The Salt Of The Earth

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."
Matthew 5:13

Years ago, common salt was such a precious commodity that wars were fought over it and laborers' wages were paid in salt. The word "salary" is a derivative of the word "salt." We also get the expression, "He is not worth his salt," from the practice of paying laborers with salt. Jesus said God's people are the *"salt of the earth."* Salt has both preserving and savory qualities. We know if we rub salt into meat, it will decay and give food a more pleasant and palatable taste. Strictly speaking, salt cannot lose its saltiness because it is a stable compound. However, most salt in the ancient world was derived from salt marshes rather than the evaporation of salt water. Because of this extraction process, salt frequently had many impurities. The actual salt, being more soluble than the impurities, could be leached out, leaving a residue so dilute it was of little value.

When salt would lose its savor, it literally was worthless. It was spread in pathways, much like we use gravel. In modern Israel, savorless salt is still said to be scattered on the soil of flat roofs. This helps harden the soil and prevent leaks; and since the roofs serve as playgrounds and places for public gathering, the salt is still being trodden under foot.

We act as a preservative by conforming, not to the world's standards, but to God's standards. Romans 12:1-2 says, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* We must also add to the stale environment of the world the savory qualities of love, joy, fairness, and honesty. A Christian's high moral principles are essential to a societies' well-being. In a sense, we are a moral disinfectant in a world where moral standards are low, constantly changing, or non-existent. We must remember that we can only discharge this function if we retain our virtue and moral steadfastness.

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