

Psalm 21:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

Analysis

Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power. The psalm concludes with a doxology that redirects all praise from the king back to YHWH. 'Be thou exalted' (rumah, רוםָה) is a prayer for God to manifest His supremacy, to be lifted high above all rivals and acknowledged by all creation. This exaltation is 'in thine own strength' (be'ozekha, בְּעֵזֶךְ)—God's power alone, not human contribution, deserves glory.

The response to God's exaltation is worship: 'we will sing and praise thy power.' The Hebrew word for 'sing' (nashirah, נִשְׁירָה) implies lyrical, musical celebration. 'Praise' (zammerah, זָמֵרָה) specifically refers to singing with instrumental accompaniment—full orchestral worship. The psalm thus moves from petition (Psalm 20) through thanksgiving for answered prayer (Psalm 21:1-12) to doxological worship that acknowledges God as the ultimate hero of the narrative.

This pattern—from request through deliverance to praise—structures biblical faith. Christians experience the same movement: we cry out to God in need, He delivers through Christ, and we respond with worship. The book of Revelation depicts this eternally: the redeemed sing, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!' (Revelation 5:12). Our worship acknowledges that God's power accomplished salvation, and all glory belongs to Him alone. The principle of soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone) finds its Old Testament foundation in verses like this.

Historical Context

Temple worship in ancient Israel was characterized by instrumental music and congregational singing. The Levitical musicians used lyres, harps, cymbals, trumpets, and other instruments (1 Chronicles 25:1-7, Psalm 150). The superscriptions of many psalms include musical directions ('To the chief Musician,' 'with stringed instruments,' etc.), indicating their liturgical function. Psalm 21 would have been sung with full musical accompaniment during thanksgiving celebrations.

The call to 'exalt' God reflects ancient Near Eastern concepts of divine kingship. In pagan thought, gods were exalted through military victories of their earthly representatives—a god's status rose or fell with his people's fortunes. Israel inverted this: YHWH's exaltation wasn't dependent on Israel's success; rather, Israel's success demonstrated YHWH's already-existing supremacy. Even in defeat, God remained sovereign (the prophets proclaimed this during exile—Isaiah 40-55).

This concluding doxology would have involved the entire worshiping community. Where earlier verses focused on the king, the final verse uses the plural 'we will sing'—all Israel joins in exalting YHWH. This communal dimension prevented royal pride: yes, the king experienced victory, but the entire nation participated in worship, and all glory went to God. This egalitarian element in worship distinguished Israel from surrounding nations where the king often received worship himself. In Israel, only YHWH received shachah (worship/prostration), and even the king bowed before God.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How can you conclude your seasons of answered prayer with intentional worship and doxology?
2. What does it mean for you practically to exalt God 'in His own strength' rather than taking credit yourself?
3. How can you incorporate more singing and musical praise into your personal and corporate worship?
4. In what ways do you need to redirect praise that's coming to you back to God?
5. How does the pattern of petition-deliverance-praise structure your spiritual life and prayer habits?

Interlinear Text

Be thou exalted	LORD	in thine own strength	so will we sing	and praise
H7311	H3068	H5797	H7891	H2167
גְּבוּרָתְךָ:				
thy power				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 57:5 (Parallel theme): Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.

Psalms 113:5 (References Lord): Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,

Matthew 6:10 (Parallel theme): Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Revelation 11:17 (References Lord): Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

Psalms 18:46 (References Lord): The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

Psalms 46:10 (Parallel theme): Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Psalms 57:11 (Parallel theme): Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

Job 9:19 (Parallel theme): If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead?

1 Chronicles 29:11 (References Lord): Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Matthew 6:13 (Parallel theme): And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.