

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one resource of the God of the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

In this twelfth series, the Bible teaches five truths about God's resources. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: GOD'S STRENGTH. We will meditate a new Bible passage, memorise a new Bible verse and then review the previously memorised verses together.

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

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is Isaiah 41:10.

The memorisation verse is: God's strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10. Isaiah chapter 41 may be divided into three parts: verse 1-7, verse 8-20 and verse 21-29.

(T) **First. The God of the Bible contrasted with other gods.**

One. Isaiah 41:1-7 describes God's dispute with the Gentile nations.

God challenges the nations and their gods in the courthouse of the universe. The point of controversy is about the question "Who is the true God?" Is the LORD, the God of the Bible, the only and true God, or are the gods of the Gentile nations and their religions really gods? The Gentile nations are not able to answer God. At this lawsuit, God judges the Gentile nations, especially for oppressing his people, Israel, during their exile in Babylon, and for their idolatry.

God proves his incomparable greatness by three things.

In verse 4 God says that he existed before any of the human generations were created and he still existed when the last of the human nations was created. *He is the eternal God, who survives the history of every nation on earth!*

In verse 2-3, he says that he calls and moves great rulers in the history of the world, like Cyrus, to do his will. *He uses the great military and political leaders of the world to carry out his sovereign will.* According to Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1,13, this Cyrus will subdue and destroy all the nations who oppressed God's people. He will even pursue and subdue these nations in places he has never travelled before. Thus, the LORD, who is the only and true God, will deliver his own people.

In verse 5-7, he says that the only thing the Gentile nations can do is to make new images in order to win the favour of their gods. Their idols are made by craftsmen, who have to nail the idols down to the floor so that they will not topple! In contrast to the gods of all the other nations in the world, the God of the Bible *is really the living God*, who strengthens his people, makes them useful as a threshing sledge and makes their land fruitful again.

(S) **Two. Isaiah 41:8-20 describes God's reassurance of his chosen people.**

He tells his own people not to fear what is happening in the history of this world, because God uses everything that happens in the history of the nations to accomplish his purpose. God calls a great military and political leader, called Cyrus, from his country Persia in the East and from his other country Media in the North, to conquer Babylonia, who had taken God's people into exile. God reassures his own people with three statements:

In verse 8-9, he says that *he himself has chosen them to be his chosen people*. Who is God's chosen people? God originally sovereignly took hold of Abraham and called him from Chaldea in the East. He called Abraham *his friend*, and made a covenant promise to him, saying in Genesis 22:18, "Through your offspring (seed) *all nations* on earth will be blessed". Galatians 3:26-29 teaches that all Abraham's offspring consist of *all believers* in the Old and in the New Testament. During the Old Testament time, *the believing remnant of Israel* was especially God's chosen people. But after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, *the believers from every nation on earth* are God's chosen people (1 Pet 2:9-10).

In verse 10-16, he says that *he himself will fight for his chosen people*. He will be present wherever they live. He will strengthen and help them in everything they do. And he will uphold them with his righteous right hand until he gives them the final victory. His 'right hand' is a symbol of his omnipotence and his right hand is called righteous, because by rescuing his own people from their oppressors, God is doing what is right and just. He says that his chosen people need

not fear their enemies, because God himself is holding his chosen people by the hand and is helping them. He redeems them and delivers them from their enemies. He even makes them into a threshing sledge with sharp teeth (15), so that they can be used by God to crush their enemies.

In verse 17-20, he says that *he himself will recreate their world*. He promises that in the future he will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valley. He will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs. He will put the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive trees in the desert, and he will set the pine, the fir and the cypress trees together in the wasteland (18-19). This promise is designed to comfort the believing remnant of Israel during their return from exile in Babylon. But Romans 8:18-22 teaches that this is a prophecy of the conditions of the future new earth! It ultimately refers to God's recreation of the whole world at the second coming of Jesus! It describes how the new earth will look like!

(T) Three. Isaiah 41:21-29 continues God's dispute with the Gentile nations.

God challenges the idols of the Gentile nations to prove that they are gods.

He challenges the idols to prophesy. He challenges them to tell whether they had ever made predictions that had also been fulfilled. The idols have never made any predictions about the future that have been fulfilled! He challenges them to make new predictions about what will happen in the future. They will never be able to make any predictions about what will happen in the future (22). This proves that the idols are dead gods and absolutely useless! The same is true of any god of any religion that cannot predict the future correctly. In contrast to all the gods of all other religions the God of the Bible predicted the rescue of his chosen people by the future king Cyrus more than 150 years before he actually rescued them through Cyrus in history! Isaiah prophesied before 680 B.C. and Cyrus only ruled from 539 B.C.!

He challenges the idols to act. He challenges them to do something, whether good or bad, so that people will be dismayed and be filled with fear (23). However, the idols remain silent and inactive! Although the idols have eyes, they cannot see; although they have ears, they cannot hear; although they have mouths, they cannot speak; although they have feet, they cannot walk; although they have hands, they cannot help (Ps 115). The idols are wind and confusion (29) and less than nothing (24)! Only the God of the Bible can strengthen and help and uphold his people!

(S) Second. Reasons why people are weak.

One. What are some right reasons why people become weak?

Psalms 31:10 says that sometimes people's strength fails due to the afflictions and persecutions they suffer from their enemies. They may be beaten so badly or fall ill after mistreatment that they seem like *broken pottery* (12). The same Psalm says that although God's people are persecuted and suffer, nevertheless God will show to them his unfailing love and he will not put them to shame. Sometimes God's people feel weak, because they are too tired or they are discouraged by the very difficult events that happen in their life.

Two. What are some wrong reasons why people become weak?

Isaiah 31:1-3 warns that all people who rely on a powerful nation like Egypt to help them instead of relying on God will be utterly disappointed. The God of the Bible says, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help", who rely on Egypt's military power, but do not seek help from the God of the Bible. The Egyptians are men and not God. Their armies are flesh and not spirit. When the God of the Bible stretches out his hand against Egypt and against all nations that rely on Egypt, then they will all stumble and fail!

Jeremiah 17:5-8 warns that every person that trusts in people for his strength instead of trusting only in the God of the Bible will become like a bush in the wastelands. That person will not see prosperity!

Proverbs chapter 5 warns all people not to give their strength to prostitution (9). Every person that engages in pre-marital sex and sexual immorality will lose his strength as well as the best years of his life! The sexually immoral people give no thought to how they live and to the consequences of their sin. In the end their lives are destroyed by venereal diseases (11) and their money is robbed by cruel strangers (10). Proverbs 5:21 warns that a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and the Lord examines all his paths.

Finally, 1 Corinthians 11:30 warns that every kind of sin that has not been confessed can cause weakness and sickness and even death.

(T) Third. Ways how people may gain strength.

One. Who is the Source of all strength?

The Source of all strength is only the God of the Bible, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Romans 11:36 says, "From God and through God and to God are all things. To him be the glory forever!" Revelation 5:12 says, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and *strength* and honour and glory and praise".

Through his death and resurrection, God the Father has given Jesus Christ all authority to exercise *all power* in heaven and on earth. Therefore, if anyone needs strength, he must go to the God of the Bible who has revealed himself within our creation and within our history in Jesus Christ. God who can reveal himself in the fire when he spoke to Moses, can also reveal himself in taking on the human nature in Jesus Christ.

(S) Two. God gives new strength only after repentance and faith.

In Isaiah chapter 30, God judges Israel for being *independent*. He says, “Woe to those who carry out plans that are not mine” and who form alliances with people without following the guidance of the Holy Spirit (1-2). God accuses Israel of being a *rebellious* and *deceitful* nation. They are *unwilling* to listen to God’s instruction. Instead, they say to God’s prophets, “Give us no more visions of what is right! Instead, tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions... Stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel (9-11)!” But the God of the Bible says, “In *repentance* and rest is your salvation, in quietness and *trust* is your strength (15)”. Therefore, if anyone wants to receive new strength, he must first repent from his independence, rebellion and deceit and begin to depend on the God of the Bible only. He must acknowledge that without the God of the Bible he is nothing and will never have real strength.

(T) Three. God gives new strength to those who wait (hope) on him.

In Isaiah 40:28-31 he says, “The Lord gives strength to the weary... Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall. But those who wait (hope) on the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Because the God of the Bible himself is inexhaustible in his power, he is the Source of all power and strength for those who wait (hope) on him. “To wait” on the Lord is to continually *believe* that God is able to do what he said. It is to refuse to waver or complain, but instead to *expect* that the God of the Bible will do what he promised in his own good time. To renew strength means to exchange his weakness for new strength from the Lord. Therefore, if someone wants to receive new strength, he must acknowledge his lack of strength and exercise patience and persistence, as well as faith and hope in the God of the Bible. No god in any other religion can give strength. Only the God of the Bible can give strength.

(S) Four. God gives new strength to those who depend on his grace.

Can God give new strength to people who have a serious weakness? In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul relates how God had given him a thorn in his flesh, which God did not want to take away. Instead, God said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”. Sometimes God allows Christians to have a thorn in their flesh, which he does not want to take away, because he has a higher purpose than healing. This thorn in the flesh is some kind of weakness or handicap with which the Christian must learn to live. It may be a physical handicap, like being cripple or blind or suffering from severe headaches. It may be an emotional handicap, like being over-exhausted (burned out) or having a weak nervous system or being easily depressed. It may be an intellectual handicap, like being illiterate or having had very little education. Whatever the weakness or handicap, the God of the Bible is not limited by our weaknesses and handicaps! On the contrary, the God of the Bible makes his power available especially to those who have such weaknesses and handicaps! Therefore, if anyone with a weakness or handicap wants strength, then he must depend on the grace of the God of the Bible, who revealed himself in the prophets and in Jesus Christ. The God of the Bible will not disappoint him!

(T) Fourth. Purposes why God gives strength.

The Bible reveals several reasons why God gives new strength to his people. In Mark 12:30, strength is needed *to love* God. In Philippians 4:13, strength is needed *to fulfil all the tasks* God has assigned in his kingdom, but especially *to have the right attitudes, like contentment* in any and every situation. In Hebrews 12:4-13, strength is needed *to resist temptations and to struggle against sin*, and *to endure the hardships of life*. In 1 Peter 4:11, strength is needed to use one’s spiritual gift *to serve* other people. In 2 Thessalonians 2:17, strength is needed *to do every good deed and to speak every good word*. In 1 Thessalonians 3:13, strength is needed *to live a blameless life amidst persecution*. And in 1 Corinthians 1:18-29 and 2 Timothy 4:17, strength is needed *to proclaim the gospel* to all the nations in the world.

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

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is “God’s strength” and the reference is Isaiah 41:10. Let us memorise the Bible verse together. Then let us take turns to say that part of the verse alone without looking at the Bible or notebook.

(T+S) God’s strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you.

(T) God’s strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you.

(T+S) God’s strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

(S) God’s strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

(T+S) God’s strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you.

(T) God’s strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you.

(T+S) God's strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10.

(S) God's strength. Isaiah 41:10. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10.

(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 "God's greatness", verses 3-5 and series "God's resources", verses 1-2.

(S) God is sovereign. Ephesians 1:11-12. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:11-12.

(T) God is all-knowing. Hebrews 4:13. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:13.

(S) God is all-powerful. Jeremiah 32:17. "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you". Jeremiah 32:17.

(T) God's presence. Hebrews 13:5-6. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you". So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6.

(S) God's Word. Psalm 119:105. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105.

(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 build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".