

Lesson 10

Evidence of Spiritual Transformation

I'm sure you are glad to be near the end of this course. There is always a feeling of joy when we finish something important. I have enjoyed leading you through this study. It has been a journey that has taken us through much of the Bible. Christian maturity is a subject very close to God's heart.

Together we have studied pictures of Christian maturity, progress in Christian maturity, and proofs of Christian maturity. This last unit has given us a measuring rod to help us determine our progress. Those who are maturing as believers will begin to look and act like Jesus Christ. They will have more and more of His character and His works in their lives.

Perhaps you are a bit discouraged when you see the goal. It seems so difficult. We are but human beings. To measure ourselves by the standard that Jesus Christ achieved in His life on earth seems hard. Cheer up! God not only sets the standard for us, but He helps us reach the goal. It is God's greatest delight to take weak people and show His power of transformation through them. This is the great hope of our calling in Jesus Christ.

lesson outline

Strength in Weakness

God's Glory

God's Power

Doubt and Condemnation of Self

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:

- Explain how God's glory is seen through humanity's weakness.
- Use specific examples to describe results of God's transforming power.

learning activities

1. Read the lesson in this textbook.
2. Answer the study questions in the lesson development, referring as needed to the textbook. Check your answers with those given at the end of the lesson.
3. Take the self-test at the end of this lesson, and check your answers carefully. Review any items answered incorrectly.

4. Review Unit 3. Then complete the *Student Report for Unit Three* found at the back of this textbook. Send the answer sheet to your ICI office or instructor.

key words

accusation	boast	specific
achieved	condemnation	
attitude	record	

lesson development

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

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

People who study birds tell us that they fly much higher when moving to a distant place than when in local flight. We are told that there are three reasons for this higher flight. First, by flying higher, they have a better view and more easily find their direction. Second, they are above the birds that would prey on them. Third, thinner air at a higher level helps them fly faster. All of these reasons help birds to reach distant goals.

Believers can learn a lesson from this. When people are filled with doubts, they look at life from such a low level that they cannot see the way. Then Satan brings temptation. It is only when believers rise to the purer air of God’s view of their lives that they receive spiritual sight and strength to reach God’s designed goals.

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 very attitude can be a start in the right direction. When individuals feel strong in their own abilities, they will tend to lean upon those abilities. Believers who recognize their weaknesses will be able to better realize their need to look to God for help.

1 Name the believer’s sources of strength and weakness.

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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.*

We have seen that humanity apart from God tries to show independence by rebellion and sin. Humankind exalts human wisdom and depends on human strength. This is the story of every civilization. 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 calls the message of the gospel a “so called ‘foolish’ message.” It is a message of dependence on God. The unbelieving world rejects this. The truth of this message has an important relationship to this study. Here, we present a very important passage of Scripture on this subject. Read it carefully:

Now remember what you were, my brothers, when God called you. From the human point of view few of you were wise or powerful or of high social standing. God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise, and he chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful. He chose what the world looks down on and despises, and thinks is nothing, in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. This means that no one can boast in God’s presence. But God has brought you into union with Christ Jesus and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. By him we are put right with God;

we become God’s holy people and are set free. So then, as the scripture says, “Whoever wants to boast must boast of what the Lord has done.” (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

- 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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God desires that humankind will glorify Him—not the instrument He uses. That is hard to do when the instrument is strong or beautiful. This should encourage most of us because we know we cannot do anything in ourselves. Thus, God finds a great opportunity to reveal His glory through us.

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 an unknown ailment that he asked God to remove (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). God told him, “My grace is all you need, for my power is strongest when you are weak” (2 Corinthians 12:9). The apostle then wrote:

I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ’s power over me. I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

God desires that we may glorify Him. Let us try to 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 on his feet before God.

Another example of God’s revelation of His power through human weakness is the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. He was a thirty-year-old priest when God called him. His nation was defeated and being destroyed. The very purpose of his own life (the priesthood) was almost useless. He was working as a captive on a farm. In Ezekiel 1–2 we read about the call of God to him in these circumstances. It came in the midst of a terrible storm (Ezekiel 1:4). This must have represented the very confusion Ezekiel felt in his life. God revealed His power in this storm. Let us read Ezekiel’s own description in Ezekiel 2:1-3:

When I saw this, I fell face downwards on the ground. Then I heard a voice saying, “Mortal man, stand up. I want to talk to you.” While the voice was speaking, God’s Spirit entered me and raised me to my feet, and I heard the voice continue, “Mortal man, I am sending you to the people of Israel.”



The name God used for Ezekiel, *mortal man* or *son of man*, is very interesting. It is a strong word that draws attention to Ezekiel’s humanity. The name appears very frequently in the book of Ezekiel. God is constantly reminding 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.” Today, we would describe such a person by saying, “If that man ever does anything good, the people will know that it had to be God!” Ezekiel is a helpful example to us through both his name and his actions.

4 Read Ezekiel 2:2 and answer the following question: How was Ezekiel able to stand on his feet before God?

- a) Ezekiel got up through his own power.
- b) God's command itself raised Ezekiel.
- c) God's Spirit entered Ezekiel and raised him up.

The personality of Ezekiel was transformed by God's power. It was through that transforming power alone that the former weak and confused Ezekiel could affirm, "I did what the Lord told me to do" (Ezekiel 12:7). God received the glory from Ezekiel's long and fruitful ministry.

DOUBT AND CONDEMNATION OF SELF

Many of the 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 the God who has made us. Such a condition sometimes leads weak Christians to condemn themselves (that is, declare themselves guilty). God knows our weaknesses. *When He chooses us, He gives us the strength and power to do His calling.* If we allow doubt and condemnation of self to keep us from fulfilling God's purpose, we lack faith in Him.

Doubting Our Ability

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

In Exodus 3, we read that God called Moses to serve Him. Moses doubted that he was able to serve God. When God miraculously spoke to him from the burning bush, Moses answered, "Yes, here I am" (v. 4). God told Moses that He was sending him to the king of Egypt so Moses could lead His people out of the country. But Moses immediately answered, "I am nobody. How can I go to the king and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (v. 11). God said, "I will be with you, and when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will worship me on this mountain. That will be the proof that I have sent you" (v. 12). Then Moses made a series of excuses: "What can I tell them?" (v. 13); "Suppose the Israelites do not believe me" (Exodus 4:1); and finally, "No, Lord, don't send me. I have never been a good speaker, and I haven't become one since you began to speak to me. I am a poor speaker, slow and hesitant" (v. 10). The Lord said to him, "Who gives man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? It is I, the Lord. Now go! I will help you to speak, and I will tell you what to say" (vv. 11-12). But Moses said, "No, Lord, please send someone else" (v. 13). At this point, the Lord became angry with Moses.

It is interesting to note God's patience in this story about Moses. God understood his doubt and was willing to work with every issue. However, when Moses continued to argue with God, it 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 begun to realize your purpose as a believer. There is a high call from God on your life. The goal of Christian maturity seems difficult. As you grow in God, you realize there will be more duties. You might even doubt your ability as Moses did, but when God calls us, He promises to help. God made every part of us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. *We must overcome our own inability through exercise of faith in God.* He is a God of power, and His glory is shown as He uses the weak to do great work.

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 There are four things that Timothy was told in 1 Timothy 4:13-15 to practice so his progress could be seen by all. List them 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.*

Many times Satan influences us to doubt ourselves. He is, as we have seen, the opposer of the believer. He works to bring the believer into confusion. He accuses and points out weaknesses. Some Christians become discouraged under Satan’s attacks. They believe his lies. What he tells them confirms their own feelings about themselves, and they condemn themselves.

After 70 years in captivity, God made it possible for His people to go back home to Jerusalem. Joshua was chosen to be the spiritual leader. He was the high priest. (Don’t confuse this Joshua with the Joshua who first brought the people into the Promised Land.) When God’s people got back to Jerusalem, they immediately started to rebuild the temple. That was good news! They soon became discouraged, however. There was opposition and grumbling. After the foundation was laid, the people gave up the work for 16 years! Finally God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to get the people moving again. In a special vision, God told Zechariah what one of the major problems was.

7 Read Zechariah 3. Who stood ready to bring an accusation against Joshua?

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8 Read Zechariah 3:3 again. What was there about Joshua of which Satan could accuse him?

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The filthy clothes Zechariah saw on Joshua seem to represent the mistakes that Joshua and the people had made. Nevertheless, the angel of the Lord answered the charges of Satan: “May the Lord condemn you, Satan! May the Lord, who loves Jerusalem, condemn you. This man is like a stick snatched from the fire” (Zechariah 3:2). Verses 4-5 tell us that the dirty robes were taken away. New clothes were given Joshua to wear. These included a turban, which was a symbol of authority with God. In verses 6-7, Joshua is told to walk in a new relationship with the Lord. Then the last verses in this chapter tell of God’s blessing on that relationship.

This Scripture passage reveals to us how Satan works on our weaknesses. He calls them to our attention. He accuses us. This causes us to doubt ourselves and become discouraged. Many times, believers just simply give up. Notice, however, that God had the dirty robes taken off and the clean ones put on. *God will take care of our weaknesses and doubts when we stop listening to the accusations of Satan.*

What Satan does in accusing believers is called *condemnation*. *Condemnation* means “to declare someone unfit or unworthy” or “to judge and pronounce someone guilty.” Romans 8:1 clearly tells us, “There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus.” John said, “Whoever believes in the Son is not judged (condemned); but whoever does not believe has already been judged, because he has not believed in God’s only Son” (John 3:18). Satan tries to judge us and get us to look at our weakness. In this way he keeps us from victory. God will transform our personalities by His divine power if we will but let Him do it.

One of the pictures the Bible gives us of God's final victory over Satan is in Revelation 12:10-11. In this passage we find these important words:

Now God's salvation has come! Now God has shown his power as King! Now his Messiah has shown his authority! For the one who stood before our God and accused our brothers day and night has been thrown out of heaven. Our brothers won the victory over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the truth which they proclaimed; and they were willing to give up their lives and die.

9 Use a pencil to mark a (1), (2), and (3) in front of the three things in Revelation 12:11 (above) that brought the believers victory over Satan.

These three powers are available to us today. Remember the truth of the Scripture verse, "The Spirit who is in you is more powerful than the spirit in those who belong to the world" (1 John 4:4).

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

The Bible is such an encouragement to us. Most of the people whom God chose to work through were much like us. Moses, Joshua, Ezekiel, Paul, Timothy, and many others were among them. They were very human and had normal weaknesses, but God's Spirit entered their lives 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.

10 Read John 14:26. Jesus told His disciples that the Father would send the Holy Spirit. What did Jesus call the Holy Spirit?

- a) The Helper
- b) The Healer
- c) The Power

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the disciples, "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The book of Acts records the story of transformed lives. The disciples were simple men. They did not have great formal training. They were men with their own specific weaknesses. Yet under the power of the Holy Spirit, they "turned the world upside down." They were strong even while suffering and facing death.

11 "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6, KJV) was said of believers who were being helped by the Holy Spirit. How does this quotation from Scripture show these believers were spiritually transformed?

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We have the same opportunity to bear witness to Jesus Christ through the power of the divine Helper. We know the goal of our Christian life, but we are too weak to reach it by our own strength. When we are weak, God can become strong in us. His Spirit can cause us to stand on our own feet. His Spirit can enable us to do the task He sends us to do. His Spirit places the nature of God within us. That nature is moving us toward the goal of Christlikeness. That goal is true Christian maturity.

self-test

SHORT ANSWER. Briefly answer the following question in the space provided.

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

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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 is supposed to boast of what the Lord has done.

The believer is supposed to boast of

.... 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. It is to judge someone innocent.

Condemnation means to declare someone and.....

It is to judge someone

MATCHING. Read the instructions carefully and write your answer in the space preceding each question.

5-9 Below you will find several illustrations of the basic concepts in this lesson. Match each illustration (left) to the concept it fits best (right).

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5 The apostle Paul had weaknesses, including an unknown ailment that he asked God to remove, but he was a powerful Christian worker. | a) God understands our weaknesses, but He expects us to do His will by faith in His power. |
| 6 God called Ezekiel “mortal man” very frequently in the book bearing Ezekiel’s name. | b) God wants to remind us of our humanity that we might depend on His power. |
| 7 Although the Lord listened patiently to Moses’ excuses, He became angry when Moses continued to resist His plan. | c) Satan tries to bring the believer into condemnation because of the believer’s failure. |
| 8 Timothy was a young man who was advised not to allow people to reject him because of his youth. | d) The shortness of a believer’s spiritual experience should not keep him or her from being an accepted example to other believers. |
| 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. | e) God’s power is strongest when the believer is weak. |

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter before the best answer to the question.

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

Be sure to complete your *Student Report for Unit 3* and return the answer sheet to your ICI office or instructor.

answers to the study questions

- 1** God is the source of strength, and human nature is the source of weakness.
- 7** Satan
- 2 a)** Christ Jesus.
- 8** He was wearing filthy clothes.
- 3** what the Lord has done.
- 9** 1) The blood of the Lamb
2) The truth which they proclaimed
3) They were willing to give up their lives and die.
- 4 c)** God's Spirit entered Ezekiel and raised him up.
- 10 a)** The Helper
- 5 b)** young.
- 11** They were spiritually transformed through the Holy Spirit.
- 6 a** Public reading of Scriptures
b Preaching
c Teaching
d Not neglecting the spiritual gift within him