



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 5:13–16

Gospel of Matthew

“The Similitudes: The Salt of the Earth”

TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading for today is again in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5, and we’re reading verses 13 through 16, in a passage that immediately follows the Beatitudes which we have finished expounding, commonly called the Similitudes. Matthew chapter 5 verse 13 through verse 16:

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

In the Beatitudes, which we have just finished expounding, the Lord spoke of the characteristics of the saints, and of the influence of the world upon them. Incidentally, when we refer to the term “saint,” we mean, of course, a simple believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. Ambrose Bierce has said, “A saint is a dead sinner, revised and edited,” but that’s the kind of saint of which we are not speaking.

In the Scriptures, those who are believers in the Lord Jesus are called saints, or “holy ones,” and, as I have often said, you may call me Saint Lewis from now on [laughter], but all true believers are saints, simply brethren in Christ. But in the Beatitudes, the Lord Jesus has spoken of the characteristics of the saints and the influence of the world upon them. He has spoken particularly in the last few verses, blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. That is the influence of the world upon them.

Then, in the Similitudes which follow, he speaks of the functions of the saints, for he refers to them as salt and light, and of their influence upon the world. In a sense, in the Beatitudes, we have been given something of an abstract definition and description of a Christian—a true believer. Now, remember, the Lord Jesus was speaking to those who were there with him as he was bringing the words that concerned the kingdom that would come to pass upon the earth in the future. And he spoke of the characteristics of his disciples as ones who are poor in spirit, as ones that mourn, as ones that are meek, as ones that hunger and thirst after righteousness, as ones that are merciful, as those are pure in heart, and as those that are peacemakers. And in these expressions, we have something of an abstract definition and description of a true believer.

In the case of the Similitudes, we have a case of a functional definition and description of the believers. It’s not so much that they are poor in spirit—though they are—but they are the salt of the earth. It’s not so much that they are merciful and pure in heart, though they are; it is that they are the light of the world.

It is the same thing, someone has pointed out, in the sphere of theology. We have certain things that are abstract, and then we have certain things that are functional. Sometimes the functional is a little clearer than the abstract, though they really do complement each other. For example, in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, upon which I grew up, one of the questions that is in the beginning of the catechism is, what is God? And the answer is—and this was the answer that we were to learn (and at one time I did know this by heart)—God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. That maybe, at least Charles Hodge

thought it was, the greatest definition of God anyone had ever penned. But then, Mr. Hodge was a Presbyterian, and you might expect him to revere the Westminster Shorter Catechism as well as the Westminster Catechism and Confession of Faith.

But if we affirm that to be a kind of abstract definition of God (and it is a good one), then we can also speak of this in a very concrete way, as God is Jesus Christ who died for our sin and rose again for our justification. That kind of definition is a functional one and is just as useful to us in the expression of spiritual truth. “Ye are the salt of the earth” and “ye are the light of the world” are primarily functional. And the importance of those functions are suggested by the importance of those two terms, salt and light.

You may be interested to know that the first reference to salt in literature is in the Scriptures. In Job, the 6th chapter and the 6th verse, written many hundreds of years before the coming of Jesus Christ, we read, “Can an unsavory thing be eaten that is not seasoned with salt?” That’s the first reference in literature to the term, salt. Salt, at one time, had religious **significance** in a very wide sphere and was the symbol of purity. Among the Hebrews, it was the custom to rub newborn babies with salt, because it was thought to ensure their good health. It’s too late now, unfortunately, for us who are in the auditorium, but nevertheless, it was the custom at one time.

And did you know, men, there is another means of basis upon which you might divorce your wife? Among the Hebrews, it was possible for a Hebrew man to divorce his wife if she neglected to salt his food.

In the Scriptures, we read of the covenant of salt, and that expression, “the covenant of salt,” is designed to stress the fact that the covenant is one that cannot be broken. Among the Orientals of the present day, as in ancient times, salt is used at a meal as a sign of friendship and hospitality. The Arabs, today, say, “We have eaten together and are friends,” and when they say that, they use the expression, “There is salt between us.” To eat a man’s salt means to be his guest, and to sit above the salt is to sit in the place of distinction.

Salt was once so scarce and precious that it was used as money, and Caesar’s soldiers received part of their pay in common salt. This part of their pay, incidentally, was called *salarium*, and I’m sure that many of you know the English word derived from it, salary. So that our word, salary, comes from the significance of salt.

Well, it’s of course about the salt that the Lord Jesus speaks. So when he says, ye are the salt of the earth, we should remember that this is a statement that is built upon an extremely important element, and undoubtedly has, in the mind of the Lord, great importance for us. In fact, it is absolutely important, for the health of the body, and, also, for the purity of the blood which is the life of our bodies.

The Similitudes made an impression upon the apostles, because we read in the New Testament, in the epistles, statements that are built upon the expressions that are found in the Similitudes. For example, in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 15, the Apostle Paul makes a statement which undoubtedly is built upon the expressions that are found in the Sermon on the Mount: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” And then in 1 Peter chapter 2, in verse 12, the Apostle Peter makes a statement that is built, also, upon the Similitudes: “Having your behavior honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” So you can see that the apostles were deeply affected by the Similitudes which the Lord Jesus gave.

We look now at the first of these: “Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? It is thereafter good for nothing to be cast out and to be trodden underfoot of men.”

This first similitude is given us a very beautiful and meaningful expression. When we think of someone who is very genuine, and very helpful, and very useful, with particular stress upon the genuineness of the person, we say of him that he or she is the salt of the earth. So this expression that the Lord Jesus has given us is one that we rely upon now.

The ancients had a Proverb, *neel utilius sole et sale*—“there is nothing more useful than sun or salt.” So, the expression here “the salt of the earth” is one that has made its impression upon our literature.

The salt is connected with several qualities. The first thing that we think of when we think of salt is that salt provides savor. It is salt with which we make our food tasty. Food without salt is insipid and tasteless, and grounds for divorce according to the Hebrews. Christianity is to life what salt is for food. So when the Lord Jesus said—I know you’re not awake; after all, it’s only 8 o’clock [laughter] or 8:15—but among the Hebrews this was very important, and Christianity was, according to our Lord, the same thing to life that salt is to food. And I thoroughly believe that. I do not believe that our Western society would be anything like that which it is, even though we have a pale form of Christianity now, were Christianity not in our midst and did it not have a history in our Western world. Christianity is to life what salt is to food. And if we are to look at things from the divine standpoint, we are to acknowledge that that is true.

The world has accused the church of just the opposite. It’s not surprising, then, that Swinburn should say, “Thou has conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath.” But this is the objection of men who have not responded to the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who are rebelling against it. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, “I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen that I knew hadn’t looked and acted like undertakers.” But these are responses of people who have not responded to the message of Christianity. Robert Louis Stevenson once entered in his diary, as if he was recording an extraordinary phenomenon, “I have been to church today and am not depressed.” [Laughter]

Nietzsche has written probably the greatest attack on Christianity in his book, *The Antichrist*, and he has said, “I’ll call Christianity the one great curse, the one enormous and innermost perversion, the one great instinct of revenge for which no means are too venomous, too underhand, too underground and too petty. I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind.” But Nietzsche was a mad philosopher and died a mad philosopher. And Jesus Christ was of sound mind and furthermore,

the second person of the blessed Trinity, and he, in contrast to Nietzsche, has said, “Ye are the salt of the earth,” as if to suggest that this earth would not be what it is in its goodness were it not for the presence of the redeemed in the midst.

Salt brings savor. And it brings savor to life. And of course, the Lord Jesus intended that his disciples should be the salt of the earth. And this is our calling as those who are representative of him.

The second thing that stands out about salt is that it preserves from corruption. Salt is an antiseptic necessary to prevent corruption. Now most of us, in this room probably, did not grow up on a farm. I anticipate, having made that remark, that a number of you will come up and say, “Well I grew up on a farm!” Well, you are very fortunate if you grew up on a farm, because there are many things that you know that the rest of us who were brought up in cities do not know. But if you lived on a farm, and if you lived before the days of refrigeration, you’ll remember that you did not have any way of keeping meat chilled if you did not have an icehouse. If you had to preserve meat in any other way, you used salt. Pork was put in barrels with brine.

The reason for having salt pork was certainly not because anyone liked salt that well, particularly that much of it, but because the salt kept the pork fresh. And so salt has had as one of its uses, from the beginning, that it preserves from corruption—prevents corruption and decay.

Now the statement that the Lord makes has interesting implications. Ye are the salt of the earth. That would seem to suggest that were it not for the believers who were present here that we would see a great deal more corruption in the earth than we do. And I think this truth preserves us from two important errors that we should beware of falling into.

In the first place, the world is not basically good. If the world were basically good, then of course we would not need the presence of salt in order to preserve and prevent corruption. The world is not basically good. The world is basically rotten, and were it not for the presence of the testimony to Jesus Christ within it, then the thing that would happen would be that the microbes of sin would eventually reduce this earth to a stinking, unapproachable carcass. So when the Lord Jesus

says, ye are the salt of the earth, he intends that the believer should be those who prevent the corruption that is implicit in this society of which we are a part.

And now there is another error that we should be preserved from, and that is that the believer should isolate himself because the world is so evil. He says, “Ye are the salt of the earth;” he does not preach isolation. A salt cannot be a preservative if it is kept on the shelf in the pantry. And so, consequently, this particular statement of our Lord is designed to preserve us from these two important errors: first, the world is basically good (it is not; it is evil) and, second, that we should isolate ourselves from it. We are not to isolate ourselves from the world. We are to be separate, but not in isolation, and are to have the effect in our society that salt has when it comes into contact with what it is to preserve from corruption.

There is a third use that salt has. It promotes purity. It is necessary to the earth’s waters, and so the waters of the earth, generally speaking, are waters that come through the salt that is found in this creation of which we are a part. And it is necessary to the purity of the blood. In the Old Testament, offerings were to be offered, certain ones of them, with salt, designed to stress that very fact, so that salt promotes purity. It should be the impact of the believer upon our society that he does promote purity by the relationship that he enjoys with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we can also add a couple of other things and say salt provokes thirst, and that would seem to suggest that our life should provoke some thirst for that which we possess on the part of others.

One of the most interesting conversions that I know of is related to this very truth. It’s not often that a man who is a professor in a theological institution is converted. Once they get that far, it’s very rare that you will find one that is converted. And it’s almost unheard of that one should be converted after he has become a minister of religious truth in a theological institution.

There is one exception that I know, and that exception is a professor by the name of R. G. V. Tasker. Professor Tasker is a very well-known New Testament scholar. I think he died recently. But Professor Tasker was professor in London University—a very skillful man in the

handling of the Greek text of the New Testament, has been involved in some of the translation activities of significance in years past—has edited the biblical text of the New English Bible, for example. Professor Tasker was an accomplished scholar.

He had a young man in his class who was a member of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship society near the University of London. And as he sat in Professor Tasker’s class, studying Greek and the New Testament under Professor Tasker, one day, finally, the Professor spoke to the young man when they were together privately and said, “What is it that you have that I do not have? I would like to have what you have.”

And the InterVarsity student led his professor of New Testament literature and exegesis to the Lord. And Professor Tasker has given us a number of very helpful volumes that he has written since his conversion through the influence of a student who obviously had acted as salt in the life of Professor Tasker. Salt provokes thirst. And every true believer in the Lord Jesus should now and then have the response that that young man had: what is it that you have that I do not have; I’d like to have it. For salt provokes thirst.

Finally, salt is a rather common, insignificant kind of food. The Lord Jesus does not say, ye are the gold of the earth, though of course we are precious to him. He does not say that we are the diamonds of the earth, though we are certainly rare. And there are characteristics of precious jewels that are our characteristics because Scripture does use metaphors that involve them of us. He doesn’t even say we are the lead of the earth, though Christians, some of them, do remind us of lead.

[Laughter]

He says, in effect, simply, that we are the salt of the earth. Common, insignificant; it’s even cheap. I think that might suggest to us the fact that God does not choose the mighty, the noble, the great, the rich, the rare. But ordinarily, he chooses the simple who are so enlightened by the Holy Spirit that they see themselves to be insignificant. “For ye see your calling, brethren, that not many men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble (he does not say, of course, not any), but not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world”—that’s what you are —“the

foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty”—that’s what you are, the weak—“and the base of the things of the world”—and that’s what you are, the base things of the world—“and the things that are despised, God hath chosen, yea, and things which are not to bring to naught the things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

And the reason that in his marvelous grace he has reached down and has taken you, the poor, the insignificant, the weak, those that are despised, is in order that as men gaze upon you, they will say, “My, isn’t God great that he will do something for people like that.” And I know what you’re thinking: “I wish he would do a little more.” Well, he is. He’s going to even more than that and bring us, ultimately, to sanctification.

Well, that’s a beautiful metaphor, but our Lord also adds an admonition. He says, “If the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? It’s good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden underfoot by men.” Debate has taken place over the possibility of salt losing its savor, because our salt does not seem to lose its savor, and therefore the commentators have wrestled with this and wondered just what, exactly, was the meaning of it.

Salt, however, was not pure in ancient times. And consequently, being mixed with dirt and other impurities, it was not uncommon for salt to become impure. And there were certain other special uses of it that also raised it to tremendous heat and did make it useless. This, then, becomes a warning.

What was it a warning against? Is it a warning against the peril of apostasy? That is, if a person has made a profession of faith and then has denied that profession and turned away from it, such as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is it then impossible to renew them again unto repentance, and are they like salt that is cast out, good for nothing?

Well of course, that’s a true statement. It’s true that those who come to the very edge of the faith and then turn aside, having received all that the Holy Spirit is free to give, and have rejected

that, then the Scriptures do teach that that is impossible to renew such unto repentance who have had those advantages. I’m not sure, however, that that is what our Lord is speaking about here.

We do read in 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 10 of a very interesting man. His name is Demas, and the Apostle Paul in this swan song of his letters states, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world and is departed into Thessalonica.” Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world. In other references to Demas in the New Testament, Demas is presented as a very fruitful disciple of the Lord Jesus. As a matter of fact, he is described by the Apostle Paul as a “fellow soldier with him in the faith.” And yet, there came a time in Demas’ life in which he forsook the Apostle Paul, and the Apostle says that he has loved the world in so doing.

I’m inclined to think that that’s what the Lord Jesus has in mind here. Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its savor, attracted by the world, by the allurements of the world, attracted by the allurements of the flesh—with what shall it be salted? It’s good for nothing. It shall be cast out. Sin does bring uselessness and fruitlessness in the Christian life.

May I make an application? Ye are the salt of the earth. The evangelical church today is not as salty as it once was in our society. I’m not going to suggest—and I’m sure you knew that—I’m not going to suggest that the church become very concerned to the extent that they neglect the more important things and plunge into politics and society, and attempt to change society by the strength of their convictions concerning those things that are the better. There are a number of reasons why the evangelical church may have departed from some of the stress that characterized it at one time in its history.

It is true that the church has been occupied in the 20th century with struggles over the faith, and it has been necessary to do this, because if we had not wrestled over the faith, and the great doctrines of the faith, the whole of Christianity may have become practically destroyed so far as the testimony is concerned. There may have been some misinterpretations of parts of the Word of God, but it certainly is true that the Christians, by and large, should be a part of the society in which they

live and should give themselves, insofar as they are able, keeping pre-eminent the stress upon the salvation of men’s souls, the betterment of the society in which we live.

Well, we come now to the second of the Similitudes, the similitude of light. Ye are the light of the world. If the salt suggests influence, this one suggests eminence. That is, the world is to be illumined by the light that flows from the Christian believers. Ye are the light of the world. The Lord Jesus then gives some illustrations to stress that.

This is probably the greatest complement that was ever paid to believers by our Lord Jesus, because he says of us that we are the light of the world, and after all, that’s what he is. And so he has in effect told us that we are to be what he himself claimed that he was. “I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.” By the way, in both of these similitudes, he does not say, you *have* the salt of the earth, you *dispense* the salt of the earth. He doesn’t say you have the light of the world, or you are the dispensers of the light of the world. But you *are* salt and you *are* the light of the world.

In other words, this is a very close identification that our Lord makes, and the fact that we are the light of the world suggests several things, too. It suggests, of course, illumination without. The Christian believers are lights for the world. Now, in the Old Testament, we are told that Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles. That was their calling. And in the New Testament times, it is the Christian believer in the present age who is to be a light of the world.

The Apostle Paul speaks about both of these metaphors in Colossians chapter 4, when he speaks of the salt that should characterize our conversation and also that relationship that we have towards those that are without. He says, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” Evidently he had read the Similitudes or had heard them. And then he adds in the 5th verse of Colossians chapter 4, “Walk in wisdom toward them that are outside, redeeming the time.” So, believers are to be the light of the world. They are to give illumination. They give illumination in what they say and in what they do.

That’s why it’s so important for us as Christian believers to know the great doctrines of the faith. It’s important for every single believer to know the grounds of his salvation. I wish it were possible for all of us to have some experiences in life which would bring home to us the necessity of being able to present the gospel to which we hold. Many believers come to me—and **many**, incidentally, from Believers Chapel—and tell me of experiences that they have and of their inability to communicate the great doctrines of the Christian faith, that they wish they could have had someone present who could explain the gospel.

Now, sometimes this arises out of frustration, because the person didn’t respond. We have to learn through experience that our ministrations of the truth are not always received, and the fact that we do not have response does not necessarily mean that we have been unfaithful in the proclamation of the gospel. The Lord Jesus did not have a very good response, and no one ever gave the Word of God more plainly and clearly and truly, and no one **more** backed it up with a life that was in complete harmony with what he was saying. But the Lord Jesus only gathered a remnant around himself.

The Apostle Paul was probably the greatest preacher of the biblical doctrine that we have had outside of our Lord, and yet the Apostle Paul was beaten and persecuted throughout the ancient world. He was knocked from pillar to post, and when the end had come to him, a relatively few number of insignificant groups of people were meeting in some of the places of the Roman Empire. Out of that has come the greatness of the Christian church, but those men had to experience the rejection that comes to everyone who **believes in our** Lord Jesus Christ.

So you should not be surprised that you find rejection when you present the gospel. You shouldn’t go looking for it. But nevertheless you should not be surprised when it comes. But all of us should be able to express the great truths of the Christian faith, and when simple questions are asked us about the reason for our faith, we should **be able to** give them.

Elders are responsible for a much deeper level of maturity. They are to be men who are teachers of the Word. Now that doesn’t mean that they should necessarily be able to stand on a

platform and sway with great effect hundreds and hundreds of people, but it does mean that every elder should be a man who is able to give the significant features of the Christian faith, and explain them, and furthermore, should have the ability to sense when error is being proclaimed, and should have the motivation and desire to correct that error. He should rebuke the gainsayers, and have the ability to do it.

But all of us are to be lights of the world. And to be a light of the world, we must have some understanding of the gospel of the Lord Jesus and the great theological affirmations that make up our gospel. That is why I’m so concerned—as far as I am concerned in my contribution to your life—I am so concerned that you develop a sensibility, a sensitiveness—I’m interested in your developing sensibility, too [laughter]—but I am interested in your developing sensitiveness to the great doctrines of the Christian faith.

I would think that when I lay down my weapons of warfare, so far as the preaching of the Word is concerned, if I could have brought you to the place where you have a well-rounded understanding of the great facts of the gospel, and you understand them in the Pauline fashion, that you are also sound in the faith in soteriology that you do not fall into the errors of Arminianism and Pelegianism and semi-Pelegianism, I would feel that I would have accomplished something that is worthwhile. And when that happens, I want you to know that I will give great praise and thanksgiving to God that he has illumined your minds and brought you to the place which I think will make you effective in the presentation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. You are the light of the world—a great complement the Lord Jesus has paid you—and you cannot be that light if you do not shine purely and clearly.

It is stated in Mark chapter 7 and verse 24, “Jesus went in one particular place and could not be hid.” I love that statement. “And from there he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house and would have no man know it, but he could not be hidden.” The light cannot be dimmed, really.

There may be some sense in which the believers are expected to be illuminationed within the house of God, too, although this is probably simply an illustration. But the text does say in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 14, “Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand, and it giveth light to all who are in the house.” Probably the great stress of this particular similitude rests upon the fact that the believers are the light of the world. But they are also to be lights within the church of Jesus Christ, too. And the same type of thing that they are outside, they may be inside, too.

There is one other thing that I think we must mention, otherwise, you will say, Dr. Johnson, you are falling into the very thing that you want to deliver us from: semi-Pelegianism. You are suggesting, are you not up to this point, that we are able to be the lights of the world? And if we are able to be the lights of the world, then evidently we have something within ourselves that, with which, we are able to enlighten the world? And I want to suggest to you, and I want to say very definitely, no, you do not have anything nor do I have anything which can, possibly, enlighten this world. The Apostle Paul has made a statement in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 8 which sets forth the truth of this when he says, “You are lights in the Lord.”

In other words, it is out of a relationship to him that we are believers that we are able to be lights. We are in him, and by being in him and related to him, then we do become lights in the Lord, and only out of that relationship to him. It is fruitless for us to expect to enlighten anyone if it does not arise out of that relationship to our Lord Jesus, and if it does not come from the life that he has implanted in us through the Spirit. We are lights only in the Lord. And that light, in the final analysis, is his light.

Now I mentioned that that first similitude was a similitude that made it necessary for us to guard against a couple of implications. Well now this one has also some implications. And the first thing that comes home to me as I think about “you are the light of the world” is that this is an evaluation by our Lord which he puts upon the world. He says that we are the salt of the earth. That suggests that this earth needs to be preserved from its corruption, for it’s rotten.

Now this similitude suggests that the world is in darkness, because we are the lights of the world. He is the light of the world. The world, evidently, needs light. That which needs light is dark and darkness, so this is another evaluation of the Lord Jesus: the world, as a whole, is a stinking, rotten mess. But at the same time, it is also in spiritual darkness. It does not understand. It proclaims the doctrines of Pelegianism. It proclaims that a man may save himself. It does not accept the doctrine of original sin. It does not accept the great doctrines of the atonement.

It does not believe that the Messiah, the Son of God has truly come (or a person named Jesus Christ has come), but it does not believe that the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures has come. It does not believe that the Messiah shall come again. It does not believe that the only way of salvation is through our Lord Jesus Christ. It does not believe in the bodily resurrection. It does not accept a vicarious atonement. It does not accept the judgment that our Lord Jesus has put upon it, and it confusedly, irrationally proclaims him a great teacher.

The world is in darkness. We have some beautiful illustrations of that in our modern American society. *Time* magazine, about six or seven years ago, wrote, that it is a peculiar heresy of Americans that they see themselves as potential saints **more** than as real-life sinners. And then *Time* went on to make some comments about the radicals among our youth a few years back. And these comments, mind you, do not come from someone well-entrenched in the Christian orthodoxy, but they come from *Time* magazine. The comments are:

“Today’s young radicals in particular are almost painfully sensitive to these and other wrongs of their society and denounce them violently. But at the same time, they are typically American, in that they fail to place evil in its historic and human perspective. To them, evil is not an irreducible component of man. An inescapable fact of life, but something committed by the older generation, attributable to a particular class or the establishment, and eradicable through love and

revolution.”

How true.

And the sad thing is that the adults didn’t recognize that, either. This world is in darkness. The old men and the old women are in darkness, and the young men and the young women are in darkness, too. There is no light, there is no life, there is no purity. There is no deliverance from corruption. There is no illumination. There is no insight into spiritual things aside from the ministry of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if the world is in darkness, we may imply from that statement the Lord Jesus is the perfect light. I am the light of the world. You are lights only in me. One commentator has written, “The light which reveals the world does not make the darkness, but it makes the darkness felt.” And no one has ever made the darkness of this world felt more than the Lord Jesus. For when he, on the cross, cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” we have there the perfect revelation of the darkness of this human society of which we are a part. He did not make us dark; he only made us feel the darkness that exists in our society and also in our heart, for we crucified him, the perfect and holy Son of God.

The Lord Jesus makes an application. He says, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The good works are not the ultimate end. It’s the glorification of God.

Well, let me conclude. We must be prepared for adverse reactions as professors of faith in the Lord Jesus. The salt that we are—incidentally, we are not candy—the salt that we are irritates. And it should not be surprising that when Christians, in faithfulness to the Scriptures, as salt express truth, should find the response of reaction and irritation, for salt itself irritates.

And the light attracts bats and insects. And when there is true light, you can expect the saints to gather, but you can also expect some of the insects, also. So we should not be surprised, incidentally, that there should come into the assembly of the saints some who are not truly attracted

to the light, but are like the bats and insects and such who gather around a light but do not understand exactly what it's all about. That's why Paul said, “Of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things.” So in the congregation such as this, there may be some bats and insects in this society, too.

Well let me say one final thing. If salt is to be preservative, if it is to deliver from decay, and if light is to be illuminative, there must be contact between the salt and the material it preserves. And the light must be near that which it illumines. It is impossible for us, as Christian believers, to fulfill the Similitudes that our Lord has given if we make no contact with the world about us.

May God help us, who have been given the marvelous grace of insight into the plan of salvation, act as salt in our society by making contact, and act as light by getting near and next to those who do not have what God, in his marvelous grace, has given to us who are insignificant. Not noble, not mighty, but really despised, except by him.

If you're here this morning, and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus, you are not salt. You are not light. You need him who is the light of the world, who died for sin and sinners, and who has made it possible for you to have life.

If God the Holy Spirit has brought conviction that you are in darkness, and that you do need life, you may find it as you look to him who died for sinners and rose again. And if, as you look to him, you acknowledge, O God, I do know that I am a sinner. I do know that I need everlasting life. I do now, within my heart, trust Jesus Christ and what he has done, and not what I have done for my salvation. May God give you grace to respond. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] We are grateful to Thee, Lord, for these great expressions of truth and affirmations that are made in marvelous grace concerning us. We pray, O God, that in Thy grace we may in measure at least be salt to the earth and lights in the Lord of the world.

And if there is someone present who has not yet come to know him who is the light and the pure salt, O God, bring conviction of sin and conversion.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.