

# Sermon on the Mount: Good for Nothing

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining saltiness, which is the quality of moral character that enables us to influence the world for God.*

**Duration:** 49:03

**Scripture:** Numbers 32:23, 2 Chronicles 7:14-15, Matthew 5:13, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 10:12, 2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Peter 3:17

**Topics:** "Sermon on the Mount"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not taking the grace, wisdom, and power of God for granted. He highlights the need for individuals and nations to address moral and spiritual decline. The preacher uses examples from the Old and New Testaments to illustrate the consequences of sin and the importance of seeking God's forgiveness and guidance. He also warns against worldliness and encourages believers to live in a way that influences the world for God rather than being influenced by the world against God.

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## Transcript

There is a verse of scripture which says, be sure your sins will find you out, and mine have found me out. In attempting to expound the Sermon on the Mount, or the early part of it, we have been going through different passages, and unwittingly, I believe, I omitted something which has been of concern to two or three people in the congregation, and I have been called to books, and have been asked why I missed a certain part, a certain section of a passage, and I have been requested to address myself to a very challenging text. Now, I ought to say that I did not omit this purposely, but it must have been one of those mornings when the clock went faster than it should, and the earth did not stand still.

So, I covet your prayerful help tonight as we turn to a passage of scripture which, indeed, is very challenging. You find it in Matthew chapter 5, and it's verse 13, part of which we have considered, but the problem, the heart of it, we must have omitted. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Now, we have certainly considered that major statement with which the verse begins, indicating that members of the kingdom, citizens of the kingdom of our Lord, are salt, and, as the following verse says, are light as well. But it's this question of the salt losing its savour and the question of our Lord, which he

does not answer. If the salt loses its saltiness or its savour, is there any means whereby that salt can retrieve its character? Or is it true to say here, and is this the final word, when our Lord says, according to one of the translations, that it is good for nothing anymore.

Now, let's look at this straight in the eye tonight. Let's come to it by way of reason and a little bit of wisdom, I trust. First of all, we look at the possible deterioration that is here envisaged.

If the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? Or loses its savour, as the King James Version puts it. Now, the implication of these words are fairly obvious. Though all Christians are, by their very nature and constitution, capable of acting as salt in the society, it is possible for any and for every believer, temporarily at least, to lose something of that saline characteristic.

I suppose you would say that this is what is implied by the word backsliding, which is used, of course, in the Old Testament. It is possible for us to lose this quality of salt or this quality of holiness or of sanctity. People who have served their God as moral antiseptic barriers, standing against the encroachments of evil and of sin, at one stage in their lives, have been known, either for a period or for the rest of their lives here upon earth, to have succumbed, to have given way to the kind of evil they once stood against.

And not only that, they have, in the process, become, as far as human eyes could see, utterly useless as witness to the saving grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that is the problem. That is the implication of these words.

That is the kind of deterioration that is here envisaged. And so you find, everywhere in the New Testament, really, you will find the clarion call for the people of God in every age and in every circumstance and situation to give due consideration to the building up of their Christian life. To that which is spoken of as holiness or sanctity or sanctification.

And you find the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter, in one way or another, not using the same terminology, but expounding the same basic truth as our Lord Jesus Christ here. They warn us and they woo us at one and the same time. They warn us against walking in certain ways which, if we will take them, we shall lose our sanctity, our purity, our capacity to influence the world for God.

On the other hand, they encourage us and they woo us to take that path in life along which we can discover the grace of God and the inspiration to live in a manner that we can influence the world for God rather than be influenced by the world against God. Illustrative of the way in which the rest of the New Testament does this, for example, is the summons of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. If you think you're standing firm, he says, be careful that you don't fall.

And again he bids them examine themselves and see where they stand in the face. If they are standing at all. And all this is with a view to making sure that they maintain what moral and spiritual pungency they have.

Or if they've lost it, that they should seek to regain it. The Apostle Peter likewise writes, Therefore, dear friends, he says, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. These are purely illustrative of the way in which the rest of the New Testament comes and teaches us the same basic principles as here underlie our Lord's words.

This kind of deterioration then takes place when instead of rendering implicit obedience to God and His Word, a believer rebels. Becomes self-willed, goes his own way and moves out of intimate, transforming fellowship with God. A believer maintains his saltiness, to use the NIV language, a believer maintains his saltiness only insofar as he's living in real fellowship with God.

Take a man or a woman out of fellowship with God and anything can take place. Without me, apart from me literally, Jesus said, severed from me with the least space between you and me, you can do nothing. And that is true.

If a branch is severed from the vine, it cannot bear the fruit of the vine. And if we are severed from our Lord Jesus Christ and anything comes in between, then we cease to draw upon His life and His fruit is not seen in us. To come back to the language here, the salt thus loses its pungency, its strength and is liable to degenerate to an extent that instead of frustrating the evil in the surrounding world, it even aids the spread of evil.

Now, perhaps it is better to illustrate this rather than simply to confine ourselves to exposition of the principles. There are a number of very tragic incidents recorded in Scripture where this kind of thing took place. We were referring to some this morning on a different level, slightly different.

In a sense, the theme this evening runs exactly parallel with that which occupied us this morning. Have you noticed how there are in Scripture a number of men who really occupied most strategic places for God, who nevertheless at some time in their lives slipped in this way? And they lost for a moment at any rate this pungency, this saline property and they ceased to be able to influence men and women for God. Take Abraham, for example.

Even the godly Abraham, man of faith and man of good works that he was, on two different occasions in his life, separated by a number of years, on two different occasions, tried to save his skin by persuading his wife to lie. Now, this may appear to some people as something very trivial. But in a man of Abraham's stature, in a man of Abraham's spiritual understanding and capacity, it's something quite serious.

On two occasions, the one in Egypt and the other in Gerar, the one recorded in Genesis 13 and the other in Genesis 20, he had a beautiful wife and he was afraid that if he went into certain territory, people would eye his wife and they'd not only steal his wife from him, but possibly get rid of Abraham in order to have Sarah for themselves. And so, going into these two places, he tried to persuade Sarah to save his own skin by lying about it. Now, you see, something's gone wrong there.

He has lost his saline properties, he's lost his sanctity, he's lost the pungency of the new life of faith. That's not the last word about Abraham, by the way, but that is an incident. The salt lost his savor and Abraham could not witness for the great God who brought him a thousand miles along the Euphrates Valley.

What could he say about a God like that to the Egyptians or to those in Gerar when he himself is so doubting God? Nothing at all, see. It crippled him. Classical Old Testament illustration probably is that of King David, of course.

David's tragic lapses are even more familiar, I suppose, than those of Abraham. You remember the story, allowing his eyes to be attracted by the spectacle of a woman bathing on the housetop. He let down the defenses, the defenses of his soul, and he sinned, first of all, in his mind, in his heart.

But not only in his mind and in his heart, then he planned and he schemed and he got the woman over to him. You remember what happened. I don't need to go into the sordid details of David, King of Israel's great sin of adultery.

And then he tried to cover that up and he lied and he planned someone else's murder and he tried to cover that up again and he lied and lied again over and over again and it snowballs until the poor man doesn't know what to do next. He lost his saline properties. He ceased to be salt and the tragedy, of course, in the life of David is to be seen in his own family.

And I don't mean to go into this in any detail tonight, but I would suggest to you, if you really want to see what happens in the wake of a slip like this, if slip it was, then you read the story. Because this man found that he simply could not control his family sexually from that day forward. Morally, they were out of control and you see the poor man couldn't say anything to them because he'd set such a bad example.

God forgave the penitent soul so that even though his sins were a scarlet, they were as wool in the sight of God. But sin leaves its mark. The salt had gone and the corruption of the world around moved into the soul of the great man.

And during that brief time, however brief, however long it was, it was comparatively brief, it set a going, a whole tide of events that David ruled until the day he died. A salt had lost its savor. When you move to the New Testament, I suppose the outstanding illustration is Simon Peter.

Not morally in the same sense as David, of course. We have no reason to believe that of Peter. But were it not for the presence with him of one who was sufficiently caring and kind to challenge him and courageous, of course, to challenge him when he said the wrong thing or where he wanted to go in the wrong direction and then to extricate him after he had gone in the wrong way, I don't think we would ever have had in our New Testament two letters that bear the name of Simon Peter.

You remember our Lord Jesus had to tell him one day or was glad to tell him on one occasion, delighted to tell him, Simon, Simon, it's not flesh and blood has revealed this to you now, but my Father in heaven and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. But the next day or two days later, not very long after, couldn't have been, Jesus has to speak to him and says, get behind me, Satan, for you're no longer in tune with the things of God but with the things of men. Satan, get behind me.

This is the man who denied his Lord with oaths and with curses and said, I never knew the man, don't know anything about him. Peter, how on earth can you do that? Well, you see, all the salt has lost its savor. Brothers and sisters, this can happen to churches and it can happen to individuals.

There are communities of God's people that can lose their savor. There are two churches, especially in the New Testament, that lost this and they lost the ability to influence the world outside morally and spiritually. There is Corinth and there is Laodicea.

There may be others. In other words, whatever happened thereafter, at least over a period, they knew nothing of the power and the pungency of a holy life to influence men and women for a holy God. Now, how does this happen? Well, a number of explanations are suggested.

I'll just mention two or three things as we pass. Perhaps, it is in some measure due to a defective evaluation. I'm sure this has got something to do with it.

Let me refer particularly to a defective evaluation of the weakness of one's own soul on the one hand and of the subtlety and the strength of sin and Satan on the other. And you see, we are all prone to this. We are all prone to think better of ourselves than God does very often.

And we are all prone to think that we can cope when God, in His Word, says we cannot cope alone. But we think we can. And we are all prone to believe that Satan is a figment of the imagination, that there is no malign, evil, supernatural power arrayed against us.

And so we think we can cope again. We can go into evil situations with our eyes open and we go in, and we say like Simon Peter, oh, we can cope. We are wiser than God.

And so the manner in which we evaluate ourselves and the manner in which we evaluate circumstances is superficial. Therefore we run into unnecessary risks. We play with sin.

In Paul's words, we make provision to the flesh or for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. And you make provision for the flesh. You get the kind of book on your table or by the side of your bed that will feed the flesh, the beast in you and you will sin sooner or later.

You get involved in the kind of music that will arouse your passions and don't be surprised if your passions run amok with you. Let us be sure that if an Abraham a David and a Simon Peter can be seduced to sin in the manner in which Scripture affirms and thus lose their salient pungency for however brief a period, then we are not immune. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.

We do well to remember Paul's words that we were thinking of this morning in part. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, no.

I beat my body and I make it my slave so that after I have preached to others I myself will not be disqualified. Defective evaluation. Defective separation.

Followers. Moral decline and spiritual disasters are almost if not invariably traced to a defective separation from what we know from the word of God to be wrong, to be sin. Now it is true of course that worldliness is essentially a matter of the heart.

It's a quality of spirit. It's a way of judging things. It's a spirit.

It's an attitude. But the fact is you see that that worldliness in the heart as a spirit as an attitude can be quickened, can be fanned to a blazing fire by people I talk to, by the things I look at, by the programs I watch, by so many things. And therefore I have to be wise not to indulge, not to get near to the things that can fan the flames of passion until they blaze in my soul and master me.

We have to be careful there. Going into the zoo you have seen as I have seen many a time don't feed the beasts or don't feed the lions or don't feed the bears. Well the poor bears have to get something to eat don't they? Of course they get their food.

Why not feed the bears? Well you see you give the bear a biscuit and he may want the hand that gives the biscuit. That's the point isn't it? And he may want the hand the arm behind the hand. You give the bear a little and he'll want more than you're prepared to give.

Do you know our passions are just like that. You start giving here and there and your lusts and mine are still so powerful they may say I want more and you're under control. Brothers and sisters that is the story of a myriad moral lapses in this city tonight as well as elsewhere.

You know the psalmist had the secret we think that he lived so long ago that he wasn't in fashion but he knew it all. Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked nor stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful there has to be a wall of separation between the man of God and the person who is against God. And if you and I if you and I don't maintain that for the glory of God and the well being of our soul we shall lose something that will make us incapable of influencing the world for God.

Now let me distinguish here. Very often you can win members of the society for yourself when you cannot win them for God. Anybody who is a winner a seeker for the souls of men anyone who is a fisher of men will long have discovered that it is possible to make friends of people and make them think very much of you without thinking without making them think much of God.

This is one of the danger of preaching and of evangelizing especially on the personal level. It is possible to leave an impression and to draw the gaze of men and women upon you and you may become acceptable. You may you may you may be able to sell yourself.

But what's the use of selling yourself if you if they do not receive the God you represent. And the Bible makes it abundantly clear that unless you and I have these characteristics of holiness we cannot properly represent the God of the Bible. We must share in his holy character.

This is not all there is to be known about God. This is not all there is to be expressed of God of course. But this is something this is basic.

And in a world such as that in which you and I live tonight this is cardinal. A defective evaluation a defective separation and a defective consecration of course. That brings me to the second main thing.

The imponderable devaluation involved here. Let me give you the King James translation which I like very much. It is therefore good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

Those are strong words aren't they? The incalculable tragedy involved in moral and spiritual deterioration is forcefully exposed in these arresting words. And their echo is all the more terrifying when we remember that these very words good for nothing came from the lips of one who was not given to exaggerations. Now if I heard some people say that I don't think I'd worry all that much because they're given to exaggerations.

But when I hear those words coming from the Son of God when I read the mode and the method of his teaching and the way he was so accurate in his description of things and of people when I read that and I hear him say this I must say to myself you've got to take this seriously. Now what does this mean? Well first of all I think it points to a functional deterioration. The salt can become incapable of functioning as salt if it is right to speak in that way.

The functional deterioration of salt demands our attention then in the first place. Salt that has lost its character has lost its distinctive purpose and meaning in life. Salt was meant to perform its distinctive function by just being itself.

Getting into touch with people rubbing into things and just being what it was. A salt doesn't make a lot of noise. If you put it in the right place and it works it does something.

And its presence becomes felt. You see people wince. There's salt in the wound.

By just being itself it performs its work. It is as simple as that. Without its distinctive character however it becomes literally good for nothing.

God's word assures us that without holiness without the quality of salt in our moral character we are actually in the same category ourselves. We become good for nothing. In the absence of this our service whatever its nature will be in vain as far as God is concerned.

It will not influence the world against sin nor for God. Now the potential destination of such savourless salt is given in this verse again. What do you do with salt like that when it loses its savour loses its saltiness? What can you do with salt like that? Its potential destination is described in terms of this challenging word.

If the salt loses its saltiness how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men. Now behind that there is a social usage which I think helps bring out the truth. Now behind that there is a social usage which I think helps bring out the truth.

Palestinian bakers used ovens in the open air. They did their baking out in the fresh air in New Testament times. In order to retain the heat in their stoves and to stop any coldness from the earth beneath coming up and taking the heat out of the stoves between the tiles on which the stoves stood and the earth beneath they placed a fairly thick layer of salt.

Now I can't explain the chemistry of it because somebody else will have to do that. But I know for a fact that this is what happened. And they had this thick layer of salt between the tiles on which the oven would stand and the earth beneath.

And apparently the coldness of the earth was not transmitted then to the ovens. But now when the salt had been between the tiles and the earth beneath for some time it became completely insipid. Absolutely insipid.

If you damped your finger and put it in the salt and put the salt to your tongue you just wouldn't know that it had been salt. There was no saltiness to it at all. No savour.

It was without savour without taste at all. There was nothing to it. Now what do you do with salt like that? Well, says our Lord Jesus and he's quoting what was absolutely true to fact.

There's only one thing to do with it. Throw it out on the path where people walk. It's no good.

There is nothing at all. No positive use. No value to it.

You can do nothing with it. Just let people trample on it. It may help make a path.

You can walk over it. It is the very Son of God who applies this usage to Christian people who lose their saltiness. They thereby become functionally useless and potentially valueless.

Men just walk over them and trample them to a powdery pulp. They have lost totally lost the capacity to influence men and women for God. That's what he's saying.

I think of Lot in Sodom. He was promoted there. We're told that he sat at the gate.

He was a kind of city councillor or town councillor or whatever it means. That's the equivalent. And he sat with the wise people at the gate.

Lot, a man from abroad, a man from a distant place. But here he was in Sodom. He's got on so well and he's so rich now.

He's got a home of his own and he's got children and he's got a wife from Sodom. Ah, yeah. But at what cost, Lot? You read the story.

I won't tell you what it says. But you read the story and you will see that Lot had become just like salt without savor. Totally incapable of saying or doing anything that would stem the tide or influence even those who'd married his daughters.

He had no influence at all on the whole Sodomite community. Were it not for the infinite mercy of God he would have been judged with them. And that brings me to the most important thing with which we shall come to a close.

The practical consideration that is stressed here. The question that is asked by our Lord. How can it be made salty again then? How shall its saltiness or saltiness be restored? Now you notice that our Lord's asking the question implies the difficulty of restoration.

He who was able, I wonder, can we really get this in perspective? You see, our Lord never found great difficulty in doing anything he did. He was never short of resources. When he spoke the word, it was done.

When he touched a diseased body, it responded. When he spoke to the waves, they were stilled. When he touched the leper, he lost his leprosy.

When he put his finger on the tongue of a man who was incapable of speech, his tongue was loosened. When he called Lazarus from his grave where he had been for over three days, the dead came forth to life. But the sovereign Son of God here asks a question and implies the difficulty of restoring its saline properties to salt that has lost its savour.

He doesn't answer it. He wants to convey the impression this is a very difficult thing to do. And my friends, if the Son of God thinks thus, you and I should take that very seriously.

He does not answer the question here at any rate. I'm not sure that it would be correct to say that our Lord Jesus Christ doesn't answer the question in the rest of His teaching. But here He does not answer it.

He poses the question and He says it is exceedingly difficult. How can it be done? And He leaves the question unanswered. You see, the point is it is a human impossibility.

A human impossibility. Now, the Word of God nevertheless announces the possibility of restoration for Christian people who have lost their saltiness, the saltiness in their character. The Word of God in the Old Testament and in the New does announce good news for the backslider.

And of course, it is to this we've got to come. But we've got to see it in context. Our Lord wants us to see the difficulty of this.

And we must not take it for granted. We must not presume upon the grace of God nor the wisdom of God nor the power of God that can effect the change again. But it is possible.

And I cannot close without coming to that. The Bible is full of it in one way or another. Let me just illustrate that.

As, for example, when in the Old Testament some of the writers speak of how to deal with national decline on a moral and spiritual level. Or in the New Testament when John tells us what to do with the sin that we become conscious of individually in our lives. Take the first.

Who is it among us who doesn't, who hasn't tried to memorize and doesn't remember those great words of 2 Chronicles 7, 14 and 15? What shall we do when the judgment of God is upon the land? Upon the soil? Upon the seasons? Upon the harvest? Or what should have been a harvest? What do we do when the judgments of God are abroad upon the land? Well, says the Old Testament, there's a way out of that too. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. So there is a way on a national level of seeing the tide turn again.

There is a way of coming back from the borders of disaster as it were and to be retrieved and redeemed. Or come to John's great classical words to individuals and to churches, but churches even as individual members of them in 1 John 1, 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There is a way of cleansing.

There is a way of pardon. There is a way of renewal. Yes, thank God, his word announces such a possibility for men and women who have lost the purity and the sanctity they once possessed.

Moreover, it does so illustratively as well as didactically. We have referred to Abram and to David and to Peter. And we didn't say the last word about any of them.

The last word concerning Abram, David and Peter is not concerning their sin and their waywardness and savourless moral character, not on your life. They were brought back into fellowship with God. The moral qualities they lost were regained again.

The pungency, the moral strength, the purity, the grace, the sanctity, it all came back again and made them strong in the God they served. That's the story of the three of them. How did it happen? Well, my friends, let me repeat.

What is humanly impossible is possible with God. The God who begins a saving work in our hearts is not nonplussed when the devil comes in and makes a mess of it. The God who comes down to the gutter of sin and lifts us up from the mire and from the clay and purges our sin away and transforms our heart, he is a God who is well able to deal with things when the devil comes in like a flood and mars the vessel again.

And in the potter's hand there's something hard and unyielding and the potter has to break it again and make it into a new vessel. But he's able to do that. See? It is impossible with man, but what is impossible with man is possible with God.

He can reclaim that pungency. He can give back that saline quality. He can make you holy and wholesome again.

He can make you win what you've lost. Scripture is full of encouragement in this respect, though not without other incidents and passages that point to the sheer difficulty of renewal. And we've got to remember that.

I repeat, we must not presume upon the grace nor the wisdom nor the power of God, but there is no way back apart from God. But he's able. The truth is then that the God who began a good work of grace in our hearts and in our lives is well able to perform it, to perform the purpose he had when he began that work.

And though all hell obstruct the way, our God is able to bring out of the most unyielding clay and crude the kind of vessel that he originally planned. And in due course, he will. But what then is the way back for us if we have wandered and gone this way and we're conscious that really we've lost this pungency, we've lost this saltiness from our lives? What is the way back? Well, the way back is signposted everywhere in Scripture.

First of all, there must be repentance. Now, repentance is not something that you shout about. It's more likely something that you sob about.

And it's something that you do more in a corner than before the public eye. And repentance is always there's more of it out of sight than there is in sight. It's not what you say that is all that important.

It's what you do in your heart, how you feel about it before God. Repentance is a change of mind. And when the mind changes, when the attitude changes, when you begin to hate what you previously loved, you're on the way back.

You now return spiritually into that place of fellowship with God where you want to be conformed to His image. And if repentance is genuine, you will want to yield fully and completely to Him as He brings you back and embosses upon your life afresh the image that has become marred and indistinct. But we must return.

We must repent. And we must rededicate ourselves anew to Him and say, Oh, Lord, I don't want to go this way again. And by Your grace, I shall not go this way.

But it must be Your grace. It must be Your power. Lead me by Your word.

Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil and from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. I can't do it, but You can.

And brothers and sisters all around us in this service tonight and in this church, there are men and women who are doing just that. This is the thing that brings joy to any pastor. What else is there in a world such as this but to see the God of all grace stepping into situations and making the weak strong in Christ? I'm reminded as I close of one of the noble lords of the United Kingdom who found the Savior and had the great capacity for speaking about his Lord to all and sundry.

And there were people who used to run after him because he was such a renowned figure and ask him questions about his faith. It meant such a transformation. One day he was going into a railway station.

He was going by train somewhere. And someone that he had known in business had heard of this great transformation in his life and he just caught up with him as he was going into the station. A whistle was going, meaning the train was going out.

And the fellow asked him, Look, look, Lord so and so. He says, What is there in life that can make me strong where I am weak? And he took his pencil out of his pocket and he put it on the window of the train. You see this pencil standing upright, he said.

Stupid, said the man, you're holding it. That's the secret, he said. I can do no more than this pencil to stand on my own two feet.

But whether the train is going or whether the train is stopping, whether the wind is blowing or whether the rain is coming, he says, I'm holding it and it can stand because I'm holding it. My God holds me. If the salt has lost its savor, it's a very sad day.

It's a day for mourning. It's a day for tears. It's a day for sorrow.

But it's not a day to lose hope. For the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is such that when God sets about to do a saving work, there is nothing that can frustrate Him and we have only to turn to Him and cry to Him and He will come and He will finish what He has begun. It may be a very delicate operation and it may even be a painful one, but He is able to save to the uttermost.

Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for this very challenging Word from the Gospels, from the sermon of our Lord on the mountainside and we pray, O Lord, that You will make it speak to our consciences and to our lives to discourage us to sin, but nevertheless to encourage us with the knowledge that You are able to do what was humanly impossible as far as common salt was concerned.

We need not become the trampling ground for human feet. You can lift us up again and You can give us the capacity to influence men and women for Yourself. O God, grant to each of us and grant to all of us in concert, in communion, in fellowship that we may be able to do this increasingly.

Lord, purify Your church to meet the need of this hour. In a very dirty world, we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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