

MATTHEW 5:13 – A SECOND LOOK AT SALT

Taught by Tom Hanz

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Almighty and gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this time together. We thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit who is the teacher of us all. We ask you to use this hour to build us up, to help us mature in Christ, and to be more like Him by what we hear and what we learn. We ask you to be with our brother, Bruce, while he's away. We thank you so much for the blessings of his ministry and his teaching to us, and we just pray for a safe return to us next week. We pray these things in the name of our glorious Savior, Jesus Christ, without whom we could do nothing. We just thank you so much. Amen!

Well, last week, Bruce was talking about being salt. This is in Matthew 5:13. Afterwards he said, "Tom, let's do next week, a lesson on legalism." I'm thinking, "What does salt have to do with legalism?" I said, "Okay, Bruce, we'll pick it up from there and we'll go on." It's very interesting, in your outline, you notice that if we take a look at Matthew 5:13, Jesus says that you are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. Salt is a preservative.

I took a second look at this, and it's interesting how many times in the Bible you can look at a passage and it means something, and it also means something else. Not that they contradict, but it kind of further exemplifies what the Lord is talking about. Here's an example. Salt is also a seasoning. That's why I put out these Greek words from the text of Matthew 5:13, that salt is a preservative but it's also a flavoring, *mōrainō*. It means it's lost its taste. Everything has a need to be emphasized or flavored. Like in Job where he's talking about needing something else, and he says, "Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt?" Is there any taste in the white of an egg? And you think, "Yeah, that's a good point." You have to do something. You can't sit down and have a meal of egg white. That's just...nothing there. So you need some salt. You need that yolk, which has taste to it. You need to also emphasize the taste...not a lot, but just enough.

Also, the saltiness is a seasoning, which is another Greek word, *halizō*, which means to be seasoned with salt. As the Scripture says in Exodus 35, even the holy incense that Aaron is to prepare in the tabernacle, it was seasoned with salt. There are several times in the law where, as you're giving a sacrifice or an offering to the Lord, you also include salt with it. I never knew that. It's interesting that Leviticus 2:13 says, "The offering of the first fruits, the grain offering, is to be seasoned with salt and then burned."

***Audience Member:** Salt also creates thirst, and in this case, you could indicate that it created a thirst for more information from the followers of Christ.*

Well that's a good idea. Yeah. You get some salt and the next thing you want is some water, whereas the living water. The other thing I thought was interesting about the use of salt is with Elisha. As soon as he had taken over from Elijah, and he's in the town of Jericho, he's talking to the city fathers there and so forth. Everything seems to be going okay in Jericho, but they complained to him saying that, "our water is so bad." So he says, "Bring me a new bowl and fill it with salt," and then Elijah throws this bowl of salt in the well, and it freshens the water. What a contradiction in worldly terms because you would never add salt to water to make it better. What you want to do if you have salt water, you take the salt out. But this is the way to Lord works.

I think these things of how salt is used is very interesting. While we're talking about salt as a preservative, we want to take a look at salt as a flavoring, or a seasoning. You think, "Well what does that have to do with legalism?" Legalism takes the flavor out of Christianity. We always talk about

legalism in terms of coming to Christ. You need Jesus plus. You need this. No, it's Jesus. It's the shed blood of Jesus is the only thing that you can be redeemed under. Nothing else works. So people try to add some rules to that.

What about in the church itself? What about, as Christians, how do we set up rules? Yeah, we're all born again. We love Jesus. We worship the Lord. This is the way you have to worship the Lord. If you don't do it this way, you're really not doing it right. That's what I want to talk about today, is how legalism gets into our worship as Christians, and sort of see if salt is a seasoning, then how do we then season our life, and how do we add flavoring of salt to our world.

I was looking Colossians 4:6, where Paul talks about let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. In other words, think about how you deal with people. Not just your brothers in Christ, or sisters in Christ, how about everybody. What is it that your projecting to them, and how you treat them? That's what we ought to be thinking about because that goes back to one of the two great commandments. Love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself.

How we project ourselves to others is critically important to God. Yet many times in our churches, we tend to think about, "Well this is the way we do it."

Another way of adding salt to our world is in having our walk match our talk. That's why the big complaints about people outside church say, "Well it's full of hypocrites." Well yeah, we're still sinning. There's no doubt about that. We haven't gotten rid of that. But it's that flavoring of, if you see someone who does what they say, and there's no discrepancy, it causes you to at least appreciate what they're doing, if not to want to know more about why they are.

Ted: *Not to get you off track, but I think...*

Why not!

Ted: *The Colossians passage may be, I mean, I am intrigued by what you've done with that, and that may be worth unpacking, what it actually means as it says in Colossians, and pragmatically what that means that in Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech always be gracious," that means having grace in it, "seasoned with salt so you may know how to answer each person." I mean, I'm just thinking of all the ways, based on what you've given us so far, how our speech could be seasoned. What if it were, using this image, seasoned with salt? I mean, what does that mean, that our speech is seasoned with salt? I would kind of throw that out based on what you've already [UNCLEAR].*

Audience Member: *I'd Bruce gives a good example every single time. Somebody says something to him, for example, that story that he gave whenever he was down at LSU. Instead of coming back at the guy, it was "I really appreciate your input. Thanks." He is always so gracious with his words. I would come right back at the guy often times. We're all human, right?*

Tom: *My Bible cross references two other verses—Colossians 3:8 and Ephesians 4:29. Colossians 3:8 says, "But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these—anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language." And then Ephesians 4:29 it's kind of the same thing, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful to building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen."*

What I found is that if you look at living a life of grace, it goes right...you take this verse of being salt of the earth, what it does, it goes right back to Matthew 5...for being humble, or being meek...Matthew

5:5. It's that humility. Being meek, is something that just invades your personality, as it comes from God. What I found is interesting. What Christ is giving us, it's not a whole series of this, this and this, but they're all interconnected. It's all one idea that he just keeps giving us more and more of.

We'll get into that a little bit more because I want to get into that verse and go on, because you think, "Well who's a good example of not being the salt of the earth?" What kind of group would you imagine in the Bible were the opposite of being salt of the earth? Pharisees. What a rude group of guys. They had no...but they had their rules and they were very proud of their rules. In fact, Paul talks about him being a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was the best. Let's take a look at Philippians 3:4-6.

Audience Member: *"⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless."* (Philippians 3:4-6 ESV)

He's talking about...if anybody knows how to be a legalistic person, it's me; it's what I used to be. He talks about five kinds of rules. That's what I think hurts us when we talk about living a Christian life. We talk about you need to be obedient. Okay, what rules am I to be obedient to? I like the way St. Augustine puts it. He says it very simply, "Love God and do what you will." Think about it. If you love God with everything you've got, all this kind of falls in line. It's not automatic, but he works with you over your life to bring you to where he wants you to be.

Paul says, "Okay, I've got these rules that I used to keep. One, I used to trust in rituals. I was circumcised on the eighth day." Okay, someone can say, "I was baptized down at the Brook Hollow Church. I'm saved." Well is it the water, the baptism that saves you? Or is it the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in which Christ circumcises your heart, and that's what you're saved by. It's by Christ, not by a ritual. Although it has its purpose, and water baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. But it's an inward spiritual grace that is what's important because we're no longer living in the world; we're living in the spirit. It's hard for us, as humans, who have been raised in the world, to make that break automatically. God works on us to get us out of the world and to get us into living a spiritual life, so there are some things we need to learn.

Also Paul says that he was of the people of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. He had this relationship. He was one of the in people. He really knew what it was to be in the A-crowd, you might say. You can't beat him. What's important is like in Galatians 3:28-29, ²⁸"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." Our relationship then is not that we're Jewish or German or whatever we might be. We are Christ's. We are in his family. We're his brother. We are heirs to the promise.

Audience Member: *Tom, I'm just perusing Galatians 3:23 and it says, "Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed," [UNCLEAR] faith.*

I think what's so interesting is that when we set up our religious priorities, we always tend to go back to, "I have to be obedient to the law," and so we go back to the ten commandments, or the law of Moses, and think, "Abraham never had that. Isaac, Israel, Joseph, they're all before the law."

Don: *So you believe that it was only a sin to kill when the ten commandments were given at Sinai and not before?*

No. No. But what is good is that...because we know that it's not right to kill, right from day one, with Cain. Cain knew he did wrong, and he was looking for an out and couldn't find it. But what it is, the law came and the law shows us how much we need grace.

Audience Member: That's true.

Yeah. What I think is important is not to dismiss the law, but to look at the law for how God wanted to apply, and that just because we don't kill anybody, doesn't mean we're a good person. Just because we do certain things, we don't gain any points with God for that. The only point we gain with God is the fact that we're covered with the blood of Jesus Christ. And that all these things that are wrong, our sins, our transgressions, they're still there, but when God put it into a code, gave us the law, it was not so much for the world as it was, he gave it to Israel, to make them a unique people. And then when the Gentiles were brought in, because we know that not all of Israel is Israel, and after Christ, we have the world being evangelized and brought into Christ, that we didn't have to keep the ritual aspects. But that doesn't dilute any of the sins that are pointed out in the Old Testament. I think that's sometimes a little bit difficult to grasp because you can't throw it away, but it is only in part.

***Audience Member:** What just came to my mind, the Philistines were when they went after the ark of the covenant. They ended up with a box thinking that that was the power. What they didn't know was who lived in the box, in the ark of the covenant, when he walked with the nation of Israel, when they got that box, they had no power. When we get a hold of the law, as Paul and the Pharisees, and they embrace that law, when Christ came, and he fulfilled the law, now you got to find Christ, and there's your faith. Having the box called the ark of the covenant or all those laws means nothing because it won't work, because you don't have, like Jacob went back to Beth El, and he worshipped at [UNCLEAR]...he worshipped the God of the house of God. And so it's after God or Jesus Christ that we have to go.*

It's not these things that Paul's talking about that he used to give himself credit for. It's that you worship God in truth and spirit. The other thing about the ten commandments, what's interesting, though, is if you look at the ten commandments as they are repeated in the New Testament, keeping the Sabbath is never one of them. It's in there, but it's never repeated in the New Testament.

***Don:** [UNCLEAR]...silence is dangerous, but...*

Okay, go ahead.

***Don:** No, no, that's alright.*

What's interesting is many scholars say, "Well keeping the Sabbath, remember the Sabbath, keep it holy, is a sign," and it was a gift to Israel. When the church goes to the Gentiles, they no longer have to keep the Sabbath. Paul says, "Well let's don't disperse, let's always meet together so let's meet on the first day of the week, which is the Lord's Day." The Sabbath was given as a sign of rest and a blessing for Israel, but the Lord's Day now is the sign of regeneration of [UNCLEAR] new in Christ.

***Audience Member:** [UNCLEAR]...*

That's true. I'm not going to argue with them. But there is a good number of people out there that are saying we shouldn't really look at it as the Sabbath.

***Audience Member:** Just reading about Jesus went into the Synagogue in Capernaum and there was a guy there with a withered hand and the Pharisees looked on Jesus to see if he would heal him. He didn't touch the guy to heal him, but he gave a discourse to the Pharisees and he condemned the Pharisees.*

The bottom line he said was man was not made for the Sabbath; the Sabbath was made for man. Legalism they had; Jesus [UNCLEAR] was turning it around to make the Sabbath man made for the Sabbath.

That's right. It's interesting because the Pharisees, so many times when they would attack Jesus, it would be because of his way he kept the Sabbath or didn't keep it, going through the field of grain and his disciples eating, "You can't eat on the Sabbath," and all this stuff. The main thing is Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. We are in the Sabbath. We are in his rest. It's not what we do; it's what he does through us that's important.

I don't want to get off course on this, but I think this is something that we just need to be looking at is how am I living my life—by what I do according to rules or by how God leads me, [UNCLEAR] the grace within me directing me.

Audience Member: *What's the purpose of the law? What's the purpose of the rule? Is it not the remind us we can't keep it and that we are sinners?*

Big time. Yes. It also shows how much we need God. How much we need his grace. Someone said the other day, "Well if it was possible to keep every one of the commandments, and never break them through your whole life, would you go to heaven?" Some people say yes, some people say no. Most people, that I know, say you can only get to heaven by the blood of Jesus Christ. It's through him that you get to heaven, not through what you do. Then while you're here on earth, before you go to heaven, it's what he does through you that counts, and not the rules you make and how you keep them. I think that's what Paul is trying get at.

Brian: *It's kind of a bad question. There's no way that you can keep the law unless you have Christ in you, so...*

That's all hypothetical. You're right. Paul also says that he was trusting in his religion. But as we said before, your religion is your baptism in Christ. It's your relationship, not the church you go to that's important. He also trusted in rules, as we talked about. He was a Pharisee. He was the best Pharisee there was. We worship according to God, not according to man's rule. That's why I pointed out here in Colossians 2:20-23 that, "²⁰If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—²¹'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch'²²(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?²³These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh."

Now I've seen it where it can be carried to an extreme, setting up for a church social one time. This one lady said, "Let's just put a couple of card tables here." The head of the women's organization of this church said, "That is a folding table. We don't play cards. It's a sin." {LAUGHTER} Excuse me! What does that have to do with living a righteous life? It's carrying it so far. But that's how we tend to think because we still are in a body of sin.

As we mature in Christ, that means at some point, we are immature in Christ. There's this graph—where are we in our maturing with Jesus. If we're down here in the immature, there's going to be a lot of stuff that we hang onto in the world, or we hang on to our self, because we're used to dealing with that. We feel comfortable about that. We feel good about that. We feel that [UNCLEAR], "I haven't missed church in three years. I've been there every Sunday without a miss. What a good Christian I am." It has nothing to do with it. That's not the rules.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]...Paul is trying to warn people that [UNCLEAR] because I think Paul admits, like St. Augustine's comment, "Love God and do as you please." He thought this was loving God, and that's what he was after, [UNCLEAR], and in his leadership, he thought that was loving God. [UNCLEAR] says beware of dogs. Verse 3 says have no confidence in the flesh, and in verse 18 and 19, it talks about some more characteristics of people who are leading, who think they are loving God, and then doing as they please. But they're misguided. It's good that he goes into this and says, "Look if someone comes after you and says, 'Hey, follow me because [UNCLEAR], follow me but I've done this or we've done that,'" the confidence in the flesh is the warning light.

Because it's all about me. That's what I like so much about Rick Warren's book. The first words in it is "it's not about you." And yet, we're almost inbred with that thought. I'm so important. That's what Paul talks about then when he says that it's even in my reputation, that he says, "I was persecuting the church as for legalistic righteousness, I was faultless. I had this reputation in Israel. I was the best of the best." And yet, it's not about us.

I want to read Romans 12:3-8, but before that, just in verse 2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." I think we skip over that verse a lot of times in that, yeah, how does my mind get renewed? Knowing his Word. His Word abides in us, and we in him. He loves us. That's what he says. If my Word abides in you, and you abide in me, my Father will make himself known to you.

We need this growth. We need to mature. And as he goes on in Romans 12:3-8, "³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

We're all part of a body, but we're not all the same. I think that's another thing that we find legalism likes to creep and control. That we all do the same thing.

Audience Member: Feedback on that, go to Romans 14, it says, "him whose faith is weak without passing judgment on disputable matters." It's so much easier for us to follow rules and regulations so we can put people in the box and say, "But he's a good Christian. He's a bad Christian," as opposed to being mature enough, having salt in our language and coming along side of them and not making those, "Oh, that's the wrong author. Oh, that's the wrong preacher you're listening to," and just say, "Hey, God is using him to grow and mature this person. Let me come along side of him in love."

It's easy to set up these rules. Sometimes if a certain group or a certain person likes to do things a certain way, and it's not a contradiction to the Word of God, fine. But don't judge them because of that. That's what we'll get into a little bit more.

This little diagram I have on the bottom is the law of works, as Martin Luther likes to call it, leads to self-righteousness. It's if I do this and I do that, then I'm good in God's eyes. It's the law of faith, which leads then to works of grace. I think that's what James is talking about. If you have faith, show me your works. If you don't have the works, I don't think you've got the faith, because the law of faith produces works of grace, which you can't do, and I can't do. But as we see in Romans, there's all these gifts that we have that God uses us for. The fact that some people excel in certain things and were never trained

for it, “Well how can that be?” Well that’s the Holy Spirit working and changing us, making us into something that we couldn’t be ourselves.

***Audience Member:** Would you say [UNCLEAR] is there a...there is a fine line between legalism and knowing proper doctrine. You also need to be wise and accepting what’s preached what is the [UNCLEAR] for a church or a denomination.*

Yeah. There’s nothing wrong with, I think, denominations, per se. It’s when they start to focus on the rules that then they get off track. And if they keep on that path, then they get to become a cult, and they’re really no longer a true part of the church. We know that happens in the church, because there are weeds that grow up among the grain. But we need to focus on the Word to make sure that we’re doing things correct. That’s why I like what Bruce refers to a lot of times is that listen to the preaching at your church. Is it all according to the Word? Is the Word being preached?

***Audience Member:** Honest people can disagree [UNCLEAR]...*

Yes. Especially when we get into habits down the road. We’ll talk about that. I like what Jerry Bridges...has everyone read is book, *Transforming Grace*? He says, “We insist that God must surely lead everyone as we believe he has led us. We refuse to allow God the freedom to deal with each one of us as individuals. When we think like that, we are legalistic.”

My wife and I both prayed to receive Christ the same night at the same time. In about five hours, it was, bingo, I knew God was with me. Everything was changed. It was very [UNCLEAR]. I said, “How are you doing?” “I’m fine.” “Well, what’s happened?” “Nothing.” So the next day, I went out and bought Bibles and stuff, “What do you think?” “Well that’s nice.” Nothing happened. Toward the end of the next month when she was in the hospital with our second child, she had a few extra days because she was running a fever, so she started reading her Bible. When she came home, she said, “Tom, what you were talking about last month, I know now. I know Jesus is my Savior.” I thought how dumb of me. Why do I think it has to be the same way that it happened to me? Why am I pigeon-holing God? We need to keep that in mind as we look at how we live our Christian lives and how we worship him.

The cure for legalism, the way to get salt into our lives, is only way, and that is by grace. I like what Paul says about grace in Corinthians, “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that was in me.” Again, as we start to mature in Christ, we understand early on...what’s grace? Grace is unmerited favor. Great! What is it? Well look how Paul talks about grace. Grace was something had changed him. It was unmerited favor. It was goods grace upon you. He looks on you because you have done nothing to deserve it. But then he changes you. Not only does he change you, he empowers you to do things that you can’t do on your own. Praise God!

A life of grace is how we get over getting these little rules that hinder us and keep us from enjoying him. Because that’s the whole purpose, that I may know Jesus Christ and the fellowship of his suffering. Why are we talking about suffering? I want to lead a Christian life. Paul never talks about anything like that. It’s that I may know Jesus and the fellowship of his suffering. He has a plan for us. We just need to step back and say, “Do your will, Lord. I’m your servant. I’m here. Thank you.”

If you look at faith in Romans 1:17, “For in the Gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last. As it is written, the righteousness will live by faith.” That’s what Habakkuk is talking about. He’s talking about the unrighteousness person has a soul that’s puffed up, and it’s all about him. But the righteous will live by his faith. Paul talks about that and says he’ll live by faith.

If we look at Matthew...let's get back to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:16-18, "¹²So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. ¹³Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." As you go down to verses 16 and 17, "¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit," so that to do anything in your life that was worthwhile, that would be considered good fruit. It's not you; it's God. It's Jesus through the Holy Spirit producing that good work in you. We need to keep that in focus.

These rules we set up, some can be important. Some are Scriptural. Others are preference. I can't think of the verse that St. Augustine says about that. Does anyone remember it? Those things that are...

Audience Member: ...essential to unity.

Say it again.

Audience Member: In essential, unity; in non-essential, liberty; in all things charity.

Yes. So it's love is the driving force in our belief, and to give people slack. Not slack when it contradicts the Bible, but when it isn't according to the little unessential things that we add in. Can you go to church on Saturday evening? Well, it's got to be Sunday, doesn't it? I don't think Jesus is keeping score that way. Some might disagree. The main thing is your focus on Jesus, and are you going, not to get a gold star, but are you going because you love him, or you want to be used by him, or you're serving others. That's the main thing.

We know that love is the big driver. For in Christ Jesus, as Paul writes in Galatians, for in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. You can take a look at and say well, let's take a look at baptism. I know people who were baptized as infants, were raised, have a belief in Christ, and they wanted to join a certain fundamental church. The fundamental church says, "Well you're not a Christian yet. You haven't been water baptized the way we do it." "What do you mean?" So is that important? If you go back...

Ted: They say it is.

They say it is. Yes.

Ted: [UNCLEAR] Bruce said if he had, in charge of a church, if he had a person who came who was baptized as an infant, you were required to get re-baptized. [UNCLEAR]... So I mean, these things are not, these things, we talk about absolute essentials, convictions, opinions and preferences, and so it slides around in that area because there are groups that believe that is an essential.

Yes. I don't want to get into an argument, but that's where I think a lot of...

Ted: [UNCLEAR]...

Yeah, because it's not the water baptism that's essential, it's the spirit baptism. Every Gospel says... John the Baptist says he will come after me and will baptize you with the spirit and with fire. It's that circumcision of the heart that then brings in women as well as men. The circumcision was not a part of the deal that God made with Abraham saying, "If you get circumcised you're one of my guys." He

said, “You follow me, you do this,” and after a while, about the second or third time, he said, “By the way, I want you to get circumcised—you and all the males in your family and all the male servants.” It’s a sign of the covenant. That’s why I go back to the Anglican definition of baptism. It’s an outward physical sign of an inward and spiritual grace. If I’m wrong, correct me please.

Audience Member: We don’t have time. {LAUGHTER}

Thank you, Lord. Let me get on to Romans 13 because here is what we really are, and we’re in a position of death. Paul talks in Romans 13:8-10, “⁸Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Today’s society, we think love is an emotional feeling, “Oh, I love her.” No, “I’m really attracted to her.” Love is not how you feel; love is what you do. Love is based upon your actions, and as a Christian, your actions are motivated by the Holy Spirit as a means of grace. Love does no harm to a neighbor; love is the fulfillment of the law.

As Paul states that each one of us will give an account of ourselves so to God, we had better start thinking of our fellow believers, especially to those who are weak. Continuing in Romans 14:13-18, “¹³Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way. ¹⁴As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. ¹⁵If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. ¹⁶Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.”

Audience Member: I just wanted to say that I believe that what we have to recognize is with salt, we are [UNCLEAR] change the flavor [UNCLEAR]...as you said earlier, I think we have to recognize that the Pharisees, if you will, they [UNCLEAR]...and we represent salt, which is the grace of God which [UNCLEAR]...and if we come in contact with those people, we are to change, we are to let our light shine before them and that way that salt will change the flavoring, if you will, of how they’re thinking, because that’s what we have to do [UNCLEAR] we’re charged to [UNCLEAR]...

It’s consistent with our actions. Yes.

Audience Member: I think, too, [UNCLEAR] motivation, because you can’t stop their [UNCLEAR]...the grace actually drives you to obedience but out of a different motivation. Motivation is changed for blessing God, and actually, maybe keeping some of those laws, but not out of a spirit of earning something or self-worth, but out of a spirit of I receive this and I’m going to share that saltiness because the motivation comes from. Often some people stop and say they have grace and then dismiss all the warnings Paul said about you really shouldn’t.

That’s a good point because it’s the law, as it was written, it not to be thrown away, but it’s there, and the more you know of the law, the more you understand man, I’m so far from it. I really need God. Even after I’ve been saved 10 years, 20 years, and so forth, I know more, I need more. I depend upon God for everything. The opposite way is like the Pharisees. Remember the Sabbath; keep it holy. Well let’s make up rules. So they get 613 rules for keeping the Sabbath. Wrong. Love your neighbor. Love God.

Ted: *I guess I'd like to say something good about the Pharisees. I always think the Pharisees get beat up. Actually, I think the Pharisees were on the right track because the Pharisees understood the holiness of God and the need to satisfy their holiness. I think our problem today is not so much legalism, it's antinomianism. It's not that we're not...there wasn't maybe you could say [UNCLEAR] were legalistic, but today that's not the problem because everybody's a law to themselves. One time there was a sense that you can do this or that and this is not appropriate, [UNCLEAR] these religious rules. That's not really a concern of most modern man. Most modern man is concerned with being an autonomous individual who calls his own shots and own laws.*

You make a good point, Ted, because...

Ted: *The Pharisees on the right track. They were seeking to satisfy God's holiness. It was just impossible to do it that way. But at least they were, saw that that was the issue. Modern man does not see that as an issue.*

And God would say they missed the boat because they were trying to do it themselves.

Ted: *Of course.*

They were trying to show God how good they were.

Ted: *But I'm just saying the Pharisees were in better shape in terms of their approach than with modern man.*

Well we have that big problem in the church today where we're not going to worship, but we're going to be entertained or performed or we've narrowed down what we believe so we include everybody. It's nothing like it's supposed to be. We're lukewarm. Don, did you have something to say.

Don: *No, I was disagreeing with what Ted said.*

Well let's wrap it up here.

Audience Member: *I'm reminded of Bruce Bickel's comment that a good works has to have an intent to glorify God. If your intent is to glorify God, it's not a good work, it's just an average work, it's some kind of work, but it's not necessarily good.*

And it doesn't have to be perfect.

Audience Member: *That's a reflection of the Pharisees attitude. Their interest was not in glorifying God and they were kind of off track.*

It was a good bad work as Bruce would say.

Audience Member: *I hear the word good a lot in everything that's being said. In Romans 12:2, it says, "Prove what is good and acceptable. Transform the mind to recognize good." God has defined what is good.*

That's right.

Audience Member: *And he's defined what is evil. And man needs to line up with God on good and evil.*

Where man defines good, 613 different laws. Right? Man takes it upon himself to define good, where God has already defined good. When he created government, he said the government is to condone good and punish evil. Very simple.

In closing, just look at St. Augustine says is right along with what you're saying. The law was given in order that we might seek after grace. Grace was given in order that we might fulfill the law. It's not what we do because of what we want; it's what God does through us because of what he wants. That's how we need to live our lives.

Audience Member: *Should we as Christians keep good from decaying, from being corrupt? Should we preserve the good? And when we see bad, when we see evil, should we recognize it, too? And warn, be the light and warn?*

Yes.

Audience Member: *As Christian individuals in society?*

That's what we were talking about last week. Preserving power of salt. We need to be that.

Audience Member: *We need to be the salt.*

Yeah.

Audience Member: *Its stops the decay.*

That's right.

Audience Member: *And warns when we see it.*

Very good.

Bill: *That brings to mind is we're not to try to be salt and light; we already are.*

That's right. It's God's work. It's not ours. Thanks guys. Let's pray for a moment and then go our way today. Father, we thank you that we have your Word as our guide, and that we have grace inside of us, that your Holy Spirit is using us to build your church, to show Christ to the world, to fulfill the law as you would have us do that. Help us on our way today, to our jobs, to our families, to what we may be doing, that we might be thinking about your grace in our lives and how you are using us for the glory of your kingdom, and may that day of returning Jesus Christ come soon and may be anxious to have him come back and restore his kingdom here on earth. We thank you so much. In Jesus' name. Amen.