

**F.B. Meyer:**

No wonder that the common people hung on Christ's words. He was a Master of the Art of Illustration, because he sought his emblems, not from remote corners of creation, or its recondite processes, but from the common incidents of ordinary human experience. Salt and light, birds and lilies, gates and roads, trees and their fruit, houses and their foundations. But there was more than art. He knew the hidden secrets of creation, and could tell the heavenly pattern upon which everything was fashioned.

And how full of encouragement he was! He was so willing to give men credit for their best; and in doing so, summoned to view qualities, the existence of which their possessors had never dreamed, or encouraged them to continue in paths on which they had ventured with hesitating steps. It was not a small encouragement to these humble peasants and fishermen to be told that they were capable of checking the evil that was eating out the vitals of society around them, as salt stays the progress of corruption. Have we ever realized sufficiently, or used, this antiseptic power with which all good men are invested?

It is a sad comment on society that it needs salt. You do not think of salting life, but death, to keep it from rotting.

This, then, was Christ's verdict on the society of his time. It had enjoyed the benefit of all that Greek intellectualism and Roman government could effect, and yet was like a carcass on the point of putrefaction. But is not this the state of all society from which religion is banished, or where it has become a system of rites and dogmas? Go into any large workshop or counting-house or public-house, where men feel able to talk freely, and there is too often the smell of the charnel-house in the stories that pass round, and the jokes that pass from lip to lip. The absence of ladies is supposed to give a certain amount of license, as if gentlemen had no special squeamishness.

Here is something that each of us can do. Perhaps we cannot speak; we cannot shed a far-reaching ray of light to warn from the black rocks, and guide to harbor; we seem shut away from scenes of Christian activity, but we can be good salt, checking the evil which would otherwise infect the air of the world, and breed disease in young and healthy lives.

The salt has just to be sell. It need not attempt to be a voice, a spark of light, or a thrill of electricity. Let it just be good, wholesome salt, and quietly, unobtrusively, it will fulfil its great mission. A little child has often arrested the commission of a horrid crime, with its innocent look and its trembling, tearful face. A gentleman who travels much among lonely farmhouses told me the other day, that whenever a fierce dog ran barking at him, he stooped down, and looked it in the face; and he said that he had never met a dog yet which could stand a steady gaze; so there is something in the look of a really good man that abashes sin. The presence of a Henry Martyn has turned an East India man from a floating hell into a very paradise. The look of a Fin-hey has stayed the blasphemy of a large factory, and brought all the mechanics to their knees. Billy Bray's life purified a whole district of Cornish miners. In fact, it would be impossible to tell of all the prisons, the backwoods settlements, the soldiers' camps, the slave plantations, where the progress of sin has been arrested, and the devil himself has slunk abashed to his lair, before the presence of a resolute genuine man of God. You might do the same, only you must be a genuine character. Salt must be good before it can effect its great preventive ministry. But if it is good it will do it. And if you really are full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith, your very presence will be all that is needful to stay the evil that cries to Heaven.

When I was in Liverpool, the women of a large reformatory ward broke into open rebellion, expelled their warders, barred the windows and doors, and gave themselves up to every species of indecency. The authorities were nonplussed, and could not tell what to do; but Mrs. Josephine Butler volunteered to go alone, still the disturbance, and bring these poor lost creatures back to decency. The extreme difficulty and danger of the task were set before her; but she persisted in her request, and finally carried her point. As soon as she appeared, she was met with a yell of madness; but the uproar at last subsided, that outburst of un-womanliness died down before the spell of her sweet and holy presence, and presently she opened the doors, and admitted the warders.

But good salt will be pungent. It has a savor about it which bites and stings whenever it comes in contact with an open wound. If you are holy, just, and faithful with a true man, he will evince no feeling of annoyance; but if with a vicious man, he will splutter, make a wry face, and show violence of hand or foot. Christ was salt to the Pharisees, and they crucified him. Joseph was salt to his brethren, and they put him in the pit. Paul was salt to his fellow-country-men, and they arraigned him before the bar of Caesar.

But always distinguish between salt and acid. Acid corrodes, burns, kills. Salt smarts, heals, saves. Some rejoice in what they call plain speaking; but they forget to speak the truth in love, and are like a physician who goes around with wholesome but nauseous medicine, and whenever he sees a mouth open pours some down. It is necessary to wash the saints' feet, but be sure you do not do it in scalding water. If you have to tell men that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, do it weeping. Let it be evident that you had no axe to grind, no selfish end to serve, no grudge to pay, when you rebuke others by life or word for things which ought not to pass unnoticed.

Salt may lose its savor. Housewives tell us that if it be allowed to get damp, it will lose all taste of salt, and become quite useless. So we may lose all power of arresting sin. Yonder is a man who once stood high in the opinion of the church and the world; but he committed one act of inconsistency, and that has sealed his lips. For him to check others is like Satan rebuking sin. They turn "and say, Take the beam out of thine own eye before attempting to take the mote from ours. Here is another, who has no power to rebuke, because he is conscious of some secret sin, which produces indecision in his manner. In another case it is as when Lot remonstrated with the men of Sodom, and urged his children to escape. He is tarred too deeply with the same brush for them to heed. They ridicule him as a childish dotard.

You cannot salt, salt. You may salt beef and mutton and pork, and a hundred other substances, but you cannot salt, salt. If it has lost its savor it is thenceforward good for nothing; but is cast out on the street, and trodden under foot of men. As long as a man has never passed under the influence of Christianity you may hope for him; but when he has gone into it, and through it, and come out on the other side unsaved, there is little to hope for. He is fit neither for the land, nor yet for the dunghill. He is cast out as almost hopeless, so far as human judgment goes, though with God there are limitless possibilities.

Let us beware of such a fate, and live daily such straight, strong, pure, noble lives that evil may be abashed in our presence and slink away, and that an arrest may be put on the plague that walketh in darkness, and the pestilence that wasteth at noonday. And whatever you do, keep your savor.