

**Matthew 5: 13; “You are the Salt of the Earth”, Sermon # 15 in a series entitled –
“These Sayings of Mine”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on July 18th, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The words that Jesus spoke here are an application of His having given the disciples the Beatitudes, the teaching concerning the attitudes which “be” in a true Christian. Being a Christian is to live a life blessed by God. The Christian is a blessed person indeed, although those who are looking on at them, who do not know the Lord, may not think so. How can you be blessed, they think, when you are poor in spirit, or mourning, or meek, or hungering and thirsting for righteousness, or persecuted? Well, you are blessed because you have Christ and His grace. You are a citizen of Christ’s kingdom and a partaker of all of the blessings of salvation; those blessings which will change and transform your life to become a person who can be pleasing to God and useful to your Lord, for service.

Flowing out of this teaching of the Beatitudes, Christ tells all Christians what they are, to a perishing world around them. They are the salt of the earth. So, in order to open this truth up and show you just what Christ would have us to learn from it, I want to give you 3 reasons why God gave salt to all the people in this world but especially to His own dear people. In doing this I will make spiritual application to our lives as Christians, of the great good that we can do in relation to both saved and unsaved people around us when we understand that we are the salt of the earth.

1st of all – Salt is a Preservative used to preserve what was good and to destroy what was bad.

If we were to do an in-depth study of this, we would find that salt has been used as a preservative for many generations, even back to ancient times. Salt has a natural property to it which draws water out of food and dehydrates it. All things require water and cannot grow in the absence of it, including the bacteria which can cause food poisoning. Salt is used to keep bacteria from growing on meat and thus it preserves meats by keeping them dry. You know that if you leave meat out on the counter too long it will get rather sticky looking. That is because its essential moisture to be fresh is leaving it, and it will spoil unless it is frozen or refrigerated.

Another food that we often use, butter, has salt in it to keep it from spoiling. Salt in it draws the water out, leaving just the fat. The Lord Jesus is saying in our text that we who are Christians are the salt of the earth. Our presence in a fallen world full of sinful people, keeps it from becoming entirely rotten. The reason that Jesus says we are salt is because we have His grace within us. His grace in us influences all of our thoughts, our words, and our actions. Salt in us preserves us, first of all. Christ’s grace keeps us personally from sin. And it helps us to mortify, or put to death sinful motions of thoughts and passions in our heart. When you are obedient and you do not receive Christ’s grace in vain. You will improve upon it by your obedience in putting sin to death, and living for righteousness. And then, you will have a good preserving effect upon all people around you, in the society of which you are a part.

You see, your being salty with the grace of Christ produces a savour in your life. That is, there is a certain smell and a distinctive taste to your life, because of that grace of Christ, that salt in you. People around you will notice it, and it will have a good effect upon them when God is striving with them to cause them to see the meaning of life. It helps them to think about God and what God is expecting from their life. Christ’s grace, this salt in you, helps them to see their own need for Christ. 2nd Corinthians 2: 14-17 – “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.” “To the one we are the aroma of death to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.” “And who is sufficient for these things.”

That is what being the salt of the world means. Having a flavor, having a taste, having a spiritual aroma and savor which others are affected by. Being the salt of the earth will often come out in the speech of a Christian. For a practical example of this, I would have you turn with me over to Colossians 4, verses 5 and 6. It says here – “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.” “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Ephesians 4: 29 is very similar. “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” The best way that you can conduct yourself while you are in the presence of other people, believers or unbelievers, is to be praying in your heart and mind and thinking of what words that God might help you to speak; words which would show them some aspect of your relationship to Him, or set forth some truth from His Word. Consciously think of how you, as a person can convey the reality of what it means to know Christ.

If you look up the word “savor” in the dictionary you find this: 1. the quality in a substance that affects the sense of taste or of smell. 2. A particular taste or smell. 3. A distinctive quality or property. 4. Power to excite or interest. Now, I want you to think about the fact that people are tasting of your life, spiritually speaking. Is it salty? Is it gracious? Do you speak to others about your relationship with Christ and the truth of the Bible? You can see here, that in order to be wise in your speech, around those who do not know the Lord, that you need to redeem the time. You should recognize that time is passing by and that people are not changing; they are not repenting of their sins, they are not trusting in Christ for salvation. And you want them to come to know Him.

In many ways, the salt that a believer is, helps this wicked world from deteriorating more and more into sin, which is the natural tendency of the depraved human heart. “Evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,” Paul says in 2nd Timothy 3: 13. But you can help preserve what is true and honorable and pure and right by thinking upon good things, and then by God’s grace, living them out in your life. That is being salt. Your speech is important to God and to other people. You let your speech be seasoned with salt; that is, with gracious words which speak of a God who is gracious in Christ. Gracious words that will convey the truth of what ought to be said to answer questions about God, about salvation, about how to live righteously in this evil world, and how God is glorified in a sinful world.

2nd – Salt was given to season the sacrifices and offerings of God’s people.

In order to open this truth up, I would like you to turn over with me to Mark chapter 9 verse 49. In the context, Jesus is speaking of the mortification of sin, and He says in verse 47 – “And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.” “It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire – where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.” And then verse 49 – “For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.” The sacrifice that is being talked about here by the Lord Jesus is the sacrifice by men which attempts to atone for their sins or the sacrifice of Christians in putting sin to death.

This is where the wicked and the righteous diverge. The wicked sometimes do offer sacrifices to God. But their sacrifices are not accepted. Their offerings of worship are not accepted, their prayers are not accepted, and their religious works, no matter how good in the sight of men, are not acceptable to God, because the sacrifice is not seasoned with salt of the covenant of grace. They may even be keeping the commandments of God outwardly, but inwardly, if there is no grace at work; there is no salt. That is what salt represents in the words in these words spoken here. It represents the grace of God which comes to a person only through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Proverbs Chapter 15, verse 8, it says, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight. Let us never believe the lie that all prayers are

acceptable to Him, no matter whether they are offered in the name of the Lord Jesus or not. No, a person cannot be saved by praying prayers to God without offering them in the name of Jesus. A person cannot worship God unless they are coming through the mediation of the Lord Jesus; and they cannot have their sacrificial works accepted and approved in the sight of God unless they have the salt of the New Covenant grace upon them.

Think with me of the offerings of Cain and Abel at the beginning of the world. Cain offered God “an offering of the fruit of the ground.” It was the works of his own hands. But Abel brought the first-born of his flock and of their fat. His was the sacrifice that typified what Jesus Christ, God’s first-born, His only Begotten Son, would do on the cross in dying as a sacrifice for sin. Abel’s offering was accepted because it had the grace of Christ upon it. (It was salted by grace) Cain’s sacrifice was not offered with salt; that is, with grace. And since it was not, Cain was very angry. God had to say to him, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?” “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” “And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.” “And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

Doing well is defined for us here, as bringing a sacrifice which God is pleased with; one that speaks of the sacrifice and grace of Christ and the covenant of grace. But Cain did not pluck out his eye when he saw that his offering was not accepted. He did not cut off his hand from taking up whatever weapon he used upon his brother when he killed him. And he did not stop his feet from running to do this evil. He was seasoned with fire, but his sacrifice was not seasoned with salt. He thought that his works were good enough to be accepted by God, because he thought so highly of himself. But he ended up killing his brother Abel and proving himself a wicked man.

Now turn with me to the book of Leviticus Chapter 2. These commandments of the law fall under the Old Covenant ceremonial law. But these sacrifices, in their being offered, point to grace of God coming to all of His people to sanctify all of their offerings in righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Look at verses 11-13. “No grain offering which you bring to the Lord shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the Lord made by fire. “As for the offering of the first fruits, you shall offer them to the Lord, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma.” “And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering.” “With all of your offerings you shall offer salt.”

These grain offerings are called, “Minchah” in the original Hebrew. They were an offering of the fruits of the earth; grain made into fine unleavened flour, and anointed with oil. (verse 4) The grain offering is meant to make us think of the offering which Christ made to God; He who was unleavened; without sin, became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2nd Corinthians 5: 21) And He offered Himself up to God on our behalf, as a sacrifice and a sweet-smelling savor to God. (Ephesians 5: 2)

But the grain offering also represents us, offering ourselves (as believers in Christ) and all that we would do for God, up to Him as a sacrifice. We cannot offer our offering with leaven; that is, with sin working in ourselves. It must be cut off and repented of. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, surely the Lord will not hear.” (Psalm 66: 18) But Christ, who is our Savior and Mediator and High Priest, did not have any sin and He will be our salt. “But surely the Lord has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.” (Psalm 66: 19) He has heard it, and He has received my sacrifice of praise for the salvation of my soul, for Christ’s sake; not my sake. And He gives me grace and power to repent and to change, and to offer myself a living sacrifice unto God.

Our offering cannot be offered with honey; that is with selfish ambition and pride working in our heart. If we would do anything for Him, or offer anything to Him as a gift of ourselves or our service to Him, it cannot mean that we would be seeking our own glory in our offering of ourselves. Remember that Proverbs 25: 27 says, “It is not good to eat much honey; so to seek

one's own glory is not glory." This was what motivated the whole discourse that we are studying in Mark 9. That was what it was all centered around; the disciples talking about who would be the greatest among them. You can offer the first-fruits; the first and best of what you can do for God, but it shall not be burned on the altar. In other words, that is not the basis of the Lord's accepting the sacrifice of what you might give to Him and do for Him.

What is acceptable is Christ who is the first-fruits of all of God's people. He was "burned on the altar"; He was crucified on the tree. He bore the wrath of God there as a sacrifice in our place. His grace is the salt of the Eternal Covenant, and every offering that we make shall be seasoned with salt. The salt of the Covenant shall not be lacking on it, which means that we will remember in the greatest of our sacrifices and in offering of the best of our good works; that it is Christ's grace which makes these possible, and acceptable, in God's sight. "Every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt." It was Christ's sacrifice which gave us the Covenant of Salt (that is, of Grace) by which we are saved, and with which we will salt all our sacrifices.

3rd – Salt was given so that as an emblem of grace in our hearts it might bring peace between believers.

Listen to our text once again – "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." In Luke's gospel, chapter 14, verse 34, Jesus says – "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?" "It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out." "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" And finally in Mark 9: 50 – Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it?" "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another." Having Christ's grace in your heart you will be the salt of the earth. If you truly have this grace of Christ, this salt, you shall never lose it. And you shall know if you truly have it, you will know if you have salt in yourselves by whether you will strive to have peace with one another.

You say that you are a Christian, you say that you have received grace. You are studying to have salt in yourself. But do you have the peace of God which passes all comprehension guarding your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus? Do you have peace with other believers? Ah this is a good question to ask ourselves, is it not? In the gospel of Mark, chapter 9, where these words of Christ are found, we see in verse 33, just before these statements at the end of the chapter on salt, that the disciples had been disputing among themselves about who would be the greatest. And Jesus asked them about it, but they kept silent. And so He sat down and called the twelve to Himself and said to them – "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

You see, all of these disciples except one, had salt. They had grace in themselves, but they were not thinking of it in the right way. They thought that having grace meant that they would be great. Each wanted to see himself as the greatest. And they thought to compare themselves with themselves. Their fleshly thoughts and their strong ambitions led them to think of greatness as though they thought that they could determine that they would be great by their own observations and assertions. But Christ comes and overhears them, and with His words He made them ashamed that they had been thinking that way. He showed them that if they were not careful they would lose their saltiness, they would lose their savor.

They would not be able to receive the reward that they believed that they deserved, and their ministry among men would be actually be seen by men as worthless. Jesus was telling them that this kind of an attitude could lead them to loss of their reward if they were not careful. Certainly Jesus knew that this would be the case with Judas, who had professed faith in Him, but would, in the garden of Gethsemane, betray Him. But this kind of thinking is not to characterize Christ's disciples. And so Jesus had to reprove them all in this regard. I hope that you can see the truth of these verses that we are studying, that you should have salt in yourselves. Mortify your pride and selfish ambition. See that having grace leads to a humble view of yourself. See

that you need to study to have peace with other brothers and sisters, and love in your heart for all the brethren.

Listen to the apostle John in 2nd John 4- 8 – “I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in the truth, as we received commandment from the Father.” “And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.” “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.” “This the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.” “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.” “This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” “Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.”

Is it possible to receive a partial reward? Evidently so. But not if you have salt in yourselves, and you do not lose your savor, you will not lose your reward, or any part of your reward. In order to preserve the savor of your salt, you must learn by grace to subdue any sinful thought and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Ask yourself, as I close this message, whether you think that people around you can taste the savor of salt in your life? Can they taste and see by your life that the Lord is good, and how blessed is the man who trusts in Him? If you can affirm that this so, I know that you have salt in yourself, and that you will strive to have peace with all of your brothers and sisters in Christ.