

## “Seasoning Your World”

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become useless,<sup>1</sup> how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” (Matthew 5:13)

1. Discuss modern uses of salt.

a. How is salt used in our culture?

b. As a seasoning, do you like salt? What happens if you forget salt in a recipe?

2. Read Matthew 5:13.

a. How is the first statement of this verse different from the Beatitudes?

b. “You” is plural, and it is emphatic. To whom is Jesus speaking, and why does He emphasize YOU?

In Jesus’ day, there were three primary uses for salt. It was used as seasoning, as a preservative, and as fertilizer. Jesus was probably not focusing on just one of these uses but had in mind salt’s usefulness in general. Notice He says that “it is good for **nothing** anymore.” In other words, it is no longer effective for any of its purposes.

3. Discuss salt as seasoning.

a. Why do people notice the presence or absence of salt in their food? Would people notice “tasteless” salt?

b. What is it that makes us distinctive as Christians in this world? What makes us stand out?

c. How does this distinctiveness “flavor” the world around us (cf. Colossians 4:6)?

d. Can you identify ways in which you stand out in your world as being distinctively Christlike?

4. Discuss salt as a preservative.

a. Why was it important to preserve food? What did the salt prevent?

b. What does the Lord intend for His people to preserve (cf. Psalm 106:3; Isaiah 56:1)?

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<sup>1</sup> “Useless” is my translation of the Greek *moros*, from which we get our word *moron*. It means “foolish, useless, ineffective.” “Tasteless” makes sense if seasoning is the primary use that Jesus had in mind, but the context seems to suggest otherwise.

- c. How does a distinctively Christian life preserve these things (cf. Matt. 5:6; 6:33)?
- d. Can you identify ways in which your life serves as a guard against moral decay?

5. Discuss salt as a fertilizer.

- a. Is this a new concept to you? In what way does Luke 14:35 suggest this use?
- b. What is the purpose of fertilizer?
- c. In what ways would a distinctively Christlike life fertilize the world? What is the “effective ingredient” that we are adding that causes the growth?
- d. What are some practical things you could do to fertilize your world?
- e. Can you identify ways in which you are already fertilizing your world?

Technically, salt cannot lose its saltiness. However, in Jesus’ day salt was not refined as it is today. It wasn’t pure salt. It came from the Dead Sea area, from salt mines, and from salt marshes and included impurities like gypsum. Over time the actual salt (sodium chloride) could leach out, leaving behind something that might look like salt but that had lost its effectiveness. In addition, greedy vendors would sometimes add a bit of gypsum to the salt in order to increase their profits rendering the “salt” less effective. If too much were added, it would become totally useless.

6. Discuss Jesus’ warning about the potential for His disciples to lose their saltiness.

- a. In what ways might the distinctive character of Christ in us get leached out by the world (cf. Romans 12:2; Proverbs 13:20)?
- b. What are some practical things you can do to prevent this from happening?
- c. How might neglecting time in God’s presence (in His word, in prayer, etc.) lead to less “saltiness” in your life? What might this neglect say about what you love (cf. Matthew 5:19-21)?
- d. What desires, aspirations, activities, etc. tend to add clutter to your life? In what ways might these things diminish the distinctiveness of Christ in you? How might they crowd out Christ?

Salt that had become useless was often thrown out into the pathways or streets in front of a home, or it might be thrown onto the roof of larger homes where people would hang out. Though salt could be used as a fertilizer, this useless salt would not be thrown into the garden because it could be harmful.

7. Discuss the fate of useless salt.

- a. What does Jesus say is done with useless salt?
- b. How would its “saltiness” be determined?
- c. These are hard words, but how will Jesus determine your “saltiness” in His kingdom?
- d. Where will your “saltiness” come from?
- e. Jesus must make you “salty”, but you have responsibility, too. What are ways that the Lord has given to you that will help you grow in “saltiness”?
- f. What warning does Jesus give to those who are not interested in being “salty”?