

City On A Hill

January 14 & 15, 2006

Roddy Clyde

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NIV) *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.²⁶ Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.²⁷ No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

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

Some take this to mean that a believer whose influence and usefulness has been contaminated and lost has also lost their salvation and is therefore condemned to Hell.

The truth, however, is that just as salt cannot lose its saltiness a believer cannot lose their salvation. Jesus' point is that...

1. A believer choosing to compromise their influence is wasting God's grace.

Galatians 6:7-10 (NLT) *“Don't be misled. Remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow!⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.⁹ So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time.¹⁰ Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters.”*

2. A believer choosing to compromise their influence is inviting God's discipline.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (NLT) *“For no one can lay any other foundation than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.¹² Now anyone who builds on that foundation may use gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw.¹³ But there is going to come a time of testing at the judgment day to see what kind of work each builder has done. Everyone's work will be put through the fire to see whether or not it keeps its value.¹⁴ If the work survives the fire, that builder will receive a reward.¹⁵ But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builders themselves will be saved, but like someone escaping through a wall of flames.”*

Every believer is empowered to be the salt of the earth, but only those who refuse to waste the opportunity experience the blessing of having influence for Christ.

A common phrase at The Fellowship is that Christianity is supposed to change us. The longer we have been in relationship with Christ, the more transformed we should be. If this is true for individuals, then it only stands to reason that it is amplified in terms of a church or congregation of believers. The longer a church has been active in a community, the more transformed that community should be. The simple truth is that Christ living IN us should change us so that Christ living THROUGH us can change the world.

In a teaching known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained God's plan for world changing Christianity...

Matthew 5:13 (NIV) *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”*

In the verses we looked at last week and in this passage today Jesus summarizes the function of believers in the world. Reduced to one word, that function is influence.

2 Corinthians 2:14 (NLT) *“But thanks be to God, who made us his captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume.”*

The lives of believers should profoundly impact everyone in their circle of influence.

1 Peter 2:9 (NLT) *“But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”*

But to protect and maintain their influence in the world, believers must guard against becoming of the world...

John 17:15-16,18 (NLT) *“I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.¹⁶ They are not part of this world any more than I am...¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.”*

You are the salt of the earth...

In numerous ways Jesus' hearers—whether Greek, Roman, or Jewish—would have understood **salt of the earth** to represent a valuable commodity.

In the time of Jesus salt was connected in people's minds to significant issues well beyond its practical applications, such as...

Divinity Commerce Friendship
Peace Covenants

As was His custom, however, Jesus used the practical attributes of salt to illustrate what should be the practical attributes of a believer's influence.

1. Salt represents distinctiveness.

It is totally different from the food or object upon which it is put. The power of salt lies in this difference.

Believers are to be different from the world. The power of their lives and their effectiveness for Christ lies in them being different and distinctive.

Romans 12:1-2 (NLT) "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is."

2. Salt exemplifies purity.

One of the characteristics of the world in which we live is the steady decline of moral and ethical standards.

Believers standards of thought, speech and behavior should be as pure as possible so they can be used by God to help purify the rest of the world.

James 1:27 (NLT) "Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us."

3. Salt prohibits decay.

In the ancient world salt was the most common of all preservatives. If the believer is to be the salt of the earth, he must have an antiseptic influence on life.

The believer must be the person who, by his presence, helps overcome the decay of sin and prevents the entire earth from degenerating even faster than it is.

Romans 8:19-22 (NLT) "For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.²⁰ Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse.²¹ All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

4. Salt stimulates thirst.

Salt works to increase the body's craving for water. Without proper intake of fluids, dehydration and even death may result.

Believers should live in a way that makes others aware of the danger of spiritual dehydration - motivating others to thirst for God.

John 4:10-14 (NLT) "Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who I am, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."¹¹ "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this is a very deep well. Where would you get this living water?"¹² And besides, are you greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his cattle enjoyed?"¹³ Jesus replied, "People soon become thirsty again after drinking this water.¹⁴ But the water I give them takes away thirst altogether. It becomes a perpetual spring within them, giving them eternal life."

5. Salt enhances flavor.

The taste of food without salt becomes monotonous. It's the correct amount of salt that maximizes the flavor.

Believers should be to life what salt is to food - enhancing to the taste of it. The shame is that too often Christianity is connected with precisely the opposite. It is seen as the ingredient that removes the flavor from life.

Colossians 4:5-6 (NLT) "Live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity.⁶ Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone."

But if the salt loses its saltiness how can it be made salty again?

The obvious answer is that salt, having lost its saltiness, cannot be made salty again. Equally obvious is the fact that salt cannot actually lose its inherent saltiness though it can lose its effectiveness and become tasteless when contaminated by other minerals. In His question Jesus is addressing the issue of a believer allowing sin to contaminate his usefulness in the Kingdom.