Heart Health Series:
Strengthen My Heart (Psalm 10:17-18)

By
Andy Davis

At A Glance:

I. **Introduction**
II. **God Hears Even When He is Silent**
III. **God Works Even When We Feel Depleted**
IV. **God Pays Attention Even When Life Hurts**
V. **Conclusion**

These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Strengthen My Heart

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Creating Chaos

1. In the first church I worked at as a youth pastor, we experienced a growing church. We had to move to two Sunday morning services because our worship center didn't have enough seats to hold everyone that was coming to our Sunday morning services. The youth ministry was growing and was larger than the average numbers for a church our size.
2. Then, in a period of a few years, there were two church splits in which multiple large groups of people left. During this difficult season, a few key influential people started fighting for power and control of the church. They wanted their own way. They started having private meetings by inviting certain individuals and families from the church to talk about all their complaints and criticisms.
3. Leadership meetings became divided as individuals banded together in subgroups to get enough votes to make the decisions they desired. Leaders were being elected by the wider church based on whether they were part of one group or another. The goal was to get enough people from "your" group to secure the majority of votes on the leadership team to enforce your interests.
4. During this time, the people who were doing wrong (creating division, scheming behind the scenes, gossiping and slandering others) were convincing others in the church they were right. The lead pastor and I, who went about things God's way by addressing issues honestly, openly, and publicly, without resorting to criticisms and name calling, were losing ground. Eventually, the first split happened, and a large group of people left the church.

B. In these difficult seasons of ministry in the church, I wondered why God allowed so much damage and destruction to happen to His people. I had questions about why those who were not on the side of truth were so convincing to others. I pondered why people with such bad character were so well respected, while those with godly character were viewed as selfish and power hungry. I was disappointed that those who wanted their agenda promoted gained momentum while those who stood on Biblical ground were vilified. I was bewildered at wicked people prospering and using their power to hurt others.

C. It is just such a situation where wicked people abuse power while hurting others that leads to the next prayer in the life of David. We can learn to rely on the strength of God to help us endure the difficulties of life caused by immoral people by implementing the lessons learned from Psalm 10:17-18. As God works in our lives to change our heart, He strengthens us.

II. God Hears Even When He is Silent

A. We are learning how to live our lives in pursuit of the heart of God through the example of David. God described David as "a man after His own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). This is the type of person God desires to have in leadership over His people. This is why David and Jesus are given authority and responsibility by God the Father in His kingdom. While most disciples won't be in

leadership roles, God still desires all righteous people to have a heart that is focused on Him (Dt. 5:29, Ps. 81:13, Isa. 48:18, Ezek. 33:31-32).

B. In the sixth prayer describing and demonstrating what a person who is after God's own heart looks like, we notice the situation this prayer springs from. David is being mistreated by powerful wicked people who live as if God doesn't exist (Ps. 10:2-3). David is praying and asking God to intervene and stop these powerful people from doing wrong and hurting others for their own advantage (Ps. 10:12-13). Despite this earnest prayer, God seems to remain silent and inactive (Ps. 10:1, 35:22). It doesn't appear that God is responding to this desperate prayer.

C. It is in this situation that David prays:

> [17] Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; (Ps. 10:17)

D. Are you confused? At the beginning of this Psalm, David says God is hiding and feels far away (Ps. 10:1). Now, David says God has heard his desire ("Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble", v. 17).[1] Which one is it? For David, it is both. Far from denying the complexity and contrasting nature of reality, he embraces the paradoxes of life.[2] God is listening and paying close attention to what David wants and is asking for in this prayer.[3] David is confident that God cares about him and sees everything that David is going through. David understands who God is. At the same time, it is also the case that God, in this present moment and situation, feels distant and doesn't appear to be acting on David's behalf. Both dynamics are playing out at the same time in the same situation. The silence and distance of God is experienced in the situation, but the assurance and confidence in God is experienced within David.

E. David doesn't allow his present circumstance or his current feelings and experiences to determine what is true about God. Instead, David allows what is true about God and what He understands from God's word to inform and interpret how he views his experiences. This order is crucial for spiritual health. If David were to view and understand God through his circumstances, God would be viewed as uninvolved and uncaring. Since David is viewing and understanding God through truth and what God says about Himself, God is viewed as attentive, involved, and interested. The source of where we get our information about who God is matters.

F. What desire is David talking about? Those who are committed to God have a desire for justice (Ps. 25:9). They want wrongs to be stopped and/or made right. They want God to have His way, and for His goodness and fairness to judge all the situations of life. More specifically, the desire in this case is for God to protect him and punish the powerful wicked people who are doing wrong (Ps. 10:12-15). He wants the power of the wicked person to be broken and taken away (Ps. 10:15). David desires God to intervene and stop bad people from doing wrong to others so that everyone will learn to do what is good and right (Ps. 10:18). David desires all people, but especially those in positions of power, to stop hurting others for their own benefit and advantage. David knows that when good people are in power, people rejoice (Pr. 29:2).

---

[1] The "humble" person (v. 12) is also referred to as being innocent (v. 8), needy (vv. 9, 10), and unfortunate (vv. 10, 14) throughout this Psalm. It is assumed throughout that the person whose heart is set on God is not powerful or prosperous.

[2] Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, "Foreword," in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 77.

[3] Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Psalm 10:17 "You have heard"

G. All disciples should be encouraged to develop their own understanding of who God is the way David did. Learn about who God is from the top down, not the bottom up. God tells the truth about who He is, and He communicates His nature and character through His word—the Bible. Don't build your understanding of God from your personal experiences. Instead, allow the truth of the word of God to inform and interpret your experiences. Appearances can be deceiving. God may appear and feel distant and uninterested in your life, but this is not true. It is very easy to draw wrong conclusions about God based on our experiences. We don't always have an accurate and informed understanding of what God is doing in our circumstances and therefore tend to draw wrong conclusions about who God is through our experiences.

H. If we ever think God is operating in our life in a way that is contrary to who He says He is or against how He says He works, we need to adjust how we think about our own experiences. If we think God is being mean, harsh, or unkind to us, it is likely we don't understand why God is allowing the situations we are experiencing. If we love Jesus, God uses everything in our life for our good—to build us up spiritually. Trusting God to work in your life as He promises, even in situations when it seems not to be the case, is part of what it means to live by faith (Hab. 2:4).

III. God Works Even When We Feel Depleted

A. With the understanding that God sees what David is experiencing, God knows what David is going through and desiring, and God is paying attention to what is happening to him. David is therefore confident that God is working in David's life through this difficult situation. David is convinced God is going to act in David's life.

B. Here is how David expects God to work:

> [17] You will strengthen their heart…[18] To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, So that mankind, which is of the earth, will no longer cause terror. (Ps. 10:17-18)

C. It is entirely possible David is looking at his situation and doesn't see a way out. He knows how "successful" these power-wicked people are at getting their own way (Ps. 10:3-5). They are very confident that nothing harmful, destructive, or bad will happen to them (Ps. 10:6). They think they are untouchable, even from God (Ps. 10:10-11). David may be getting discouraged, losing hope, and feels his need for God's help to keep his confidence in God. Despite all this, David remains hopeful that God will strengthen him ("You will strengthen their heart", v. 17). David is persuaded that the Spirit of God will make him stronger, despite the challenges and difficult circumstances he is currently facing.[4]

D. David is providing us a clear and practical example of what it means to be renewed and find strength in God. Here is a description of what David is doing:

> [29] He gives strength to the weary, And to *the one who* lacks might He increases power. [30] Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, [31] Yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. (Isa. 40:29-31)

[4] Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Psalm 10:17 "strengthen"

E. The way to renew our strength and allow God to make us strong when we are weary is to let go of trying to control situations and outcomes. Instead, we develop at attitude of trust in God and wait for Him to work His will out in our life situations ("those who wait for the Lord, Will gain new strength", v. 31). Trusting and waiting on God is how we live in such a way that we don't become tired and weary ("They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary", v. 31). This spiritual habit of strengthening himself in God was a regular practice of David (1 Sam. 30:6, 2 Sam. 12:18-20).

F. In what way does God strengthen our hearts? David answers this question in the next verse ("To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed", v. 18). A person's heart is strengthened to trust in God's legal representation of them.[5] To vindicate is to maintain, assert, defend, and argue for a side in a legal proceeding.[6] A person's heart is strengthened in the sense that their confidence in God's favorable verdict of how they are acting in the various situations of life. David is convinced that God is on his side because David is ordering his life according to God's ways. While David's enemies act as if God doesn't exist, David is constantly aware of God's presence and awareness of him. David will wait for God to intervene on His behalf.[7] Instead of trying to take matters into our own hands, we wait for God to handle the wrongs done to us (Rm. 12:19).

G. Another way God strengthens the heart of those who seek and rely on Him is by deepening their commitment to Him:

> [14] You have seen *it,* for You have looked at harm and provocation to take it into Your hand. The unfortunate commits *himself* to You; You have been the helper of the orphan. (Ps. 10:14)

H. God works in us to make our trust in and commitment to Him stronger ("commits himself to You; You have been the helper of the orphan", v. 14). The widow and the orphan are an example of a humble, innocent, needy, and unfortunate person who trusts in God for help. David, as a humble person set on seeking God, has entrusted himself to God.[8] David is taking his hands off the situation and the results and entrusting them to God. Essentially, David is telling God, "You take care of and be responsible for this situation." Those who are humble depend on God for help. People who live for God know that God is on their side because they are living in obedience to Him. God will come to their rescue one way or another—in this life or in eternity at the final judgment. The heart of David is going to be strengthened to keep moving toward God and staying faithful to His way of life.

I. Are you feeling weak, exhausted, and depleted? Do you feel like you are going through life on fumes? If so, the solution for living life without becoming tired and renewing your strength is to learn to trust God with everything. The more a person operates under their own power and the more they try to control situations and outcomes, the more tired they are going to be. Those who have the attitude and act as if everything depends on them will become tired and weary. They won't be able to say no. They go through life with the mindset, "If I don't do it, it won't get

[5] Psalm 43:1, Micah 7:9

[6] Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Psalm 10:18 "To vindicate"

[7] An example of this from David's life was when David was being encouraged to harm King Saul so he could inherit the kingdom God promised to him. David however, waited for God to establish him on the throne (1 Sam. 24:1-15).

[8] Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Psalm 10:14 "commits"

done or it won't get done correctly." Individuals who go through life focused on accomplishing and achieving while not having time to sit with God and care for their soul will go through life with an energy tank on empty.

J. Those who navigate life with an attitude of trust and confidence in God while relying on Him to take care of the outcomes will live in a way that doesn't' exhaust them. They will run and not grow weary. No one does this perfectly; even those who live in God's strength will still become tired from time to time. But those with the right attitude and perspective will renew their strength when needed and they won't grow as tired as those who lack this God centered lifestyle. They wait on God.

K. How do you learn to trust God more? The way to trust God more is to deepen your understanding of who God is through becoming knowledgeable about Him through the word of God. Accurate and informed theology is the source of strength. The more you understand who God is and what He can do, the more you will be willing and able to trust Him, even with your life and the most significant situations you will experience. Jesus, as a person with the strongest attitude of trust in God the Father, accepted and trusted while being unjustly murdered (Lk. 23:46). Those with a well-developed trust in God are strong, even in the most difficult of circumstances.

IV. God Pays Attention Even When Life Hurts

A. With this deep confidence in God, David is convinced God is paying attention to what is happening to him, even if it seems God is distant. Right now, God appears not to be paying attention to what is happening in David's life, God doesn't seem to be responding to David's prayers, the wicked seem to be getting away with hurting others, and David is getting tired from all this. Yet David maintains the conviction that God is watching over him and knows everything that is happening.

B. Here is the final element of David's prayer that we will discuss:

[17] You will make Your ear attentive (Ps. 10:17)

C. God is described as adjusting His physical posture to be in a better position to listen carefully to what is being said ("You will make Your ear attentive", v. 17). This means to bend or turn one's ear toward the speaker to listen well. God is drawing close and posturing Himself to be able to hear what is being spoken to Him. David, like Jesus, is confident that God is always listening and paying attention to his prayers (Jn. 11:41-42). The situations and difficulties of life do not diminish the effectiveness and posture of God in prayer. Even when we don't receive the answers we were looking for, God is paying careful attention and listening closely to our prayers.

D. Disciples live their lives trusting themselves, their situations, and the outcomes of their efforts to God, understanding that He will do what is good and right in the long run. This doesn't mean every situation will turn out the way we desire, hope for, or pray about. In a broken world with morally corrupt people, wrongs will be done to us and bad experiences will happen. Life won't always be conformable or pleasant. Those who trust God with an attitude of faith will rest in the assurance that God sees everything that happens to us and we know He will respond by doing what is good and right in every situation.

E. As the Psalmist tries to do his best to trust and obey, he also knows that doing good and focusing on God does not guarantee positive external outcomes such as happiness and stability.[9] However life turns out, David is confident that God cares and that God is paying attention to his situation and his prayer. The way life situations play out does not deter David from knowing that living in pursuit of God is still good. God sees (Ps. 10:14), God hears (Ps. 10:17), and God's goodness will be enforced in the end (Ps. 10:16).[10] However the details of life play out, God is still firmly sitting on the throne to punish wrongs, give justice to all, fix everything that was broken, and reward those who are faithful to Him.

F. David knows people who act as if God is irrelevant and uninvolved in people's lives say hurtful and critical words, lie and deceive, and try to overpower others with their speech (Ps. 10:7). They have secret plans to harm others so they may gain an advantage (Ps. 10:9). They use their power and influence to use others for their personal interests (Ps. 10:10, 10:7). When facing people like this, David still trusts that God will watch over him. God will ultimately enforce what is good in the long run (Ps. 10:16). God being the judge of all people is the central core of this Psalm.[11]

G. If we adopt this perspective and attitude, we will be following the example of Jesus:

> [21] For you have been called for this purpose, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you would follow in His steps, [22] *He* who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; [23] and while being abusively insulted, He did not insult in return; while suffering, He did not threaten, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

H. The purpose of God giving us spiritual life is for us to trust God while suffering ("For you have been called for this purpose", v. 21). Jesus lived His life constantly entrusting Himself to God the Father just like David did ("kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously", v. 23). As disciples, the purpose of God giving us spiritual life is for us to live as Jesus lived in this regard. We suffer in this life the way Jesus did. We keep doing good while being mistreated by others with an attitude of trust in God. God will deal with the intentions for harm and the harm that is done to us. We don't react by doing wrong to those who wrong us. We let God determine how those who hurt us should be dealt with and punished.

I. Do you trust God with the outcome of all your circumstances of life, even the most difficult ones? Will you trust God to do what is good and right, even when you receive bad news? Are you convinced that God is in control, is good and wise, has good reasons behind what He does, and does what is good and right even in the most painful situations of your life?

J. We have all faced situations that leave us scratching our head and asking the question, "Why did God allow that to happen?" The truth is that we don't always know what the will of God is in every situation. We don't always know what God is doing or why He is doing it the way He is. God doesn't always share His reasons with us.

---

[9] Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God*, ed. J. A. Motyer, vol. 1, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 44.

[10] Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God*, ed. J. A. Motyer, vol. 1, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 44.

[11] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *A Continental Commentary: Psalms 1–59* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 198.

K. There are plenty of situations in life that will seem to be contrary to the will of God and will be contrary to God's moral standards. God lets wicked people get away with doing wrong for a while. They can even prosper for a season. Yet, during it all, God sees everything they are doing and will punish them when the time comes. While God is slow to anger, He will not let the guilty go unpunished (Na. 1:3).

V. Conclusion

A. As we experience life in this world, we are going to see bad people doing wrong and hurting others. These same people will even be "successful" in gaining an advantage and being in positions of power. Those who live as if God doesn't exist might seem to prosper for a time. It may appear that faithfulness and obedience to God doesn't pay off.

B. The truth is, God observes and understands everything that happens in our lives. He is good and He is on the side of those who seek and obey Him. God listens closely to our prayer. He will punish and correct all the wrongs we experience. He is the Judge of all humanity who will assess everyone righteously, fairly, and justly. Everyone will get exactly what they deserve. God is King and will eventually remove anyone who disobeys and does wrong from His world.

C. The main advice of this Psalm is summarized by Peter:

> [19] Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God are to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (1 Pet. 4:19)