

## THE SALT OF THE EARTH AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Matt. 5:13-16: 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 under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

### INTRODUCTION:

1. The Hebrew nation had failed at this same command. What the Jewish nation was to have been to their dispensation of time to the other nations of the world the Church and individual Christians are to be to our world.
2. The statement is individual, personal. It speaks of responsibility and influence.

Greenbough has said: “He was speaking to a little group of men in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire. To speak of this insignificant company as the salt of the earth, as the light of the world, would have been laughable in any other. But in that little company, he saw the womb of the future. He saw the ever-increasing host of faithful men and women who would gather around him as these had done. He saw his own sweetness and light carried by renewed lives innumerable into the dark and putrid places of humanity. He saw himself magnified and reproduced everywhere. He saw morning breaking for all in the world in the lamp which he had kindled. He spoke not to these twelve men alone. He spoke to his own through all generations. The words are in our ears. They speak to our hearts and consciences. If we believe in Him they belong to us. If we love Him, they are true to us.”

3. THE STORY OF SALT:
  - A. “The story of salt in the history of mankind is an interesting one. In the Orient, during the time of Jesus, it was so valuable that soldiers often received part of their pay or wages in salt. The word “salary” has its origin in this fact, as does the expression, “the man is worth his salt.”
  - B. “During the time of Jesus, salt was even more valuable than it is today, for it was used as about the only preservative available. It was also used as an antiseptic and was used then, as now, for flavoring purposes. Jesus was paying a

high tribute to His disciples when He called them the “salt of the earth.” They were expected to preserve the good qualities and high ideals of their society, and they were to add flavor to the lives of others by their influence.”

Ralph Sweet, *Moments On The Mount*, p. 27.

## I. SALT HAS A THREE-FOLD PURPOSE:

1. It is used to preserve.
  - A. True Christians have the responsibility of preserving what is best in society. There is no one else who cares or who can.
2. It is used to flavor.
  - A. Think of having to live in a world without Christian influence. What a terrible society or community that would be. It is the influence of good Christian people that add a flavor to our society - our way of life.
3. It is to heal.
  - A. The ills of Sin, Moral and Political Corruption can only be healed by Christian influence. These things abound more and more when Christian influence subsides.

SALT IS POTENT. “A very small quantity of salt is powerful out of proportion to its size. A few genuine Christians are always powerful out of proportion to their number. By close contact with the decaying world, not through monastery methods, they can claim men for the kingdom. The Master’s minority can always be “more than conquerors” because “one plus God” is still a majority.”

Eddleman, *Teachings Of Jesus*, p. 30.

## II. THE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IS MOST POWERFUL OUTSIDE THE CHURCH BUILDING AND INTO THE WORLD.

1. Elton Trueblood has said, “Christianity lives or dies not by what goes on in the church (buildings), but by what goes on outside of them.”
2. If we limit our preserving power to ourselves, we too shall die.
  - A. The influence of Christians preserves society.
    - (1) The Antediluvian World lacked it.

- (2) Sodom and Gomorrah lacked it.
- (3) This nation will also fall when its Christian influence is gone.

B. On our jobs is one of the best places to influence others.

Sweet has pointed out that, “There are many ways in which the Christians can apply these principles, but perhaps no better way is in their daily work. The mistaken notion has arisen that the only individuals who really let their light shine before men are those persons who devote themselves to full-time evangelistic and preaching work. This was not the teaching of Jesus here. He was not singling out the Christian minister for particular praise, but was showing how each Christian, regardless of his vocation in life, can be a living witness of Christ....

“Work need not be considered a drudgery and looked upon merely as a means of earning a living. It should rather be considered an opportunity to serve others and to bring the light of Christ into their lives. The dedicated Christian men and women who are laboring in the fields and factories of the nation are perhaps the most effective preachers. This attitude toward one’s work makes even the monotonous tasks, which so often make life a drudgery, into a chance for thrilling achievements. In any walk of life, one can find challenges to his best abilities if he has the vision of becoming the salt of the earth and the light of the world.”

*Moments On The Mount*, pp. 28-29.

### III. SALT PRESERVES OR SAVES AT THE EXPENSE OF ITSELF.

- 1. The preserving quality in us will cause us to expend ourselves in:  
Time - Money - Energy.
- 2. Salt works silently - Inconspicuously - Gradually.
- 3. Living the Christian life is the greatest contribution one can give to the world.

### IV. SALT CAN LOSE ITS SAVING POWER.

- 1. This is the sad condition in which many Christians find themselves.

“IMPOTENT SALT IS WORTHLESS. YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH, BUT ... Some salt has ‘tuckered out.’ Or it got wet and its essence evaporated. It was so weak it could not stand

but one using. For whatever cause, it has 'lost its savour.' It has become impotent and insipid. It cannot stave off the rotting process in meat nor give taste to so much as a boiled egg. It is good for nothing - but to be cast out. This is sharp language, but the analogy is clear. When a church member no longer lives right, no longer witnesses, no longer lives so as to promote Christ's kingdom, the church is better off without him."

Eddleman, *Teachings of Jesus*, p. 30.

Thompson says on this point, "There is a danger that the salt will lose its taste. Chemically this is not possible, but practically it often happened in Palestine that the salt was mixed with dirt and became therefore quite worthless. So the Christian often does not affect his environment but is instead affected by his environment; he does not transform the world but is conformed to the world. Salt that has become corrupt was neither good for the land, nor for the dunghill; it could neither fertilize nor purify; and as a troublesome, hateful thing, it would be cast into the roadway, where it could not do much harm, there to be trodden under foot by men." *The Sermon On The Mount And Its Meaning Today*, p. 41.

2. Our influence will transcend time and go with us to the Judgment.

A. Let us be careful to not lose the good influence we have.

(1) Peter says: "Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives....."

(2) Timothy was first influenced by his mother and his grandmother.

(3) Abel - "Though he be dead, yet he still speaks."

V. YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD:

1. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

2. The Value of Light:

A. "Traveling 186,000 miles per second, light from the sun is even more indispensable to life on earth than salt. The present universal scheme of things cannot operate without

sunlight. In the Scriptures, light symbolizes two things: truth and righteousness - just as its opposite, darkness, is a figure of ignorance and sin. The world needs Christians who glow with the true light.

3. The light of Christ is to be reflected by us.

FIRST - In our homes                      V. 15

SECOND - In our city                      V. 14ff

THIRD - In the world                      V. 14a

4. Too many lights are not shining.

A. Reflectors are dirty because of sin.

B. Some lights are blown out by the Devil because of the places we frequent.

C. Some lights are like lightning bugs - They shine in flits and starts.

VI. CHRISTIANS ALL OVER THE WORLD NEED TO TURN ON THEIR LIGHTS AND LEAVE THEM ON.

1. To light the world into a period of peace and good will toward all men.

2. To point the way out of religious division and confusion.

3. To point the poor soul struggling with sin to Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world.

Let The Lower Lights Be Burning  
Send a Gleam Across the Wave  
Some Poor Fainting, Struggling Seaman  
You May Rescue, You May Save.