The Sermon on the Mount (Part 3)

Matthew 5:13-16

Verses 3-12 are **beatitudes** (attributes of the citizens of the Kingdom). Verses 13-16 are **similitudes** (similes/metaphors of kingdom citizens).

Before looking at the spiritual application of these verses, first consider the dispensational/doctrinal application:

- v. 13—Like salt, Israel was to be a preserving and purifying influence in the world. However, instead of being a purifying influence like salt, they became corrupt themselves and lost its savor. Therefore, they were cast out of their land, and Israel was “trodden under foot” (Luke 21:24).

- v. 14—God’s plan was for Israel to be “a light to the Gentiles.” They would be representatives of the King.
  - Isaiah 49:6—I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.
  - Isaiah 60:3—And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Israel was never “a light to the Gentiles.” However, when Christ returns and sets up His kingdom, Israel will finally fulfill its God appointed role. They will be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6).

While these are attributes of citizens of the Kingdom of heaven, salt and light should also characterize the spiritual life of a N.T. Christian. Paul reaffirms the two characteristics in his epistles to the church.

I. **A SEASONING responsibility** (Mt. 5:13).

- Job 6:6—“Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” Salt seasons whatever it touches. It cannot be ignored. You cannot be neutral about being a Christian.

A. **Salt’s PRESERVING function**.

- Before the time of refrigeration, salt was the preserving method. Fish were packed in salt to be transported.
1. Christians are to act as a spiritual preservative against the bacteria of sin in our society.
   - Imagine what the world would be like without a single Christian in it.

2. ILLUS: What makes meat go bad? Don’t blame the meat. It goes bad when bacteria in the meat is allowed to breed unchecked. The question is not “where’s the beef,” but, "Where is the salt?"
   - Why God destroyed Sodom? Not because of the homosexuals. Sodom was destroyed because Lot failed to produce nine other pieces of salt. Sodom was destroyed because of a LACK OF SALT (Gen. 18). Today, Sodom is under water at the south end of the Dead Sea (Salt Sea).
   - Lot’s wife became a pillar of salt as a testimony to God’s requirement for His people to be salty.

B. Salt’s PURIFYING fervency (Ezek. 16:4). Salt enemy of decay—Foe of impurity—Antagonist of corruption.

1. Salt is an antiseptic. It removes impurities and kills germs.
   - Sore throat (½ teaspoon in 8 oz of warm water- gargle)
2. It burns and stings in a cut. (Eating chips with a cut finger).
   - That is why the world persecutes the Christian’s testimony (Mt. 5:10-12). We are not called the honey of the earth.
3. Every O.T. sacrifice was to be salted (Mk. 9:49 cf. Lev. 2:13).
   - If it had no salt, God would not accept it. It had to have a testimony that it was holy and pure. Romans 12:1—“present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” We must have a “salty” testimony that is pure if our service is to be acceptable unto God.

C. Salt’s PERSUASIVE flavor. Colossians 4:6–Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

1. There must be a seasoning influence in our conversation.
   - Salt is the flavor of God in our conversation.
2. We are to make people thirsty for Christ—the “living water” (John 4:19). ILLU: “SALT THE OATS”

D. Salt’s POSSIBLE failure (text). Salt can lose is savor/power.

How does salt lose it’s savor/power?

1. The power of salt lies in it’s distinctiveness. Salt is distinctively different from the thing it is put on. Salt loses it’s savor/power when it becomes like the thing it is sprinkled upon.

2. The power of our influence is we are different from the world. If we become like the world, we lose our power to influence the world for Christ.

The largest concentrated salt block in the U.S. is in a Louisiana salt mine that is 8½ miles deep and 12 miles square. It is 98.7% pure salt in the center. The only salt they isn’t used is salt deposits close to the edge. It has been contaminated by the surrounding minerals in the earth.

We need to stay away from the edges of this world if our testimony is to have an impact. The purest testimony is that testimony centered in Jesus.

When a Christian loses their saltiness their testimony becomes diluted. As soon as salt resembles its surroundings, it ceases to be useful and is good for nothing.

• It cannot be put on the ground for it destroys fertilization.
• It can only be cast out into the street.

In the times of Christ, salt was given to Roman soldiers as part of their pay. It was called a “salerarium” (i.e. to be paid in salt). Today the word is “salary.” Thus the phrase, “worth your salt.” Have you lost your savor? Are you worth your salt?

II. A SHINING responsibility (Mt. 5:14-16).

• “Ye are all the children of light” (1 Thess. 5:5). Again, “…ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:” (Eph. 5:8). “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the
midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

- We sing, “This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!”

We live in a dark world / dark days –
- 1 million abortions a year
- 50% of teenagers are sexually active.
- 20,000 murders a year in the U.S.
- Child molesting by clergymen.
- Gang violence / drive by shootings
- Divorce rate among Christians is 53%
- Gay marriages
- Terrorism
- World teetering on the verge of war (powder keg).

As we are to be salt in a decaying world, we are to be light in a darkened world. In either case, we are to make a difference.

A. Light’s REFLECTION (2 Cor. 4:6).

1. The light is not our own. Our light comes from Jesus who said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12; John 9:5).

2. We reflect His light (as the moon reflects the light of the sun).
   a) The Bible pictures our Sun as a type of God’s Son (Ps. 19:2-5; 84:11; Mal. 4:2).
   b) The moon is a type of the Christian. The moon has no light of it’s own. It reflects only the light of the Sun.
      - As the moon is a lesser light for “night,” so this age is called “night” (John 9:4-5; 12:35-36, 46; 1 Thess. 5:2).
      - A lunar eclipse: When the world/earth comes between the Christian and the “Son,” he undergoes a total eclipse.

B. Light’s RADIANCE (vs. 14-16). Light SHINES!

1. Christianity is meant to be seen.”LET your light shine…” A believer can refuse to shine!
If a light bulb does not shine, it’s because its light has been dimmed. Darkness cannot put out a light. Light cannot be diminished by increasing the darkness. Darkness gets darker because the light gets dimmer. When our light is shadowed by the world we’ve lost our effectiveness for Christ.

2. Light is radiated by our good works (v. 16 cf. Titus 2:7)!

C. **Light’s RESIDENCE** (v. 15). The world has no other light. “Ye are it.” Therefore, the light is to be placed where its influence can be best used and felt.

1. Light does no good when it is concealed! It is to STAND OUT! Light is not seen unless it is placed before men. A believer must not seclude himself from others.
2. The candlestick is the local church (Rev. 1:10-13, 20).

D. **Light’s RESULTS** (v. 16). God is glorified (John 15:8). This is the motive behind our good works.

**III. A SHARING responsibility.**

A. As both “salt” and “light” can only be effective when it is shared in the food and the surroundings of life. Likewise, the Christian should influence his surroundings for righteousness.

- We must get “out of the salt shaker” and out from the shadow of the world.

B. Consequently, Jesus says this will cause others to “see” our “good works” and, in turn, “glorify” our “Father…in heaven” (5:16).

**SUMMATION:** God calls you “salt” and “light.” Are you “living up to your name?” Has your salt lost its savor? Are you hiding your light?

Are you saved? If not, you are living in darkness.