

# Influence: Salt Life

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Matthew 5:13

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John Stott said at the Cape Town Lausanne Conference, “*The greatest hindrance to the advance of the gospel worldwide is the failure of the lives of God’s people.*” An anonymous author adds, “*The reason some folks don’t believe in missions is that the brand of religion they have isn’t worth propagating.*”<sup>1</sup>

Salt is a chemical compound composed primarily of sodium chloride (NaCl) used to preserve, purify, and season food. It is one of the most common substances on the earth and cannot be destroyed by fire or time. Salt, known also as “white gold,” is one of the most significant substances in history, along with iron, gold, and wheat. It has been taxed, used in mummification, as a food preservative, and as currency in the slave trade. Salt has figurative qualities, as well. Sharing salt was a symbol of friendship and hospitality and was shared and eaten with bread at the conclusion of conflicts as a symbol of friendship.<sup>2</sup>

Salt has connections throughout Scripture. It is integrated into the Old Testament sacrifices (Lev 2:13; Ezk 43:24; Ezra 6:9; 7:22). It is connected to God’s covenant (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chron 13:5). It is woven together with discipleship (Matt 5:13; Mark 9:49-50; Luke 14:34-35) Additionally, Paul admonishes the Colossians to season their speech with salt (Col 4:6).<sup>3</sup>

Salt has always been valuable in human society, often much more so than it is today. During a period of ancient Greek history, it was called *theon*, which means divine. The Romans held that, except for the sun, nothing was more valuable than salt. Often, Roman soldiers were paid in salt, and it was from that practice that the expression “*not worth his salt*” originated.

If the Beatitudes leave the impression that life in the kingdom is somewhat passive, the metaphors of salt and light correct such a misunderstanding. Salt permeates and performs its vital function in society. Light illumines the darkness and points people to the one who is the source of all light and life.<sup>4</sup>

## I. Jesus said, “You are...”

- A. The “You” is emphatic.
  - 1. The meaning is “You and you alone...”
  - 2. You – the one and only.
- B. “Are”
  - 1. He does not say, “You will be...”
  - 2. He does not say, “You can be...”
- C. The emphasis is on “being” rather than “doing.”
  - 1. This is a consistent theme in the Sermon on the Mount.
  - 2. The Beatitudes encapsulate the being that salts pictures.

## II. Why did Jesus call believers the “the salt of the earth?”

- A. Salt is white and a symbol of purity. (Connected to Matt 5:8, “...*the pure in heart...*”) (**James 1:27**, *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*)
- B. Salt enhances its surroundings (a spice; an attractiveness to the Gospel).
  - 1. **Genesis 18:32**, *Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.”*
  - 2. **1 Corinthians 7:14**, *For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean,*

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<sup>1</sup> Akin, Danny. *Exalting Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> II, Robert G. Rayburn. “Salt.” Edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Akin, Danny. *Exalting Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019.

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*but as it is, they are holy.*

- C. Salt stings (burns, think fire) when applied to a wound (cleansing, purifying, healing).
  - 1. **Mark 9:49–50**, *For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.*
- D. Salt creates thirst (We are to be thirsty for God and, in turn, create that thirst around us).
  - 1. **Matthew 5:6**, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*
  - 2. **John 7:37**, *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.*
- E. Salt Preserves. The Holy Spirit, through the temple of believers, restrains & preserves a rotting world.
  - 1. **2 Thessalonians 2:7–12**, *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, 12 in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

### **III. Useful or Useless? Steps to Usefulness**

- A. The need for exposure - Salt is not effective in the jar.
  - 1. **John 17:15–16** *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. John 17:18, As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*
  - 2. **1 Peter 2:9**, *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.*
  - 3. **Colossians 4:6**, *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*
- B. The need for Purity (**Luke 14:34–35**, *“Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? 35 It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

### **IV. Practical Ways to Stay Salty**

- A. Check your affections.
  - 1. **1 John 2:15**, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*
  - 2. **Colossians 3:2**, *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*
- B. Stay in the Word of God (Psalm 119).
- C. Watch your Words.
  - 1. **Colossians 4:6**, *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*
- D. Remember the mission
  - 1. **1 Peter 3:15**, *But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,*
- E. Powerful Prayer (Matthew 6:5-15)
  - 1. Continued confession
  - 2. Lifelong repentance
  - 3. Determined dependence

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## V. The Implication of Salt (Valuable commodity, Important Function,

- A. The Need for Exposure (Salt left in the shaker serves no useful purpose).
  - 1. To the Corrupt, Impure, Tasteless World (**2 Timothy 3:13**, *While evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*)
    - a) From Adam to Noah
      - (1) Adam's sin in the Garden (Genesis 3:6)
      - (2) Cain's murder of Abel (Genesis 4:8)
      - (3) The days of Noah (Genesis 6:1, 3, 5, 7-8)
    - b) The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19) (Remember Lot's wife (Luke 17:28-33))
    - c) The future judgment (2 Peter 3:7, *But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.* 2 Peter 3:10, *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.* )
- B. On the Christian "You are the salt of the earth..." (the only salt; emphasis on being rather than doing)
  - 1. The preserving effect of a Christian
    - a) **John 17:15–16** *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. John 17:18, As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*
    - b) **1 Peter 2:9**, *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.*
    - c)
  - 2. The purifying effect of a Christian
  - 3. **1 John 2:15**, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*
  - 4.
  - 5. The enhancing effect of a Christian
    - a) **2 Corinthians 2:14–16**, *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?*
    - b)

## VI. The Function of Salt

- A. Salt is to prevent rot
- B. Salt is to provide flavor.

The second-century Christian leader Tertullian was once approached by a man who said, “I have come to Christ, but I don’t know what to do. I have a job that I don’t think is consistent with what Scripture teaches. What can I do? I must live.” To that Tertullian replied, “Must you?”

Loyalty to Christ is the Christian’s only true choice. To be prepared for kingdom life is to be prepared for *loneliness, misunderstanding, ridicule, rejection, and unfair treatment of every sort.*

John Chrysostom, a godly leader in the fourth-century church preached so strongly against sin that he offended the unscrupulous Empress Eudoxia as well as many church officials. When summoned before Emperor Arcadius, Chrysostom was threatened with banishment if he did not cease his uncompromising preaching. His response was, “Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father’s house.” “Then I will slay you,” Arcadius said. “Nay, but you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God,” came the answer. “Your treasures will be confiscated” was the next threat, to which John replied, “Sire, that cannot be, either. My treasures are in heaven, where none can break through and steal.” “Then I will drive you from man, and you will have no friends left!” was the final, desperate warning. “That you cannot do, either,” answered John, “for I have a Friend in heaven who has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ ” Chrysostom was indeed banished, first to Armenia and then farther away to Pityus on the Black Sea, to which he never arrived because he died on the way. But neither his banishment nor his death disproved or diminished his claims. The things that he valued most highly not even an emperor could take from him.