

Psalm 34:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

Analysis

My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. David declares intention to boast—but exclusively in God, not self. This establishes proper glorying that honors God while encouraging fellow believers, contrasting worldly boasting with godly exultation.

My soul shall make her boast (Hebrew nephesh halal—soul/life praise, boast, glory) presents paradoxical boasting. Boasting typically exalts self; David's boasting exalts God. Soul (nephesh) represents whole person—inner being, life, essential self. Entire being will boast, glory, exult. But in the LORD specifies boast's object. Not personal achievements, wisdom, strength—only in God. This echoes Jeremiah 9:23-24: Let not wise glory in wisdom, mighty in might, rich in riches; but let him that glories glory in knowing LORD.

The humble shall hear thereof introduces audience. Humble ('anav—humble, afflicted, meek) describes those recognizing their need, acknowledging dependence on God. Proud self-sufficient people resent others' testimony; humble welcome it. Shall hear thereof means David's testimony will reach them. And be glad (samach—rejoice, be joyful) describes their response. Hearing how God delivered David encourages humble to trust God for their deliverance. One person's testimony strengthens corporate faith.

Reformed theology sees here proper use of testimony. We don't boast to elevate ourselves but to honor God and encourage others. Personal testimonies serve

ecclesial purposes—building faith, strengthening hope, demonstrating God's faithfulness. Paul boasted in weakness (2 Corinthians 11:30, 12:9), in cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14), never in self. Christian boasting glories in God's work, not human achievement, encouraging humble believers who hear.

Historical Context

Psalm 34's superscription connects it to David feigning madness before Abimelech (1 Samuel 21:10-15). This humiliating episode—Israel's king pretending insanity, drooling on beard, scratching doors—was shameful. Yet David boasts not in courage or dignity but in God who preserved him through degrading circumstances. This reframes testimony: we glory not in how well we performed but in how faithfully God delivered.

Hebrew wisdom tradition distinguished proper and improper boasting. Proverbs warns against self-commendation (Proverbs 27:2) and haughtiness (Proverbs 16:18). Yet Psalms model boasting in God repeatedly (Psalms 5:11, 32:11, 44:8). Distinguishing factor is object—boasting in self is prideful; boasting in God is worship.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does boasting in the LORD differ from worldly boasting, and why does this distinction matter?
2. In what ways can your testimony of God's faithfulness encourage humble believers around you?
3. Why do humble people rejoice when hearing others' testimonies while proud people resent them?

4. What circumstances in your life, even humiliating ones, provide opportunities to boast in God's deliverance?
5. How can you cultivate practice of gloria in God rather than self-promotion in speech and thought?

Interlinear Text

בְּ יְהֹוָה	תַּתְהַלֵּל	נֶפֶשׁ	שָׁמַע
in the LORD	shall make her boast	My soul	shall hear
H3068	H1984	H5315	H8085
		עֲבָדִים	the humble
		H6035	
וְיִשְׁמַחְתָּ			
thereof and be glad			
H8055			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 9:24 (References Lord): But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

1 Corinthians 1:31 (References Lord): That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Psalms 119:74 (Parallel theme): They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

Psalms 44:8 (Parallel theme): In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

2 Corinthians 10:17 (References Lord): But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Psalms 105:3 (References Lord): Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

Isaiah 45:25 (References Lord): In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Psalms 142:7 (Parallel theme): Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org