

# HIS Nature

*Blessed is the man who  
perseveres under trial. . . .*  
JAMES 1:12

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## HEART OF STRENGTH

Everything about Jesus is  
amazing, and everything  
in the universe testifies to  
just how amazing he is!  
Scripture loudly proclaims  
Christ's great care for us,  
so should it surprise us  
that creation frequently  
illustrates the magnitude of  
this love (Hebrews 1:1-3)? Deep  
within the hidden recesses of our  
 chests lies a living emblem of  
God's providential kindness and  
incomparable strength. Here resides  
a very special type of muscle Jesus  
created in order to give us life—  
the muscle of the human heart.

The heart or cardiac muscle  
(also known as the myocardium)  
is composed of a family of



*Heart muscle fibers*

intertwined fibers not unlike the  
threads of a wool coat, except that  
myocardial fibers are immensely  
more complex. Each strand of  
muscle is miraculously designed to  
give the heart the ability to pump  
blood tirelessly throughout the  
body. And Jesus protects each fiber  
by surrounding it with countless  
other fibers. Cardiac cells selflessly  
work in concert—there are no  
loners in this business! Without  
a coordinated effort, the heart

*continued...*

Jesus designed the complex  
network of arteries, veins, and  
capillaries within your body,  
vessels which stretch for a grand  
total of 60,000 miles. If we  
laid all your blood vessels end  
to end, they would circle the  
equator two-and-a-half times!

Hold your hand in front of  
your chest and make a fist—this  
is approximately the size of the  
miraculous pump that pushes blood  
through those 60,000 miles of  
arteries, veins, and capillaries tightly  
packed into your body. Your heart  
is located behind your breastbone  
or sternum, just left of center, and  
it weighs less than one pound. But  
don't let its size fool you, because  
this organ reflects the strength of  
an infinite God! No other pump is  
so resilient. The average life span  
of the best man-made pumps is 10  
to 15 years, but a person's heart can  
last 70, 80, or 90 years and beat  
two to three billion times during its  
lifetime. The heart stops and rests  
no more than a second between  
contractions, yet it doesn't tire out.

An average person pumps about  
ten pints of blood throughout the  
body every minute—that's 2,500

*Blessed is the man who perseveres under  
trial, because when he has stood the test, he  
will receive the crown of life that God has  
promised to those who love him.*

JAMES 1:12





could not function properly and we would die. There's no need for alarm, though; our Maker carefully and lovingly watches over the activities of each fiber and faithfully directs their work every moment of every day (Colossians 1:16-17).

By the end of the nineteenth century, scientific research into the realm of human anatomy and physiology brought to light the incredible and precise ways God orchestrates the performance of cardiac muscles. English scientist Ernest Starling discovered that each muscle fiber of a person's heart contracts when stimulated—if the fibers are stretched just a little, collectively they work harder. This is now known as Starling's law of the heart. It's a little like facing a world-class rugby team. The harder you push against their front row, the harder they push back.

At first glance, this may not seem like a big deal. But our bodies are daily subjected to stress, so this ability of cardiac muscle to change the power of its blood flow is extremely important. We

are immersed in a universe of physiological trials and tribulations. Every day we are exposed to temperature fluctuations, physical activity, germs, hormones, and many other burdens, requiring each of us—and especially our hearts—to be adaptable.

Consider a busy fire department as an analogy. Firefighters have to be prepared for all contingencies. The greater the emergency, the greater their response. This is how it is with our hearts. When we're lifting a heavy object or we're frightened, the myocardium kicks into high gear. It works harder to supply extra oxygen and nutrients to the stressed body. As it does, an increased amount of blood fills the chambers of the heart, stretching the individual muscle fibers ever so slightly and dramatically increasing the heart's ability to perform work (Starling's law of the heart). Again, this is all possible because Jesus created us and deeply cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)!

God places us under stressful circumstances at times. He does this to stretch our character so that our faith in him might become stronger. But he also promises that he won't stretch us too

far (1 Corinthians 10:13). One of the ways our Lord Jesus prevents this from happening is by surrounding us with other believers. As it is with heart muscle cells, God doesn't intend for us to be "isolated fibers" (Colossians 2:19). He gave us the church to strengthen and protect us from the wiles of the world, its prince, and our own wickedness.

We see this principle marvelously illustrated in the heart. If our hearts are healthy, no individual muscle fiber can be overstretched, and thus injured, because collectively the surrounding muscle fibers are too strong to allow this to happen. The sheer quantity of fibers (numbering in the millions) that compose the heart protect the individual muscle cells from damage. So it is with the church of the Living God when we truly care for one another! This is one reason why Christ commands us not to neglect meeting together (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Jesus is amazing! He has placed in the center of our chests a working symbol of his love. The heart teaches us that we shouldn't run away from



*Human heart*

difficulties, nor should we avoid those people through whom God gives us strength. Like the heart muscle, we should exercise our faith in Christ and allow ourselves to be stretched from time to time so God's will can be accomplished through us. And if we support one another, we will take part in Christ's promise that even the gates of Hades will not overcome his church (Matthew 16:18).

#### **DIGGING DEEPER**

The study of the heart began in earnest during the seventeenth century. William Harvey, royal physician for James I and Charles I—kings of England, was the first to grasp the basic workings of the heart and the intricacies of blood vessels. As a result of his dogged research, Dr. Harvey published an important paper in 1628 describing the flow of blood in the human body.

*continued...*