

Sermon on the Mount, Part 2: Salt and Light

For Part 1 of this series, see “Sermon on the Mount, Part 1: The Beatitudes” under the Bible Studies tab.

Continuing his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV).

Here, Jesus continued his teaching, which was aimed at believers – not sinners. He explained that as Christians, we are “the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). Salt is a natural preservative. During ancient times, salt was used to preserve food and protect it from bacteria, mold, and spoiling. In addition, salt was a very valuable commodity. Salt production was legally restricted in ancient times, so it was historically used as a method of trade and currency. The word “*salary*” was derived from the word “*salt*”; and often times, part of a soldier’s pay was given in salt. Ancient Grecians traded salt for slaves giving rise to the expression, “*not worth his salt*.” Salt is also a purifying agent and a mild antiseptic, which is why people with a sore throat are advised to gargle with warm salt water. Salt may sting when it touches a wound, but it helps to kill infection. Salt gives flavor to things and, importantly, it makes people thirsty and encourages needed water consumption.

When we choose Jesus and are saved, we become God’s preservative. Like salt, our presence in the world, as well as our prayer and righteous living, helps to slow the growth of evil, wickedness, and decay. When sinners see our example of

holiness and our lives filled with love and inner peace, they should become thirsty for the “living water,” which is salvation and the Holy Spirit (John 4:1-26). Today, salt is processed in such a way that it never loses its saltiness; however, in Jesus’ day, salt could lose its flavor. When that happened, there was no way to restore it, and the salt was thrown out into the street to be walked on. In his book “The Wiersbe Bible Commentary,” Dr. Wiersbe explained, “When a disciple loses his Christian character, he is ‘good for nothing’ and will eventually be ‘walked on’ by others and bring disgrace to Christ.” As Christians, we should strive to never lose our saltiness and become useless to God.

Jesus also emphasized that, as Christians, we are the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:14-16). Jesus also described himself as the “light of the world” (John 8:12, and 12:46). Dr. Wiersbe said, “When [Jesus] was here on earth, the perfection of His character and conduct exposed the sinfulness of those around Him.” As sons and daughters of the Lord and vessels of the Holy Spirit, our lives should reflect the Light of the World, which is none other than Christ Jesus. Light exposes sin, which is why this ever-darkening world does not want light. As a Christian, our life should expose the darkness and sin around us just by living righteously and bearing the fruits of the spirit. For more on righteous living and the fruits of the spirit, see “God Requires Holy Living” and “Cultivate the Fruits of the Spirit”.

In teaching about salt and light, Jesus wants to help us to live a life that is both useful to God and much needed by a dark and decaying world. Choose to be salt and light! Choose Jesus today!

God bless!