

Being Culturally and Spiritually Relevant

In Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus referred to his disciples as the “salt of the earth”. Jesus says that his followers are both “salt and light of the world”. Since the beginning of the church age dispensation at Pentecost, the church has been charged with the responsibility of being salt and light as we share Jesus Christ with the world. Salt performs two important functions. It preserves and keeps things from going bad and it gives taste and flavor.

The Christian’s task is to be the salt of society; preserving, reconciling, giving meaning where there is no meaning, giving hope where there is no hope and keeping the society from going bad. Light does two things. It illuminates our path so that we do not stumble along the way and it draws attention to itself. If you are in a dark cave where there is nothing but blackness and someone turns on a light you instinctively turn toward the light. When people who are lost in the darkness of sin see the light of Christ that emanates from a Spirit led believer they are drawn to the light of Christ.

Statistically those who claim to be active Christians in terms of defining themselves as being salt and light by living out their faith in a real and practical way are just 29 percent of the U.S. population. Those who claim the Christian name only where there is no real Christian testimony of being salt and light comprise 30 percent of the population. Americans who claim absolutely no religious affiliation are 41 percent of the population. In other words, the Church of the living God has failed to be salt and light to a culture that is fast becoming devoid of spiritual influence by the church because the church has become either culturally or spiritually irrelevant.

In 1950 only 6 percent of adults had received no religious training during childhood. Today that number is near 40 percent and

climbing. Forty percent of the adult population is not familiar with the song “Jesus Loves Me This I Know” and how the lyrics go.... *for the bible tells me so*. Forty percent of the adult population have never heard John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

In First Thessalonians chapter one we see the Apostle Paul gives five characteristics of a salt and light Christian and Church.

I. In verse three we see the church at Thessalonica was an energetic church. We see three qualities of this energetic church; their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope in Christ Jesus. We can have the greatest programs in the world, but if it is not based on faith, hope of eternal life in Christ and love, it will render very little lasting fruit because it will be driven by organization, not by the Holy Spirit.

II. In verse 5 we see it was a Spirit led Church. Paul brought the precious gospel of Jesus Christ to this Roman city that was full of paganism. God transformed lives through the life-changing message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the Christian’s job to be salt and light, the Holy Spirits job to convict and the individual’s responsibility to receive.

III. In Verses 6-7 we see an exemplary church. Even though this church was born out of much affliction and persecution, it became an example for all the other churches to follow. It was culturally and spiritually relevant. They impacted their culture.

IV. In Verse 8 we see this church is an enthusiastic church. Paul found that wherever he went, this church was the talk of the town. Everybody knew the testimony of this great church. Enthusiasm about the things of God inspires enthusiasm in others to be all that they can be for Christ.

V. In Verses 9 – 10 we see that this was an expectant Church.

They eagerly anticipated the return of Christ. Their lives were changed because of a transformation that took place when they turned to God from idols. They realized that salvation was only by faith in Christ and not by their own works of self-righteousness.

If churches today are to be relevant culturally and spiritually we must take the gospel of Jesus Christ out from behind the four walls of our churches and engage the culture on their turf. This culture must see genuine Christianity lived out before them as salt and light. “..But if salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” Let’s not lose our savour.

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