



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

## Salt and Light

**Lesson Subject:** Christians must exercise a godly influence.

**L93. Date:** September 1983. **Text:** Matthew 5:13-16.

**Topic:** Jesus: Teachings of.

*“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).*

Matthew 5:16 is the key verse to this week's study of “Salt and Light.” It agrees with the central truth of the lesson: “Christians must exercise a godly influence.”

The lesson is built upon a foundation made up of these truths. (1) The Christian has an influence as “salt” and as “light.” (2) The Christian's influence is to be manifest “before men” for good. (3) Others will take knowledge of the “good works” of the Christian. (4) The faithful Christian can give a life-testimony which will “glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Watch for those truths as you continue the study of the lesson text.

The Christian witness is twofold: what he is and what he does. It is the witness of character and conduct. That is indicated in the text. Salt is salty (what it is) and light shines (what it does).

The unregenerate world of mankind cannot receive the things of God apart from divine ministry (I Corinthians 2:14). God witnesses to the unsaved through the believers in Jesus Christ. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20).

## I. YOU ARE SALT

*“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour,*

*wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (verse 13).*

**A. The Christian's function is to exercise a salty influence.** Jesus gave His disciples a great compliment in that statement. Even today, to say a person is “the salt of the earth” is to show respect and appreciation for him.

Salt was a precious commodity in ancient times. It was common for Roman soldiers to be paid in salt. (The English word for salary is from the Latin term *sale* which means “salt”!) The Greeks called salt divine. And Jesus said His disciples were “the salt of the earth.”

(1) Salt prevents decay. In hot climates without refrigeration it is common to salt down meat to keep it pure. Notice the change for the good the presence of a faithful Christian can have on the conversation of wicked men. It purifies.

To do its preserving work, salt must come into contact with that which it would purify, but it must not become a part of it. The Christian is “in” the world but he is not “of” the world (John 17:15, 16). That is why he can have that antiseptic quality which creates a pure and wholesome atmosphere about him.

(2) Salt adds flavor. One purpose of salting food is to sharpen and enhance its flavor. People put on a salt-free diet report that food tastes flat and insipid.

The Christian should show the difference Jesus makes in life. He should reflect the joy of living in fellowship with God. Jesus came to give us a life which is more abundant (John 10:10). That means the Christian life is to “overflow the edges all around.”

Life without Christ is flavorless. That is why there is such a mad craze for entertainment and fun. That is why men put into their mouths alcoholic beverages which steal away their brains. That is why some go beyond sexual immorality into sexual perversion. Many who have gone to such excesses testify that only in Jesus Christ have they found real meaning to life and joy in their hearts.

The Christian has a blessed opportunity to preserve the good and counteract the evil in his society. A society without Christian influence is not a fit place to live and to rear children. Thank God for the opportunity to live a life in this world which reflects the character of the kingdom of heaven and exerts an influence for God and good upon the world.

**B. The Christian's danger is that the salt may lose its “savour.”** Jesus warns against that very thing. The salt of Syria would lose its strength (its saltiness) if exposed to sun and wind. It would no longer be salty enough to be used. Jesus warns that the Christian can lose his influence for good if

he exposes himself to worldly indulgences.

What can be done with salt that has lost its strength? It cannot be cast aside any place, for it still has enough salt in it to blight good soil. In ancient times it was used on pathways to keep grass from growing and provide footing somewhat as we have pathways covered with gravel today.

What is the use of a Christian who has been disapproved for service (I Corinthians 9:27)? Behold the tragedy of backsliding! The world loses the potential good of the preserving and purifying influence of the Christian. He becomes “thenceforth good for nothing” in spiritual service.

Take heed to your life. You can lose your ministry of saltiness in your world. It might happen by some sinful act, sinful attitudes, or perhaps by mere idleness. Opportunities to bless people and glorify God will be lost eternally. You will suffer; your family will suffer; your church will suffer; your community will suffer; your nation will suffer; your generation will suffer if you lose your saltiness for Jesus Christ.

## II. YOU ARE LIGHT

*“Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (verses 14-16).

**A. Who is the light of the world?** “YOU are the light of the world.” The words are so placed in the Greek text that the “you” (“Ye” in KJV) is emphatic. Jesus is saying, “You, and only you, are the light.”

To whom are those words addressed? To ordinary Christians! Not just the great evangelists, the outstanding pastors, or the faithful missionary. You yourself are the light of the world. Shine, Christian! Shine!

*“Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”* (Philippians 2:15).

**B. How did you become the light of the world?** God has “called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:9). *“Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light”* (Ephesians 5:8). You became the light of the world when you were joined to Him who is *“the light of the world,”* even Jesus (John 8:12). *“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (II Corinthians 4:6).

**C. What are you to do as a “light” of the world?** You are to shine! You are to be evident in the sight and understanding of others as a Christian

who believes and behaves according to the truth of God.

The shining of a Christian will have three blessed consequences. First, it will expose the darkness of sin (Luke 12:35; Philippians 2:15). Second, it will show the cause of darkness in men (John 3:19). Third, it will show the way out of darkness (John 1:3-7). That is what a Christian testimony is all about. That is your assignment in your world.

Jesus said the reason men light a candle is to give light to those who are in the house. It is not put under a basket, but on a candlestick. *“Let your light so shine”* (verse 16).

**D. Where are you to shine as the light of the Lord?** You are to shine in the *“world.”* That term *“world”* means the system of human society in the midst of which you live. The world needs shining Christians in it today.

(1) The world is in darkness, for the devil has blinded all mankind (II Corinthians 4:3-7; Ephesians 4:18; Matthew 6:23).

(2) Only the Christian can give spiritual light in the darkness of the world. *“You and only you are the light of the world”* according to verse 14.

(3) The glory of the Christian is to turn people from darkness of sin to the light of the Lord (Colossians 1:13).

Why are salt and light used in Jesus' teachings here? Salt is the Christian influence in a general area. Light is the Christian influence in the specific sense of directing men to Jesus Christ. What one is must precede what one does: salt must come before light.

God requires each Christian to be *“salt”* and *“light”* each day. Otherwise the *“salt”* will lose its flavor and the *“light”* will be put under a bushel. Christians must exercise a godly influence.

## QUESTIONS

1. What four truths underlie this study?
2. What is the relation of character and conduct in the Christian?
3. How does II Corinthians 5:20 relate to this study?
4. What is the Christian's function as *“salt”*?
5. What is the Christian's danger as *“salt”*?
6. How does I Corinthians 9:27 relate to this study?
7. What is the Christian's function as *“light”*?
8. How is John 8:12 related to Matthew 5:14?
9. What can you do this week in your community as *“salt”* and *“light”* of the Lord?