

CALL TO DUTY

VOL. 4, ISSUE 3

THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)

I have been going to Honduras on mission trips for fourteen years. I try to go every year to visit two congregations, in Villa de San Francisco and Guadalajara. I love the members of those churches and enjoy my time with them.

Two years ago, I started experiencing some strange symptoms. Nothing major, but troubling, nonetheless. My trip to Honduras went as planned, but I had a bit of trouble walking in the rough terrain. Upon returning to the US, I went to my doctor who referred me to a neurologist. The diagnosis- Parkinson's Disease (PD). I immediately started prescribed medications and researched more about the disease.

Last year I was able to complete my trip to Honduras with no issues. This year, however, I was hit with another medical issue as I planned a trip there in July. I had a detached retina in one eye and needed immediate surgery. That put my plans on hold for a few months. I will travel to Honduras in October or November.

At some point, PD will probably inhibit my ability to travel overseas, but it will never lessen my resolve to serve the Lord. I can still serve in many ways. How do I know that? Because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil 4:13, NKJV). Just as Paul preached Christ when things were going well or in hardship, I can drive on with the mission of spreading the gospel in good times or bad. While I am no Paul, I am a Christian that believes in the power of Christ.

~~ Tony



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Strength Through Christ

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13, NKJV)

How do we know that Paul could do all things through Christ who strengthened him? The answer is found in the surrounding context of Philippians 4.

In Philippians 4:8, Paul instructs Christians to meditate on whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. By focusing on these things, Christians find encouragement and strength to face life's challenges. Dwell ing on what is good helps push out discouraging and sinful thoughts that can weaken our faith.



Paul learned to be content regardless of his circumstances. Whether he had much or little, whether he experienced comfort or hardship, he trusted God. When troubles came, he knew that his faith in Christ would sustain him and that God was at work in every situation.

This helps us better understand Paul's statement in Philippians 4:13. His strength did not come from himself but from Christ. His confidence rested in God, not in his own abilities. Christ gave him the strength to endure every circumstance and remain faithful.

Paul expressed this same mindset in Philippians 3:8 "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

Compared to knowing Christ, the things of this world had little value to Paul. His focus was not on earthly gain but on his relationship with Christ and the hope of heaven. Because Christ was his greatest treasure, he could endure both blessings and hardships with contentment.

Therefore, Philippians 4:13 cannot be fully understood apart from its context. Paul's strength came from fixing his mind on Christ, valuing Him above all else, and trusting Him in every situation.
May we learn the same lesson. No matter what comes our way, our faith in God will give us the strength to face it, endure it, and overcome it through Christ.

~~ Greg

Greg James grew up in the Air Force and lived in Utah, Louisiana, and South Dakota before entering the active-duty Air Force in 1991. He transferred to the Reserves as an Air Reserve Technician in 2001. Greg was in air operations with heavy and fighter aircraft deploying to Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan among other deployments and TDY's. He met and married his wife Tammy while she was active-duty Air Force, and she got out when their son was born. Greg retired from the Air Force Reserves in 2017 after 26 years of total service and graduated from Brown Trail School of preaching in 2016. Greg served as the associate minister for the Greenmount Rd congregation in Belleville, IL and served as the pulpit minister for the Briar congregation in Briar, Texas before relocating to Jackson, Tennessee. They are members of the Crosswinds church of Christ.

Faith in the Leadership, Confidence in the Objective

Paul's past was remarkable. With the best education available, a Roman citizen, a Pharisee and zealous for Judaism, what could have been any better for him? On the road to capture and deliver Christians to the Jewish authorities for punishment, everything changed. From that point forward, it was not about Paul's "credentials" and zeal. It was about the gospel and the risen Savior.

Now, with his role reversed, Paul is under arrest for teaching and preaching Christ as Lord. Paul's letter to the church at Philippi is remarkable as he proclaims joy, humility, oneness in Christ and caring for one another.



Paul's life as a Christian was never about him, but about service to God (Phil 2:17; 2Tim 4:6). His time as a sincere but incorrect persecutor of Christians was behind him. As he pens this letter to the Philippian church, the joy of faithfully serving Christ along with them is one of the powerful messages he sent.

Imprisoned as he wrote to them, his remarkable outlook was positive, and even more remarkable, joyful! His joy didn't come from being a prisoner, but for his ability to preach Christ while in chains and his relationship with the Philippians. (1:7) As it is with a successful fighting force, he had faith in the leadership (Christ) and confidence in the objective (preaching the gospel of Christ).

How many times has our theme, Phi 4:13, been used completely out of scriptural context? Well-meaning people have invoked this passage when they approached a very difficult objective or task in life. Certainly, any Christian wants the Lord to bless our honest efforts as we go through life, but it is doubtful that Paul was proclaiming that he could "leap tall buildings in a single bound" through the power of Christ.

Paul's statement that he could "do all things through Christ " was not a proclamation of something mysterious. Rather it was a summary of his experiences as he was encouraged by the Philippian church. He didn't view his imprisonment as the Romans did. Punishment was intended, but the outcome was that the gospel was spread to all the soldiers of the guard!

The spirit of what Paul wrote to the church at Philippi was to affirm that their support for him brought him joy, cheerfulness. This is a lesson for us to embrace. Our prayers for encouragement to others is empowering. Knowing that in the face of adversity or trying circumstances there Christians who pray for and support us brings a comfort and confidence that is otherwise absent.

In Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanses us, we have power to do "kingdom work" that alone we are powerless to do. It is through Him that Paul said we can do things we never dreamed possible.

~~ Conrad

Conrad Slate enlisted in the Army Reserve while in college and later transferred to the Air National Guard. He went to Officer Training School and completed 31 years of service retiring as a colonel. He served a variety of positions starting as a Military Policeman. He served in the Security Police, in Public Affairs, in NBC warfare training, and a variety of staff positions, retiring as Deputy Chief of Staff for Support Services. He is a member of the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, TN where he is active in jail ministry

Strength for the Mission

Ranger School will expose everything you are made of-every weakness, every fear, every limit you didn't know you had. I remember one night on a dark movement between objectives. My feet were destroyed, my ruck felt like it weighed twice as much as it should have, and I hadn't slept in over 24-hours.

The cadre had pushed us harder than I thought was possible. I hit a wall. My body said stop. My mind said quit. But quitting wasn't an option, so 1 did the only thing I could do: 1 took the next step. Then another. And another.



I learned Ranger School isn't about being the strongest or the smartest. It's about perseverance when everything inside you wants to give up. It's about relying on something greater than yourself.

The apostle Paul understood that kind of perseverance. He wrote Philippians 4:13 while sitting in a Roman prison. He wasn't writing from a mountaintop experience. He was writing from a place of struggle. Yet he declared, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Paul wasn't saying he could do everything. He was saying that in every circumstance-whether he had plenty or had nothing, whether he was free or in chains-Christ gave him the strength he needed. That's the key. It's not about having the strength to do whatever I want. It's about having the strength to do whatever God calls me to do, right where He has me.

Those with military experience know that the mission rarely unfolds as we expect. Plans change. Conditions deteriorate. Things break down. People get hurt. That's when our training kicks in. That's when we lean on our brothers and keep pressing forward.

As Christians, we lean on Christ. He doesn't promise that the road will be easy, but He does promise that we won't walk it alone (Cf. Matthew 28:20). He gives us the strength to get up again after we fall (Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

You may be facing a new kind of battle today-one no one else can see. Maybe it's physical pain, sleepless nights, memories that won't go away, or the challenge of finding purpose in a new season of life. Whatever it is, Christ knows. He is your strength, and He cares for you (Cf. 1 Peter 5:7).

Stay faithful. Stay strong. Stay the course. Christ is with you. That is the message of Philippians 4:13.

~~ Mike

Mike Green currently serves as the Dean of Students at the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in Knoxville, TN. He has spent the last two decades serving the church in various capacities to include church planting, preaching and youth ministry. Mike holds a B.B.S degree in Bible and an M.A in New Testament. Prior to entering ministry full-time Mike served five-years as a U.S. Army Ranger with the 75th Ranger Regiment. He and his wife Natalie have been married twenty-four years and have six children. They are members of the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville.

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The Explosive Power of God

Phil. 4:13 "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (NASU)

In Philippians 4:13, the Christian apostle Paul seems to be bringing forth three points in his letter to the Christians in the church at Philippi. First, Paul is saying that it is God that empowers him to do all good and godly things he does. Second, Paul says he knows that strength comes from God. Third, Paul seems to imply that this God-given strength to him is to be shared with the Philippian Christians via the means of prayer and in the spreading of the gospel of Christ in Philippi. In this case, "strength" implies an explosive power comparable to dynamite.



As dynamite has enough explosive power to destroy physical lives, the gospel has enough explosive power to save spiritual lives (Rom. 1:16-17). As such, God's salvation ability or strength to deliver any and all persons of accountability from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8.2) into eternal life is only that of the gospel. Being for all persons of accountability, one must both believe in and obey the gospel for forgiveness of sins. As God provides salvation only through Jesus (Acts 4:12), all the unrepentant sinners who do not believe in Him cannot be rescued from the law of sin and death. The gospel of Christ rescues only the repentant and obedient believers.

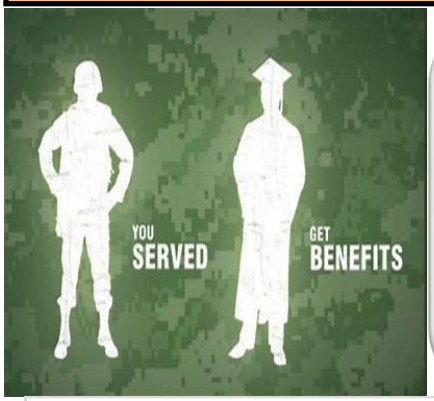
Prerequisite to any rescue, all persons of accountability have only the time given them by God in between their births and deaths (Eccl. 3:1-2) to prepare for the eternity. After that comes the sure appointment of the judgment (Heb. 9:27-28). Therein, few will have traveled the narrow path of obedient belief into eternal life while many more will have traveled the broad path of disobedient unbelief into eternal destruction (Matt. 7:7-8, 13-14). As unbelief is as explosively destructive as dynamite, all of the non-Christians who did not know or obey the gospel in this life will become eternally separated from Christ (2 Thess. 1:6-10). By then, the gospel cannot be of help to them.

Also, deserting to any imaginary gospel different from Christ's is equally destructive to any false teachers who encourage Christians to desert Him. Those false teachers then become accursed or doomed to destruction by God (Gal. 1:6-10). Likewise, any Christians who desert the gospel of Christ and return to any man-made religion become severed from Christ and the grace of God (Gal. 5:4). Consequently, only the ones who initially obey and continue in obedience to the gospel of Christ (Christians) can be rescued out of the law of sin and death into the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. They are then placed into the New Testament church.

~~ Tom

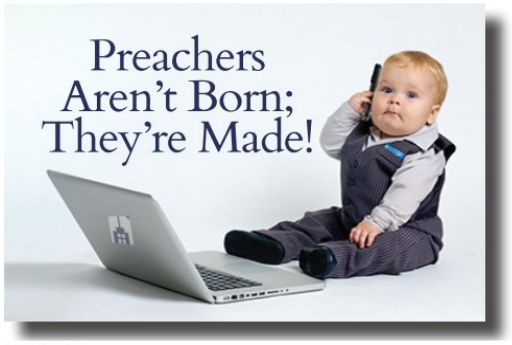
Tom Wright served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War Era. Following his military discharge, Tom graduated college and worked in Design Engineering for over two decades. In his middle forties, he left secular work and entered fulltime ministry. He holds degrees of Bachelor of Theology, Master of Biblical Studies, and Doctor of Ministry. Tom has spent about the past twenty-five years serving God as an evangelist, preacher, and teacher. He and his wife Carla live in the Colorado Springs area and worship with the Calhan church of Christ.

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BELIEVE ***in Jesus as Savior of world***: John 3:16; 14:6; 14:23
REPENT ***of your sins***: Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; Revelation 2:5, 16, 21,22; 3:3, 19
CONFESS ***Jesus before others***: Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:8-11
BE IMMERSED ***into Christ for forgiveness of your sins***: Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-47; 22:16; Romans 6:3-11; 1 Peter 3:18-22

CONTINUE ***to live faithful to God until you die or Christ comes again***: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Revelation 2:10

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AFFIX STAMP

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