

Matthew 5:13: “You are the Salt of the Earth!”

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Throughout the pages of the Bible, God calls His people by a number of different names and titles. He calls us a ‘chosen people’, ‘a holy nation’, ‘kings’, ‘priests’, and in many instances He even compares us with special treasure or jewels. On one occasion, Christ called His true flock the ‘salt of the earth’ (Matt. 5:13)

Why would Christ compare us to *salt* – of all things? There has to be good reason! Salt has many physical attributes and He wants us to *deeply* understand them so that we can identify the spiritual parallels of these attributes and make sure we are attaining them in our lives.

For the purposes of this article, we will look into five of the many physical attributes of salt.

1) Salt is a preservative

This is possibly the most important physical attribute of salt. Long before refrigeration was invented, salt was used to keep food from decomposing and spoiling. In ancient times, salt stood between healthy living and famine because salt was what kept food wholesome. It protected the food and maintained its nutrients by preventing it from external decay. No matter how old salt is, it will never lose its taste or its ability to *preserve*! Salt is incorruptible and stands the *test of time*! Because nothing compromises this quality, it is the best preservative of all time.

Spiritually speaking, isn't God using us, as the salt of the earth, to preserve and maintain His Truth (1 Thess. 5:21)? As the salt of the earth, we have the responsibility to keep and obey the law which preserves it for the whole Church, for those called in the World Tomorrow and beyond! God wants His truth protected *forever*! Do we realize the huge responsibility assigned to each of us? *Everything* we say and do demonstrates to God how much we love, and how well we are preserving, His Truth! We must be sure to think before we speak and before we act ensuring that we do everything to the best of our ability and in a way that is becoming of a member of God's family, always asking God for help along the way. At the end of *each day*, we should prayerfully evaluate our performance and take stock of any areas in our lives that need improving. Our eternal life depends on this!

“Should ye not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the Kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him and to his sons by a ‘*covenant of salt*?’” (2 Chronicles 13:5). God gave the ‘Kingdom over Israel’ to David forever! This scripture links the word ‘*forever*’ with the ‘*covenant of salt*’! In other words, the ‘covenant of salt’ signifies an *everlasting* covenant or agreement. Salt is everlasting and uncompromising, that's why it was used to ratify, bind and preserve this covenant! As God used salt to bind this covenant forever, we are bound to protect, preserve and maintain God's Truth forever. Just as salt, in history, was the best thing that prevented food from spoiling, we should be the defense against any form of evil that tries to corrupt God's truth – no compromising allowed! God's *true* flock will stand the test of time!

2) Salt is enduring

Salt is an *enduring* mineral. Not only does it stand the test of time, but it also stands the *test of pressure* without losing its taste or being destroyed! *Genuine* salt is indestructible!

Salt will only dissolve if it is heated to 1474 degrees Fahrenheit. That's how hot it has to get before salt even begins to melt. However, even when it *does* melt, it still maintains its ‘saltiness’, or its taste – this is how enduring it is! It can be ground through the most intricate

processes, sprinkled on hot, cold or frozen food, and *still* keep its saltiness! *Nothing* will change this enduring mineral.

We, as God's salt of the earth, are promised *great* trials and tribulation if we are to enter into the Kingdom: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue [or, to endure] in the faith, and that we must through *much tribulation* enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Acts 14:22). This is what Christ is talking about when He says that we are the 'salt of the earth'. If we truly represent *genuine* 'salt', we will endure the fiery trials of life which are promised us, standing extreme tests of pressure. We must *rejoice* in our trials and see them as God-allowed opportunities for our personal spiritual growth and character building: "My brethren, *count it all joy* when you fall into divers temptations, knowing this that the trying of your faith works patience" (James 1:1-2). This attitude is what helps us strive to be *indestructible* in face of any trial we might face and, importantly, helps us build the righteous character God so wants to see in each of us.

We have to endure *much* if we are to pass the test of endurance! This also includes, at times, enduring grief and suffering wrongfully (1 Peter 2:19), just as Christ endured so much for the love of His brethren.

3) Salt is a stimulant for life and growth!

In many places in the Middle East the land is very acidic, and the *only* way for that land to become productive is by spreading a small amount of salt on the ground. Salt acts like a fertilizer and promotes life! It balances the acidity of the land, creating the right surroundings to promote growth.

Apart from promoting life and growth on the land, even the human body *needs* salt to live and grow. If it wasn't for the small amount of salt in our blood and body cells, (about 4 ounces), human beings would die! Without salt, the human body ceases to function.

As the salt of the earth, we are also expected to *grow* in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). This demonstrates that God's Church is alive and growing (John 17:17)! Accepting this New Truth, inculcating it in our minds, and applying it is what helps stimulate life and spiritual growth in our own life.

How about stimulating spiritual growth in the lives of those in the Church? As the 'salt of the earth' we must fellowship with one another! The Bible is replete with examples and admonition to apply this important tool. The Greek word for 'fellowship' used in the New Testament is "koinonia" (Strong number 2844) and means "*partnership, participation, social intercourse, communication, communion, contribution and fellowship*". This doesn't mean that we are to only talk about superficial or mundane things that go on in our lives. It means making a *genuine* effort to get to know each other making everyone in the body of Christ feel involved and loved. Fellowshiping means *rejoicing* with each other, *helping* each other in face of problems, *encouraging* each other, contacting each other especially scattered brethren and, most importantly, deeply *discussing* the Word of God, doctrines and Church teachings with each other. This is how we, as the salt of the earth, can be an effective stimulant for spiritual life and growth in others. "Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17).

4) Salt is white and pure!

Salt is *pure* – no microbes or germs can live in it! Leviticus 2:13 and other scriptures demonstrate that salt was to be a part of all meat offerings in the Old Testament. Salt was needed to indicate that the offering was pure before God.

Spiritually speaking, we are admonished to have pure hearts (1 Tim 1:5, 1 Peter 1:22). To reach this level of purity we must guard against the ways of this world, wrong pursuits and desires (Prov. 30:12). We must fight every facet of human nature, strive to come out of this world (Rev 18:4), and do all we can to develop a mind-set that is in a state of constant repentance. We must do our utmost to conscientiously live by every word of God: "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but *by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4). Doing this will ensure that we will be clothed in fine linen – clean and white (symbolic of spiritual purity) – when Christ returns (Rev. 19:8-9)! How are we measuring up?

5) Salt is valuable!

Salt was not easily and readily available to everyone in the past. Those that lived close to the sea perhaps had easier access to it, but those that lived inland found it very difficult to come by - probably because of difficulties in transport and communication. In this sense, salt was a symbol of wealth. It used to be traded for gold, silver and fine cloth. And in Old Testament times, it was something kings and the rich had access to (Ezra 4:14).

We are told that today, surprisingly, there are still a few parts of the World where the use of salt is considered a luxury.

Interestingly, because of its value, salt was used as 'money' as a form of payment. In fact the English word 'salary' comes from the Roman word 'salarium', meaning 'salt'. In times past, people actually got paid with 'salt'! History books show that ancient governments collected salt as a form of tax revenue. Salt was valuable!

When Christ called His people 'the salt of the earth', He had its 'value' in mind. Christ makes a connection between 'valuable salt' and His *true* followers! Our obedience and submissiveness to Him and His Word are what makes us valuable to God.

"You 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" (Matt. 5:13). This is a warning about the danger of *not* living and functioning as spiritual 'salt'. We need to understand that 'genuine salt' will never lose its value – it will never lose its taste or any of its other fine qualities. 'Imitation salt', on the other hand, will lose its taste – and once it's lost, it will be gone forever! When *we* are no longer different and separate from the world, when we no longer work to *preserve* God's truth, when we no longer *endure* and act as a *stimulant* for life and spiritual growth, *then* we are no longer valuable to God, and are only good to 'be trodden under foot of men'.

Salt that loses its taste isn't genuine. Once it loses its taste, at best it's only good to clear frozen pathways and get trampled on as people walk on those paths.

As the salt of the earth, we must think of the outstanding physical qualities of genuine salt, and as we do that, we should look out for, take note of, and ensure the spiritual parallels in our own lives! It's the spiritual parallels found in us that renders us to be the 'genuine salt of the earth' that Christ compares us with in Matthew 5:13! How are we measuring up?