

I Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Me

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13

If God wants it done, can it be done? Does the Bible say, "With God most things are possible?" No, it says, "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23). If God tells us to do something, can we do it? I can't imagine God issuing a command that cannot be carried out. That would be like God saying, "Son, this is what I want you to do. You won't really be able to do it, but give it your best shot anyway!" That's ludicrous! Even secular research and theory has ascertained that authority will be undermined if an order is given that cannot be obeyed.

Nothing Can Keep Us from God's Will

If we can do "it," then what is the "everything" that we can do? Certainly there are some limitations. The key, as in all biblical interpretation, is found in the context. Paul says he has learned to be content in all of life's situations. In other words, the circumstances of life do not determine who we are, nor do they keep us from being what God wants us to be. No person and no circumstances can keep us from doing the will of God, which primarily is our sanctification (see 1 Thess. 4:3). It is Christ who strengthens us.

We may not be able to rearrange the external events of life, nor have we been called to, but we have the assurance that God is rearranging our *internal* world and using the external world to do it. "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom. 5:3-5). Our hope lies in proven character, not in favorable circumstances, and that is where Paul learned the secret of contentment. He stopped trying to change the world and allowed God to change him. If we all did that, the world would be radically changed.

Allow God to Be the Controller

The fruit of the Spirit is not spouse control, or child control, nor does it assure us of the ability to control the circumstances of life. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control. When we turn control of our lives over to God, we will move significantly closer to doing all things through Christ. We will stop trying to con-

trol our spouse, and start loving him or her. We will focus more on instructing our children instead of controlling them. As bosses and leaders, we will stop trying to manipulate our people and start caring for them. As employees and helpers, we will stop undermining authority and start serving with joy.

Our unbelief is the only obstacle keeping us from first being and then doing everything that God wants us to be and do. We are assured that all things are possible for those who believe. However, we can't determine for ourselves what it is we want to believe. We must believe the truth, and that's found in God's Word.

New Age Versus Christianity

New Age philosophers say, "If you believe something enough, it will become true." They argue that we can create reality with our minds. In order to do that, we would have to be gods, which is precisely what they are saying. That lie goes all the way back to the garden. "You will be like God" (Gen. 3:5).

Christianity says, "It is true, therefore I believe it." Believing something doesn't make it true, and not believing something doesn't cause it to go away. Jesus prayed for us concerning this in His high priestly prayer in John 17:15, 17: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.... Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth." We believe in God, and walk by faith according to His Word. In my book *Victory Over the Darkness*, I shared the following:

If You Believe You Can, You Can

If you think you are beaten—you are.

If you think you dare not—you don't.

If you want to win but think you can't,
 It is almost a cinch you won't.
 If you think you'll lose—you're lost.
 For out of the world we find
 That success begins with a fellow's will;
 It's all in the state of mind.
 Life's battles don't always go
 To the stronger or the faster man;
 But sooner or later the man that wins
 Is the one who thinks he can.¹

That poem has an element of truth and expresses the power of positive thinking. The Christian community has been somewhat reluctant to buy into this well-known axiom and for good reason. Thinking is a function of the mind and cannot exceed its inputs and attributes. Any attempt to push the mind beyond its limitations will only result in moving from the world of reality into fantasy. Believing something beyond what we know to be biblically true is not faith—it is presumption. And we dare not presume upon God.

Believe the Truth

The Christian, however, has a far greater potential in the power of believing the truth. Belief incorporates the mind but is not limited by it. A lot of biblical truth I believe, but I don't fully understand. Belief, or faith, actually transcends the limitations of the mind and incorporates the world that is unseen but not unreal. With the infinite God of the universe as the object of Christian faith, what can stop the Christian if God wants something done? Couple that with the fact that it doesn't take any more ef-

fort to believe that one *can* than to believe that one *cannot*. The issue is choosing truth and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, instead of believing the enemy's lies. Because you are God's child, you can confront doubts and unbelief:

Why should I say I can't when the Bible says, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13)?

Why should my needs not be met knowing that "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19)?

Why should I fear when the Bible says, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7, *NKJV*)?

Why should I lack the faith to serve God knowing that "God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3, *NASB*)?

Why am I weak when the Bible says, "The Lord is the strength of my life" (Ps. 27:1, *NKJV*) and "People who know their God will display strength" (Dan. 11:32, *NASB*)?

Why should I allow Satan to have supremacy over my life, for "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4)?

Why should I accept defeat when the Bible says, "Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14)?

Why should I lack wisdom when I am "in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God" (1 Cor. 1:30) and "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously" (Jas. 1:5)?

Why should I be depressed when I can recall to my mind and therefore have hope, "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22,23)?

Why should I worry when I can "Cast all [my] anxiety on him [Christ], because he cares for [me]" (1 Pet. 5:7)?

Why should I ever be in bondage, for "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17) and "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1)?

Why should I feel condemned when the Bible says, "There is...no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1)?

Why should I ever feel alone when Jesus said, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20) and "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb 13:5)?

Why should I feel accursed or the victim of bad luck when the Bible says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us,...that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13,14, NKJV)?

Why should I be discontented when I, like Paul, "Have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Phil. 4:11)?

Why should I feel worthless when "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21, NASB)?

Why should I ever have a persecution complex when the Bible says, "If God is for us, who can be against us" (Rom. 8:31)?

Why should I be confused since "God is not the author of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33, NKJV)?

Why should I feel like a failure when "In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37, NASB)?

Why should I let the world bother me when Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NASB)?²

Don't Believe the Lie

The biggest obstacle I encounter in helping people find their freedom in Christ are the lies people believe. Satan is the father of lies. Jesus is the truth. The Holy Spirit is first and foremost the Spirit of truth (see John 14:17), and He will lead us into all truth (see John 16:13). When I share my faith, people sometimes say, "I just can't believe that." And I respond, "Of course you can, if I believe it, can you believe it? Belief is a choice."

One of the most common lies I encounter is, "I can't do that. I'm not good enough. I don't have the ability." I always expose it for what it is, a lie from the pit. The truth is, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength," (Phil. 4:13). Here is a little poetic encouragement:

Someone said that it couldn't be done,

But he, with a chuckle, replied:

"That maybe it couldn't, but he would be one

Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried."

So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin

On his face. If he worried he hid it.

He started to sing as he tackled the thing

That couldn't be done, and he did it!
 Somebody scoffed, "Oh, you'll never do that,
 At least no one ever has done it."
 But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,
 And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
 With the lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
 Without any doubting or quiddit,
 He started to sing as he tackled the thing
 That couldn't be done, and he did it!
 There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
 There are thousands to prophesy failure,
 There are thousands to point out to you, one by one,
 The dangers that wait to assail you.
 But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
 Just take off your coat and go to it,
 Just start to sing as you tackle the thing
 That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.³

I started this chapter by asking, "If God wants it done, can it be done?" and "If God asks you to, can you do it?" The answer is, "Absolutely!" And if God gives you grace, can you be content with His will in any situation? Yes, because He is there with you and you are in Him. You can say, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13).



DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER, thank You for revealing my true identity in Christ. Thank You for showing me from Your Word how You are meeting my needs of acceptance, security and significance in Christ. I feel like I need to say, "Lord, I believe,

help me in my unbelief." Teach me to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. I want to be a child of God who lives by faith. I renounce the lies of Satan that say I can't, and I announce the truth that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I pray for the renewing of my mind so that I can prove that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect for me. I love You with all my heart, soul and strength. You are the Lord of the universe, and the Lord of my life, now and forever. In Jesus' precious name I pray. AMEN.

Notes

1. Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), p. 114.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-117, adapted.
3. Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959), "It Couldn't Be Done," published in *Family Book of Best Loved Poems* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1952).