

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

24- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 4

The Citizens of the New Kingdom are “Salt” and “Light”

Church August 07, 2022

Matthew 5:11-16

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

**14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.**

16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now I need to remind all of us that the **Gospel of Matthew** is the most *Jewish* of the four Gospel Records. And that is by Design. The Apostle Matthew wanted to reach his people- the Jews- with the glorious “*Good News*” (Gospel) of a “*Forgiveness*” and a “*Righteousness*” that is acquired by Faith ALONE in Jesus *personally*; and in His perfect Obedience; and NOT by what we can earn for *ourselves* by striving to obey God’s Commandments.

But we also need to remember that, originally, the **Gospel according to Matthew**, like the other 65 Books, was written on scrolls. And those original scrolls (*Autographs*) would have been made out of either leather or parchment or a combination of both. But at some point after the 1st Century, the Scriptures were copied and inserted into what is called, a “*Codex*”. And a “*Codex*” was an early, very primitive Prototype of what we call, a “*Book*”- similar to what we have today.

But even then- there were no Chapter divisions in the Bible until Stephen Langton, an Archbishop of Canterbury, put the modern Chapter divisions into place in around A.D. 1227- over 12 Centuries AFTER the Resurrection. The “*Wycliffe English Bible*” of A.D. 1382 was the *first* Bible to use the Chapter pattern.

The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by a Jewish rabbi by the name of “*Nathan*” in A.D. 1448. Robert Estienne, who was also known as “*Stephanus*”, was the first to divide the New Testament into standard numbered Verses, in 1555. And Stephanus essentially used Nathan’s verse divisions as a Guide for his work in the 27 Books of the New Testament. Since that time, beginning with the publication of the “*Geneva Bible*” in 1560, the chapter and verse Divisions originated by Stephanus have been accepted into nearly all the Bible versions. But the Chapter and Paragraph Headings were not added until much later.

Now the reason I am bringing this up to you this morning is that, even though people did this to try to make reading and studying the Bible *easier*- neither the chapter and verse *Divisions*; nor the chapter and paragraph *Headings* are inspired. They are NOT inerrant; and they are NOT infallible. So, sometimes, we need to ignore them.

Now I do NOT believe that there was any sinister Motive behind why they did this- but, there are times when the Man-made Divisions in the Bible are simply NOT a good fit.

So, there are times when the biblical writer was trying to make a Point; and yet there was put a chapter Division right in the middle of his Point. And, likewise, there were verse Divisions put into a Thought that the writer was trying to convey that actually makes the Thought *harder* to understand. For example, please look at **Ephesians 1:3-12** with me:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,
4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love
5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace
8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight
9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him

11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Now this inspired Writing by the Apostle Paul speaks of Salvation. But it should be clear to everyone that the phrase, “**In love**” at the *end* of verse 4 *should have been put at the beginning* of verse 5. The phrase, “**in all wisdom and insight**” that is at the *end* of verse 8 *should have been put at the beginning* of verse 9. And the phrase, “**In Him**” at the end of verse 10 *should have been put at the beginning* of verse 11.

Now these “*Verse Division Difficulties*” don’t change the Divine Truth that the Apostle Paul was teaching- but, in this case, the verse Divisions make it more difficult to follow Paul’s Logic.

And that is what happened here in **Matthew 5**. The Context of Jesus telling the new People of this new Kingdom that they are both “Salt” and “Light” is in connection to the Persecution of verses 11&12. So, it is the Reality of our being both Salt and Light- AS WE ARE PERSECUTED- that Jesus was talking about. And that means that the Teaching about saved people being both “Salt” and “Light” is NOT a “stand-alone” Teaching but is connected to the Reality of our Persecution.

So, to understand this better- I want to divide this Sermon into three parts:

1. What does it mean to be “Salt” and “Light”?
2. “Salt” and “Light” and Complaining
3. “Salt” and “Light” while Rejoicing

1. What Does it Mean to be “Salt” and “Light”?

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

**14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.**

The New Testament teaches that genuine Christians have been “called” by God- “*out from the world*” to be a “**people for God’s Own Possession**”(1Peter

2:9). So, we are a people who are “*possessed by God*” in this world. In other words, God *owns* us. And that is why the Apostle Peter said this in **1Peter 2:9&10:**

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Now look again at the end of verse 9 at what Peter said was the Reason WHY God chose us:

... so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

The one, true, and living God, Who created all things; and Who saved us- has also brought us out of Darkness and into His marvelous Light so that we may PROCLAIM something to the world. And the word that was translated here as “Proclaim” comes from a word (*exangelloo*; Strong’s # 1804) that means: *to show by making known; to show by proving; or to exhibit*. So, what is it that we are supposed to “*exhibit*”; or that we are supposed to: “*show by making known or by proving*”? Something that Peter called,

... the excellencies of Him ...

... which are the “*Excellencies of God.*”

So, just what are the “**Excellencies**” of God? Well, they are the various Attributes and Characteristics that make God to be “*Excellent*”. Actually, the word, “**Excellencies**” here in verse 9 comes from a word (*artee*; Strong’s # 703) that means: *any Excellence of an individual (in either body or mind); an eminent Endowment, Property or Quality. A virtuous “course of thought, feeling, action, virtue, or moral goodness”*.

In other words, the “*Excellencies of God*” are those Qualities that God possesses that make Him to be “*Excellent*” or “*Morally Perfect*”. So, these are the Attributes that make God to be- God! And the Apostle Peter said that we were “called”; and “chosen”; and “set apart” from the lost world- so that we would “*show forth*” or “*reveal*” or “*illustrate*” or “*proclaim*” these Excellencies to the lost world!

Okay- that's a lot. But then Jesus is quoted by Matthew here in this Passage in **Matthew 5**- that we are to "*proclaim*" these Excellencies to the lost world- IN our Persecution!

So, as we are being insulted and persecuted; and while they are saying all kinds of false things about us- Jesus said we are "*Blessed*"! And we are blessed- because it is at that very moment- *when we are being persecuted*- that we are to be both "Salt" and "Light". And as we act as both Salt and Light- *in our Persecution*- we will proclaim how Great and Wonderful and Majestic and Powerful and Glorious and Good and Kind and Merciful God really is.

And that means that our Persecution is actually nothing more than an Opportunity to proclaim these Excellencies to the world. So, God is NOT allowing our Persecution because He wants to see how strong and tough we are when we are being hurt and beaten and falsely accused. He's NOT trying to see how much pain we can withstand before we melt. God is NOT trying to see if we can outlast those who are treating us terribly. No! God allows Persecution to come our way so that we may proclaim His Excellencies.

Now the person, who is lying about us; or the person, who is persecuted us- is probably NOT in the mood to get involved in a Bible Study about God's Excellencies. If they were interested in us teaching them about all the glorious Components that make up our great God- they probably wouldn't be persecuting us in the first place. But that isn't what "Proclaiming" means in this case. And to prove that- turn and read with me a very familiar Passage from **1Corinthians 11:23-25**:

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Now this is the Passage that we read every week pertaining to us partaking of the Sacrament of the Lord's Table or Communion. Okay, but what does this have to do with us being both "Salt" and "Light" as we are being Persecuted- so that we may "Proclaim" the Excellencies of God to the lost world? Because look what the Apostle Paul said in the very next verse:

1Corinthians 11:26

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

So, a genuine Believer, eating the Bread by Faith and drinking the Cup by Faith and NOT doing it to earn Salvation but simply partaking of the Lord's Table because you are already saved- IS "proclaiming" the Lord's Death until Jesus comes back.

So, I would suggest to you that responding to unfair Treatment; responding to them telling lies about you that are designed to try to ruin your Testimony; Responding to being insulted because of your Salvation; and responding to being Persecuted for loving and obeying Jesus- as Salt and Light- IS proclaiming the Excellencies of God. Believers responding as Salt and Light to Persecution IS proclaiming all of the glories and moral Perfections of Jesus.

So, that brings up the Question, "*How do we respond to Persecution as 'Salt' and as 'Light'?*" In other words, "*What can we do- to act as 'Salt' and to act as 'Light'- as we are being persecuted?*" And I think the Answer to that comes from what Jesus said about both "Salt" and "Light" in this Passage. So, in verses 11&12, Jesus said,

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

So, we can notice several things here. First of all, there is NO attempt at *defending* ourselves against the false Accusations. These people have *already* spoken Evil of you. They have *already* insulted you and treated you as the unsaved Jews did with the Old Testament Prophets.

But these people are NOT persecuting you and lying about you because you haven't said or done *anything*. They are attacking you precisely because of what you have spoken or done. So, you have either preached the Gospel; or condemned Sin; or called people to Repentance; or proclaimed Truth in the open market- place. And their Persecution of you- is how they are *responding* to what you have said or done. They can't defeat the Divine Truth you have uttered- so they respond by attacking and persecuting you- *personally*. And they do that to try to get you to stop preaching; or to force you into silence; or to make you recant what you said or did.

So, like they did with Jesus- these people have already made up their minds about you. And that means that there isn't a need to defend yourself. They have already changed the Subject away from whatever Issue was being discussed- and they have made YOU to be the Issue. And they do that because they have NO Answer to the Issue. They can't discuss the Issue because

the Issue is true; and they can't defeat it. So, they try to change the subject and make YOU to be the Issue. So, you are wasting your time trying to defend yourself.

Also, defending yourself against their Persecution is a form of NOT believing that God will defend you. So, personal Defense against Persecution is a form of a lack of Trust in the Sovereignty of God. So, what should we do? Jesus said that we should behave as both "Salt" and "Light."

But how do we act as Salt and Light in our Persecution? By obeying what Jesus taught right here? Look again at the beginning of verse 13:

You are the salt of the earth...

Notice that Jesus made a declarative Statement here. He didn't say, "*Try real hard to become the Salt of the earth*". Jesus said, "*You ARE the Salt of the earth!*" So, **ALL**, who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth **ARE** the Salt of the earth- already. **ALL** of the Citizens of the new Kingdom of Heaven **ARE** the Salt of the earth- right now. **EVERY SINGLE PERSON**, who has put their Hope and Trust and Confidence in Jesus personally and in His finished Work **ARE** the Salt of the earth.

So, we **ALREADY ARE** the Salt of the earth by virtue of belonging to Jesus; and by virtue of having the third Person of the Trinity abiding and walking inside of us; and by virtue of being a part of the New Covenant; and by virtue of being a Citizen of the new Kingdom of Heaven. And that means:

- Being saved- IS being the Salt of the earth
- Being born again- IS being the Salt of the earth
- Being Justified by Faith ALONE- IS being the Salt of the earth
- Being adopted into the Family of God- IS being the Salt of the earth
- Loving and striving to obey Jesus- IS being the Salt of the earth
- Believing that the Bible is the infallible Word of the living God- IS being the Salt of the earth
- Being a Citizen of the new Kingdom of Heaven- IS being the Salt of the earth

... and it is also being the Light of the world.

What I'm trying to say is that there *isn't* a separate Event that *causes* us to be Salt and Light. There isn't another step to take; or another Truth to believe. If we are truly saved- we already ARE both Salt and Light. But now look at the rest of verse 13:

... but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

Again, this is NOT some “*higher way to walk with God*”. Jesus is NOT teaching here that SOME Believers are SALT and LIGHT, while others are NOT. Jesus is simply restating what He has ALWAYS taught about genuine Salvation.

Remember, Salvation is eternal. So, nobody can “lose” their Salvation. We didn’t do anything to become saved in the first place and so, there isn’t anything we can do to become “unsaved”.

But people can be deceived into *thinking* they are saved- when, in fact, they are “*yet in their Sins*” and heading toward an eternity in Hell. So. It is simply NOT true that some have “*committed certain Sins*” (that are supposedly too powerful for the Grace of God to conquer); and have “*fallen away*”; and have “*lost their Salvation.*” That is NOT what happened.

What happened to people, who “*appeared to us*” to be saved; and who have since “*left off serving God*”- is that they were simply deceived about being saved in the first place- and they are now (for a variety of reasons) merely being honest about their Relationship with Jesus.

My dear friends, because they are either ignorant of; or they refuse to learn what the Bible actually teaches about Salvation- far too many in the modern Church have a Theology about how God saves lost sinners and why- that is *entirely* Man-made and unbiblical. And as a result of not knowing or not believing (or both) what the Bible DOES teach about Salvation- there has been a whole host of terms and logic about Salvation that have been completely *manufactured* by other people. But God didn’t say it. The Bible doesn’t teach it. In fact, in many cases, the Bible actually teaches *against* what they believe- such as:

- Salvation is the Result of Human Choice or Decision
- Saved people seeking after the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit”
- Saved people “re-dedicating their lives to God” after a long season of being “backslid”
- Saved people making Jesus the “Lord of their Lives”

When Jesus warned us about Salt “*becoming tasteless*”- He was referring to *supposedly* saved people who no longer bear godly Fruit. They no longer desire to follow Jesus in humble and joyful Obedience. They have “pitched their tent” toward the world and Sin and have become “*Worldly*” (1John 2:15-17).

And so, Prayer Meetings are looked at as being a complete waste of time; the Bible has become boring; and they would much rather play with their electronic

device than listen to the Word of God being heralded or taught. So, instead of praying earnestly- TV and the Internet now dominate their daily lives. And instead of being excited about spending Eternity in Heaven with Jesus- they ponder how to have more fun; make more money; and possess more of this world's Goods down here.

Look, it is true that saved people get discouraged by times. But it is also true that saved people avail themselves of the various "*Means of Grace*" like:

- Bible Study
- Communion
- Godly Fellowship
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Serving God and Others

... and as they avail themselves of these various "Means of Grace" these "Means" do what God created them for- and those discouraged saints become Encouraged. And weak believers become Strong; And weary soldiers of the Cross are awakened to a greater Glory; and those, who have been tempted to doubt or "turn back" are made **"Strong in the Lord and in the Strength of His Might" (Ephesians 6:10).**

True, genuine, biblical Salvation "*gives*" or "*grants*" to each individual Believer both the Desire and the Power to "*keep on keeping on*". And this is a biblical Truth called the "*Perseverance of the Saints*". So, ALL of those, who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth "*keep on*" repenting; they "*keep on*" believing; they "*keep on*" pressing in; they "*keep on*" reading and studying the Bible; they "*keep on*" crying out to God for a godly Life; they "*keep on*" seeking God's Face and Will. And they "*keep on*" loving and following Jesus. And this IS being "Salt" and "Light".

You see, God knows that we are but Flesh. And so, God has built in spiritual "*Checks and Balances*" inside the Church that are designed to lay hold of each Believer; and empower them to walk; and talk; and live; and exist- WITHIN the Framework of the living and breathing Organism called, the "Church".

And so, we become "**members of one another**" (Ephesians 4:25). We are told to "**encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**" (Hebrews 3:13). God said that each Believer in the Church is supposed to "**strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.**" (Hebrews 12:12&13); which is why we "**stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own**

assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25). We are commanded to **“confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.”** Why? Because **“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” (James 5:16).** And this is why we are told that **if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. (1John 4:12).**

So, yes! We DO get discouraged, periodically. And there may be times when we are *horribly* tempted; and *severely* tried; and we get weak; and we faint. But it is also true that if we belong to a Church that is actually doing these things- we will NOT *stay* discouraged. We will have brothers and sisters surround us with their Love; and with their Prayers; and with their Help; and God will use that to stimulate us and empower and enable us to walk this world as both Salt and Light.

So, when a Believer, who was robust and spiritually healthy, begins to stay home instead of assembling with their Covenant brothers and sisters; when a Member, who is known to have a vibrant Prayer Life is suddenly silent; when Discouragement and Despondency and Defeat is seen in the face of a fellow- bond-slave- the other Members take notice and go to work. And they demonstrate their Love by reaching out; and by Counselling; and by sharing the Scriptures; and by praying.

No genuine Believer can possibly be content when a Covenant brother or sister strays off the straight and narrow Path and begins walking on the Broad Road. No one, who has an ounce of genuine Christianity can forget the “joyful Sound” that comes from the lips of a happy and contented Saint. And that is because we **“are members of His body.” (Ephesians 5:30).** And so, we **“lay aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.” (Ephesians 4:24).**

Jesus said that “tasteless Salt”

... is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

... so, what is Jesus talking about? Is Jesus teaching here that Salt can actually *lose* what it has? In other words, can a saved person go so far that he becomes **good for nothing except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men?**

No! This is the Fruit of religious people, who have NEVER truly been born from Above. This Phenomenon pertains to “*therapeutic moralistic Deists*”, who have NEVER beheld the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. This has to do

with people, who may well be Members of the Church- but who have NEVER been on God's Roll up yonder.

You see, because we are fallen people- we have an enormous capacity to be deceived about ourselves. And so, no one is able to truly and fully diagnose his own spiritual Condition. We need Objective Propositional Truth- that is external to ourselves- to diagnose the Reality of our Relationship with Jesus. And that is why God gave us 66 inspired; inerrant; and infallible Books.

For example, the **Epistle of 1John** was written by the Apostle to give us 10 Tests that determine if we are truly saved or only deceived. So, John wrote this in **1John 1:5-7**:

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

... and by periodically taking these 10 Tests- we will know the Truth about our own spiritual Condition. Now let's look at what Jesus taught about us being the Light of the world from **Matthew 5:14&15**:

**14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.**

Light is ONLY useful if it shines. A Light that doesn't shine is a contradiction of terms- precisely because Light ALWAYS shines. There is no such thing as a Light that doesn't shine. ALL Light shines. So, when Jesus talked about our Light NOT shining- there MUST be something else involved that is separate from the Light- that hinders or stops the Light from being and doing what it is supposed to be and do- a shining Force.

So, Jesus talked here about a "basket" that covers up the Light- so that it doesn't do the ONLY thing it was meant to do- shine! And He drew a distinction between us putting our Light in a basket or on a lampstand.

And that means that we CANNOT *create* the Light. Our Light that shines is merely a *reflection* of Jesus. We CANNOT *create* this Light and neither can we *destroy* it. So, it isn't the Light itself that is the Problem- but what we do with it.

And if we take our reflection of Jesus and hide it in a basket- nobody will see it and it becomes worthless.

So, my Question is, “*Why would any genuine Believer hide his Reflection of Jesus?*” And the Answer is, “*He wouldn’t.*” But I suggest to you that the Answer is NOT merely that a genuine Believer WOULDN’T hide his Light- but that he CAN’T! Look again at what Jesus said at the End of verse 14. He said,

... A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Jesus said here that a City that is set on a Hill CANNOT be hidden. So, we do NOT have the Power to hide the true Light. It CANNOT be hidden. But now look again at the first part of verse 15:

nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket...

Here Jesus says that NO ONE lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. He said,

nor does anyone...

They DO NOT DO THAT! But what DO they DO?

... but on the lampstand ...

Jesus says NOBODY lights a Light and puts it under a basket- but EVERYBODY puts the Light on a lampstand. Why?

... it gives light to all who are in the house.

... which is the ONLY purpose of having the Light.

So, once again, what is Jesus talking about? Is He teaching that *some* reflections of Jesus are not worthy to shine and be seen? No, He isn’t. He is NEVER talking about ANY deficiency in the Light itself. But somehow and for some reason the person, who has the Light- who has a Reflection of Jesus- hides it. So, why would any Believer do that? And again, I say, He wouldn’t.

So, I can only think that, once again, Jesus is talking about a person, who simply *thinks* he is saved and is NOT a genuine saint of God. Because a genuine saint of God would never do that.

2. Salt and Light and Complaining

Now remember that the Context here is us being Salt and Light in connection to our Persecution. And in **Philippians 2:14&15** we read:

**14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing;
15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,**

Now this is a very convicting Passage to me. Because complaining about what God is doing in your Life; or complaining about what God seems to NOT be doing in your Life- has an effect on being a Light.

So, am I the kind of person, who is NOT a grumbler or a murmurer or a complainer or a Self-justifying Arguer with people or am I one, who does ALL things without grumbling or disputing- even as I am being persecuted?

And as I considered what God says here- I was broken- because of my Nature is to complain. But then my Brokenness went even deeper because of what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:11&12**:

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Now I don't know about you- but when I am persecuted, I am frustrated; and I'm angry. I get irritated, and then I start to reason in my mind how I should talk about it and defend myself. And then everything starts to churn inside of me in terms of Self-defense. And then complaining just flows out of my mouth. And if I don't deal with it, it can go on and on and on.

So, we get persecuted, or somebody says something false against us and we complain. We murmur and we grumble. And out of our belly flows rivers of Self-pity and Anger.

But then Jesus makes it *worse* because He says: "When Persecution comes (and it WILL come); when you are treated badly,

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

So, what **Philippians 2:14&15** says *negatively* (**Do all things without grumbling**), **Matthew 5** says *positively*, (**Rejoice and be glad**). And rejoicing

and being Glad is the exact *opposite* of complaining and grumbling. So, Believers are to rejoice when we experience something that would make Lost people complain.

And then the Arrow of God went even deeper into me- because I went on and read just three verses later,

“You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

... and I had never seen that in this Context before.

So, in **Philippians 2**,

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, so that... you [will] appear as lights in the world... in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation

... and then in **Matthew 5**,

“Rejoice and be glad [when you are persecuted and slandered]... for you are the light of the world, a city set on a hill.”

Now look- God knows us. And it is *exactly* at the Point where Jesus said to rejoice and be glad that our grumbling and complaining starts. And that isn't an accident.

Now look again at **Matthew 5:16**:

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

... but I am tempted to say, “*Wait this has a deeper meaning.*” Why? Because the lost and pagan world can do Good Deeds. They do Good Deeds all the time. So, this is MORE than us merely doing Good Deeds. It is us doing Good Deeds- WITHOUT MURMURING- *exactly* at the Point when we are being persecuted!

And that means that us being the “Light of the world” is a powerful Freedom from Complaining, Grumbling, and Murmuring about being persecuted- and is, instead, a great Joy! And the Key to unlock this- is the Promise of God found in **Matthew 5**:

Great is your Reward in Heaven!

And so, I saw from **Philippians 2** that when I was murmuring and complaining about being persecuted- I was actually putting OUT my Light about

the Brightness of God's Power and the Brightness of His Wisdom and the Brightness of His Kindness.

But then God took me even deeper and showed me that when I am complaining- I am also putting out the Brightness of His Reward! I am saying, *"The Payoff for this Experience I am having — this Slander — isn't very Good."*

But Jesus is saying, *"Oh, yes, it is! It is VERY Good! Your Reward in Heaven for enduring what you are going through right now- without Complaining, but with Rejoicing, will be off the charts Glorious!"*

And so, my Battle now, is to not simply believe that God has been Kind to me in the Past (which He has by dying for me; and forgiving me) but that He has GUARANTEED a GREAT Reward for every patient Act; and every non-complaining Act that I engage in! He has GUARANTEED a Reward that is unspeakably Great!

3. "Salt" and "Light" while Rejoicing

So, now I ask you to try this Interpretation of what it means for Christians to be "Salt". And I suggest that being "salty" as a Christian means: *Being so profoundly satisfied by Christ as my eternal Reward, that I am freed from Fear, Greed, and Complaining- so I may offer Sacrifices of Love- while rejoicing at Persecution.*

Now as I said at the beginning, the correct Context of the Statement **"You are the salt of the earth"** is **"Blessed are you when you are persecuted Rejoice and be glad . . . because your reward is great in heaven."**

And when someone actually lives like this- it is so utterly unnatural and amazing and wonderful, it tastes really Good! So, joyful Suffering for the Sake of Jesus Christ is wonderfully salty.

So, Jesus says to every Believer, *"You will be salted with fire."* And I take that to mean that every genuine Believer will encounter the Fires of Trouble and Pain in this Life. And that Experience can make you salty. It salts you. In other words, close calls with Eternity, where you can smell the flames of Hell; as well as the scents of Paradise- can fill you with a holy Dissatisfaction with this world; along with a profound Satisfaction in Christ as your eternal Reward!

Mark 9:50

Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

There are few things in this Life that make for *greater* Peace than a Freedom from the Need to have this world's Affirmation and Rewards. Such people don't

return Evil for Evil. They rejoice when reviled. They are Peacemakers. And that Freedom for Love comes from the Salt of Satisfaction in the Reward of Jesus now and in the Age to come.

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

The Question here is: *“How does being seasoned with Salt help us “know how to answer each person”?* In other words, *“How does being ‘salty’ make you more discerning?”* And the Answer is:

If we are deeply satisfied with Jesus as our Reward; and if we have been made Free from the Cravings for approval; and for a Reward on this Earth- then our “Faculties of Discernment” about just what is “Loving”, will be less clouded with selfish Distortions. We will “know” more readily what godly Love calls for, because we will be more ready to Love.

And that brings me to my Conclusion

This is my Suggestion: to be the Salt of the earth and the Light of the world means that, at root, Christians are so profoundly satisfied by Jesus as our eternal Reward- we have been made Free from Fear and Greed so we may engage the world in the Sacrifices of Love; and we will be more able to rejoice at Persecution. And when the world sees this- they see the Glory of God in the Person of Jesus- and then they can taste the satisfying Pleasure of Who He is.

Amen. Let’s pray.

© 2021-2022 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church PO Box 2906 Gulfport, Mississippi 39505 www.covenantofpeace.net

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of a verse- by- verse “Journey” through the **Gospel of Matthew**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this Transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete Copyright Statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

