

Psalm 149:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

Analysis

This verse reveals the basis for Israel's rejoicing: 'For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.' The phrase 'taketh pleasure in his people' (ratzah YHWH be'amo) echoes verse 11 of Psalm 147 but personalizes it to the entire community rather than just the individual faithful. God's pleasure (ratzon) in His people is foundational. 'He will beautify the meek with salvation' (yephareh anavim be-yeshua) uses the verb paarah (beautify, adorn) in a striking way: salvation is portrayed as beautification or adornment. The 'meek' (anavim) refers to those who are humble, afflicted, or spiritually oppressed. The verse claims that God specifically beautifies the humble and afflicted through salvation. This inversion of worldly values appears throughout biblical wisdom: the proud are brought low, the meek are exalted. The promise is that God will adorn those previously degraded with the splendor of salvation. This provides comfort to those suffering under persecution or social marginalization: God sees them, takes pleasure in them, and will beautify them through deliverance.

Historical Context

The concept of God taking 'pleasure in his people' carries covenantal language. The verb ratzah appears in connection with acceptable sacrifices (Leviticus 1:4, 19:5) and expressions of divine favor. By extending this to the entire community ('his people'), the verse asserts that God's favor rests on Israel collectively. The phrase 'beautify the meek with salvation' reflects the theodicy of post-exilic Judaism: those suffering unjustly are promised divine vindication and honor.

During times of persecution (Seleucid oppression under Antiochus IV, later Roman persecution), this verse provided assurance that God saw the meek and would beautify them. The concept of salvation as beautification or adornment appears in Isaiah 61:3 and 10, where salvation garments transform the sorrowful and the poor. In Hasidic mysticism, the meek are valued as spiritually superior to the proud, aligning with this verse's elevation of the humble. Early Christians understood this in light of the reversal of values through the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) and Christ's identification with the afflicted.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's pleasure in His people affect their identity and sense of worth?
2. What does it mean that salvation 'beautifies the meek,' and how does this image transform understanding of redemption?
3. Why does the psalm specifically identify the meek (humble, afflicted) as the recipients of this beautification?
4. In what ways does this verse challenge worldly standards of beauty, strength, and honor?
5. How should Christians understand being 'beautified with salvation' in light of transformation through the gospel?

Interlinear Text

רֹצֶחָם יְהִי בְּעֵמָה יְפָאֵר עַתָּה יְמִינָה

H3588 taketh pleasure For the LORD in his people he will beautify the meek

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בִּשְׁוֹעָה:

with salvation

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Additional Cross-References

Psalms 147:11 (References Lord): The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

1 Peter 3:4 (Parallel theme): But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

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.

Psalms 132:16 (Salvation): I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

Psalms 22:8 (References Lord): He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

Psalms 117:2 (References Lord): For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

Jeremiah 32:41 (Parallel theme): Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

Zephaniah 3:17 (Salvation): 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.

Isaiah 61:10 (Salvation): I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Psalms 90:17 (References Lord): And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

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