

SALT IS GOOD!

Last month we looked at Ephesians 4:1-3 regarding how we, as followers of Christ, can impact our culture for positive change. The passage revealed that we are to be people who radiate the character of Christ by living lives that reveal God's glory. We learned that God's first concern was not what we do, but who we are. Our conduct flows out of our character. This month we consider a verse of Scripture that focuses on something we are and what we must do to help preserve a culture, delaying moral decay and corruption.

In Matthew 5:1-12, known as The Beatitudes, the focus is on our relationship with God and how we, as followers of Christ, should live our lives in this world. While the first twelve verses focus on our inner character, the next verse focuses on our outward influence. Jesus always links our inward attitudes with our outward actions. He says in Matthew 5:13:

"You are the salt of the earth."

Notice that Jesus says, "You *are* the salt of the earth." He doesn't say that we are like salt or that in the future we will be salt, but that we *are* salt. It's our identity. True believers, those who have a personal relationship with Christ, automatically are the "salt of the earth" because all that is divine, holy, and precious exists in them, and only them.

As we consider what salt does, we will understand what we are called to do.

(1) Salt preserves. When it is interspersed with other substances it delays decay. That is the positive influence followers of Christ are to have on our culture, slowing down moral decay and evil. Salt preserves meat when it penetrates it, not when it is in a salt shaker. And we must penetrate our culture if we want to have a preserving influence on it. We can make a difference by being salt, leading lives of righteous living in a world where moral standards are constantly changing and becoming non-existent. Salt doesn't restore, but it does buy time. Jonah is a good example of what the actions of one individual can do to postpone God's judgment for a season.

(2) Salt enhances flavor. It imparts a portion of its flavor to everything in which it is mixed. As salt, we are God's seasoning in the world. Just as salt renders palatable otherwise distasteful food, so as Christians we can sweeten the difficulties, disappointments and defeats of life by introducing our friends to the hope we have in Christ. Be gracious, bring out the best in others (*Colossians 4:5-6*).

(3) Salt creates thirst. When we demonstrate winsome qualities to others, we create a thirst for additional information as to why we are different. We exist for the world's sake much more than for our own sake. We are chosen by God, not for our own comfort, but to show our neighbors the beauty of life in Christ, thus attracting them to Him.

Salt is a preservative, a seasoning, and creates thirst. In all three cases, salt must be brought into contact with its object in order for its power to be released. Salt that stays in a shaker benefits no one. We must be about the business of permeating our culture with the sweet aroma of Christ, not isolating ourselves from the culture (*2 Corinthians 2:15*).

Jesus continues in verse 13 to say,

"But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."

There must be a distinction between salt and the items in which it comes in contact (*John 17:15-18*). Salt can become adulterated and therefore good for nothing (*Luke 14:34-35*). If the salt is saltless, it has no impact to affect change. Jesus warned His disciples not to lose their saltiness. If Jesus is not the Lord of our lives, we will never have the pleasure of influencing others for Him.

We must spend time with lost people in order to influence them for Christ. This will require us to take the initiative to invite them into our lives and look for ways to enter theirs. When we express our faith through a lifestyle of praying, caring and sharing for those in our sphere of influence, our neighborhood, workplace, and greater community cannot help but be changed. As we are obedient, God will bring revival to believers and regeneration to unbelievers, thus preserving the world until He returns. Remember, when a heart is changed, a family is changed. When families are changed, communities are changed. When enough communities are changed, a nation is changed.

Ask God to point out one unbeliever that you can begin to establish a closer relationship with this week. Pray for him or her, initiate contact, and see how God will lead you.

Dave Dagwell
Assistant to the President
Capitol Commission