

October 14-20
New Testament Lesson # 40
“I Can Do All Things through Christ Which Strengtheneth Me”
Philippians; Colossians

(I have sought to simplify, organize and unify Paul’s most important messages under the major theme in these scriptures.)

Paul testifies he has endured all he has endured, and can do all things, through Christ.

I. Paul, who writes three letters from prison in Rome, testifies that the things he is enduring serve God’s *overall* purposes.

A. Because Paul showed courage in spite of imprisonment, others dared to speak out boldly.

1. “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have [helped] the furtherance of the gospel... And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear” (Philippians 1:12).

2. While some had spoken out of “envy and strife,” most spoke “out of love” (Philippians 1:15-17)

3. Paul expressed his joy that “Christ is preached” (Philippians 1:18-19).

B. Paul’s faith is now so strong he yearns to go and be with Christ. But he realizes the Saints need him to stay to strengthen them for now (Philippians 1:23-24).

C. He tells the Saints that it is given them not only to believe in Christ, but also to be willing to suffer for His sake, as Paul has (1:29).

II. Paul stresses the Saints *can* be of One mind and One spirit.

A. One way to do this is to consider others better than oneself (Philippians 2:3).

B. Jesus has set His great example:

1. [Although] “being [a God, Jesus] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

a. Jesus not only left His place beside God the Father and became mortal, but as a mortal, **He took the lowliest place among men**, and finally humbled Himself to the point of suffering the most cruel of deaths, [upon the cross, which was a symbol of sin itself] (Philippians 2:6-8).

b. But as a result the Father has exalted Him, “given him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2: 9-11).

C. Another way to be One is to put on charity, the bond of perfectness (Col 3:14).

1. **A major essence of charity is to not find fault, but cover others weaknesses unless necessary to expose them.**

2. Joseph Smith taught, “If you do not accuse each other, God will not accuse you. If you have no accuser you will enter heaven ... **If you will throw a cloak of charity over**

my sins, I will over yours --- for charity covereth a multitude of sins” (HC 4:445).
(Emphasis added).

III. Paul urges “set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2).

A. This is consistent with Christ’s teachings: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

B. Paul tells them how to find such “best things”.

1. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

C. He further counsels “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17).

IV. Paul is undaunted by whatever His future holds, and testifies “I can do all things through Christ [who] strengthen[s] me” (Philippians 4:13).

A. Paul prays earnestly that the Colossian Saints may also be filled with knowledge of God’s will, walk worthy of the Lord, be fruitful in good works, increase in knowledge of God, and be strengthened through faith in Christ (Col. 1:9-13).

B. He promises that Jesus, who is the Firstborn of the Father (Col 1:15) can “present [them] holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith ... and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard” (Col 1:22-23).

C. He especially encourages them to have their hearts “knit together in love” (Col. 2:2).

D. He warns them “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world” (Col 2:8).

E. He reminds them they have been “Buried with [Christ] in baptism [and] risen with him through faith [in] God who hath raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12). Therefore they are now new beings through Jesus Christ.

A Personal Account of overcoming hard things through Christ.

In February of 1976, a member of our stake presidency in Tulsa, Oklahoma, asked me to perform something I found terribly challenging. He asked me to be in charge of writing and directing a pageant to honor that year’s United States Bicentennial.

They wanted this to be a regional event. It would be held in a very large auditorium in the city, holding thousands. Members would be asked to invite non-member friends and neighbors. I knew that some of them would be significant people in the community, as some members of our stake held high positions in corporations.

The gap between any previous experience I had and what was expected of me was enormous.

Yes, I had done some writing. But it had all been expository. I had never tried to write anything that had dialogue and action, let alone a pageant!

Yes, I had directed two simple one act plays. Obviously it was a huge jump between that to a pageant with performers nearing a hundred.

I felt overwhelmed. And that night I went to bed with my legs aching from stress. But by the morning, my leg ache was gone. Through the night I had begun to see the major outline of what I should do. I was able to obtain this overall outline because I had been searching the scriptures, and I saw how what I had learned could be utilized. I wished to show how America fit into God's overall plan as A Promised Land.

I have no doubt that the Lord blessed me to see so quickly the direction I must go. In fact, I hastily began to write down and expand on the ideas I had, to make sure that the committee being called to work with me could be persuaded to adopt them.

I know this could not have happened so quickly without the Lord's help.

The stake leaders called many talented people to help put flesh on these ideas and to help bring them to life. And, the pageant began to take shape.

Later, as I kept working on the script, I developed a great desire that the work we were doing would have an impact -- that it would positively touch the lives of others.

I know the Lord blessed me in fulfilling this desire. And he even blessed me to see how it was actually fulfilled in one particular case.

A week or so before the actual performance, I received a frantic call from a member who lived nearby. Her little girl had been bitten by a neighbor's dog, which was protecting puppies. The wound was near the eye and Suzanne was deeply concerned that her child's sight was endangered. She was leaving for the emergency room immediately. She had no one to leave her children with but these same neighbors. She did not know them well. She asked if I would please come and get her other children and take them to my home until she could return. Of course I did.

When I picked up the children, the neighbor met me at his door. I was able to get briefly some picture of his background. He was shirtless. He had a can of beer in his hand. And when I said something about danger to the eye, he swore. (I later learned other details of a life which were very different from ours).

Fortunately, the dog bite had not injured the eye, nor caused any other serious damage. And, because the incident helped the Connells get to know their neighbors better, they were the couple they invited to our pageant. And, perhaps feeling obligated due to the accident, the neighbors accepted.

After the performance, as the Connells took their neighbors home, the husband expressed his favorable impression of what he had seen. He asked if he could learn more. So that same night, Suzanne gave him *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*. They hoped they might be lucky to hear from him some time in the distant future.

To his amazement, when Robert Connell was leaving for work the next morning, he was met by this neighbor. He had stayed up all night reading the book. And he wanted to learn more. Bob then gave him *The Book of Mormon*.

Our pageant had awakened a deep hunger in this individual. He was eventually baptized. I distinctly remember seeing him as he sat on the stand after his baptism. He was a changed man! And his later actions confirmed a complete change.

There were additional baptisms and reactivations which came as a result of the pageant, though this was the most dramatic. When I consider how totally overwhelmed I felt that first night when I was asked to accept this great challenge, and what the eventual results were, I can strongly testify, as Paul did, "**We can do all things through Christ.**"