

Psalm 147:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Analysis

This verse reveals the specific orientation of God's favor: 'The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.' The phrase 'taketh pleasure' (Hebrew 'ratzah') indicates divine delight and approval. 'In them that fear him' employs 'fear' (yirah) in the biblical sense not of terror but of reverent awe and respect. The parallel 'in those that hope in his mercy' (yachelu le-chesdo) establishes that fear of God and hope in His mercy are not opposites but complementary. Those who reverence God appropriately also trust in His kindness. This verse answers a crucial question: what kind of people please God? Not the powerful or wealthy, but those who combine proper fear with confident trust. The pairing of fear and hope suggests a mature spirituality that neither despises God's authority nor doubts His benevolence. Divine pleasure (ratzah) is closely linked in biblical thought to acceptance and favor. Those who combine reverent awe with trust in mercy find themselves in right relationship with God.

Historical Context

The concept of 'fear of the LORD' (yirat YHWH) is foundational to biblical theology, appearing in Proverbs, Job, and throughout the Psalter. This verse articulates the theological synthesis: proper fear of God coexists with hope in His mercy. During the exile and post-exilic periods, when God's power was not evident in political/military terms, maintaining both proper reverence and confident hope was spiritually demanding. The phrase 'hope in his mercy' (chesed) echoes the covenant theology that sustained Israel through dispersion. In later Jewish

thought, the combination of 'fear of heaven' (yirat shamayim) with trust in divine benevolence became the essence of piety. The Kiddushin tractate of the Talmud (42a) discusses who inherits the world to come, consistently emphasizing those who combine proper fear with genuine kindness. In Christian tradition, this verse pointed to the security of believers who, fearing God appropriately, could nonetheless approach Him with confidence through Christ's mediation (Ephesians 3:12).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How can fear of God (reverent awe) coexist with hope in His mercy without one undermining the other?
2. What does it mean that 'The LORD taketh pleasure' in those who fear Him - what is God's emotional response to human reverence?
3. Why does the psalm pair 'fear' with 'hope in mercy' rather than pairing 'fear' with 'obedience' or 'hope' with 'love'?
4. In what ways does the character of those who fear God and trust His mercy inform our understanding of righteousness?
5. How should believers today understand and practice the 'fear of the LORD' in light of New Testament revelation of God's love?

Interlinear Text

רֹצֶחֶת	הָיָה	אַתָּה	יְרַא	אַתָּה	בְּמִימָלֶל
taketh pleasure	The LORD	H853	in them that fear	H853	him in those that hope
H7521	H3068		H3373		H3176

לְמִסְנָה

in his mercy

H2617

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 33:18 (Grace): Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

Zephaniah 3:17 (References Lord): The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Psalms 149:4 (References Lord): For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

Isaiah 62:4 (References Lord): Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

Psalms 33:22 (Grace): Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Psalms 35:27 (References Lord): Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

Proverbs 31:30 (References Lord): Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

Proverbs 11:20 (References Lord): They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

1 Peter 1:17 (Parallel theme): And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

1 Peter 1:13 (Grace): Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

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