

**Russell Kelfer**

# **Salt from the Steeple**

**# 979-B**

**Series: Let God Be God**



DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.  
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO



# Salt from the Steeple

It appeared to be of infinite value. Nothing else could do what it could do. When someone was totally beyond help and everything else had failed, this little vial of medicine had been known to perform medical miracles. It was called “Vitacure X”. On more than one occasion, it had been the difference between life and death.

Until now. This time, when the prognosis all but guaranteed that “Vitacure X” was the perfect treatment, the patient had failed to respond. The result was devastating. It was only hours later, after the fact, when two technicians in the laboratory found the problem. The tiny label fastened to the side of the bottle told the story. “This medicine must be used before \_\_\_\_\_ (date of expiration)”. The date had expired weeks ago. After that date, the medicine was useless. It had lost its ability to heal. It had lost its power. It was now of no more value than a vial of water. No, in many ways it was of much less value than a vial of water, for the one thing worse than being useless is pretending to be useful when you’re not. That, you see, results in unfulfilled expectations and in unexpected failures. What could have been the one thing that saved a life turned out to be the greatest disappointment known to those who trusted in it.



There is a message in “Vitacure X” for the church. It is a message Jesus carefully explained to His followers some 2,000 years ago on a hillside. It is a message the church needs to hear again, a message about an amazing cure for the ills of the world. If the church fails to deliver that message properly, it will leave the world more confused than ever, for the world expected it to work.

That cure is a very common commodity, so common that the church often either overlooks its strength or

## Salt from the Steeple

underestimates its value. The Master Physician took the parchment of Scripture and wrote out a prescription for the terminal illness of sin. And he spelled it in only four letters.

The prescription reads like this:

	
<b>Salt:</b>	Given in poper doses, guaranteed to change the world.
<b>Caution:</b>	If stored up and not properly dispensed, or if allowed to lose its intensity, this medicine will become useless . . . good for absolutely nothing.
<i>Dr. Jehovah</i>	

It is on this prescription that we will now focus our attention, as Jesus calls His inner circle aside and begins to outline for them His totally different plan to cure the ills of the world.

Our title for this lesson: “Salt from the Steeple”.

Our outline:

- I- Salt from the Steeple; Light from the Hill
- II- Salt When It’s Salty; Salt When It’s Not
- III- Salt in the Shaker; Salt in the World

### SALT FROM THE STEEPLE; LIGHT FROM THE HILL

The prescription is found in the earliest portion of the Sermon on the Mount. There Jesus called his team of followers up into a mountain, seated Himself before them, and proceeded to give them a formula for happiness. He told them what it will take to be “blessed” people. And what a

surprising list of back-to-back ingredients for an enviable life. He said the “blessed” are those who are “poor in spirit” (who see themselves as insignificant). He said the “blessed” are those who “mourn” for “they shall receive comfort”. “The “blessed” are those who are “meek” (mild, patient, long-suffering); “they shall inherit the earth.” The “blessed” are “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled”. The “blessed” are “the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted”, Jesus went on; and as He went on, He crushed beneath the weight of His words every trace of similarity between what the world would call “happiness” and what God would prescribe to guarantee a “blessed” life. There were to be no common denominators.

The world would say that the kingdom belonged to those who knew they could; Jesus promised it to those who knew they couldn't. The world would say blessing belonged to those who had no cause to mourn. Jesus promised it to those for whom grief had become a way of life. The world promised the earth to the ones who went after it; Jesus promised it to those who humbled themselves and waited. The world said blessing belonged to those who received mercy. Jesus promised it to those who gave mercy. The world said blessing belongs to those who are never misunderstood. Jesus promised joy to those who were.

The lines had been drawn. This was to be a gospel that ran so at cross-currents with man's concept of success that, so long as those to whom this Kingdom belonged did not blur the distinctives, the world could never confuse their plan with His.

But the punch line was this: should those to whom He had entrusted this incredible new life choose to mix it with the philosophies of their age, or keep it to themselves, it would not only become useless, but dangerous. Men would be waiting, panting for a cure that would never come, looking for a panacea that would prove to be futile; and having put their trust in that which they thought would save them, they would have perished unnecessarily.

So Jesus is not changing subjects as He continues

## Salt from the Steeple

His Sermon on the Mount. He now simply moves from the information stage to the application stage. He rolls directly from the seeds of happiness to the sowing of happiness, and He does it this way:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, where with shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.  
(Matthew 5:11-16)

There you have Jesus' prescription for taking the blessed life and multiplying it in a world that does not understand blessedness. You pour salt from the steeple and shine a light from the hill. Do that, the Master admonishes his startled followers, and the blessed life will multiply like shock waves, changing the course of history as it goes. Fail to do that, the Lord cautions, and that which could have saved your world will prove to be not only useless, but dangerous; for it will have promised life and delivered nothing.

Salt from the steeple; light from the hill. Two amazing commodities, so simple, so available, so seemingly insignificant that they, in all likelihood, would be overlooked in man's scramble for a more complicated formula with which to impress a searching world. Salt from the steeple; light from the hill. Could it really be that simple? If so, then why wasn't the world transformed in a generation? (or at least in the multitude of generations that have come and

gone?). Jesus clearly explained that as well.

In this lesson, we'll tip the church upside down a little, and let some salt flow from its steeple. In the next, we'll try to take the lid off the lantern and see why the light doesn't shine. For today, the issue is salt; and the issue is us.

I say the issue is us because Jesus looked those followers of His squarely in the eye and made a simple, straightforward statement that left absolutely no room for doubt as to what their position was to be in implementing this "blessed kingdom" of His. The statement was this: "Ye are the salt of the earth".

The "Ye are" is a statement of accomplished fact. It is a definition of being. It is like saying "Ye are a man" or "Ye are a woman" or "Ye are a Jew" or "Ye are a Gentile". It is not a word of encouragement to become something you are not. It is a word of affirmation that this is what you are.

You are the salt of the earth. You who bear the name of Jesus, by virtue of having placed your trust in Him, now possess all of the attributes that salt possesses. You are, therefore, to this world spiritually, what salt is to this world physically. You now have a totally new identification. You are salt. You are THE salt; that is, you are the specific, unique salt of the world. There is none other. You are it. If this old world is to receive the benefits spiritually that salt gives physically, then it must receive those benefits from you. Without you, the world will be salt-less. You are *the unique and very specifically designated salt of the earth*. That's who we are. Nothing more; nothing less. We are THE salt of THE earth. Therefore, when the church of Jesus Christ is functioning as it should on planet earth, the world should be benefiting from its presence precisely as it benefits from salt. Likewise, when you and I, individually, are behaving (or allowing Christ in us to behave) as we should, those who live in our world will experience all of the benefits of a world touched by salt.

### SALT WHEN IT'S SALTY; SALT WHEN IT'S NOT

That brings up two major issues. Issue number one is,

“Just what should our world, then, be like?” What does salt do that is so phenomenal? And issue number two is this: “Is it possible for us not to behave like salt; and if so, what will be the consequences?” You’ve heard Jesus answer that one! We’ll touch on it again before we’re through.

This is no incidental statement from the lips of Christ. This is God Himself, having described for the first time what His revolutionary life of blessedness would be like, now clearly describing how that life would be communicated to a world whose message was so at odds with His, that the two could not be merged any more than light could merge with darkness.

Therefore, it is not a subject for casual study. It is an issue of deep significance. God designed the church so that every day salt would pour from its steeple into a lost and dying world. If that salt retained its flavor, the world would get a taste of Jesus Christ. If that salt lost its flavor, the name of Jesus Christ would be trodden underfoot, as a dying world cried out for a cure, only to find the vial from which deliverance would come was marked “out of date; no longer valid”.

We simply are the salt of the world. Precisely what does that mean? Let’s focus in on at least four specific qualities of salt that Jesus must have had in mind when He made that all-inclusive statement.

#### 1- Salt is life’s seasoning.

It brings out the best in whatever it touches. It makes that which is bland and tasteless come alive. It makes otherwise unappetizing things palatable. In proper doses, it makes the difference between something that is simply tolerable and something that is the talk of the town. No cook worth his salt will be without his salt. So valuable is it to the taste of life that other additives which give food flavor are often referred to as “salt” themselves. Granted, it must be applied in proper amounts, but when used with discretion, it is guaranteed to change the flavor of everything it touches.

Jesus just described how that takes place. The Christian,



## Salt from the Steeple

when faced with exaltation, humbles himself and quietly yields his place to others. A world bent on destroying itself by exalting itself immediately tastes something new—humility. And the flavor is enough to cause it to wonder what it has been missing. It is salt. The Christian, when faced with grief, finds such solace in the Comforter that the things that cause the world to mourn bring to the child of God a reminder of God’s presence. The world is amazed when it sees that kind of response to grief. It wants that flavor. It is tasting salt. The Christian, when faced with the unknowns of life, quietly waits and trusts a Sovereign God. The world, demanding easy answers and immediate solutions, is frustrated. It sees in the “blessed” ones who are meek something it has never seen. It is witnessing salt.

The Christian lives to extend the hand of mercy to those who do not deserve it. The world is in awe. How different that is. It must be salt. The Christian finds pleasure in purity. The world is amazed. It is overwhelmed at this attribute of salt. The Christian even finds persecution “blessed”. The world calls it the utmost in inequity. The difference? Salt.

An unbelieving husband, according to I Peter 3, can literally see God by the very quiet gentleness of a God-honoring wife. His whole concept of God can be changed by watching His wife demonstrate the “blessed” life. What is happening to him? He is tasting salt; and it is changing the way He looks at Christ. She is the salt of his world. His marriage thus becomes filled with the flavor of godliness.

An insensitive, overbearing boss, according to I Peter 2, can be overwhelmed by just watching a godly employee respond to unjust correction. His whole life can be affected by the godliness of one submissive employee. Watching that one gives him a taste of salt. It flavors his attitude toward the Kingdom of God. No wonder in Job 6, we are asked the question,

Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt?

(Job 6:6a)

Do you change the flavor of the world in which you live? Or do you reflect the flavor of those around you? God’s men

## Salt from the Steeple

and women, when filled with His Spirit, will, simply by their manner of life, season their worlds with the delightfully different taste of Jesus Christ. And the world will want more and more. They will want Him.

### 2- Salt is an excellent preservative.

Salt keeps that which it touches from spoiling. It keeps things from turning sour, from becoming rancid, from becoming useless. The dictionary defines salt: “a white, crystalline substance, frequently used as a preservative.” A preservative is something that, by permeating the atmosphere around what it touches, inhibits the process of decay. The church was to be the salt of the world. It was to be the church that would hold together the moral fiber of a world that was degenerate from its roots so that even amidst the lusts of man there would be possible a society that held to moral values. For generations, the only thing holding up the standard of morality for a sick world has been the salt pouring from the steeple of God’s church.

The only thing that has held any semblance of justice in a perverse world has been the gospel of Jesus Christ. Apart from Him there is no equality, no righteous judgment, no cure for prejudice, no answer for society’s great moral injustices. The salt from the steeple is all that preserves this world from total chaos.

What has preserved the home as the center of humanity for 2,000 years? The salt of the earth has. What has kept the distinctives of men and women clear while still elevating each to their rightful place as portraits of Christ and His church? The salt of the earth has. What has kept the children of society from total anarchy and kept at least a taste of respect and honor for their parents? The salt of the earth has. If you do not believe that the presence of the Body of Christ is the salt of the earth that is holding the earth together, you read what will happen to this world when the “Restrainer” (the Holy Spirit) is taken from this earth as the church is raptured to be with Christ. This earth, as we know it, will fall apart at the seams. Total rebellion, total destruction, total deception will be the hallmark of the age. Why? The salt of

the earth will be gone.

3- Salt is the antiseptic that cleanses and purifies that which would otherwise be defiled.

Not only are we to change the flavor of our worlds and be the glue that holds our worlds together, we are to be the gentle cleansing solution that God uses to surface the impurities of this world and wash them away. Ezekiel 16:4 speaks of Israel as a newborn infant not yet cleansed; not yet washed with salt. Elisha poured salt in the water in II Kings 2:21 as a symbol that the waters had been cleansed by Jehovah. Salt touches that which is antiseptically unacceptable and takes away the germs so that what is left is usable. So saline, or salt water, is even today used to rinse out that which is bitter or diseased and help it to heal.

You and I are to be the antiseptic solutions to our world. Wherever we go, our very presence ought to cause others who normally accept sin as the norm to see it in a totally different light. Have you ever been with someone who naturally uses profanity as though it were his native tongue? Suddenly, one day, just seeing you there, that person apologizes for saying things he has been saying all his life. You said nothing, but he was convicted. Or he apologizes for watching something or doing something he has always considered acceptable. What suddenly made him aware of sin? Salt did. You are the salt of the earth, not because you carried a placard and condemned their lifestyle, but because you demonstrated something so much higher that their standard of right and wrong suddenly underwent a tumultuous change. They tasted salt.

4- Salt speaks of fidelity and unity.

In ancient times, if one was to eat the salt of the king, he, in so doing, was pledging that king his loyalty forever. Similarly, if two people sat down and ate bread and salt together, they were signifying the formation of an unbreakable league of friendship. So salt was used as a covenant sign in Numbers 18:19 and in II Chronicles 13:5. It was the seal of a bond that would not be broken.

## Salt from the Steeple

Beloved, in the same way, you and I are the salt of the world. What the world must see, then, is not a fragmented bickering saltshaker. The world has the patent on that. If we are to be salt, we must be in the process of building one another up, of encouraging one another, of supporting one another, of loving one another. So Paul admonishes us in Colossians 4:6 to always see that our conversation is full of grace, seasoned with salt; gracious as well as sensible; edifying as well as honest. That is the church in action. Not double-minded or double-tongued, but neither characterized by backbiting or bad reports. The church, according to Paul, is one Body. There is only one Spirit, only one gospel, only one family. When it behaves as a family, the church becomes salt in an angry, inhospitable world. When it behaves like it often behaves, it loses its flavor.

### SALT IN THE SHAKER; SALT IN THE WORLD

Which brings us, of course, to Jesus' words of warning. Yes, we are the salt of the world (not will be, we are!). But, oh, Beloved, how we affect that world will totally depend on whether or not we behave as the salt we are. For "if the salt has lost its saltiness, what good is it? It is then only good to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men." The Living Bible says it this way,

You are the world's seasoning, to make it tolerable. If  
you lose your flavor, what will happen to the world?  
And you yourselves will be thrown out and trampled  
underfoot as worthless. (Matthew 5:13 TLB)

That's an amazing statement. We are the salt of the earth. As such, we will either be everything the world needs, or we will be of absolutely no value whatsoever. Either we flavor our worlds, preserve our worlds, cleanse our worlds, and unify our worlds, or we are a hindrance to our worlds. We become like that vial of "Vitacure X". By failing to be what we pretended to be, we became less than useless; we became dangerous. Others believed that we were the salt they were seeking, only to find a flavor no different from that of the world in which they lived. They were not, therefore, impressed with what we claimed to be. To them, we are good

## Salt from the Steeple

for nothing. They would as soon walk on us as touch us, for we professed to be salt, but possessed no saltiness. What a bitter taste we left in their mouths!

In Scripture, salt misused or salt not used was always considered less than worthless. In Judges 9, it was used to illustrate a sign of doom or destruction. In Deuteronomy 29 and Jeremiah 17, it was used as a symbol of barrenness and sterility. That which God intends to be the flavor that changes the course of history becomes the death knoll of a lost and dying world if it ceases to be what it was meant to be. Like Lot's wife, the church, with one eye to the world and one to its own deliverance, becomes a statue of what something becomes when it becomes worthless, a living monument to salt that has lost its savor.

Likewise, salt left in the shaker touches nothing and changes nothing. The church clustered in its sanctimonious circle praising itself is useless to a dying world. Unless we tip the steeple until the salt we are permeates the world we live in, the salt we are becomes good for nothing but to be trampled underfoot of men.

Jesus made the issue clear. You and I are the salt of the earth. We are God's flavoring in a tasteless world. We are God's preservative in a dying world. We are God's antiseptic in a defiled world. We are God's covenant in a strife-torn world. Christ in us represents everything that salt represents when it is used aright. So long as the salt has not lost its flavor, it will change its world. And so long as the salt is willing to leave the shaker long enough to touch something, it will change its world.

But Jesus' admonition was not only to the church at large. It was an individual indictment aimed at a life that has ceased to be productive because it has either ceased to be pure, or ceased to be available. Both issues clamor for our attention. Notice Jesus did not address the saltshaker. He was not interested in how pious we look or act. He was not addressing the doctrinal stance we take as we live hypocritically before those He sends our way. The issue wasn't how good the salt looked. You can tell instantly once

## Salt from the Steeple

salt touches your food if it is good or not. It can be in a sterling silver antique saltshaker that is worth thousands of dollars; but if it has lost its taste, the shaker simply becomes an expensive disappointment. The object is not external appearance, but internal reality.

Salt doesn't lose its flavor overnight. You and I don't lose our power overnight, either. It happens gradually, like the subtle erosion of a rock as a stream of water sends its steady flow of force upon it. It appears to be harmless, but it is ultimately deadly. Little things crowd into our lives that appear at first to be acceptable, if not advisable. We don't feel comfortable with them and God coexisting at first, but soon we justify that God doesn't mind, so long as we keep them under control. And soon a tiny crust of sin builds up in the linings of our hearts, and the power does not flow as once it did. "That's only natural," we justify. "After all, we mustn't judge by feelings." True. But the gentle prodding of the Holy Spirit from the Word is different from our feelings. It all happens so gradually. On the outside, nothing's different. We may even serve more. We may even become more active in the church. But inside, we know something's different. The salt is losing its flavor.

May I remind you today that Jesus does not say that tasteless salt becomes less useful. You say, "That's a relief." No, Jesus said that tasteless salt becomes useless. It is good for what? Nothing. That which had the potential to change the world it touched has become worthless. The best thing you can do with it is walk on it. It is not less valuable. It has no value at all.

In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I appeal to you and to myself as well, that before it is too late, we examine the purity and consistency of the salt we are. If that salt has not become contaminated, we can be and, in fact, we are the very element of God to transform and flavor and preserve the world we live in. But if we have allowed the salt in us to decay, to lose its flavor, we are not only less productive, we are in the process of becoming spiritually useless. Good for nothing.

Salt from the Steeple

*Dear God,*

*Please don't let that happen. Rather, may we be the salt we are that the world may experience the God you are.*

*Amen.*

WE'RE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

We're the salt of the earth  
That's what God has arranged  
Whatever we touch  
Ought to be changed.

Wherever we go,  
By God's gentle grace  
There should be a flavor  
The world needs to taste.

There should be a power  
The world can't explain  
A preserving power  
Sin to restrain.

There should be a purity  
Clean like a child  
Drawing to holiness  
All that's defiled.

There should be a unity  
A oneness, a treasure  
Displaying in harmony  
Love without measure.

All of this speaks  
Of the salt that we are  
Touching, transforming  
Both near and afar.

But, oh, what a tragedy,  
Oh, what a waste  
When the salt that would alter  
Loses its taste.

*(continued)*

Salt from the Steeple

We're the salt of the earth  
And the need of the hour  
Is that God would restore  
To that salt all its power.

Transforming power  
Power that saves!  
Dear God, make us  
The salt this earth craves.

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

---

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230  
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778  
www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(03.11.15)