

I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH *Christ* WHO STRENGTHENS ME

PHILIPPIANS 4:13



Reflection:

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Amidst his trials and sufferings, the apostle Paul penned some of the most inspiring words of faith and resilience found in the New Testament. From the confines of his prison cell, he wrote to the Philippians, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). These words echo with a profound sense of contentment and victory, revealing Paul’s unwavering trust in God’s sovereignty even in the face of adversity.

Paul’s life was marked by hardship and suffering. He faced persecution, imprisonment, and physical afflictions throughout his ministry. Yet, despite the trials he endured, Paul remained steadfast in his faith, finding contentment in Christ alone. In his letter to the Philippians, he writes, “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” (Philippians 4:11-12). It is in continuation that Paul declares, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

This verse is familiar to most Christians, yet regrettably, it’s often misunderstood and misused. Paul did not intend for the Philippians to view this verse as a magical solution to be used anytime. Instead, he emphatically declares the truth that he can do everything under God’s will with the strength that Christ gives him. Isn’t he speaking about the need for a harmonious interplay of human effort and divine grace that should be the norm in our lives?

‘I can do’ is a bold assertion that Paul makes. Yet this confidence comes from the assurance of the hidden power of Christ strengthening him. The context of this verse is a life of contentment in all circumstances. Paul chose to anchor his contentment in his relationship with Christ. He understood that true contentment does not come from external comforts or material possessions but from the assurance of God’s presence and providence.

Paul’s example challenges us to re-evaluate our understanding of contentment. In a world that often equates happiness with success, wealth, or comfort, Paul reminds us that true contentment transcends earthly circumstances. It is a deep-seated peace that comes from knowing and trusting in God’s faithfulness, regardless of our circumstances. Some of us may find our contentment waning in times of hardship, while others may experience it fading in times of prosperity. Each of us possesses areas of abundance and areas of lack. Thus, we all require the illuminating guidance of God’s wisdom to perceive both our abundance and deficiencies as opportunities for spiritual growth.

In various aspects of our lives as Jesus Youth – be it health, wealth, ministry, or relationships – there might be areas where we yearn for abundance. With God’s grace, we are empowered to pursue growth or to gracefully accept our current situations. Genuine contentment arises from this ongoing collaboration with His grace. However, it is crucial to distinguish authentic divine contentment from deceptive complacency stemming from idleness or neglect. Failing to address our limitations while working alongside God makes us susceptible to the enemy’s tactics, aimed at exploiting our vulnerabilities with anxieties, grievances, or comparisons. Christian living embodies a divine-human partnership, where both God and humanity contribute fully – a beautiful synergy between grace and human effort!

Learning to be content in our abundance can also be a challenge. It is all too easy to become arrogant and disdainful toward those who may be less intellectually endowed, financially weak or emotionally immature. Moreover, some individuals may feel discontent despite their wealth, perpetually comparing themselves to those with greater riches.

Pause awhile and examine your heart. Are you truly content with your life? Know that your contented life can bring light and hope in a discontented world. God is a loving Father who desires His children to be joyful and contented in all circumstances. So be assured of His presence and providence and make Paul’s confident declaration your own. You can – with Him!

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