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“And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” 1 John 4: 21

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**Sunday – June 12, 2022**

## **The Things Above ...**

**Philippians 4:13**, *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”*, is one of the most well-known, quoted, and tweeted verses in the entire Bible. You hear actors quote it after they win an award, you read it on graduation Hallmark cards, you see it on t-shirts and wristbands, and you know athletes recite it before the big game. My goal of this article is not to bash anyone who quotes or cites this verse. I simply want to ensure that we recognize the true contextual meaning of Philippians 4:13 is far more challenging, powerful, and meaningful than we see it used today. The issues arise when we only look at this verse in isolation without considering the full context of the passage in which it is found. When Paul says he can do “all things” through the strength of Christ, what are the “all things” he is referring to? Are we free to fill in whatever we want it to be? (I can get the raise, win the game, get into graduate school, etc.) Or, by “all things” is Paul referring to the topics he has already addressed earlier in this passage and in the book of Philippians as a whole? In **Philippians 4:8-9**, Paul offers the standards we should be shaping our lives around. This raises the question; how can we expect strength from Christ if we are unwilling to accept the standards He has called us to live by? In **Philippians 4:11-13**, Paul describes a contentment that thrives in any and every situation because it is not dependent on circumstances. Then what is his contentment dependent on? Christ Jesus and the strength found only in Him. Paul desired the strength which comes from Jesus in order that he might serve and glorify Him by living by His standards and practicing contentment in all circumstances. Isn't it ironic this seems to be the exact opposite way this verse is used today? Today, many use this verse to say, “I can fulfill my goals, I can achieve my dreams, and I can be successful” by the strength of Christ.” However, Paul was not desiring strength from Christ to promote or elevate himself. Due to the strength of Christ, Paul was able to rejoice from a prison cell, put others needs above his own, and practice contentment even in the most difficult of situations. It was all about Christ and Paul's service to Him.

So, when we consider Philippians 4:13, *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”*, the question is not whether you desire strength from Christ. Any professing Christian would

claim that they do. The real question is this. Why? Why do you desire strength from Christ? Is it so you can do all of your things, or is it so you can do all of His?

- Kason Lawrence