

(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 fourth series God teaches that there are 5 important traits in the Christian character: Christlikeness, purity, love, faith and humility. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: A DISCIPLE DEVELOPS THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER OF CHRISTLIKENESS.

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

The new Bible that verse we will meditate and memorise is 2 Corinthians 3:18. We will ask one another questions in order to help us to meditate on the truths written in the Bible. Let me read 2 Corinthians 3:18 in its context, 2 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:6 and 3:12-18. "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. ... You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. ... Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

The memorisation verse is: Christlikeness. 2 Corinthians 3:18. "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

(T) **First. Christians are a trophy of God's love, mercy and grace.**

The picture is derived from the triumphal processions of the Roman army. After a Roman general won a victory, he would hold a grand triumphal procession through the streets of Rome. His army would march before him and many would ride on chariots. He and his army would display their captives chained to their chariots as a public spectacle before the multitudes who came to watch his return.

The picture in 2 Corinthians 2:14 is of God in Christ who leads the Christians in his triumphal procession and displays them as his trophies of love, mercy and grace to the world. It says, "God, who always leads us in *triumphal procession* in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him." Romans 5:10 says that we Christians were formerly God's enemies, but God's love and grace have overcome us and have taken us captive. Now God leads and displays all the Christians to the world, not just during one passing occasion, but every day and everywhere in the world. From the time we were completely justified until the time we will be completely glorified at Christ's Second Coming, we Christians are on exhibition as a trophy of God's love, mercy and grace!

We Christians are led in triumphal procession "*in Christ*". This victorious progress in Christ, this "inclusion of the believer in Christ" is Paul's concept of the state of salvation. Only Jesus Christ is 100% accepted before God, because he only is 100% sinless and 100% righteous. But through faith in the completed work of atonement of Jesus Christ, we Christians are incorporated in Jesus Christ. From the moment we believe in Jesus Christ, God *declares* us 100% forgiven and righteous and from that time onwards *regards and treats* us as 100% righteous! We have no standing before God except in Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ, God triumphs over us and exhibits us to the world as his captives. But while Rome subdued its prisoners by brutal power and treated them with scorn, God subdued us by his love, mercy and grace and treats us with 100% love.

First conclusion. *We Christians are a trophy of God's love, mercy and grace.* Looking at us, the people of the world should see the love, mercy and grace that God has shown to us.

(S) **Second. Christians are an aroma of Christ.**

It was customary for the triumphal processions in Rome to be accompanied by the release of sweet odours from the burning of spices in the streets. 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 says, "God ... through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life."

(T) How can Christians be an aroma of life and of death at the same time?

(S) *Whenever Christians preach the gospel, it always has two effects on people: either death or life.* For those who refuse to receive the message of salvation, the consequence of its proclamation is death. But for those who believe the message of salvation, the consequence of its proclamation is life. In Luke 2:34 we read that Jesus Christ “is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel”. In John 3:36 we read, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” Thus, the force of the gospel is such that it is never preached in vain! The preaching of the gospel is effectual and leads either to life or to death. The repetition of the words “from death unto death” and “from life unto life” is probably a Hebrew way of emphasising “death” and “life”. These awful and ultimate effects of either eternal salvation or eternal damnation of the ministry of the gospel causes the apostle to say, “Who is equal to such a task?” Who is able to preach both salvation and judgement? Paul is very conscious of his own inadequacy in fulfilling such a great responsibility. He answers this in the next chapter with the words, “Our competence comes from God” (3:5).

Second conclusion. *Christians are an aroma of Christ.* By preaching and teaching the word of God openly and freely everywhere and to all people, the people of the world will smell the knowledge of Christ. Then they will also be able to choose between life and death.

(T) **Third. Christians are a letter from Christ.**

(S) Why are the Christians at Corinth called “a letter from Christ”?

(T) During the time of the apostles, the number of false apostles and false teachers began to multiply. Large numbers of sanctimonious charlatans appeared, who sought to lead a parasitic existence by imposing themselves on local churches as itinerant teachers or preachers. In order to combat these false apostles and false teachers, the churches required letters of introduction, which would recommend a particular evangelist, teacher or preacher to a local church. For example, in 1 Corinthians 16:10, Paul strongly recommends Timothy to the Corinthians in his first letter to the Corinthians. Now, these impostors, who peddled the word of God for a financial profit, succeeded in penetrating into the ranks of the Corinthian church by producing illegal letters of recommendation. In order to establish their own position and influence, they had to advertise themselves and undermine the position and influence of the true apostle to the Corinthians, Paul himself. But because the apostle Paul was the first person that preached the gospel in Corinth and also founded the church there, he became their spiritual father and they became his spiritual children, as it were. All the genuine Corinthian Christians knew Paul personally, so that he did not need an ordinary letter of recommendation to them or from them!

The Corinthian Christians themselves, who had repented of sin and had been transformed by God’s love, mercy and grace, were Paul’s letter of recommendation! The Author of that letter is no one less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself! It was not Paul, but Jesus Christ who had saved and transformed the Corinthians. The authenticity and validity of this letter cannot be denied by anybody, because the complete transformation of the Corinthians is the proof of the power of the true gospel he preached.

Likewise, all genuine Christians are letters from Christ. They are written not with ink, but with the Spirit of God. They are a letter, written not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. Letters of recommendation that are written by people with ink on external paper are temporary, fade with time and are lost to memory. In contrast, letters that are written by Christ through the internal work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people are eternal, never fade, never spoil and never perish (cf. 1 Peter 1:3-5). Christians have the handwriting of Christ on their hearts! The handwriting of Christ is the work of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Third conclusion. *We Christians are a letter from Christ.* Our transformation is Christ’s handwriting. The rest of the world should be able to read Christ’s handwriting and realise that it is Christ who has changed us so much.

(S) **Fourth. Christians are a mirror of Christ’s glory.**

(T) What is the meaning of the veil over Moses’ face?

(S) When the prophet Moses entered the tabernacle to speak with God, his face shone (Exodus 34:29-35). This was proof of the authenticity of his ministry and leadership. However, after he had spoken to the people, Moses would cover his face with a veil so that the people would not be able to see that the glory on his face was all the time fading away. 2 Corinthians 3:15 says, “Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.” The veiling of the face of Moses became symbolical of the veil of rebellion and unbelief, which covered the hearts of the Israelites and symbolical of the veil of ignorance and misunderstanding, which covered the spiritual eyes of all unbelievers. Although the Israelites saw the glory of God on the face of Moses, they were unwilling to obey the law. As a consequence, their minds were dulled and their hearts were hardened (cf. Romans 1:21). During the succeeding centuries, the Jews continued to harden their hearts and as a consequence God allowed their hearts to become hardened! Their rebellion and unbelief made it impossible for them to understand the Old Testament.

This veil can only be taken away by the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ came, the new covenant replaced the old covenant. The passing glory of Moses was superseded by the surpassing glory of Jesus Christ that never diminishes. 2 Corinthians 3:16 says, “Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken

away.” Jesus Christ is the visible revelation of the invisible God and anyone who turns to Jesus Christ will be able to see the brilliant glory of God.

(T) Do Christians “reflect” or “behold” the Lord’s glory?

(S) The original Greek text allows this verse to be translated as “*Christians reflect Christ as in a mirror*”. Then the Bible says that we Christians reflect the glory of God to other people. In that process of reflecting Christ to others, we are transformed into Christ’s likeness ourselves.

The original Greek text also allows this verse to be translated as “*Christians behold Christ as in a mirror*”. Then the Bible says that Christ reflects the glory of God to us. And as we behold Christ, we are transformed into God’s likeness. Also 1 Corinthians 13:12 says that we Christians see Christ “as in a mirror”. To gaze by faith into the gospel is to behold Christ, who is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). To contemplate Jesus Christ is to progressively be transformed into Christ’s image. The effect of continuously looking at Christ is to be continuously transformed into Christ’s image from one degree of glory to an even greater degree of glory!

While under the old covenant, *only the prophet Moses* beheld the glory of the Lord, now under the new covenant, *all Christians* behold the glory of the Lord! In contrast to Moses’ glory, which *continuously faded*, the Christian’s glory *continuously increases*! Sure enough, as long as we live by faith and not by sight, we see Christ “as in a mirror”. But, according to 1 John 3:2, when Christ returns, then we shall be like him, because then we shall see him as he is!

(T) Into which image are Christians transformed?

(S) As the Christian beholds Christ, he is continuously transformed into the likeness of God. He is not just changed back into *the image of innocence*, which Adam and Eve had before they fell into sin. He is transformed into *the pure and perfect image of God*, so that he will be without sin and also will not be able to sin any more. As the Christian keeps looking to Jesus Christ, trusting and obeying him, he is not only justified, but also continuously sanctified and finally glorified!

Fourth conclusion. *Christians are a mirror of Christ’s glory.* We reflect the glory of God expressed in Christ visibly to other people in the world. At the same time, Christ is the true mirror of God’s glory. As we Christians look at Christ, we are transformed into Christlikeness.

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

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is “Christlikeness” and the reference is 2 Corinthians 3:18. Let us memorise the Bible verse together.

(T+S) Christlikeness. 2 Corinthians 3:18. “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18.

(S) Christlikeness. 2 Corinthians 3:18. “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18.

#### (T) **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 gospel”, verse 5, and series “Discipleship”, verses 1-4.

(S) Salvation by faith. John 1:12. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12.

(T) Lordship. Romans 12:1-2. Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2.

(S) Denial. Luke 9:23. Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23.

(T) Serving. Mark 10:45. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45.

(S) Giving. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

#### (T) **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”.