

Salt, Light, the Law, and Jesus

(Matthew 5:13-20)

There is so much that is packed into the little parable of **verse 13**, where it says “you are the salt of the earth.” But the main thrust is **distinctiveness**. Salt is distinctively different from the thing upon which it is put. By nature, and by purpose it is different. **So are believers**. They are distinctively different by nature and by purpose. By nature, believers are a new creation, born of God. By purpose, believers are to penetrate and change the very taste of the earth. They are like salt.

In the same way, Jesus’ disciples have a vital role to play in influencing the world for God. Jesus continues to tell us, his disciples, who we are: “We are the salt of the earth (v. 13). There are several things that can be said about salt that point out what Jesus means. **First**, salt is distinctive. It is totally different from the food or object upon which it is put. The power of salt lies in this difference. Believers, just like salt, are to be different from the world. The power of their lives and their testimony lies in their being different and distinctive. As

it says in **James 1:27**, they are to “keep themselves from being polluted by the world.” **Second**, salt preserves. It keeps things from going bad and decaying. It cleanses and disinfects. Believers, just as salt, are to cleanse and preserve the world. They are to disinfect the world and keep the germs of the world from causing things to go bad. They are to save the world from corruption. We read this in **1 Peter 1:22-23**, “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your bothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” **Third**, salt penetrates. It inserts a new quality, substance, and life. It changes that upon which it is put. Believers are likewise to penetrate the world and insert a new life into it. This is what we’re told in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”

Fourth, salt flavors. It influences the taste of things. It takes a bland, tasteless food and makes it enjoyable. Believers are to flavor and influence the world for Christ. They are to take the bland and the tasteless and salt them, making them enjoyable and desirable within the world. This is best told to us in **Galatians 5:22-23** as the *fruit of the spirit*, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” **Fifth, salt is quiet.** It is visible, but it works silently, making no noise whatsoever during its work. Believers, the salt of the earth, are to work quietly and discreetly. **First Peter 3:4** points this out: “Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. **Sixth, salt spreads.** Its flavor spreads all about. A sprinkle of salt has a widespread effect. A believer’s salt spreads far and wide. That is what it says in **Colossians 4:13**: “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. **Seventh, salt is irrepressible.** Once applied, it cannot be stopped. A believer’s *salt*, his testimony, is irrepressible; it cannot be stopped. It tells

us this in **Isaiah 55:11**, “so is my word that goes out of my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Three final thoughts on salt: The *first* thought is, if salt loses *its* flavor, what is going to restore *its* flavor? There is nothing. Once the saltiness is gone from the salt, it is gone. It can no longer salt the earth. The *second* final thought on salt is, there is no one other than Christ who can salt and save a person from decay. A person who professed to have salt and remains bland, tasteless, and corruptible has no hope of ever being salted. No one else can salt him. He either lets Christ salt him or else he is never salted. The *third* final thought on salt is, a person who has not been salted and saved from decay is doomed to ruin. He is good for nothing, but to be thrown out.

Now, we move to light. In **1 John 1:5** it says, “God is light.” Jesus Christ said in **John 8:12**, “I am the light of the world.” And here, in **Matthew 5:14**, Jesus says, “You are the light of the world.” What an enormous

compliment!! God is light, Christ is light, and the believer is said to be “the light of the world.” The believer is what God and Christ are: light. No greater compliment could be paid the believer. But note: to be identified with God is an enormous responsibility as well as a compliment. Whatever light is and does, the believer is to be and do. As I did with salt, I’m now going to list several things about what light is and does. **First**, light is clear and pure. It is clean, that is good, right, and true. This is what it says in **Ephesians 5:8-9**, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in goodness, righteousness, and truth).” **Second**, light penetrates. By nature, it cuts through and eliminates darkness. **1** **Thessalonians 5:5** points this out: “You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.” **Third**, light enlightens. It enlarges a person’s vision and knowledge of an area. Which is what we read in **John 12:35**, “Then Jesus told them, ‘You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you.

The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going'."

Fourth, light *reveals*. It opens the truth of an area, a whole new world, and it clears up the way to the truth and the life. Jesus pointed this out in **John 14:6**: "I am the way and truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." **Fifth**, light *guides*. It directs the way to go, and leads along the right path, which is what it says in **John 12:46**: "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." **Sixth**, light *strips away the darkness*, which is what we read in **John 3:19-20**: "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." **Seventh**, light *routs the chaos*, which is what we read in **Philippians 2:25**, "So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe."

Eighth, light discriminates between the right way and the wrong way. **John 8:12** tells us that: “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’.” **Ninth**, Light warns. It warns of dangers that lie ahead in a person’s path. **Ephesians 5:11-14** states it this way: “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is the light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” **Tenth**, light protects. It protects a person from the dangers of darkness, from stumbling, falling, and injuring themselves. **Romans 13:12** puts this out: “The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

Three final thoughts summarize these 10 points on light. **First**, believers are now the light of the world. Jesus said, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world”

(John 9:5). Jesus is no longer in the world, not bodily. His light is now in the lives of believers. Believers are reflections of him. **Second**, a person's light is only a reflective light, reflecting "the light of the Lord." **Third**, the character of light is pure. The believer is to walk in light, that is, in purity. Both these second and third thoughts are backed up in Ephesians 5:8: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

Now, let's take a look at the third part of today's sermon: the law and Jesus. Jesus Christ was accused of destroying or abolishing the law of God. Christ pulls no punches and comes straight to the point in verse 17, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law," and in verse 19, anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments..., and in verse 20, "unless righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teacher of the law."

So, a person must know that Christ came to fulfill the law. Jesus said He was neither contradicting nor abolishing the Old Testament Scriptures nor standing

against them. He was fulfilling them, completing them, bringing out what was implied. He was showing what the real meaning of the Old Testament Scripture is, its full meeting—all that God intended the Scripture to say. As God's Son, He is the Revelation of the truth. He is to reveal the true and complete meaning of the Scriptures.

In addition to a person knowing that Christ came to fulfill the law, a person must do and teach the law in order to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. And a person must have more righteousness than a religionist.

So, what are the lessons we can learn from this Scripture reading from Matthew?

This Scripture reading from Matthew teaches that followers of Jesus are called to be the **salt** and **light** in the world through their good works, making a positive impact so God gets the glory, and emphasizing that righteousness beyond mere outward observance of the Law is required for the Kingdom of Heaven, focusing on

inner transformation and true obedience. And that Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not destroy it, meaning he fulfilled its perfect requirements, which we cannot do on our own.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Heavenly Father, you have called us to be the **salt** of the earth. Help us to preserve your truth and add flavor and goodness to a world that hungers for hope. Help us, Lord to let our **light** shine before others, not for our own glory, but so they see our good works and glorify you. Lord Jesus, thank you for fulfilling the Law. Help us obey Your commandments and to the good works you've called us to do, living with gospel intentionality and demonstrating your kingdom, not abolishing Your Word. We ask this in the name of Your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**