

## OVERCOMING FAILURE (4)

**Introduction:** Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Our present series is an extended examination of Paul's announcement: "*When I am weak then I am strong.*"

1. Paul writes that in order that he might not exalt himself above others, God sent him "*a thorn in the flesh. . .to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure*" (2 Cor. 12:7b). Though Paul petitioned the Lord three times to remove the thorn, God assured him, "*My grace is sufficient for you.*"
2. We've studied O.T. characters in whom God changed weakness into strength.
  - a. Though called "*meeek*" Moses had a temper (Exod. 2:11-14; 32:15-20).
  2. Though the "*father of the faithful*" (Gal. 3:9), when it came to Sarah Abraham showed lack of faith in God's providence (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-17).
  - c. Though addressed, "*You mighty man of valor,*" Gideon was anything but brave when he was hiding his crops from the Midianites (Judg. 6:11-15).

### E. PETER: FROM INSTABILITY INTO STRENGTH.

1. Peter's name was first Simon (Gr. "hearing"); the Lord changed his name to Cephas (Aramaic for "rock" or "stone") (John 1:42). Peter was unstable.
2. Regarding Peter's unstableness, *Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (p. 642) offers the following adjectives to describe Peter: eager, impulsive, ener-getic, self-confident, aggressive, daring, unstable, fickle, weak and cowardly.
3. Yet there was something in Peter that the Lord saw and could use: His natural aggressiveness made him a natural leader. Peter's love for and associations with Christ molded him to a man of stability, humility (Luke 22:31-32).
4. Development is evident in Matthew 16:13-19 when Peter spoke for the 12. The Lord molded Peter (and the other apostles) in two steps: (1) Who is Jesus? and (2) What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God?
  - a. Viewed Jesus as "King" at feeding of 5000 (Matt. 14:13-21; John 6:15).
  - b. Saw him as "Son of God" when he walked on the water (Matt. 14:33).
  - c. Peter called Jesus the Christ (Messiah) the Son of God (Matt. 16:16).
  - d. Having come to that realization, the Lord next trained the 12 what "Messiah" means: "I must die" and "you must die" (Matt. 16:21-27).
  - e. For the next six days the apostles were confused until the Lord takes them up on a mountain where He was transfigured (Matt. 17:1-5). The trans-figuration transformed Peter's life (*cf.* 2 Pet. 1:16-18). "I am not fickle!"
5. Through the molding of the Lord, Peter eventually came to identify himself with Christ the true Rock (see also: 1 Cor. 3:11; Isa. 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:4-5).
6. Thus Peter fulfilled Christ's prediction concerning him: "*...He said, 'You shall be called Cephas' (which is translated, A Stone)*" (John 1:42; Gal. 2:9).

**Conclusion:** Are we allowing Christ to change our weaknesses into strengths? Remember Paul's words, "*When I am weak then am I strong*" (2 Cor. 12:10).