

The Sermon on the Mount

Part II: Salt and Light

“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. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:13-16)

Introduction

1. Previously, we discussed the Beatitudes — blessedness of those who pursue the Spirit rather than the flesh, based on Jesus’ declared word (“blessed... for they shall/will”).
2. This lesson continues His declaration: What effect do those who pursue the Beatitude qualities have on the world around us? ANSWER: Salt and light (Matt. 5:13-20).
3. Both images describe a disciple’s influence:
 - a. Their effect on the world’s condition.
 - b. And on what the world sees.

Discussion

I. Salt of the Earth (Matt. 5:13)

- A. Jesus draws our attention to the effect salt has on flavor: “if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?”
- B. Emphasis: salt must be distinct and distinguishable from the rest of the food — it is intended to be different and to stand out.
 1. 1 Pet. 2:11-12: Let your conduct be honorable among the Gentiles.
 2. 1 Pet. 4:4: The world ought to think our behavior is strange when contrasted with its own.
 3. Rom. 12:2: We are not conformed to this world but transformed-become different.
 4. John 15:19: Our conduct will lead us to be hated, because we are not of the world.
- C. DISCUSSION: If salt that loses its flavor is good for nothing but to be thrown out, what does that suggest about a disciple who simply blends in rather than stands out? _____

II. Light of the World (Matt. 5:14-16)

- A. “World” here refers to the current system that is opposed to God.
 1. John 12:31; Eph. 2:1-3: Of which Satan is described as ruler.
 2. John 1:4-5: Also referred to as “darkness” by the apostle John.
 3. light shines precisely because it is set against that darkness.
- B. Verse 14-15: Light is not to be hidden.

1. Like salt, light is only effective if it is clearly distinguishable from the darkness.
 2. Think of trying to use a flashlight that has no batteries.
 3. Even when light is produced, it is intended to illuminate the space presently occupied by the darkness.
 4. Verse 15: Light is intended by God to give light to all — a lamp is placed on a stand, not under a basket.
- C. Verse 16: As the light of the world, our conduct, behavior, or “works” is what produces the luminating effect on the world around us.
1. What does the world see that has the same effect as light?
 - a. “Your good works” — not for show, but so that people glorify your Father in heaven.
 - b. “Let your light **SO SHINE**.” (Compare Matt. 6:1, NASB).
 2. Our light is the glowing radiance of God’s own love seen by the world through us.
 3. John 15:5-8: Our good works are produced as we abide in Jesus’ words and His words abide in us.
 4. Eph. 5:1: God is glorified because of how we do our works – as imitating Him as His children.
 - a. NOTE: When Jesus says, “Let your light so shine...” He implies that words can be done in such as away as to not glorify God.
 - b. Therefore, we must not only pay attention to WHAT but also HOW, that our light may “so shine among men” that God is glorified.
- D. 1 Peter 4:14: DISCUSSION: How is God glorified if the world hates us?

III. Righteousness That Is from God (Matt. 5:17-20)

- A. This section does not move on to a different point, but clarifies how Jesus’ disciples, as salt and light, continue to relate to God’s words.
- B. Verses 17-19: As salt and light, we do not view ourselves as above God’ law — Jesus did not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it.
1. Obedience to God’s word defines the distinguishing qualities that set Jesus’ disciples apart from the rest of the world.
 2. John 17:17: We are “sanctified” by God’s truth.
 3. But according to grace, we must not consider doing the law as a means of earning our own righteousness.
- C. Verse 20: our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees — not a self-righteousness that glorifies self (Matt. 23).
1. Romans 7:24-8:5: Jesus removes our condemnation so that, as we set our minds on the Spirit, we walk in the Spirit, free from the condemnation of the law.
 2. What “exceeds” theirs is a righteousness that comes from God by faith, and that pursues God by faith.

Conclusion

1. Salt and light are not something a disciple performs, but something a disciple is — the natural, visible result of being the people of God rather people of the world.
2. If our lives look no different from those around us, whatever savor or light we claim to carry has already been lost.
3. Let our good works be seen, not to draw attention to ourselves, but so that others glorify our Father in heaven.