

**THE SHOUT OF SUFFICIENCY**  
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PHI 4:13 "I Can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

This verse, so well known, so often memorized, has become one of the favorite verses for most Christians, has, in fact, become a life-verse for young men and women entering the fray of life. And to all of us, Phi. 4:13 is a verse we pull up from our memory storage bank when things are difficult and we need strength in our lives. We have all memorized Phi. 4:13.

The more I read this verse the more convinced I become that for the Apostle Paul this verse was not a declarative sentence, but rather an exclamatory sentence. It was a cry, a scream, a shout. From his very soul, from his innermost being, from the Source beyond himself, came these words. They sound like human words, but they are beyond human thought and language. These words are what I would label, A SHOUT OF SUFFICIENCY. We find that sufficiency in at least three ways.

I. IT WAS, FIRST OF ALL, A SHOUT OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF POWER to accomplish any task that God wanted him to accomplish, and to shoulder any burden that he was forced to carry. The great Episcopalian pastor/evangelist, Samuel Shoemaker once said that religion, to be effective, must provide for man power to live his life, and must also give man an explanation of how to live that life.

a. Facing the burden of a Roman prison, caged like an animal, he cries out, "I can do..." This phrase is only found in two other places in Scripture, in 1 Sam. 27:1 where David decides, "The best thing *I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines.*"; and in John 5:30, where Jesus says, "Of myself I can do nothing;..." In effect, David was simply saying, "I can do this and save my life." But Jesus was saying, "Everything I do, I do in concert with my Father's will. I can do what He does, only that."

In a bleak, bleak, moment, Paul breaks forth with a shout and says, "I can do..." The body of Paul was owned by the proud and powerful Romans, but Paul possessed his soul, and his spirit was unbroken by the shackles and the chains which he wore for Jesus' sake, calling himself 'a prisoner of Jesus Christ.'

O the power of that shout, "I can do!" Throughout the centuries brave hearts have conquered oceans wafting that shout above the waves; have scaled the highest mountains reminding themselves of its truth; and have found cures for the most hideous diseases as they labored in their laboratories wading through myriad failures, but crying, "I Can!" Every person needs a good dose of the good old 'I can do.' Little is accomplished with a negative attitude. One entering any endeavor must enter it believing in his power to get the job accomplished, otherwise it will not and cannot be done.

How is it with your attitude? Do you go around doubting that it can be done? Do you remember Moses and his detractors? They were murmurers and doubters! Had he listened to them, had he heeded their negativism, God might have had to choose a people for himself elsewhere. Thank God for Moses' 'I can do' attitude. Nothing great can be accomplished without such an attitude; and all great leaders have had such an attitude.

b. But wait! How about the majority of the human race who may say, “I can” and who then fail. Life is a mountain of dry bones, the bones of people who thought they could but could not. The harshness of circumstances broke them. They live all around us; we see them every day; and too often, they are us. And for the one who scales that high mountain, a thousand lie broken and frozen upon its stormy slopes. Let us be honest, let us be radically honest, only a few are truly strong, only a few are successful, and the rest of the human race is weak. Whatever metaphor we choose, we live in a world of disastrous failures and failure.

But wait, there is more in this verse than ‘I can do.’ Paul says, “...Christ which strengtheneth me.” In the oldest manuscripts the word Christ is omitted. Rather it is, “... **Him** who strengthens me.” In either case, it is **Christ** about whom Paul speaks. **Christ** is Paul’s strengthener. **Christ** is Paul’s Savior. **Christ** is Paul’s Lord.

If Paul had just said, “I can do,” he would have been a good Stoic, but a poor Christian. Indeed, Paul’s thought reflects the Stoic philosophy which, no doubt, was very attractive to him as a young man in Tarsus; for, as the Interpreter’s Bible tells us, Tarsus was the chief home of Stoic philosophy. The Stoics believed in self-sufficiency. They believed that the *universal soul* was a part of every man, and that that Pythagorean ‘fire’, that ‘logos’, that God-spark within us made us self-sufficient. All we had to do, they thought, was to die to our emotions and to our desires and we would achieve that self-sufficiency. We didn’t need anyone’s help—in fact we didn’t need anyone. Having God within we would become God. But, “Paul was convinced that man by himself can do nothing, but is in hopeless bondage to the evils of this world.” (IB).

Paul’s sufficiency of power came from a source outside himself, from Christ Jesus the Lord. The Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson, reminds us that this word strengtheneth is a causative verb meaning “to empower, to pour power into.” Then Robertson writes, “Paul has such strength so long as Jesus keeps on putting power (dunamis) into him.” For Paul, then, the Sufficiency of Power came from His Lord. His power came from the Holy Spirit. His power came from His anointing in Jesus Christ. His power came from His God and Father, the Father of Mercy and the God of all Truth.

Paul’s shout was a Shout of the Sufficiency of Power.

## II. BUT, AGAIN, PAUL’S SHOUT WAS THE SHOUT OF EXPLANATION.

a. The Sufficient Explanation to the Christian life is that the human life must be lived in a dependency upon God. *The Pulpit Commentary* says it best, “It is only in Christ, in spiritual union with Him, that the Christian is autarkes, self-sufficient. His presence gives strength to do and suffer all things.” In a word, the Shout of Sufficiency came from Paul because Paul lived his post-conversion life in union with Jesus Christ. That is to say, his spirit was united with God’s Spirit. To do what had to be done, Christ needed Paul and Paul desperately needed Christ. Paul depended upon Christ and upon the Power of the Living Christ.

Perhaps William Barclay’s statement will shed some light on that dependency of Paul.

“We see at once the difference between the Stoics and Paul. The Stoics said, ‘I will learn content by a deliberate act of my own will.’ Paul said, ‘I can do all things through Christ who infuses strength into me.’ For the Stoic contentment was a human achievement; for Paul it was a Divine gift.”

Paul's Shout of Sufficiency was centered in the knowledge that the Christ who loved him, who died for him, who saved him from a life of arrogance and pride, would indeed empower him for every task in any circumstance.

Paul had found the answer. His human strength could only take him so far. But in union with Christ he could do 'all things.' Whatever was God's will, however impossible it seemed, he could do.

b. But the Faith to believe is the second part of a Sufficient Explanation. So, this statement is a Shout of Faith, a confession of Faith, a strong assertive belief that faith helps us to rise above circumstances and look into the Face of God. Paul says, "I can...do all things...Through Christ..." And if one shouts that in faith, he will have the sufficiency to accomplish the miraculous. Jesus reminds us of that in Mt. 19:26, and Mark 10:27, "With God all things are possible." Man needs to be with God and to live in God. That was Paul's Shout of Sufficiency. He cries out to the dumb earth below and to the heavens above, "I can do all things through Christ which strengteneth me." This verse provides an explanation by which one can live, and through which he can find power throughout all his days upon earth. This is a SHOUT OF EXPLANATION.

### III. FINALLY, PAUL'S SHOUT IS THE SHOUT OF FREEDOM.

a. We often forget that, in this earthly life, real freedom is spiritual freedom... In II Cor. 3: <sup>17</sup>, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." NIV

Paul had found God's freedom years before on the dusty Damascus Road. In becoming God's slave he had found God's freedom. The Damascus Road started him out on God's Road. And as he looked back to the problems he had faced on his Christian pilgrimage, he summarized it all—"I can do all things through Christ which strengteneth me." It was as if he was lifting his small fist against the mighty mailed fist of the Roman Empire, and saying victoriously, "I am the winner—not you."

Do you have such freedom in your life? In the face of every difficulty can you affirm, as did Paul, "I can—through Christ!" The entire world cannot defeat the man or the woman in Christ. The Roman Empire could hold Paul in bonds, or under house arrest, but Paul gave the Shout of Victory. When Savanorola was dragged to the stakes to be burned to death for his faith, those around him heard him saying, "They may take my life, but they will never, never, never, tear the Lord Jesus from my heart." That is a shout of Freedom, the Shout of Victory!

b. Our freedom in Christ is not just freedom in this life, but is eternal freedom. Rom 8: <sup>21</sup> NIV, "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." Glorious freedom indeed, for real freedom is glorious and can only be found in Christ, who said, "You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free!"

Paul found Christ to be so sufficient that his shout was a Shout of Sufficiency. In Christ he found power, meaning, and freedom. And that makes any man sufficient --

sufficient in life and sufficient in death. Have you found that sufficiency? St. Patrick found his sufficiency in Christ and wrote:

Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in heart of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

This is the Shout of Sufficiency—I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”