

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - January 21, 2021

Prepared & Presented by: Pastor James G. Austin, Jr., PhD, D.Min.

Title: "Consider the Impact and Influence You Have on Others"

Sub-title: You Are Salt!

Scripture Reference: Matthew 5:13a

"Ye are the salt of the earth ..."

I. Introduction

A. In the target verse for this study, Jesus taught that we are to be "the salt of the earth."

B. Considering the various uses of salt in the ancient world and how important salt was during that time, this statement by Jesus carried a tremendous amount of weight.

C. When Jesus referred to his listeners as salt, no doubt various images ran through their minds, and they understood the many connotations that salt carried with it. By using this illustration of salt, Jesus was teaching about the impact or influence that we are supposed to have upon the world in which we live.

D. The word "salt" is the Greek word halas and it describes salt exactly like the salt we use in our homes and kitchens today.

E. Today, salt is so common that it can easily be purchased in any grocery store. However, in New Testament times, salt was an expensive and treasured commodity that was crucial and needed in many areas of life. We will cover those areas in this study session, and discuss the applicability of our Lord's statement, "**Ye are the salt of the earth.**"

F. High quality salt could only be found in a few places in Israel. One location was the Hill of Salt (the area of which I have been privileged to visit on several visits to Israel), that covers a seven-mile stretch located on the southwest coast of the Dead Sea, or it could be gathered from salt pits near the Dead Sea.

G. In each of these locations, the gathering of salt was an expensive process, which made the salt very costly. It was a commodity so rare that it was seldom wasted, sparingly used, and highly valued.

II. Exposition [Part I] - Salt was used as a Preservative

A. In the warm temperatures of Israel, meat would quickly rot, spoil, and decay. However, when salt was added, it acted as a preservative. Therefore, salt was especially important in the preservation of meats and other kinds of perishable foods.

B. Those who heard Jesus' teaching that we are to be the salt of the earth" therefore understood that He meant that through our influence, we should be a preserving force in a world that is filled with rot, spoil, and decay.

Comment: God's Word working in our lives causes us to be like salt; and our very presence helps to lessen the corruption that is eating away at the world.

III. Exposition [Part II] - Salt was used as a Flavor Enhancer

A. Salt is one of the most profound enhancers of taste that exists in the culinary world.

B. When you eat food, there is an instant awareness of how powerful this flavor enhancer is when you eat food that contains no salt. Unsalted food is often monotonous - we may even say it is

bland, and uninteresting; but when salt is added, like the great chef Emerald Lagasse would say, "Bam - another notch." In other words, the flavor is ignited.

C. Just like today, salt was used in the ancient world to give food a stronger and richer flavor. It was considered essential for the long-term preservation of food and for the enhancement of taste. Now consider the spiritual application of this use of salt.

D. Not only should our presence abate or diminish the evil in the world, but our presence should also change the flavor of society as we bring the savor (i.e., the flavor) of Christ to our surroundings, wherever we go.

IV. Exposition [Part III] - Salt was used as an Antiseptic

A. In the ancient world where dirt and disease were common enemies to health, salt was used as an antiseptic.

B. This was especially true in areas considered unclean, tainted, or contaminated - areas so filthy that it could potentially become hazardous to one's health. It was believed that salt would work like a disinfectant.

C. If properly applied in heavy doses, salt sanitized, hygienically cleansed, and made a location relatively germ-free. The application of salt in such circumstances was considered to be enormously advantageous because people believed such an application of salt sterilized non-sterile environments.

D. If a rapidly spreading disease was known to exist in a village, the sick people were removed and relocated, and salt was immediately spread to disinfect the contaminated area and to prevent the further spread of the disease.

E. Salt was such a powerful cleansing force that the ancient world believed it would assist in freeing the environment of infection.

F. As an antiseptic, salt was used in the fodder (i.e., dried hay or feed) of barns and barnyards - places where sickness and disease could swiftly spread among animals.

G. A small dose of salt scattered on the fodder of a barn or barnyard served as a deterrent to the proliferation of sickness and disease among animals.

H. Therefore, when Jesus said we are to be "**the salt of the earth**," those who heard Him understood that through our influence, we are called to be a kind of **spiritual antiseptic** to a world that is diseased with sin.

I. Even a small dose of the **spiritual salt** we carry within ourselves is such a powerful disinfecting agent that if scattered in society, it will deter the spread of sin and moral decay.

SELF EVALUATION

When you look at your life and the things that surround you, do you see any evidence that your personal presence is making a difference and that you are helping to promote a more **spiritually sanitized environment**?

V. Exposition [Part IV] - Salt was used as a Medicinal and Healing Agent

A. Salt was also a very important ingredient for physicians and those employed in the field of medicine; it was used as a healing agent.

B. For example, if a person was severely wounded, salt was poured into the wound to sanitize the wound from germs, to stop the spread of infection, to stop the bleeding, and to speed up the healing of the wound.

C. In the ancient world where medications were rare, salt was an indispensable product in every doctor's medical bag.

D. Salt could be found in homes, businesses, and public places. It was kept close at hand in case it was needed for treatment of an open wound or sore.

E. When Jesus said that His people were to be "**the salt of the earth**," those who heard him understood that through our influence, we should be carriers of physical healing to a world that is suffering with all manner of sickness and ailments.

F. Through the preaching of God's Word and personal ministry to those who are physically and spiritually ill, we are supposed to be "**the salt of the earth**" that brings healing to those who are physically and spiritually suffering.

G. Through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, who resides in every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are fully sufficient to administer comfort as vessels of the Living Christ to those who are hurting. But remember, Jesus said, "**for without me ye can do nothing.**" (John 15:5b)

VI. Exposition [Part V] - Salt was used as a Fertilizer

A. Salt was also a very important ingredient used by farmers to enrich and fertilize their soil, in order to produce larger crops of a higher quality.

B. Even a small amount of salt scattered on the ground could improve the quality of the soil and result in bigger and healthier crops.

C. When Jesus said we were to be "the salt of the earth, it could actually be translated "the salt of the soil."

D. The implication is that through our influence, we should affect the world in which we live. Our very presence should enhance life and make this world a better place to live.

E. The world we touch should become productive and our godly presence should positively impact the quality of life for those around us.

F. As "**the salt of the earth,**" we are to enrich the atmosphere wherever we go through our influence, simply because we carry the life of God within us.

G. When we walk into a situation, the environment surrounding us is filled with more peace, joy, and hope than it was before we arrived. ARE YOU FEELING THIS???

A Time for Reflection

- **Considering the various ways salt was used in the ancient world, can you see how powerful Jesus' point is?**
- **If you are making God's Word applicable in your life by being "the salt of the earth," there should be some fruit all around you as a testimony. Can you see visible proofs of your "salty" influence?**

It is once again interactive time. Please fill in the blank spaces in the Scripture passages listed below. All passages have been taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

"_____ is good: but if the _____ have lost his _____, wherewith will ye season it? Have _____ in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

[Mark 9:50]

"Let the word of Christ _____ in you richly in all _____; teaching and _____ one another in _____ and hymns and spiritual _____, singing with _____ in your _____ to the Lord."

[Colossians 3:16]

"Let your _____ be alway with _____, seasoned with _____, that ye may know how ye ought to _____ every man."

[Colossians 4:6]

"The _____ of a wise man's mouth are _____; but the lips of a _____ will _____ up himself."

[Ecclesiastes 10:12]

"Let the _____ of my _____, and the _____ of my heart, be _____ in thy sight, O Lord, my _____, and my _____."

[Psalm 19:14]

Think about what the Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 4:6 concerning our conversation. When you are seasoned with salt, you will speak:

- **Words that flavor life and make it “taste” better.**
- **Words that bring comfort to others.**
- **Words that speak truth.**
- **Words that “disinfect” and help those who were once contaminated.**

QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO CONSIDER

1. What did you learn from this study? What made the greatest impact on you about what it means to be “the salt of the earth”?
2. Can you think of ways that you are acting like “salt” in the lives of other people in your family, church, community, or work-place?
3. When you reflect on the words that come out of your mouth, can you honestly say that your words are “seasoned with salt”?

May the Lord bless and keep you and remember this - salt **preserves**, **cleanses**, and it **creates thirst**. My prayer is that you will both hunger and thirst **even more** for the **Word of God!**

Jude 3
Pastor Austin