

Psalm 45

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies.

A Maskil of the Sons of Korah; a love song.

¹My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

²You are the most handsome of the sons of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.

³Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,
in your splendor and majesty!

⁴In your majesty ride out victoriously
for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;
let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!

⁵Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the king's enemies;
the peoples fall under you.

⁶Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;

⁷ you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;

⁸ your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.

From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;

⁹ daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor;
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

¹⁰Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear:
forget your people and your father's house,

¹¹ and the king will desire your beauty.
Since he is your lord, bow to him.

¹²The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts,
the richest of the people.

¹³All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold.

¹⁴In many-colored robes she is led to the king,

with her virgin companions following behind her.

¹⁵ With joy and gladness they are led along
as they enter the palace of the king.

¹⁶ In place of your fathers shall be your sons;
you will make them princes in all the earth.
I will cause your name to be remembered
in all generations; therefore nations
will praise you forever and ever.

I. *Exposition*

Our text today is a song of praise. The writer, speaking by the Holy Spirit, praises the divinely appointed Anointed king, the beauty of the king's bride, and the gloriousness of their wedding ceremony. The writer makes known to us the attributes of the King: The anointed king is the most handsome among the sons of men, full of grace and truth, blessed by God forever, mighty, majestic, exuding splendor, victorious, devoted to truth and meekness and righteousness, eternally established as king by God. He is *the* lover of righteousness and truth favored by God above all men.

The anointed one is not merely a person upon whom God's favor rests, but one whose active obedience to God's law is met with divine approbation. God does not look down upon the king of righteousness and truth and meekness in contempt. Rather, the writer tells us in detail about the relationship between the Lord God and his Anointed King. Because the king is the most handsome among men and full of grace and truth, God has blessed him forever. Because the king has loved righteousness and hated wickedness, therefore God has anointed him with the oil of gladness above all of his companions.

Thus, by the Holy Spirit we see that the king *was* above all of his companions and *is* above all of his companions. And by virtue of his character, this king is favored above all others by God, as well as exalted above all others by God. The Holy Spirit also teaches us that this king is not merely a man above all other men, but God himself. As it is written: "Your throne, O God, is forever..." The Anointed one of Israel, the Christ or Messiah, to put the matter more explicitly, is the most righteous among men and the only Righteous and Wise God himself, clothed in human flesh. The king of Israel is God and Man, without contradiction, and is the object of the praise of the writer, who is speaking the Spirit of God's Words, and God's most favored king of all kings.

It is important for us to stress these relations between the Spirit (speaking through the writer), the King (who is God and Man), and God (who has chosen this king and exalted him because of his righteousness and victory over wickedness and the enemies of God), for it shows us, albeit in a shadowy form, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the whole of Scripture at once. This psalm has God's anointed king as its central focus. He is the object of the Spirit's glorification and the object of the Father's love. He rides forth in justice and righteousness and meekness and successfully destroys God's enemies and wickedness. And he takes for

himself a bride beautified by the garments of his royalty, a bride whom he has set apart from the world for himself as the object of his love.

Do we not see the Trinity? Do we not hear the Spirit of God speaking of the Son's glories? Do we not hear the Spirit of God revealing that the Father has chosen his Son above all men to be the eternal occupant of the throne of David, the king of all kings, and the perfect bridegroom who covers his bride with royal garments of righteousness? We do, although only *in part*, that is to say in a shadowy type that becomes crystal clear when the time of fulfillment comes. Hence, the writer of Hebrews reveals that it is

of the Son [that the Father] says,
“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”¹

And Paul explains that husbands ought to love their wives even as

...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.²

And the apostle John reveals that Christ is the king of kings and the church is “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”³

Whereas commentators have written extensively on this psalm, trying to identify its king and queen as this or that historical person, the New Testament clearly states that the King of which the psalmist speaks is *the Son*, Jesus. And the New Testament tells us who the bride of Jesus is: the church. What we have in this psalm, then, is not merely the celebration of an ancient king and his beautiful bride, but a typological portrait of the Spirit glorifying the Son who glorifies the Father who, in turn, glorifies the Son. The Spirit glorifies the king by revealing the king's glorious attributes and relationship to God the Father. The king glorifies the Father by his gracious words and perfect obedience to God's holy law. The Father glorifies the Son by blessing him forever, as the psalmist reveals.

Now the church, the bride, is present as well, but as one who has been taken out of the world, united to the Son, and called, therefore, to worship and serve him. The marriage ceremony structures the reciprocal glorification of the writer, the king, and God (i.e. the Spirit, the Son, and the Father). It is the means whereby God's triunity and glory are displayed for the world to see. We are called to leave the world, our past lives of darkness

¹ Heb 1:8-9.

² Eph 5:25-33.

³ Rev 21:9b.

and depravity, and to worship the king, for he is our Lord. He has chosen us from the world, clothed us in marriage garments, and prepared a place for us eternally dwell with him.

2. Doctrinal Application

Having given the general thrust of the psalm, let us move onward, looking at several key verses. We pray that the Lord will cause us to see how these words are applicable for us, his bride.

v.1: *The marriage of the Lamb is a pleasing theme.*

As we mentioned in our study in Mark, the bride of Christ eagerly awaits her bridegroom. There are some who would identify this desire to see our king return in power and glory as misguided. There are some who caution us against this by saying “You shouldn’t be so heavenly-minded that you’re no earthly good.” Scripture teaches us something completely different. The marriage of the king and the bride, the marriage of Christ and his redeemed people, at the time of his return is a *pleasing* theme to not merely the writer of this psalm, and not merely the church, but to the Holy Spirit who inspired this song. It is, moreover, a pleasing theme to the Son of God who loves us and gave himself for us to deliver us from our sins and unite us to himself. And not only this, but it is a pleasing theme to the Father who gave us as a bride to his beloved Son. The Father has elected a people for the Son, the Son has fought victoriously against the powers of sin, death and the devil, and the Holy Spirit now calls us to gaze in awe upon the glory of God thereby revealed. How is this *not* a pleasing theme? The marriage of the Lamb and his church is a pleasing theme that should inspire joy and worship in our hearts, just as it did for the psalmist. Let us, like the psalmist, meditate on the glory of the king, the love of God for his Anointed One, the gift of our union to Christ, and our duty to love and worship him who redeemed us.

v.2: *What makes Christ desirable is that he is full of grace and truth.*

The psalmist describes the king as the most handsome among men but does not list the physical features of the king. Elsewhere in Scripture, handsome kings have been described by their physical attributes. David is young and ruddy. Saul is taller than most others. Yet here is something quite different. The king is called the most handsome among men, and his spiritual virtues are listed. He is full of grace (as we see in this second verse) and truth (as verse 4 teaches us). And he is the object of God’s love. The king who rules over his church is not desired by the reprobate for this reason: He is light, grace, truth, purity itself - and the reprobate only wants what feeds his own sinful flesh. Christ is desirable because he is the literal embodiment of holiness and righteousness and truth and grace, not because he helps us pursue our dreams of a better life here and now. Christ is our life - here and now and forevermore. And it is only those who have been given a new heart of flesh, one that hungers and thirsts for righteousness, that truly see the king’s handsomeness as consisting in his spiritual virtues, i.e. Who he is: The Lord our Righteousness.

v.3: *The splendor and majesty of our King is seen not only in his mercy and truth, but also in his destruction of all that oppose him.*

Sinful man sees the judgment of God in Scripture and opposes it with every fiber of his being. This is why when we preach about the righteousness of God and the reality of Hell we are often met with statements like: “I could *never* worship a God like that!” I encountered this kind of attitude from a person some weeks ago, as some of you know, as I explained the reality of judgment to him. He told me he would rather go to Hell than worship God. And in the public sphere, we perhaps may have heard the irrational ramblings of the so-called New Atheists who hate the judgment of God and try to indict him as immoral for his judgments against the Egyptians, the Amalekites, and the Philistines. These men would all readily claim that they don’t oppose the Scriptural teaching to love one’s neighbor as oneself, or the Scriptural injunction to feed and clothe the homeless, or to take in orphans and help needy widows. What they will not stand for, however, is the humbling and terrifying fact that by the works of the law no flesh will be justified. The judgment of God, in which he reigns down upon the unredeemed with the fullness of his wrath, reminds men that their claim to love justice, mercy, goodness, and even God are false. The judgment of God reminds men that they are justly condemned and have no hope - in anything other than the cross of Christ Jesus - of escaping their fate. Therefore, how can they believe that God’s true justice, under whose exercise even the smallest infraction merits an eternity of suffering, is one of the things that displays his glory? How can the enemy of God see God’s judgment of his enemies as something that makes his Son the most handsome of men? They cannot. But we see in this psalm that the beauty and greatness of the Son is displayed in his conquering sin, death, and the devil, in judging his enemies. Revelation 19:11-16, even more explicitly tying together the beauty of our Lord to his display of wrath and power, reads:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called *Faithful and True*, and in *righteousness* he *judges* and makes *war*. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in *a robe dipped in blood*, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

v.4: *It is not wrong to pray for God to repay his enemies with perfect justice.*

Hence, the psalmist sings about the majesty of the king as he rides forth victoriously warring against the enemies of God. Not only this, but he prays the king *will* continue in this

path of executing the righteous judgment of God. The phrase “let your right hand teach you awesome deeds” is explained by one commentary as follows:

“It is the right hand wherewith the warrior strikes; and at each blow it opens to the striker terrible experiences, and thus may be said to ‘teach him terrible things.’”⁴

And more concisely, another commentary explains that the phrase means to “point the way to terrible things; that is, in conquest of enemies.”⁵ The writer is not simply content to identify the wrath of the king against God’s enemies as good, but prays for it to continue. Hypocritically, sinful man wants to pray for peace, pray for justice, pray for those who are suffering unjustly under a tyrannical political regime - and yet *refuses* to pray for God’s wrath to be poured out upon his enemies. Only those who are in Christ see Christ’s war against sin, death, and the devil, as well as his victorious triumph over his reprobate enemies as good, as something for which we should pray. This doesn’t mean we are to take pleasure in the death of the wicked. Not at all. We are to plead with them to repent and be forgiven. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. And we are to love them, pray for them, and give them a reason for the hope that we have *because* we desire to see God glorified not only in his destruction of the wicked, but also in his salvation of the wicked who repent and place their trust in him.

**Many misunderstand the so-called imprecatory psalms, believing them to be the expression of one ancient people’s hatred for another ancient people of a different ethnicity or nationality. This is a sinful interpretation of the Scriptures that needs to be put to rest. The imprecatory psalms are simply prayers for God’s righteousness to reign in heaven and on earth alike, in this age and in the age to come. Regardless of how much men hate this truth: God is glorified in the destruction of his enemies.

v.5: *Christ is crushing his enemies underfoot.*

Thus, when we come to verse 5, we are told that the king’s enemies fall under him. And we have here, it seems, an allusion to Genesis 3:15 where we learn that Christ will crush the serpent and his seed underfoot. The enemies of God are being crushed underfoot and will ultimately be completely conquered once, as Paul tells us, he puts away sin and death forever. We do not yet see the completed victory of our Lord, but we can see him crushing his foes everyday. For death is the punishment for sin and it is meted out everyday. Men die every day. Therefore, God is meting out judgment every day. This is not, of course, the last judgment. This is not the second death. Rather, what we see is the first death, entailing the separation of those who have died from those who are still living. This is serious, but it is only a hint of the fate of those who reject the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the day of

⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary.*

⁵ *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary.*

the Lord, the reprobate will be eternally separated from the true land of the living, the new heavens and earth. On that day, the wicked will find no rest, day or night, no place of residence in Christ's kingdom, for the wicked shall be turned into hell and tormented day and night by the God at whom they now shake their fist in defiance. And yet, there is another way in which our Lord's enemies fall under him, viz. by conversion. As the Scriptures teach us: While we were yet enemies of God, Christ died for our sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Through his propitiatory sacrifice, God is not our enemy, but our Father. Christ's enemies will fall under his feet. Christ will rule his enemies in either one or two ways: They will either continue in rebellion and be the subjects of his eternal wrath, or they will repent and be made into sons of the living God whose lives will eternally bear the image of their Divine king.

v.6: *Christ's kingdom and kingship is from everlasting to everlasting.*

Christ has never been ousted from his throne by any of his creatures. There has not been, nor can there ever be a time, moreover, in which this is possible. Of his own free choice, the Lord of Glory tabernacled among us as a servant. As Paul says: Though he was rich, yet he, for our sake, became poor. And he did this in righteousness, in order to fulfill all righteousness, and for the sake of his church, that his righteousness would be imputed to us by faith alone. His kingdom, then, is an eternal kingdom which is marked by uprightness. And this uprightness is not the superficial uprightness observed in the scrupulosity of monks and Pharisees and Sadducees. Rather, the uprightness characteristic of the king's scepter is first and foremost in the perfect righteousness of the king to God's law, that is to say in the king's personal righteousness, and secondarily in the king's perfect execution of justice according to the Law of God. This implies that no matter what evils occur in this preset evil age, Christ is ruling righteously over all flesh as he calls out his elect from the world. As we read in John 17:1-2, God the Father has "...given him authority over all flesh, to" - *i.e. In order to* - "give eternal life to all whom [the Father has] given him..."

v.7: *God is pleased with Christ above all other men.*

The psalmist declares that because of the king's righteousness - expressed in his obedience to the Law and his hatred and punishment of all lawbreaking - God has anointed him with the oil of gladness above his companions. Spurgeon, commenting on this psalm, notes that "while our King is anointed with the oil of gladness it is also written of the virgin souls who wait upon his church, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought, they shall enter into the King's palace." As those who have been united to Christ Jesus in life, death, burial, and resurrection, we are accepted *in the beloved*. We are objects not of God's wrath but his favor. Our acceptance with God, then, is found not within ourselves but in Christ Jesus our King. The man who presents his good works before God in order to win God's favor, then, is not only willfully forgetting that he was conceived in sin, is now a sinner, cannot wash away his stains of sin, nor suppress the sin that still resides in his heart - the one who presents his good

works to God in order to find acceptance with God implies that Christ is not the one in whom God is pleased above all men. The one who presents his good works in order to find acceptance before is implying that he is more righteous than God. This is blasphemy of the first order, and it is rightly condemned by God's Word. As it is written:

All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse... (Gal 3:10)

v.10: *We are saved by faith alone, unto obedience.*

Salvation is a gift freely given by God to undeserving sinners. And the only good works sinners may plead are those performed by the Son of God in our place, in his life and death. Yet, we are called out of the world in order to serve and worship our king, the Lord God Christ. Note the language used here. The psalmist says:

*Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear:
Forget your people and your father's house,
And the king will desire your beauty...*

And is this not the same command given to us in 2nd Cor 6:16-18, where the Lord tells us to come out of the world, be separate from the world, touch no unclean thing in order to be, that is to say in order to live according to what we already are by faith, children of God? Indeed, it is the same command. We are saved by faith alone, unto obedience to our Lord. We are united to Christ in order to not only receive forgiveness of sins but to bear his image in righteousness and knowledge and holiness.

We saw this emphasized in Mark's Gospel, where our Lord calls his apostles as they were fishing. John and James leave their job, their father, and their old lives behind in order to follow Christ. Likewise, we saw that Levi left behind his job, his old life of tax collection and state sanctioned theft, in order to follow Christ our Bridegroom. And this is because God calls us out of the world to be his people, but he is continually drawing us out of the world's ways, calling us to follow his ways, to follow him. The Christian is continually being separated and being called to be separate by God. The command given to the bride in our psalm today is the same we are given in 2nd Cor, as we've noted. And it is the same command the church is given in the book of Revelation, where we read:

*Come out of her, my people,
lest you take part in her sins,
lest you share in her plagues;
for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities.*
(Rev 18:4-5)

From the moment we are called to leave behind family, and our father's house, even as Abraham was called in Gen 12:1-3, until the moment we are separated from the goats and called to reside with our Lord God forever, we are being separated unto God. We are separated from the world in our union to Christ. And in this, God is pleased. We are the bride of Christ and in our being separate from the world, he is pleased. We are the children of God, and in our being separate from the world he is pleased as well. We are the church, and in being separate from the whore of babylon he is well pleased. We are his people, and he is pleased to have us separated from his enemies for all eternity that we might finally be in sinless communion with him.

vv.16-17: *Our lives are to point to Christ.*

The final verses of this psalm remind us, yet again, that we are not under the old covenant but under the new. We are reminded that the patriarchal line of fathers continued up to Christ our Lord. We are reminded that we look to Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, our Covenant head, and the one to whom we are to be conformed. The psalmist declares that *in place of* Christ's fathers, i.e. The patriarchs, shall be the Lord's successors, or here "sons" in a figurative sense. We are children of God through Christ, sons through the Son of God. Hence, we see here that the patriarchs led up to Christ, and we proceed, as it were, from Christ, looking back to him.

The fathers, or patriarchs, pointed to Christ, bearing his image only in a shadowy form. Adam was the first federal head of humanity and bridegroom whose side was pierced for the sake of his bride. But Adam sinned and died. Abel was the original shepherd who was slain by his faithless and jealous older brother. Yet Abel was a sinner whose blood only cries out for God's wrath against Cain. Noah was a preacher of righteousness and the federal head of the newly cleansed heavens and earth, the one who bore the sword of God's justice against those who kill men who bear God's image. Yet Noah drank and got drunk, and so failed to be the perfect bearer of God's image.

Christ is the Last Adam; the federal head of his bride, for whose sake his side was pierced. Christ is the good shepherd who was slain by his faithless and jealous ethnic brothers, and whose blood brings us not wrath, as Abel's blood called for, but peace with God. Christ is the true preacher of righteousness, the perfect image of God who bears the sword of justice, as we have noted numerous times today, in perfection. He is the federal head of a new race of people, his elect, and will rule and reign forever over the new heavens and the new earth.

At the center of history is the Lord Christ.

The fathers pointed to him, they being shadowy types of the Savior.

And we look backward to him who is the fulfillment of those types.

And we bear his image, though imperfectly while in this physical frame and in this present evil age.

And we will all bear his image perfectly in the age to come.

The psalmist states: “You will make them princes in all the earth...” He has “freed us and made us a kingdom” or made us “kings and priests” to God. He has saved us so that we might bear his image, reflecting his light even as the moon reflects the light of the sun. And in this Christ’s name is remembered throughout all generations, and the nations of the world will praise him forever and ever.

To him who loved us and purchased with his blood be all glory and honor and power and dominion, forevermore.

Amen.