

What did Jesus mean by salt losing its saltiness?

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot" (Matt. 5:13 NIV)

The salt in those days was not refined like the Morton Salt we have today, but was a poor quality rock salt. Salt in Israel came from the rock salt found by the Dead Sea. Because it was crudely gathered, earth and other impurities were collected with it into a bag. If the salt got wet and dissolved, the insoluble bits of rock would remain. It didn't take much moisture to dissolve the salt and leave behind a bag of useless tiny stones.

Once most of the salt content was lost it was no longer useful. However, it couldn't be tossed into a garden or a field because the remaining salt would ruin the soil. The best place for it to be disposed of was in the street, where it was "trampled underfoot" by pedestrians.



It's interesting that Jesus went on to say (in the Sermon on the Mount), "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces" (Matt. 7:6). The "dogs and hogs" are unbelievers who do not appreciate what you give them and consider it worthless.

Followers of Christ are the salt of the earth, but if we compromise our beliefs, our distinctiveness as disciples will be watered down and we'll be ineffective in influencing others. As a result, our testimony will be "trampled under their feet."

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