

# “Salt & Light”

*Matthew 5:13-16*

Part 2

## Introducing the Text

*“You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.*

*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:13-16*

Last week, Jesus challenged every Christian to consider his or her “saltiness.” According to the Lord Jesus Christ, those who by faith in Him have been redeemed by His blood and cleansed from all unrighteousness have been called to be “salty.”

What does it mean to be salty? To be salty means...

- **Christians are called to be salty preservatives that prevent decay and rotting.** More than anything else, salt in the days of Christ was used to preserve perishable items like meat. We have been redeemed to live holy lives, and when we do so, God, in a supernatural and mysterious way, preserves our sinful, rotting world.
- **Christians are called to be salty healing agents.** Not only does salt preserve, it also heals wounds. We have been redeemed to live holy lives, and when we do so, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ uses our lives to burn and sting sin and ultimately bring healing to the life infected by sin and unrighteousness.
- **Christians are called to be salty thirst accelerants.** As we all know, consuming salt increases thirst. We have been redeemed to live holy lives in a world where people do not hunger and thirst for righteousness. When our lives radiate holiness, the Holy Spirit will begin His regenerating work by creating a thirst for truth in the life of the sinner.

- **Christians are called to be salty flavor enhancers.** Salt not only creates thirst, it also enhances flavor. For the reprobate – the person without Christ – the Word of God and the Gospel lack flavor. The sinner would much rather dine with the devil at the world’s table of sweet concoctions, then feast at Christ’s table where the satisfying meat of God’s Word is served and satisfying. When our lives radiate the holiness and righteousness of Christ Jesus the Lord, the Word of God is transformed from bitterness to flavorful in the mouth of the sinner.

This is what genuine Christian discipleship looks like. Genuine followers of Jesus Christ are anointed and used by the Holy Spirit to be agents of salt in a decaying, sin-infected, parched, and flavorless world.

We must resist the temptation to mix our salt with the world. If we do so, Jesus reminds us that our salt becomes useless. When we take the salt of our Christian holiness and mix it with the defilement of the world, our lives lose their Christian flavor and we become ineffective in glorifying Christ and advancing the Gospel.

### **The Light of the World**

In this text, Jesus also commands us to be the “light of the world.”

Jesus defines what true Christianity looks like in the simplest of metaphors – salt and light. According to Christ, Christians are the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” Authentic discipleship is salty and radiant. Our lives should sting sin, accelerate spiritual thirst, enhance the flavor the Gospel, and radiate the holiness, truth, and glory of Jesus Christ in a world of spiritual darkness.

Let’s look more closely at the second metaphor Jesus uses to describe authentic Christianity. In verses 14-16, Jesus says...

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

The first, and most significant, question we must consider is this – “*How are we the ‘light of the world?’*” This is a most important question. If we do not answer this question rightly, our light will not shine like our Lord desires it to.

In the Gospel of John, John and Jesus answers our question this way...

*“In him was life, and the life was the **light of men.**”* John 1:4

*“I am the **Light of the world.** Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* John 8:12

*“I have come into the world as **light**, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”* John 12:46

Listen carefully to how the Apostle Paul answers our question...

*“For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light **in the Lord.**”* Eph. 5:8

*“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”* Colossians 1:13

The Apostle Peter answers our question is a similar way...

*“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his **marvelous light.**”* 1 Peter 2:9

Each of these scriptures echoes the same profound truth about Jesus. Jesus is *the* Light. He is the “light of the world.” He is the “marvelous Light.” He is the “Light of men.”

Just as these scriptures teach us about Jesus, they also teach us about us. The picture is far less flattering. According to the these same passages, we were once dark. Don’t miss this! We were not simply living in darkness. Our plight was far more terrifying than that. We *were* darkness. Our souls were dark. Our minds were dark. Our hearts were dark. Internally and externally, we were consumed by the darkness and depravity of sin.

Furthermore, not only were we dark, we were enslaved to the “domain of darkness.” We had no hope of generating spiritual light that would liberate us from the domain of darkness that held us captive. We desperately needed light, but in and of ourselves, we could do nothing to produce light.

And then, Jesus, the Great Light, entered our dark domain.

*“The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us.”* Psalm 118:27

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.”* Isaiah 9:2

*“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.”*  
Isaiah 60:1

Jesus Christ entered our domain of darkness as Light. The shroud of sin’s darkness had hovered over mankind for centuries. Jesus Christ came as Light and sin’s darkness could not contain Him.

Jesus went to the Cross of Calvary as the Light, that we might become the “light of the Lord”; that we might enter the “kingdom of God’s beloved Son”; that we might be transferred into the “marvelous light” of Jesus Christ; that we might walk “in the light.”

So, let’s go back to our question – ***“How can we be the ‘light of the world’?”***

The Lord Jesus, along with Paul and Peter, give us our answer. We can only be light insofar as we know Jesus to be *the* Light. We have the power to be the “light of the world” because, thru faith in Jesus Christ, we have the “Light of the world” living within us.

Don’t miss this!

If you’re a Christian, fulfilling your call to be the “light of the world” is completely dependent upon you staying connected to the Source of light. Who is that Source of light? Jesus Christ. It is impossible to fulfill our redemptive calling to be “the light of the world” if we do not remain intimately connected to Jesus Christ.

Becoming the “light of the world” first and foremost requires a surrendered and consistent connection with Jesus Christ. It is Christ living in us – the “Light of the World” – that empowers us to be “the light of the world.”

If we have any hope of radiating the holiness, glory, truth, and victory of Jesus Christ, we must remain completely surrendered to His lordship in our lives. When Jesus ceases to be our Lord and Master, it’s as if someone has shut off the electricity. Our light cannot shine when Jesus is not on the throne of our lives.

Is your light shining for Christ? Are you fulfilling your call to be the “light of the world”? Are you radiating the holiness, glory, and victory of Jesus Christ and His cross? If you are, one thing is for sure – Jesus Christ, the “Light of the world,” is on the throne of your life. If you are not, one thing is equally as sure – Jesus Christ, the “Light of the world,” is *not* on the throne of your life.

Being the “light of world” is grounded in Jesus Christ the Lord. You can’t be light without the Light. Do you have the Light of life? Have you surrendered to Jesus Christ as the Lord of Light?

### **Other Biblical Principles**

Now that we’ve established the importance of Christ in our faithfulness to being the “light of the world,” let’s turn our attention to some additional biblical principles that will help us radiate the holiness and glory of Jesus.

Throughout the New Testament, Christians hear a common theme of instruction and exhortation when it comes to being the “light of the world.” Do you know what that common theme is?

Listen to the following verses...

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not **walk** in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12*

*“The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us **cast off** the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Romans 13:12*

*“Do not be **unequally yoked** with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?” 2 Cor. 6:14*

*“...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk** as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead **expose** them.” Ephesians 5:8-11*

*“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we **walk** in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” 1 John 1:5-6*

Did you hear what God commands us, as the “light of the world,” to do?

From a negative perspective, God commands us – if not warns us – not to walk in darkness; to cast off works of darkness; to not be unequally yoked with darkness; to take no part in unfruitful works of darkness; and to resist becoming liars by claiming to belong to Christ but walking in darkness.

There is no place for darkness in the life of the Christian. When the professing Christian chooses to walk in darkness, yoke himself with darkness, and enjoy unfruitful works of darkness, it’s as if he is taking the light of Christ and putting it under a basket – the very thing Jesus tells us not do. This is foolishness.

Can I ask you some questions?

**Are you professing to know Christ, but walking in darkness?** If so, you are taking the light of Christ and hiding it from the world. Furthermore, God says that, in His eyes, you have become a liar and do not practice the truth. I don’t know about you, but I have no desire to be known by God as a liar. After all, God hates the lying tongue. (Prov. 6:16-19)

**Have you yoked yourself with dark things?** If so, you are taking the light of Christ and hiding it from the world. It's not enough to apply "yoking" with dating and marriage. We must also be cautious that we do not yoke our Christian holiness with the debauchery of the world.

**Are you currently enjoying the fruits of darkness – ungodly, perverse, and false things?** If so, you are taking the light of Christ and hiding it under a basket. The fruits of darkness have no place on the diet of the Christian. Our calling is to radiate holiness and thus expose fruits of darkness – not enjoy them.

On the positive side, God commands us to "put on" the armor of light; to "walk" as children of light; to produce the fruit of light which is found in those things that are "good and right and true"; and to "expose" unfruitful works of darkness.

Listen carefully Christian! Being the light of the world is directly linked to how we fight, how we live, what we enjoy, and what we expose.

Notice if you will that the purpose of light is threefold.

First, *light exposes darkness*. When Jesus calls us to be the "light of the world," He is calling us to expose darkness – the darkness of the world and her sins. The light that radiates from Christian holiness is intended by God to expose the darkness of the world and the sins of people living under its domain. Is your life radiating a holiness that is exposing darkness and the sin of people living under its domain?

Second, *light reveals the cause of darkness*. What is the cause of darkness? Man's insatiable, depraved appetite for sin rather than God. Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts it this way...

*"The sole cause of the troubles of the world at this moment, from personal to international, is nothing but man's estrangement from God. This is the cause of the trouble...that fallen man by nature still loves darkness rather than light."*

Is your life confronting the cause darkness – people living without the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ?

Third, *light provides the way out of darkness*. When Christians shine as the “light of the world,” we provide people living under the domain of darkness with a way out. What’s the way out? Jesus Christ is the Way! He is “light of life” who longs to deliver people out of the domain of darkness into His marvelous light.

### **Closing Comments**

True Christians have the “Light of the world” living in them, which empowers them to be the “light of the world.”

We are to be the holy Bride of Christ who radiates His holiness and walks in His light; who exposes unfruitful works of darkness; who produces works of light; who points people to the “Light of life.” We do this all for the purpose of glorifying Christ and seeing people delivered out of the domain of darkness and into the light of salvation and eternal life.

I leave you with this wonderful quote...

*“Christian people, you and I are living in the midst of men and women who are in a state of gross darkness. They will never have any light anywhere in this world except from you and from me and the Gospel we believe and teach. They are watching us. Do they see something different about us? Are our lives a silent rebuke to them? Do we so live as to lead them to come and ask us, ‘Why do you always look so peaceful? How is it that you are so balanced? How can you stand up to things as you do? Why is it that you are not dependent upon artificial aids and pleasures as we are? What is this thing that you have got?’ If they do we can tell them wondrous, amazing, but tragically neglected news, that ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ and to give men a new nature and a new life and to make them children of God. Christian people alone are the light of the world today. Let us live and function as children of light.” (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)*