

LESSON 10 Evidence of Spiritual Transformation

Together we have looked at pictures, progress, and proofs of Christian maturity. This last unit provides a measuring rod to determine our progress. Maturing believers will look and act like Jesus Christ and will demonstrate more of His character and works.

Perhaps you are discouraged when you see this goal and your human limitations. To measure ourselves by the standard Jesus Christ achieved on the earth seems hard. Cheer up! God not only sets the standard for us but also helps us reach the goal. It is God's greatest delight to transform and empower weak people.

lesson outline

Strength in Weakness

God's Glory

God's Power

Doubt and Self-Condensation

Doubting Our Ability

Doubt Caused by Satan's Accusations

Transformation through the Holy Spirit

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify the believer's sources of strength and weakness.
- Use 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 to point out what the believer is to boast of.
- Use Ezekiel 2:2 to explain what enabled Ezekiel to stand before God.
- List four things Timothy was told to practice so his progress could be seen.
- Identify a major source of doubts, and state how you can overcome them.
- Explain how Acts 17:6 shows believers were spiritually transformed.

learning activities

1. Read the lesson.
2. Do the exercises in the lesson development, referring as needed to the textbook.
3. Take the self-test at the end of this lesson, and check your answers carefully. Review those items answered incorrectly.

key words

accusation

achieved

attitude

boast

condemnation

record

lesson development

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

Objective 1. *Identify the believer's sources of strength and weakness.*

Birds fly much higher when moving to a distant place than when in local flight, and they do so for three reasons. First, by flying higher they have a better view of their direction. Second, they are above the birds that would prey on them. Third, thinner air at a higher level helps them fly faster.

Believers can learn a lesson from this. When discouraged, we must rise to God's view of life and receive spiritual sight and strength to reach God's goal for us.

Perhaps you are already saying, "I don't believe I can ever achieve spiritual maturity. I am so weak. How can I ever be like Jesus?" That attitude can be a start in the right direction. A believer who recognizes personal weakness will be better able to see his or her need for God.

Application

1 Name the believer's source of strength.

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God's Glory

Objective 2. *Use 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 to point out what the believer is to boast of.*

Humans apart from God try to show their independence by rebellion and sin. They exalt human wisdom and depend on human strength. This is the story of every civilization. But God chose Christ's sacrifice and faith as the means of right standing with Him. This insulted the world's thinking.

In 1 Corinthians 1:21, Paul says the message of the gospel is a so-called *foolish* message. It is a message of dependence

upon God, and the world rejects this. The truth of this message is significant. Read it carefully:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:26–31)

Application

2 According to 1 Corinthians 1:26–31, the believer’s wisdom is to be

- a) Christ Jesus.
- b) the Bible.
- c) his or her mental growth.

3 According to 1 Corinthians 1:26–31, the believer is to boast of

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The life of the apostle Paul is an example of God’s revelation of His glory through human weakness. Although well educated, Paul had many pressing weaknesses. One of them was a painful physical ailment which he asked God to remove (2 Corinthians 12:7–8). God responded to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). The apostle then wrote:

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9–10)

Like the apostle, let us glorify the Lord in all we do and say.

God's Power

Objective 3. Use Ezekiel 2:2 to explain what enabled Ezekiel to stand before God.

Another example of God's power through human weakness is in the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. He was a thirty-year-old priest when God called him. His nation was defeated and being destroyed. Ezekiel's priesthood was almost useless as he was working as a captive on a farm. But Ezekiel could still hear God's call to him in these circumstances. God revealed His power in the midst of a storm (Ezekiel 1:4). Let us read Ezekiel's description in Ezekiel 2:1-3:

He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day.



The name God used for Ezekiel, *Son of man*, draws attention to Ezekiel's humanity. This name appears frequently in the book of Ezekiel as God constantly reminds Ezekiel that He wants to work through his humanity. The name *Ezekiel* means, "the one whom God will strengthen" or "he whose character is personal proof of the strengthening of God."

Application

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- 4 Read Ezekiel 2:2 and answer the following question: How was Ezekiel able to stand before God?
- Ezekiel got up through his own power.
 - God's command itself raised Ezekiel.
 - God's Spirit entered Ezekiel and raised him up.
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Ezekiel's personality was transformed by God's power. It was through that transforming power alone that the former weak and confused Ezekiel could affirm: "I did as I was commanded"

(Ezekiel 12:7). God received the glory from Ezekiel's long and fruitful ministry.

DOUBT AND SELF-CONDEMNATION

Many people God has called to serve Him have felt unable to do it. Such a feeling in itself is not wrong. But sometimes that feeling is a lack of faith in God. Such a condition sometimes leads a weak Christian to condemn himself. God knows our weaknesses. *When He chooses us, He gives us the strength and power to do His calling.*

Doubting Our Ability

Objective 4. *List four things Timothy was told to practice so his progress could be seen.*

In Exodus 3, God called Moses to serve Him, but Moses doubted his own ability. When God miraculously spoke to him from the burning bush, Moses answered, "Here I am" (v. 4). God told Moses that He was sending him to the king of Egypt so that he could lead His people out of the country. Moses questioned, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (v. 11). God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain" (v. 12). Then, Moses made a series of excuses, including the fact that he was not a good speaker. The Lord asked him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Exodus 4:11–12). But Moses said, "O, Lord, please send someone else to do it" (Exodus 4:13). At this point, the Lord became angry with Moses.

Note God's patience in this interaction with Moses. God understood Moses' doubt and was willing to work with him. However, Moses' arguing with God became an issue of lack of faith. Finally, Moses did go to Egypt, and each day his confidence grew as God helped him. He became a great leader for God.

Perhaps during this course you have realized your purpose as a believer, and Christian maturity seems difficult. You might even doubt your ability, but when God calls us He promises to help. God made every part of us and knows us better than we know ourselves. Therefore, we must overcome our inabilities by exercising faith in God. He is the God of power, and His glory is shown as weak people do His great work.

Application

5 Read 1 Timothy 4:11–16. According to verse 12, Timothy was advised not to let anyone look down on him because he was

- a) not handsome.
- b) young.
- c) weak.

6 In 1 Timothy 4:13–15, Timothy was told to practice four things so that his progress could be visible. List these four practices in the order they are mentioned.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)



Doubt Caused by Satan’s Accusations

Objective 5. *Identify a major source of doubts, and state how you can overcome them.*

After the Israelites had been in captivity for 70 years, God made it possible for them to return to Jerusalem. Joshua, the high priest, was chosen to be the spiritual leader. (*Do not confuse this Joshua with the one who brought the people into the promised land.*) When God’s people got to Jerusalem, they started to rebuild the temple. But shortly thereafter they became discouraged and quarrelsome.

Only the foundation was laid before the people gave up the work, and no work continued on the temple for 16 years. Then,

God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to motivate the people to continue construction on the temple.

Application

7 Read Zechariah 3. Who stood ready to accuse Joshua?

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Through a vision, Zechariah learned that the filthy clothes he saw on Joshua represented the mistakes of Joshua and the people. Nevertheless, the angel of the Lord answered the charges of Satan: “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?” (Zechariah 3:2). Then, the dirty robes were taken away and Joshua was given new clothes, among which was a turban that symbolized God’s authority. In verses 6–7, Joshua is told to walk in a new relationship with the Lord.

This Scripture reveals how Satan works on our weaknesses. He calls them to our attention and accuses us. This leads us to doubt ourselves and become discouraged. Notice, however, the example in Zechariah 3. God will take care of our weaknesses and doubts when we stop listening to Satan’s accusation.

Satan’s accusing of the believers is called *condemnation*. To condemn means “to declare someone unfit or unworthy” or “to judge and pronounce someone guilty.” Romans 8:1 tells us, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” And John writes, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:18). Satan tries to judge and destroy us, but God will transform us and give us victory if we allow Him.

One picture of God’s final victory over Satan is in Revelation 12:10–11. Read the record:

Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our

God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

Application

8 Mark (1), (2), and (3) in front of the three things in Revelation 12:11 that brought the believers victory over Satan.

These three powers are available to us today. Remember the truth of the Scripture, “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Objective 6. *Explain how Acts 17:6 shows believers were spiritually transformed.*

The people God worked through were much like us. Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Ezekiel, Mary, Paul, Timothy, and many others were among them. These were people with everyday weaknesses, but God’s Spirit entered and transformed them. The book of Acts tells of such transformation. The disciples were scattered and discouraged at the crucifixion of Jesus. Even the resurrection did not solve their problem. But when the Holy Spirit came upon them as Jesus promised, things changed. They worked and witnessed with great power.

Application

9 Read John 14:26. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the

- a) Counselor.
- b) Healer.
- c) Power.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the

earth.” The book of Acts records the story of transformed people, who did not have formal training in ministry. These were also people with particular weaknesses. Yet, under the power of the Holy Spirit, they changed the world! Many of them were strong even while suffering and facing death.

We have the same opportunity to bear witness to Jesus Christ through the power of the divine Helper. When we are weak, God’s Spirit can empower us as we move toward the goal of maturity.

self-test

SHORT ANSWER. Write the answer to the question on the lines provided.

1 What is the advantage of viewing our lives as God views them?

.....

TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space if the statement is true. Write **F** if it is false. Then, change the FALSE statements to make them true.

.....2 The believer must boast only of what the Lord has done.

The believer must boast

.....3 Moses protested to God that he was a poor speaker.

Moses protested to God that he was.....

.....4 Condemnation means to declare someone fit and worthy.

Condemnation means to declare someone..... and

.....

MATCHING. Following are illustrations of the basic concepts in this lesson. Match each illustration (5–9) to the concept it fits best (a–e) by writing the correct letter in the blank before the illustration.

- **5** The apostle Paul, a powerful Christian worker, had weaknesses, including a physical ailment which he asked God to remove.
- **6** God called Ezekiel “Son of Man” frequently in the book bearing Ezekiel’s name.
- **7** Although the Lord listened patiently to Moses’ excuses, He became angry when Moses continued to resist His plan for him.
- **8** Timothy was advised not to allow people to reject him because of his youth.
- **9** Satan stood ready to accuse Joshua (the High Priest during Israel’s restoration) when Joshua was shown in dirty robes before the angel of the Lord.
- a) God understands our weaknesses, but He expects us to do His will by faith in His power.
- b) God wants to remind us of our humanity that we might depend upon His power.
- c) Satan tries to condemn believers because of their failure.
- d) The shortness of a believer’s spiritual experience should not keep him from being an accepted example to other believers.
- e) God’s power is strongest when the believer is weak.

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter of the correct answer.

- 10** Satan stands before God and works against the brethren as
- a) a true reporter.
- b) an accuser.
- c) a common serpent.

Be sure to complete your unit student report for Unit 3 and return the answer sheet to your GU instructor.
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answers to the study questions

- 1 God is the source of strength.
- 7 Satan
- 2 a) Christ Jesus.
- 3 the Lord.
- 8
 - 1) The blood of the Lamb
 - 2) The testimony they proclaimed
 - 3) Their willingness to give up their lives and die
- 4 c) God's Spirit entered Ezekiel and raised him.
- 9 a) Counselor (or Helper).
- 5 b) young.
- 6
 - a) Public reading of Scriptures
 - b) Preaching
 - c) Teaching
 - d) Not neglecting the spiritual gift within him

For Your Notes
