

Psalm 45

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[0 : 00] Psalm 45, as you know the psalm's right in the middle of the Bible, and Psalm 45 is a particularly attractive psalm as it speaks about the king.

My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king. My tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.

You are the most excellent of men, and your lips have been anointed with grace since God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword on your side, you mighty one, and clothe yourself with splendor and majesty.

In your majesty, ride forth victoriously in the cause of truth, humility, and justice. Let your right hand achieve awesome deeds.

Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies. Let the nations fall beneath your feet.

[1 : 21] Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever. A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness.

Therefore, God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.

From palaces adorned with ivory, the music of strings makes you glad. Daughters of kings are among your honored women.

At your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir. Listen, daughter, and pay careful attention. Forget your people and your father's house. Let the king be enthralled by your beauty. Honor him, for he is your lord.

[2 : 37] The city of Tyre will come with a gift. People of wealth will seek your favor. All glorious is the princess within her chamber.

Her gown is interwoven with gold. In embroidered garments she is led to the king. Her virgin companions follow her.

Those brought to be with her. Led in with joy and gladness they enter the palace of the king. Your sons will take the place of your fathers.

You will make them princes throughout the land. I will perpetuate your memory through all generations. Therefore, the nations will praise you forever and ever.

What a glorious son. What a glorious king. Well, it started.

[3 : 56] And during the next few weeks, we're expected to be bombarded on the TV, internet, radio, and newspapers about one thing. And the climax will be reached in early June.

There have always been those who have been skilled in extolling either the actual government or enthusiastic about describing their government ideal.

The sort of government that they hope will come into power. And there are occasions in the life of a nation which lend themselves to exalting and promoting a particular leader.

It might be that of a national emergency or perhaps a time of national celebration. If you think back to any royal wedding in the past, you remember that several pages of national newspapers are devoted to celebrating each person making up the happy couple.

You might remember that music also is composed to make great things of that occasion. It might be a coronation march in the 1950s.

[5 : 16] If you go back further, there's a great musical composition used to mark the wedding of George II and Queen Caroline.

It's a music composed by Handel. And at the end of the coronation piece, the choir sang verses from Psalm 45.

And the opening verse of that psalm that we have before us is this. My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king.

My tongue is the pen of a skillful writer. Now, your Bible probably has a note just before Psalm 45 indicating that it was indeed a wedding song.

But its principal purpose, I'm sure, is to exalt God's king to glory in him and at the same time speak of his glory reflected in the bride.

[6 : 25] So, what was it about? Which king was it about? It possibly referred in the first instance to King Solomon and his bride, the daughter of the king of Egypt.

It might be. People are not too sure. And in a sense, it's not all that important for us to know the exact occasion that was in mind. But the background to that psalm is very important for us to remember.

The background to that psalm is something somewhat earlier, a promise made to King David in 2 Samuel 7, verse 12.

Let me read that promise to you. That promise made through Nathan to David. And the promise reads like this. When your days, the days of David, are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up for your offspring to succeed you your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom.

I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. Now, that was a real marker in the Old Testament.

[7 : 51] And particularly from that time, the people of Israel looked forwards the appearance of this king. And with the coronation of each successive king, the faithful people of God would ask themselves, Is he the one?

Is this the one that was spoken of to David? But sadly, time after time, the hopes and expectations of the faithful were raised, and then dashed as they waited for his appearance.

Now, Psalm 45 describes the king they longed for. It was a choral piece set to a memorable tune, the tune of the lilies.

Always a good thing to have words connected to a tune that you can remember that's easy to sing. Well, they sung it to the tune of the lilies.

Imagine the first time that it was sung at the wedding of this king, and the hopes of those who sat around the throne, along with the ordinary people who'd been longing for the prosperity, safety, and security of Israel.

[9 : 06] What was it like to have that sort of longing? What was it like to have longings and hopes which are dashed time after time after time? Well, perhaps it could be a little bit like someone who has a favourite football team in a lower division, and at the beginning of every season, you look at your team, and you pick out the key players with their skills, and encourage your fellow fans with the thought that this is going to be the year of elevation.

And you know how it is. Time after time, they're disappointed. Well, it was a little bit like that with the people of Israel and the people of Judah, those people of ancient Israel.

And it continued after the division of Israel into the house of Judah and the house of Israel. The people raised their hopes, and then in some way, their king would let them down.

The one they'd waited for, the one they've longed for, hadn't come. Actually, they underestimated the glory of the one that was to come.

The psalmist in Psalm 45 had reason to think that this was the one. He sounded, he looked like, and even smelt like a great king.

[10 : 35] Look at the verse, You are the most excellent of men, and your lips have been anointed with grace.

He observed that young king. He observed his speech. He observed how winsome that king was. His kindness, his patience, his thoughtfulness. His lips were anointed with grace, or at least so it seemed at that time.

Of course, it's not a mark of godliness to have lips which are not like that. It's not a mark of godliness to be churlish, angry, embittered, boastful, or impatient of speech.

That wouldn't make a gracious king. It might be a king that would be feared, but not a king that would be loved and adored and served with rejoicing.

[11 : 34] He looked again at this man, this king, and saw that he had potential as a military leader. Gird your sword on your side, you mighty one.

He had a majestic presence about him. In your majesty, ride forth victoriously. The king, this young king, had exhibited justice in that he rewarded good behavior and punished evil behavior.

You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore, your God has set you above your companions. This psalmist was really encouraged by this young king. So this king loved righteousness and hated wickedness. He was a king who started off exercising justice.

And that's a reminder to any of us who might find ourselves in any sort of authority, we're to be impartial and just in our judgments. This young man had a commendable love of those things which were regarded as being beautiful and attractive and a source of joy.

[12 : 55] All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From palaces adorned with ivory, the music of the strings makes you glad.

He was a remarkable man. A man who, in many ways, reflected the glory of God, the image of God. It's not a mark of godliness to be shabby, untidy, squalid or gloomy when you can avoid it.

No, this king started off in a way that really encouraged the man who wrote about him. And the king started well. And the psalmist was thrilled with him.

His heart was stirred with thankfulness and delight. But he had impossibly high expectations of him. Sadly, the kings of Judah often started well, but finished badly.

It's one thing to start well. It's another thing to persevere in a good work. Of course, that's true of our lives as Christians. It's true, perhaps, of you.

[14 : 01] You might have started well as a Christian and been an encouragement to lots of other Christians. But where are you today? Are you persevering in good works, in the worship and delight of God?

Well, who is the king that would ultimately fulfill the promise to David? Remember that in 2 Samuel, the promised king would be established forever.

What a kingdom. What stability. What about the kingdoms of this world? What about the empires of this world?

What about our great businesses, sports club, political parties, and so on? They might appear to be rock solid. But you know, and I know, they have their day.

Isaiah spoke about the glory of men. The glory of nations. The glory of kings. In Isaiah 40, he said, The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.

[15 : 17] And we know, we all experience that sort of thing. But the same Isaiah wrote this back in chapter 9.

Very well-known words. Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, the prince of his peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Now the king that the psalmist wrote about in the first instance was not that sort of king. He didn't reign forever and forever.

[16 : 20] No, the people were looking forward to something much, much more glorious, even than that king with all his promise. The king, of course, is the one who should have a special place in your life.

But wait a minute. Is your trust, your confidence and your joy in something less than that king? Is he central in your life? Now the psalmist in Psalm 45 was taken up with that king.

That king not yet revealed to the people of Israel. And he was taken up with his kingdom. It was an everlasting, unchanging king, and an everlasting, unchanging kingdom that stirred his heart.

Look at verse 2. You are the most excellent of men, and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever.

No temple king here. He was the eternal king. Look at verse 6. Your throne, O God, your throne, O God, will last forever and ever.

[17 : 34] A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

Therefore, God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. And there's no ambiguity whatsoever about the king that the writer to the Hebrews was describing. It was Jesus. And he's quoting exactly from Psalm 45. And that king stirred the heart of the writer of Psalm 45.

He rejoiced in the thought of that king. He rejoiced in the true identity of that king. So what effect does the name of Jesus have on you?

Remember that Jesus means Savior, for he shall save his people from their sins. We didn't sing it tonight. We could have done. Isaac Watts wrote, Jesus shall reign where'er the sun his successive journeys run.

[19 : 06] You've sung it lots and lots of times. And then you remember how it goes on. And then, His name, like sweet perfume, shall rise with every morning sacrifice.

Look at verse 8. Reminds us of the perfume used by the king. Robes fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. The Lord Jesus Christ has a fragrance, a sweet fragrance about him.

Do you like the smell of curries? Some love the smell, and some hate the smell. In Roman times, petals were thrown over victorious armies.

They were thrown on the ground. The petals of roses were in the air. And as the Roman armies marched and rode over those petals, a smell was given out.

It was a sweet perfume. Well, it was sweet to most people, but to those people who are prisoners of the armies, who are in chains, it wasn't a pleasant smell.

[20 : 25] It wasn't a delightful smell. It was a smell that filled them with fear about their unknown future. They thought, no doubt, about slavery, execution, exposure to lions in arenas surrounded by mocking clouds, mocking crowds.

And Paul noticed this about the preaching of Christ and the preaching of Christ crucified. Paul said this, he uses us, as apostles, to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.

For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one, we are an aroma that brings death.

To the other, an aroma that brings life. Now, do you love the smell of the gospel, the fragrance of the gospel?

Does it stir your heart like the writer of the psalm? This is a really important question. It's a question of life and death. It asks you this question, are you an enemy or a friend of the king?

[21 : 47] He does have enemies. Very surprising. Such a glorious king has enemies and sometimes in very surprising places. Even in his own courts.

And if you read through the history of Israel and Judah, you come across the enemies of kings there in their own courts.

David, for example, had an enemy in his own son Absalom. Think of that. his own son, an enemy of David. Think about Judas later on.

Judas, one of the disciples who betrayed Jesus. Enemies come in very surprising places where you wouldn't normally think. And prime ministers today fear the night of the long knives.

Look at verse 4. In your majesty, ride forth victoriously to the cause of truth, humility and justice. Let your right hand achieve awesome deeds.

[22 : 57] Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies. There you are, the king, so glorious, and yet the king with enemies.

But the king has sharp arrows that he uses. On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter preached to those who were the enemies of King Jesus.

He boldly accused them in Acts chapter 2, verse 22. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did among you through him as you your souls know.

And then you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by kneeling him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to keep his hold on him.

What happened? The arrows of conviction entered their hearts as they heard the word of God. And when the people heard that sermon, they were cut to their heart and they said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

[24 : 16] What shall we do to be forgiven? What shall we do to be saved? Have you ever asked that question when you've heard the word of God? Have you thought to yourself, I'm not a Christian.

I'm so far short of the glory of God. I've done this, I've thought that, I haven't cared for this person, I haven't cared for that person. And those things that go through my mind, how can I be saved?

Now God is holy, he's majestic, he's glorious, he's just. How are you going to stand on that day before that God? Now, let me ask you, have the arrows of conviction entered your heart and disturbed you, made you frightened, made you ask, what can I do to be saved?

How can I be saved? See, the king, when he rides forth victoriously, he does it in that way, he convicts those who were his enemies. What grace, what kindness, those who crucified him heard that message and those arrows of the king, yes, they were sharp, but they were gracious arrows. There are arrows sent by kindness that those people might be saved. Look at verse 4 again. In his majesty, he rides victoriously in the cause of truth, humility, and justice.

[25 : 44] Remember how he entered Jerusalem humbly on a donkey. In humility, he allowed himself to be taken by the Jewish leaders like sheep, like a sheep waiting to be slaughtered.

He stood there before Pilate. And the governor asked him if he was the king of the Jews. And Jesus answered him like this, for this reason I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me. I wonder what Pilate thought about that. He realized, of course, that Jesus was actually turning the tables and he was bringing Pilate to think about what his condition was.

Was he on the side of truth? You know what Jesus said in John chapter 10? My sheep hear my voice. So have you understood and believed when you heard the voice of the good shepherd? The good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. Not one who came into the world to save you by going to the cross and experiencing God's judgment on him rather upon you.

[27 : 12] Have you listened to him? Have you heard his voice? This is how much God loves you. He loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son. Anyone, anywhere, at any time who believes in him and trusts in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

But what if you don't listen? What if you harden your heart to that glorious gospel, that glorious promise, that promise of hope? What's your condition going to be like?

Let me go forward in the Bible to Revelation. Revelation chapter 19 and verse 11 and again we meet the one who went forth victoriously to the cause of truth, humility and justice.

Revelation chapter 19 and verse 11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse not a donkey whose rider is called faithful and true.

Here we see the king again. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire that sees the hearts of people and on his head are many crowns.

[28 : 37] We saw it, we sang earlier about Jesus being crowned with many crowns. Well here's Jesus, here's the king again coming out of his mouth with a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty on his robe and on his thigh his name is written King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He's the king promised of old in Psalm 2 which we read earlier and there in Psalm 2 we read this ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance the ends of the earth your possession you will break them with a rod of iron you will dash them to pieces like pottery therefore you kings be wise be warned you rulers of the earth serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling kiss the son or he will be angry and your way will lead to destruction for his wrath can flare up in a moment blessed are all who take refuge in him now if kings and nations be broken with a rod of iron and dashed to pieces like pottery what about you as a weak frail individual on that great day when the Lord

Jesus Christ returns to visit this earth you need to listen to him now now is the day of salvation now is the day the time of your opportunity you need to kiss the son in the words of the psalm kiss the son in submission you need to take refuge in him and make him your king and saviour it's a matter of urgency because you don't know when his wrath will be poured out we simply don't know it's urgent and the psalmist in psalm 2 stressed that urgency he's not a king to be ignored or trifled with but wait he's a joyful king his kingdom is one of joy his kingdom is not a religion of nitpicking rules eat this don't eat that observe this day don't observe that day Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome who are tying themselves in knots and dividing about such matters and judging one another they were miserable people and Paul said this the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness well this king is a king of righteousness peace and joy in the Holy

Spirit note verse 7 you love righteousness and hate wickedness therefore your God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy and there's joy in heaven it's a joyous king the king of heaven is joyful heaven is a joyful place there's joy in heaven over every sinner that

repents and this is what Jesus said with regard to the finding of lost sheep prodigal sons those who come to their senses those who find lost coins there's joy in heaven over any and every sinner who repents joy in heaven over you and if you are a sinner here tonight who has repented who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ there's joy in heaven over you just think heaven's looking down upon you and there's joy there because heaven sees your repentance your faith your submission to the king there's joy in heaven and there's joy in earth too isn't there isn't the joy when someone comes to the Lord

[32 : 39] Jesus Christ and confesses him as Lord as saviour the one who's changed his or her life of course the kingdom of heaven is a joyous kingdom now that joy is not an abstract thing it's true for any and every one of us doesn't matter where we've come from it doesn't matter whether we've come from a poor background or a rich background it doesn't matter what nation we've come from from the east the west Africa India or whatever and the king in Psalm 45 had an international following notice verse 9 daughters of kings are among your honoured women foreign kings kings from afar daughters of kings are among your honoured women and when you read through the Acts of the Apostles Paul visited Thessalonica and it's recorded in Acts chapter 17 that some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and

Silas as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women women and even today there are members of our royal family who are servants of the king of kings we can look back in thankfulness for the lives of people like Selina of Countess of Huntingdon so influential during the 18th century in this country and queens in other countries think about great queens of France Jean d'Albreu and René who helped the reformers in France now do you think it'd be wonderful to have royalty in your family I do too Peter yes but the wonderful thing is this you do have royalty in your family if you're a Christian if you're a child of God a servant of the king of kings you have brothers and sisters who are royalty you're not a nobody you're one with them now seriously what right do you have to link yourself with the king and his servants those servants are lesser kings and queens of the earth well we've noted nothing as yet about the bride celebrated in Psalm 45 who is she if the bridegroom is the king of kings and the lord of lords who is his bride well she's there in Psalm 45 verse 10 listen daughter and pay careful attention let the king be enthralled by your beauty talking about the bride of the king verse 13 all glorious is a princess within a chamber her gown is interwoven with gold the king the bridegroom has a bride who is the bride well you don't need me to tell you the bride is the bride of Christ at the church and in Ephesians 5 Paul spoke about the bride of Christ husbands love your love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy cleansing her by the washing with water through the word and to present to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless that's the bride and if he's cleansed you from your sins you're part of that church you're the bride of Christ you're his delight he's cleansed you from your sins if you've received his word of salvation if you're one of those sheep who listen to the voice of the king look at verse 9 at your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir where did she get her gold Solomon imported gold from Ophir probably in India and later kings did the same where did the bride get her gold from well from the king himself look at verse 13 all glorious within a chamber her gown is interwoven with gold in embroidered garments she is led to the king think about that dress of the bride where did she get that rich dress from well it was provided by the king himself why believe that well the king is so infinitely rich and it was no problem to lavish rich gifts upon his bride to make her particularly beautiful and it was common in Old Testament days for kings to provide beauty treatments for his bride if you read the book of Esther a year or so was spent in preparing Esther to take the role of queen her beauty was provided by the king himself in Revelation 3 the lord addresses those who were without the clothes they needed to come into his presence and have fellowship with him this is what the king the lord said to those people I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you can become rich and white clothes to wear so that you can cover your shameful nakedness come to the king ask the king ask the lord for that gold for that righteousness and he provides it without money without price what a wonderful invitation for those who feel themselves not worthy of the king not good enough for the king too sinful for the king to be concerned with he provides the righteousness the goodness that you lack he provides the white robes the richly embroidered garments to make you acceptable have you asked him for that righteousness have you asked him to cleanse you from your sins and to clothe you with the righteousness of Christ the righteousness of the king you buy from him but they're free at the point

of asking how wonderful now this morning we heard a bit about the apostle

[39 : 31] Paul and the apostle Paul had a past that he could have boasted him he had a religious seal in the background that would be the envy of any pious Jew but in his letter to the Philippians he made it clear that he counted this sort of thing garbage done that he might have Christ and his righteousness he deliberately forgot those things that he could have boasted in the things that the world counted as being so valuable look at the earnest instruction given to the bride in verse 10 listen listen daughter and pay careful attention forget your people and your father's house let the king be enthralled by your beauty don't boast in your past if you're a Christian today don't go back and think of all the good things that you might count as being something in the presence of God don't do that don't do that at all remember that the king has given you a righteousness a perfect righteousness forget your people in your father's house those things that this world counts so important let the king be enthralled by your beauty why well he provided it are you enthralled by the king is your heart stirred by a noble theme did you notice at the end how the writer to the psalm concluded he concluded like this

I will perpetuate your memory throughout all generations therefore the nations will praise you forever and ever that was the aim of the writer of this psalm is it your aim how does it work out with your children grandchildren how does it work out in evangelism how does it work out in your interest in missionary work how does it work out in your prayers do you have the same aim as the writer of this psalm notice the encouragement there in verse 16 your sons will take the place of your fathers you'll make them princes throughout the land the evangelism of the church will be blessed the lord Jesus Christ will build his church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it the words of the psalm in his majesty he will ride forth victoriously let's pray lord we thank you that you have made the lord Jesus our king the one that we delight in and yet so sadly the one that we represent so badly we pray that you would help us to be enthralled with his beauty and that we might have the sort of zeal that the psalmist had in making him known making him known to those around us that we may have great zeal in praying for those who proclaim the gospel of Christ whether here in this country or elsewhere lord we ask that you would help us to read this psalm meditate upon it and be changed by it we ask in our saviour's name amen