

OVERCOMING FAILURE (1)

Introduction: **Read:** 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. **Context:** Paul Defends His Apostolic Authority (10:1--13:10). The apostle challenges those who discredit him (11:16--12:13). He cites his: (1) "pedigree" in the Jewish religion (11:22), (2) "suffering" for the cause of Christ (11:23-33), and (3) his visions and revelations (12:1-10).

A. PAUL: "WHEN I AM WEAK THEN I AM STRONG."

1. Paul realized that he had been blessed by the revelations he had received and there was great danger in his exalting himself above others.
 1. Consequently, "... *a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure*" (12:7b)
 2. In time of temptation God promised saints that He "*will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10:13)..
2. Though Paul petitioned the Lord 3 times to remove the thorn, God said, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*"
 1. Mark Paul's change of attitude, "*I will rather boast of my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*" (12:9).
 2. He then concludes: "*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong*" (12:10). Compare 12:9 with 1 Corinthians 15:10.
3. As an apostle, Paul had **miraculous** power (see 10:11-13), but does not the same principle, "when I am weak, then I am strong" apply to all Christians today? Apparently so, for God works His will in the lives of His children.

B. MOSES: WEAKNESS TURNED INTO STRENGTH.

1. Moses is only Bible character who is called "meek" (Num. 12:1-3; KJV; ASV).
2. Many confuse "meek" with "weak." Moses was at first weak, but not meek.
3. Meek (πρα_της or πρ_ότης; *prautes*) is *lit.* "strength under control" and is translated "gentleness, mildness, meekness" (Thayer under πρ_ότης).
4. During his early life Moses was anything but "strength under control."
 1. Was weak and evasive when God commissioned him (Exod. 3:11--4:17).
 2. Greatest weakness was his inability to control his temper--hot tempered.
 - 1) Killed the Egyptian taskmaster who abused a Hebrew (Exod. 2:11-14)
 - 2) Threw down the tablets of the decalogue in anger (Exod. 32:15-20).
 - 3) Struck a rock in anger instead of speaking to it (Num. 20:2-13).
 3. The people through their constant murmuring and complaining provoked the anger of God and Moses (Num. 11:1-3). Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-11.
5. Yet, in time Moses learned self-control and patience in the wilderness while God refined both he & the children of Israel in the wilderness (Num. 14:33).

Sunday Morning

May 31, 1998