

Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Lecture 4, Beatitudes, Part 4: Salt and Light

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This is Dr. Bill Mounce in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session 4, The Beatitudes, Part 4: Salt and Light.

Okay, we are going to finish with the Beatitude and the salt and light passage, and then we'll be done for the day.

And again, just to reiterate, I've gone really slowly, probably because I like to, but we'll speed up a bit. But as you can see how I'm approaching it, this is pivotal for everything. So, I wanted to greet you with as many of the controversies as I could.

Okay, eighth Beatitude, number 10. Verse 10 says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of God." I'm sure Jesus looked up, and they were looking at him with mouths hanging open and going, Peter, I didn't hear that right.

No, John, you didn't. There's no way he said that. Because everyone knows that God's blessing is wealth and prosperity, right? Good Jewish doctrine.

So, certainly not a blessing of persecution. Jesus looks at their faces and goes, let me say that again so even Peter can get that. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad because your reward in heaven, because great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you. A logical kind of literary question is as you're reading through the Beatitudes, you get through with the first seven, and you say, how is this person going to be received, right? Certainly, if somebody understands who they are in relation to God, they're meek, they hunger for God's righteousness, they're merciful, they're pure, they make peace. Certainly, the world's going to love it, right? I think that there really needs to be an entire class and seminary on persecution.

Because what do you all spend most of your time doing? Dealing with conflict, don't you? I mean, especially if you're a pastor of a smaller church, which means you're the only staff person, you're going to spend a tremendous amount of time dealing with conflict, right? So, that is not how a Beatitude person is received. Like our master, we will be hated, despised, persecuted, and perhaps even killed. Some of it is because we're essentially different from this world, and therefore, they don't like us, but part of it is just spiritual warfare that Satan didn't like Jesus and tried to, well, try to kill him.

He will do the same for his disciples. Now, I'm not; obviously, Jesus is not talking about being persecuted because you're a twit. This is persecution for Jesus, for righteousness' sake.

In verse 11, it says, on my account. So, this is overt, this is persecution because you are a follower of Jesus Christ and because you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. This is the universal message of the gospel.

It doesn't always make it easy to accept, but it is, is it not, the universal message of the gospel? It's interesting that there are slight shifts in the order of words. There's a shift to you to make it a little more personal.

There's a shift from the present, and you are persecuted from the future. There's the theirs is pushed further forward. It's, there's, there's little subtle things going on because Jesus knows how hard this is.

He understands how hard the message is. You know, we read about this in Acts 5:41: they left the apostles, they left the presence of the council rejoicing they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for his name. Philippians 1:29, it's been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer.

2 Timothy 3.12, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted. I mean, you know these verses, right? They're all, and they're all over the place. If someone tells you Christians don't suffer, they're selling something you don't want.

Or, in the words of the modern theologian, let me get this right: life is pain. Anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something. Who's a theologian? Princess Bride.

You know Princess Bride, the movie? Oh, you're Baptist. You don't go to the movies. Oh, that's one of the greatest lines in the Princess Bride, in the Princess Bride. Life is pain, your highness.

He's talking to the princess. Anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something. The church, this is a line from someone I didn't mark who it was from, the church is the persecuted church or it's not the church at all.

I remember the first time I taught this at church; one of the deacons came up afterward, and he was genuinely concerned. And when he thought of persecution, he was thinking of martyrdom. And persecution takes many forms, doesn't it? It takes just harassment to actual persecution, all the way over to martyrdom.

I saw in the footnote to Quarrel's book that, and I'd heard this before, in the last century, more Christians were martyred than in the preceding 1900 years. And he

said the number is about 45 million. 45 million brothers and sisters were killed for Jesus in the last 100 years.

We were talking about the earthquake in Nepal the other day, and I forgot who I was with, but they were commenting on how many times there are natural catastrophes. Well, natural catastrophes, I am not saying that all earthquakes are by God, but they were talking about how when there are naturally these earthquakes and whatnot, Christians come in. I asked him how long the persecution had stopped. They said that it generally stops for a very long time. It's easy to persecute someone you don't know, but when there's a relationship built because they're helping you out in a difficult time, it's really hard to turn around and persecute them back.

The specific story, oh that's right, it was a guy from the Zan movement who's telling me this. You know, the persecution in Indonesia was the most intense there was. I mean, Christians were just being slaughtered everywhere.

And then the tsunami came, and much to the Muslims' surprise, it was the church in Indonesia that turned and helped the Muslims. From what I understand, and this is not my area of interest, the persecutions have not returned anything like what they were before because the Muslims were helped by the Christians, the relationships were built, and there's a willingness to have peace. So, you hear about two massive earthquakes in Nepal, and many of their temples being torn down.

Matt has a good friend who's a pastor in Nepal, and many of his people were killed. The question is, what's going to happen out of that? Is God going to work in the midst of really difficult circumstances to build relationships between Hindus and Christians such that the persecutions, at least for now, will go away? You know, I don't know. Persecution takes many forms, from harassment to flat-out persecution to martyrdom.

I think the most painful martyrdom story I heard came out of North Korea a couple of years ago, where they found a list of Christians, and they took a family, husband, wife, and their children, laid them down on the street, and bulldozed them. That's North Korea. Yeah.

So this stuff is happening all around us. Most likely, what we will experience is something in the middle. And I would add, in our context, I think the majority of persecution comes from within the church.

If you preach the gospel forcefully and with love, but the gospel forcefully, you will be persecuted by the Pharisees in your church. We...I went through a difficult ministry experience. I was up at Zondervan, who publishes my stuff, and I said, hey, I got a book for you.

And they said, what is it? I said, why save the lost when you can fight with the saved? They said, write it, we'll print it. There's eating and devouring our own. I mean, the books...there is an endless line of books about persecution from within the church.

And let me tell you right now, if you preach the gospel forcefully, even lovingly, you will attract the Pharisees, and they will persecute you. Okay? I'm sure some of you have already experienced that. Persecution...did for Jesus, right? His primary persecution wasn't the Romans; it was the Jewish leaders.

It's the history of the church. We kill and devour our own. It's just the way we do it.

It's the way we do things. Persecution then becomes a means of blessing. And this is probably the greatest irony in the Beatitudes, isn't it? That the persecution is a blessing.

It's a cause for rejoicing. In fact, the word translated...rejoice, in verse 12 is probably under-translated. It means being exceedingly joyful, to exult, to be overjoyed.

Luke 6:23 says, rejoice and leap for joy. Why? Well, number one, your reward's great. Yours is the kingdom of heaven.

So that bookends the eight...the blessing, the same blessing bookends, doesn't it? I'm telling you that this is the greatest blessing. The greatest blessing is being part of the kingdom of God. I often think of the verse in Romans 8:18. Let me look it up to make sure I'm saying it right.

Not Luke...Romans 8:18, I'm sorry. Romans 8:18. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be...well, that's not really a good verse. Yeah, it's not the point I want to make.

Okay, never mind. Never mind. Why do we rejoice? It's not just why we rejoice.

Why is persecution a blessing? There, that's a better way to say it. Why is persecution a blessing? Number one, because it comes not just with the reward, it comes with a great reward. Oh, yeah.

And, you know, we get so consumed with our current pain and current suffering, we can't...it's hard to see beyond it, isn't it, in the midst of pain. But that's why Romans 8:18 is so important. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing, not even worth putting them on the same table, not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

So, there's something about our reward being so great that our slight momentary afflictions...where's that coming from? I'm sorry. Verse...light momentary afflictions are earning for us what? Second Corinthians. Hush will find it for us.

Pardon? Second Corinthians 4:17. Right. I'm sorry. Second Corinthians 4.17. Yeah.

This is another great verse, just to keep perspective on things. Persecution is a blessing because it brings a reward. Second of all, persecution is a blessing because it assures us that we're Christians.

And the verse I'm thinking of is Romans 8:16.17, just right where I was. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs.

Heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Then this is the doozy. If indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

See, verses like this make me sound more like a Wesleyan. Okay, because this is not, you know, transactional theology. I raise my hand; I got my get-out-of-hell-free card; nothing else matters.

It says that we are heirs to Christ on one condition. The condition wasn't that I raise my hand at camp, but that I share in his suffering.

And only if I share in his suffering will I share in his glory. Hmm. Hmm.

Interesting. Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Oh, yeah. Yeah. The persecution comes from the Pharisees.

Persecution comes from people who simply don't, well, in other words, they want their ears tickled. And there are people who will actively oppose your preaching role if you preach the gospel because they don't want to hear it. The Pharisees don't like the implications of the pure in heart.

You know, anytime you start moving into their heart, they get uncomfortable. But yeah, there's probably a larger number of people who just want their ears tickled. They want to check off their spiritual activity for the week and go on about their lives.

Yeah. And they will throw you out of the church. Yeah.

The fact of the matter is remnant theology, when we learn about remnant theology, primarily in the Old Testament, that the true Israel is not the same thing as the

visible Israel. And yet I don't know if I ever heard it taught that, oh, by the way, that's still true. And that the true church, the invisible church, and the remnant are a small part of the visible church.

I had never met John Piper before. We had a very good common friend of Tom's Schreiner, and John was coming to Gorn Kahneman when I was teaching there to speak. And I really wanted to meet him because of all the things Tom had told me.

So, I went to the guy who was in charge and said, "Can I pick him up at the airport?" And he said, "Sure." So, I knew I was going to get a half-hour with John. At that point, I was thinking about leaving the academy and going into pastoral work.

And that's exactly what John did. I wanted to ask him why he left Bethel College and went to Bethlehem church. And so, we started talking, kind of chitchat.

Although you don't chitchat very long with John, I asked him these questions. I finally said, "I've always viewed myself as a very driven person."

But you are just way beyond me. So why? Where does that drive that passion come from in you? And he said I'm convinced the church is going to hell. And I thought that's a little harsh.

And then I became a pastor. And he's dead right now. He's overstating, he's being Jesus.

He's overstating the point to make it. But when you get up and you all preach, do you assume that everyone's listening to you is going to heaven? No, of course, you don't. You can't do that.

You know you're preaching to a mixed audience. Everyone may say they're going to heaven, but they're not. That's impossible.

And so, John was saying, there are so many people that wrap themselves in spiritual garb and go through these spiritual exercises of going to church. We taught our kids to never say that phrase. You cannot go to what you are.

So, whatever you do, you don't ever go to church. You are the church. And I understand that what John was saying, he's saying there are so many people in this church that, I don't know, I'm not to judge, but there's a lot of people here going to hell.

It drives me to preach, lead, and love with passion. I'm not quite sure why I told that story. There was a time; it must have been later in the afternoon.

Yeah, and you will suffer. Not many people know the story, but John went through a very intense time. It's very public.

It was a very, very intense time of persecution in his church. Because they felt he didn't handle the situation properly. And I imagine John would say he probably didn't.

But intense persecution, dropping off of people, and reducing his salaries because of the budget. I mean, it was very intense. But it was just, you're going to be persecuted.

Everyone's going to be persecuted. Swindoll went through a horrible time. And the details are not public, so I can't share them.

But he went through a horrible church situation. Just terrible. Now, this is Chuck Swindoll.

Who doesn't love Chuck Swindoll? Well, I can tell you a couple of people who don't love Chuck Swindoll. You know, everybody goes through this. Everyone is persecuted.

Pharisees, non-Christians in the church. It's going to happen. And the assurance, one of the assurances of our Christianity, is that changed people live changed lives.

Our change in lives puts us in necessary conflict with the world around us. And they're going to persecute us. And our answer is, thank you, I'm not like this world.

Thank you for making me different. That's a blessing.

The third, and I'm really moving out of this passage now, but it's a very important passage to me. I think part of the blessing of being persecuted is that it lets you know you're part of something bigger. Actually, no, it does come out of this passage.

In the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you. When you and I are persecuted for righteousness' sake because we preach the gospel. Okay, now granted, sometimes we really goof up, right? We preach it too harshly or we make mistakes.

We get called on the carpet for it. That's not at all what we're talking about. We're talking about you're rightly divining the word of truth.

You are preaching it with strength and compassion and love and clarity, and people are going to hate you for it. Part of the reward that comes from that persecution is that it lets you know you're part of something bigger. They persecuted the prophets.

They're persecuting you. You're becoming part of this cloud of witnesses, right? Philippians 3:10 is an interesting passage. A good friend of mine preached this sermon at our church.

And again, it's one of those things. Don't you love it when you hear a sermon and it's over a passage you've read I never heard that before. I never ever saw that before. I like that when that happens.

Philippians 3:10, yes, I want to know Christ. I want to know the power of his resurrection, period. That's where the American church puts its punctuation, right? We're all into the power.

We're all into joining with Christ's resurrection. He was raised from the dead. I'm going to be raised from the dead.

The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power at work in me. Amen. Let's go start a megachurch.

Obviously, we all know it doesn't. It doesn't end there. Not even a comma, right? And yes, I want to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings.

Becoming like him in his death somehow attains the resurrection from the dead. There's something about suffering for the sake of Christ that joins you with the prophets and joins you with Jesus in a unique way. And so, you know you're part of something bigger and greater than the pain.

Now, I don't think I've ever been in a situation where it's hurt that I was able to say, yeah, I'm not there yet. I don't know if I ever will be there. We lost two daughters, one in a miscarriage and one at birth.

And when Rachel died four hours after she was born, they gave me a couple of weeks off. I was teaching the Azusa, and they were going to give me more time off. I said, no, I'm ready.

I can come back. And I was teaching Romans. And you know what was the next passage I had to teach? Romans 5. Rejoice in our suffering because suffering produces character.

Character, hope, and hope, endurance. And I got 10 minutes of the lecture and just full-speed running, just bawling my eyes out. They gave me another two weeks off.

So, my colleagues taught it for me. I never had, in fact, I think the next time I taught Romans, I said, "I still can't teach Romans 5." So, we're going to go from 4 to 6. If you

don't like it, read your commentary. You know, so I'm not holding myself up as a paradigm on this at all.

I mean, suffering sucks. It really does. It hurts, alienates, and makes you question the goodness of God, the power of God, and the love, right? Doesn't it? It does.

It does me. And, you know, so I'm not there, but there comes a time as you continue to go through this cycle that we call the Christian life, where you start realizing the persecution that we face. And I'm thinking particularly of persecution as a pastor, of preaching the truth, whether they want to hear it or not.

There's something about the persecution that comes through being a part of that that you start to understand. I'm not alone in this. I'm part of something bigger. I'm part of the prophets.

I'm part of Christ. And that's good. That's a good thing.

It's a hard thing, but it's a good thing. I will tell you my story, but it's going to be the last thing I share with you because it ties in with the end of Sermon on the Mount. So, you'll hear my full story, but you're going to have to wait.

Actually, those of you who had pastorals probably already heard it, come to think of it. I was still pretty raw two years ago. All right.

So, Bonhoeffer says, suffering is the badge of true discipleship. Yeah, yeah, whatever, whatever. Okay.

The last of the Beatitudes. Do you have any comments on that? If I could get in on just this one, you know, of course, it has to do with the structure of the Epistle. Your understanding of the structure is that it begins with a blessing, and we are in the poor spirit, where there is the kingdom of heaven.

And then it closes with blessed are you who persecute the poor. I would think that where there is the kingdom of heaven, it marks two sections. So, the first section of the Beatitudes stops with what's the peace of God.

The next section starts with persecution. And that whole section, running through salt and white, your behavior under persecution. So, one of the nice things about it is that if you said eight, you get the first seven. Nicely and symmetrically surrounding blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Oh, you get the middle. Yeah. When people insult you and persecute you falsely and say all kinds of evil against you, because of me, rejoice and be glad because praise your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

And then I would say that the next verse is biblical. In other words, you should supply like the prophets before you; you are the salt of the earth. And then, as were the prophets before you, you are the light of the world.

That whole section is introduced by Beatitudes. You would persecute you. Everything running from there has to do with your steadfast, devoted devoutness in the face of persecution.

No, I mean, yeah, and that's the counterargument. I've not really read anything that convinces me there's a really strict structure to this. I mean, everyone talks about bookends, but it doesn't make it right.

I think what you'd have to say is, is there something about salt and light that is specific just to persecution, or does it apply to all eight Beatitudes? In other words, is the salt, as I'm going to present it, is the salt and light applicable to a Beatitude person, or are they applicable to a persecuted person? And you're going to say a persecuted person. Yeah, because there are a couple of passages that use the term salt, and passages that deal with steadfast, devout, devoted in the midst of suffering. Yeah, I've never thought about it.

I don't know. If you are being persecuted, you are already being light. I mean, everybody's going to focus their attention on you.

I mean, that's a great way of becoming light, becoming a focus of persecution. And what's the issue? People see your light, and they glorify God for the worst. What is the worst? What's the steadfastness in the midst of persecution? Yeah, let me think about it.

It's always a little hard to process a brand-new thought. I'm just saying I'm not asking you to read. I'm just saying, is it a possibility? And, you know, more than a possibility. I mean, that's the way I understand it.

Because I've read a number of articles that talk about the structure of the attitude. Yeah, yeah. They seem to kind of like the possibility.

If you could find the question for the video, I presented it, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven as bookends. The question is, are they actually introductory formulas for two sections? So, you have, Dave's convinced Dave that that's correct. So you would have, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and then the qualifications.

Second thought: blessed are those who are persecuted, for theirs too is the kingdom of heaven. And by the way, if you're persecuted, you need to be the salt and light,

and not hide because of the persecution. I would think what would make the argument convincing is if you could show from these other verses that there's something about salt and light that's specifically attached to persecution.

If you could do that, I think that's how you'd make your case. Well, but if you do it with salt, it will carry over to light, too, you would argue. Why don't you write a paper on it? For class, or are you? Oh, okay.

Okay, well, let's move in. Oh, that's not true. That's not true.

There are a lot of crazy ideas out there. All right, let's do it. Yes, you do.

All right, let's move on to the salt and light. Again, I'm presenting it the way I've always done it, not to negate or devalue Dave's crazy idea. Here's my intro.

Because the qualities of all eight Beatitudes are so demanding, I could see Jesus thinking that a normal response would be that we would say, if I'm really going to live out the Beatitudes, I have to do so in isolation from the world. There's no way to do these eight things if I'm actively engaged in the things of this world. So, the only way to be a Beatitude person is to go to the wilderness, become a desert father, you know, to leave the world and to move out of it.

And so, I think what Jesus is doing is concluding the last eight Beatitudes by explicitly denying that you can live in isolation. He's saying you have to stay engaged in the world. And I love the expression; it's Jesus's, so that's not a big deal, but not of the world.

I think that's what the salt and lights are about. Don't disengage from the world; be in it, although you're not of it. It's really funny.

If you do mission work, isn't it true that it's the third day is the hardest? When we first went to Nepal, Matt took Robin and me to Nepal, and it was the third day. It was just the poverty and the Hinduism and the monkeys in the monkey palace, and it was just this overwhelming thing. And Robin and I went back to our room, and we seriously were saying, do you think Matt would recognize if we got on a plane and went home? He could do what I'm doing.

I don't need to do this. I mean, how would we get to the airport, Robin? Can we really sneak? It's the third day. I went to China this time; again, it was the third day.

And so maybe there's something about a third day that's special. But right when we were actually seriously talking about it, we got a Facebook message from a good friend of Robin's that was done a lot of work in Ethiopia, and she simply said, it's a

third day; do not disengage. Because she knew exactly what we were thinking about doing.

I can't do what I need to do. I'm just going to disengage. It was a stretching experience.

I spoke in a church that met an old rug factory, and a rat about that big ran across the stage right before me. And Robin flies. She hates things like that. She's flailing back, and I guess the rat went through a hole, went up and sat on a piece of plexiglass over my head the whole time I was talking.

It was quite an experience in Nepal. And we wanted to disengage, and we just said we can't. Okay, the Christian can't disengage.

You're in the world, you're not of the world, you got to stay in the world. That's what the salt and light is about. We are the salt of the earth.

We beatitude people are rubbed into the wounds of the world to stop its decay. We are the light of the world. Beatitude people shine truth into the darkness of this world, and therefore we must stay involved.

Without us, society rots in moral decay and stumbles in the darkness of sin. So, stay engaged is what it's getting at. Okay, let's look at a few of these things.

Matthew 5.13, you are the salt of the earth. It's always what we encourage ourselves and our people to do. Put yourself in the audience's shoes, right? You're a bunch of know-nothing, uneducated Galilean fishermen.

And Jesus is looking at you and saying, you are the light of the world. You go, what? Who's he talking about? Me? I live in an insignificant town or area, Galilee. I live in an insignificant country.

I can't do anything. And Jesus says, no, you are the salt of the earth. Just as a little salt affects the taste of a much larger area, especially if you eat it out back, you know that the effect of a few lives, what the effect of a few lives would be on the entire world.

I got to tell you a story. Have you seen, what is his name? Liam Rimes, The Lost Art of Disciple-Making. It's an old book.

It's one of the first Navigator books that came out. Lost Art of Disciple-Making, I think by LeRoy Eims.

Is that who it is? Leroy Eims. Okay. There's a story he makes up in the middle of it, and I embellish it a bit, but it's a great story.

Jesus is up in heaven talking to an angel, and the angel says, hey, where have you been the last? I haven't seen you for 33 years. Oh, I've been down on earth. Oh, really? What have you been doing down there? Of course, it would not have ever happened, but it makes for a story.

What have you been doing down there? Oh, and I preached to thousands of people, thousands, and I healed even more. I healed so many people. Angel goes, oh, that's really cool.

Jesus says, "Yeah, I spent most of my time with 12 guys." Angel asks, "What did you do that for?" Jesus says, "They're the hope of the world." Angel asks, "What's plan B?" Jesus says, "There is no plan B. Those 12 are the hope of the world."

A little bit of salt makes a phenomenal amount of difference. A little bit of light makes a phenomenal amount of difference. And so, Jesus left us a model of discipleship with small numbers.

So even if you're pastoring a large church, the model he left is small numbers because small numbers of people can have a great impact on the world. Salt has many uses. Quarrel says there are at least 11.

I never heard that before, and he doesn't tell me what they are. He thinks the primary force of the imagery of salt is a purifier. And so, he talks about that believers have a transforming effect on the world.

The problem is I don't know how salt purifies. Do you? Open question. How does salt purify something? I know how it preserves things, but I don't know how it preserves it.

But I don't know how it purifies it. It's like salt water over fresh water. Yeah.

And how does that purify, though? It disinfects. Okay. All right.

Okay. Yeah. Chlorine.

Sodium chloride. I got it. Yes.

A little slow on the chemistry. But anyway, that's what Quarrel says is the primary thrust. You know, the application is when we walk into a room, do the dirty jokes and the sexual innuendo stop? Not because you're a pastor but because you're a Christian.

I could see that being a purifying effect that we have on this world. I had a, like I told you, I was a photojournalism major in college, at least at the beginning. And I had a really good friend named George.

George was a really good photographer. I mean, this kid could take pictures. He was pretty vile, but he was my best friend.

And, you know, back then when you did photography, you, it's not Photoshop, you were up all night, developer, fixer, you know, all the chemicals and stuff. And we are working one night about one o'clock in the morning. And I need to say some words that are a little difficult for me to say, but it gets the point.

He got, something happened. He got mad at a picture, and he goes, oh God almighty. And I said, he is George.

Oh, oh, I'm sorry. That's right. Later on, he said, the more familiar God D. And I said, he's good as George.

And George and I had a great relationship, so I could say these things to him. And that kind of changed our relationship a bit. Not because I was shaking my finger at George, but because George realized I was different than he was.

And that I didn't want to hear my Lord's name used that way. And he cleaned his language up. I mean, so I can. There are ways in which we purify, don't we? We purify.

What bothers me is when I'm with a bunch of Christians, and they're gossiping and slandering and telling sexual innuendos, and they're no different from the world. That's not being salt. So that's kind of, I think, how it purifies.

The way I've always heard it is that the salt is a preservative. And that just as salt is rubbed into meat to slow its decaying and rotting, so also we are the salt that is rubbed into a rotten and decaying society where our influence slows the decay and gives the gospel more time. I saw a chart once, I wish I kept a copy of it, but it was a chart of social indicators.

And that the important date was the day that they kicked prayer out of the schools. And when you look at children born in wedlock, abortions, there's a whole lot of those kinds of social indicators. They're going along, and at that year, they just took off.

I'm not interested in getting political, but I find it interesting that when the country told God to get out of something, God said, okay, if you're going to remove the salt

that is slowing the decay of society, then society is going to start decaying at such a more rapid rate. And is that not true? I mean, society is just in a downward free fall, right? I remember when the gay movement started politically, and the line was over and over again. It was, we have no interest in changing society, we just don't want you to tell us what to do in the bedroom.

And I heard that over and over, and I'm probably older than most of you. I'm 62. Am I the oldest guy in the room? Please don't.

Oh, thank you. Thank you. I hate you.

Good. All right, all right. And now what's happened? We have diversity training, right? Where is our business brain? What's the word I'm looking for? Brain, brainwash people into diversity.

Do you know that there is the, if you accept a student who has a federally guaranteed loan, if you as a school accept students with federal funding, you have to hire gays? You have to. It's the law.

Now, I don't mean to be picking on the gay movement, but I'm just saying society is in a free fall. And part of it is political. I think the majority of it is because the church has stopped being salt.

It's stopped being different. Because that's the only way that salt works, is for it to be essentially different from what it's being rubbed into, right? If the salt were the same as the meat, or if it were diluted, as the illustration is, it wouldn't do any good. I saw another Barner report.

It was interviewing Christians and evangelicals and non-Christians, that was, there were the two groups, on what their hopes and dreams for their children were. Do you know that evangelicals' hopes and dreams for the children are identical to the world's hopes and dreams for the children until point six? They're identical. We want to be happy, healthy, educated, good job, rich.

Oh, and to be Christian. Number six, the church as a whole in America is not salt, and so society is decaying around us. That's encouraging.

Okay, let's go on to something else that's encouraging. I don't, this is, I'm sure, it was a joke. It is one of the funniest ones.

I'm not a good joke-teller, so you'll have to figure that out. But it was this lady got pulled over by, it happened to be a lady got pulled over by a cop, was arrested and taken to jail, and wouldn't tell her why she was being arrested. And about two hours later, the cop came in and said, okay, we decided to let you go.

And she goes, what on earth happened? He said, well, you were weaving out of traffic, you were yelling, you were honking, you were flipping people off, and you got Jesus stickers on your car. So, we just assumed the car was stolen. Anyway, anyway.

By the way, on Barner Reports, you got to watch something. He has a definition of an evangelical that I don't agree with. It's still a little too loose.

And when he compares evangelicals to non-Christians, there's virtually no difference. He has another definition for an evangelical that is much more accurate, I think, that is, you know, they go to church once a month kind of stuff. And that group is significantly different from society.

So, watch Barner Reports on that. You have to be careful which definition of evangelical is being used. Anyway, salt has many uses.

Two of them are preservation and purifier. Three truths that flow from the imagery. One, the world left on its own, is rotting and decaying.

It's decaying morally, it's decaying spiritually, it's decaying in every way imaginable. And that's why all the social engineering stuff fails almost every time. Because social engineering is fundamentally based on the idea that people are good.

And the problems are education and social. So, if we can just fix these external problems, then all the other problems go away. I'm an absolute Trekkie.

I love Star Trek. It's just pictures of Spock, everything, okay? I confess. But Roddenberry's fundamental theme was that all of our problems are external.

In the 24th century, problems of education, poverty, and starvation have all been fixed. And so, people work for their betterment, for their good, Kirk says. They don't have money.

Because who cares about money? That's not why we work. And as much as I love Star Trek, Roddenberry's completely wrong. The problem is not out there, the problem's in here.

Society is not full of good people whose problems will be solved if we give them money. It just doesn't happen. So the first truth is that the world left on its own rots and decays.

The second is, and I love how the commentaries talk about this, he says, you are the salt of the earth. I mean, just think about that. You are the salt of the earth.

Every single person with beatitude is the salt of the earth. He doesn't say you should be. He doesn't say what the gospel message is.

You are. So, it's your job and my job personally to so live and so speak and so act that we perform the function of salt in society. Thirdly, and I hinted at this, salt, as salt, we must be essentially different from the world.

I love that old King James translation that we are a peculiar people. Now, it's not peculiar for King James, I didn't mean what the word peculiar means now, but I still kind of like the imagery. We are odd, you all.

We are, aren't we? Have you ever seen a guy get up from the dead? You know, we are different in what we believe. We think that meekness is a good thing. Why would you think meekness is a good thing? We are a peculiar people.

But we have to be peculiar. We have to be different. We can't fit in with the rest of the world because if we do fit in, we cease to perform our function.

It's really that simple. We have to be different. As different as salt is from meat, as different as light is from darkness.

Of course, being different also means we aggravate. We rub people the wrong way. We just, that's why, that's what peculiar people do.

We rub people the wrong way. I love the statement, since Stott, he's quoting Telica, he says, Jesus did not say you are the honey of the world. Isn't that a great line? We're not the honey of the world.

Now you can go to some churches and be told that you are the honey of the world and you just have to smile. I know it's a bad accent, but it's the best I can do. However, that's not what the Bible says. You aren't the honey of the world, and you're the salt.

You aggravate the world because you are fundamentally different. Tasker, the commentator says, disciples are a quote, moral disinfectant in a world where moral standards are low, constantly changing, or non-existent. You and I are a moral disinfectant.

Anyway, the translation issue that most people point out is that it says in the NIV, but if the salt loses its saltiness, and of course, sodium chloride is a stable compound, salt can't lose its saltiness. The word is actually much better translated as diluted, that's what the word means. Salt was taken out of the Dead Sea, and it was full of impurities. If they hadn't gotten rid of the impurities, it wouldn't have done its job.

But if you take sodium chloride and it gets wet, it takes the salt out, and you're left with a white-looking compound that looks like salt, but it's not good for anything. And that's basically what Jesus is thinking about: there is salt that got wet, the good stuff washed away, and it's not good for anything, but just to throw it onto the road. Quarles makes the point, and I've never heard this before, that what Jesus is saying is that it's actually a negative thing that salt destroys.

When Rome defeated Carthage, you know what they did to make sure the Carthaginians would never rise again? They salted the fields, they salted the fields, so they couldn't grow. I think for 100 years, the fields around Carthage could not produce a crop. So salt is not only worthless, it can actually be very damaging to soil, and Quarles says that's the point of the illustration.

Anyway, if we're not different, if we're not salt, we're of no purpose. You know the old book, I've not read it, but I love the title, *Out of the Salt Shaker Into the World?* Is that what it's called? Yeah, salt does no good in the salt shaker. Salt only has value as it's poured out, rubbed into, is different from food.

Pippert says, page 65, one can hardly blame unsalted meat for going bad. It can't do anything else. The only real question is, where's the salt? We could do a take on that old Wendy's ad.

We could have Frank come up to the table and go, where's the salt? Where's the salt? Not where's the beef? So anyway, it's a powerful, powerful, judging, damning in times illustration as we look and say, are we the salt of the earth, individually and corporately? The second metaphor is we are the light of the world. People do not put a light on a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand, which gives light to everyone in the house.

And in the same way, oh, I'm sorry. Verse 14, I need to start at. You are the light of the world.

Two illustrations. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden—second illustration.

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. Application in the same way.

Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Wonderful use of a common worldwide duality. Light is good.

Darkness is evil. And isn't it interesting that despite all of our technological development and growth in this world, the world is no closer to answering the really fundamental questions of life? Who am I? Why am I here? What am I supposed to

do? What gives me meaning? Where am I going? I mean, those are the questions that have always haunted the world.

The world is no closer to answering that. Jesus is the light of the world, and he has made us the light of the world. Some commentators refer to the sun and the moon, saying that the sun is Jesus and that he is the light.

And we are the moon. We are reflected light. It's a helpful analogy.

But we are the light of the world, and the world is in darkness. And we are to shine the light of the beatitudes into the world to illuminate the darkness. He has two illustrations.

The first is that the city set on a hill cannot be hidden. And especially like you've been out in the desert, you look out over a mountain, and you see a few lights on from this itty-bitty little, maybe Nazareth back up in the mountains. It just, you can't, you can't see it, right? I mean, when the city is at the top of the hill at night, when its lights are on, you can see it for miles and miles unless you live in LA, Shanghai, or Beijing, and then you can't see across the street.

But the point is that a person with beatitude stands out. Beatitude person is supposed to stand out. A beatitude person must stand out because a beatitude person is the light of the world.

The second illustration is in verse 15. And the lights they had were those, you know, those little copper clay pots. They make them round, pinch the end, put a little oil in it, put a wick in it.

Very, very little light. And yet even that little light, if it's the only light, is able to illuminate an entire house. And he's saying it'd be crazy to take your one light and put it under a basket.

The whole point of having a light is that it illuminates. So, the application, either to the persecution beatitude or to all the beatitudes, is what you have in verse 16. The whole reason that we're salt and the whole reason that we are light is so that we can, well, I guess it's more just the light, isn't it? The reason that we have been made the light of the world is so that we will shine on others.

Do not disengage. That's what Jesus is saying. Don't disengage.

It would be as silly as putting a big bucket over a lamp. The reason you've been given the truth, the reason you've been given the beatitudes, is so that you will shine, right? That's the first illustration. That's the whole purpose of knowing this.

So that you will shine, and not shining is as stupid as covering over a light. Live out your life.

Let your light shine before others so they can see how you're living. Not good deeds that earn salvation, but good deeds that result in salvation. And if you are truly living out good deeds, you will not be the one praised.

God will be the one praised. We get to heaven. We no longer get to be the light of the world.

Right? This is one of these jobs that we are given, and it will not continue into eternity. And so it's one that we must perform. Robin and I had a... we've been working on this for some time.

We'd gone to India with Matt, and we had gone to China a few years later. And we're kind of talking about our life and where we are with the kids almost gone, and some degree of independence and freedom. We can do what we want.

Like come to Carolina, be with you guys for a week. And I said, Robin, what do you want to do with the rest of your life? I was probably 60 at the time. She was 52.

She's eight years younger than I am. I need to tell you out of deference to my wife because I've never been in a conversation where, at least within the first five minutes, she points out that she's much younger than I am. I robbed the cradle, proud of it.

Anyway, we were talking about what do you want to do with the rest of your life. And how do you want to serve the Lord? We're not in the pastoral ministry anymore. So, what is there for us? What do we want to do? And my wife said, I want to die exhausted. I want to die completely and totally exhausted.

I said I can go for that. By which he meant the last thing that we're going to do is sell the house, move to Phoenix, and golf every day. Of course, you can't golf in the summer in Phoenix.

It's only in the winter. That's, you know, it's not saying it's right or wrong, but for us, we said, we get one chance to be the light of the world, and we are going to die being the light of the world. I got all eternity to catch up on my sleep.

All right, I don't need to worry about that now. We're going to die exhausted. We're going to stay engaged to the day we die, Lord willing, Lord enabling.

If I keep working out and eating right, we'll stay engaged to the day we die. And I think that's what Jesus is saying. This is your one chance to be salt.

It's your one chance to be light. Just go do it. Preach the word in season and out.

Be prepared at all times because someday they'll just want their ears tickled. So, preach, live as salt, live as light, slow the decay of society, illuminate the darkness, and die. It's a good life.

It's a good life. It's a good wife. It's a good life.

Do you have any comments? All right. All right. Well, if you don't tell Frank, I won't tell Frank, and we'll get out a little early.

I'm not saying we'll do this every, but this is the end of the first major section, so I don't want to start the next. So tomorrow we will do all the fun things like divorce. If we get through chapter five, maybe a tad into chapter six, we'll be happy tomorrow.

See you then. Thanks. Bye.