

Psalm 86:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Analysis

Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

David petitions God to cause joy in his nephesh (נֶפֶשׁ, soul), recognizing that genuine gladness comes from God, not circumstances. The verb sammach (סִמְמַח, make joyful) indicates active divine intervention—David needs God to produce joy he cannot manufacture himself.

The parallel phrase **I lift up my soul** (nephshi essa, נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר) describes prayer posture—offering one's entire being to God, holding nothing back. This lifting up suggests both elevation (directing attention upward to God) and surrender (placing oneself in God's hands). The gesture anticipates Jesus's promise: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32).

The causative connection—joy results from lifting up one's soul to God—establishes proper spiritual ordering. Happiness rooted in circumstances fluctuates, but joy grounded in God's character and covenant promises remains stable. David's request models prayer that seeks God Himself as source of satisfaction, not merely His gifts.

Historical Context

Soul-lifting was physical prayer posture in ancient Israel—uplifted hands and eyes directed toward heaven or the temple. This embodied prayer expressed dependence and openness to divine blessing. The practice continued in synagogue

and early church worship. Psalm 86 likely functioned liturgically, teaching proper prayer approach emphasizing God's character (verses 5, 8-10, 15) as ground for petition.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Where are you seeking joy apart from consciously 'lifting up your soul' to God?
2. How can you distinguish between circumstantial happiness and deep joy rooted in God's unchanging character?
3. What does it practically mean to 'lift up your soul' to God throughout the day?

Interlinear Text

נְפָשָׁה	אֶלְעָנָה	נְפָשָׁה	שֶׁמֶן
Rejoice	my soul	of thy servant	H3588
H8055	H5315	H5650	H413
			for unto thee O Lord
			H136
			my soul
			H5315

אָשֵׁא:

do I lift up

H5375

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 143:8 (Parallel theme): Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Psalms 25:1 (References Lord): Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

Isaiah 61:3 (References Lord): To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Psalms 51:12 (Parallel theme): Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Psalms 62:8 (Parallel theme): Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

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