

When I say “Pass the salt and turn on the light,” I am talking about Christian influence.

“Woodrow Wilson told the story of being in a barbershop one time: ‘I was sitting in a barber chair when I became aware that a powerful personality had entered the room. A man had come quietly in upon the same errand as myself to have this hair cut and sat in the chair next to me. Every word the man uttered, though it was not in the least didactic, showed a personal interest in the man who was serving him. And before I got through with what was being done to me I was aware I had attended an evangelistic service, because Mr. D. L. Moody was in the chair. I purposely lingered in the room after he had left and noted the singular affect that his visit had brought upon the barbershop. They talked in undertones. They did not know his name, but they knew something had elevated their thoughts, and I felt that I left that place as I should have left a place of worship’” (John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7*, page 236). Mr. Moody had exerted Christian influence.

Jesus used two simple, down to earth examples of Christian influence: Salt and Light. Our influence as salt deters evil and our influence as light spreads truth.

The theme of the Sermon of the Mount is inward righteousness in contrast to the external, skin-deep legalism of the Pharisees. Jesus announced this theme in 5:20.

In the Beatitudes in 5:3-12, the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described eight internally righteous attitudes God blesses: humility, sadness over sins, submission toward God and others, hungering for personal righteousness, compassion for the needy, inward purity, and peacemaking with people. If we possess these internal godly attitudes toward God and others then we will endure persecution from those who reject Christianity.

The last Beatitude is our attitude toward the world’s reaction, or in many cases pharisaic reaction, against our godliness. In the examples of salt and light Jesus gave our influence on the world or Pharisees that reacts against us.

The result of these God blessed attitudes in the beatitudes is Christian influence. We need the Christian influence of salt because the world is dead and decaying. Paul describes the unsaved as “dead in trespasses and sin.” The unsaved are the walking dead spiritually rotten on the inside. In case of Pharisees, zombies all dressed up in Sunday go to meetin’ clothes. We need the Christian influence of light because the culture is in spiritual darkness: “having the understanding darkened because of the blindness of their heart” (Ephesians 4:17). Notice, Paul did not say “blindness of their eyes” but “blindness of their heart” because they can not see their need of Christ.

**Let’s start with the**

## **1. The Christian Influence of Salt or Deterring Evil (Matthew 5:13)**

**A. First** to have the influence of salt we must become salt. Jesus said, “you are salt.” The influence we bring to bear is always the influence of who we are. In Mark 9:50, after Jesus made a powerful statement on Hell, He said, “Have salt in yourself.” Let God preserve you from eternal separation though salvation. To deter evil we must let God make us righteous through faith in Christ. First we must be saved.

**B. Next** we must live our righteousness. Salt is a preservative and antiseptic to corruption.

Back in the pioneer days of our country before refrigeration, they butchered meat in the late fall and while the meat was fresh salt cured it and hung it in the smokehouse to preserve it. So we have been eating salt cured ham biscuits a long time.

The Holy Spirit in believers is called the restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. When the restrainer is removed in the Church at the rapture, the Anti-christ comes on the scene with all of his ungodliness. Spirit filled believers hold back evil in their homes, on their jobs, and community.

When a believer walks into a room of people God’s name is no longer taken in vain, the dirty jokes stop, and the shady deals are over.

**C. Finally**, Jesus warned that salt can lose its saltiness or preservation effect.

William Thompson in his book, “*The Land and the Book*” told of a businessman who rented several houses in which to store salt. The businessman, however, forgot to cover the dirt floors of the houses and simply unloaded the salt directly on the earth. When he returned many days later, he discovered that his salt had lost the saltiness from being next to the ground. The entire supply was actually thrown into the street, where men walked upon it (Warren Wiersbe. *Live Like a King*, page 196).

Lot was this kind of saltless Christian. He lost his influence because of his overexposure to the passive acceptance of Sodomy in Sodom.

Roman soldiers were paid by salt rations. Our English word salary literally means “salt money.” But a Roman soldier who was lazy or cowardice was said to be a man who was not worth his salt (Wiersbe, page 185). Have we allowed Hollywood to desensitize us to sin? Do we passively accept what God's Word clearly condemns as sin? Then we are not worth our salt because of our lack of influence.

Abraham, on the other hand, was a salty or spiritually influential believer. Because he was not tainted with his culture, he interceded in prayer and rescued Lot. Are we an insipid Lot or salty Abraham in Christian influence on others around us?

## **2. The Christian Influence of Light or Spreading Truth**

**A. Like salt,** we must become light before we can let our light shine. Before salvation we were not just in spiritual darkness externally we were darkness. We were not just in a benighted culture, we were spiritually blind to the truth of the gospel by the god of this age (2 Cor 4). When we trusted Christ we became not just enlightened we became light: “For you were sometimes darkness, but now are your light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). Now we can light up our surroundings with "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

**B. Whereas salt speaks of who we are,** light represents what we do. Jesus said, we must let our light shine that people may see our good works. But we must be salt before we can be light.

There is an old saying, “You can lead a horse to the water, but you can’t make him drink.” But someone else said, “You can make the horse drink water if you feed him enough salt.” Horses, however, don’t refuse to drink because they are stubborn, but because unlike humans, horses when dehydrated do not receive a signal from their brain that they need water. Don’t drink because they are unaware of their need. Therefore horses are fed salt or sweet feed to make them aware of their need to drink.

Many unbelievers are totally unaware of they need Christ. They think if their good works out weigh their bad works God will let them in His heaven. They are deceived. “For by grace are you saved through faith, not of works lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8). If we are salty, God can use us to open their satanically blinded eyes (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

**C. We let our light shine around the world.** Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Now, that He is back in Heaven, He uses us like a city on a hill. In the next verse, Jesus will contrast this example with the individual believer who is like a single candle on a lamp stand. But the image of the city is our influence collectively letting our light shine. Today we do this by corporately combining lights in our local church. We can do this by supporting world-wide missions. Two billion people still have never heard the gospel or 1/3 of the earth’s population. We do this by tithing. We can also do this by surrendering to go to those who have never heard.

**D. We also let our light shine at home.** We don’t put our individual light under a bushel but on a lamp stand so we can lighten our immediate area. We let our light shine at home through preaching, singing, teaching, and witnessing. Through helping in ministries here at Gospel. AWANA saw three clubbers saved three weeks ago. Not long ago one of our teens was saved.

I remember when our youth group went and held preaching services in the Nursing Home where my grandmother lived. She was in her nineties. She would roll up and down the halls in her wheelchair announcing, “It is time to go to preaching.” She was letting her light shine. We saw unsaved nursing home residents come to Christ.

We let our light shine at home by giving a neighbor a ride to the store. Our very conversation with the unsaved can be light if it is gracious and “seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6).

Francis of Assisi said, “Preach the gospel, and sometimes use words.” The problem with this popular myth is when we preach or witness the gospel we always have to use words: “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” But perhaps what Francis of Assisi was trying to say was that we must back up those words with good works. We must first be salt and then we can be light.