

## You Are The Salt Of The Earth

by Hendrik Joubert

The affirmative manner in which the Lord delivers the sermon on the mount, and specifically the depiction of the qualities of those who *are* part of His kingdom, grabs one's attention. Those who were privileged to actually hear Him were **astonished** at the **authority** with which He taught. (**Matthew 7:28-29**) Jesus does not announce the qualities as something to be considered; blessed *are* those who *have* these qualities – they stand between the sinner and the kingdom.

The reasons why the citizens of the kingdom should *have* these qualities are stated in the same affirmative way; **...you are the salt of the earth**, and not *you should work at becoming...* Having said that, it does not suggest perfection from the outset; it speaks to attitude, to resolve – being **pure in heart**. Consider the similarities between the qualities announced by the Lord and those announced through Peter as we learn that **if these things are yours** (*you made them your own*) **and abound** (*and you are getting better at it*), **you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** (**2Peter 1:8**) You will be the salt which flavors the creation corrupted by mankind.

The implication is, if **these things** are absent **the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.** (**Matthew 5:13**) The inference seems too negative to consider. It is too final. Notice the negative finality with which the Lord concludes His sermon: **...those who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand;...** (**Matthew 7:26-27**)

It is a fact that we stumble, however we should not accept it as a reality in the sense that we justify our weaknesses. Remember, we need to be **pure in heart**. It should be a *bona fide* stumbling and not a planned wrong encouraged, or should we say, justified by the grace of God. It is through Jude that we are warned that some have slipped in without being noticed, turning the grace of God into moral looseness. (**Jude 3-4**)

Through James we are exhorted to **submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.** <sup>8</sup> **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** (**James 4:7-8**) Notice the idea of double-mindedness. The concept conveys the idea that at one moment I may be quite sure; however at another I am not so sure – about making the commitment for change. Am I being modest, or is it because I do not know if I am willing to make that kind of a commitment?

The role of self-denial and the self-control it takes to do what God wants rather than what I like is obvious. Consider the correlation between the qualities Jesus announces in **Matthew 5** and that which make up the armor of God, **Ephesians 6:13-18**. The follower of Christ is exhorted to put on the **whole** armor of God in

order to remain standing. Through Paul we learn about these weapons of our warfare, that they are ***not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,*** <sup>5</sup> ***casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,***... (2Corinthians 10:4-5)

***Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...*** A striking difference between the ***teaching of Christ*** and the Law is that the ***ministry of the Spirit*** (2Corinthians 3:7-8) addresses the sin right there where it starts, in the heart of man. The role of repentance, literally a change of mind, is obvious. A *transformation* is to take place as a result of *renewing* the mind: ***And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*** (Romans 12:2)

This renewal can only come if we let go of our own perceptions of right and wrong, of acceptable and unacceptable, of what we like and dislike, as we ***hunger and thirst after righteousness.*** (Matthew 5:6) Through Peter we learn that this involves feeding upon the pure milk of the word in a rather base and instinctive manner; as a newborn baby. (1Peter 2:1-2)

Does this kind of talk make us uncomfortable? Are we looking for gracious statements to excuse our lack of commitment? Are we being double-minded? ***Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*** (James 4:8) *Beloved* let us worship God with purified hearts (Matthew 5:8), making sure that we are not condemning ourselves by what we ***approve.*** (Romans 14:22) Let us glorify God by demonstrating our faith in Him through our actions (James 2:14-26) so that we may indeed be the salt of the earth.