

The Salt of the Earth

by Chuck Smith

Christians must become a positive influence in the world by living a life filled with joy and the preserving influence of God, or they will be crushed under the fallen world.

Duration: 34:44

Scripture: Psalm 5:1

Topics: "Christian Influence", "Moral Decay"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of Christians being the 'salt of the earth,' preserving society from moral decay and influencing others towards God. It highlights the consequences of losing this influence, using historical and contemporary examples to urge believers to take their commitment to God seriously and make a positive impact in the world.

Transcript

Let's turn to Psalm 5 for our scripture reading today. I'll read the first, the unnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead you in the reading of the even-numbered verses, and shall we stand to read the Word of God.

Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for unto Thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.

In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and I will look up. For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Thee. The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight, and Thou hatest all of the workers of iniquity.

Thou dost not destroy them that speak falsehood. The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy, and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple.

Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness because of mine enemies. Make Thy way straight before my face. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness, and their throat is an open sepulcher, and they flatter with their tongue.

Destroy Thou them, O God. Let them fall by their own counsels. Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against Thee.

But let none of those that put their trust in, let all of those that put their trust in Thee rejoice. Let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them. And let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee.

For Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous. With favor wilt Thou compass him as with a shield. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your blessings, and for the favor that You have bestowed upon us. And as we turn now to Your Word, we ask for the help of Your Holy Spirit, Lord, that You would give us understanding of Your truth. Guide us in Your counsels.

Lead us in Your paths. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

You may be seated. Well, we're continuing our journey now in the New Testament, Matthew's Gospel, and tonight, the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 through 7. So read it over this afternoon and join with us tonight, and go through the New Testament with us. A great opportunity to just get in and to understand the Bible and the New Testament as we start now in Matthew's Gospel and just looking at the Word of God.

This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the 5th chapter and verse 13 of Matthew's Gospel. Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under the foot of men. If you should ask me about someone, and I'd say, oh, they are the salt of the earth, what does that connote to you? They're just warm, wonderful people.

They just, you know, are wonderful to be around. They're just the kind of people that you'd like to know as a friend and like to have as a neighbor. I don't know where that phrase, salt of the earth, began.

Maybe it was with Jesus here, where he said, ye are the salt of the earth. But we do know today that it is a good title to give to someone just to say of them, they are the salt of the earth. They are wonderful people, warm, rich, good to be around.

In the Bible, we have here in Matthew's Gospel, the beginning of it, of course, is the Beatitudes. And, you know, it is the attitude that I am to have, the attitudes that would reflect my relationship with Jesus. It isn't really the do attitudes.

Many people try to tell you, well, these are the things you should do. No, this is what you are, and what you are will be reflected in what you do. Now, Jesus, having given the Beatitudes, said, ye are the salt of the earth.

You know, at one time, salt was a very valuable commodity. In fact, an ounce of salt would buy, or it would take an ounce of silver to buy an ounce of salt. They were considered equal in value, salt with gold.

And so, they would often pay wages with salt. And thus, you would hear, they would say, oh, he's not worth his salt. It means that he really didn't deserve his wages.

The word wages in Latin was salary, and thus, it again was, the word salary is the word salt in Latin, and thus, it did refer to the wages that one got for their labor. When Jesus said to his disciples, you are the salt of the earth, just what did he mean? Well, today, we think of salt as a seasoning, something that brings out the flavor in the food. It gives zest to the meal.

Much of the food would be rather tasteless without salt. Growing up, Mom always cooked cereal for breakfast. We had either oats or wheat or cornmeal for breakfast, and every once in a while, she would forget to put the salt in the boiling water before she would put in the oats or the wheat, and the first bite would tell us, Mom forgot the salt again today, because it was just flat.

It didn't really taste, you know, flavorful or good at all, and so it gives zest. It gives flavor. It brings out the flavor within the food, and as a Christian, we should really bring out zest and flavor in life.

It's interesting to go to different nations of the world and to watch the people in the busy cities as they go about their business. They seem so somber. They seem so serious.

So, well, they, you know, it just seems like there's no excitement to their life at all. They seem so sober and somber, and it just is a sad indictment against the world outside of Christ. How does the world seek to cope with this insipidness of life? Well, of course, they try to fill it up with, say, pleasure, the pleasure mania, and, of course, yesterday and, of course, today, too, we'll see the football stadiums crowded with people that are trying to just have a time of excitement and something that they can get into and cheer over and so forth, and others will just get lost in the fantasy of a movie, and they spend a lot of time just in the theater watching films and so forth and sort of getting lost in the film, and that is their way of escaping from the dullness and the drabness of life that is apart from Christ.

Some, of course, take mind-altering drugs to go into an altered state of consciousness, or others use alcohol for the same purpose, to have an altered state of consciousness where you don't have to think about what's going on around you, but you can sort of escape into this altered state of consciousness. There are some who go into compulsive gambling. It used to be that when I would go over to the churches in Vegas and the church in Reno or the church in Las Vegas and sometimes staying in a hotel with a casino, and most of those hotels plan it so you have to go through the casino to get in, and I would see these older ladies in there, and they would have cups of coins there, and they had this just sort of a blank stare on their face, and they'd drop the coin in and pull the... And you wonder, well, what's so exciting about that? Because you'd hear the thing go ding, ding, ding, ding, and you'd think, well, they just hit something.

But then it seemed to just drop another coin, and it was an automatic kind of a thing. What do they get out of that? I don't know. But yet there are people that get caught up in that compulsive gambling, and they are just, well, they're just passing through life and, you know, wasting their time.

Sadly, Christianity has not always been thought of something that is exciting and joyful. There was a time when Christians thought that it was actually sinful to be frivolous, and it was unspiritual, and, you know, that righteousness was sort of related with being very somber, very sober. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked so and acted so much like undertakers.

Robert Louis Stevenson had in his diary, I went to church today, and I'm not depressed, as though that's something that usually happens when you go to church, you get all depressed. In a world that is filled with depression, a Christian should be radiating joy. In a world filled with depression, a Christian should be relating just the excitement of serving the Lord.

In a world buried and filled with hatred and strife, Christianity should be manifested in love. A world filled with anxiety and worry, the Christian should exude confidence and hope. One of the characteristics of salt

is that it does create thirst.

Have you ever noticed how thirsty you can get after eating salty food, a bag of peanuts or a bag of potato chips? Christians, as Christians, our influence in the world should be that of creating a thirst in the lives of people that they might be thirsty for God. Our lives should be filled with joy, the joy of knowing that our sins are forgiven, the joy of knowing that we're going to be with Him when He establishes His kingdom upon the earth. The world seeks and it longs for joy, but all of the world can find is happiness.

You say, well, what's the difference between joy and happiness? Well, joy is a constant and it is not dependent upon my outward circumstances. If I have the joy of the Lord in my heart, I can be going through a very painful and difficult condition in life, but yet the joy of the Lord remains. Happiness, well, that's conditional.

It's conditioned on my outward circumstances. If things are going well and all, then I'm happy, but happiness is a variable and it can change in just a moment of time. If I should, say, offer to you to pay your past due rent, you find that you can't pay your rent, you come to me and I say, well, here, let me write you out a check, and how much is your rent? And I write out a check for the amount of your rent and I hand you the check.

You can be all so happy. Oh, that wonderful Pastor Chuck, he paid my rent this month, and he's so sweet, you know, and kind. And you can be just filled with happiness until you went to cash the check and you find out that it's insufficient funds.

And so then you think, oh, that rotten guy giving me a bad check for my rent. And so, but the emotions, you see how rapidly they can change from great joy and all, oh, I'm going to pay my rent, to, oh, you know, that rat, he gave me a bad check, you know. So John tells us that in the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, as Jesus was with his disciples there in the temple area, and he watched the people as they were, you know, worshiping on this, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

He said to his disciples, if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. And he who drinks of the water that I give, out of his innermost being there will gush torrents of living water. John writing later, understanding more fully what Jesus was saying, added this commentary.

This he spake of the Spirit, which was not yet given. What did he say of the Spirit? Well, when you're filled with the Spirit, there's just this unutterable joy flowing forth out of your life, like living water. And so, it was just, Jesus said, but you drink of this water, you're going to thirst again.

The water of the world, the worldly pleasures, and these worldly activities that people are looking to, to find happiness. You drink of that water, but it doesn't satisfy. You're going to thirst again.

So, Jesus was referring to that deep spiritual thirst in the heart of man for God. You need God in your life. God created you that way.

Your life is incomplete without him. And there's that consciousness of life's got to be something more than what I've yet experienced. And thus, there is that searching and that quest for that which is going to fully satisfy that conscious need that you have in your life for something more.

As David said, as the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God. My soul pants for the living God when I shall stand before him. Paul wrote that God created man subject unto this

emptiness, and that by the design of him who created us, that is, that emptiness that you're trying to fill, it's an emptiness that was created by God, and God created it so that you would find the fulfillment of it only in him.

Nothing else can satisfy, as I said, as Jesus said, drink of this water, you will thirst again. In the days of Jesus, one of the basic purposes of salt was a preservative. Not just something to give flavor and zest to the food, but it was to preserve food.

When they would butcher an animal, they would take the meat that they could use immediately and roast it, but that meat that they did not need immediately, they would salt it down in order to kill the surface bacteria because they didn't have sufficient refrigeration in those days, and so the meat would be salted down to preserve it, and thus salt was used as a preservative, and in those days, they thought of it as a preservative, and I believe that Jesus is saying, you're the salt of the earth, is saying that we should have a preserving influence in the society in which we live, the world in which we live, to keep it from rotting. If the salt has lost its savor, though, it's really good for nothing but to be cast out, Jesus said, and triumphal under the foot of man. When church denominations appoint admitted homosexuals as bishops, and lesbians as pastors, how can that church be a purifying influence in the world in which we live? The salt has lost its savor, and then it's good for nothing.

When pastors are denying the inspiration of the scriptures, the deity of Christ, and even denying sin itself, the salt has lost its tang, and the result is rotteness. Our nation was founded as a Christian nation, and our constitution quotes the Bible four times more than any other source. In the beginning of our nation, back in 1884, in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, there was a ruling that stated no free government now exists in the world unless Christianity is acknowledged as its religion of the country.

And yet, in spite of that, back in 1884, a decree from a judge in Texas recently stated any student saying the name of Jesus at a school graduation ceremony will be jailed, the threat of this judge. In the Delaware Constitution, it declares everyone appointed to a public office must say, I profess faith in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, his only Son. But now, those that run for office, if they mention God or Jesus, they are criticized by the media if they profess to have a faith in Jesus Christ.

George Washington said it is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible. Now, in 2004, the courts have ruled that the display of the Bible outside of the Houston courthouse was unconstitutional and ordered it removed. Patrick Henry said it cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians.

Not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 1962, the Supreme Court banned public prayer in our schools. At that time, the three major discipline problems in the schools were talking in class, chewing gum, and making noise.

Today, 50 years later, the problems in school are murder, drugs, gang fights, teachers having sex with students, and girls becoming pregnant. Just a short time, but we've ruled God out, we've ruled the Bible out, and we're suffering the consequences. As they say, they've sown the wind, they'll reap the whirlwind.

Abraham Lincoln said that the ideas of the classrooms in one generation will create the ideas of government in the next. A university professor declared to his class that the presence of evil in the world proved that there was no God. A student responded, isn't it true that darkness is measured by the absence of light? That total darkness means a total absence of light? The professor acknowledged, yes, that is

true.

The student continued, isn't it true that cold is measured by the absence of heat? And that a minus 460 Celsius is a total absence of heat? And again, the professor agreed, it is true. He then said, isn't it true that evil is measured by the absence of God, and total evil would be a total absence of God? That student was Albert Einstein. If salt has lost its savor, the Lord said it's good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of man.

Under certain conditions, salt can lose its tang or saltiness, and when that would happen in the ancient days, they would throw the salt out onto the dirt pathways to kill the vegetation, and thus it literally was trampled under the foot of man. Look at the church in Russia. Dr. Kennedy in his book *America, A Call for Greatness*, quotes a Soviet educator speaking of Russia, we were once a great Christian nation, but we turned our backs upon God and we have destroyed ourselves.

The church had lost its savor and was crushed under the heel of communism. England was once the center of world missions. During that era, the British Empire ruled much of the world.

The boast was that the sun never sets on the British Empire. The church became weakened, the salt has lost its savor, and now fewer than 6% of the populace of England attend church on Sunday. And England is rapidly becoming a Muslim nation.

It is reported that there are now more mosques in England than there are churches. Jesus is actually giving to the church an ultimatum, and that is do your job, become a savory influence in your society, or you'll be crushed under that fallen society. America is going down fast, and who's to blame? The church and everyone, the church is to blame, and each one of you who failed to vote for righteous leadership in our elections.

I was shocked at the Democratic Convention this week in Charlotte, North Carolina, when they discovered the oversight of leaving God out of the platform for the future. And so Mayor Villagrosa from Los Angeles made three calls to the General Assembly to correct this omission and to place God within the platform of the Democratic Party this year. But after the third attempt, when he did not get the majority vote necessary for that inclusion of God, he then took and brought his gavel down and said, you know, approved, as amended, but then it resounded with a bunch of boos, and the people were angry that he would make that declaration when it was obviously not voted in the majority by the people.

So as I heard that, I realized, good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of man, the salt has lost its savor. I wondered as he did that and as I heard these people crying out their displeasure for his inclusion of God into the platform, I thought, is this America? It's surely not the America I grew up in, and it is a sad indictment against our nation today in that I'm afraid that we're close to that point where the salt has lost its savor and is soon to be crushed under the foot of fallen humanity, maybe under the Muslim religion. The homosexual community does not comprise a very large percentage of our population, and yet they have elected a large number of people to public office who are actively and aggressively promoting their pro-homosexual agenda in the legislature of our state and across our nation, creating laws that will undermine the family and the moral strength of our nation and will guarantee our nation's demise to a second-rate power.

As Paul said, knowing the time, high time that we awake out of our sleep. Wake up, church. We must either become a positive influence for good or we'll be trodden under the fallen world.

It's time to really get serious about your commitment to God, and your commitment must be greater than just an hour on Sunday morning. Or one morning, we will wake up to discover that we've been crushed under the foot of the fallen world. May God help us in these critical days.

Father, we pray that our hearts might be stirred with the reality of what is happening in the world in which we live. When we see, Lord, the declining influence of the church. When we see, Lord, even the declining influence of your spirit within the church.

And Lord, we see the downward trend and we realize that we're on the wrong path. We pray, Father, that you'll help us. And that you'll stir us as a nation.

And that we might again turn back to you and seek your face. And Lord, allow you again and invite you again to be a part of our lives. And of the nation and the government in which we serve and live.

And so, Lord, we just pray, guide us today. Fill us with your spirit. And Lord, may we indeed become the salt of the earth.

May we become that preserving influence that you would have us to be. May we create, Lord, a thirst in the lives of others to know the power and the joy of your Holy Spirit working in their lives. We ask, Father, in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today and so we would encourage you. If God has spoken to your heart and looking at your own life, you know, are you indeed the salt of the earth? Are you having an influence on the society in which you live? Are you making a difference? And if not, why not? And maybe it's because your relationship with the Lord isn't all that it should be.

And so we would encourage you today to just seek the Lord. These pastors are here to pray with you and to pray for you that your life might become a powerful influence in your neighborhood, in your schools, in your workplace, and that God might use you in these days to be an influence for good and for righteousness wherever you are. So may the Lord be with you and may He challenge you to indeed become the salt of the earth for His glory, for His sake.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

God bless you.

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