

YES YOU CAN!
Philippians 4:13

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

INTRODUCTION:

From Matthew 13:34-35 - -

³⁴ *Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵ So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:*

*“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”*

And, from the popular children's classic by Watty Piper first published in 1930: THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD.

Chug, chug, chug. Puff, puff, puff. Ding-don, ding-dong. The little train rumbled over the tracks. She was a happy little train for she had such a joy load to carry. Her cars were filled full of good things for boys and girls.

There were toy animals – giraffes with long necks, Teddy bears with almost no necks at all, and even a baby elephant. Then there were dolls – dolls with blue eyes and yellow curls, dolls with brown eyes and brown bobbed heads, and the funniest little toy clown you ever saw. And there were cars full of toy engines, airplanes, tops, jack knives, picture puzzles, books, and every kind of thing boys or girls could want.

But that was not all. Some of the cars were filled with all sort of good things for boys and girls to eat – big golden oranges, red-cheeked apples, bottles of creamy milk for their breakfasts, fresh spinach for their dinners, peppermint drops, and lollypops for after-meal treats.

The little train was carrying all these wonderful things to the good little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain. She puffed along merrily. Then all of a sudden she stopped with a jerk. She simply could not go another inch. She tried and she tried, but her wheels would not turn.

What were all those good little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain going to do without the wonderful toys to play with and the good food to eat?

“Here comes a shiny new engine,” said the funny little clown who jumped out of the train. “Let’s ask him to help us.”

So all the dolls and toys cried out together: “Please, Shiny New Engine, won’t you please pull our train over the mountain? Our engine has broken down, and the boys and girls on the other side won’t have any toys to play with or good food to eat unless you help us.”

But the Shiny New Engine snorted: "I pull you? I am a Passenger Engine. I have just carried a fine big train over the mountain, with more cars than you ever dreamed of. My train had sleeping cars, with comfortable berths; a dining-car where waiters bring whatever hungry people want to eat; and parlor cars in which people sit in soft arm-chairs and look out of big plate-glass windows. I pull the likes of you? Indeed not!" And off he steamed to the roundhouse, where engines live when they are not busy.

How sad the little train and all the dolls and toys felt! Then the little clown called out, "The Passenger Engine is not the only one in the world. Here is another engine coming, a great big strong one. Let's ask him to help us."

The little toy clown waved his flag and the big strong engine came to a stop.

"Please, oh, please, Big Engine," cried all the dolls and toys together. "Won't you please pull our train over the mountain? Our engine has broken down, and the good little boys and girls on the other side won't have any toys to play with or good food to eat unless you help us."

But the Big Strong Engine bellowed: "I am a Freight Engine. I have just pulled a big train loaded with big machines over the mountain. These machines print books and newspapers for grown-ups to read. I am a very important engine indeed. I won't pull the like of you!" And the Freight Engine puffed off indignantly to the roundhouse.

The little train and all the dolls and toys were very sad. "Cheer up," cried the little toy clown. "The Freight Engine is not the only one in the world. Here comes another. He looks very old and tired, but our train is so little, perhaps he can help us."

So the little toy clown waved his flag and the dingy, rusty old engine stopped.

"Please, Kind Engine," cried all the dolls and toys together. "Won't you please pull our train over the mountain? Our engine has broken down, and the boys and girls on the other side won't have any toys to play with or good food to eat unless you help us."

But the Rusty Old Engine sighed: "I am so tired. I must rest my weary wheels. I cannot pull even so little a train as yours over the mountain. I can not. I can not. I can not."

And off he rumbled to the roundhouse chugging, "I can not. I can not. I can not."

Then indeed the little train was very, very sad, and the dolls and toys were ready to cry.

But the little clown called out, "Here is another engine coming, a little blue engine, a very little one, maybe she will help us."

The very little engine came chug, chugging merrily along. When she saw the toy clown's flag, she stopped quickly.

"What is the matter, my friends?" she asked kindly.

"Oh, Little Blue Engine," cried the dolls and toys. "Will you pull us over the mountain? Our engine has broken down and the good boys and girls on the other side won't have any toys to play with or good food to eat, unless you help us. Please, please, help us, Little Blue Engine."

"I'm not very big," said the Little Blue Engine. "They use me only for switching trains in the yard. I have never been over the mountain."

"But we must get over the mountain before the children awake," said all the dolls and the toys.

The very little engine looked up and saw the tears in the dolls' eyes. And she thought of the good little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain who would not have any toys or good food unless she helped.

Then she said, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can." And she hitched herself to the little train.

She tugged and pulled and tugged and slowly, slowly, slowly they started off.

The toy clown jumped aboard and all the dolls and the toy animals began to smile and cheer.

Puff, puff, chug, chug, when the Little Blue Engine. "I think I can – I think I can – I think I can – I think I can – I think I can – I think I can – I think I can – I think I can."

Up, up, up. Faster and faster and faster and faster the little engine climbed, until at last they reached the top of the mountain.

Down in the valley lay the city.

"Hurray, hurray," cried the funny little clown and all the dolls and toys. "The good little boys and girls in the city will be happy because you helped us, kind, Little Blue Engine."

And the Little Blue Engine smiled and seemed to say as she puffed steadily down the mountain, "I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.

I thought I could.

I thought I could.

I thought I could."

That was always one of my favorite stories. And I think that even as I child, I got the point: there is power in positive thinking. If we believe we cannot do something, we are defeated before we try. On the other hand, if we believe we can reach our goal, we probably will.

I hope you have a goal to be spiritually fit – – for life. Do you believe you can be fit for life? Do you really think you can?

There are some who will never be spiritually fit for life.

I. The Shiny New Engines Will Not Be Fit For Life

In Watty Piper's story, the Shiny New Engine was an engine that pulled passenger trains. He had important things to do, important places to go and important people to serve. The little train with its toys and food was beneath him. "I pull the likes of you? Indeed not!" he said.

There are those people who think they have too many more important things to do than practice the spiritual disciplines to develop spiritual fitness. A quiet time for Bible reading, prayer and meditation is probably fine for folk who are not so significant and notable and eminent as they. But to take time away from their many crucial tasks to be alone with God...why, they are much too important for that.

Corporate worship, times of fellowship, Sunday School and mid-week Bible Study are fine for people who aren't doing such significant things as they. But for the Shiny New Engines of the world, spiritual fitness just isn't vital for such influential people as they.

II. The Big Freight Engines Will Not Be Fit For Life

They are too weighed down with the freight of this world to make spiritual fitness a priority. They are busy paying the bills, acquiring treasures, saving for the future, working for promotions, etc. They don't have time to develop spiritual maturity...they are much too busy for that right now. Maybe later, once they have made their fortune, indulged their whims, pursued their hobbies and otherwise occupied their time, talent and treasure...maybe then they will be able to think about becoming spiritually fit for life. But not now: they have too much life to live to be fit for life.

III. The Rusty Old Engines Will Not Be Fit For Life

In some ways, these may be the saddest of all the people who will never be fit for life. There was a time when they wanted to be. There was a time in the past when they were enthusiastic participants in the church. They were regular in their attendance. They listened attentively and then went home and tried to put into practice what they had been taught. They were enrolled in Sunday School. They served on committees. They were elected to the Board. They adopted a daily schedule so they could read through their Bibles in a year. They kept a prayer list handy so they could talk to God about others and their needs. They gave generously of their time and money to the work of the Lord.

But all of that is in the past. Now, they are just plain tired.

Some lost their energy when some crisis hit them and they asked, "What good has it done me to put the Lord first in my life? I tried that and I still had this calamity come upon me."

Some lost their energy when they were criticized for what they were doing. They thought, "I was doing the best I could and then people who weren't doing anything at all started talking about me behind my back. I quit." And they did.

Others got distracted and quit. Some got disappointed and quit. Some got discouraged and quit. But there are a lot of Rusty Old Engines who will never be spiritually fit for life because they tried, they tired and they gave up. And now they are just too tired to put forth the effort for spiritual fitness.

IV. There Are Those Christians Who Will Be Fit For Life

One characteristic of the Little Blue Engine was her humility. She didn't think she was too important or too big to pull the little train over the mountain. And she wasn't all that confident that she could do it. She admitted that she was only a switch-engine and had never been over the mountain. But what she had going for her was that she was going to try. Her chant was, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can."

There are those who will be spiritually fit for life. They are not cocky about their spiritual maturity but they have made it a priority. If they do not accomplish anything else in this world, they will be the people that God wants them to be.

For these folk, their chant is not, "I think I can. I think I can." Their message is, "I know He can." They cling to Philippians 4:13 - "*I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*"

CONCLUSION:

Not too long ago, a well-known politician ran on a platform of “Change You Can Believe In”. One of his campaign slogans that always got the crowd stirred up was the chant, “Yes you can!” People, that is my message for you this morning. You may wonder if you can be fit for life but the firm message of Scripture is: YES YOU CAN! And that is more than political rhetoric and a campaign promise, you have God’s Word on that...in Philippians 4:13.

INVITATION: #644 – *“The Greatest Thing”*