

## On the Implication of Salt and the Meaning of Suffering for Christians in *The Bible*

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### Abstract

In *The Bible* Jesus compares Christians to the “salt of the earth”. That means Christians should have the quality of salt. Therefore the essay will, from the basic properties of the salt contained, explore what life character and demeanor Christians should have as the “salt of the earth”, to play a full role in the construction of a harmonious society in China and ultimately bring about the transformation of the society.

**Keyword:** Salt; Implication; Suffering; Harmony

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### INTRODUCTION

In general, salt is refined out through very good methods of crystallization. It undergoes hardships before it becomes pure, square and upright salt. It melts and dissolves itself into water so as to be useful and beneficial seasoning. In *The Bible* Jesus compares Christians to the “salt of the earth”. That means Christians should have the quality of salt. Therefore the essay will, from the basic properties of the salt contained, explore what life character and demeanor Christians should have as the “salt of the earth”, to play a full role in the construction of a

harmonious society in China and ultimately bring about the transformation of the society.

### 1. THE BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SALT: TO MELT ITSELF

Salt, only when melted, and die, can play a role. Just take a bowl of soup, sprinkle some salt in and one can see the salt disappear, melted. This method of experiment makes one understand the nature and the operation of salt: melted, lost, dead. Similarly, in food or wherever the salt is scattered, it melts in order to play the role of the “salty” taste. Imagine if a piece of salt is scattered into the food, it does not want to melt, does not want to lose it; it can not play the role of “seasoning”. The only way for salt to play a role is to be melted, to lose itself. Only when salt is dissolved, disappears, can it play a role. Therefore, it is soluble. In any object or any body, it is easy to melt itself. By completely immersing in the inside of an object it can be corrodible and become enjoyably. Christians as “the salt of the earth” should have the characteristics of being “soluble”. Only when Christians are willing to melt them, pay and sacrifice themselves in the social collective, are they able to play their own roles. In *The Bible*, the great significance for the reason that Christians are likened to salt lies in this: to deny them, suffer, sacrifice and pay. The following is, from the cultural point of view of *The Bible*, to explore the intrinsic link between salt and the salt people - Christians.

#### 1.1 The Refinery of Salt

Salt can be divided into four kinds: sea salt, lake salt, well salt and mineral salt. Of them, there are at least four salt production processes generally required for sea salt. Regardless of which type of salt in the process of production processes the preparation of the processes is relatively numerous and the process is also quite special and scientific. In general, salt will be “tempered”

thousands of times and suffer countless hardships, meet the idea of the salt producers, through the evaporation of water, impurities removing, precipitating into the crystals. At last it becomes valuable materials for use and spices.

### 1.2 The Color of Salt

Salt is white, square and upright. *The Bible* requires Christians to have the color and shape of salt so as to have the “white” heart and honorable behavior of salt. The purpose of this instruction is to love with the love issued by the pure heart, the conscience of the honorable and sincere faith. The apostle Paul warned the Christians to keep the purity of heart - they have no sin, no evil, do not envy people; do not hate people, but to “love your neighbors as yourselves”. Only when they eliminate evil from the heart can they become white as snow both inside and outside. Just as Jesus said to Peter: whoever has bathed (the washing of the soul), as long as his feet are washed (for the secular filth is removed), is completely clean (for the souls of the body are clean).

### 1.3 The Shape of the Salt

With the color of salt, they should also have the shape of salt, to be Christians of correct behavior, walking in bright as the bright children of light. Paul taught Christians “to be dignified in action like during the day”. If a man has a pure heart, he is bound to have the correct behavior and will naturally be away from all these incorrect behaviors as “reveling and drunkenness”, “lust and lasciviousness”, “rivalry and jealousy”. Jesus calls out Christians to be salt because He wants them to be the social role models, with their correct behaviors to guide and “exemplify” the worldly people so that they can be recognized as the disciples of Jesus. A theologian summarizes this effect in very vivid language: “The behavior of believers is the bible of the non-believers”. That is the truth believers should act out especially when sufferings come. Christians who are clean inside will not be “contaminated”, but always maintain a “correct behavior”, like salt which will not be “corroded” by the outside.

### 1.4 The Function of Salt

Jesus said to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth. If the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? Thenceforth as it is good for nothing, it will be thrown out and trampled.” It means that Christians should have the style of salt, so as to be worthy of “the salt of the earth,” the glorious and sacred title. Salt refining processes means asking them to be sculptured and refined and undergo the painful process of being tempered and honed, to maintain moral integrity, not to be corrupted by sin, to have the good conduct and good quality of Jesus Christ, like the salt is removed its impurities, to experience brewing and recrystallization to become valuable so as to be used. For Christians, that is to have their own self-desires, their sins crucified, remove impurities from the soul, utterly destroy the filth of soul, and finally become refined and purified

as white as salt. They are like salt, preventing corrosion (not attracted by the world’s temptation), having the world crucified, that is, “The world has been crucified to me, - The world can no longer be attractive”, “I have been crucified to the world - The world is no longer tempted”, so they do not covet the enjoyment for the body. They, like salt, are not only not subject to the corrosion from the outside world, but also are able to resist the temptation of fame and fortune, are the same as the salt “seasoning”, so that the world around them is meaningful, tasteful and indispensable. Only in this way, can they move from a worldly Christian, to a carnal Christian, into a spiritual Christian fully to be complete finally. So they are, first, like salt, experiencing being refined. Meanwhile they should also be the spirit of salt - melted, dissolved into water and completely sacrifice them as a tangible bulk crystal of salt is put and dissolved into water and becomes flavored spices. Though salt has flavor, only those placed in the salt and dissolved in water, are truly able to achieve the value of salt. As a person, when he is only integrated into social groups and does not plan his personal interests, he is courageous to give up himself to sow love in groups for the sake of others, and sacrifice him so as to realize the true value of a person. From apostolic times until today, Christians have grown and thrived by relying on the seasoning function of Christians. When the group is in conflict and discord they, as Jesus said, forgive “not only seven times, but seventy-seven times”, for “seven” in *The Bible* stands for “completeness”. Forgiveness completely and thoroughly is done from the depths of the soul, not just a talk, a cope-with, a psychological comfort, but a 99.9% kind of forgiveness. Even if (in the eyes of humans) it is suffering, everyone must strive to become the salt to lose for the good words and deeds, e.g. to do what other people can not do, to tolerate what other people can not tolerate so as to become worthy of the name of the salt people.

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## 2. THE CORE SPIRIT OF SALT - TO GIVE UP

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### 2.1 To Give Oneself

The core spirit of salt is to give, to sacrifice. The spirit is “to pay without asking for anything”, “to sacrifice for the sake of taste”, “to love with no trace”. As recorded in *The Bible* about Jesus, He give his life on the cross to save all human beings. What He gave is an utterly holy, utterly beautiful and completely righteous life. In other words, the life dedication of Jesus is not different from that of salt, so He becomes an example for Christians to follow up. *The Bible* says they conduct themselves wisely toward outsiders and let their speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt. This is a pay attitude, and an attitude of self-sacrifice. It is not what one wants to get, but what he can give. They not only give but also dedicate completely, and are full of the joy to pay! This is exactly, as what Jesus said, the key to the meaning of the believers as “the salt of the earth”.

## 2.2 To Keep the Taste of Salt

The salt people should keep the flavor of salt. Only by maintaining the salty taste, will salt play the effect of salt or if the salt loses its saltiness, there is no use, neither for the food seasoning, nor becoming fertilizer in the fields but having to be strewn and trampled. The Apostle Paul warned believers: In the last days, some people have a form of godliness, but no real meaning of it. This is the picture of the salt. When the salt loses its saltiness, it appears to be still salt - white granules, powder or crystals. If it is tasted, however, one will realize that it is not salt. It has lost its savor, is no longer salty, only has the shape of the salt, but has lost the nature of salt. He also said there will be a kind of Christians who fully have only a seeming appearance to do all activities of the Christianity step by step, saying Christian speech, speaking the words of worship, but having lost its intrinsic ability and having no connotation. It seems that salt has been bad to the point where it has only its name but no substance. The Chinese see that as "nominal", nominally called salt, but not the kind having the substance of the salt and its saltiness. No matter what the manner of life is, it should be only what it seems to be so that it can have the practical effect. In real life, some of the salt people can not stick to "their saltiness" but lose "their taste". This is not difficult to understand, because the core spirit and values of the salt is complete dedication and full pay, "to moisturize things in silence", not to see one's own but others', and never expect for return. Once salt is dissolved it is never seen but dissipates without a trace. The Christians as "the salt of the earth" will have the spirit of such a dedication. It is not to put emotionally the interests of individuals, relatives, friends or small groups on the location of the core, but to practice what Jesus entrusted to the Christians, to give top priority to the interests of others to contribute their strength and dedication to meet the needs of the people of the world. What this spirit reflects and embodies is a pure and noble moral obligation for the Christian to the state, the collectives and those in need of help.

## 2.3 To Guard Against the Loss of Taste

In today's society the endlessly pay seems to make people feel tired. When tired of pay they complain that: "It seems I have paid enough. I have given enough of my life, time, money, and I do sub." Once you allow this kind of thinking, ideas and attitudes prevail, it will be easy to see that salt is no longer salt. Because if one does not want to lose their own effort, time, money, he feels it has been enough, that is, he wants to live his own life, have his own time, and do what he loves to do. But actually when he starts to think like that, he will lose his saltiness. Jesus said to His disciples to carry a cross all the time, give themselves every day and follow Him. They just do not have their own personal selfishness, as long as they indulge in the thought of Jesus as the dedication of the whole heart and the whole person. Otherwise they can not

be His disciples, for if they stop giving; stop being the salt, the salt will lose its saltiness. At the same time, the dedication of the salt must be holy and clean. Christians, first and foremost, must have pure hearts, especially when facing suffering, physical demand, and the need for their own interests in the world, the material lure of compromise, they will easily lose their saltiness, lose their own function. That is when a person, if he does not see corporate interests above his own interests, will have no "taste" and value in a group. Therefore, Christians need to have long-lasting pure heart and spirit, always and never lose the "flavor of the salt".

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## CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes the blessings and responsibilities for the Christians closely related with salt in *The Bible* because of their sufferings, and explore that the Christians as members of the society should be like salt, have the basic characteristics of the salt melted and the spirit to give or to sacrifice and give themselves infinitely for the society or a team. Throughout the ages, countless believers take it as a lamp to their feet, a light to their path, in preparing themselves for their homes in Heavens. They establish orphanages, nursing homes, offer disaster assistance, and help many vulnerable groups in need. Their good and right footsteps are always worth pursuing. They are forged like finished salt and never hesitate to give themselves to communities and groups though they encounter many difficulties in their lives. They remember what they suffer is not vain, but valuable and meaningful. For sufferings culture one's character, just as steel is iron plus fire, the land is rock plus heat or the glaciers of punch. Great figures are never forgotten by the world and great figures do not come from the comfort and pleasure, but from the misery suffered. Yet behind any suffering, there is a greater blessing.

Austin Phelps said: Suffering is a wonderful fertilizer to the roots of character. The great purpose of life is to develop character, for only the character, people can bring into eternal things. The test of purpose for suffering is to cultivate and ignite noble character. The noble character for the construction of any harmonious society is essential. So the people all over the world should do so. To learn to build the true life character as salt is built will make them able to endure sufferings, willing to pay their expenses and sacrifice, keep holy, not to hope for one's own fame but make more common contributions for families, communities and countries in the world.

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