

Heart strength

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

Psalm 31:24

It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear, but the mastery of it. The mastery of a thing is generally achieved by strength, or skill, or both. In this text, it is strength of heart that is to master fear, and that strength is linked to hope in the LORD. Thus, courage is not borne of a strong will, but of a trusting heart yielded to God. Such trust is connected by hope, as we understand that hope, as used in the Bible is not simply a fleeting wish, but is something that we are certain will come, yet has not presently arrived. In the beginning of this psalm, David expressed his hopeful trust in the LORD with a combination of statements of faith and prayers for deliverance: "In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth" (vv. 1-5).

To follow this example, we need to be reminded that our strength must come from the LORD. There are plenty of these reminders in the scriptures. For example: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:14). "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped" (Psalm 28:7). "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:26). "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools" (Psalm 84:5-6). From these it is clear that our hope, our help, and our strength in times of trouble must all come from the LORD. May we each connect such courage to our hope, in this and every day. "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:7).