

Heart Strength

Psalm 138

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: Ephesians 3:16-17

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

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...

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

David chooses to praise God

David needs God's help to trust God!

Praise and cries for help can happen at the same time

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: 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: 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!"

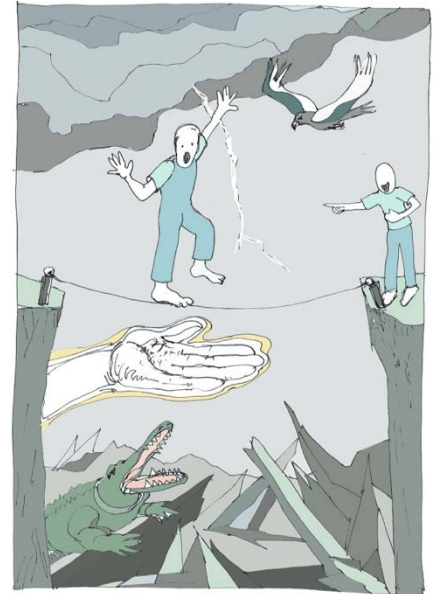
The Big Idea

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

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



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

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!"

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 ...

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

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!”

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!

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you need the presence and work of God in your life?
2. What helps you cry out to God with expectation for His presence and work, even through trouble?
3. Who else needs this presence and work of God, especially in these days? How can you help them cry out to God?
4. How have you seen God’s steadfast love and unending faithfulness in your life, even through trouble?
5. Where and how can you sing the praises of our God and His steadfast love and unending faithfulness?