

Bible Class**11th October 2023****I can do all things Through Christ that Strengthens me!****Philippians 4:13**

Dear Brothers and Sisters

The NET Bible has a useful translation of this verse and the context, which is good to set the scene:

10 I have great joy in the Lord because now at last you have again expressed your concern for me. (Now I know you were concerned before but had no opportunity to do anything.) 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in any circumstance. 12 I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. 13 I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me. 14 Nevertheless, you did well to share with me in my trouble.

The example that the Apostle Paul gives, is the necessity to have a willingness to have acceptance in the circumstances of which we find ourselves, in meekness and confidence. Much of the circumstances we find ourselves are actually outside of our control. What country we live in, skin colour, where we were born, whether our parents were unbelievers, whether we are male or female, financially stable, or very poor, whether we are in advancing years, or still early in our life.

Some circumstances are in our control, we can choose the company we keep, the books we read, the pastimes, and methods of relaxation. We can choose how to earn money, and how to spend it. Choose how to live, choose to do good or do evil.

The happy rejoicing words- *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* is limited in its application. All things? Will we be strengthened to continue in sin? Of course not. Paul is saying that whatever situation he

encounters, if he exercises the patience of Jesus Christ, and the outlook, and attitude of Jesus, accepting that God is in control, and that our life direction is being fashioned in accordance to the aspirations of the gospel, then the imprint and effect of the Word of God, the words of Christ have such a positive effect, that we are able to endure the difficult times, and not become complacent in the easy times. However, such success is only promised if achieved *through Christ*. The way in which it is possible to be strengthened through Christ, is not through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as some Evangelical Christians claim. They interpret emotion, and a wave of hyper motivation from pumping music and raucous preaching as being some supernatural force or strength from Jesus Christ, to enable them to be invigorated to reach new heights as it were. However, that interpretation is not correct. What they feel is not the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit gifts being distributed, in these last days. 1 Corinthians 13 makes it clear that the gifts of the Holy Spirit would cease in the times of the Apostle as he writes that letter, and that instead it would be replaced by that which is perfect – the Divinely Inspired Word of God , in it's complete collection of the Canon of Holy Scripture, concluded with the last – the Revelation given to the Apostle John.

The strength therefore which can be derived from Christ is attained from the reading of this Word. The Word of God, is the only agent available today to impart the strength necessary to overcome sin, to do good, to be motivated to be godly, and be Christ like. As we read the Word, it is the Inspired Word, God breathed, the very intention and will of God, the thoughts and His ideas, which come through the pages. Even when we read the negative aspects of human nature it is because the Author, the Father of Lights has decreed that it is necessary for us to have that mirror, that balanced reflection of human nature for us to be educated, and be aware of what we are capable of. When we read Scripture, we are reading the very same words which inspired Jesus Christ himself as he walked to Calvary. The words which he spoke, were also the same which he had read from the Old Testament, the Law, Prophets and

Psalms. Jesus said, the Words which I speak, they are Spirit and they are Life. Jesus was strengthened by the Word, and strengthened his disciples by the same Word. It is true he was also strengthened by the angels at critical points in his life – but they were the same agents who were sent to the prophets and writers of the scripture he read, and came from the same source. The Father in heaven. Our God, to whom we pray through Christ Jesus. It is then a promise that if we live our lives as Christ, who fulfilled the Word – the Word made flesh – that same Word, which enabled Christ to overcome sin, and have the victory over death, that same Word, is capable once understood and put into practice, of transforming our lives, - by faith and obedience. That is the strength that can be obtained through Christ. The All things – doing ‘things’ in sin, are of no value, are empty, useless, and do not count. The things of which the Apostle is talking relate to the ‘things’ concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ,- Acts 8:12, 19:8, 24:14. Other ‘things’ such as the rudiments of the world- the achievements of man, his enjoyments, hobbies, poems, culture, music -even earning a living etc while all being harmless are time fillers, and amount to very little, when the body is a mouldering in the grave. The ‘things’ of which Paul is talking about the ‘things’ which he wants to DO, which he so expects Jesus Christ to strengthen him is the Gospel in action – but ‘doing the things’ of the gospel is particularly difficult. Those fruits of the spirit, which are so easy to talk about such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22,23) are not easy ‘things’ to do consistently, and even harder ‘things’ for our personalities to be known by. – For example sister xxxx may be known as that gentle sister, but is she known as the patient sister. The loving brother, is he temperate? It is very difficult to have all of these ‘things’ as gifts at the same time, and in order to reach and attain these ‘things’ the strength of Christ is the only possible route. It is to obtain his strength, by drinking of the same fountain of Jacob, the same Gospel, and that is only possible by reading,

understanding, and meditating upon the 'things' we read – and then we will be motivated by the act of a good conscience to finally DO it! John 15:7

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Brother Terry