

Strong in Us  
Philippians 4:13  
Everton Hills  
2 November 2014

*A strong young man at the construction site was bragging that he could outdo anyone in a feat of strength. He made a special case of making fun of Morris, one of the older workers. After several minutes, Morris had had enough. "Why don't you put your money where your mouth is?" he said: "I will bet a week's wages that I can haul something in a wheelbarrow over to that outbuilding that you won't be able to wheel back." "You're on, old man," the braggart replied: "It's a bet! Let's see what you got." Morris reached out and grabbed the wheelbarrow by the handles. Then, nodding to the young man, he said, "All right. Get in."*

How strong do you feel? **As young people preparing to make a stand for Jesus, are you feeling courageous? Nervous? Indifferent?**

And for the rest of you... when stuff happens, when the proverbial hits the fan, would you say that you are strong, that you have a lot of inner strength, a lot of guts and determination... or does your resilience sometimes run a bit low?

I love the story of the apostle Paul. When he had doubts and struggles and uncertainties and issues, he prayed that God would take away his thorn in the flesh... but each time, he got the same answer

***"Each time God said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9, NLT)***

My power works best in weakness. Difficulties are the way that God becomes strong in us.

As Paul concluded...

***"Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10, NLT)***

**When I am weak, then I am strong.**

That is confusing. Because we don't see strength in weakness. When people are weak, people often think of them with pity, or as pathetic... 'toughen up princess'. But that's not what God is saying here. ***My power***, God says, ***works best in weakness.***

Today, you young people have been invited to make a stand. To say, effectively, "I believe in God. I believe in Jesus and what he has done – for me and in me."

I want to briefly draw your attention to that verse from Philippians 4:13, which reads, ***"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13, NLT)***

**What Paul is saying is that we are not as strong as we think we are, but God is stronger than we think.**

And here is the thing. Those 11 words contain the most powerful truth you can possibly imagine. A powerful truth that I want to encourage you to take forward into the future...

**“For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13, NLT)**

**“For I”**

We are people of faith. Make no mistake about it. God uses people to get his stuff done. Sometimes he might use angels. The Old Testament at one point has him using an ass. But ordinarily, he chooses people of a particular type...

Do you know what that type is... it's not the mighty, the powerful, the rich or the influential. God chooses ordinary people to get his stuff done. The reason is simple. Like Paul and his thorn in the flesh, God uses broken people, so that we, and others, can see God working in us. If we think we have got things together, then really, we're not yet ready for God. Because while we think we have got our lives together, we are always going to rely on ourselves... and then we don't see God working in us.

Paul says, “For I can do everything through Christ” God wants to use ordinary people like you, to make a difference.

Next, he says, **“For I can do”**. That is not a political statement or a political campaign. That is the perspective of faith. It is a fact of human nature. We seldom accomplish more than we think we can. People who think they can't, can't! Henry Ford said, “Success begins with I can. Failure with I can't!”

It is amazing what you can do when you don't know you can't.  
David didn't know Goliath was too big to stop.  
Caleb didn't know the Promised Land couldn't be conquered.  
Joshua didn't know Jericho's walls were too strong.  
Elijah didn't know his enemies were too many.

But you also need to know that faith is more than positive thinking. Faith begins as we believe, “I can!” Not I might, not I should, not I could do, if. It begins by knowing that “I can do everything through Christ.”

Everything—that's speaks about the potential of faith. **“For I can do everything through Christ.”** That's a big promise.

But the question is, do you really believe it? If you really do believe it, how are you going to show it? And how are you going to show it when things start to be tough?

If you look at the context of what Paul is saying, he understands that difficulty...

***“Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.”***  
***(Philippians 4:11–12, NLT)***

Did you notice? Paul sees God in every circumstance. Both good and bad. In the full stomach and the empty. In the plenty and the little. In the success and the failure.

And that gives Paul the confidence that he can do everything in Christ.

Some of you know that by experience. Some of you have suffered loss. Many of you have faced problems, confronted temptations, wrestled with habits, and struggled to make decisions. And it wasn't easy. And I am sure that there have been times when some of you thought that you wouldn't make it. But you did. And because of it, you know the power of these words.

**“I can do EVERYTHING—not just the easy things, not just the things that everyone else is doing, not just the things I have always done before—I can do all things through Christ.”**

And that leads to the last phrase... the source of our hope.

**“For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13, NLT)**

Jesus is the source of your strength. Whether you are clever with words, great at athletics, excellent with music, financially astute, exceptional at school, a person of incredible compassion, Jesus is the source of the strength and the ability that you have.

But I need to make this one point clear. This isn't about the power of positive thinking. This is not some kind of pull yourself up by your bootstraps slogan. It isn't a promise that you can do anything if you dream big dreams and reach for the stars. It's not like the little red engine, “I think I can I think I can”. The power, the secret, is not you. In fact, it's got nothing to do with you. It's all Jesus.

**“For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13, NLT)**

When Jesus is in you, God's things will happen!

**“For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13, NLT)**

To sum up... Phillip Brooks, a great American preacher of another day, explained it like this,  
**“Do not pray for easy lives, pray to be stronger people;  
do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for powers equal to your tasks.  
Then the doing of your work may be no miracle, but you shall be a miracle.  
Every day you shall wonder at yourself, the richness of the life that has come to you by  
the grace of God.”**

Be strong. Be courageous...

**“For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13, NLT)**

Believe it.

## **Kids Talk – MAGIC WORDS**

Magic is pretty amazing isn't it?

Do you know any magic words?

“abracadabra.”

It's not for real, but it is a nice word.

Ali Baba in the Arabian Nights opened the door to the robbers' cave with a secret command—  
“Open Sesame.”

That's make-believe. But it seems pretty cool.

When I was growing up, there were some other magic words that seemed to get things to happen – please and thank you. Maybe that's a bit like in your house today as well... special words that seem to get things to happen.

This morning, I am going to be talking about 11 little words that, if believe, enable us to overcome any obstacle, conquer every challenge, fight off every fear, bear any burden, and shoulder any sacrifice. Just 11 little words!

Do you want to know what they are?

**“For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13, NLT)**