

I. Introduction

- A. What if the most powerful chains holding you back aren't made of iron, but of a single, dominant thought?
- B. I'll name that thought in a moment.
- C. Two thousand years ago there stood a Roman Colony, proud and bustling. Its citizens walked streets paved with imperial ambition. Even so, many lived under a hidden shadow – the belief that their lives were determined by forces beyond their control:
 1. by unpredictable gods,
 2. by the cold calculations of the stars,
 3. or by the blind Fates who spun, measured, and ultimately cut the thread of every life. What will be, will be.
- D. Social structures seemed unshakeable. The privileged felt 'favored,' the struggling felt resigned. Slaves acquiesced to their lot in life... either buying their freedom through military service or a fluke of financial success.
- E. Any whisper in the heart to break the predetermined mold was crushed by the simple futility of it.
 1. You are simply an observer, even a victim, of your own life. The stars, the gods, the fates rule all.
- F. Now, consider our world. We don't overtly bow to ancient pantheons, yet don't global events, economic tides, and societal pressures sometimes leave us feeling small, overwhelmed, subject to forces beyond our control?
- G. And how does that feeling voice itself in our hearts? What voice rises from that sense of being powerless against the current?
- H. It's that same ancient enemy, that same crippling two word phrase:
 1. I CAN'T.
 2. I can't change my circumstances.
 3. I can't break this cycle.
 4. I can't make a real difference.
 5. I can't overcome my 'destiny' – anxiety, failure, just getting by.
- I. This voice is fed by any worldview that diminishes our hope in the face of overwhelming power.
- J. I want to speak to whatever machine is causing you to say *I can't*.
- K. So today I'm starting a new series:
 1. **Quit Telling Yourself I Can't!**
- L. Over the coming weeks, we're going to explore an ancient message, delivered to a people steeped in fatalistic philosophy – a world that left them feeling powerless.
- M. This message was written by a man facing his own impossible 'you can't' circumstances—that should have screamed a giant I CAN'T into his psychology.
- N. But he offered a radically different perspective.
- O. This perspective hinted at a source of strength, a foundation for hope, that didn't depend on favorable stars or the whims of fate, but on something – or Someone – far more reliable, far more personal.
- P. So here are people living convinced that their stories were already written by the unfeeling stars or the relentless Fates. Then suddenly a message comes to them... a voice from an imprisoned man who declares that their first and truest identity was one they never thought possible.

II. Three Building Blocks of an I CAN Soul

- A. IDENTITY: You have a new IDENTITY from a new source, because the Father calls you SAINT (Philippians 1:1-2)
 1. So we're looking at the letter to the people of Philippi, the epistle to the Philippians.
 2. The author is a man named Paul.
 3. This is crucial. Paul isn't writing this from some ivory tower, some comfortable study.
 4. He is in chains. He is a Roman prisoner. This is one of 4 prison epistles he wrote.
 5. And when he wrote it, his future is uncertain, at best. He is on trial for his faith. His circumstances scream at him, 'You can't escape! You're done!'
 6. Yet, from that very place, that place of confinement, how does he begin his message to these people?
 7. Not with his own troubles, not with a list of demands. He starts with an address. A label. And I tell you, it must have landed like a thunderclap in their deterministic world. This is the first building block for an 'I CAN' soul.
 8. He writes this:
 - a) *"Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons..."* (Philippians 1:1)
 9. Saints.
10. **IDENTITY: You have a new IDENTITY from a new source, because the Father calls you SAINT (Philippians 1:1-2)**
11. Just let that word hang there for a minute. You hear 'saint,' and what pops into your head?
 - a) For so many of us, maybe for them too, it's that stained-glass window figure, right? Super-holy. Practically glowing.
 - b) Someone who lived a life without a single flaw, centuries ago. Someone pretty much not like you. Not like me.
 - c) Especially when that internal critic, that voice you know so well, starts whispering about all your flaws, all your failures.
12. That voice, it says, 'Saint? You? You've got to be kidding me. I know what you did this morning. I know the thoughts you had just an hour ago. I know how stuck you feel in that habit, in that attitude, in that grief. You can't be a saint.'
13. Saint is a title for religious people. It's a title for holy people.
14. But Paul, from that prison cell, he's flipping the script. He's democratizing life with God.
15. 'Saint' – the Greek word is *hagios* – it doesn't mean 'flawless.'
 - a) **Saint: a person marked for a higher calling—belonging to God, not the world—as a citizen of a kingdom beyond earth, possessing privileges of personal agency and unalienable dominion.**
16. This was an identity Roman citizens would find striking.

17. It's an identity we should find striking too.
 - a) It's not some status you earn by excessive devotion to religion.
 - b) It's not a lucky draw in some cosmic lottery. No.
 - c) Saint is an identity that's given to you. Conferred. This is foundational.
 18. Can you imagine the psychological shift of knowing that you are a saint, and that as a saint, you have personal agency and unalienable dominion... from the Supreme God of heaven!
 - a) If you truly believe your life is a script already penned by cold, impersonal forces, then being a 'saint' feels like an impossible dream.
 - b) But what if this new message, coming from a man who, by all rights, should feel utterly fated himself, declared that a personal God was stepping in? Choosing? Setting apart individuals like you, regardless of your past, regardless of your social standing, regardless of what the stars supposedly decreed?
 19. This isn't just a new nickname. This is an earthquake shaking the very foundations of everything in your psychology that makes you stuck.
 20. It's suggesting that your ultimate identity, who you really are, isn't fixed by your circumstances.
 21. It's not dictated by some grand, impersonal cosmic plan.
 - a) It's bestowed. It's a gift. This is block number one for building that 'I CAN' soul: recognizing this new name, this new identity.
 22. And who gives it? Look at verse 2:
 - a) *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:2)
 23. The letter names a God... and not God as Supreme being, though he is.
 24. It names God as Father.
 - a) Not some distant emperor.
 - b) Not a fickle Olympian god.
 - c) Not an unfeeling Fate.
 25. He's your Father. The ideal Father.
 26. As Father, He's the source of 'grace' – that unearned, undeserved, absolutely free kindness and love – and 'peace,' a deep wholeness, a rightness that just laughs in the face of a chaotic, fated world.
 27. Could it be that this 'Father,' introduced by a man in chains, sees something entirely different in himself and therefore in you?
 28. That He operates completely outside the crushing determinism they knew, that you might feel? Could it be that His act of calling you 'saint' was His very first move, the first essential building block, in patiently, lovingly dismantling all your 'I can't's,' by giving you an identity not of this world?
 29. An identity that whispers 24/7 of a different kind of power, a different kind of plan for your life?
- B. PARTNER: You have a new PARTNER from beyond this world because the Father believes in you from Day One. (Philippians 1:3-5)**
1. What if the God who just re-named you 'saint' wasn't a distant, critical observer of your fumbling first steps, but your biggest, most joyful investor from the moment your story with Him began?
 2. A lot of people think that when you first get saved, God puts you on probation. You have to fix your life. You have to clean up your act. You have to prove you really meant it.
 3. You have to prove...
 - a) You really meant your prayer of salvation.
 - b) You really meant your baptism.
 - c) You really meant your determination to walk with Jesus.
 - d) You have to prove it...
 4. That's what most people think because that's what churches preach and that's a total tragedy because that's the opposite of what Scripture says:
 - a) *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now..."* (Philippians 1:3-5)
 5. We need to zero in on 2 phrases, and the first one is: your fellowship in the gospel.
 - a) Whatever this means, you have it.
 - b) So what is it?
 - c) First of all the word gospel. It literally means good news. That grace news. That absolutely scandalous, world-tilting, life-altering news of a Savior who, driven by an unthinkable love, shed His own blood to reconcile sinners – people like them, people like you, people like me – to a holy God and, in a breathtaking act of divine transformation, turn them into saints. That's the business God is in, and Paul sums it up in 1 word, Gospel.
 - d) And you are a partner in that business with God, so to speak.
 - e) The Greek word *koinonia* (translated as "fellowship" or "partnership") isn't passive. It implies shared mission, mutual investment, and active engagement. The Philippians weren't just recipients of the gospel; by being saved, God invited them to be co-laborers with him in the greatest mission the world has ever known.
 - f) Unlike the fear-based religious systems of the time, where appeasing the gods was central, the gospel is fundamentally GOOD NEWS—not a burden, but a gift. The Philippians weren't trapped in a new form of determinism; they were invited into a God-given agency and dominion.
 6. And Paul says these Philippians, these brand-new saints in a pagan, fatalistic city, they jumped in. They embraced this partnership "from the first day until now."

7. 'From the first day.' Let that phrase grab you.
8. When the gospel first pierced the darkness in Philippi, when Lydia, that businesswoman, felt her heart strangely warmed and opened by the Lord. When that Roman jailer, shaken to his core by an earthquake and an even greater spiritual awakening, cried out, 'What must I do to be saved?' That was 'the first day.'
9. And Paul, channeling the Father's own heart, didn't say, 'Well, let's wait and see. Let's see if they prove themselves. Let's see if they clean up their act. Let's see if they get more mature, more polished, less... messy.'
10. No! From that very first day, there was joy.
 - a) There was thanksgiving.
 - b) There was this immediate, profound recognition of their new value, new identity, new agency, new dominion, new power, new rights, new privilege.
 - (1) Saints from day one.
 - (2) Partners in the gospel from day one.
 - (3) Co-regents with God from day one.
11. I saw it just last Sunday. A young man gives his life to Jesus, gets baptized right here in these waters, and before he even dries off, before he's back in his seat, he's on his phone. HE's calling his friends. He's telling them about the love, the power, the grace of God he just experienced. That's 'first day' partnership! And I tell you, heaven rejoices over that!

a) God doesn't put new believers on probation and we shouldn't either.
12. Your Heavenly Father isn't sitting back with a clipboard, waiting for you to reach some imaginary level of spiritual perfection before He believes in your journey, before He celebrates your involvement. The moment you said 'yes' to Jesus, the instant His Spirit breathed life into you and began that good work – that was your 'first day.' And from that very day, in the Father's eyes, you were a valued partner in the greatest, most significant enterprise in the history of the cosmos: the gospel of His Son.
 - a) He believed in your capacity to grow, even when you felt like a spiritual infant.
 - b) He believed in your potential to contribute, even when you felt you had nothing to offer.
 - c) He believed that the gospel in you will take root and flourish, because it is jam-packed with the power of heaven.
13. Maybe you look back at your 'first day,' or even yesterday, and all you see are fumbles, missteps, maybe even outright failures. Maybe your earthly father, or some other critical voice, only ever pointed out your mistakes, never seemed to notice your efforts unless they were flawless.
14. But your Heavenly Father?
 - a) He sees your heart.
 - b) He sees your desire, however faint.
 - c) He sees your willingness, however hesitant, to step into fellowship with Him.
 - (1) And He has been joyfully, passionately invested in your journey, cheering you on, "from the first day until now."
15. That nagging voice, the one that whispers, 'You should just give up. You're not getting anywhere. It's hopeless; you'll never really change?' That voice is an echo from a world that doesn't understand grace. It doesn't recognize the patient, joyful, unwavering investment of a Father who never gives up on His kids.
16. The very fact that you are here today, that you're leaning in, still seeking Him, still listening for His voice – that's evidence! Evidence that His work in you continues. Evidence that His belief in your journey, the belief He had on your 'first day,' is still active, still potent, still driving you forward. This is the second building block of your 'I CAN' soul: knowing you have a Divine Investor who has been all-in on you from the very beginning."

C. PROMISE: You have an unbreakable PROMISE from a faithful Father who can never give up on you. (Philippians 1:6)

1. What if the deepest fear driving your 'I can't' – the fear of ultimate failure, of not making it – was met by an ironclad, notarized, divinely underwritten guarantee from God Himself that says, 'Oh yes you will?'
2. So, your Father calls you 'saint' – Building Block number one. He then joyfully invests in your 'first day' partnership – Building Block number two.
3. But even with that, there's still a voice:
 - a) What if I mess this up?
 - b) What if I can't hold on?
 - c) What if I'm the exception to grace?
4. If that's you, then here's your lifeline.
5. Here's the promise that stares down every doubt.
6. Paul, from that Roman prison, makes one of the most audacious, confidence-infusing statements in Scripture.
 - a) *"being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:6)
7. Paul isn't just hopeful. He is confident. Utterly. Completely. Unshakably.
8. God started something in you; he's going to finish it.
9. This is the miracle of your salvation, from start to finish!
 - a) It's the forgiveness that washed you clean, the new birth that made you His child.
 - b) It's the ongoing, sometimes messy, sometimes glorious transformation – making you healthier, saner, more whole, more like Jesus.
 - c) It's the healing of deep soul-wounds, the strengthening of fragile faith.
 - (1) It is profoundly good because its source is God, its aim is your eternal glory, and its means is His inexhaustible grace.
10. Now, that 'I can't' voice, it's probably hissing, isn't it? Pointing where you feel stalled, or like you're going backward.
 - a) 'I can't overcome this addiction.'

- b) 'I can't break free from this depression.'
- c) 'I can't ever be the person God wants me to be; I'm just too flawed.'
- 11. Are you ready for the Father's response, thundering through Paul's words? The same Father who began that good work in you 'will complete it.'
- 12. 'Complete' – *epitelesei* – a powerhouse word. He will carry it on, perform it, bring it to its intended, perfect, glorious finish. This isn't a 'maybe.' It's not an 'if you try harder.' It's not your guarantee of anything, it's God's guarantee of everything, signed in the blood of Jesus.
- 13. Why? Because your Heavenly Father doesn't do half-finished projects.
- 14. He doesn't invest His energy, His infinite grace, His very Son, into your life only to walk away 9 months later saying, "Well that didn't work out."
- 15. His reputation is on the line! His love for you is too fierce! His power too vast! The angels, Scripture says, watch you to discover God's multifaceted wisdom as He crafts you, His masterpiece.
- 16. This is the Father's ultimate vote of confidence. Not in your ability to perfect yourself – thank God! – but in His sovereign ability to perfect His work in you. He believes so profoundly in what He has initiated in your soul that He personally guarantees its completion.
 - a) When the voice inside says, You're a lost cause, the voice you declare has to say, Not with God... he will complete what he started in me.
 - b) When the voice inside says, You can't change, the voice you declare has to say, Right, but that's not my job anyway; God will change me.
 - c) When the voice inside says, You're an undependable Christian, the voice you declare has to say... Totally, but I have a dependable God and that's what makes all the difference.
- 17. From the day you were saved till the day Jesus returns and you stand face to face with him, Your Father will work his work in your life and till he puts the finishing touches on and stands back and says, Absolutely perfect.
- 18. This, my friends, is the third, unshakeable building block of an 'I CAN' soul. Your Father believes in His work in you so profoundly, so completely, that He has guaranteed its success. And this truth, this divine assurance, doesn't just give us comfort for today; it flings open the door to a kind of hope, a kind of joy, a kind of transcendence that can begin to reshape everything, right here, right now. It prepares us to hear something truly astonishing about the Father's heart..."

III. Conclusion

- A. I think most Christians would agree that God's love is unconditional.
- B. But what about God's confidence in you? What about having a Father who believes in you?
- C. Most of us would say, well, that's conditional. That's something you have to earn, something that wavers with your performance.
- D. But I'm here to tell you that's not how your Father's heart works at all.
 - 1. You have an Identity. You have a Partner. You have a Promise.
 - 2. Please quit telling yourself I CAN'T.
- E. What if the most astonishing truth, the one that can shatter every remaining 'I can't,' is this: Your Heavenly Father doesn't just believe in His work in you; He genuinely, profoundly, joyfully believes in YOU – the you He created, the you He redeemed, the you He calls saint, the you He sees through the finished work of His Son, Jesus Christ.
- F. His belief in you isn't a reluctant hope that you'll finally get it right. It's a settled, passionate conviction rooted in His own love and His perfect knowledge of who you are in Christ. He sees past your present struggles, past your stumbles, past your self-doubt, and He sees the glorious, completed masterpiece He is committed to unveiling.
- G. And because He believes in you with such unwavering, creative, powerful belief, that is the ultimate voice of I CAN in your life.
- H. It's not your belief in yourself that changes things. It's not even primarily your belief in Him that initiates the deepest transformation, as vital as that is.
- I. It is His belief in you that underwrites everything.
- J. When you truly grasp that the Creator of the cosmos, the perfect, holy, all-powerful God, looks at you, His child, and says, 'I believe in you. I believe in who I made you to be. I believe in what My Son accomplished for you. I believe in what My Spirit is doing in you. I believe in your glorious future with Me' – when that truth explodes in your heart, something shifts.
- K. The 'I can't' voices begin to lose their power, not because you've argued them down, but because they are drowned out by the thunderous, loving affirmation of your Father.
- L. This is your mountaintop. It's not about striving to make God believe in you. It's about awakening to the astonishing, liberating, life-altering reality that He already does.
- M. What if the most powerful chains holding you back aren't made of iron, but of a single, dominant thought... and that dominant thought is I CAN'T?
- N. If I can leave you with one takeaway for this week it is this:
 - 1. **Believe in the Father who believes in you.**
- O. Because believing that is the bedrock of your soul's 'I CAN.'
- P. Because the truth is, you can do all things, not because you are mighty, but because the One who is mighty believes in you with a love that will never let you go.
- Q. So, will you choose to live from His belief in you, rather than your doubts about yourself? Is today the day you start believing in the Father who so completely, so joyfully, believes in you?"
- R. Let me pray that into you right now.