

## **What Work Does the Church Perform on Earth (Part 2) (Matthew 5:13-16)?**

The scriptures have much to tell us about the function of the local church. Last month, we began to consider the question, "What work is the church to perform on Earth?" The Lord Jesus Christ tells us clearly in the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**) that His church is to salt the earth with His Gospel. The Gospel message is that of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for our sins (**I Corinthians 15:1-4**) and needs to be given to the unsaved, so that they will have the opportunity to believe in Christ and avoid eternity in Hell!

### **B. It is the Light of the World (Matthew 5:14-16)**

As Jesus continued with His sermon, He explained that the church is not only to salt the earth, but also to shine His light to it. The salting and shining works of the church are very similar, but different. The salting work of the church focuses on being a preserving force in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and souls being saved. The shining work focuses on allowing the Lord Jesus to shine through believers to the world, as a testimony of His changing work in our lives. Jesus Christ proclaimed to the Jews that He was the Light of the world (**John 8:12**). He also told His disciples that they were the light of the world, because He lives within His church through the Person of His Spirit (**Romans 8:9**).

When a person accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, the Bible tells us that certain instant changes occur within them: their eternal destination changes from Hell to Heaven (**John 3:16**), their dead spirit is resurrected by the Holy Spirit to become alive unto God (**Ephesians 2:1**), and they cease to be God's enemy, to instead become His child (**Galatians 3:26**), to name a few. While these changes are instant, others may be more gradual; however, they are expected to occur, if that believer is to grow spiritually. These gradual changes include obtaining an attitude that is more like Jesus Christ (**Matthew 5:1-12**), discarding ungodly habits to pick up godly ones (**I John 2:15**), and having a desire to learn from the Lord Jesus through His Word (**Matthew 11:28-30**). These changes are what Jesus is talking about, when He speaks of our duty to shine His light to the world and are testimonies to the world of His work in us.

When a person believes on Jesus Christ for salvation, the Bible states that we become a new creature in Him (**II Corinthians 5:17**). Our old life of sin and worldliness ought to gradually fade away, as we allow the better things of holiness and spirituality to come in. When we allow the Lord Jesus to change our lives a little at a time, we cannot help but reveal the changes that are taking place to others. As a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid and a candle lit in a home shines to all corners, we cannot hide what the Lord Jesus is doing in our lives before others, nor should we be ashamed to!

Why should we do the work of salting the earth with the Gospel and shining the light of a Christ-like testimony to the world? There are a few major reasons. One, is because **Jesus commanded these things of His disciples**. If we appreciate the fact that Jesus Christ paid our debt of sin (**Romans 5:1**), that we could never pay, then we should love Him enough to obey His wishes (**John 14:15**). Being salt and light in this world is the least we can do for our Savior.

Secondly, **whenever we salt and shine, we are telling the world about Jesus and acting like Him**. This is the work Jesus did while He was on Earth and is what He left us on Earth to do (**Matthew 28:18-20**)! As we tell the world about Jesus and do good works in His name, God gets the glory for it. Imagine a sinful, selfish person that has his life turned around by the Lord and now loves his family, instead of just himself. Imagine the lazy, prideful, and wrathful person being turned around to become productive,

humble, and kind, all because of the work of the Lord Jesus in their lives! These are not petty things, but great things that no one but God can bring forth! No one can reform or repent in and of their own selves; only God can change a heart to bring about these desires! When this happens, He alone deserves to get the glory for it.

Every believer is commanded to salt and shine as a testimony for Jesus Christ before this lost, sinful world. When we salt the earth, we are helping to preserve it through the preaching of the Gospel message. When we shine Christ's light, we are testifying as to the transforming work of God's Spirit and His Word within us.

Our church is made up of sinful people that are having our lives gradually transformed by the Lord Jesus Christ, as we follow and learn about Him day by day. What about you? Do you desire these things for your life? Will you allow us to help? If you are interested in these things, you are welcome to drop by our meeting place or the pastor's house anytime.

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