**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN - 8**

**A Christian is…Salt and Light**

**INTRODUCTION** - In these past 2 months we have discussed what it means to be a Christian, noted some of the blessings and responsibilities that accompany being a Christian and devoted 6 lessons to descriptions of a Christian (a citizen, soldier, athlete, farmer, priest and various other descriptions). Today we want to notice one more set of descriptions that are related in their application – that as Christians we are to be salt and light. These are qualities associated with being a proper example to the world.

 **I. The power of being as proper example**

a.  The importance of being a proper example is something that cannot be overemphasized. Our world desperately needs more godly examples. In many instances, they many not accept them (at least at the moment), but you never know when and how a good example will affect someone else. Incidentally, the same can be said about a bad example.

b.  We ARE being examples. Whether we like it or not, we are examples and people are watching.

c.  The Bible in many passages speaks of being a proper example.

   i.      [**1 Cor. 11:1**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor.%2011.1) - Paul said to imitate him as he imitated Christ.

   ii.     [**1 Tim. 4:12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Tim.%204.12) - he challenged Timothy to be an example in every aspect of his life.

   iii.    [**Phil. 2:14-15**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil.%202.14-15) - that we are to be shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

   iv.   [**1 Peter 2:12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%202.12) **- “*having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*”**

   v.     [**Matthew 5:13-16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matthew%205.13-16) – our text. We are salt and light.

 **II. We are the salt of the earth**

a.   [**Matt. 5:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.13) – Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. He calls for us to be the example we ought to be.

b.   [**Mark 9:49-50**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mark%209.49-50) – similar to previous text, “have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

c.   [**Colossians 4:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Galatians%204.6) – let your speech be seasoned with salt. Our conversations with others ought to be pleasant and make the situation better.

d.   Qualities of salt – all of these have to do with our example.

   i.      **It preserves** – before refrigeration, salt was used generously as a preservative. Even today, it is a form of preservation. The idea of preservation is to keep something from spoiling or ruining.

1.  By our example, we can save souls from being lost. We can keep the world from becoming totally depraved and doom. In the Bible God has often spared nations and people because of the righteous. Consider Abraham interceding for Sodom in [**Genesis 18:20-32**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Genesis%2018.20-32) where God offers to spare the city if only 10 righteous are found in it.
In Israel’s history, Judah was spared from total destruction because of a remnant.
Righteous King Josiah caused God to put off destruction of Judah during his life [**2 Chron. 34:23-39**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Chron.%2034.23-39)
Who knows if our example will preserve some soul from destruction or maybe keep someone from falling away?

2.  As Christians, ***we ought to preserve the word of God*** – its purity and its truth.
It can preserve us from falling away – [**Psa. 119:11**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Psa.%20119.11)**, “*Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*”**
It can keep others from falling away. Once the word of God is lost, so is the world and so is the church. Let us do our part to keep that from happening. I think of the warning of leaven corrupting the whole lump - [**1 Cor. 5:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor.%205.6) and that we purge it out.

 ii.      **It irritates** - poured on a wound or in the eyes, salt can be very painful. But I hear that at times it can be helpful as this is done.

1.  Similarly, at times being a Christian will be an irritant to the world. As we live and proclaim the word of God, there are going to be those who don’t like it.

2.  [**Heb. 4:12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb.%204.12) - describes the word of God as living and powerful, sharper than a 2 edged sword, **“*piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joins and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*”**

3.  Jesus taught His disciples that the truth would irritate the world – [**John 15:18-19**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2015.18-19)**.** [**1 John 3:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20John%203.13) **- “*Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.*”**

4.  And He was not alone – John the Baptist before Herod and Pharisees; Jesus before Jewish leaders, Stephen, Paul, etc.

5.  Just prior to describing Christians as salt in our text, we have “the beatitudes”. The final beatitude deals with being persecuted for righteousness sake - [**Matt. 5:10-12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.10-12)Even in that we continue to be examples.

   iii.      **It creates thirst** – Salt makes us thirsty. The more salt there is in a food, the thirstier we get.

1.  As the salt of the earth, we by our example ought to provoke others to desire the word of God.

2.  They ought to see something in us that they want. How we handle problems, our disposition (positive, pleasant, kind, etc.), our consistency in practicing what we preach, how we avoid trouble by living pure lives, how we deal with hateful and ungodly people, etc. – these are things that people see and they will cause some to want to know what you are about.
**Acts 16:25** - did the conduct of Paul and Silas in prison have anything to do with the jailer turning to them? (16:25 – in context this is after they were persecuted and beaten for preaching Christ).

3.  That is why it is important that we be a proper example at all times. Sure there will be many who mock us, but others will see something worthy of further investigation.

   iv.      **It flavors (seasons)** – the average person enjoys a little seasoning in their foods. Salt can take a bland piece of meat and give it the right amount of flavor to make it more palatable and perhaps even “perfect.”

1.  One of the observations made in [**Matt. 5:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.13) is that if salt loses its flavor, how will the world be seasoned? It is good for nothing. Perhaps this was the main point Jesus was emphasizing with our example as salt.

2.  In this we are reminded that we need to live to make the world a pleasant place. Just as our godly influence causes others to thirst, it can give this world a more pleasant outlook. The ungodly world is an ugly place. It is filled with hopelessness, bitterness, corruption, pain and sorrow, etc.
How can we make the world around us a better place? By simply being “the salt of the earth”. Make the environment around you as pleasant as possible.

3.  Cause the world to see your good works and glorify God because of it - [**Matt. 5:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.16)
[**Col. 4:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Col.%204.6) - let your speech be seasoned with salt.

4.  As I read the Bible I see a standard that will work if everyone were to apply it. While we cannot force others into following what we believe to be the truth, we can make our environment, and to whatever degree we have the ability, their environment, more pleasant and palatable. Be a part of what makes the world around you better instead of worse.

5.  Note: is it possible to have too much salt? Physically yes. Too much salt can ruin food and perhaps make it even inedible. It can also cause health problems.
What about spiritually? I think of one who abuses the word of God to get his way. One who lives a self-righteous life imposing his agenda on others – especially when it is done in the name of God. For example: The Westboro Baptist church and its hateful method of delivering its message. While I might agree with some of their moral stands, I will NEVER agree with their tactics.

e.   In this we see how we are to be like salt in this world.

 **III. We are the light of the world**

a.  **[Matt. 5:14-16](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.14-16%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)** - as Jesus continues to emphasize the importance of example, he turns now to light.

b.  We could spend an entire lesson addressing the word of God as light, but time will fail us doing such (and it has been a frequent point of emphasis in various lessons).

c.  In scripture, light is typically a reference to God and that which comes from Him [**1 John 1:5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20John%201.5) – God is light – including truth [**2 Peter 1:19**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Peter%201.19) Jesus brought light into this world - [**John 1:4-5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%201.4-5)**,** [**John 8:12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%208.12)**, “I am the Light of the world”.**

d.  We need the light of the world, and we need to let it be shining on others. [**Phil. 2:14-16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil.%202.14-16)

e.  Qualities of light include:

   i.      **It illuminates** – it helps us see. The word of God is described as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path [**Psa. 119:105**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Psa.%20119.105)**.**

   ii**.      It exposes –** [**Eph. 5:11-13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Eph.%205.11-13) **- “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.*”**
Jesus in [**John 3:20-21**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%203.20-21) spoke of this.

   iii**.      It drives away darkness** – associated with the exposing of darkness, light actually drives it away. You can introduce light into a dark room, but you cannot introduce darkness and drive away light. To get darkness, you have to remove the source of light.

   iv.      **It guides us** – the frequent references to light in scripture imply that it gives us direction.
I think of a light house that warns ships and guides them away from danger.
I think of car beams – note how they illuminate the path immediately in front of you. But they get you where you are going because you keep shining them in that direction.
[**Eph. 5:8**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Eph.%205.8) calls for us to walk as children of light. So does [**1 John 1:7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20John%201.7) -walk in the light.

   v.      **It can attract others** – our good light (example) like many other things we have discussed can attract others to the truth. That is actually what is emphasized in our text in [**Matt. 5:14-16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.14-16)**.** Don’t hide your light, but put it on a lampstand so all can see. And as a result, perhaps they will glorify God in heaven. Vs. 16

   vi.      **Again, as with the salt, can we have too much light?** I am convinced we can make the same application, as excessive light can blind one and cause them turn away. We must shine brightly, but again consider how you shine that light on others. Don’t shine the word of God in a harsh way on others.

**CONCLUSION** –

You can see yet more descriptions of the Christian.

This time we have emphasized the importance of example.

Let us strive to be the light and salt that God wants us to be.

How is your influence?