



Topic: Becoming A Good And Salty Christian (Preserving the Righteousness of Christ in the World)

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*Ye 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.
~ Matthew 5:13 (NKJV) ~*

INTRODUCTION

In his gospel account of all Jesus did and said during his earthly ministry, Matthew records Jesus' words spoken to believers concerning them being the "salt of the earth". While we can say that you and I, as believers in Christ, are called the salt of the earth because our lives enhance and give meaning to this existence we call life, what does being the "salt of the earth" really mean and how do we become this salt of the earth? We also find in Matthew's gospel where Jesus lets his believers know that it is possible for the salt to lose its flavor. If this happens, Jesus asked the question: "how shall it be seasoned?"

We see in our text that Jesus did not say you can be...or you have the potential to be...He said you are. Everyone who has trusted Christ for salvation and is born again is the salt of the earth. Now if you and I as born again believers in Christ are the salt of the earth, then it behooves us to understand just what being the salt of the earth really means.

The value of salt, especially in the ancient world can not be under estimated. In the Bible, salt is often used as a symbol, in one way or another. The Scriptures mention salt, in different meanings and in different contexts. Roman soldiers received their wages in salt. The Greeks considered salt to be divine. The Mosaic Law required that all offerings presented by the Israelites contain salt:

Leviticus 2:13 (NKJV)

And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

We also understand from the scriptures that salt played a significant role in God's covenant with the Levites.

Numbers 18:19 (NKJV)

All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord with you and your descendants with you.

We know that today, salt is often used as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge. There are such expressions as "taking things with a pinch of salt" or "a grain of salt", which means that one must not believe all and everything but must instead use wisdom (wit) and through that come to wise assessments and conclusions.

So, then what are the characteristics of salt that caused the Lord to use it in this context of Matthew 5:13? There are different theories and beliefs about the reference of salt. One such theory is that the color of salt (whiteness) represents the purity of the justified believer. Another such theory says that salt's flavoring properties imply that believers add divine flavor to the world. Then there's the theory that Christians are to sting the world with rebuke and judgment the way salt when poured upon an open wound stings. There is also the theory that asserts that, as salt, believers are to create a thirst for Christ. Still salt is said to represent a vital purpose in that it stops decay. It is believe that this is what the Lord Jesus had in mind when he told his followers that they are the salt of the earth. He meant that all of His disciples were to serve as preservatives, stopping the moral decay in our sin infected world.

OUR STUDY

In my studying for this lesson, I came across a Peanut cartoon where Peppermint Patty was talking with Charlie Brown. Here's how the conversation went... Peppermint Patty: "Guess what, Chuck. The first day of school, and I got sent to the principal's office. It was your fault, Chuck." Charlie Brown: "My fault? How could it be my fault? Why do you say everything is my fault?" Peppermint Patty: "You're my friend, aren't you, Chuck? You should have been a better influence on me." While some of us might feel Peppermint Patty should take ownership for her behavior, she was in essence saying that Charlie Brown's influence in her presence should have impacted her life in some way or another causing her to make better choices and decisions. Whether we realize it or not, as Christians, we influence the world. If we live up to God's standard and in accordance with His word, then our influence upon the world would be positive. On the flip-side, if we profess to be Christians with our lips and yet our life fails to represent what we profess, our influence upon the world would give rise to some remaining trapped in their sins feeling as though there is no hope of escape.

So, our challenge is to remain flavored with the salt we received at salvation. As previously shared, Jesus did not say that we had potential to become the salt of the earth; Jesus said that we are the salt of the earth. So, just how do we remain a good and salty Christian?

Walk in Wisdom

Colossians 4:5 (NKJV)

Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

To be wise in the way we act toward outsiders is to show practical Christian wisdom in dealing with secular society. The apostle Paul's words imply that believers are to be cautious and tactful so as to avoid needlessly antagonizing or alienating their pagan neighbors. In a positive sense, these words also imply that believers should conduct themselves so that the way they live will attract, impress, and convict non-Christians and give the pagan community a favorable impression of the Gospel.

Receive Clear Guidance From God. Wisdom is the capacity to see things from God's perspective and respond according to scriptural principles. Those who walk wisdom receive the Father's direction for their lives. While God's children still have some painful experiences, they are spared many mistakes and false starts. Waling in God's wisdom spares believers numerous wrong decisions and hurtful relationships. Nobody is better qualified to guide your steps or lead you onto the right path than God. As the salt of the earth, our clear guidance from God will help to shape our impact upon a saltless world.

Season Your Environment

Matthew 5:16 (NKJV)

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

This portion of scripture gives witness to what we have shared from Colossians 4:5. As a Christian, we should act in a manner that reflects our character as a true follower of Christ so as to serve as witnesses or lights to lead those in darkness out. Within each of us as Christian resides the power of God's Spirit (greater is he that is in us than he that is in the word) that is able to subdue and bring under subjection anything in our immediate environment that is contrary to God. We must understand that because we are a light, we will be noticed. No one can be a secret Christian these days because light shines the best when its dark and we all know that the world we live in today is very dark. So we must keep shining through both positive and negative responses because that's what light does.

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do with gentleness and respect.

As Christians or believers, we should acknowledge the eternal holiness of Christ by revering Him as the Lord of the universe who is in control of all things. To give a defense: Peter assumes that the Christian faith will be falsely accused. He therefore encourages Christians to have rational answers to respond to those false accusations. Our defense before men ought to be with gentleness and respect. In this way, we season our environment with the Spirit of Christ.

Stand Fast to Your Christian Faith

Proverbs 4:13

Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life. (KJV)

Faith may be well described as taking hold upon divine instruction. God has condescended to teach us, and it is ours to hear with attention and receive his words; and while we are hearing faith comes, even that faith which saves the soul. To take "fast hold" is an exhortation which concerns the strength, the reality, and the heartiness, and the truthfulness of faith, and the more of these the better.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (NKJV)

Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.

Remember that God is always there. Even in the driest times, when you just don't feel God's presence, you need to remember that God is always there. He does not forget you. True faith is developed even when you don't feel God.

GETTING SALTY AGAIN...

But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? We can lose our saltiness by neglecting to take up the reins of stewardship and responsibility as citizens in the kingdom. Staying salty is hard work and

requires a daily commitment to Christ. He gave his life for us. Let us give ours to Him in service, saltiness and love.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 (NKJV)

Do not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Maintaining our saltiness takes us striving to live a life committed to the Lord and one that is focus on the prize of eternal life we are striving toward. When we have lost our steadfastness or saltiness, to get back on track requires a rededication unto the Lord on our part. We must be willing to deny ourselves from all things that draw us away from our commitment to the Lord. Realize it will take the same effort for you to rededicate yourself, if not more, that it took when you first committed yourself to the Lord. I encourage you my brother and my sister not to lose sight of the salt that is upon your life.

God's peace and blessing be upon you....

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