

Sermon on the Mount Part VIII

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Date: 28 April 2013

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[0 : 00] We've been reading several different passages, some from the Old Testament and some from the New, that speak about the reality of light. And contrary to what we might think, light is not the opposite of darkness.

Darkness is not the opposite of light. Darkness is the absence of light. And there is a considerable difference.

In the beginning, when God created light, separating it from the darkness, it was the light that was the predominant thing.

Darkness throughout Scripture speaks of hiddenness. It speaks of, and when it is used of morality, it is always talking about spiritual darkness. And I wish we could all really grasp the concept that is so difficult to grasp, because for a good 12-plus hours a day now, we see light all around us.

And wherever you go in the world, you see light. But that's a different kind of light. And the kind of light which the Scriptures speak that we will be addressing this morning has to do with moral and spiritual light.

[1 : 24] And it is just as real as the physical light that allows us to see by. When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, the whole of creation was plunged into a moral, spiritual kind of darkness.

And that's where it resides today. It's difficult for us to really understand that concept, because we tend to think of intellectuality.

We tend to think of inventions and technology and so many advances being made. And yet, the kind of light that really counts is sorely, sorely lacking in this world.

In fact, the kind of light that really counts is here on the planet in such an infinitesimal amount that darkness, moral and spiritual darkness, is the preponderance of what we're dealing with.

It is the vast majority of what makes up the whole globe. The only moral, spiritual light there really is, is that which you are.

[2 : 38] And as I remarked in our last message when we were dealing with this, it sounds terribly arrogant and perhaps elitist to say that true Christians are the only real light and salt that this world has.

But it is absolutely, totally true. From a human standpoint, you are the only thing this world has going for it.

And I know that most of you are of a humble spirit who would not want to think of yourselves in that vein. Don't put me up there. That's above my pay grade.

I don't have that kind of ability or responsibility. Don't try to lay that on me. But there's no place else to lay it. You who know Christ, wherever you are throughout the world, on whatever continent you live, if you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, humanly speaking, you are the only thing that this world has going for it.

And I realize it does sound elitist. And it does make us sound somewhat arrogant. But that is not of our doing. We are not the only hope of this world because we strive to be that.

[3 : 56] We are the only hope of this world because that is what God has made us in Christ. And here in this passage that we are dealing with, and we started this several weeks ago, an exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, and we worked our way down to chapter 5.

And by the way, this probably won't come as any news to you, but there are three chapters. It's Matthew 5, 6, and 7, comprise the Sermon on the Mount. And I thought, well, it will probably take at least three months for us to get through that.

And then I corrected myself. I said, now, Marv, you always say things like that, but you never make it. You probably ought to make that six months. But I'm not going to make that either.

There's just too much here. And by the way, somebody would say, particularly those who are of a dispensational ilk like we are, what are you spending all this time in the Sermon on the Mount for? That's in the Gospels.

You ought to be back in the Pauline Epistles. That's the stuff that really matters. Let me tell you something. It all really matters.

[5 : 09] Different portions of Scripture serve different purposes. And while I would be the first to insist that the information regarding the mystery that God revealed to the Apostle Paul is definitely the latest revelation we have from God, and it does constitute the marching orders for the church, and it is to be our primary base of operation, that is, the Pauline Epistles, nonetheless, all of the Word of God is profitable, and it is all inspired of God, and it is only to our hurt that we ignore any portion of it.

And besides, as we will see time and time again, when we go through the Sermon on the Mount, that is here in the Gospels, and repeated in a shortened version in Luke's Gospel, but the longer version is here in Matthew, we will see numerous issues come to the surface that don't square with the Pauline Revelation.

And the reason they don't is because they're not supposed to. They belong to a different dispensation. And as I told you last week, the Gospels belong to the Old Testament dispensation, not the New.

The fact that there are 400 years separating the completion of the Old Testament and the provision of the New Testament doesn't mean that the Jewish motif has somehow fallen off, and when you come to Matthew 1.1, now that's New Testament.

No, it isn't. I know it says that in most of our Bibles when you pick them up, and it tells you about Matthew, Mark, this is the beginning of the New Testament. And insofar as the canon of Scripture is concerned, that's true.

[7 : 01] It does belong in the New Testament. But insofar as doctrine and understanding the plan and program of God, you have got to know and remember that the four Gospels and the first half of the book of Acts is Jewish, Jewish, Jewish, Jewish.

And did I mention that it's Jewish? It is. And when you ignore that and try to Christianize the Gospels with the latest revelation that we have from the Pauline Epistles and try to make it fit in the Gospels, it won't fit in the Gospels any better than it fits in the Old Testament.

It doesn't fit there either because it's a whole new revelation. It is something that has been given by God later. And you've got to keep that time frame in mind because it's critical.

Otherwise, you will end up with hopeless contradictions because you can't make this jibe with that and you can't make that jibe with this. So, as we go through the Sermon on the Mount, we are going to come across numerous contrasts.

And you need to understand, why don't we do that today? It's because it's part of the law dispensation that God gave to Israel. We're not under law. We're under grace.

[8 : 19] The difference is enormous. So, what we are going to do as we go through the Sermon on the Mount, we are not only going to expound on it, and I trust to explain it, particularly some very puzzling passages that are in it, but you will be able to see the noticeable contrasts between that and the Pauline Epistles.

And there are no contradictions. There are just misunderstandings because people don't understand that there are two different programs.

And now we're not under the old program. We're under a new program. That will become abundantly clear as we move on through. Now we're talking about salt and light, and Christ is addressing his 12 apostles.

And as he begins, apparently they are the only ones there. We are told in verse 1 of chapter 5 that his disciples came to him. Now, that may very well have included more than just the 12, because as I've told you before, all of the apostles, all 12 of the apostles were disciples.

But not all disciples were apostles. So, it may not have been limited to the 12, but we know one thing. And we can gather this from not only Matthew, but from Luke's account as well, that when Christ began speaking, there's probably a relatively few number there, and few in number.

[9 : 42] But as he got into this message, the crowds that had heard and had witnessed his healings, his miracles, his teachings, etc., found out where he was.

They sought him out. And the crowd is building. And the people are coming by the dozens up this hillside, because they know that this really unusual rabbi from Nazareth is teaching.

And Jesus' name by this time had become almost a household word, because we are told in chapter 4 that huge numbers went out, and crowds gathered wherever he was.

So, the crowd is building here, and by the time he finishes the Sermon on the Mount, there's a whole lot more people there than there were when he started. But when he addresses them with the Beatitudes there, he is referring to those who are there in his audience.

And he is telling these people, this is what you are. You are the poor in spirit, and yours is the kingdom of heaven. That's going to be the theme all throughout Matthew's gospel, is this business of the kingdom of heaven.

[10 : 53] And I'm not going to elaborate on that anymore, because I think we have dealt with it sufficiently. But all of the requirements and all of the behavioral characteristics that are found in the Sermon on the Mount are the requirements that need to be met by those Jews who anticipated having a position when the kingdom of heaven on earth arrived.

As he is speaking, it is merely anticipated. It has not occurred. But the idea in the mind and heart of every Jew is that it was coming.

And when God's Messiah, the Anointed One, comes, he's the one who's going to establish this kingdom. Well, John the Baptist said that Jesus is that one.

And Christ said he is that one. And the apostles believed he was that one. The religious establishment who had all the clout, influence, and power, they didn't believe it.

They didn't believe it for a minute. And the reason they didn't believe it was because Jesus of Nazareth did not meet their preconceived qualifications for what the Messiah of Israel would be.

[12 : 13] For starters, he came from Nazareth. You know where Nazareth is? Nazareth is in Galilee. Do you know what other name Nazareth goes by and Galilee goes by? Have you ever heard of Galilee of the Gentiles?

That's enough to give any Jew apoplexy to think of the Messiah coming from Nazareth in Galilee? Galilee of the Gentiles?

And wasn't it Nathaniel that said, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Of course not. So right off the get-go, they didn't accept him as their Messiah, and for numerous other reasons that we won't go into now.

But after having pronounced all of these beatitudes upon them and telling them these are characteristics that people will have who enter the kingdom of heaven, and even in verse 10, when they persecute you, blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

That's another way Jesus is saying, for they have a spot reserved for them. Those who have undergone persecution for the cause of righteousness, they have a spot reserved for them in the kingdom of heaven.

[13 : 24] And to the Jew, that was everything. Because to the Jew, that was the equivalent of eternal life. That's what they thought of regarding eternal life.

So, right away, we've got a contrast. That's not what we think of. When we think of eternal life, we think of absent from the body, present with the Lord. You go and you enter into the dwelling place of God where Jesus Christ is, and that's where we are, and never to be separated from the Lord.

That's our concept of eternal life. But it wasn't the Jews, neither in the Old Testament nor in the Gospels. It is this concept of the kingdom of heaven. And then, he as much as says, you people who are of this stripe, all of you, and this word blessed means well-advantaged.

It means happy are you. It means fulfilled. And it's all rendered in the word blessed, makarios. And it literally means you are spiritually well-off.

You may not have two nickels to rub together. You may have terrible health. But you are spiritually well-advantaged.

[14 : 48] That's the meaning of blessed here. And when he enumerates all of these things, he is telling those who are there before him, who are his disciples, all of these things are true of them.

And in addition, he tells them, and not only that, but you are the salt of the earth, and you are the light of the world. Today, we have a different kind of, what shall I say, a different kind of setting that we would attribute to the people of God.

We think in terms of the church, the body of Christ. That didn't even exist back here in the Gospels. These were just people who were already on board with God.

Let me take a moment and explain something, because this is very, very important as the New Testament opens. As you read the Old Testament, particularly if you think of Isaiah or Jeremiah, there are two of the major prophets.

If you read those books, all you have to read is the first couple of chapters of Isaiah and of Jeremiah, and you very quickly get the impression that these people of whom Jeremiah and Isaiah is speaking, and of course they're all Jews, they are not in league with God at all.

[16 : 19] And both prophets, and not only Isaiah and Jeremiah, but all the other prophets as well, they are reading them out. I mean, they are really dressing down the nation of Israel, the priests, the system, the religious system, all of those people who were in positions of authority.

They were so corrupt and so vile, and many of them idolatrous, worshiping dumb idols and statuary of gods from the surrounding nations.

And they just heap all of this judgmental language upon the nation of Israel. That's what the majority of the nation was.

Did God have any salt and light back then in that kind of a situation? He sure did. And the prophets constituted some of it.

And those who were in league with the prophets and who believed the prophets were people of faith, and they were always, always, always in a minority.

[17 : 32] In every dispensation that has ever existed, the people of God have always been in a minority. Nothing has changed. Nothing has changed.

Those who were on board with the true God in the Old Testament, those to whom Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel, those to whom he was not speaking, were those who were in league with the prophet, and they were the people of God, and they did constitute a minority.

It's just kind of, you can even go back further. You go all the way back to Noah. In the Noahic situation, in Genesis 6, things were so rotten, so corrupt, so dark, so vile, so sinful, with one family.

One family. Noah and his sons were the only ones who were in league with God.

The only ones who were obedient to God. The only ones who accepted God's revelation and God's light. The only ones. All the rest of the world was in darkness. All the rest of the world was in a rejection mode of God himself.

[18 : 56] And I imagine that Noah took a lot of ridicule and a lot of invective in building that ark. But you all know the story. Could it be that the whole world was so bad and so evil and so...

Well, that's what the text says. God looked upon the earth and behold, the whole earth was filled with violence.

You know, God has always hated violence, although sometimes sometimes He commands it. And whenever God commands violence, it's because it's the only way of dealing with a greater violence.

So there has always been a people of God, always a minority, but always in league with Him, always with an ear attuned to Him, always obedient to Him, always wanting to please Him.

But they've always been a minority. Are they a minority today? I rest my case. Of course they are. Of course they are.

[20 : 05] You are the minority. You're the minority here in this nation. God has a minority of believers in Germany. He has a minority of believers in Ireland.

He has a minority of believers everywhere all over the world, but they're always in a minority. And the vast majority are dealing with darkness on a perpetual basis and they don't even know it.

They don't have a clue and they don't have a clue that they don't have a clue. That's pretty clueless, isn't it? So this category that is set forth here is nothing more than a repetition of the way it has always been.

And in the Old Testament time, this majority of people that constituted the power brokers, the shakers and movers, the religious establishment, the well-connected priests, etc., they were as corrupt as they could be.

They were always taking bribes and Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets. They read them out for that. And they read them out for oppressing the poor and beating them down and taking advantage of them.

[21 : 16] And all throughout these portions in the Old Testament, the name of the game is might makes right. And the golden rule according to them was them that has the gold makes the rules.

That's the way it was in the Old Testament. Now let me update you a little bit to this. When Jesus Christ came on the scene and was introduced by John, was this the kind of setting that the Messiah was born into?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Was this the unbelieving element that John the Baptist had to contend with? Who do you think he was talking about when he said, you generation of vipers?

Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore the fruits meet for repentance. You say you repent? Talk is cheap. John was looking for action.

And of course they weren't bringing it. That was the religious establishment during the time Christ was ministering. That was the basis for all the conflict. They were coming from two different worlds.

[22 : 32] They were coming from the world of darkness, the world of corruption, the world of power, the world of greed. And Christ was coming from the position of truth and light and mercy and justice.

And it automatically put Christ at loggerheads with the established religious institution. Every time he turned around they were locking horns because they were as different as day and night.

Light and darkness. So when Christ says to his disciples you and those like you who are in league with God you are the salt of the earth.

You are the only thing that keeps this world from being absolutely totally corrupt. Thoroughly spoiled. You are the only thing. Now that's a pretty heady responsibility.

You stop and think about it. But it's also one of great privilege. And every person who comes to faith in Christ today is moving from spiritual darkness into spiritual light.

[23 : 38] They have shifted sides. They have left that to which they formerly belonged and have now become part of the world's enemy.

Because believers everywhere are the enemy of the establishment of darkness. Usually it's not that overt.

Usually it's more kind of underground. But sometimes it just breaks forth in obvious ways and believers become objects of outright physical persecution.

persecution. And this is what's taking place in the Mideast right now. In Egypt and in Iran where there was at one time a considerable complement of Christians.

Virtually all of them have subjected been subjected to persecution and many of them have left the country. And it's that way wherever. Because this thing this spiritual darkness every now and then has pockets that break forth and really engage in intense persecution that is very obvious and very outward.

[24 : 52] And that's what Christ is talking about in verse 11. When men cast insults at you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you on account of me. On account of Christ.

So nothing else has changed. And we've talked a little bit about the salt of the earth. And if the salt has become tasteless how will it be made salty again.

I've got a couple of things I'd just like to run by you and I want you to think about and maybe help me answer these. The darkened world deeply resents and rejects the minority who claim there are absolutes for morality.

I do not think and certainly this is true in the United States of America. We have never lived under such a heavy fog of relativism as we are today.

Everything is relativistic including people's morals and standards and values. You have yours and I have mine. And relativism says there is no such thing as an overarching umbrella of morality under which everything should function and respond.

[26 : 19] Doesn't exist. Well, that's a typical even necessary position for a secularist to take or for an atheist to take. They reject all concepts of an ultimate authority.

Who is the authority under relativism? you are. You're the only authority. Well, they recognize there are the courts and the law and whatnot who can impose penalties upon you.

But by and large, insofar as judging of morality and right and wrong, you are your own authority. That's why we say things like, well, it may be wrong for you, but it's not wrong for me.

And hey, we all know that there are subjective values and there are things that's wrong for one person that may not be wrong for another person. But that's not to do with morality.

Morality are issues of right and wrong. If a thing is right, it's right here, it's right in China, it's right in Belgium, it's right wherever. And if it's wrong, it's wrong.

[27 : 27] And I'm not talking about environmental concerns, I'm talking about the essence of moral right and wrong. I don't care where you go in the world, it's wrong to commit murder.

It's wrong. That's a moral absolute. It isn't wrong to commit murder in one place, but it's okay in another place. No, it isn't. There is that overarching umbrella that I'm talking about.

Stealing and lying, these are moral characteristics. And they're wrong in one place and they're wrong in another place. That's what we mean when we talk about moral absolutes.

And if there are moral absolutes, where do they come from? There has to be a moral law giver in order for moral laws to exist.

And that brings us right back to this position of God and being in league or in tune with Him. And those who are, are the spiritual light salt.

[28 : 32] Now, if Christians today, as opposed to believing Jews in the Old Testament or in the Gospels, if Christians today are the, not some, we are not some salt and some light, we are all there is.

there is no salt or light apart from those who are in tune with God. There is none. So, if those who are salt don't get out there and sprinkle it around, where is the saltiness going to come from?

We are the only source of it. Now, you may not like that because you may feel that it foists too much responsibility upon you. But it does.

It does. This is part of what you opted for when you came to Christ. You may not have known it, and I'm sure that God didn't explain all of the responsibilities before you came to faith. Some of you might have thought twice about it.

But this is what we bought into. And it's a solemn thing to think that, well, you know, Christians are a little bit salt here, but thank God we've got all those other sources of salt too.

[30 : 03] We've got Muslim salt, and we've got Jehovah's Witness salt, and we've got Buddhist salt, and we've got all of these wonderful religious groups, they're all salt and light.

No, they're not. They're all part of the darkness. Now, do you have any idea how it makes me feel to be saying things like that?

Not very good, because I know this CD is going out in a lot of places, and they're going to people raise eyebrows and say, who in the world does that guy think he is? To hear him tell that Christians are the only things that really count or that make any difference in this world at all.

Precisely! I don't particularly like it either. But that's the truth. We are not some salt and some light. We're all the salt there is, and all the light there is.

That's it. There isn't any more. Everything else is darkness, everything else is insipid. We are it or nothing. Now, I'll tell you one thing. Maybe if you come to grips with that like I have over the last few weeks, is it too much to say it might rekindle our interest in evangelism, in spreading some of that salt around, and some of that light around?

[31 : 38] Paul said, if our gospel be hid, it is hid to those who are lost, whose minds the God of this world has blinded.

That's another way for saying darkness. The God of this world, whose minds the God of this world, has blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.

We are the light, like it or not. And you know something? This old, darkened, sinful world is really counting on us, and yet they would be the first ones to deny it.

when people really see light shining, they tend to be drawn toward it.

I remember, I don't know if it was a story I read or a movie I saw or what, but these people were in a labyrinth of caves connected, lost, and it was just super duper pitch dark and all kinds of precipices and cliffs and everything to fall off of and fall into, and fumbling along in the dark because their light had given out, and here they were in pitch dark, walking around, and for all they knew, they were walking in circles, trying to get out of this place that was just a nightmare, and just so black and so dark you couldn't even describe it, couldn't see your hand in front of your face or even begin to, and all at once, way up there, they saw a little glimmer of light, light, ever so small and ever so distant, and what do you think they did?

[33 : 57] well, of course they did what every normal person would do, they turned around and went the other way, no they didn't, nothing mattered except getting to that light, there was a glimmer of hope, if we could just get to that light, you know where that light's coming from?

That light is coming from out of doors, freedom, rescue, escape, if we just get to the light, and I say that just to say this, the world doesn't even know what it's looking for, but you and I are in a position to give them a little bit of light, and the tendency is to go toward the light, you want whatever it is that that light comes from, and that's that way with salt too.

Can you think of anything that's more worthless than salt that isn't salty? What possible purpose could you have for it? Jesus said it's good for nothing except to just throw it on the ground and people trample it underfoot.

If salt's lost its saltiness, and I think the parallel and the application is quite obvious, there are a lot of unsalty Christians with flickering lamps for lights.

You know, the flickering lamp, you can't really tell for sure if it's on or off because it's in that in between stage. There are a lot of Christians like that. And the world gets confused by that because they don't know whether you're light or whether you're darkness.

[35 : 50] that, I think, is part of what's going on in our culture today. Have you noticed, is it just my imagination as a pastor, but it just seems to me undeniable that there has been a huge decline in interest of people's salvation, of spreading the gospel so that people can hear and come to faith in Christ?

We don't even talk about it. Years ago, we didn't do a whole lot about it, but we at least talked about it. Today, we don't even talk about it. Have you noticed that?

Or is it just me? Who do you know who's come to faith in Christ the last few years? I'm sure there are some, but nothing compared to what it used to be.

And I don't know what to attribute that to other than unsalty Christians with flickering lights. we just aren't measuring up.

And part of the reason is because religious pluralism, religious pluralism, which is the equalizing, the legitimizing of all religious faiths, no matter what they are, of giving them a place at the table and acknowledging their legitimacy.

[37 : 17] That's what the world's into now. This is part and parcel of political correctness, religious correctness. And woe be unto anyone who would actually go so far as to say all other faiths except biblical Christianity is a false faith that has nothing to do with God.

Oh boy, you want to raise Dan. Now, I can say that here. I'm preaching to the choir and you're all in agreement. But do you realize most of the churches in Springfield, if I were to stand in the pulpit and say that, people would be highly offended.

And they would say, who does this guy think he is? Where is he coming from? You mean to tell me? Hey, listen, there are good people. There are good people in the Hindu faith. There are good people who are Mormons.

There are good people. That's not the issue. Nobody's talking about good people. people. We have allowed the world to sell us a bill of goods and they have intimidated us into silence.

Because nobody wants to be called a bigot, narrow-minded, and that's what they'll call you.

[38 : 36] You better believe it. That's what they'll call you. Well, salt and light, light of the world.

If you are a light, Jesus said, men do not light a lamp and put it under a bushel.

It defeats the whole purpose of the light, doesn't it? Doesn't that really be stupid? Buy a candle, light it, and then put a bushel over it. Well, for Pete's sake, why would you do that?

That defeats the whole purpose of the light. It's supposed to be in the open where it can shine and radiate. It gives light to all who are in the house.

let your light. Let your light shine in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

[39 : 41] The darkened world deeply resents and rejects the minority who claim there are absolutes for morality and who claim to be the light.

light. And what is it that we are to spread and shine? Well, verse 16 tells us, we are to do this so that they may see our good works.

That's our light. I don't want to take away from the power of speech because we are to speak the truth, but we are also to do the truth. And in this case, the light we are letting shine and the salt that we are spreading around is supposed to make people thirsty.

Someone has said, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. And they try to apply that to Christians. You can give somebody the gospel, but you can't make him believe.

Well, that's true. But you can do what you can do with a horse, you can do with a person, too. You can lead a horse to water, you can't make him drink, but you can give him a salt lick, but it'll make him thirsty.

[40 : 57] And Christians, you and I are supposed to be just one great big old salt lick walking around on two legs.

It makes people thirsty. Do we live our Christianity in such a way that it causes people to say, I want what they've got.

There's something about that person. I can't put my finger on it. I don't know what it is, but there's something about them that's different. And you know what they're seeing? They're seeing your light. And they're seeing your salt.

And that's exactly what we're supposed to be. We're supposed to be bait. We're supposed to be people's light at the end of the tunnel. We're supposed to be a salt lick walking around on two legs.

Now, some of us are saltier than others, and some of us probably have hit a spell where we've lost our saltiness, and our fellowship with the Lord is not what it ought to be.

[42 : 01] And we all go through times like that. The ultimate way that these people can glorify God is let them see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

And the ultimate way they glorify the Father is by coming on board and joining the team. When you glorify God, it simply means that you behave yourself in such a way that God gets the credit.

You don't get the credit. God gets the credit. People are saying, I know this person, and there has to be something behind him to make him the way he is, because I know him.

I remember many of you recall our old farmer friend who's with the Lord now, Jack Neff, and he told me about his coming to faith in Christ.

And it was a couple of years, I think, after his son, Roger, had come to know the Lord. And I remember Jack sat there in my office and shook his head and said, I tell you, Pastor Wiseman, he said, I knew there had to be something to this, because I never saw anybody change like Roger did.

[43 : 25] He says, you didn't know Roger before, but I knew Roger, and something happened to that boy that made me say, this has got to be something really big, because nothing could have that kind of an effect on Roger.

Not on Roger. And he saw his son just transformed right before his eyes. And you know what he got a dose of? He got a dose of a new block of salt lick from his son, and some light from his son, and it caused him to want what he had.

Our speech is to be seasoned with salt. What does that mean? Paul refers to that, I think it's in Romans, let your speech be seasoned with salt. And that means that our words should be spoken in such a way as to create thirst in the mind of those who hear us.

It causes them to think, to want to hear more, and to know more. And largely, it's on that premise that we originated this concept of Christianity Clarified.

And those of you who have heard any of the sessions know that these are not conversational. They have no warm fuzzies in them.

[44 : 52] There's no humor in them. I'm not trying to make friends or anything like that. I'm just delivering content. And the whole thrust of this Christianity Clarified is to try to get people to think, just to think.

and each one is building upon something else that went before. And that's what we're supposed to be doing. We are supposed to talk to people in such a way that our speech is seasoned with salt.

We are to cause people to wonder, to think. Do we? I think you have to make a pretty conscious effort at it, really. We need to understand that that's part of our job description as Christians, but it's too easy just not to take it seriously.

And of course, we all know that the one who's really supposed to do that is the pastor, right? I mean, he's the one who's trained and he's a professional and blah, blah, blah. And I'm afraid I might mess it up. And on and on and on we go with our excuses.

But I think we know this is what we're supposed to be doing. And then the critical aspect is that our speech must be backed up by our attitude and action.

[46 : 04] Because if it isn't, then the charge of hypocrisy will rise to the surface and they'll nail you every time.

When we say one thing and do another, the world is not only confused, they are put off. they don't know what to make of it.

And we become a stumbling stone to them rather than a stepping stone. And this is the believer's primary obligation. And you know, all this is talking about is believers being what they are.

God isn't asking us to be anything really special, supernatural, dynamic, this or that. He's just saying, hey, will you just be what you are? That's all I want you to do, is just be what you are.

The church is supposed to just be what it is. That's all God's asking. Just live before him with our salt and light.

[47:11] And it's just to be what we are, not what we aren't. Salt can become unsalty. that is speech that is not seasoned with salt.

And light can fail to shine, a light not shining. Principal purpose for the existence of Israel in the scripture text that we read. Remember earlier? In fact, it was the very first one.

Israel's response was, I don't think we want to do that.

And they didn't. Now, Lord, you are releasing your bond servant to depart in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

And Israel said, thanks, but no thanks. We'd rather not. And they didn't. And you know something? Many in the Christian community are saying the very same thing.

[48 : 38] We are no better than they. We're saying the very same thing. I got mine. I don't know about you. We can become so complacent and so stolid and so set.

We lose our salt. Our lamps are flickering. And we really don't reach out to others in a way that we should.

And when I point this finger at you, I'm pointing three back at me. Because I'm part of that too.

And I'm not very proud of it. As Christianity clarified, it is just the beginning. But I hope you will give serious thought to this passage.

Even though it's not from the Pauline epistles, but all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, is it not?

[49 : 44] So, we are going to leave off with that, the light and the salt, and we are going to engage these great themes which have to do with the law of murder, the law of retaliation, the law of divorce, and other such laws that will come up here.

There are six of them in all. And as they read from the Gospel of Matthew, I'd be the first to admit that they are very perplexing, but I think you will see them really come to life when we shed some of the cultural considerations to these things that are radically different from ours today.

And I want you to get the blessing from it that I've already gotten in studying it, and it will be enjoyable stuff. Have you a question or comment?

[illegible]

I was thinking about this last week, and when you brought up false salt, if you can call it that, 2 Timothy 3, where Paul gives that laundry list of the last days, what people are going to look like, what they're going to act like.

[51 : 09] A lot of the commentaries I've read, not necessarily grace commentaries. In fact, I don't think one of them has gone this way, but most of them seem to assume and want to put forth that that's just going to be the condition of the world in general.

But I'm wondering your opinion on this. When Paul ends that list by saying these people, they hold a form of godliness, but they've denied the power thereof, which seems to be the gospel, power of God unto salvation.

Paul's actually talking about within the church, or the professing church anyway. Would you say that would be of the two? There could be some overlap here, but would that probably be more the context of Paul's warning?

This is what the church is going to look like in the last days? Well, the Laodicean church, and I'm not real sure about chronologically where all of these belong.

I've taught different things regarding that over the years, but the Laodicean church is characterized with its lukewarmness, and I'll be as brief as I can about this, because the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are highly controversial, and scholars are widely of different opinions, but I think that those churches that are listed there are representative of the different kinds of churches, churches that have existed from the first century.

[52 : 44] I think there are churches today that are characteristic of the Thyatira church, there are churches that are characteristic of the Ephesian church, there are churches today that are characteristic of the Laodicean church, which is a lukewarmness, and I think a congregation, a church, can move from one of those to another.

I think you can be a Laodicean church, which is lukewarm, and Christ said, because you are neither cold nor hot, I'll spew you out of my mouth. Nothing is unpalatable as warm anything.

Who likes warm coffee or warm tea or warm milk? So, it's possible for a church to be a lukewarm church, a Laodicean church, and morph into something else, or the reverse.

All I'm saying is any church, anywhere that exists, fits one of the seven churches, and I see that as a description that spans the centuries.

And I know they are given as geographical locations, but I think it is actually saying that it's a Laodicean type church, to the church of Laodicea, to the church of Thyatira, to the church of Pergamos, etc.

[54 : 12] So, and as a pastor, I don't mind telling you, I've often wondered, well, which one of these seven churches best characterizes Grace Bible Church? And where are we in that spectrum?

something every church member ought to ask themselves. So, in the last days, evil men will wax worse and worse, and Paul said, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine, because the time is coming when men will not endure sound doctrine, but will heap to themselves or gather around themselves teachers that will tell them what they want to hear.

And who can deny that that's where we are today? There are a lot of churches that have an audience that is there because what is taught is what they want to hear.

I don't want to teach what you want to hear. I want to teach what you need to hear, whether you like it or not.

That's the task of the pastor, is to teach what the word teaches and sometimes people won't like it. As old Vance Havner used to say, it rubs their fur the wrong way.

[55 : 35] The only remedy is let the cat turn around. That's the only remedy. So, we comfort the afflicted and we afflict the comfortable.

wow, what a job. And to think that I get paid for doing this. It's incredible. Incredible.

Another question or comment? Marvis? What you're talking about, I've been thinking about for a while.

when you're somewhere in your life, when you're not so sure how salty you are, and when you're maybe one grain of salt in a mess of nothing, what do you do about it?

As a church, what do we do about it? I've been wondering that for a while. Okay. I think the only thing that can be done about it, and I think there's only one right thing to do about it.

[56 : 43] There are a lot of wrong things we can do about it. We can say, well, after all, I'm not perfect. Or we can say, well, I think I'm saltier than a lot of people I know.

Or we can come up with all kinds of excuses. But the only right way to handle anything like that, when once we are convinced that we are remiss, is the word repent.

repent. Repent. That means you have acknowledged your shortcoming. You have admitted it. You've owned up to it.

Now, what are you going to do about it? More of the same? Take comfort that others are worse than you? Or, we can say, you know, I really think I've been missing the boat here.

I haven't taken my responsibilities as a Christian seriously enough. I've just concentrated on enjoying my Christianity rather than spreading it.

[57 : 49] And I want to reverse myself. I want to get serious about this. I want to understand that I am the only light and salt.

And I ought to be doing something about it. Paul said, I am a debtor. I owe a debt of responsibility to the Jew and to the Gentile.

And he spent his life paying on that debt. And the debt we owe is the gospel that we have and have embraced and are lackadaisical about giving it to others.

And we make up all kinds of excuses like, oh, they wouldn't be interested. They don't want to hear it anyway. And on and on. We can cover for ourselves in such a way that sometimes it makes me sick of me, what you can rationalize.

Lynette? This will have to be our last comment. We're just about out of time. You know, I've thought a lot about this lately too. And it's funny, if you want people to know, like the friends and the family around you, if you really care about them and you want them to know Christ, and you pray for them and for God to give you an opportunity, it's amazing what he does.

[59 : 26] When we get serious about it, yeah. I mean, because, for instance, last night we went out with some friends that are Catholics and I've had different times with them where I've been able to get closer enough to where you can say something and not feel like they're going to say, well, what the heck are you talking to me about that for?

And so yesterday, knowing that we were going to go out last night, I just got down and prayed and I said, Lord, I don't know how you're going to do it, but I'm going to trust you to give me an opportunity to talk to them and please give me the courage to say something when you give me that opportunity.

Help me to recognize it, help me to just get out there and say something. And here we were sitting at dinner and talking about everything under the sun and out of the blue, the guy says something about church.

church. We weren't even talking about church or Christianity or being Catholics or anything. And he just brought that up and I said, well, where do you go? And I knew he was Catholic and we knew that.

But he told us that they go to this Catholic church in New Carlisle and so we started talking about that. But that just brought to my mind the prayer that I asked God for.

[60 : 44] He gave it to me right there. And I didn't give him, honestly, I didn't give him the plan of salvation and talk all about Christ and everything. But another opportunity that came up is that I mentioned Roger Neff and Travis and how Travis is doing.

And she happens to know Roger or remembered him from years ago. And she's like, oh, well, I remember him. He was like a stinker. And I said, well, you know, I heard that, but I didn't know him then.

But I tell you, he goes to our church and he is, from what other people told me about his past life, he is a changed man and it's because he knows Christ now. And he became a Christian.

And she says, is that Jack's son? And I said, yeah. And she goes, yeah, I remember him too. And I said, well, he's gotten saved too. And so it's just, we're just some seeds planted.

But here, I didn't even bring that up. They did. And I think it's all because I prayed that. And, you know, I'm just hoping that they'll talk to me again another time.

[61 : 58] But, you know, you've got to be out there. I mean, if we all just hang around just other Christians, you don't have those opportunities. You've got to get out with other people and whether it's at work or what, and say something.

And stop hobnobbing with just believers. That's true. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you, dear. I appreciate that. You know, there are just so many dear Catholic people.

Well, Catholics are just like Protestants. There are saved Catholics and there are lost Catholics. And saved Protestants and lost Protestants. And the vast majority of them do not understand that salvation is not institutional.

It's personal. But they've never heard that. They don't know that. They've been told for years that you just stay in good terms with the church and you keep the sacraments up and the church will take care of you in your eternal life.

And that's the way it works. And that is coming from people in positions of authority. And he's the priest. He ought to know. And they just put that kind of trust in.

[63 : 08] And there are Protestants that do the same thing with their church. My name is on the church roll and my grandfather was a circuit riding preacher and blah, blah, blah. And they just talk like that's their ticket to heaven.

And they just don't know. Do you know why? Because they're in darkness. They're in spiritual darkness and they don't even know it. Pray with me, please.

Father, these are really solemn things that we've been talking about. And we know that to one degree or another, every one of us is flawed and has been remiss in letting our light shine and in speaking a word for Christ because we don't want to receive any unpleasant looks or any raised eyebrows.

We don't want anyone calling us names behind our back. We want to put on the proper image which makes everybody think we are something that we're not.

It's time for all of us, beginning with me, that we need to be what we are and stand with Paul who said, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God through faith unto salvation to everyone who believes.

[64 : 34] We don't want to take that glorious gospel for granted. We don't want to ignore it. And how can we who have received such wonderful blessings and eternal life from this gospel be the least bit reluctant to share it with others?

Thank you for the privilege and thank you for reawakening a sense of responsibility in my heart and we trust in the hearts of others. now when we go forth from here, may we be open and available.

We pray in the name of him who is the light of the world and has given us the privilege of reflecting that light, even Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.