

Salt and Light (part 2)

Matthew 5:13-16

Last Sunday morning we began looking at this passage. I showed that the Lord commands His followers to be Salt and Light in this corrupt world. Jesus talked first about Salt and how it is able to balance the good and corrupt in life. We began to look at the properties of Salt.

First, salt is a **Preservative**. It is an antiseptic which performs the function of preventing meat from becoming rotten and corrupt. In tropical countries where there is no refrigeration, people rub salt into meat to keep it from going bad. In the same way, when Christians come in close contact with the sinful people of the world, the world is kept from progressing further into unspeakable foulness. Christians benefit secular society.

Second, salt is **Necessary For Flavor**. Without Christians and the gospel that they proclaim and practice, this world would be more tasteless. There is no true flavor found in the world. There is no true joy found in this world. Only the company of Christians gives flavor and joy to the world.

More Properties of Salt.

Third, salt is white, symbolizing purity. Christians are to be in the world and yet live pure lives. As I said before, Christians should glory in their difference. They are citizens of heaven who are living in this world for its benefit. As such, they must constantly resist the temptation of being like the world by striving to be like Jesus. They must oppose the values of the world and proclaim and practice biblical lifestyles. As we read in James 4:4, ***“Friendship with the world is hatred toward God.”*** As the salt of the earth, we must be holy, pure and different from the world. In Romans 12:2 Paul says, ***“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world”*** and in James 1:27 we read that we must keep ourselves ***“from being polluted by the world.”*** In 1 Peter 4:4 we read that the world thinks it strange ***“that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation.”*** Salt is pure.

Fourth, salt also was used as a fertilizer. Christians must function in a way that promotes that which is good in the world. They must oppose evil and promote good. Though often hidden by sin, there is much good in his world. Christians should work to grow what is good and useful to mankind. I personally hate politics. To me it has become a cancer in society because we have ruined what it should be. Politics once meant the “science of government” but it has become nothing more than slinging mud. Hateful speech, name calling, blaming, protecting one’s position. The greater good is seldom the desire of a politician. However, this is one area where Christians can engage in life to promote policies that are helpful to families. Historically, Christians have championed many causes that promoted the good of humanity. They have suppressed evil and caused good to grow and flourish by speaking out against what is evil or wrong.

Fifth, salt causes people to become thirsty. When I was in the Navy they gave us salt tablets to make us thirsty so we would drink water. I was in Jacksonville, FL in the summer. I did not need anything to remind me to drink water. We Christians need to turn up the heat of the gospel and help people to thirst for Jesus Christ and his gospel. If we live as Christians daily for God’s glory in this world, the world will observe us and desire to know about Jesus Christ. Now, I don’t mean all the people of the world will do this, but some will. Through us God will generate within some a thirst for the living God, and they will come to us and ask, “Why are you different? Why are you so full of hope and peace and joy even during trouble?” When they do this, we can give an answer of the hope that is in us.

So, ask yourselves: Are we functioning as salt in our society? Are we causing people to thirst for Jesus Christ? In John 7:37, Jesus declared at the Feast, ***“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”*** It is the church’s business to produce in the hearts of unbeliever’s great thirst for Jesus Christ. Being salt can accomplish all these things. But,

Worldliness Destroys Saltiness

Then Jesus said that if salt lost its saltiness, it would become useless and worthless. We can lose our saltiness by allowing worldliness to enter our life and affect our faith. If we conform to the pattern of the world, if we embrace the values of the world, if we become materialistic, sensual and pleasure-seeking, **we lose our saltiness**. We become like the world.

We must realize that we are to be in the world but not of the world. Although we are in the world, we must focus on Jesus and His teachings. If we are not different, we will become useless to God, useless to our families, useless to society, useless to the world. And the day will come when saltless professors of Christ will be cast out.

We read about this in Matthew 8:11-12: *“I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness. where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* And in 2 Timothy 4:10 Paul, grieving, speaks about his fellow worker Demas, *“Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.”*

Yes, one day the Jesus will say to such people, *“Depart from me, I never knew you.”* One day he will speak to them, *“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”* *That day is coming!* Let us **BE SALT!**

The Light of the Dark World

Christians are the salt of the earth and they should benefit the earth while they live in it. Once He finishes with salt, Jesus also told his disciples, *“You are the light of the world.”* In the Greek text it is, “You and you alone are the light of the world.”

What is light?

In the 15th and 16th centuries, many ancient Greek writings were found. That period was called the Renaissance, meaning a rebirth. In the 18th century, people gloried in discarding revelation, meaning God and his authority. Then they ordained reason—the fallen reason of man. What did they call this period of rationalism? The Enlightenment. Was this enlightenment? No. It was an age of darkness.

Here we see Jesus on a mountain speaking to a bunch of poor, humble, people. What is he telling them? ***“You and you alone are the light of the world.”*** What a great compliment this was! What great dignity God bestowed upon them! And this is true of us as Christians today.

Who is the light of the world? Christians. Jesus was not saying that light is found in Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, emperors, politicians, philosophers, artists, or scientists, billionaires. No. The poor, humble Galileans who confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God—and all Christians throughout history—are alone the light of the world.

What about all the books written by the wise people of the world? They are darkness. Their authors are in darkness just as the world is darkness. That is the implication of the statement that “You and you alone are the light of the world.”

In Prov 4:19 we read, ***“The way of the wicked is like deep darkness.”*** All the wisdom of the world may be contained in high philosophical terms, but what does it really consist of? Deep darkness.

God Gives Light

In Ephesians 5:8-s9 Paul says, ***“For you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.”*** These humble, poor, despised Galileans were once darkness, but then they followed Jesus—and were made to be light in the Lord. In 2 Cor 4:4-6 Paul writes, ***“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of glory of Christ, who is the image***

of God. . [But] God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

We were once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. How are we supposed to live? **As children of the light.** Jesus said he was the light of the world and then he told his disciples that they are the light of the world. In other words, the world is deep darkness—this world of professors, politicians, scientists, technocrats, plutocrats, movie stars, and religious gurus. But in this world of deep darkness, God planted his church as light.

It is absurd when Christians want to become like the world? Should we tell lies because the world lies? By no means! As I said, Christians are not to retreat from the world into monasteries, but neither are we to seek to become like the world by following its fashions and darkness. We must be in the world and function as its light as we proclaim and practice the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must realize that although the world is sinful and dark, God loves it and sent his one and only Son to redeem it.

In John 3:19-21 Jesus said, *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”*

So, God loves the world, and he sent his Son to be its light. He has purposed to save people from their sins, and He will save them. He saves them through the church as Christians proclaim and demonstrate the gospel in every aspect of life. Whether in the workplace or the marketplace, whether in the political sphere, the family, or the school, as we demonstrate the light of Christianity, God will save some out of darkness just as he saved us. We will finish this next Sunday morning.