

The Unique Role of Believers as the Salt of the Earth (Mt. 5:13)

¹³***“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor [intended purpose], how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” (Mt. 5:13)***

I. GOD’S PURPOSE FOR BELIEVERS AS THE SALT OF THE EARTH

- A.** Jesus called believers to fulfill their unique role as the ***salt of the earth*** (Mk. 9:49-50; Lk. 14:34-35). What qualities, if lost, make salt worthless and fit only to be thrown out and trampled on?
- B.** Salt has several qualities:
1. ***Salt seasons***, requiring only a small amount to “set the flavor” in food or drink by removing negative qualities (coffee bitterness) and drawing out positive qualities (flavor, sweetness, Song. 4:1-5). Believers are to be a “spiritual seasoning” that enhances the quality of life in a tasteless world (Job 6:6). Salt was in sacrifice (Lev. 2:13; Mk. 9:49).
 2. ***Salt preserves*** perishable items, guarding them from being destroyed through decay. Before the invention of the refrigerator, people “cured” various meats to preserve them. Believers are to act as a supernatural “preserving agent” in a world vulnerable to moral and societal decay (Gen. 18:16-19:29).
 3. ***Salt heals***. It has therapeutic properties for the entire body: regulates the body’s water content; effective in stabilizing irregular heartbeats; can lower high blood pressure (with water and other minerals); is a strong antihistamine; vital for extracting excess acidity from cells; an anti-stress element, essential in treating emotional disorders; vital in preventing and treating cancer; helps sleep regulation; vital for diabetics. Salt also kills most germs on contact, thus cleansing wounds to begin the healing process. Believers are to seek out and bring the healing benefits of redemption to a sick and dying world.
 4. ***Salt*** is a ***diuretic***, causing great thirst in the body. Believers are to live so as to make people around them “thirst” for something they didn’t realize was missing (Rev. 22:17).
 5. ***Salt*** is a ***precious commodity***. The value of salt was so high in ancient times that Roman soldiers were often paid a *salarium* (salt as wage), where we get the English word *salary* and the expression “he’s worth his salt.” The salt trade shaped many ancient trade routes and was often traded ounce for ounce for gold. The ancient Chinese used “salt coins” as currency, and “salt cakes” acted as money in Ethiopia. As believers, we are to walk in the confidence of our worth to God, displayed in the price He paid for us (Mt. 13:45-46).
 6. ***Salt*** is a ***ratifying agent*** commonly used in making “covenant,” thus, the biblical term “covenant of salt” (Num. 18:19; 2 Chr. 13:5), the Arab expression “there is salt between us,” and the modern Persian phrase “untrue to salt.” The Arabic word for salt is the same as the word for a compact or a treaty. Believers enter covenant with God through the mutual sacrifice of laying down of lives (Ps. 50:5)
 7. ***Salt*** is a ***de-icing agent***, essentially lowering the freezing point of water. Believers help those around them in a cold world by warming their hearts with the power of God’s love.

II. CHRIST IN US: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD AND THE SALT OF THE EARTH

- A. In the same way that Jesus is the *light of the world* (Jn. 8:12; 9:5) and calls us to be the same (Mt. 5:14), He was the *salt of the earth* when He walked upon it at His first coming and still is, living His life through His Body upon the earth (Eph. 4:11-16). In this way, we are *salt* and *light*, but only as we are connected to Him in a living and active relationship (Jn. 15:1-8).

⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out... (Jn. 15:5-6)

- B. At the new birth we receive a new nature, as the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us, giving us new desires that spring from this divine union. Being the *salt of the earth* has to do with being a *faithful witness* of the Father, by the power of the Spirit within us, even as Jesus was the *brightness of His glory and the express image of His person* (Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:5).

⁸“Lord, show us the Father...” ⁹Jesus said, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me...? He who has seen Me has seen the Father... (Jn. 14:8-9)

- C. There is something very precious to God in you that is longing to be revealed and it’s Jesus, but it’s really you too! It’s the mysterious union of Christ and His Bride (Eph. 5:31-32). As we mature, more of *Jesus’ glory is unveiled* (2 Thes. 1:10) and *our glory is revealed* (Col. 3:3-4).

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)

III. INTEGRITY: WALKING PERFECT BEFORE GOD EVEN WHILE WE’RE MATURING

- A. Being the *salt of the earth* relates to *integrity*. Three main applications:
1. Adherence to a code of moral values. “Her integrity didn’t allow her to compromise.”
 2. Unimpaired, sound. “The earthquake damaged the building’s structural integrity.”
 3. Being complete or undivided. “Preserve the cultural integrity of the community.”
- B. In ethics, *integrity* is the honesty and truthfulness of one’s actions and can be seen as the *opposite of hypocrisy* (Mt. 23). It regards internal consistency as a virtue, and suggests those holding apparently conflicting values (i.e. saying one thing and doing another) should either account for the discrepancy (repentance) or alter their beliefs (1 Kgs. 18:21).
- C. The word *integrity* stems from the Latin *integer*, meaning whole and complete. Integrity brings an inner sense of “wholeness” that flows from living consistent with the character of Christ. Our integrity may be judged by the extent to which we act according to the values, beliefs, and principles we claim to hold.
- D. Integrity entails remaining *true* to our new nature (identity, character), being *authentic* and *genuine*, regardless of external circumstances or internal pressures. Jesus calls us to be *perfect* like our Father, to have integrity, by walking in the light we receive from the Spirit (Mt. 5:43-48)

Therefore you shall be perfect [promise] just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)

IV. TESTING THE INTEGRITY OF THE CHURCH BY DIVINE FIRE

- A. Integrity is evaluated **subjectively** by internal consistency and external accountability, or **objectively** by testing that reveals measurable results. God will shake everything, beginning with His Church (1 Pet. 4:17).

²⁶“I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” ²⁷This... indicates the removal of things... being shaken... that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹For our God is a consuming fire. (Heb. 12:26-29)

- B. God will refine His children, bringing forth the divine nature by fire (1 Pet. 1:7). We tend to focus on the negative being removed, whereas God’s intention is to bring forth Himself in us. The beauty, clarity, and strength of a **diamond** is produced underground [secret place] through the extreme conditions of heat and pressure over time. Otherwise, only a lump of coal remains.

¹Behold, He is coming... ²But who can endure the day? For He is like a refiner’s fire... ³He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify... and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness. (Mal. 3:1-3)

V. FORERUNNERS: CURRENT WEAKNESS IS THE DOORWAY TO FUTURE FULLNESS

- A. In mercy, God places us in seasons of pressure and testing to expose the faulty foundations we trust in (Lk. 6:46-49) and to remove the props we lean upon, so that our great need for God is **revealed** in our own barrenness. Though we are “surprised” by what we see, God is not.
- B. It’s in the sometimes-difficult acceptance of our true inward condition—our **weakness**—that we find the **grace** and **power** to overcome. For those who recognize that they are **poor in spirit**, all the resources of heaven are available (Mt. 5:3). Jesus told Paul, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness**” (2 Cor. 12:9). God resists the proud but empowers the humble (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). Understanding this, we see that **our current weakness is the doorway to our future fullness**.

- C. Dream 2-13-11: “**I am highlighting your weakness right now and if you partner with Me in it you’ll experience substantial increase.**” Our agreement with God brings increased power.

¹³For it is God who works in you both to will [desire] and to do [power] for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13)

- D. We reproduce ourselves by divine design (Mt. 23:15), so we can only **impart** or **multiply** what we are (Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 24-25, 26-28). If we walk in the flesh we have no spiritual power to impart Christ to others, because we’re not connected to the Vine ourselves (Jn. 15:4-5).

- E. As the **salt of Christ** is revealed in us, we become not only messengers with a message, but become the actual message itself (2 Cor. 3:2-3). However, remember that salt was only available for offerings of sacrifice, i.e. it requires death to self (Mk. 9:49; Rom. 12:1; Gal. 2:20). As we gain victory over our weakness, we may begin to partner with God in delivering others.

***Everyone will be seasoned with fire** [testing]...every sacrifice...seasoned with salt (Mk. 9:49).*

VI. THE SPEECH OF THE FORERUNNER: SEASONED WITH SALT TO IMPART GRACE

- A. Speaking the **truth in love** actually releases **grace** to those who receive it, thus **empowering** them to **overcome** their circumstances. I have gone to both extremes: truth without love and false love, which seeks to simply keep the peace. Neither are according to the full truth.

⁶*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer. (Col. 4:6)*

²⁵ *Let each one of you speak truth... ²⁹Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for... edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. (Eph. 4:25-29)*

- B. Dream: *I wish that the last time I talked to him was the last time I would ever talk to him.*
- C. This may bring **conflict**, but healthy godly conflict brings **empowerment** if done in a culture of honor with a foundation of trust. Our fellowship and unity with believers is not founded on our agreement on **every** point; it is founded upon the **light** (1 Jn. 1:7). Iron sharpens iron (Pr. 27:17).
- D. **Relational conflict** is an **opportunity for growth** for both parties. The preparation and biblical process involved ensures it (Mt. 18:15-17). The primary point to God isn't **how they respond**, but **how we do**. By relating to one another in a godly way, even in conflict, we remove the opportunity of distraction from the real issues.
- E. **Fear** causes us to either engage in conflict in an **unhealthy way** or **avoid it altogether**. Humility isn't passivity. Sometimes love demands **staying engaged** in an uncomfortable conversation, even though we have no guarantee of the outcome. Eli neglected to do this (1 Sam. 3:13).
- F. Don't imagine that we will suddenly become faithful witnesses and love our enemies after ignoring this process with loved ones for decades. We must discuss the **potential threats** to our relationship with them (Jas. 5:16). If there's life in the garden, there are going to be weeds.

¹⁶*Confess your trespasses... and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (Jas. 5:16)*

VII. BEING AN ACTIVE "PEACE-MAKER" NOT A PASSIVE "PEACE-KEEPER" (MT. 5:9)

- A. Jesus came to bring a sword. Why? He is the salt of the earth, and, therefore, confrontation with things that were in disagreement with His Father's will was unavoidable. He loved people too much to leave them in a state of disagreement, without giving them an opportunity to change.

³⁴*"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵I have come to 'set a man against his father'...³⁶and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'³⁷He who loves father or mother... more than Me is not worthy of Me...³⁹He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life... will find it." (Mt. 10:34-39)*

- B. Jesus wasn't afraid of **making war** to establish lasting peace (Rev. 19:11). To **make peace** we sometimes have to talk about the elephant in the room. However, in so doing we're sons of God!

⁹*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Mt. 5:9)*