

Father, may these spoken words be faithful to your written word and lead us to the living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

A father was teaching his son what a Christian should be like. He talked about the salt of the earth and the light of the world and a few other teachings. Once the lesson was over, the father realised he had his work cut out for him when his son asked, "Daddy, have I ever met one of these Christians?"

In a very simple way, like that little boy, Jesus challenges us with two very vivid images of what it means to be a Christian. Salt and Light.

First let's look at salt. Salt is something that is so common that we hardly notice it, unless you're on a salt-free or reduced salt diet. We put it on everything eggs, meat, we even have salted caramels! Why? Because it makes things taste better. It is a seasoning that enhances the flavour of food; that's one of the natural qualities of salt.

It's also a preservative. Before we had refrigerators or tin cans, most meat was preserved in one of two ways. It was both dried and smoked or it was packed in salt and cured. Packed in salt, meat would last for years. It was a preservative.

Salt is also therapeutic; it has medicinal qualities. Before modern medicine, salt was used as an antiseptic. It burned like crazy but salt was often poured into an open wound to clean it of any impurities. Sometimes a concoction of salt and vinegar was used for the same purpose, to clean and purify the wound so it would heal quicker and cleaner.

We're called to be the "salt of the earth." In other words, we're called to be a seasoning that enhances the flavour of life through the living out of our faith. We're called to be preservatives that help preserve the Biblical standards of morality. And we are called to be therapeutic. We have a message of hope and forgiveness from a Saviour that can bring healing to all of the hurts in this world. We know all of these but there's one more aspect to salt, too. Salt creates thirst! Have we ever made anyone thirst for Jesus?"

We're called to be the salt of the earth. We're called to season the world with the flavour of Grace. We're called to help preserve the world from decay. We're called to help bring healing. And we're called to make people thirsty for Jesus.

Jesus also said, "You are the light of the world." Most people today don't have a clue what darkness really is. We have street lights and lighted signs, porch lights and decorative lights around the house. Ever since Edison discovered the light

bulb, we've been trying to physically push back the darkness. Why? Because light exposes the true nature of things.

Have you ever walked into a half lit room in an old house and you think to yourself, "How quaint." But in the morning, in the full light of day, you can see the cracks in the paint and the walls, the worn carpet and fabric on the furniture and the thick dust on everything? Light exposes our imperfections.

Light exposes but light also reveals. We've all experienced having the lights go out in a power cut. All of a sudden we're plunged into darkness and the things in a familiar space become dangerous. Even the light from a flash of lightning is helpful, for it lets you see where possible dangers lie. It's the same with life. The light of Christ exposes our need for salvation; it reveals where the dangers are and it reveals where safety, direction and new life can be found.

In the film *Schindler's List*, Oskar Schindler, a Nazi profiteer becomes an unlikely light in the midst of darkness. Working with his assistant, Itzak Stern, he bluffs and bribes his way through the Nazi hierarchy to save as many Jews as possible. He has Stern type up a list of Jews whom he claims are necessary for "war work" at his factory. At first they are only making simple items like mess kits. But then they are transferred to another factory to make shells for the large guns. In the end Schindler's instructions to his workers are that he does not want any of the warheads in the shells to actually work. At first, Stern is suspicious but eventually sees Schindler for the benefactor that he is. At one point in the film, Stern comes to Schindler and says: "This list is life." Schindler battles to keep his employees, and on one occasion, barely saves a shipment of women who had been left off at a death camp by mistake. The stark black and white photography of the film shows the contrast between the darkness of the Nazis and the light that Schindler has chosen to follow and has become for the people on "the list."

Jesus calls us and challenges us to be the same kind of light in the world today. He calls us not only to be light but to point to the ultimate source of light, Him.

Salt and light are the language of God; the language of Grace; the language of hope and love. And when this language is turned into action it becomes the most beautiful language ever spoken. We're called to be salt and light and to speak the language of God as we live our faith. We're called to live the Word.

The simple fact is this:

God makes us the salt of the earth. Salt, however, does not exist for its own sake. No one sits down to eat salt and salt alone. Salt is a seasoning meant to be applied to something, it is meant to penetrate and preserve and flavour the food that people eat. And in the same way light is not meant to be looked at, it is not meant to be covered and treasured like some precious object, it is given so that people might see what is around them and walk in safety, it is meant to penetrate and overcome darkness.

In other words we are saved - not just for ourselves, but to do the work of God, And the simple thing we can do is this - We can stand up for our faith in God. And we can stand upon our faith in God.

When we do so, when we believe and act in faith, then we will be full of light, and of power, and of grace, we will be beacons in a dark place, and praise and glory to God will be the result

We have God's word on it, that word by which we were made, and by which all life is given, "Let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." In Jesus' name. Amen