

ST. SIMEON ANGLICAN CHURCH, OFF FUTA ROAD, AKURE

BIBLE STUDY, 11/06/2008

STUDY 9

KINGDOM VISIBILITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Matthew 5:13 – 16

The beatitudes are followed by a summary statement of the basic character of the Christian's life as salt and light. Four terms are used to illustrate the Christian character: salt, light, lamp (candle), and lamp-stand (candlestick). Salt was used by the Jewish people to sprinkle on oil to give brightness to the lamps. Salt also was used to purify and preserve food. Jesus Christ used these illustrations to show the function of the Christian character, to give brightness to life and to preserve society from the forces of decay. The lamp and lamp-stand were used as an illustration for everyday life of the Jewish people. The significance is that the disciples of Christ and all Christians are obliged to present the light of the gospel to the world, shining before man to show God's good works and to guide man in glorifying the True God.

Ye are the salt of the earth. The salt adds flavouring, acts as a preservative, melts coldness and heals wounds. Thus it is a very appropriate description of the believer in Christ in his relationship to the world in which he lives. The term "lose its savour" refers to its essential saltiness and therefore if the salt loses its saltiness, it is worthless. This implies that if a Christian loses his effectiveness, his testimony will be trampled under the feet of men.

Ye are the light of the world describes the essential mission of the Christian to the world. He is the condition (salt) to meet the world's needs and he has a mission (light) to the world. His light is to clearly shine forth into the darkness of human depravity. He is to set it up on a candlestick, not hide it *under a bushel*, e.g., basket. Inconsistent living and un-confessed sin in the life of the believer will become a basket-like covering which hides the light of God. God provides the light and it continues to shine, but as believers we must keep our lives clean before the Lord in order not to cover up the light which He has placed within us. Darkness is the absence of light and darkness alone cannot dispel the light, but the smallest light can dispel the greatest darkness. Therefore, let your light shine through a clean life before the Lord and before the world in which you live.

1. The salt of the earth

Matthew 5:13; Hebrews 4:12; Acts 2:37; II Corinthians 2:14; Numbers 18:19; Leviticus 2:13; Ezekiel 43:24; Colossians 4:6; Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34

Ye are the salt of the earth. The doctrine of the gospel is as *salt*; it is penetrating, *quick*, and *powerful*; it reaches *the heart*. It is cleansing, it is relishing, and preserves from putrefaction. An everlasting covenant is called a *covenant of salt*; and the gospel is an everlasting gospel. Salt was required in all the sacrifices in the Old Testament. Now Christ's disciples having themselves learned the doctrine of the gospel, and being employed to teach it to others, were as salt. Christians, and especially ministers, are the salt of the earth.

For Christians to be *as good salt*, white, and small, and broken into many grains, but very useful and necessary they are: (i) to be in themselves—seasoned with the gospel, with the salt of grace; thoughts and affections, words and actions, all seasoned

with grace. *Have salt in yourselves*, else you cannot diffuse it among others. (ii) they must not only *be* good but *do* good to others, must insinuate themselves into the minds of the people and transform them into the taste and relish of the gospel. (iii) to be great blessings to the world because mankind, lying in ignorance and wickedness, were a vast heap of unsavoury stuff, ready to putrefy; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines, to season it with knowledge and grace, and so to render it acceptable to God. (iv) not to be laid on a heap, must not continue always together at Jerusalem, but must be scattered as salt upon the meat, here a grain and there a grain; as the Levites were dispersed in Israel, that, wherever they live, they may communicate their savour.

But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. If they be not as *good salt*, they are as *salt* that has *lost its savour*. If Christian, who should season others, is himself unsavoury, void of spiritual life, relish, and vigour; then he is (i) *irrecoverable*: *Wherewith shall it be salted?* Salt is a remedy for *unsavoury meat*, but there is no remedy for *unsavoury salt*. (ii) *unprofitable*: *It is thenceforth good for nothing*; what use can it be put to, in which it will not do more hurt than good? As a man without reason, so is a Christian without grace. (iii) doomed to ruin and rejection; He shall be *cast out*—expelled from the invisible church and the communion of the faithful, to which he is a blot and a burden; and he shall be *trodden under foot of men*.

2. The light of the world

Matthew 5:14–15; Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15; John 5:35; James 3:13; Job 29:11 *Ye are the light of the world*. All Christians are *light in the Lord* and must *shine as lights*. Christ is *the Light of the world*, and they are *workers together with him*, and have some of his honour put upon them. Spiritually the world is in darkness (II Peter 1:19) and sits in the shadow of death (Matthew 4:16), Christ raises up his disciples to shine in it; and, that they may do so, from him they borrow and derive their light.

As the *lights of the world*, Christians are to illuminate and give light to others and therefore, (i) they shall be *set up* as lights. Christ has lighted these candles, they shall not be put under a bushel, not confined always in one place but they shall be sent into the world. The churches are the candlesticks, the golden candlesticks, in which these lights are placed, that the light may be diffused; and the gospel is so strong a light, and carries with it so much of its own evidence, that, *like a city on a hill, it cannot be hid*, it cannot but appear to be from God, to all those who do not wilfully shut their eyes against it. It will *give light to all that are in the house*, to all that will draw near to it, and come where it is. (ii) they must *shine* as lights, by their *good preaching*, that is, the knowledge they have, they must communicate for the good of others; not put it *under a bushel*, but spread it; and by their *good living*, that is, they must be *burning and shining lights*; must evidence, in their whole conversation, that they are indeed followers of Christ and they must be to others for instruction, direction, quickening, and comfort.

3. The essence of a light so shine

Matthew 5:16; I Peter 4:11; Colossians 4:6

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. First, our light must shine by doing such good works as men may see, and may approve of; such works as are of good report among them that are without, and as will therefore give them cause to think well of Christianity. We must do good works that may be seen to the edification of others but not that they may be seen to our own ostentation. Those about us must not only hear our good words, but see our good works; that they may be convinced that religion is more than a bare name, and that we do not only make a profession of it, but abide under the power of it.

Secondly, our light must shine so "that those who see your good works may be brought but to glorify your Father which is in heaven." The glory of God is the great thing we must aim at in every thing we do. We must not only endeavour to glorify God ourselves, but we must do all we can to bring others to glorify him. "Let them see your good works, that they may be convinced of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, may be provoked by a holy emulation to imitate your good works, and so may glorify God." The holy, regular, and exemplary conversation of the saints may do much towards the conversion of sinners.