

## Salt In A Dehydrated World

**“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” (Matthew 5:13)**

A Puritan tract, old and worn, was lent by a poor man to Richard Baxter's father. Through reading this little book, Richard Baxter, afterward the great preacher of Kidderminster received a real change of heart. Baxter wrote "The Saint's Everlasting Rest", which was blessed to the conversion of Phillip Doddridge. Doddridge wrote "The Rise And Progress of Religion in the Soul", which was the means of the conversion of Leigh Richmond, who wrote "Dairyman's Daughter", which has been translated into more than fifty languages, and has led to the conversion of thousands of souls. How many of these converted ones have in their turn written books and tracts which have charmed others to Jesus, eternity alone will reveal. We can never fully see the issues of our acts.

All that has gone before, each Beatitude describing the Christian character, now arrives at this somewhat symbolic picture of his relationship to the world. Jesus now summarizes the function of the Christian in the world. The prime issue of importance here is that of influence. The question that could be asked is, "You are the preserving influence of this world; what message are you leaving as you live in it?" Jesus said in John 17, "I pray not that thou should take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world . . . . As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." [v.15,17, 18] Couple this statement with that of the Apostle John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." [1Jn. 2:15] Although it may sometimes be a fine line, the fact is that we are in the world by Christ's own design, yet we are not to be of it; He purposed that we should stay in the world, but not love it. In other words, we are to influence it.

The nineteenth century British evangelist G. Campbell Morgan once said regarding Matthew 5:13, "Jesus looking over the multitudes of His day, saw the corruption and disintegration at every point; He saw its spoliation. Because of His love for the multitudes, He knew what they needed most was salt in order that the corruption would be arrested. He saw them wrapped in gloom, sitting in darkness, groping amidst fogs and mists. . ." Jesus' mention of salt presupposed corruption and decay. As D.M. Lloyd-Jones states, "It clearly implies rottenness in the earth; it implies a tendency to pollution and to becoming foul and offensive." Jesus is saying here, "You are the preservative and antiseptic in this decaying world. You are the agents of purity, honesty and morality, restraining and counteracting the influence of sin." How especially appropriate are our Lord's words here in the light of the world's condition today: "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come . . . . But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." [2 Tim. 3:1,13]

It is worth noting the record of Scripture, comparing the evil and corruption on the earth with God's reaction to it. God created a perfect earth, but by Genesis 6, sin and its evil polluting influence had run its course: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. . . for I am sorry that I have made them . . . . Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth." [Gen. 6:5-7, 11-12] God spared eight persons in the "new" world, however, by Genesis 18 sin manifested itself again: "And the LORD said, The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. . . Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven." [Gen. 18:20, 19:24] Finally, in a day yet future, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. . . looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" [2 Peter 3:10,12]

Commentators are replete with examples and illustrations regarding the uses of salt and its characteristics and qualities. They also include numerous applications of those uses to the Christian life, many of which have obvious connection in describing the function of the believer as salt in society. Certainly an important quality of salt is that it penetrates to what it is applied. It does not lay inactive on the surface. It preserves and sterilizes. The Christian

preserves the highest standards and his presence affects those in close proximity. A not so popular attribute; it stings. "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life." [2 Cor. 2:15-16] Salt creates thirst. Could this be more obvious? Does our influence create a thirst, an awareness of spiritual dehydration in the hearts of those with which we socialize?

Salt is a basic commodity of life. It should be a basic quality of the believer. The danger lies in salt "losing its savor", rendering it "good for nothing". Again, it is important to remember that the word "salt" in this verse is purely symbolic, and the main emphasis and meaning is that of influence. When sin and worldliness contaminate our lives, we lose our effectiveness in the Kingdom. Sin renders the believer useless; there is no purifying effect, no antiseptic power, no preserving influence, and no counteraction to the influence of sin. As James 1:27 states, there must be an exercise of great diligence in order "to keep oneself unstained by the world." The Scottish Bible expositor Alexander MacLaren comments, "If you are not heating the world, the world is freezing you. . . . Men must either be hammers or anvils; must either give blows or receive them. . . . if you do not salt the earth, the world will rot you."

In closing, let the words of Scripture reinforce this vital and most fundamental principle: "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." [1 Peter 2:9] And also, "Wherever I go, thank God he causes my life to be one continuous pageant of triumph in Christ, diffusing the perfume of His knowledge everywhere by me." [2 Cor. 2:14(Moffatt Translation)]

Prayer –

Father, may Thy people be the salt of the earth indeed that others may become keenly aware of the depths of their spiritual dehydration and danger.