

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. In this third series God teaches that there are 5 things that are important in the gospel message: understanding the nature of sin, knowing that judgement is a punishment for sin, believing that sin must be atoned, realising that salvation is God's gift and personally receiving Jesus into one's life. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: **A DISCIPLE REALISES THAT SALVATION IS GOD'S GIFT**.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is Ephesians 2:8-9. We will ask one another questions in order to help us to meditate on the truths written in the Bible. Let me read Ephesians 2:5-10.

Ephesians 2:5-10. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace that you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

The memorisation verse is: Salvation is a gift. Ephesians 2:8-9. "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast". Ephesians 2:8-9.

(T) **First. Salvation is by God through Christ.**

Ephesians 2:4-5 say that God saved us because of his great love, mercy and grace.

What is the difference between "love", "mercy" and "grace"?

God is love. Because God is incomprehensible, his love for sinners will always be incomprehensible and unique. Ephesians 3:19 says that God's love surpasses knowledge. It cannot be adequately defined. The sovereign nature of God's love is expressed in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, "The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you." God's mercy and God's grace are aspects of God's love. God's mercy *pities* us, while his grace *pardons* us. His mercy is his love towards us as wretches in need of pity. His grace is his love towards us as guilty and undeserving people in need of forgiveness and salvation.

(S) **What does it mean that we are made alive, raised and seated with Christ?**

Ephesians 2:5-6 say that believers in Jesus Christ have been made alive with Christ, have been raised with Christ and have been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms.

Jesus Christ died on the cross to make atonement for our sins. His resurrection from the dead and his ascension into God's presence is the proof that God accepted this atonement for our sins. It is the proof that the sentence of death for our sins has been lifted, that our sins have been forgiven and that we have been declared righteous in God's sight. The Bible not only teaches that Christ died for us, but also that we died with Christ. The Bible teaches that we have been made alive with Christ and that we have been raised into a heavenly position with Christ and as it were are seated with Christ.

Thus, *whatever happened to Christ has an immediate effect on real Christians*. When Christ died on the cross, we who believe in him died with him. His punishment counts as our punishment! His crucifixion means that our old nature has also been crucified. His resurrection to life means that we too have been made alive with a new nature. His sitting in heaven means that we also have a new position in heaven. When Christ was resurrected and exalted to the Father's right hand, we who believe in him were raised up with a new spiritual nature now and with the guarantee that our mortal bodies will be raised up later. When Christ was seated in heaven, we who believe in him have become citizens of heaven and we have the guarantee that we will inherit the new heaven and the new earth. These verses describe *our spiritual position or our legal standing before God* and his law. We who believe have died, have been raised and have a position in heaven, but only with Christ!

(T) **Second. Salvation is by grace and not by works.**

Ephesians 2:8 says that God saved us by grace. What does it mean to be saved by grace?

To be saved by grace is to be saved from sin without deserving it at all. It is to be saved from *the guilt of sin*, that is, to be completely forgiven. It is to be saved from *everlasting damnation* and given everlasting life for soul and body. To be saved by grace is the exact opposite of being saved by merit.

To be saved by works is to be saved by merit, that is, the merit that a person is supposed to build up through his own inherent goodness and strenuous religious effort. If it was possible to be saved by one's own goodness, good works and religious efforts, then people would not need God or his work of salvation. Then people would be able to boast in the presence of God and say, "I saved myself!"

However, the Bible says very clearly that we are saved by grace and not by works. God is *the Author of salvation* as well as *the Bestower of salvation*. He works salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ and he gives salvation as a free gift to those who believe. Salvation by grace means that salvation is from the beginning to the end a gift from God, which we do not deserve and which we cannot earn or buy.

(S) What is the meaning of "the coming ages" in verse 7? In Ephesians 2:7 Paul says that in the coming ages, God will show the incomparable riches of his grace. In contrast to Ephesians 1:21, which uses the singular, "The coming ages" in Ephesians 2:7 refers to all future time without limitation. It includes the present age before the second coming of Christ as well as the future coming age after the second coming of Christ. Throughout all future time, all we who are saved by God's work of salvation through Jesus Christ will be displayed as monuments of God's incomparable rich grace!

(T) **Third. Salvation is by faith.**

Are Christians saved by God's grace or by their faith? This question is answered differently by different Christians and their answer depends on how they interpret Ephesians 2:8, which says, "It is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -". All Christians believe that they are saved by the atonement work of Jesus Christ and by faith. However, they differ about how to look at faith. Some Christians say that faith is only man's responsibility. Other Christians say that faith is God's gift. Let us try to explain Ephesians 2:8-10, which deals with this question.

One. The argument of Christians that say, "faith is man's responsibility alone". They say that with regard to salvation, "grace is God's part" and "faith is man's part." They say that salvation has a condition and that condition is man's faith. They say that the word "this" in the sentence "and *this* not from yourselves, it is the gift of God", refers to salvation and not to faith. They interpret Ephesians 2:8 as saying, "It is by grace that you have been saved, not of yourselves, it is the work of God". They say that "salvation" is the work of God and the gift of God, while "faith" is the work of the believer alone. However, saying "salvation is by grace" and immediately after that say "this salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" would be an unnecessary repetition. Moreover, in the Greek language the word "this" refers more naturally to its immediate antecedent "faith" and not to "salvation".

Two. The argument of Christians that say, "faith is God's gift". This interpretation is correct. They say that with regard to salvation, "grace is God's work" and "faith is God's gift". They say that although the responsibility to believe and the activity to believe is man's responsibility, nevertheless in Ephesians 2:5-10 the emphasis is on the fact that faith is both in its initiation and in its continuation entirely dependent on God. Not only man's salvation, but also man's faith is entirely dependent on God. The apostle Paul was speaking of the "incomparable riches of God's grace" in verse 7. A proof of this incomparable grace is the fact that the Ephesian Christians are saved by grace, through faith. But then, lest the Ephesians should begin to think that they deserve credit, at least, for exercising faith, Paul immediately adds that even this faith or the exercise of faith is not of themselves but is God's gift! The responsibility to believe and the activity to believe are ours, but this is only possible after God gives us faith as an undeserved gift. Other parts of the Bible make even clearer that faith is God's gift. Philippians 1:29 says, "For it has been *granted* (given) to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him". And Philippians 2:12-13 say, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." When we have received faith as God's gift, then we have the responsibility to exercise it.

(S) **Fourth. Salvation is not by works, but for the purpose of good works.**

What is the relationship between salvation and good works? Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly says that we are saved by grace, through faith and not by works. Every work, on which any man bases his hope for salvation, is excluded. Trying to be saved by being inherently good and living a moral, virtues and religious life is excluded. Trying to be saved by making any strenuous effort to earn salvation is excluded. Even our faith is not a work that can earn our salvation. Our faith is not a good work, but a gift of God.

One. Christians are not saved by keeping the laws in the Bible. In Romans 3:20 Paul says, "No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law." Living a moral and virtues life, keeping all the commandments, will not justify any person on earth!

Two. Christians are not saved by any effort from their side. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul says, “From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through the gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God chose us to be saved. Our salvation was his eternal decision and plan. But God also worked salvation in us by giving us his Holy Spirit and faith. Every ground for boasting in ourselves is excluded.

(T) If good works do not save us, then what is the purpose of good works? Ephesians 2:10 says, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” We Christians are God’s handiwork. We are his product. We owe our entire physical and spiritual existence to him. Not only are we *created* by Christ, but we are also *recreated* by Christ. In Christ we became a new creation and apart from Christ we can do nothing. The purpose for our physical creation and spiritual recreation is to do good works. God planned that our existence as Christians should have a very important purpose on earth. Our existence should be very meaningful. Our whole life should be filled with the good works, which God prepared for us to walk in. Even the good works that we should do are not our product, but the product of God’s preparation. In Romans 11:36 Paul says that all good works are from God, through God and to God. God is the Author of good works, the Enabler of good works and the Goal of good works. Our life in its origin, in its present and in its future is dependent on God alone. To him be all the glory!

Salvation can be illustrated with a flourishing and fruit-bearing tree. The “root of salvation” is God’s grace, which he shows by giving us his Holy Spirit and faith. The “fruit of salvation” are good works, which he prepared for us to do. Christ requires that everyone who believes in him bear much fruit and lasting fruit!

(S) **POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is “Salvation is a gift” and the reference is Ephesians 2:8-9. Let us memorise the Bible verse together.

(T+S) Salvation is a gift. Ephesians 2:8-9. “For it is by grace that you have been saved.

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(S) **POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED**

Let us review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.

Series “The new life in Christ”, verses 4-5, and series “The gospel”, verses 1-3.

(T) Fellowship. 1 John 1:7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7.

(S) Witnessing. Matthew 10:32. “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.” Matthew 10:32.

(T) Nature of sin. Romans 3:23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23.

(S) Punishment of sin. Ecclesiastes 12:14. “For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:14.

(T) Atonement of sin. Romans 5:8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8.

(S) **POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www etc.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.