



TRUTH IN LOVE

Shedding Light on the Word of God

Salt of the Earth

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.

The problem with the world is not the crooked politicians, greedy oil executives, perverted moviemakers or biased news reporters. It's not racism, pornography, homosexuality or alcoholism. We Christians like to point the figure at all of them in hopes that we can lay the blame at their feet, but as I learned in kindergarten, when you point at someone else, there's three fingers pointing back at you.

The church is failing the world, and many of the problems the world is experiencing is because the church is not what it is supposed to be. Jesus teaches that as His followers, we **are the salt of the earth**. We most often think of salt as something that provides flavor, but it does other things as well. Salt makes a person thirsty, can be used for healing, and preserves food from rotting.

Jesus only mentions **its flavor** because that is how one determines whether or not salt is useful for these other things. This was especially true in the days of Christ. Salt was not pure and refined the way it is today. Since it was simply sea water with all the moisture removed, salt had many insoluble impurities. As a result, some salt was more salty, and therefore, more valuable. They judged the worth of salt by its flavor.

Similarly, the church is supposed to be full of flavor by living out the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12). If we do this, the world will want a taste of what we have (Ps 34:8), and will develop a thirst for God. In this way, disciples will be agents of healing for hurt lives and preservation in a decaying society.

But Jesus warns about the salt losing its flavor.¹ Once the flavor was used up, it could not be **seasoned** again. When salt tasted more like sand, it was judged to be **good for nothing**, and so was **thrown out and trampled underfoot by men**. This is what is happening to the church today. Though many churches are quite large, most of them did not become that way by being salty. They became that way by learning how to market the church according to worldly patterns. The church has become so much like the world, that in many cases, it is no different than the world, and is therefore ineffective in the world. We have lost our flavor. The Greek word for salt losing its flavor (*moraino*), can so mean "become foolish" and so this may be a play on words by Jesus.²

We have lost our saltiness so they are trampling us underfoot in their mad dash toward death. We accuse the world of being full of death and decay, when it is we who have failed to preserve and heal. And instead of being salt, we are only left-over impurities—gritty, annoying, and irritating.

Thankfully, more in line with how salt is produced today, a disciple can regain his saltiness and can even become more salty through the refining process. There is some crushing, grinding and melting involved, but if we endure the process, we will come out pure, white and full of flavor. The whole world will want what we've got because true Christianity gives flavor to life and helps preserve the world.

The problems with the world can be fixed, and it all begins with you. How? Go back and read again the Beatitudes and pray that God will begin to develop those attitudes in your own life. Pray that He will "resalt" you as you become His disciple. Remember, there is no such thing as a salt-substitute. We are all that the world has got.

¹ Some might wonder how salt can be used over and over again until it loses its flavor. The truth is, I don't know. Few commentaries or reference books seemed to recognize this problem. Craig Keener indicated that Jesus might be using some humor to make His point. The only way to make tasteless salt salty again is to salt it. This we do by being around salty disciples. See Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 57.

² The related adjective is *moron* (1 Cor 1:25) which is where we get our word "moron," *ibid*.

Family and Ministry Update

From Jeremy:

I had a busy year with school, taking full loads both semesters as well as Winter and Summer session classes, but now I have one year under my belt. As of today, classes begin again for me in eight weeks. At this current pace, I believe I can finish in three years. Of course, yesterday, I found out that I lost six transfer credits from Denver Seminary, so I now have to fit those in somewhere as well. I'm not sure how I'm going to do this, unless I take 18 credits for two semesters, or maybe God wants us to be here for an extra semester.

It has been a busy month as well. I am working full time at Grace Evangelical Society, putting all my time into editing the one-volume New Testament commentary due out in early 2007. It is mentally taxing, but enjoyable. I'm learning a lot about the Word while gaining some valuable editing and typesetting skills.

In June, I was able to preach five times. That's quite a bit, considering there were only four Sundays. On June 4th, I preached at Grace Covenant Fellowship in Arlington, TX on the genealogy of Luke 3:23-38. I have a lot of fun with genealogies. On Father's Day, I spoke at West Cliff Church in Irving, TX on Esther 1. It's not a Father's day sermon, but I'm going to be able to preach through book of Esther there over the next few months. I will be preaching three more times at West Cliff Church in July, covering Esther 2-4.

I preached in two evening services at Berean Memorial Church in Irving, TX on June 18th and 25th from Luke 3:1-14. This passage shows that repentance is the key to gaining deliverance from bondage to sin and divine discipline. Finally, on June 25th in the morning, I spoke at Mount Zion Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Cumby, TX. I spoke from Luke 1:5-25 about how God is the greatest promise keeper. It is always a privilege to bring the Word of God to believers who want to remain "salty."

As with most of my other sermons, these are all available for free download at www.tillhecomes.org I continue to get encouraging letters and e-mails from all around the world about the website. This year, it had over 22,000 visitors, with over 130,000 hits. Your support is making that happen. Thank you.

From Wendy:

As far as family goes, Kahlea has become quite a joy. Her colic has been replaced by smiles and giggles. Taylor and Selah are really enjoying their "new" sister. We are also happy that Jeremy has eight weeks off from school. Now we'll get to see and talk to him more. He is working full-time at Grace Evangelical Society, and is also preaching quite a bit, but I'll let him tell about that below.

An interesting tidbit for this newsletter is about the faith of a child (again!). It's amazing to be a mom as it seems I am constantly being taught more than I teach. Taylor and Selah are constantly "teaching" me how to have faith like a child, and I love it. They (and God) never cease to amaze me. This month we saved a butterfly from a puddle and as its wings dried, Taylor was able to hold it. But just before it became Selah's turn to hold the butterfly, it flew off. So what did the girls do? They prayed for another butterfly, of course. They prayed for three days, and then on the fourth day, a butterfly literally flew into the house and landed on my finger, as if to say, "Here I am—your answered prayer." Both girls held him for 15-20 minutes while he flew from finger to arm to head and back to finger. Then we lovingly took him back outside and set him on a leaf. My bit of advice this month is that if you have a prayer request, give it to a child to pray for, and then stand back and watch child-like faith in action.

