

## A Strong Heart

When do we need **physical** hearts that are strong?

How do our **physical** hearts get stronger?

When do we need **spiritual** hearts that are strong?

→ inner strength: will, emotions, character, perseverance, ...

How do our **spiritual** hearts get stronger?

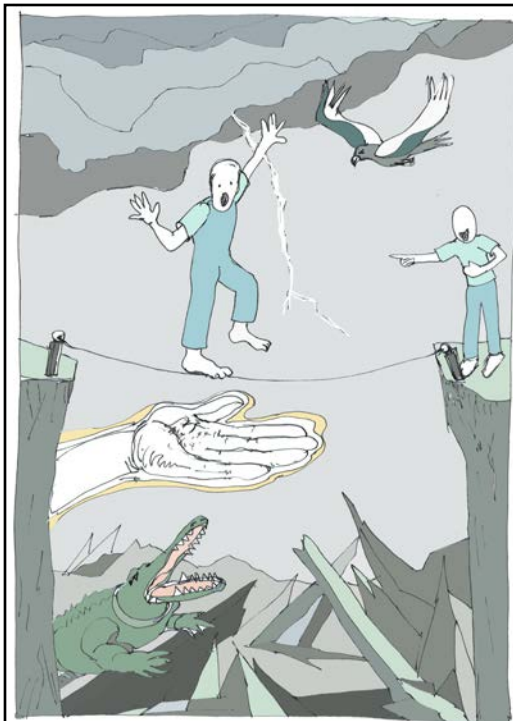
Do you need your heart strengthened today?

Do you know someone who does?

Our prayer:

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen you** with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” *Ephesians 3:16–17*

1



## Heart Strength

Psalm 138

[bib.ly/Psa138.NIV](https://bib.ly/Psa138.NIV)  
[tiny.cc/cmchandouts](https://tiny.cc/cmchandouts)

2

*What David (the author of this psalm) probably felt...*

*based on hints from this psalm...*

- Humiliated
- Bent down under his troubles
- With a troubled soul
- With enemies (literal or metaphorical) that threatened his well-being
- Feeling abandoned by God
- At risk of falling and breaking

And he wrote for people who feel that way

3

*Some stories from some troubling days...*

- Kindergarten parents' day
- Charlie Brown in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade musical
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade camp
- When I applied to be pastor of the church we attended

**I felt...**

- Abandoned (though I was able to walk home soon after)
- Humiliated
- With a troubled soul

**I've learned that...**

- both old and young need strong hearts
- being older doesn't mean our hearts are stronger
- and I'm still learning God's work through troubling times...

4

*A quick note about this psalm...*

- Some of the Hebrew (the original language) in this chapter is confusing (and not just to me!)
- So different translations have significant differences
- Yet the big idea is unmistakable...

5

*Psalm 138*

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart;  
 before the “gods” I will sing your praise.  
 I will bow down toward your holy temple  
 and will praise your name  
 for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,  
 for you have so exalted your solemn decree  
 that it surpasses your fame.  
 When I called, you answered me;  
 you greatly emboldened me.

**exalted = made great**  
**solemn decree = sacred promise or command**

6

May all the kings of the earth praise you, Lord,  
 when they hear what you have decreed.  
 May they sing of the ways of the Lord,  
 for the glory of the Lord is great.

**decreed = declared or commanded**

7

Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;  
 though lofty, he sees them from afar.  
 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,  
 you preserve my life.  
 You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;  
 with your right hand you save me.  
 The Lord will vindicate me;  
 your love, Lord, endures forever—  
 do not abandon the works of your hands.

**lofty = high, glorious**  
**vindicate = prove God is worthy of my trust**

8

*Psalm 138:1-3*

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart;  
 before the “gods” I will sing your praise.  
 I will bow down toward your holy temple  
 and will praise your name  
 for your **unfailing love** and your **faithfulness**,  
 for you have so exalted your solemn decree  
 that it surpasses your fame.  
 When I called, you answered me;  
**you greatly emboldened me.**

exalted = made great

solemn decree = sacred promise or command

9

*Psalm 138***1-3:** David worships God for His love and faithfulness

- The ‘gods’ are perhaps...
  - the powers or troubles that threaten us
  - the powers that others trust (other than the true God)
 David chooses to declare God’s glory to these gods!
- **Unfailing love** (חֶסֶד hesed): the perfect love that Jesus opened to us by His death and resurrection
- **Faithfulness** (אֱמֶת emeth): God’s perfect reliability and commitment to love us in Jesus

4-5: • David **chooses** to praise God

6-8a: • David **needs God’s help** to trust God!

8b: • Praise and cries for help can happen at the same time

10

*Psalm 138:4-5*

May all the kings of the earth praise you, Lord,  
 when they **hear** **what you have decreed**.  
 May they sing of the **ways** of the Lord,  
 for the **glory** of the Lord is great.

**decreed = declared or commanded**

11

*Psalm 138*

1-3: David worships God for His love and faithfulness

**4-5: Even the greatest powers are to praise God**

- These kings may include the powers that threaten David
  - the 'gods' from verse 1
  - or the 'gods' whom these kings trust
- They will praise God when...
  - they hear God's words and works declared
    - by David and by God's people
  - they know the glory of the Lord
    - which is...

6-8a:

8b:

12

*Psalm 138:6-8a*

Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;  
 though lofty, he sees them from afar.  
 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,  
 you preserve my life.  
 You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;  
 with your right hand you save me.  
 The Lord will vindicate me;  
 your love, Lord, endures forever—

**lofty = high, glorious**  
**vindicate = prove that trusting God is good and right**

13

*Psalm 138*

1-3: David worships God for His love and faithfulness

4-5: Even the greatest powers are to praise God

**6-8a: God's glory=His greatness + His kindness to the lowly**

- Yet troubles will still come, even as He cares for us
  - **The lowly** experience His kindness
  - **Those in trouble** are preserved by Him
  - **Those fearing the anger of their foes** (literal or figurative) are rescued
- The Lord will vindicate: show that trust in God during trouble is good and right

8b:

14

*Psalm 138:8b*

do not abandon the works of your hands.

15

*Psalm 138*

1-3: David worships God for His love and faithfulness

4-5: Even the greatest powers are to praise God

6-8a: God's glory=His greatness + His kindness to the lowly

**8b: Final prayer: don't abandon your children!**

- Despite the statements of praise, **David still feels** like God might abandon him (or already has)
- His prayer:
  - "I am yours, Lord.  
Don't let me fall to the ground and be shattered!  
Hold me tight!"

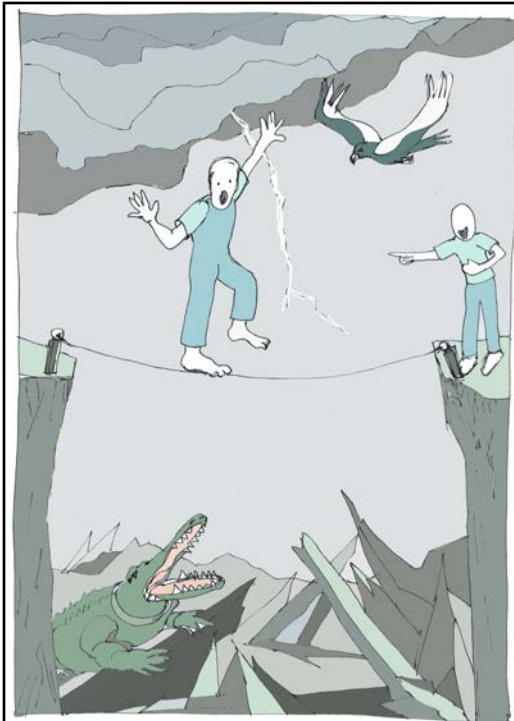
16



*The Big Idea*

**True strength of heart  
comes through crying out to  
and trusting in  
the God of unfailing love and unending faithfulness  
in Christ**

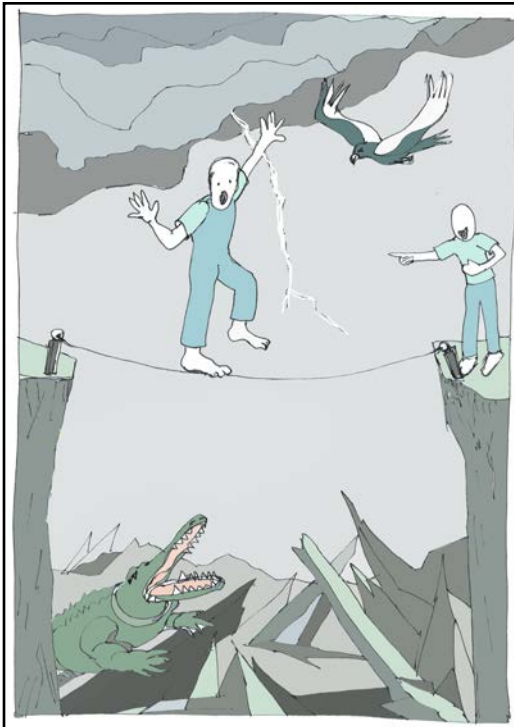
17



**Sometimes we feel...**

- **that we are in great danger**
- **like people are mocking us and mocking our trust in God**
- **that we could fall at any time**
- **and that our fall might destroy us**

18



While there is value in the power of positive thinking, in the support of friends, in finding an inner peace, ... none of these things is not powerful enough to help us through real trouble!

**There is no human or natural solution to our deepest troubles**

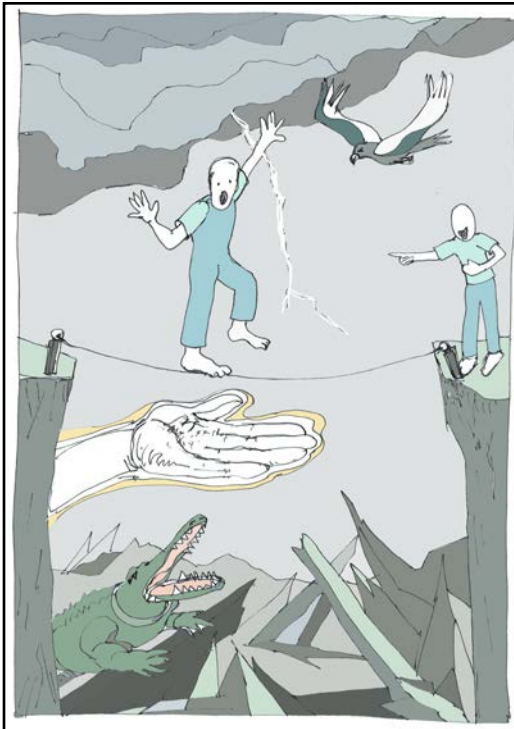
19



The hand of God...

- is always under His children
- even when we can't see it
- even when we aren't even looking for it!

20



**When Peter was walking on the water with Jesus, he started to sink, and he prayed (quickly!):**

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Immediately **Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.** “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

*Matthew 14:30-31*

21



**When the early church was in danger because of persecution, they prayed:**

“Now, Lord, **consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.**

Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

... And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.**”

*Acts 4:29-31*

22

*The Big Idea*

**True strength of heart  
comes through crying out to  
and trusting in  
the God of unfailing love and unending faithfulness  
in Christ**

23

**Application**

**Call out to God through Jesus Christ**

- **We need God's help**
  - We need His **steadfast love** and **faithfulness**
  - When we fail
  - When others fail us or disappoint us or threaten us
  - When life crumbles or the path is too hard for us
- **We need God's help to trust Him**
  - "When I called, you answered me;  
**you greatly emboldened me.**" *Psalm 138:3*
  - "You made me bold and stouthearted."
  - "Do not abandon me as your child!"

24

### Application

#### Call out to God through Jesus Christ

- Our hearts are strengthened when...
  - God answers our prayer to strengthen our hearts
    - “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” *Ephesians 3:16–17*
  - we exercise our trust: choosing to trust and praise God when we feel afraid, or worried, or angry, or threatened, or lost, or ...

25

### Application

#### Call out to God through Jesus Christ

- This doesn't mean that troubles always go away
  - God loves us too much to always give us exactly what we ask for
  - I know that through so many experiences...
- Because...
  - Troubles are a key strategy God uses to build His power into us
  - Troubles are a key context God uses to show the world His glory
    - “...His Spirit in your inner being...”
      - people need to see the Spirit of God at work in us
- This is true for...
  - every age of person
  - every age as a Christian

26

### Application

#### **Point others to God's steadfast love and faithfulness**

- "May all the kings praise you, Lord, **when they hear** your **word** and your **works** in your help for the lowly and those in trouble"
- When God strengthens your heart, or shows His kindness, or shows His power, **make opportunities to tell what He has done:**
  - To other Christians
  - To people who are not yet Christians
- Let us "Sing of the ways of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord is great!"

27

### *The Big Idea*

**True strength of heart  
comes through crying out to  
and trusting in**

**the God of unfailing love and unending faithfulness**

**To prove and to enact His unfailing love and faithfulness...**

- **The Son of God became a man to live in our troubled world**
  - **He suffered and died in our place**
  - **He rose to life again, giving His Holy Spirit to live in us**
  - **He promised to come again so we can live with Him forever**
- He is the God of unfailing love and unending faithfulness!**

28

## **A Strong Heart**

**Do you need your heart strengthened today?**

**Do you know someone who does?**

- **So often we don't have much faith in God's power and love**
- **Yet we have seen, and we will see, how He is with us, and how He brings good through trouble as we grow in trust**
- **sometimes by working **through** the troubles and sometimes by rescuing us **from** them**

**Let's cry out to the Son of God who lived and died for us, and who lives to intercede for us even today:**

- **Make us bold and give us strong hearts!**
- **Be with us and rescue us, not abandoning His children in Christ**