

Text: Philippians 4:13

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God's power is always yours, because it is Christ who gives you strength. Amen.

Philippians 4.13. A very famous verse. Lots of people use it. NBA MVP has it on his shoes. There's a church at the start line of the Boston Marathon that puts this verse on its church sign every year for the start of the marathon. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. So does this verse mean we can expect Samantha to be the WNBA MVP? If we all just say this verse often enough, we all can finish the Boston Marathon? What does this verse really mean?

Well, it might be helpful if we took a closer look at the first word of the verse, in the original language. It means, and is more often translated, "I am strong." I am strong in all this. I am strong no matter my circumstances. And then look at the end of the verse. Christ gives me strength. Christ puts strength on me. Christ continually infuses his strength into us. I depend on Christ. He's the one who gives me strength. The point of this verse is not that I am so strong and me, myself and I can do everything. The point is that Christ is constantly giving me strength and that makes me strong to face any situation. Maybe a little background will help. The man writing this is a guy named Paul. He was recounting some of the difficulties he experienced while traveling and telling people about Christ. He learned to be content, no matter his circumstances. He often had to go hungry. Without food. Have we had to do that? He often went without sleep and not one all nighter before a test, but frequently without sleep because he was on the run. Once a day and a night in the open sea, after a shipwreck. Paul was beaten by people who didn't want to hear about Jesus. He was whipped, nearly to the point of death, three times. And once he was stoned and people left him for dead. Literally. Do you think we would be strong in those circumstances?

Heck, Samantha will you be strong enough when that first offer of drugs comes around? Maybe it already has. Come on, it's legal in most states. This will be legal soon. It's going to make you feel good. Will you be content to have God on your side, or will you more desire to have a boyfriend? Will you be strong to say no to him? Come on, everybody does it. You don't really believe in waiting until marriage? What are you, a cavewoman? Will your arms get so weak, a Bible is too heavy to pick up? Will your legs be so weak, they can't get out of bed to attend worship and receive Jesus' body and blood? Maybe now is a good time to remember some other famous words, from a song you likely learned as a child. Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong. They are weak, but he is strong! He is strong! Jesus was strong enough to say no, to every sin. So Samantha, you would have a perfect substitute, to take your place in all your failures. Jesus was strong enough to carry your sins, all the way to the cross. Jesus was strong enough to rise from the dead. Jesus is strong enough to raise you, too!

Yes, we are weak, but he is strong. This verse says, "Focus on this one thing about Jesus. Focus on the strength he gives you. Focus on the strength he keeps on giving you." Every time Jesus gives you his body and blood, he is not only wiping away the failures of the past, he is giving strength for the struggles of the present, the future. This wonderful gift of Jesus' own body and blood, that you will receive for the first time today, empower you to say no to that offer of drugs, I have strength in Jesus. To say no to that boyfriend, because you are already married to a perfect guy, Jesus. This wonderful supper makes your arms strong to keep on picking up that Bible. It would be cool if you texted me your favorite weekly

verse, even though I'm not asking you anymore. And yes, your legs are strong to get out of bed and join your brothers and sisters in getting the strength that only Jesus gives.

There's one translation of the Bible that puts this verse this way, "I'm strong enough for every situation, because of the one who makes me strong." Samantha, it's Christ who will make you strong, whether or not you win MVP or run a marathon. Christ will make you strong for every situation. Christ will keep on making you strong. Amen.