
THE SALT AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Matthew 5:13-16

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

In the first twelve verses of this chapter Jesus describes the qualities a person must have to be a faithful disciple within the Kingdom of heaven.

Now in verses 13-16 Jesus summarizes the *function* of Christians in the world: ***influence***.

Whoever lives according to the beatitudes is going to function in the world as salt and light.

REJECTION OR ACCEPTANCE

Jesus is preparing these people on the mountain for what lies ahead. He does not want any of them ignorant, or surprised about what lies ahead. He’s helping them “*count the cost*.”

If someone becomes a disciple of Jesus, one of two things will happen:

- He will influence people for good
- He will become worthless and be cast out of the Kingdom.

That's pretty well "*black and white.*" There are no "*gray areas.*" A disciple cannot be half useful and half influential. To the Laodiceans Jesus said:

Revelation 3:15-16

15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

- Hot beverage, or
- Cold beverage, but
- **NOT LUKEWARM!**

POWER OF INFLUENCE

A disciple's influence is extremely powerful.

The Scriptures teach that ***an unbelieving husband can be converted*** simply by the good influence of his Christian wife (1 Pet 3:1-2).

But influence is a very fragile commodity.

- A good reputation can take years to obtain
- It can be destroyed in a moment!

ILL: How many curse words would I have to say before my influence and reputation would be destroyed?

- dirty jokes?
- cans of beer?

- cigarettes?
 - dirty magazines?
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Proverbs 22:1

1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
Loving favor rather than silver and gold.

The name which we wear (Christian) is very honorable and we dare not spot, or tarnish it.

Even wicked and worldly people recognize the high **moral** and **ethical** standards by which Christians are recognized.

- When a Christian (especially a preacher) does something wrong, people are shocked! It is out of the ordinary; it makes the headlines in newspapers, radio and TV.
- When Jimmy Swaggart committed adultery it was on every newspaper and tabloid in the supermarket!

ILL: When is the last time you saw a headline:

“Night Club Owner Commits Adultery”
“An Atheist Arrested For Dishonesty”
“Another Devil Worshiper Turns Bad”

So we must guard our reputation and influence that God might be glorified and unbelievers might be saved:

1 Peter 2:12

12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which **they observe**, glorify God in the day of visitation.

TEXT (1)

Notice carefully now what Jesus said in the text before us:

Matthew 5:13

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Salt has always been a valuable commodity, but more in ancient times. These people listening to Jesus knew that if Christians were like salt, that meant they were very valuable to the world.

- **Roman soldiers** were often paid part of their wages in salt, and it was from that practice that the expression, “Not worth his salt” originated.
- **Salt supplies** were needed to rebuild the temple (Ezra 7:21-22).
- **Salt was used in certain covenants** (2 Ch 13:5).
- **Every sacrifice of Israel required salt** (Lev 2:13).

Salt was very prominent to these Jews listening to Jesus.

When Jesus told the multitudes that His disciples were like salt, that really meant something to them!

(It was an impressive statement!)

PRESERVATIVE QUALITIES

Q: What is it about salt that disciples of the kingdom are like?

R: The main thrust seems to be the preservative qualities of salt.

(Most foods today are preserved by vacuum sealed cans, or refrigeration, but foods in olden days were preserved by salt.)

By saying that disciples were like salt, Jesus was implying the earth is **corrupt** and **decaying**. But what's more is that things are just getting worse!

2 Timothy 3:13

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

We are being taught today that mankind is evolving to higher and higher levels. BUT, any person who knows history, and thinks man is evolving upwards, is *"deceiving and being deceived!"*

Man has increased in:

- scientific knowledge
- medical knowledge
- technical knowledge
- mechanical knowledge

BUT, he has not improved society! Instead, modern man has simply increased the number of ways he can express his depravity.

As **salt**, Christians are to be a preserving influence in the world. They are to prevent spiritual and moral decay.

Sinners are like leaven (1 Cor. 5:6 – *"a little leaven leavens the whole lump."*)

Rather than fermenting and corrupting the world even more than it is, Christians preserve the world; they put a brake on moral corruption.

ILL: Some people will actually stop cursing when they notice you don't curse.

A POSITIVE NOTE

There's a positive note though. Although salt implies corruption, it also implies that there is hope for part of the world.

If the world was completely beyond hope, then why worry about salting it?

ILL: A man would not take totally rotten meat and begin applying salt to preserve it.

NOTE: We say there is hope for part of the world, not all of it. Some men are beyond the "point of no return." (cf. Ezk 14:20).

Now, if a Christian is **not** able to influence and convert the people he associates with, one of two things will be the problem:

- The unbelievers are beyond hope, or
- The salt has lost its savor

If we are true disciples we will be influencing someone!

I suspect when the salt runs out, the world will end!

- God would have saved **Sodom** if 10 righteous souls had been found.
- God would have saved world at time of **Noah** if enough righteous people had been found
- God will likely allow world to continue as long as there is sufficient salt!

I believe that when the corruption of this world is irreversible and the salt is insufficient, then God will call a halt to this universe!

Jesus is saying, *"The very ones despised and persecuted by the world are the world's only hope!"*

SALT BITES

Notice carefully that Jesus did not compare His disciples with sugar, or honey.

Our mission in life is not to sugar-coat. We don't leave sinners with the impression they are OK in their present condition.

Salt has a "*bite*" to it and the message of the gospel is a biting thing! That is why a true disciple of Jesus often finds himself persecuted (vv. 10-12).

TEXT (1)

(Continued)

Matthew 5:13

13 "You are the salt of the earth; ...

Jesus did not say to these Jews, "*You are the salt of the nation.*"

Earth – implies a worldwide commission. This passage looks forward to the great commission that will be given in Mt 28. We are not to live in total isolation from the world.

ILL: Some have suggested how great it would be if a bunch of Christians banded together and formed their own community away from the rest of the world.

- **Mormons thought this way.** To escape persecution they fled to Utah to live in isolation and form their own community.
- **Catholics thought this way.** They formed monasteries to isolate certain devoted members to prevent corruption and sin from rubbing off on them.

IT'S UP TO US

you (ὁμεῖς) – emphatic: *“You alone are the salt of the earth”*

If we do not influence the world, the job won't get done!

John 17

15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

Christians and their children must learn the lesson of being **IN the world**, but not **OF the world**. Only in this way will we truly be salt!

SALT LOSING ITS FLAVOR

Jesus gives us a warning:

Matthew 5:13

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? ...

“if the salt loses its flavor” – how does salt lose it's flavor?

R: These people knew all too well ... dirt, debris, and contaminants were mixed in until it could no longer be used. (evaporating sea-water)

Salt has only one *essential* quality: saltiness. When that quality is lost it has no value whatsoever.

That is not true of all things. ↓

ILL: Horse. Very useful while alive. When dead he still has usefulness -- glue, or dog food, or fertilizer.

Many other things are like this – they don't become useless when their primary function ceases. We make secondary uses out of them.

The extraordinary thing about salt is it has no use whatsoever when it loses its saltiness. It is very difficult to know what to do with it.

- It sterilizes any ground it falls on.
- It can only be thrown in the street where men literally trample it under foot.

“with what shall it be salted?” – What can be substituted for salt?

Let me tell you something ... I've tasted some of these “*salt substitutes*” and I'm here to tell you there is no substitute for salt!

Neither can anything be substituted for a Christian's influence.

If a Christian remains in this “*unsalted*” condition, what will become of him? Jesus said he is “*good for nothing, but to be cast out.*”

ARGUMENT: ***Once saved, always saved!*** (Mr. Fred Howard (Wayland Baptist University) said this only meant the disciple was no longer good for evangelism, but he would still be saved!!)

A: Jesus said these people are good for ***nothing***. Anyone going to heaven is good for something, but Jesus said these people, in that unsalted state, are good for ***nothing***.

2 Peter 2:20-21

20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, **the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.**

21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

Hebrews 3:12

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

A Christian who falls away is not only lost himself, but he sterilizes all the ground around him – he drives others away from salvation.

That’s what distresses me when parents quit the church; they not only loose their own souls, but their children too!

TEXT (2)

Matthew 5:14-15

14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

This was shocking to those on the mountain! Jesus told those common, ordinary, insignificant people that they were the light of the world!

In saying that the disciples were light, Jesus implied that the world was in darkness. This allegory emphasizes something different than the first one:

- **Salt** -- implies **corruption** and refers to the **actions** of men
- **Light** -- implies **darkness** and refers to the **thoughts** of men

Genesis 6:5

5 Then the LORD saw that the **wickedness** of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the **thoughts** of his heart was only evil continually.

Those wicked people needed some salt for their wickedness and some light for their thoughts!

WORLD, CITY, HOUSE

Notice now the progression Jesus draws. As disciples we are like:

- **Light of the world** (sun is seen by all world)
- **City set on hill** (seen by neighborhood)
- **Lamp in house** (seen by family)

As disciples we affect the world, our neighborhood and our families. How do we do this?

- **Universal church** – affects the world
- **Congregation** – affects the city (neighborhood)
- **Individual disciple** – affects his family

HIDING LIGHT

Matthew 5:15

15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Jesus is saying it's utterly ridiculous to light a lamp and then cover it up.

Some men in history have tried to hide their light and conceal the fact that they believe in Jesus.

- **Nicodemus** came to Jesus by night (Jn 3:1-2)
- **Joseph of Arimathaea** was a secret disciple (Jn 19:38)
- **Peter** cursed and denied the Lord (Mt 27)

ILL: One man married a Christian woman and obeyed gospel, but never told parents he became member of the “*church of Christ.*”

A true disciple does not try to hide his light. He sees how utterly ridiculous it is to claim to be a Christian and yet deliberately try to hide the fact.

A man who truly realizes the grace of God and what God has done for him, is a man that cannot conceal it! He doesn't want to conceal it.

Acts 4:20

20 ... we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

TEXT (3)

Matthew 5:16

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and **glorify your Father** in heaven.

The purpose of letting our lights shine is so men might see them. The purpose for letting men see them is that they might glorify God.

The Pharisees did their works to be seen of men, but it was not that God might be glorified. It was for their own glorification.

Marshal Keeble:

*“The Bible does not say **make** your light shine, but it says **let** it shine!”*

That is, we do not boast and brag. Of the Pharisees it was said:

Matthew 23:5

5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. ...

In contrast to this we are to let our lights shine *naturally* that God may receive the glory.

GOOD WORKS

Men are to see our good works and glorify God. The Bible describes several kinds of works:

- **Works of merit** (Rom 4:2)
- **Works of Satan** (1 Jn 3:8)
- **Works of men** (Mt 23:5)

None of these will save. But some have erroneously concluded that all works are the same and that no works of any kind can save. There are **good works** which pertain to salvation:

- **Works of God** (Jn 6:29)
- **Works of obedience** (Acts 10:35)
- **Works that save** (Ja 2:24)

Jesus said not to hide these good works of obedience which save us and glorify God:

Ephesians 2:10

10 For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

APPLICATION

Brethren and sisters, it's time we started taking seriously this idea of influence! It's time we started reevaluating some things.

I want to voice some concerns I have:

- **Worldliness mixing in and contaminating our salt**
- **Baskets gradually being lowered over our lights**

It's time we started to question:

- Some of the **movies we go see** and the ones we rent and bring home!
- **TV** and allowing the world free access into our homes
- **Magazine subscriptions** (e.g. "Sports Illustrated")
- **Internet** – our next major problem
- **Romantic novels**
- The **music** we listen to
- The **clothes** we wear ... it's getting out of hand!

Christian *women* dressing like the world:

- Make-up caked on as thick as cake icing
- Jewelry hanging off every joint and limb
- Acting like they've never heard of 1 Tim. 2:9-10
- Short skirts
- Low neck-lines ... exposing as much as they can
- Nose rings
- Belly-button rings

Other Christian women go to the other extreme:

- Dressing so masculine they look like a man
- Wearing men's clothing

Christian *men* dressing like the world:

- Shirts (if they have one on) half unbuttoned
- Necklaces
- Earrings

These things destroy our influence with some. Influence is so fragile.

The way we wear our hair:

- Christian women getting their hair chopped off and shaved off like space aliens.
- Christian men letting their hair grow like cave men. (Start looking like the "missing link" Richard Leakey has been searching for.)

Our attitude:

- Some Christians have lost their influence because of their hateful dispositions and their completely joyless attitude. They never smile ... never have any good thing to say.

Our hospitality:

- The saying is: "Good old Southern hospitality." That's true if you emphasize the word OLD! Some of the most unfriendly, inhospitable people I've met have been in the South.

Our actions around the opposite sex:

- I was taught that a man does not allow himself to be alone in a house with a woman he's not married to! This old advise seems to have died away.
- Someone asks: "What's the matter, don't you trust us?" The answer is: "No I don't!" I've seen too many mighty Christians fall to this temptation!

Our reputation of paying our debts:

“Owe no man anything” the Bible says Rom. 13:8. Some people’s solution to “Owe no man anything” is to file bankruptcy ... walk away from debt!

It’s time we learned we can’t have everything we want!

- People with bills pouring out their ears can’t **go out to eat** just because they don’t want to cook!
- People with bills about to eat them up and wanting the church to help them financially, but when **Christmas** comes they make sure their kids get everything they want!

I’m getting weary of hearing Christians ask:

- “What’s wrong with smoking?”
- “One beer, or one glass of wine?”
- Lottery?

I’ll tell you what’s wrong with those things: There’s no Bible authority for these things (Col 3:17) and **they’re a bad example!** They ruin your influence and Jesus said:

Matthew 5:13

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Ask anyone on the street what a Christian is and they’ll probably say: “A Christian is someone who doesn’t smoke, drink, or cuss.”

Yet we act like we don’t see anything wrong with any of this!

NOTE: Gene Grant said, “The only people I’ve ever heard justify smoking are Christians!” Something’s wrong with that!

We ought to be the most:

- Reliable
- Godly
- Clean cut
- Modestly dressed
- Decent behaving
- Well mannered
- Hospitable
- Helpful
- Neighborly people in the world!

We can't compete with the denominational world when it comes to:

- **Big fancy buildings** ... we don't have the money they have!
- **Recreation** ... fun and games to attract the crowds
- **Building hospitals and orphanages** ... we don't believe in using the Lord's money to build such institutions

I'm not bothered when they out do us on all of those things, but brethren ... ***it bothers me if they live better lives than we do!***

Romans 12:2

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

BE JOYFUL

But when we preach about influence and worldliness there's always someone out there who begins to cry: ***"Being a Christian means you can't do anything!"***

I know people that are:

- reliable
- well dressed
- good manners
- clean cut

And they're the most miserable people in the world! All they ever seem to do is bemoan what they can't do and can't wear! They think back in fond memory of the *"good old days"* when they could do what they wanted to do!

Luke 9:62

62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

These people have forgotten that what they ***gain*** by being a Christian far outweighs what they have to sacrifice!

Mark 10:28-30

28 Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You."

29 So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's,

30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time — houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions — and in the age to come, eternal life.

Don't be sorrowful about all you have to give up for Jesus. Remember all that He gave up to come be your savior and be thankful that He is your savior!

Preserve your influence so you can help save others from destruction!

"We are the only Bible

*The careless world will read,
We are the sinners gospel,
We are the scoffers' creed;
We are the Lord's last message
Given in deed and word,
What if the type is crooked?
What if the print is blurred?*

*"What if our hands are busy
With other things than His?
What if our feet are walking
Where sin's allurements is?
What if our tongues are speaking
Of things His life would spurn,
How can we hope to help Him
And welcome His return?"*

CONCLUSION

Our own salvation and the salvation of others depends on our maintaining a good influence.

- If we allow our influence to degenerate we will be cast out and trampled under the feet of men because we are "good for nothing."
- If we retain a good influence we will both save men and glorify God.

THE SALT AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD

QUESTIONS:

- 1) What quality about salt was Jesus emphasizing in this chapter?
- 2) If Christians are like salt, what does this imply about the world?
- 3) What is a secondary use of a horse?
- 4) What does “*corruption*” refer to – actions of men, or thoughts of men?
- 5) What does “*darkness*” refer to – actions of men, or thoughts of men?
- 6) What did Marshall Keeble say about Christians being the “*light of the world*”?
- 7) What is the next major moral problem our brotherhood will face?
- 8) What is the “*only Bible the careless world will read*”?