

ARE YOU GOOD OR GOOD FOR NOTHING?

TEXT: MATTHEW 5:13; MARK 9:49, 50

INTRODUCTION:

1. Our Lord made an interesting statement in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13).
2. He said, Christians are the salt of the earth, but if our salt loses its savour (taste), it is thenceforth "good for nothing."
3. Years ago, a young man in our church surrendered to preach. He was teaching high school in the Bronx and he left to attend seminary at my alma mater in Virginia.
4. Before he left, he said to me and my wife, "I want my life to count for God." In other words, he did not want to be "good for nothing" (Matthew 5:13).
5. The words "You are good for nothing" are sad words. If a boss tells an employee, "You are good for nothing," or if a coach tells an athlete, "You are good for nothing," those words can really hurt.
6. But how much more coming from the lips of our Saviour!
7. Herbert Lockyer referred to "the sin of insipidity." He described it as the utter futility of a life in which the Lord Jesus Christ is not preeminent. A life without Christ is a wasted life.
8. Wouldn't you agree this describes most people today? Recently Bill De Blasio, who will soon be the next mayor of NYC, told reporters that he considers himself a "spiritual person," even though he is not affiliated with any particular church.
9. Lately it is fashionable to refer to one's self as "a spiritual person," though the words are meaningless and insipid and "good for nothing."
10. Christians have often linked Matthew 5:13 together with Matthew 5:14-16. "Ye are the light of the world."
11. We are to be both salt and light. Salt arrests corruption, and light dispels darkness. As "the salt of the earth," Christians morally benefit the world; and as "the light of the world" Christians dispel the darkness in this sin-loving world that has rejected the Gospel.
12. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). God is light, and God's people are to be light reflectors. This is why our Lord says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).
13. In Luke 16:8, our Lord referred to believers as "the children of light." Much can be said about this but this morning I want to focus on our Lord's words in Matthew 5:13 -- "Ye are the salt of the earth..."

I. THE PROMINENCE OF SALT

1. The word "salt" is found 41 times in Scripture. In Biblical times, salt was very valuable. Part of a soldier's pay was given in salt. Our word "salary" comes from the word "salt," and that is where the old expression comes from, "He's not worth his salt!"
2. "Not worth one's salt" implies not worth the expense of the food he eats. *Are you worth your salt?*
3. Our Lord said if the salt has lost its savour, "it is good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).
4. Leviticus 2:13 refers to "the salt of the covenant." Salt was an ingredient of both animal sacrifices and bloodless sacrifices.
5. The sin offering, the trespass offering, the burnt offering, the meat offering, and the peace offering were all offered with salt.
6. The covenant of salt is referred to in Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19; and II Chronicles 13:5.
7. Sacrifices destitute of leaven (represents sin) implied that nothing partaking of corruption was to be brought into the service of God.
8. Sacrifices seasoned with salt implied that nothing that was tasteless and insipid was to be brought into the service of God.
9. Unfortunately, much modern day worship is corrupt, and tasteless and insipid.
10. Salt not only preserves; salt also purifies. Salt is an antiseptic that prevents decay and makes things cleaner. Ezekiel 16:4 refers to the custom of washing and salting newborn babies.
11. Salt may sting when it comes into contact with an open wound, but salt helps to kill infection.
12. The infection of sin is everywhere. That is why our Lord said, "Ye are the salt of the earth..." (Matt. 5:13).
13. The healing power of salt is proven in the miracle Elisha the prophet performed when he cast a cruse of salt into the bitter waters of Jericho.
14. Second Kings 2:21 and 22 says, "And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake."
15. Salt gives flavor. Job said, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" (Job 6:6).

16. Bread without salt is both disagreeable to the taste and indigestible. In other words, it is "good for nothing."
17. Salt makes people thirsty. Christians ought to make sinners thirsty for the salvation that comes only from the Lord Jesus Christ.
18. Our Lord said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). Only the Lord Jesus can quench that thirst.
19. Our Lord said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."
20. Are you making people thirsty for this springs of living water?
21. If not, then our Lord said you have lost your savour, and are good for nothing (Matthew 5:13).
22. As I was doing research on the prominence of salt, I read something interesting about Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting of the Last Supper. Back in da Vinci's day, it was widely believed that it was unlucky to spill salt, and in his painting, Judas Iscariot is shown seated next to our Lord and clutching his money bag. This is based upon John 12:6, which refers to Judas holding the money bag.
23. Judas clutching the bag is very noticeable in the painting, but what is not as noticeable is that Judas is pictured knocking over a salt cellar (salt-shaker) with his elbow.
24. Of course, Judas' betrayal had nothing to do with bad luck or with knocking over a salt shaker. Judas Iscariot chose to betray our Lord, and because of his betrayal his name has gone down as history's greatest villain.
25. Referring to Judas, our Lord said, "But woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24).
26. Better never to have been born than to live and die and then spend eternity in hell! Those in hell are good for nothing but fuel for fire.

II. THE POWER OF SALT

1. Our Lord said in Mark 9:50, "Salt is good," but salt in and of itself cannot do anything. Salt must make contact if it is to do anybody any good.
2. Our Lord said, "Salt is good." Salt is considered a necessity of life. Salt is indispensable. Everywhere I go I see salt on the table and salt in the kitchen, because "salt is good."

3. The Greek poet Homer called salt "divine," and the Greek philosopher Plato spoke of salt as "a substance dear to the gods."
4. The apostle Paul said, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6).
5. "Seasoned with salt" -- pungent, not bland, not tasteless, not insipid.
6. Without salt, public health would suffer. There is no substitute for salt. Salt helps retain water in the body.
7. Salt stimulates muscle contraction. Salt also helps prevent our muscles from cramping.
8. Salt helps our bodies digest food. Doctors and nutritionists say a lack of salt is dangerous. For example, sodium deficiency can become extremely prevalent in warm temperatures which cause the body to perspire and can lead to dehydration.
9. This is why our Lord said, "Salt is good" (Mark 9:50).
10. When there are germs on meat, the purpose for rubbing salt into the meat is to preserve it against putrefaction.
11. Just as salt is absolutely essential to the life of the world, the life and witness of Christians are just as essential for the preservation of human society from putrefaction and decay.
12. And if you think "putrefaction and decay" is too strong a description, just consider all of the vile filth on television and on the radio and on the Internet and coming out of Hollywood, etc.
13. Hip-hop and rap music is known for its filthy lyrics and dancing.
14. Our Lord said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" because salt is an essential preservative. We need to preserve our Christian heritage because it is being viciously attacked by Satan and his minions.
15. An unsaved politician recently told me that politicians were doing the Lord's work. I told him most of them were doing the devil's work. The politicians have given us legalized abortion (55 million babies killed since the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision), homosexual "marriage," legal gambling, pornography, and a 17 trillion dollar deficit.
16. Politicians (even good, moral politicians) can never save America. Only godly believers proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ can save America! We are the salt of the earth.
17. From Bible times and down throughout the ages a few godly believers have kept back the judgment of God from overtaking a guilty, sin-loving, godless world.
18. Elijah turned Israel away from Baal-worship and back to the worship of the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

19. Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, and had there been a few more men like him God would have spared those wicked cities.
20. Abraham pleaded with God. He said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (Genesis 18:32).
21. But there weren't even ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, and so those cities were destroyed by fire and brimstone.
22. May I remind you that NYC is not much better than Sodom and Gomorrah?
23. A few faithful believers kept back the judgment of God in Jerusalem. Isaiah the prophet said, "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:9).
24. And a very small remnant is all we have here in America today. Let us pray and let us warn sinners and let us rescue the perishing because the hour is late!
25. Lately, the weather has been getting colder, and soon winter will arrive. Soon we will have to deal with all of the snow and ice, and a familiar sight is the trucks spreading salt on the road to melt the ice.
26. The salt keeps people from slipping and sliding and getting into accidents, and getting hurt.
27. Our Lord said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" because it is our job to keep foolish sinners from slipping and sliding and getting hurt.
28. Our Lord said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" because it is our job to keep foolish sinners from slipping and sliding into hell!
29. One preacher put it this way, "Without the true Church in the midst of its corruption, society would be without a balm to heal its disorders and a compelling force to arrest its progress toward utter destruction" (Herbert Lockyer).
30. Salt is distinct and separable from that upon which it acts. Mix a pinch of salt in your meal and you recognize the difference. Someone has said salt's purity is the measure of its power. What a lesson for us!
31. Salt is essentially different, and the Christian is essentially different from the unsaved.
32. In Mark 9:50, our Lord said, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." If we as Christians do not "have peace one with another," we will not be much help to sinners.
33. Also, notice our Lord said, "Have salt in yourselves." He did not say, "Have salt *for* yourselves." Salt can only purify when it is rubbed into

- what it can preserve and, when it is applied it quickly permeates food, which without it would be insipid and corrupt.
34. Alexander Maclaren said, "If you do not salt the world, the world will rot you."
 35. We have marked the prominence of salt, and the power of salt...

III. THE PERIL OF SALT

1. Salt is mentioned in connection with judgment many times in Scripture (cf. Deut. 29:18-29, esp. verse 23).
2. Deuteronomy 29:23 describes the barrenness that follows the judgment of God.
3. These Old Testament prophecies and judgments upon Israel can certainly be applied to the New Testament church. In Revelation 2 and 3 we see seven letters to seven churches. These letters contain strong exhortations and warnings.
4. For example, Revelation 2:5 says, "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."
5. They did not repent and those churches have been long gone. Today that area is Turkey and it is almost entirely Muslim.
6. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).
7. Today we are surrounded by salt-less churches with salt-less church members, and salt-less preachers preaching a salt-less message.
8. Our Lord said that when salt has lost his savour, it's not even fit for the dunghill (Luke 14:34, 35). A dunghill is a pile of manure.
9. Society today is rotten to the core, and the corruption is getting worse each and every day. But the churches have become assimilated by the world, and therefore they have lost their power to stem the tide of wickedness that is overcoming this world.
10. Salt is often mentioned in connection with judgment. Genesis 19:26 says Lot's wife looked back to Sodom and Gomorrah and she became a pillar of salt. That is why our Lord said in Luke 17:32, "Remember Lot's wife."

CONCLUSION:

1. Our Lord spoke often about the horrors of hell, and one of His strongest warnings is recorded in Mark 9:43-50.

2. J.C. Ryle said, "It is not possible to say too much about Christ. But it is quite possible to say too little about hell."
3. Most good Bible-preachers emphasize the eternal, unquenchable fire in hell, and that is certainly where our Lord put the emphasis (9:43, 44, 45, 46, 48).
4. But then our Lord said in verse 49, "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."
5. "Salted with fire"? Salt preserves from putrefaction, and when salt is applied to the wicked in hell, it preserves them for all eternity. For all eternity they will suffer in the fire that never shall be quenched.
6. This Scripture has puzzled interpreters for two thousand years, and much more could be said about it, but let me conclude with this thought.
7. According to the Bible, the covenant of salt is a perpetual covenant. In like manner, punishment in hell is for ever and forever.
8. In Mark 3:29, our Lord referred to the "danger of eternal damnation."
9. In Matthew 25:46, our Lord warned of "everlasting punishment."
10. Hebrews 6:2 warns of "eternal judgment."
11. Jude 7 speaks of "the vengeance of eternal fire."
12. And our Lord spoke of sinners entering into "everlasting fire" in Matthew 18:8 and 25:41.
13. Daniel 12:2 describes hell as a place of "shame and everlasting contempt."
14. Revelation 14:11 says, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night..."
15. Certainly these warnings should be seriously considered.