

THE LIFE THAT KNOWS NO DEFEAT

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13.

These striking words may sound to some like an idle boast of a bold braggart, but they are not. Rather, they are the triumphant expression of a self-distrustful soul that has found its way to the source of inexhaustible power. Paul had tried Christ under all conditions and circumstances of life, and had found Him equal to every emergency. He told his Philippian brethren that he had learned a valuable lesson, namely, how to be content with his lot in life, whether he had little or much. He was independent of circumstances because he was entirely dependent upon his Lord and Master. Christ Jesus was sufficient for him.

In His last discourse to His disciples, Christ said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. Thus the Saviour restricted every soul to a genuine dependence upon Him. In the light of this limitation, Paul jubilantly testified to the measureless resources within this realm of dependence. Christ was the great Giver, and Paul was the great receiver.

When Paul wrote this letter he was a prisoner in Rome. Although he was not incarcerated in a prison, he was chained to a Roman soldier to make sure that he did not escape. The Christians in Philippi had sent him a substantial present to supply him with the necessities of life. In his own typically gracious manner, Paul thanked them for their thoughtfulness and generosity. He deeply appreciated their provision for his needs, but their action was not obligatory as Paul never considered himself indispensable. However, he rejoiced greatly in their expression of love for him. It was sweet to him, and it was good for them. Besides, it was a positive proof of their spiritual progress. In gratefully acknowledging their gift he remarked that he had been initiated into the great mystery of contentment, and knew full well how to adjust himself to either of the two extremes in human experience.

Concerning "THE LIFE THAT KNOWS NO DEFEAT," we shall observe three things: ---

I. The Source of It.

Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." A more literal translation of that text is, "I can do all things in the Christ who empowers me." Empower means to pour power into, or to infuse strength into another. As long as Christ kept on putting power into Paul, he had adequate strength for every need. The verb, which is translated empower, is in the present tense, and that denotes continued action. The text really says, "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour His power into me."

Paul realized that a living power was flowing into him and preparing him for whatever he might be called upon to endure. But, we should remember that Christ infused strength into Paul, not for the gratification of his personal desires, but for the fulfillment of Christ's purpose and the carrying out of His will.

Christ is the source of all power for victorious living and acceptable service. Apart from Him we are helpless, and our efforts are in vain. Regardless of how numerous our talents, or plentiful our resources, or complete our organization, nothing worthwhile can be accomplished without Christ. We should cultivate our talents develop our resources, and perfect our organization, but we shall make a colossal blunder if we depend on these things instead of Christ.

Paul claimed that he had mastered the circumstances of this life through contact with Christ, who is the source of the life that knows no defeat. In making the transition from "I know" to "I can", he changed knowledge into power. He swept circumstances into the same category of absolutely mastered conditions, and made the startling assertion, "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour His power into me." Thus, he modestly but frankly explained what he had experienced and accomplished. He was equal to all demands only because Christ strengthened him.

Each of us needs strength, whether or not we are conscious of that need, but none of us has the inherent strength to meet the demands that are made upon us. Every believer is weak in himself, but allied to Christ he is able to overcome evil and to do good. The strength which is in Christ is superhuman, but the glorious thing about that strength is that it is available for every believer who will receive it.

Paul remembered full well that throughout his gospel ministry not a day had gone by without some manifestation of a power that could transform hearts, reform lives and perform Christian activities. He encountered numerous hardships and much trouble, but he had peace within, due to the indwelling Christ. His Master strengthened him by His grace, by His example, by His promises, and by His power. Therefore, it is no wonder that he wrote, "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour His power into me." Christ is still the only source of life that knows no defeat.

II. The Scope of It.

A sense of inability to meet life's claims upon us is very depressing. When people realize how much there is to do, some become victims of pessimism, while others are gripped by hopelessness. Paul's broad assertion, "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour His power into me," should be a wonderful inspiration to all discouraged believers.

Paul never attempted to explain all the vicissitudes of life. He simply mentioned the fact that Christ had imparted to him the grace and the strength to stand up and take anything that came his way in life. Strengthened by Christ Paul was able to master every situation in which he was placed. Time after time he extracted victory from apparent defeat. Even when all the odds were stacked against him, the Lord gave him sufficient grace and strength to emerge victorious. On one occasion he was placed in the most unfavorable circumstances, and all his friends forsook him. In referring thereto he said, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." II Timothy 4:17. He had peace in his soul, valor in his spirit, and victory in his life. He was to endure all things to which God called him, and to achieve all things that he was commanded to do, because Christ continued to pour His power into him just as he needed it. When Paul asserted that he could do "all things," he had in mind only those things that were in the will of God for his life. He could do all the things Christ commanded him to do.

To learn fully that we can do nothing of ourselves, but that we can obtain sufficient strength to do the will of our Lord, regardless of what that will is, is a lesson of paramount importance. Christ does not demand the impossible, or that for which He does not guarantee sufficient strength. He provides the necessary strength for every duty and every emergency. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." II Corinthians 12:9. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19. We can neither think, nor speak, nor act unless He enables us to do so. It is just as true that He gives us strength in proportion to the work to which He calls us. When our duties are extraordinary we can always rely upon Him for extraordinary supplies of grace and strength. The power is provided as the work is done.

It is worth everything to us to be able to truthfully say what Paul said. Not only is this true in our personal lives, but also in our church life with its great tasks, high professions, and unsatisfactory achievements. In these days of doubt, disillusionment and dismay, we need to remember that the same power which Paul possessed is available to each of us as believers in Christ. We, too, may have adequate strength to meet every emergency in this world of sin and strife, because the Christ who poured His power into Paul is unchanging.

Let us consider a few of the "all things" Paul could do in the Christ who continued to pour His power into him, bearing in mind that all Christians can do the same things.

1. He could overcome his temptations.

From his acceptance of Christ until his death, Paul had a constant battle with Satan, who daily tempted him to sin. But he overcame these temptations because Christ continued to pour His power into him. Likewise, in the strength of Christ there is victory for those of us who are Christians. If you have a violent temper, Christ's power will enable you to conquer it. If you are timid, He can make you bold. If you are lazy, His power can make you energetic. If you are unstable, He can enable you to settle down and become dependable. "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

2. He could endure his sufferings.

In enumerating a few of the things he had to endure, Paul said, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Instead of complaining or despairing, he maintained the attitude that I can endure anything as long as Christ "continues to pour His power into me." II Corinthians 11:24-28.

3. He could discharge his duties.

No matter how difficult the assignment Paul received from the Lord, he tried his best to do it in Christ who continued to pour His power into him. He firmly believed the Lord could do it through him.

David, too, believed that God could do the unusual through him. When Goliath, the giant, came out of the camp of the Philistines and defied the armies of Israel, the fearful men of Israel concluded that not one of their number was qualified to accept the challenge. Then, the lad David came in from the field and said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." I Samuel 17:32. His brothers ridiculed him, the soldiers laughed at him, and the king tried to discourage him by telling him that he could not hope to slay Goliath. But David refused to give up. He believed God could do it through him. In that spirit he undertook the task, and presently the giant lay dead in the dust of the earth.

4. He could meet death unafraid.

Paul wrote, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 15:55-57. But how did Paul react in that last hour when he had to face the grim reaper, whose name is death? Did his courage fail, or was his strength sufficient? The answer to these questions is found in his own statement: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." II Timothy 4:6-8.

III. The Satisfaction of It.

It is truly wonderful to have the power of the living Christ offered to us. By all means we should cheerfully receive it. It is by His grace that we are able to accomplish anything that is worth while. Most assuredly He is the fountain of all spiritual strength. "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour His power into me!

A life that knows no defeat should claim our most careful attention and most thorough investigation. If we will let Christ continue to pour His power into us, we shall receive a new inspiration and come to have a different outlook on life. Not only will we realize that there is so much work to be done for our Master in this sin-cursed world, but we shall come to understand that He is depending on His people to do it. While the work is too large for our strength, it can never be too large for the power of Christ. We can do this work in a most acceptable manner, and enjoy the life that knows no defeat, if we will go forth in the power of the living Christ.

We need no other inspiration or aid than Christ, in whom is light, and life, and love, and liberty. He can meet every need of our souls. He will walk with us in blessed companionship, completely satisfy the longings of our souls, and help us in every time of need. He is a forgiving, burden-bearing, and victory-giving Christ. Knowing Him intimately, we shall understand the real meaning of life, and know what to do and what to expect.

If you will really turn to Christ, who is immutable in His love, unfailing in His resources, and unwearied in His oversight, Christ will pour His power into you and you will enjoy the same experience that Paul had. You will find that Christ will enable you to do His blessed will, for truly His strength is limitless. Without any fear of contradiction, I frankly say that Christ has helped us, He is helping us, and He will still continue to help us. As He continues to help us by pouring His power into us, we shall enjoy an indescribable satisfaction of soul in living the life that knows no defeat.