



In this issue:

Salt and Light: Don't Lose Your Flavor P. 1

Shine As Lights P. 4

Salt Is Salt P. 5:

Reflections of the Psalms: Psalm 11 P. 6

SALT AND LIGHT

DON'T LOSE YOUR FLAVOR

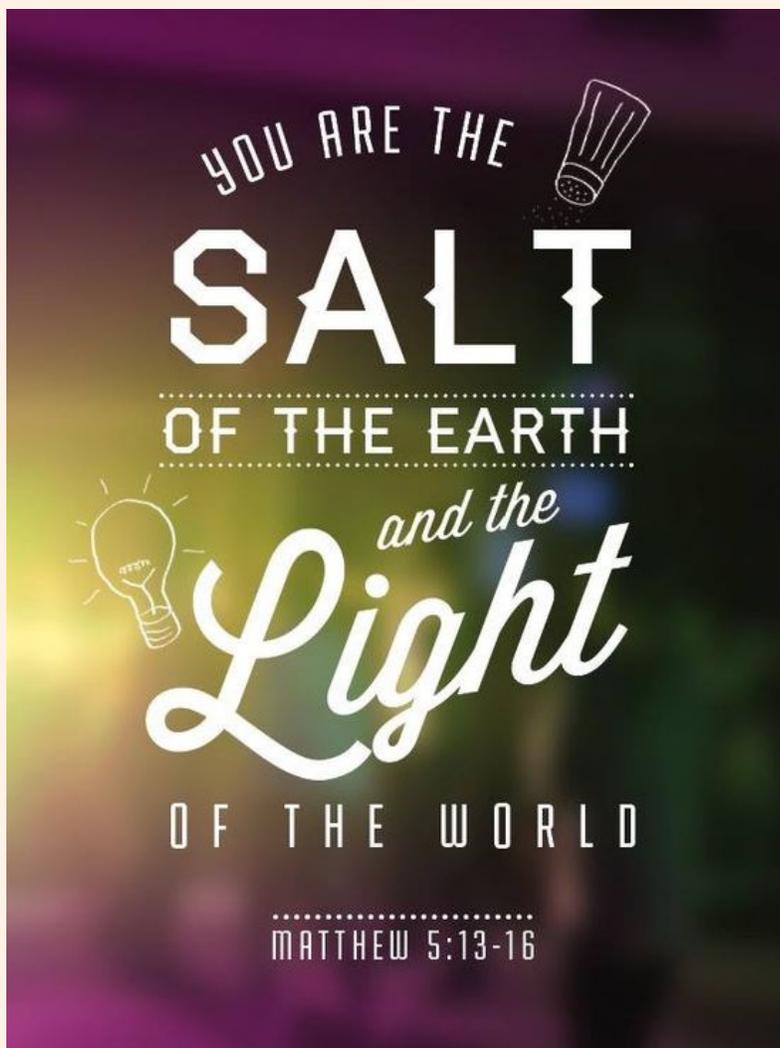
“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” Matt.5:13-16

No one likes to think of himself as a good-for-nothing, much less to be called one. But that’s exactly what a person becomes if his “salt” is no longer salty.

Generally speaking, salt is good, unless it loses its saltiness. Otherwise, salt affects almost everything it touches, especially food, by enhancing the flavor. It’s also an inexpensive solution for preserving foods that tend to spoil. But what is Jesus talking about? How are we “the salt of the earth”?

For starters, it begins with our speech. *“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Col.4:6)* The salt with which our speech should be seasoned is grace - speaking graciously to everyone - because it is palatable, unoffensive, and unique in a world of bitterness and hate. Secondly, being salty means behaving differently from the rest of the world. And in this, the world can’t help but notice us. Like salt in ice cream, it’s very apparent. As parents we expect our children to behave according to our standards. In like manner God expects His children to act according to His standard. And guess what? He gave us a list. And just as children may find mom and dad’s list a challenge, we too will find God’s expectations a challenge; however, they are very doable.

For example: *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love...distributing to the needs of the*



saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse....Repay no one evil for evil....Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Ro.12:9-21)

Godly behavior among God’s people is designed to preserve an otherwise rotting humanity. As believers, we are that savory element in the midst of a bland, purposeless world. We are that saving influence in the midst of a morally corrupt culture.

Godly behavior among God’s people is designed to preserve an otherwise rotting humanity

Therefore, Jesus has given us an assignment: *“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit.” (Matt.28:19)* “But wait,” some might say, “that was for the apostles and for the evangelists of today. He certainly didn’t mean me.” Well, if that’s the way we feel, then may God use us where we are by being the salt of the earth.

Jesus knows that all of us, by nature, will sprinkle a little “salt” on everyone we meet. But most of the time those meetings amount to first impressions, and our “salt” or influence is minimal. On the other hand, should we find ourselves working with others day in and day out, our influence could have a lasting effect on them, just as theirs could have on us.

Therefore, the Bible cautions us about the friends we keep and their possible influence on us. *“Do not be deceived; Evil company corrupts good habits.” (I Cor. 15:33).* Obviously, if we expect to keep our job, there is a certain amount of interaction with “evil company” that’s to be expected. Co-workers can sometimes be a problem as their speech may be laced with profanity or they can be rude and selfish, even aloof at times. Hopefully, our “salt” will win them over.

So, until we see a change in their speech and behavior, we’d best keep our relationship a profes-

sional one. Yet by being aware of the sway of the unbeliever, be it ever so subtle, that awareness can be a spiritual safeguard from the pressure of our peers.

And just as the Bible teaches us to take a defensive stance, *“(take) the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” (Eph.6:16)*, it also marshals us to go on the offensive, to be pro-active in our influence as well - that we might counteract the effects of sin’s darkness by illuminating it.

DON’T LOSE YOUR GLOW

“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 lamp stand, 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.” (Matt. 5:16)

So, when the Lord says, “Let your light so shine before men,” is He permitting us here to boast about our generosity, good deeds, and faithfulness? Certainly not! Even though some see it otherwise. The Pharisees, for example, not only saw it the other way, but they also embraced it wholeheartedly.

But Jesus condemned it outright. *“Take heed,” He said, “that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” (Matt.6:1-4)*

So again, how do we, as children of God, go about “letting our lights shine” if our works and our charity are to remain unseen?

When Paul and Silas were arrested unjustly, stripped of their clothing, beaten with rods, and finally put into the inner prison with their feet in the stocks, it was the perfect opportunity for them to complain, even curse and swear. Yet, had they done so, the other prisoners, who were no doubt well accustomed to that sort of thing, would have barely noticed. Instead, about midnight, they began praying and singing hymns to God, not to appear more righteous nor to garner sympathy from their cellmates, but simply to worship God. And as they did, something unexpected began to happen - the other prisoners started listening. That night, at least one that we know of was saved. It was the Jailer himself, plus his entire family. And it all started with two Christian prisoners, merely letting their lights shine. (Acts 16:16-34) You see, whenever we behave differently from the world, our actions become so apparent, so illuminating, that the world cannot help but notice.

Years later, Paul, in writing to the church at Philippi (the very city where He and Silas were jailed) wrote the following: *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, 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.”* (Phil. 2:14,15).

God calls us to be both lights and salt in the world. Undoubtedly, almost everyone knows a godly man or woman whose life had a powerful effect on an unbeliever and eventually brought that person to repent and obey the Gospel.

One that I will never forget and whom I came to love as a dear brother was a man I'll call Fred. When I first met him, I was not impressed and even wondered what his wife possibly saw in him that made her say “I Do.” They came from two different worlds. She had grown up in the Church, and Fred had grown up in a Bar. She was a believer, and he was not. You get the picture. However,

over time, the influence of his wife and in-laws began to soften his heart and open his mind. At long last, he was baptized into Christ, and when I heard the good news, I later asked him, candidly, “Fred, what was it that finally convinced you to obey the Gospel?”

“First,” he said, “I knew for many years that my father-in-law never approved of my lifestyle and yet he never judged me.” My father-in-law said that I was always welcomed at his table. Fred went on to talk about an incident that convinced him that unless he changed his relationship with his unbelieving buddies, he was a lost man. That incident happened while all the family was dining out one evening. Just as the waitress brought their tray of food, she accidentally spilled the entire contents on his father-in-law. Fred was dumbfounded, yet his father-in-law was greatly amused and began laughing about it. Once everything was cleaned up and they had finished their meal, the old patriarch, feeling sorry for the embarrassed waitress, left her a much larger tip than usual. When Fred saw all this, he said, “I thought to myself, ‘If that had happened to any one of my friends, they would have cursed the waitress and walked out without paying.’”

Fred saw firsthand the Spirit of Christ manifest in an unusual, yet powerful way. He witnessed the spirit of grace, the spirit of forgiveness, and the spirit of generosity all in one fell swoop.

What else can I say? His father-in-law was salty, and it made him thirsty. His behavior was illuminating, and it made Fred see his need for Christ. Fred became a new man.

Lord willing, God will use your salt and your light to bring a dear friend or loved one to Christ, maybe even in a surprising way.

Danny Johnson

West Monroe, LA

SHINE AS LIGHTS

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, 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, 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.” Philippians 2:14-16

Very often we see black tablecloths or black curtains hung and draped over tables in display booths. Why is that? Black is the perfect backdrop to make what is being displayed appear bright and shiny. The product will stand out against that black curtain or tablecloth.

There is not a better backdrop for God’s children than a perverse world. Paul tells the Philippians that when they act like children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse world that they stand out. They shine as lights. The word translated “lights” in this passage is the Greek word “Phoster” (Strong’s number 5458). The definition is that which gives light, an illuminator, as of the stars, sun and moon.

In nearly every translation I checked (KJV, NIV, ASV, NLT, CEB, AMP, ESV) those translators give this wording to the passage, “Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky...” The idea is that God’s children should stand out and be different from the world. In fact, the blackness of the world should make our Christian behavior shine like the Sun, Moon and Stars!

The passage from Philippians begins by admonishing us to do all things without complaining and disputing. Now that is certainly different from what we often hear. What we often hear when people are asked to do things are things like, “Do I have to?” “Why do I have to do that?” “I did that the last time; isn’t it someone else’s turn?” “I’m too busy for that!” “Do it yourself!!”

Paul says when we do things without complaining that we become blameless and harmless. We become children of God without fault. We shine as lights, like stars, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. There is always plenty of crookedness and perverseness in the world. When Peter preached the gospel on the Day of Pentecost, he admonished his hearers, “And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’” (Acts 2:40) Some translations render this word “untoward” and others “crooked”. Crooked is the opposite of straight. The idea is that this world is meandering around without any real sense of direction. In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he sums up the crookedness of the world when he urges the Ephesians not to be “carried away with every wind of doctrine”. (Eph. 4:14) The world is always carried away with something, and soon it drops that something for something else. The world is not straight; it is crooked and perverse; it is not dependable. The world is fond of complaining and disputing.

We are presented with a great opportunity! We can shine as lights in this dark world and show the ones who will listen a better way of life. A life that is blameless and harmless, doing things without complaining.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” Philippians 2:5

L Scott Gage

Fayetteville, AR

Salt Is Salt

Beach season is winding down. Here where I live, schools are getting back in session, and families have returned from their coastal vacations. Who doesn't enjoy a few days on the beach, savoring the taste of salt water on our lips?

Perhaps that sensation of vacations on the beach is one factor behind the surge in popularity of sea salt in food preparation. One web site noted that in 2010 alone more than 1,300 food products containing sea salt were introduced, and that several restaurants and fast-food chains touted the addition of this "all natural" mineral to their lineup. There is clearly a mystique surrounding sea salt.

The American Heart Association, however, attempts to educate us on the topic of salt. Though 61% of Americans in 2011 said they believed sea salt to have less sodium than common table salt, the facts say otherwise: salt is salt. The difference is that sea salt goes through very little processing, leaving a few trace minerals. Table salt is mined and then processed, stripping most of those minerals. But sodium content is the same.

One thing most of us can agree on is that salt is desirable. Not too much, please, but when food is lacking salt we know it and we don't like it. Who would pay money for hot French fries - with no salt?!

Jesus used salt, a commonly desired mineral throughout the ages, as the basis for a vital lesson: "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" (Matt. 5:13).

We know when food has been salted, and when it hasn't. Have you ever been to a restaurant that had no saltshakers on the tables? A doctor's order that we all fear is to be told, "Eliminate salt from your diet!" A bland diet is a serious verdict to be handed.

What constitutes the "saltiness" of Jesus' followers? In general it is living the life that Jesus modeled when He lived on earth. It was different from the norm, distinctive. He loved, forgave, helped, and showed compassion. It is a flavor that few find distasteful.

Of the aforementioned list, love stands out most. Jesus taught that: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35).

Even the words we speak should show this influence: "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6). Christ's influence in our lives will result in a "salty taste". And it's a flavor that most will appreciate.

Timothy D. Hall

"LightGrams"

August 7, 2014

Volume 18, Number 25

It is because they were the exceptional people, that they must not lose their exceptional quality. "If salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" is a much more pointed question than any mere lament over the price of the best beef. If the world grows too worldly, it can be rebuked by the Church; but if the Church grows too worldly, it cannot be adequately rebuked for worldliness by the world. Therefore it is the paradox of history that each generation is converted by the saint who contradicts it most."

G.K. Chesterton, Saint Thomas Aquinas: "The Dumb Ox", Chapter 1 ("On Two Friars"), pp. 23-24

Reflections of the Psalms: Psalm 11

When something out of the ordinary happens, or we are grappling with some problem, we may turn to someone else and seek his/her advice. This practice is not necessarily a bad thing. After all, when we talk to someone else about a problem, it gives us a chance to crystallize in our own mind what the real problem may be. Once we actually identify the problem, then we start to see the beginnings of a solution. Another person may be able to point out some things we had not even considered. So, seeking advice can be very helpful.

However, advice can also be wrong. Apparently, in Psalm 11, David was facing some kind of problem, and he received some advice from his friends or counselors. Their advice was to run! Obviously, David was not overly pleased with their suggestions! “In the Lord I take refuge. How then can you say to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain; For behold the wicked bend the bow; they make ready their arrow on the string to shoot in darkness the upright in heart. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

His timid and fearful friends advised him to flee, but in the beginning of this psalm we can see the great faith of David. We don't know what specific challenge he faced, but the “wiser” course of action would have been to withdraw. David rejected that kind of thinking, because his trust was in the Lord, and he knew that with God anything was possible.

Today, Christians also face trials and opposition. The fact is that the many, many people do not accept the teachings of Jesus Christ. Many leaders in entertainment, news, education, government, and other areas seem to actively work against the great truths of the New Testament. The forces opposed to Jesus Christ and the Gospel seem to be growing in strength.

On a more personal level, we meet people daily that refuse to accept Jesus Christ. Situations will

arise where we will find ourselves at a disadvantage because we are Christians. As we look around in the workplace, in our neighborhood, in our schools we may feel lonely, besieged, and ready to give up. Well, what do we do? The advice given to David was - run!

How about that? Should we retreat? Should we give up the field to the enemy because they seem to be stronger or better organized? As Christians look over the ranks of the enemy, they may despair. “How can we do any good against the world? There is so many of them and so few of us!” Without realizing it, congregations can develop a “can't” attitude about doing the Lord's work. These congregations view themselves as little fortresses besieged by the forces of evil.

David knew the answer. “The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of man.” The point in this Psalm is that no matter how strong the enemy seems to be, the Lord is seated. He knows. He is in control. We need to remember this great fact.

So what does the Lord want from us? He wants trust, faith, confidence, assurance, competence, and calm steadiness as we deal with life in this world. The day can be the darkest just before the victory. In fact, with the Lord, we've already won! We must reflect the same attitude and faith as David.

God's power cannot be measured by the standards of the world. As a Christian, the Lord does not want us to do something for him. Instead, he wants us to let him use us. Look at what was accomplished in the early days of the church. Everyday people, with common skills, were given a mission to spread the Gospel to the world. They did it! “Yes, but that was different. They were different. Times are different. We *can't* do that today.”

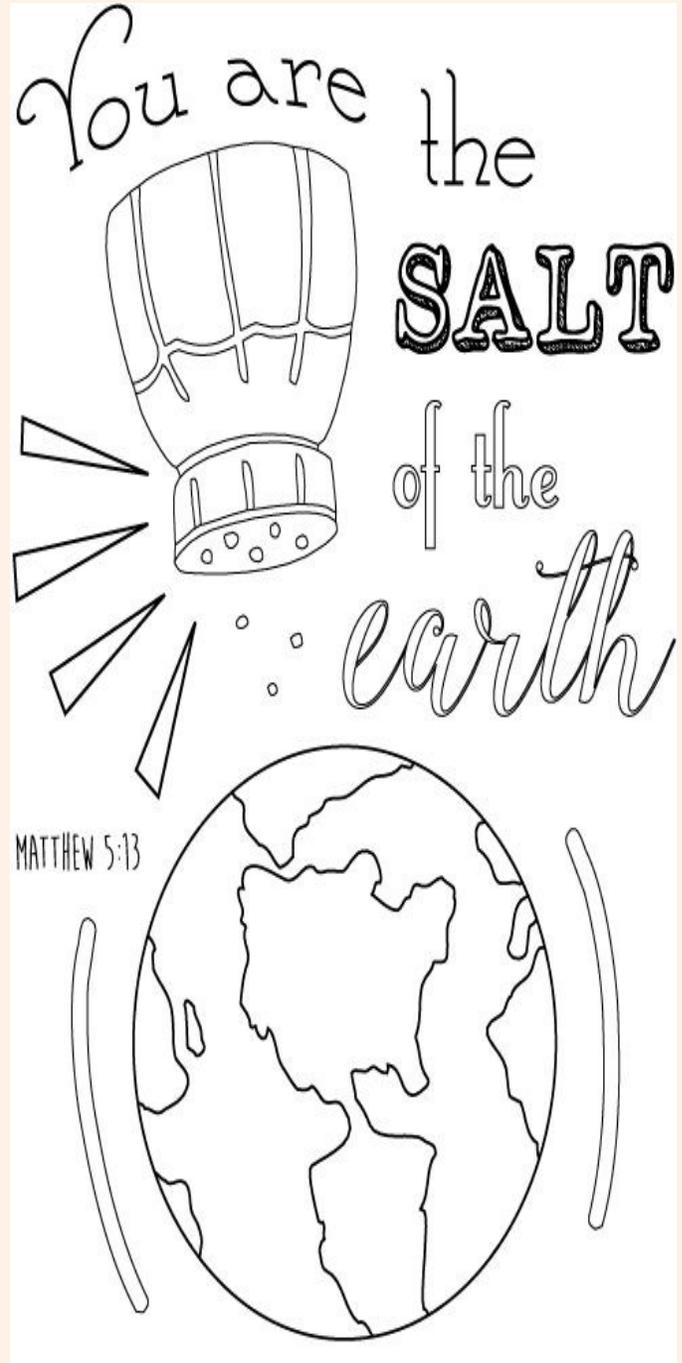
I submit to you that if we accept these statements, we are accepting lies. If we place our lives in the hands of our God and Father, if we become receptive to the opportunities that will open up before us; then we can be effective in our respective communities. The spreading of the Gospel is one-on-one work. Think of each Christian quietly touching one person after another throughout a life.

What if the individual work of members of each congregation in San Antonio resulted in 10 people obeying the Gospel this year - and then again next year, and the year after? How would that change our communities? Can it be done? Nothing is impossible in the Lord. Remember, "The Lord is in His holy temple."

Should we run? No! Let Our Light Shine!

Jim Shelburn

San Antonio, TX





Volume 45 - Number 1 - Jan/Feb 2026

BC is published every other month. Send all inquiries, address changes and subscriptions to the editor: L Scott Gage, PO Box 3425, Fayetteville, AR 72702-3425 Voice 479-521-6809

Email: Lsgage129@cs.com

www.basicchristianity.net