

# *It Is Written*

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## You Did It In Ignorance

By Jim McDonald

Peter charged his nation with denying, delivering up, and crucifying Jesus. He described Him as being the Holy and Righteous One, the Prince of Peace: their Messiah. These were strong words and Peter “softened” them somewhat in saying, “And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as also your rulers” (Acts 3:17). It is difficult to understand how they could have done what they did in ignorance. The signs Jesus gave His nation were so compelling and overwhelming. How could men have witnessed such signs and still not recognize who Jesus was?

Consider the restoration of sight to the blind man in John 9. When, after grudgingly recognizing that “Yes, Jesus had given sight to a man who had been born blind”, they still told the blind man, “We know God spoke unto Moses, but as far as this man, we know not whence he is” (John 9:29). They didn’t know? The response of the blind man says it all: “Why, herein is the marvel that ye know not whence he is and yet he opened mine eyes!” (John 9:30). In the whole of the narrative the Jews said, “We know this man is a sinner” and then, “We know not whence he is”. They knew Jesus was “a sinner” because He had healed the blind man on the Sabbath, and in doing that had “worked” and violated the law of God. Therefore, He was a sinner. In another confrontation with Jewish rulers over the same issue, Jesus showed His accusers that, by their reasoning, they too had “worked” on the Sabbath. But that, in a quaint illustration from long ago, “was a horse of a different color”.

The Jews of both John 9 and Acts 3 were willfully ignorant. Peter said in Acts 2 that Jesus was a man whom God had approved unto them by many mighty powers, signs, and wonders (Acts 2:22). Despite overwhelming evidence from God that He approved and had sent Jesus, His nation rejected Him. Jesus did not meet their concept of who the Messiah was. They had their own notions about what the Messiah would be and do, and they wouldn’t accept any evidence that proved their own ideas wrong. Their ignorance was willful.

The Pharisees and chief priests of John 11 were no different from those of John 9. Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead four days. The death of Lazarus was “public knowledge” for those four days, so denial that he had been dead would have made them appear quite foolish. They reasoned together, “What do we? This man doeth many signs”. So did they do as others and believe on Jesus? They did not. They plotted to kill Him because, as they reasoned, “If we let him thus alone: all men will believe on him and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:47-48)

Perhaps there were some at Solomon’s Porch in Acts 3 who truly were ignorant of the truth that God had sent His Son. But whether sincerely or willfully ignorant, the Jews had sinned in their betrayal, denial, and crucifixion of God’s Son. Their actions were sinful; ones they would be condemned for. Paul preached to the Gentiles in Athens who had rejected the one true God and had made and worshipped “gods that are no gods”. Paul’s message to them was about the same as Peter’s at Solomon’s Porch. He said, “The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he shall judge the world by the man whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17:30-31).

Ignorance neither excuses nor saves a man. Both those of Acts 3 and Acts 17 who were ignorant were commanded to repent (Acts 3:19; 17:30-31). Jesus said, “And that servant what knew his Lord’s

will and made not ready nor did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes, but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few" (Luke 12:47-48).

Paul told the Corinthians, "Try your own selves whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves that Christ Jesus is in ye? Unless indeed ye be reprobate" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Eternity is too long and hell is too terrible for us not to sincerely evaluate to see whether we are walking in the light of God or not, and if we are not, to repent and begin to do so.

## OUT OF CONTEXT

By Andy Brenton

Philippians 4:13 is one of the most well-known New Testament verses, but it's also notoriously misused. After telling his audience that he's experienced both poverty and affluence, the Apostle Paul writes these well-known words: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Many of us have seen some variation of these words in encouraging notes and cards, in art, on t-shirts, tattooed on people's bodies, and even scrawled on the shoes of famous athletes or printed on their eye black.

The verse is often shortened to, "I can do all things . . ."

But is that what Paul is really saying here? Is he telling us to believe in ourselves? Or to believe that Christ empowers us to do whatever we set our minds to? No.

### What Paul Really Means

If we truly want to know what a Bible verse or passage means, we have to read it in context. We can't strip away all the surrounding verses, remove it from its original intent, and still expect to understand it.

Just before Paul says, "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength," he recounts some of the different circumstances he's found himself in: he's been hungry and well-fed, he's been in need and he's been well off, and he's learned to be content, no matter what his circumstances are.

Paul isn't comparing these circumstances to suggest that one is better than the other. He's using these extremes to highlight that he understands the range of human experience and that he understands the challenges that come with each position. He isn't a rich person telling a poor person to be happy with what they have (or vis versa), and he's not sitting there on a full stomach telling hungry people to get over it.

He's saying that no matter what your circumstances are, you can learn to be content. How does he know? Because he's proved it. How does he do it? That's where verse 13 comes in.

If you read the NIV translation of verse 13, you'll notice an important distinction from most other translations: "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength".

When we read "this" instead of "things," it's a lot more clear that the passage is referring to specific things—all the things Paul has been talking about—not "all things" in the sense that we can do anything. In context, "I can do all things" is the ministry that God has sent Paul to do. He can persevere, share the gospel, and be content in any situation. Not on his own, but through Christ who strengthens him.

### What Paul Doesn't Mean

This verse is so misused because many folks interpret "all things" as "anything," not "all the things Paul has talked about." It's not a blanket endorsement that God will support anything we set out to do and empower us to do whatever impossible things we can imagine. It's an assurance that we can do whatever God calls us to do, not whatever we decide to do.

This isn't a biblical exhortation you can stamp on whatever goals you have professionally, personally, or physically. It's an encouragement that God can give you the strength to be content, no matter what.