

SALT AND LIGHT (Matt. 5:13-20)

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. In my encounter with non-Christians, I am often asked, “What advantage is there to being a Christian: What makes you Christians so important in this world? Why do you Christians have to be so different?” Our Lord answers these questions by telling all Christians that they are “the salt of the earth: and “the light of the world.” If this really be true, then there is no more important calling and position than that of a Christian!
- B. In the Beatitudes we saw what a Christian is, but now we come to see what a Christian does. Or, putting it in another way, after realizing what we are, we must consider what we must be for Christ. Beatitudes deals with our character; salt and light with our influence in the world. What influence could those people mentioned in the Beatitudes have upon this hard tough world? What can the poor in spirit, the meek, mourners, merciful and peacemakers have on the world? Will they not be overwhelmed with the flood of evil? Where your weapons are only righteousness and a pure heart, what difference can we really make? Can such a feeble, minority really achieve anything.

II. THE SALT OF THE EARTH: 5:13

- A. *Ye are the salt of the earth:*” - - Notice carefully that our Lord did not say that Christians should be the salt of the earth but that they are the salt of the earth, simply because the Father in heaven has called world. What does the Lord mean when He calls Christians salt? Salt was used in different ways and all could apply to Christians.

1. **Seasoning:** Salt is used for seasoning so as to bring out the taste in food.

NOTE: Christians bring flavor and meaning to life. In our pleasure-crazed culture, people are finding life dull and boring. No worldly pleasure can satisfy. Christians reveal to the world that life without Christ is tasteless and unsatisfying. Christians have the real meaning to life in Christ.

2. **Cleaning Agent:** Salt in Old Testament times was used as a cleansing agent. Apparently newborn infants were washed in brine.

NOTE: Christians have a cleansing effect on all the world as they bring the world the Water of Life, who is Jesus Christ, the Lord.

3. **Healing Agent:** Salt was used to heal wounds and, when applied, brought a biting sting.

NOTE: The Christian tells the message of judgment and the grace of God to all men, and men react, for vulnerable parts of their lives have been touched by the message of Christ. Yet, when men respond to Christ, God heals the wounds of sin. Remember where there is no reaction to the message of Christ we are preaching, the true salt is lacking.

4. **Preservative:** One of the main functions is to prevent decay and putrefaction.

NOTE: The Bible clearly states that the world we live in is decaying because of

sin, and only Christians can understand it. The very presence of Christians in this world is holding back the natural decay process of sin. Perhaps one reason that God is holding back judgment in our own country is that there are still many Christians in our land. R.G.V. Tasker: “to be a moral disinfectant in the world where moral standards are low, constantly changing, or non-existent.”

5. **Neutralizer:** Salt was employed in Biblical times as a neutralizer in the soil. Farmers cast salt on the ground to stimulate growth. This is perhaps, in context, what our Lord is referring to. A.B. Bruce: “We go from being saviors of society to supplying materials for footpaths.”

NOTE: Christians are neutralizers against sin and Satan and, through the proclaiming of Christ, there is spiritual fruit for God, a growth numerically of truly ___?___ people.

- B. “*But if the salt has lost his savor (flavor), wherewith shall it be salted: it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*” -- In Palestine there was an impure grade of salt, which was mixed with other minerals if it was exposed to the elements, especially water, the salt would be washed right out of it. It would look like salt, but the saltiness would be left out. A.B. Bruce: We go from “being saviors of society to supplying materials for footpaths.”

NOTE: The point is clear. If the cares of the world or any other sin come into the Christians life, then one’s testimony for Christ is removed. The Christian becomes useless for God. I can think of nothing worse than to be useless and worthless for God.

III. **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (Matt. 5:14-16)**

- A. “*Ye are the light of the world.*” - - A Christian is a light because he is related to Jesus Christ who is the Light of the world (John 8:12). Christians reflect the light of Christ to all the world. The purpose of light to expose and dispel darkness.

NOTE: The Bible proclaims that the world is in a state of gross darkness, and an honest evaluation of the world would prove this to be true. Man, today, thinks himself so enlightened because of the knowledge he has attained. The tragedy of our century has been that we have concentrated solely upon one aspect of knowledge. Our knowledge has been of mechanical things, scientific things, and knowledge of life in a biological sense. But man’s knowledge of the real factors that make life, have not increased at all. Natural man cannot apply the knowledge he has to the spiritual realm, and the spiritual side of man is the all-important part of man. Why the gross darkness? The Bible says the problem is sin and that men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19).

NOTE: Modern day thinkers and philosophers are baffled and have no answer for the deep problems of the world. They can analyze the situation and tell what the problems are but cannot explain how to solve them. But Christians know that the basic problem is sin, and only Christ can deliver a person from self. Every problem in this world can be traced back to sin, selfishness and self-seeking. Because Christians are lights, though they may never have read any philosophy, they know and understand more about the real problems of life than the greatest expert who is not a Christian. Christians are lights to the world because they alone know _____?_____ and have

an answer to the world's problem - Christ!

- B. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." -- The Lord means that if we fulfill our responsibility of shining as a light, we cannot help but be seen. In other words, it is impossible to hide when our light is shining.

NOTE: There can be no such thing as secret discipleship. "For either the secrecy destroys the discipleship or the discipleship destroys the secrecy." (Barclay)

- C. "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." -- The Lord is saying a lamp is not kindled in order to be placed under a covering. To hide a lighted lamp, is to misuse its intended purpose. Christians are to give light to a sin-darkened world. If they do not, they are misusing the light that God has given them. They are not being used for their intended purpose.

NOTE: Christians are to shine brightly for Jesus Christ. Real spiritual lights will expose the sin around them and may come into conflict with it.

- D. "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" -- The Christian will seek to do good works for which he has spiritually created by God Eph. 2:10). It is not enough just to shine but the disciple of the Lord is to shine in such a way as to bring glory to God. This means that good deeds are not done for self or for fame, but solely for God's sake.

NOTE: It is totally illogical and contradictory to be a Christian and yet deliberately try to hide the fact. There is nothing in God's universe that is so utterly useless as a nominal, professing Christian. The real disciple desires to do good works to prove, demonstrate and give evidence that he is a child of God.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. There is a fundamental difference between Christians and non-Christians, between the church and the world. We must not obliterate or even minimize the difference. John R. W. Stott: "Probably the greatest tragedy of the church throughout its long history has been its constant tendency to conform to the prevailing culture instead of developing a Christian counter-culture."
2. We have a responsibility to maintain this distinction. We must not concede outright by sin, compromise, laziness or fear.
 - a. Negative: to arrest decay. It is one thing to stop the spread
 - b. Positive: to bring light to of evil, it is a darkness another to promote the spread of truth, beauty and goodness

"To wash our hands of society is not love but worldliness."

We need a Salt and Light Company.

IV. THE RULES FOR BEING A DISCIPLE OF SALT AND LIGHT (5:17, 20)

- A. **INTRODUCTION**: If the Lord's disciples are to be salt and light, rules, principles and precepts to guide them. Therefore they must they must follow him. If they are to follow Christ, they must have know His precise stand as to the Scriptures, namely the Old Testament.
- B. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets." -- Why would anyone think the Lord came to destroy the law and the prophets (the whole of the Old Testament): Christ's teachings were so radical, so revolutionary, so different from the typical rabbis of His day that the people thought He had departed from the Old Testament Scriptures. The Lord disregarded the traditions of the elders and the interpretations of the scribes. And so people accused Christ of departing from the Scriptures.
- C. "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." -- The Lord fulfilled the whole Old Testament in three ways. First, he gave a proper interpretation of the Old Testament, freeing it from all man-made traditions of legalism. Secondly, he fulfilled the Old Testament in the sense He kept all the laws and commands perfectly. Thirdly, Christ fulfilled all the prophetic anticipations concerning Himself in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is all about Christ in type and prophecy, and it becomes exciting to read when Christ is searched for in it's pages.

NOTE: If Christ destroyed the Old Testament, then he would be doing away with the only source that really proved He was the Messiah.

- D. "For very I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." -- It is significant to note the Lord's high regard for the O.T. The jot was the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and the tittle is a part of one letter. The smallest detail will be fulfilled. The Lord is stating the absolute accuracy of the inspired scriptures of the O.T.

NOTE: Jesus Christ believed the O.T. in detail and as the very Word of God. He held to the authority of the O.T. Many liberals today hold that the O.T. is filled with errors. They contradict the teaching of Jesus Christ. Who will you believe: unregenerate men or the Son of God? Jesus said the O.T. is word by word inspired of God (*John 10:35*) "... and the scripture cannot be broken". Are these liberals so vain to think that they know more then Christ!

ILLUSTRATION:

Century follows century - there it stands.
 Empires rise and fall and are forgotten -- there it stands.
 Atheists rail against it -- there it stands.
 Kings are crowned and uncrowned -- there it stands.
 Despised and torn to pieces -- there it stands.
 Storms of hate swirl about it -- there it stands.
 Profane, prayer less punsters caricature it -- there it stands.
 The flames are kindles about it -- there it stands.
 Higher Critics deny its claims to inspiration -- there it stands.
 Infidels predict its abandonment -- there it stands.

Modernism tries to explain it away -- there it stands.
The arrows of hate are discharged against it -- there it stands.

- E. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." -- Since the Bible is inspired of God, the disciples of Christ have the awesome responsibility to teach the O.T. very carefully. By breaking the commandments, the Lord seems to be referring to misinterpreting them and teaching men their misinterpretation.

NOTE: I shudder to think what will happen to these liberal preachers and teachers who tell their congregations that the O.T. is filled with error, that the creation account is a story, the Fall is a myth and the crossing of the Red Sea is a legend. Someday these men will give an account to God.

- F. "But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." -- Those disciples who correctly interpret the Scriptures and practice them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

- G. "*For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" The Pharisees were the religious people in that day. Their religion was based on externals (traditions, man-made rules, etc.) and they thought themselves righteous before God because they kept these external laws; yet their hearts were far from God. They did not have a Biblical righteousness, which is a by-faith righteousness, which comes to a person when he trusts God through Christ. These religious Jews did not understand that salvation was by grace through faith. *Rom. 4:3: "For what saith the scripture? - Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."*

NOTE: Real disciples of Christ must have a by-faith righteousness. This kind of righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. By-faith righteousness is found only in Christ.

V. CONCLUSION

- A. A Christian is one who receives Christ into his life to deliver him from sin and give eternal life. What are you trusting? Are you resting in your own good works. This is not God's method of salvation.

The Scriptures teach that salvation is by faith. It is a by-faith righteousness that comes only when one receives Christ as personal Saviour.