

1. Next week, 6/27, we'll meet in the choir practice room.
2. We won't meet in July or August. We'll resume 9/12, after Labor Day. Hope to see you then!
3. Next week's LifeLine is Psalm 150! (I know! It's 6 verses!) *DON'T miss this!*

LifeLines 6/20/22

Today's Scripture: 1 Verse

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

WHY WE'RE HERE

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All scripture is inspired by God & is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, & for training in righteousness, so that every-one who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

CONTEXT

In Paul's letters to the Galatians & Colossians, he was responding to crises in both churches. In contrast, Philippians is a short, very personal letter of appreciation & encouragement to his favorite church. This letter was probably written during his two years of house arrest in Rome.

In addition to our LifeLine, this book has many other famous scriptures probably familiar to many of you: **I thank God every time I think of you (1:3); He who began a good work in you will see it through until the day of completion (1:6); To live is Christ & to die is gain (1:21); Do nothing from selfish ambition or deceit (2:3); Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus (2:5); Work out your own salvation with fear & trembling (2:12); But this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind & straining forward to what lies ahead, I press onward to the goal of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus (3:13-14); I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, & I know what it is to have plenty...I have learned the secret of being well-fed & of going hungry, of having plenty & of being in need (4:11-12).**

Paul greets the church at Philippi & its leaders, thanks them for their faith & encourages them in their faith & devotion (they were his strongest supporters). He thanks them for the monetary gift they sent by Epaphroditus. He tells of his imprisonment & how God is using even that to further the Kingdom. He warns them to beware of corrupt Christians. He tells them of his desire not to be put to shame in his life *or* his death. He expresses appreciation of their concern over Timothy's illness. He bids them remain steadfast in their faith & imitate Christ's humility, & he gives a concise resume in 3:4-6. Some of you may have memorized much of **Chapter 4**. Throughout the letter is a constant thread of his rejoicing, reasons to rejoice & encouragement of them to do the same thing. He is ever their cheerleader, leading by example.

Even though the theme is Christian joy, Jesus Christ is the subject of the book of Philippians! Paul points to Jesus as the ultimate example of finding joy through humility. Paul's goal was to emulate Christ, the Source of his strength! He accomplished all he did with an amazing level of contentment, whatever the circumstances. In fact, he could have said, "I can live through all circumstances through Him who strengthens me."

Again, many don't grasp the true meaning of this popular verse, so it is frequently misused & even flippantly used.

DIFFERENT VERSIONS

NIV

I can do *all this* through Him who gives me strength.

ESV

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

NLT

For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

CEV (Contemporary English Version)

Christ gives me the strength to face anything.

GNT (Good News Translation)

I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.

MSG

Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.

SELAH

BREAKING DOWN THE VERSE

I can do all things... First of all, Paul doesn't mean we can do *anything*! Most people think this means the ability to accomplish *things*, as in *isolated instances* – Get the promotion, dunk the basketball, lose 20 pounds in 2 weeks. *Things* like this usually spring from selfish motivation. Using our verse for this purpose is a huge stretch. Another thing we must consider is the focus on “I”! *I can do all things* is what some people assume. Rather than look to Christ's power, they assume they can use their own or that Christ will sanction their use of their personal power.

While it's true that messages of faith & hope frequently cite this verse, some people assume they can accomplish *anything* because God will give them supernatural ability. Some assume they can do anything they want or live any way they want because they believe all things must be acceptable if they believe in God. Some believe this means if they pray really hard, God will grant their desires. A supernatural faith won't suddenly overcome us & grant our petitions. God won't give us a blanket endorsement to do anything we wish. These interpretations sound good, but they make assumptions about motivations & goals.

The word “things” is misleading. Paul's meaning is about so much more than *things*. It's deeper & more complex. It's a definitive statement of faith! First, consider the word, “do.” What could be synonyms for *do* in our context? Accomplish? Survive? Endure? Prevail? Make it through an ordeal? Live to tell about something in order to encourage someone else who's going through the same thing?

In our verse, Paul is referring to the many different “*seasons*” of his life, not just specific incidences (stoning, beating, imprisonment), occurrences, or *things*. He is speaking of the summation of all the experiences he endured & survived *and* the reason he was able to do so.

Now, put those concepts together. What seasons have we prayed (for ourselves or others) to be able to endure & survive? Pregnancy? Chemo?

Grief? Substance, physical or mental abuse? Aging or dying loved ones? Recession? Rearing a special needs child? Wars? Relocation? Rebuilding after hurricane or tornado damage? Loss of income? Loneliness? Divorce? What else? We can't solve any of these issues on our own. In all humility, how do we endure? In Whom do we find our strength?

Through Him who strengthens me... Paul states that because of the strength of Christ, & his belief & confidence in the risen Lord, he was able to *endure every season* he had faced.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Think of Jesus’ request of the Father to “let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what You want” (Matthew 26:39). Now, think of Paul’s request for the thorn in his side to be removed (2 Corinthians 12:7-10), & God’s response that His grace was sufficient for him. Paul even stated in verse 10, “Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, & calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.” Jesus went to the Father to sustain Himself in difficult seasons. In the same way, Paul’s purpose in every *season* of life was to rely, in all humility, on His Savior & His Savior’s strength. He modeled this for his followers. He assured them they could also “do” all seasons of life in the same manner.

If Paul had ever tried to lean on his own strength, cunning, manipulation or knowledge to endure & survive what he experienced, he couldn’t have done it *to the glory of God*. (Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 for a detailed list of trials Paul faced.) It is God’s power that enables us to endure & overcome. It is God’s grace. Grace is the divine influence, the enabling power of God’s Spirit that gives us strength to survive whatever trial or tribulation comes our way.

Paul met each season, each trying time & each time of blessing with a spirit of gratitude & thanksgiving! God, in Christ Jesus, fulfilled his needs. Christ gave Paul *overcoming power*! He gives the same to us today. Bottom line - The power of Christ gets true believers through tough times.

SELAH

RELATED VERSES

Nehemiah 8:10c, Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (Only vs. 1 is printed here), For everything there is a season, & a time for every matter under heaven.

Psalms 18:29, By You I can crush a troop, & by my God I can leap over a wall. (This is also quoted in 2 Samuel 22:30.)

Psalms 23:4, Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod & Your staff – they comfort me.

Psalms 91:14-16, Those who love Me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know My name. When they call to Me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them & honor them. With long life I will satisfy them & show them My salvation.

Habakkuk 3:17-19a, Though the fig tree does not blossom, & no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails & the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold & there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength;

Matthew 11:28-30, Come to Me, all you that are weary & are carrying heavy burdens, & I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, & learn from Me...for My yoke is easy...

Luke 1:37, For nothing will be impossible with God.

John 15:5c, “Because apart from Me you can do nothing.”

2 Corinthians 3:4-5, Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God.

Ephesians 3:20-21, Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church & in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever & ever. Amen. (LifeLine, 2/14/22)

Ephesians 6:10, Finally, be strong in the Lord & in the strength of His power.

Philippians 4:9, Keep on doing the things that you have learned & received & heard & seen in me, & the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:19, And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:12, I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He judged me faithful & appointed me to His service,

1 Peter 5:7, Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

1 John 4:4b, For the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

How does our attitude compare to Paul's? Are we following Christ as closely as he did? Does our life show evidence of God's Spirit living in us as his did? What's our *attitude* when we have plenty or when we lack? Do we remain thankful? Do we allow sufferings to alter our contentment, faith or spirit, or do we continue to share & proclaim God's goodness? *This verse is about maintaining our joy, contentment, faith & peace, even when life's circumstances seem impossible to bear, all because Christ is in us!*

While the Lord enables us to cope with & deal with trials & troubling times, & allows us to take refuge in Him, there are still things He will not shield us from, because *He intends for us to deal with them*. He protects us from dangers & troubles – more than we ever realize, & if we live the life

He's assigned us, & do it in joyful dependence on Him, acknowledging that His way is perfect, our lives will be rich indeed.

It is Jesus who sustains us when life feels overwhelming. When we face tough seasons that make us want to throw in the towel, give in or say, "I've had it! I can't take any more!" we need to remember Paul. Instead of dwelling on our problems & trying to handle everything on our own, we must focus on Jesus & our faith in Him, surrender our problems & trials to Him, & allow Him to take care of them. The strength of Christ makes every *season* possible to survive. Christ's strength & our decision to remain faithful & thankful will sustain us through the years of our journey.

We all face good & bad *days*. When we have confidence in Christ, as Paul did, Jesus transforms & fortifies every *season* of our lives, with incredible results. Trials *do not have the upper hand* in our lives; nor do they have the last word!

*God is still in the miracle business!
Thanks be to God & the WORD made flesh!*

*Let this verse be a LifeLine for you, &
Let's Keep Learning More!*

THE ***WORD IS*** OUR –

LifeLine!

References: insight.org; www.learningreligions.com; britannica.com; christianwalls.com; christianity.com; zondervanacademic.com; biblehub.com; tomorrowsreflection.com; blog.tms.edu; preceptaustin.org; Jesus Always, by Sarah Young, entry for June 16.