

Essential Commitments of a Local Church pt 9

VIII. We are Committed to Evangelism of the Sinner
rather than Moral Reform of the Society.

2 Timothy 2:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Introduction

“We have all in our lifetime and certainly in recent years been exposed to a current trend in evangelicalism in America that we could call a trend toward morality. It is not exclusive to evangelicals.

The Roman Catholic Church has always upheld morality. The Mormons have upheld morality. There are many other religious groups — cults — that make an issue out of morality. Many years ago there was a

moral movement in America known as Moral Rearmament. And then more recent years there was the Moral Majority and now that Moral Majority is sort of been redefined as The Religious Right. And we've always heard a lot about the importance of Judeo-

Christian values and how critical it is to teach morality to our children and to call America back to moral living and moral conduct. There are many evangelical churches that have made a major emphasis on this issue of morality. Many evangelicals, as you well know, have become involved in politicking at all levels in order to effect moral change in America through lobbying, through use of money to buy influence here and there, by pressure, politics, by protests and etc., etc.

There is a grave concern about the immorality of our world and about the immorality of our nation. And certainly I agree that morality is better than immorality, that morality has inherent in it a certain sort of human goodness. And obviously I am supportive of what is the divine standard, the moral code that God has revealed on the pages of Scripture in His very clear commandments.

Having said that, however, I want to say something that may surprise you. Morality is more dangerous than immorality. Morality is more dangerous than immorality.

There is a very serious danger in moral reformation without regeneration. There's a very serious danger in endeavoring to live your life according to Judeo-Christian values without salvation. Reformation without transformation puts a person in a very, very dangerous position.

I suppose the greatest illustration that we know anything about in human history is the Pharisees.

They were classic moralists down to the minutiae. The apostle Paul being one of them could even say that a...measuring his life against the law he was blameless. They lived by a complex ethical code. They demanded that life be controlled by moral standards. They demanded this ethical, moral behavior be based upon the laws of their own tradition and the hottest hell awaited them. Morality gained them nothing and it cost them everything. It was morality that caused them to reject the Messiah.

That's why Jesus said to them, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." It is the righteous, it is the moral, it is the religious, it is the self-satisfied, self-congratulating, moral people, the people who uphold the traditional values, who are resistant to the true diagnosis of their spiritual condition. And that was the case with the Jews. The whole of the population had been largely influenced by the Pharisees and they hated the way that Jesus

diagnosed their condition. And the Pharisees, of course, hated the fact that He identified them in the way that He did.”

The Danger of Moral Reformation John MacArthur

• Sermons Luke 11:24-28 42-161 May 2, 2004

Matthew 23:25–28 (NKJV)

²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.
²⁶ Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.
²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

It was clear at the end of Christs’ ministry that it was the Moral majority (pharisees) that were against Him. The Moral ones are the ones that led the charge to get him killed.

There is great danger in making the message of the church a message exclusively about morality. It is very dangerous when the churches Goal is to make you a moral person. To make you a better you.

We have all seen it. Millions of dollars and millions of man hours given to put a particular party or person in office, only to see it overturned and undone in the next election.

If we preach a message of morality without calling the sinner to repentance then we have failed in the very clear commands of scripture.

If we teach that God wants you to obey his commandments without showing them that they have failed in that obligation and are in need of salvation then we have fallen woefully short of what God expects of us, his Church.

If we call our society back to the standard of Morality found in scripture without explaining to them that they are under the wrath of God then we have done more to drive them away from God than towards God.

Jesus gave a sobering warning about morality.

Luke 11:24–28 (NKJV)

²⁴ “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ ²⁵ And when he comes, he finds *it* swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then he goes and takes with *him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first.”

²⁷ And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed *is* the womb that bore You, and *the* breasts which nursed You!”

²⁸ But He said, “**More than that, blessed *are* those who hear the word of God and keep it!**”

You are in worse condition when you a moral religious person than the immoral irreligious.

Romans 1 shows us that the further men get away of God the more religious they become.

The more moral you are without God, the more you think you don't need God.

Moral, good people have always been the hardest to reach with the Gospel, because they think they are ok.

My concern is that we think we have done our job if we call lost people to obey the commandments.

That we think we have completed the task when we tell people that homosexual lifestyle is wrong

That we think we have finished the job and done all we are supposed to do if we tell the young mother that abortion is wrong.

That we have completed the great commission when we protest the ungodly legislation of our governments.

That we have done our part as long as we vote for the right party.

What have you done if the ones you call to obey the commandments do what you say and die and go to Hell

What have you done if you tell the homosexual that his lifestyle is wrong and he needs to stop and he does and dies and goes to Hell

What have you done if you convince a young mother that abortion is wrong and doesn't go thru with it and raises the child without the gospel and dies and goes to Hell.

What have we done if we protest the legislation of a government and all the leaders die and go to Hell

What have we done as long as we vote for the right party by never share the gospel with all parties and they die and go to Hell

I suggest that we have done nothing but make moral occupants of Hell.

Review

Essential Commitments of a Local Church Pt. 8

I. We are Committed to a High View God Rather than a Deification of Man.

II. We are Committed to the Absolute Authority and Sufficiency of the Scriptures Rather than the Tradition of Man

III. We are Committed to Sound Doctrine Rather Than the Dumbing Down of Doctrine.

IV. We are Committed to the Preaching of the Word Rather than Pragmatic Methodology

V. We are Committed to Integrated Worship with the Family rather than the Segregation of the Family

VI. We are Committed to Personal Holiness Rather than Worldliness.

VII. We are Committed to a plurality of Godly Leadership than the Business or Democratic Model.

VIII. We are Committed to Evangelism of the Sinner rather than Moral Reform of the Society.

IX. We are Committed to the Return of Jesus Christ rather than the Riches of Earth.

Lesson:

I. The Clarification

II. The Command

III. The Conduct

I. The Clarification

There have always been attempts to distract the church and diminish the message of the Gospel.

We have in recent years seen multiple attempts of those within and without the church to do exactly this.

Some have attempted to redefine the Gospel.

With the advancements of the agenda of the Social Justice movement there have been attempts and in some cases successes in redefining the Gospel to a salvation from a particular social status rather than salvation from the wrath of God.

Seminaries and professors of large denominations and leading evangelicals have succumbed to the pressures of Political correctness and cultural mandates to allow Culture to define the Gospel.

The Social gospel is the gateway to liberalism in the church.

The deception is that many believe they have done their duty in evangelism in alleviating social ills of society.

While some are attempting to Redefine the Gospel. Others are attempting to Diminish the Gospel.

1. By eliminating the exclusive nature of the Gospel

Some are saying more and more that Jesus is not the only way. That there are many ways to God other than Christ. That those who never hear the gospel are saved.

John 14:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Acts 4:12 (NKJV)

¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

2. By promoting Ecumenicalism.

And that even the Roman Catholic Church is a true church and they are to be considered brothers and sisters in Christ. Once clear lines given to us by the

Reformation are being blurred and eliminated by very popular teachers in the church.

VIII. We are Committed to Evangelism of the Sinner rather than Moral Reform of the Society.

What we are not saying.

1. We are not saying that our only purpose on this planet is evangelization however it is the primary reason

God has left us hear for a number of reasons

1. Evangelism
2. Edification of the Body
3. Exemplification
4. Exclamation

2. We are not saying that we should not stand and speak for what is right.

issues

Abortion

Homosexuality

Racism

Feminism

Biblical manhood and womanhood

Raising children

Evolution
Liberalism
Progressivism
Neo-Marxism.

3. We are not saying that we have no desire for our culture to be moral rather than immoral

4. We are not saying that Believers cannot and should not pursue places of influence in Government or politics. (Although in this culture I do not see how you could last unless you compromise your Biblical Fidelity and keep your mouth shut)

What we are saying

1. God calls us to speak the truth of the Gospel
2. God calls us to be salt and light in the darkness
3. Moral Reform or Moralism does not save anyone
4. God is not calling us to be Political but rather Biblical
5. The only hope for this planet is the Gospel of Christ.

I. The Clarification

II. The Command

Matthew 28:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*” Amen.

Luke 24:46–47 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Mark 16:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 13:46–47 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us:

‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,
That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

Acts 28:28–31 (NKJV)

²⁸ “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” ²⁹ And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

³⁰ Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Romans 10:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!”*

Colossians 1:23 (NKJV)

²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

2 Timothy 2:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.

¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

I. The Clarification

II. The Command

III. The Conduct

The Command should be met with our Conduct.
We are to live what we say and say what we live.

I. Our Message should be Biblical.

II. Our Model should be Moral .

III. Our Method should be Scriptural

I. Our Message should be Biblical

The Gospel should include

1. We are sinners deserving of the Wrath of
God

John 3:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Romans 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

2. **God Loves Sinners and Sends His Son to Die for sinners**

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Romans 5:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

3. We are commanded by God to Repent, Believe and Submit to the Lordship of Christ.

Acts 2:37–38 (NKJV)

³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 10:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

I. Our Message should be Biblical.

II. Our Model should be Moral .

Our Example, how we live, has a great effect on the the believability of the message we bring.
We are to live honorable, holy lives to bring credibility to the Gospel

Romans 2:17–24 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, ¹⁸ and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, ¹⁹ and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. ²¹ You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? ²² You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? ²⁴ For “*the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,*” as it is written.

Ezekiel 36:20–23 (NKJV)

²⁰ When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These *are* the people of the Lord, *and* yet they have

gone out of His land.’²¹ But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.

²² “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.²³ And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

Titus 2:3–5 (NKJV)

³ the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—⁴ that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

1 Timothy 5:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Therefore I desire that *the* younger *widows* marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

Titus 2:6–10 (NKJV)

⁶ Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷ in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, ⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

⁹ Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things*, not answering back, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

1 Timothy 6:1 (NKJV)

6 Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed.

2 Samuel 12:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.”

Matthew 5:13–17 (NKJV)

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

In these four verses the Lord summarizes the function of believers in the world. Reduced to one word, that function is *influence*. Whoever lives according to the Beatitudes is going to function in the world as salt and light. Christian character consciously or unconsciously affects other people for better or for worse. As John Donne reminds us, “No man is an island.”

Andrew Murray lived an exceptionally holy life. Among those on whom his influence was the greatest were his children and grandchildren. Five of his six sons became ministers of the gospel and four of his daughters became minister's wives. Ten grandsons became ministers and thirteen grandchildren became missionaries.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, p. 236). Chicago: Moody Press.

Woodrow Wilson told the story of being in a barbershop one time. "I was sitting in a barber chair when I became aware that a powerful personality had entered the room. A man had come quietly in upon the same errand as myself to have his hair cut and sat in the chair next to me. Every word the man uttered, though it was not in the least didactic, showed a personal interest in the man who was serving him. And before I got through with what was being done to me I was aware I had attended an evangelistic service, because Mr. D. L. Moody was in that chair. I purposely lingered in the room after he had left and noted the singular affect that his visit had brought upon the barber shop. They talked in undertones. They did not know his name, but they knew something had elevated their thoughts, and I felt that I left that place as I should have left a place of worship."

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, p. 236). Chicago: Moody Press.

Christ's kingdom people are not to reflect the world but they are to influence the world; they are to be in it but not of it.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, p. 236). Chicago: Moody Press.

Here is a mandate for Christians to influence the world. The Beatitudes are not to be lived in isolation or only among fellow believers, but everywhere we go. God's only witnesses are His children, and the world has no other way of knowing of Him except through the testimony of what we are.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, p. 237). Chicago: Moody Press.

The world needs salt because it is corrupt and it needs light because it is dark. G. Campbell Morgan said, "Jesus, looking out over the multitudes of His day, saw the corruption, the disintegration of life at every point, its breakup, its spoliation; and, because of His love of the multitudes, He knew the thing that they needed most was salt in order that the corruption should be arrested. He saw them also wrapped in gloom, sitting in darkness, groping amid mists and fogs. He knew that they needed, above everything else, ... light" (*The Gospel According to Matthew* [New York: Revell, 1929], p. 46).

The biblical world view is that the world is corrupted and decayed, that it is dark and darkening. "Evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse,

deceiving and being deceived,” Paul warns (2 Tim. 3:13). The world cannot do anything but get worse, because it has no inherent goodness to build on, no inherent spiritual and moral life in which it can grow. Year after year the system of evil accumulates a deeper darkness.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, p. 237). Chicago: Moody Press.

being salt

Salt has always been valuable in human society, often much more so than it is today. During a period of ancient Greek history it was called *theon*, which means divine. The Romans held that, except for the sun, nothing was more valuable than salt. Often Roman soldiers were paid in salt, and it was from that practice that the expression “not worth his salt” originated.

In many ancient societies salt was used as a mark of friendship. For two persons to share salt indicated a mutual responsibility to look after one another’s welfare. Even if a worst enemy ate salt with you, you were obliged to treat him as a friend.

Salt was frequently used in the ancient Near East to bind a covenant, somewhat in the way an agreement or contract is notarized in our day. When the parties to a covenant ate salt together before witnesses, the covenant was given special authentication. Though no particulars are given in the account, we learn from 2

Chronicles 13:5 that God made a covenant of salt with David. God prescribed that all sacrificial offerings in Israel were to be offered with salt “so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking” (Lev. 2:13).

In numerous ways Jesus’ hearers—whether Greek, Roman, or Jewish—would have understood **salt of the earth** to represent a valuable commodity. Though most could not have understood His full meaning, they knew He was saying that His followers were to have an extremely important function in the world. Whatever else it may have represented, salt always stood for that which was of high value and importance.

Many suggestions have been made as to the particular characteristics of salt that Jesus intended to associate with this figure. Some interpreters point out that salt is white and therefore represents purity. As the “pure in heart” (v. 8), Jesus’ disciples are to be pure before the world and are to be God’s means of helping purify the rest of the world. Their glistening white moral and spiritual purity is to contrast with the moral discolor of the world. Christians are to exemplify the divine standards of righteousness in thought, speech, and actions, remaining “unstained by the world” (James 1:27). All that is certainly true; but it does not seem to the point, because saltiness, not the color of salt, is the issue.

Others emphasize the characteristic of flavor. That is, Christians are to add divine flavor to the world. Just as

many foods are tasteless without salt, the world is drab and tasteless without the presence of Christians. Someone has even said, “We Christians have no business being boring. Our function is to add flavor and excitement to the world.” Christians are a means of God’s blessing mankind, including unbelievers, just as He sends His sun and rain on the righteous and unrighteous alike.

There are certain senses in which that principle is true. An unbelieving marriage partner is sanctified by a believing spouse (1 Cor. 7:14), and God offered to spare Sodom for the sake of only ten righteous people, if that many could be found within it (Gen. 18:32).

The problem with that view, however, is that, from the earliest days of the church, the world has considered Christianity to be anything but attractive and “flavorful.” It has, in fact, often found the most spiritual Christians to be the most unpalatable. In the world’s eyes, Christians, almost above all others, take the flavor *out* of life. Christianity is stifling, restrictive, and a rain on the world’s parade.

After Christianity became a recognized religion of the Roman Empire, the emperor Julian lamented, “Have you looked at these Christians closely? Hollow-eyed, pale-cheeked, flat-breasted, they brood their lives away unspurred by ambition. The sun shines for them, but they don’t see it. The earth offers them its fullness, but

they desire it not. All their desire is to renounce and suffer that they may come to die.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes reportedly once said that he might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen he knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers. Sometimes the world is turned away from the church because Christians are hypocritical, self-righteous, judgmental, and truly boring by any standard. But even when the church is faithful—indeed, especially when it is faithful—the world does not value whatever taste or aroma it sees in Christianity. Paul reminds us that Christians are an “aroma from life to life” and “a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved,” but are an “aroma of death to death” among “those who are perishing” (2 Cor. 2:15–16).

Because salt stings when placed in a wound, some interpreters believe that Jesus meant to illustrate just the opposite characteristic to that of flavor. Christians are to sting the world, prick its conscience, make it uncomfortable in the presence of God’s holy gospel.

That analogy also has merit. The church frequently is so concerned with trying to please, attract, and excuse that its witness against sin is obscured and all but lost. We may be so concerned with not offending others that we fail to confront them with their lostness and their desperate need to be saved from their sin. A gospel

that does not confront sin is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some years ago a young couple who came to me to be married said they knew the Lord had brought them together and given them to each other. The woman claimed to have been a Christian all her life, but her concept of salvation was that of trying to please God by doing the best she could. She admitted that, although she had filed for divorce because her husband had been unfaithful, she was still married to him. On further questioning, she admitted that she had been committing fornication with the young man she now wanted to marry. The young man claimed to be born again, but he saw no great wrong in their relationship and no reason why they should not be married in a Christian service. I told them that God could not possibly have brought them together because they were living contrary to His revealed will—and worse, trying to justify it. At that point they both got up and angrily stormed out of the office.

The church cannot stand for the Lord if it does not stand for His Word, and when it stands for His Word its witness will often sting.

Salt also creates thirst. Partly because it increases the body's craving for water, salt tablets often are given to those who do hard work in excessive heat. Without proper intake of fluids, dehydration and even death may result. God intends for His people so to live and

testify before the world that others will be made more aware of their spiritual dehydration and danger. A person may see our peace in a trying circumstance, or our confidence in what we believe, and thereby be persuaded to try our faith.

I believe that all of the foregoing analogies have some validity. Christians are to be pure; they should add a certain attractiveness to the gospel; they should be true to God's Word even when it stings; and their living should create a thirst for God in those who do not know Him.

But I believe the primary characteristic Jesus emphasizes is that of preservation. Christians are a preserving influence in the world; they retard moral and spiritual spoilage. When the church is taken out of the world at the rapture, Satan's perverse and wicked power will be unleashed in an unprecedented way (see 2 Thess. 2:7–12). Evil will go wild and demons will be almost unbridled. Once God's people are removed it will take only seven years for the world to descend to the very pits of hellishness (see Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6–19).

Until that day Christians can have a powerful influence on the welfare of the world. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, "Most competent historians are agreed in saying that what undoubtedly saved [England] from a revolution such as that experienced in France at the end of the eighteenth century was nothing but the Evangelical Revival. This was not because anything

was done directly, but because masses of individuals had become Christians and were living this better life and had this higher outlook. The whole political situation was affected, and the great Acts of Parliament which were passed in the last century were mostly due to the fact that there were such large numbers of individual Christians found in the land” (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 1:157).

As God’s children and as the temples of His Holy Spirit, Christians represent God’s presence in the earth. We are the salt that prevents the entire earth from degenerating even faster than it is.

Helen Ewing was saved as a young girl in Scotland and gave her life completely to the lordship of Christ. When she died at the age of 22 it is said that all Scotland wept. She had expected to serve God as a missionary in Europe and had become fluent in the Russian language. But she was not able to fulfill that dream. She had no obvious gifts such as speaking or writing, and she had never traveled far from home. Yet by the time she died she had won hundreds of people to Jesus Christ. Countless missionaries mourned her death because they knew that a great channel of their spiritual strength was gone. She had risen every morning at five in order to study God’s Word and to pray. Her diary revealed that she regularly prayed for over three hundred missionaries by name. Everywhere

she went the atmosphere was changed. If someone was telling a dirty story, he would stop if he saw her coming. If people were complaining, they would become ashamed of it in her presence. An acquaintance reported that while she was at Glasgow University she left the fragrance of Christ wherever she went. In everything she said and did she was God's salt.

being light

Jesus also calls us to be light. **You are the light of the world.** Whereas salt is hidden, light is obvious. Salt works secretly, while light works openly. Salt works from within, light from without. Salt is more the indirect influence of the gospel, while light is more its direct communication. Salt works primarily through our living, while light works primarily through what we teach and preach. Salt is largely negative. It can retard corruption, but it cannot change corruption into incorruption. Light is more positive. It not only reveals what is wrong and false but helps produce what is righteous and true.

In his introduction to the book of Acts, Luke refers to his gospel as "the first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (1:1). Christ's work always has to do with both doing and speaking, with living and teaching.

David wrote, "For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we see light" (Ps. 36:9). "God is light," John

reminds us, “and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5–7). Light is not given simply to have but to live by. “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path,” the psalmist tells us (Ps. 119:105). God’s light is to walk by and to live by. In its fullest sense, God’s light is the full revelation of His Word—the written Word of Scripture and the living Word of Jesus Christ.

God’s people are to proclaim God’s light in a world engulfed in darkness, just as their Lord came “to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death” (Luke 1:79). Christ is the true light, and we are His reflections. He is the Sun, and we are His moons. A free rendering of 2 Corinthians 4:6 could be, “God, who first ordered the light to shine in the darkness has flooded our hearts with His light. We now can enlighten men only because we can give them knowledge of the glory of God as we have seen it in the face of Jesus Christ.” God sheds His light on the world through those who have received His light through Jesus Christ.

The Jews had long claimed to have God’s light, and He had long called them to be His light. But because they had ignored and rejected His light, they could not be His light. They were confident that they were guides

“to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,” but Paul told them they were blind guides and lamps without light. “You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?” he asks (Rom. 2:19–21). They had the light, but they were not living by it. “You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?” Paul continues by way of illustration. “You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?” (vv. 21–22). We are to prove ourselves “to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [we are to] appear as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

By its nature and by definition light must be visible in order to illuminate. Christians must be more than the largely indirect influence of salt; they must also be the direct and noticeable instruments of light.

Both in the daytime and at night, **a city set on a hill cannot be hidden**. It is exposed for all to see. By day its houses and buildings stand out on the landscape, and at night the many lights shining out of its windows make it impossible to miss. A secret Christian is as incongruous as a hidden light. Lights are to illuminate, not to be hidden; to be displayed, not to be covered. Christians are to be both subtle salt and conspicuous light.

God did not give the gospel of His Son to be the secret, hidden treasure of a few but to enlighten every

person (John 1:9). Many reject the light and reject those who bring it, but just as God offers His light to the whole world, so must His church. It is not our gospel but God's, and He gives it to us not only for our own sakes but the entire world's. True believers *are* salt and light, and must fulfill that identity.

The Problem: Danger of Failure

but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. (5:13b)

Much salt in Palestine, such as that found on the shores of the Dead Sea, is contaminated with gypsum and other minerals that make it taste flat and even repulsive. When a batch of such contaminated salt would find its way into a household and be discovered, it was thrown out. People would be careful not to throw it on a garden or field, because it would kill whatever was planted. Instead it would be thrown onto a path or road, where it would gradually be ground into the dirt and disappear.

There is a sense in which salt cannot really become unsalty. But contamination can cause it to lose its value as salt. Its saltiness can no longer function.

Jesus is not speaking of losing salvation. God does not allow any of His own to be taken from Him. "My

sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand,” Jesus assures us (John 10:27). Christians cannot lose their salvation, just as salt cannot lose its inherent saltiness. But Christians can lose their value and effectiveness in the kingdom when sin and worldliness contaminate their lives, just as salt can become **tasteless** when contaminated by other minerals. It is a common New Testament truth that although true believers are identified as righteous, godly, and salty, there are times when they fail to be what they are (cf. Rom. 7:15–25), which Peter says leads to loss of assurance (2 Pet. 1:9–10), not loss of salvation.

With great responsibility there is often great danger. We cannot be an influence for purity in the world if we have compromised our own purity. We cannot sting the world’s conscience if we continually go against our own. We cannot stimulate thirst for righteousness if we have lost our own. We cannot be used of God to retard the corruption of sin in the world if our own lives become corrupted by sin. To lose our saltiness is not to lose our salvation, but it is to lose our effectiveness and to become disqualified for service (see 1 Cor. 9:27).

Pure salt does not lose its saltiness, that which makes it valuable and effective. Christians who are pure in heart do not become **tasteless**, ineffective, and useless in the kingdom of God.

Light, too, is in danger of becoming useless. Like salt, it cannot lose its essential nature. A hidden light is still light, but it is useless light. That is why people do not **light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on a lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.** The exemplary woman praised in Proverbs 31 does not let her lamp go out at night (v. 18). There was always illumination for anyone in the household who had to get up or find his way home during the night. A light that is hidden under a peck-sized basket cannot even be used to read by; it helps neither the person who hides it nor anyone else.

Whether we hide our light because of fear of offending others, because of indifference and lovelessness, or because of anything else, we demonstrate unfaithfulness to the Lord.

The Purpose: to Glorify God

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (5:16)

The word (*kalos*) for **good** that Jesus uses here does not so much emphasize quality—though that obviously is important—as it does attractiveness, beautiful appearance. Letting our **light shine before men** allows them to see our **good works**, the beauty the Lord has worked in us. To see good works by us is to see Christ

in us. That is why Jesus says, **let your light shine**. It is not something we create or make up, but something we allow the Lord to do through us. It is God's light; our choice is whether to hide it or let it shine.

The purpose of letting our light shine and reveal our good works is not to bring attention or praise to ourselves but to God. Our intent should be that, in what we are and in what we do, others may see God in order that they may **glorify** [our] **Father who is in heaven**. Jesus' speaking of the **Father** emphasizes God's tenderness and intimacy, and speaking of His being **in heaven** emphasizes His majesty and holiness, as He is pictured dwelling in the splendor of His eternal holy home. Our good works are to magnify God's grace and power. This is the supreme calling of life: glorifying God. Everything we do is to cause others to give praise to the God who is the source of all that is good. The way we live should lead those around us to **glorify** (*doxazō*, from which we get *doxology*) the heavenly **Father**.

When what we do causes people to be attracted to us rather than to God, to see our human character rather than His divine character, we can be sure that what they see is not His light.

It is said of Robert Murray McCheyne, a godly Scottish minister of the last century, that his face carried such a hallowed expression that people were known to fall on their knees and accept Jesus Christ as

Savior when they looked at him. Others were so attracted by the self-giving beauty and holiness of his life that they found his Master irresistible.

It was also said of the French pietist Francois Fenelon that his communion with God was such that his face shined with divine radiance. A religious skeptic who was compelled to spend the night in an inn with Fenelon, hurried away the next morning, saying, “If I spend another night with that man I’ll be a Christian in spite of myself.”

That is the kind of salt and light God wants His kingdom people to be.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 241–247). Chicago: Moody Press.

I. Our Message should be Biblical.

II. Our Model should be Moral .

III. Our Method should be Scriptural

2 Timothy 2:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the

sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

For this reason refers to what Paul has said in the preceding verse about remembering the preeminence of Christ and the power of God's word. Those divine motivations gave the apostle the willingness to **endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen**. He is not speaking here of fellow believers, but of God's **chosen** who had yet to **obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus**.

That translates *hina*, which, when used with a subjunctive, as here with *tunchanō* (**to obtain**), indicates a purpose clause. A more exact rendering, therefore, would be "in order **that**" the unbelievers to whom he witnessed might **obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus**. Paul not only suffered because his faithfulness to Christ provoked it but also because, like the Lord, he was "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). His heart reflected God's heart, because, like Peter, he knew with certainty that "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

God's Word clearly reveals that "He chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, [and]

predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph. 1:4–5), that “whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29). Disregarding other Scripture, some fatalistic interpreters use texts such as those just cited to argue that evangelism not only is unnecessary but presumptuous, claiming that God will sovereignly save those whom He has predestined, regardless of whether or not they hear and believe the gospel. But God’s Word just as clearly teaches the necessity of faith for salvation as it does that salvation is by God’s free and sovereign grace. Jesus said, “No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father” (John 6:65). But He also said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes* in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. ... He who *believes* in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because *he has not believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16, 18, emphasis added; cf. v. 36). Paul succinctly states those companion truths in the familiar and priceless words “By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

Scripture also is clear that, despite the Lord’s sovereign calling of men to Himself, He calls those who belong to Him to extend His call to those who have not

heard and heeded it. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,” Jesus said, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). We are called to be Christ’s “witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In his letter to the church at Rome, immediately after declaring that “whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved,” Paul goes on to ask rhetorically, “How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14).

The fact that our finite minds cannot fully understand or reconcile such truths in no way affects their validity. God sovereignly calls every believer in His grace; He sovereignly demands their faith to make His gracious calling effective; and He sovereignly calls those who are saved to be His witnesses to those who are not.

John Wesley traveled by foot or horseback some 250,000 miles, preaching more than 40,000 sermons, and he wrote, translated, or edited more than 200 books. He lived simply and gave away most of whatever income he received. Yet he was continually ridiculed and pelted with stones by ungodly mobs and was ostracized by fellow clergymen in the Church of England. When maligned, he answered, “I leave my

reputation where I left my soul, in the hands of God.” He never lost his joy of service or his love for the Lord and for men, both saved and unsaved. One biographer commented, “To Wesley was granted the task which even an archangel might have envied.”

George Whitefield, a close friend and fellow worker with John and Charles Wesley during his early ministry, spent thirty-four years preaching the gospel in the British Isles and in America. He made thirteen transatlantic voyages, which were still perilous in those days, and preached at least 18,000 sermons on the two continents. The noted poet and hymnwriter William Cowper—who wrote “Oh! For a Closer Walk with God” and “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood”—penned the following tribute to Whitefield:

He loved the world that hated him.
The tear that dropped upon his Bible was
sincere.
Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was a blameless life.

That resolute man of God heeded Peter’s counsel to “keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong” (1 Peter 3:16–17).

And **with it**, Paul continues—that is, with “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus”—comes **eternal glory**. In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul presents that truth more fully: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (8:16–17).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [2 Timothy](#) (pp. 60–62). Chicago: Moody Press.