

You are the Salt of the Earth and Light of the World

Since Jesus continued to build upon them, we can't simply move into this next section in His Sermon on the Mount without reviewing and remembering what He just finished saying. He introduced the sermon with eight qualities. Each of them bringing great honor and success. He revealed them in this way to encourage all disciples to take these words and build upon them (Mt 7:24-27).

Poor in Spirit	Mourn	Meek	Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness
Merciful	Pure in Heart	Peacemakers	Persecuted for Righteousness Sake

Since the "you" in verse 11-12 is carried over into this verse, it is evident that those who possess the above qualities and as a result are being persecuted for them by the wicked are the salt that is flavoring.

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 underfoot by men. Mt. 5:13

While working on and mastering the qualities Jesus identified, He now simply added another component. The qualities described in Mt 5:3-12 are not simply for the private use and success of the Christian who possesses them. They are also for his family, his workplace, the church, and any other place where he is in the position to influence others. These qualities will savor and influence where ever they are felt. Jesus' death on the cross and the power of the gospel will bring these qualities into our heart and we will be greatly blessed by them. This parable has been placed here for our careful consideration and meditation. Just how much are these qualities that have so greatly blessed our own lives also being used to bless others? Are we conducting ourselves so our spouse, children, parents and siblings are being influenced by them? Is our moral flavor being felt by those with whom we work or in any other way spend time with?

Joshua's Salt

Remember God's words to Joshua and Joshua's words to Israel.

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. Josh 1:7-8

Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! 15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Josh 24:14-15

God warned Joshua to do all the Law. He was never to stop talking about it to others or thinking about it himself. It was to completely permeate every part of his being and in so doing he would observe to do them all. But by always thinking and talking about them he was also flavoring and influencing others. After all his years of working with Israel, his final words revealed the salt that had already permeated his family and were now being used in an attempt to savor the entire nation and it worked!

Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. Josh. 24:31

As Job noted in one of his speeches, the essence of salt is the good flavor it imparts to food.

Can flavorless food be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg? 7 My soul refuses to touch them; They are as loathsome food to me. Job 6:6-7

That is why salt is gathered and why it is used. Foods that otherwise could not be eaten or enjoyed become tasty with the addition of salt. Every table in America and all over the world is blessed with salt. In exactly the same way, the savor of a godly and devout servant of the Lord who is filled with the eight qualities just listed brings flavor and taste to what would otherwise be worthless.

Noah's Salt

The spiritual reality of this parable is first noted before the flood. The entire earth was corrupt and God was grieved. There was nothing in all the earth that God found savory. Yet Noah's righteousness, close walk with God, and uncompromising devotion to being blameless made the difference in him and in his family.

And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. 9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. Gen 6:6-9

Lot's Salt

This theme continues through the Scriptures. In Gen 18:22-33 Abraham used the preservative and flavoring power of the righteous to save the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham began with fifty righteous and God promised to save it for fifty. By the end of the conversation, God had promised to spare the cities if He could find ten. As we read these words how do we feel about our own life? Is our own salt enough that God would spare America, or at least our own family because of our savor? There were not ten in Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities were destroyed. But like Noah, Lot had enough savor that his own life and those of his daughters were spared.

and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) — 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, 2Pet 2:7-9

While the men of Sodom lived wicked lives, Lot stood firm. Day by day, he refused to compromise. This was the first step in letting salt savor and not allowing it to become tasteless. But there is an equally important second step. The wicked must feel it! Lot's convictions while witnessing the ungodly conduct created strong feelings of frustration. By verbalizing those frustrations his salt was savoring. Though spoken in gentleness, the savor of this salt was too strong for them!

So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, 7 and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! 9 And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. Gen. 19:7, 9

Although he only identified their conduct as being wicked, they sensed the condemnation of his salt. By calling it a wicked act, he stood up against them and allowed his salt to flavor the situation.

Our Salt

This is the template for all of us. If we want our salt to savor, we must first feel the torment the lives of the wicked create. If we can witness evil without such feelings, our salt is already losing its flavor (Rom. 1:32). Yet equally important, we must never be afraid to speak out when current events are discussed. As Joshua, we must always be speaking of God's words and bringing His views into the conversation. Paul commanded that we seek every opportunity to allow our speech to be seasoned with this salt.

Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. Col 4:5-6

We need to be looking for ways to influence and prick their thinking. Even our opinions, if they are based on Scripture will salt a conversation and leave a savor in their mind. For some it will bring the aroma of life, changing their views and bringing salvation. For others it will leave a bad taste in their mouths. It becomes the aroma of death, leading to their death.

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? 2 Cor 2:14-17

The other two places where Jesus gave the analogy of salt lead us to these same conclusions. In Mark, Jesus used salt to emphasize moral purity. If a hand, foot, or eye leads us to compromise on our moral and spiritual purity, then we need to cut it off or pluck it out. We must do this because salt is good, but it can lose its flavor due to moral impurity. Therefore Jesus advised us to have salt in ourselves and keep that righteous purity strong.

And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire — 48 where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' 49 "For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another." Mk. 9:47-50

In Luke, Jesus spoke of the intensity and zeal of a true disciple. Those who are blessed with the eight qualities above will forsake all that they have. They can never compromise. When tempted to keep what should be forsaken, we must realize the consequences. Our salt will lose its flavor, become tasteless, and be fit for nothing. So if we have ears to hear, we must always be listening.

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. 34 "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Lk. 14:33-35

We must never underestimate the power this salt can have. There have been times in the history of the world where such a salty savor made all the difference to the one who possessed it.

"But I will deliver you in that day," says the Lord, "and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. 18 For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me," says the Lord." Jer 39:17-18

The Light of the World

Introduction:

For a second time, Jesus chose a parable to emphasize God's expectations of those who have been blessed with the eight qualities He discussed in Mt 5:1-13.

Poor in Spirit	Mourn	Meek	Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness
Merciful	Pure in Heart	Peacemakers	Persecuted for Righteousness Sake

None of these things would be possible without the grace and mercy of God who revealed them to us in the gospel and gave us the tools and wisdom to develop them. Jesus reveals the great honor these things convey while at the same time reminding all that *"everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."* (Lk. 12:48)

If we possess these things we become one of those *"to whom much has been given"* and *"much has been committed."* We become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Since these great blessings also bring important duties Jesus used the parables of light and salt to reveal how *"much will be required."*

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 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. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Mt. 5:14-16

As with all parables, the first step is to understand the physical reality of the story itself, and then seek for the spiritual lessons and applications that must be made.

Light is Necessary to See

Although obvious and simple, it is the fundamental truth about light and the heart of this parable. The purpose of light is to reveal what otherwise could not be seen. During the daylight hours few think about light unless they are going into a cellar or a mineshaft. But when night comes everyone begins to think about light. Man has expended great effort and ingenuity creating light in the darkness. Fortunes have been made on light bulbs for the home, flashlights for the outside, and headlights for motor vehicles. Without these things work would end at sunset. Without light, you can't work at night, see dangers in the darkness, or drive a car safely.

In the days Jesus walked the earth, a lamp using a wick and burning oil to create light was an important possession. As was a torch or lantern if one had to move in the night (Jn. 18:3). If you lit a lamp, it was to create light so everyone in the vicinity could see. Jesus knew everyone understood this so He uses this simple truth to make a very important spiritual application. First, every city that was bustling and busy in the evening would be forced to create light. There would be lamps, lanterns and torches everywhere. Such a city could not be hidden, nor would those who were busy and working want it to be.

In a second application Jesus again states the obvious. Without a lamp it is already dark. No one would light a lamp and then put it under a basket. The purpose of the lamp is to generate light. If the lamp is lit, it will be put on a lampstand which would be put in the most prominent place in the house where it would do the most good by shining the most light. Everyone in that home would rejoice to be blessed with that light in the evening. They could read, sew, work, visit, etc. A good light chases away fear, doubt, ignorance, and danger. While sitting in the dark imaginations can run wild, but when the lamp is lit, truth prevails and calm restored.

Spiritual Truths Revealed by the Parable

God is Light

In exactly the same way, spiritual and moral light also reveal what otherwise could not be seen. Unfortunately this is something only fully understood by God who has always dwelled in the light.

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1Jn 1:5-7

The Word: The True Light which gives Light to every Man

The Word who was with God and was God was also the light of all men.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man

came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. John 1:1-9

John the Baptist - A Burning and Shining Light

John the Baptist was sent before Jesus to do exactly the same thing that Jesus now charges His disciples who have the blessed qualities to do. John was not the light, but came to bear witness of that Light and thus also was a shining light.

You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. 34 Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. 35 He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. John 5:33-36

Jesus - The Light of the World

While John's light only shone because he was sent "to bear witness of the Light," Jesus "was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world." As long as Jesus was in the world, He was the light of the world.

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. Jn 8:12

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Jn 9:5

Then Jesus said to them, A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. Jn 12:35-36

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. Jn 12:46-47

Jesus did his work perfectly. While He was in the world He accomplished the great and important work of showing man the difference between good and evil which was also the difference between light and darkness. After seeing that light, everyone had the opportunity to forsake the darkness and come to the light. That did not is a condemnation of those who did not come.

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." Jn. 3:19-21

The world killed Jesus in a vain attempt to turn off the light and return to the darkness. But they failed! Every disciple of Jesus is now shining the same light all over the world.

You are the Light of the World

The words in the Sermon on the Mount reveal God's expectations that after Jesus left, the light would continue to shine. That everyone would have the opportunity to see the light and come to the light. He also gives everyone the opportunity to hat the light and refuse to come to the light. But in order for this to occur, they have to see the light. This is what Jesus is demanding in this and the previous parable about salt.

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 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. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Mt. 5:14-16

God wants the disciples of Jesus Christ to be as conspicuous as possible. He wants them to be like a city set on a hill or a lamp set on a lampstand. He wants them to give light to all and be seen by all.

There are two very important truths to be considered here. The first is obviously preaching the gospel.

Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. 13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 15 "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: 16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, ... 23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, Mt. 4:12-16, 23

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophesy when he moved to Galilee and began teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Isaiah had foretold that the "people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." This was accomplished as Jesus preached and taught them the gospel.

Our Light Shines when we Preach the Gospel

It is still being accomplished today every time and everywhere the gospel is preached.

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you

should be for salvation to the ends of the earth." 48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. Acts 13:46-48

But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' Acts 26:16-18

Our Light Shines when they See Our Good Works.

Jesus not only speaks of how His disciples preach the gospel, but also how they live it in the presence of the lost. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." There are many passages that speak of our conduct and example being just as important as preaching. Often we can only preach a few times to the ungodly before they do not want to hear it anymore. We then fall back to this second way of letting our light shine. Carefully reflect on the following passages as the means by which we might let our light shine.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. Jn. 13:34-35

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Phil 4:5

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- 1 Pet 2:11-15

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 1 Pet 2:18-19

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. 1 Pet 3:1-2

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Pet 3:7

There are just a few. When we turn the other cheek and go the second mile, when we render good for evil, when we manifest the eight qualities among those who are lost and dying, we are letting our light shine.

Even Timothy working as an evangelist was told that by his conduct he could do great good in the church.

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. 1 Tim 4:12-16

Along this the above, is the constant attempt to raise up the moral standards of those who are around us.

Be not ye therefore partakers with them; 8 For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord; 11 and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; Eph 5:7-11

Brethren, we cannot change what God created us to be. By our very nature, we must take the things God has given us and live them. When we live them, men will see our good works and glorify our Father. But the only way this can happen is if we truly reflect that light and do not allow the darkness to slowly hide the light that once shone so brightly within us.

Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. Phil 2:14-16