

The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 5:13 "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.

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matthew 5:15 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*.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

A person who lives in the world and who lives-out the beatitudes that Jesus taught will affect the world for God and for good.

That affect is illustrated: You will be like **salt**, and you will be like **light**. The world needs salt as a **preservative** because it is corrupt. The world needs light because it is **dark** and **darkening**.

How do we know the world is corrupt? Because when Jesus compared you to **salt**, He was also describing the world. It implies that it needs salt; and salt's major function was to preserve foods. A piece of meat was rubbed with salt to kill the surface germs and preserve it.

The world is corrupt and can only get worse. Paul warned, in Second Timothy 3:13, that **evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived**.

Let's talk about **salt**. (We will talk about **light** next time). Salt has always been valuable; it was once commonly used as currency. Roman soldiers could be paid in salt, and that is where we first got the expression still used today, "not worth his salt."

The Greeks, at one point in their history, called salt *theon*, which means *divine*.

The Jews knew that God had prescribed that all sacrificial offerings in Israel were to be offered with salt; in Leviticus 2:13 you read, *so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking*.

Roman... Greek... Jew... All held salt in much higher regard than we might. It's important we realize that, when Jesus compared believers to salt, it would have been understood by His hearers as something of extreme value.

Salt and its properties can suggest different things:

1. Salt is white... Thus it can speak of purity. We read, in the beatitudes, about being pure at heart. We are to represent a high standard of purity to the world.
2. Salt adds flavor... Thus it can speak of believers giving the world a savor it would not have otherwise. Too often Christians portray their relationship with Jesus as a religion rather than something fresh and full of joy.
3. Salt creates thirst... Thus our lives ought to increase a thirst for God in unbelievers. They ought to be able to see in us something more satisfying than anything they have experienced in the world.
4. Because salt stings when placed into an open wound, some say it represents the pricking of conscience of unbelievers as we preach and promote God's standards of righteousness.

The primary characteristic Jesus seems to be emphasizing is preservation. When God was going to destroy Sodom He said He'd spare it for the sake of ten righteous. Their presence in Sodom would have preserved it – *if there had been that many!*

Our corrupt world needs salt. For example: Have you heard of Blu-ray discs? They are vying with HD-DVD's to replace DVD's as the next new wave in technology.

Do you think they will catch on and replace DVD's and HD-DVD's? They will... **But the reason may surprise you!**

From Macworld (May 2, 2006):

Just as in the 1980s, when the Betamax and VHS video formats were battling it out for supremacy, the pornography industry will likely play a big role in determining which of the two blue-laser DVD formats — Blu-ray Disc and HD-DVD — will be the winner in the battle to replace DVDs for high-definition content.

Ron Wagner, director of IT operations at E! Entertainment Television Inc., in Los Angeles, said his company has already chosen the Blu-ray Disc format, in large part because of talk in the porn industry favoring it over rival HD-DVD.

“If you look at the VHS vs. Beta standards, you see the much higher-quality standard dying because of [the porn industry’s support of VHS],” he said. “The mass volume of tapes in the porn market at the time went out on VHS.”

Even though things are getting worse and worse, they would be (and will be) far worse once Christians are removed in the Rapture.

When Jesus said, **You are the salt of the earth**, it meant, *You are the **only** salt.* (Likewise with **light**). The very people who are reviled and persecuted by the world are its only hope!

The **you** is plural. Jesus was speaking of the affect of the whole body on the earth.

The word **are, you are the salt**, stresses *being*, rather than *doing*. Jesus isn’t telling you to do something; He’s telling you to be someone. In context, you are to be the person who is described by the beatitudes. When you are, you affect your spoiled surroundings the way salt acts on foods.

But if the salt loses its flavor... Listen to this old account:

That this is possible in the land of Judea, we have proof from Mr. Maundrell, who, describing the Valley of Salt, speaks thus: “Along, on one side of the valley, toward Gibul, there is a small precipice about two men’s lengths, occasioned by the continual taking away of the salt; and, in this, you may see how the veins of it lie. I broke a piece of it, of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, Yet It Had Perfectly Lost Its Savour: the inner part, which was connected to the rock, retained its savor, as I found by proof.”

Exposure to the elements versus maintaining connection with the Rock. Thus we retain or lose our flavor as the world's spiritual salt.

How shall it be seasoned? Saltiness cannot be restored to salt that has lost its saltiness. You don't try to save it! You use it for something else.

It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Salt that had lost its saltiness was used to prevent slipping on paths. (Salt is still used on icy roads). It was useful, but not as intended.

When a believer is too mixed-up in the world, he doesn't lose his salvation; just his influence and effectiveness. You still, in a sense, keep slippage down by your very presence. But who wants to be like Lot in Sodom? Sure, he kept the city from being destroyed for a time. But, though a righteous, saved man whose soul was vexed by the wickedness around him... **His testimony was trampled under foot!**

What about Mrs. Lot? She looked back and was rained on by the fire and brimstone, turning her into a solid pillar of salt. She stood there, a monument to the decision of the heart to long after the things of this world even while its citizens were perishing.

- being changed to bring change -
Go out and spice it up! **Be**, don't just do.