

We close out the old year by focusing on the glorious beauty of Christ with the majestic Psalm 45. Whether at the beginning or the end of the year, how we need to get *all* of our encouragement from the LORD Jesus. The world we live in is brim full of disappointments, broken promises and relationships that need much grace if they are to be saved! But what a relief that Christ is always the same, always dependable and faithful to us. No wonder the writer of Psalm 45 urges us to forget all others and cling only to Christ. As the fifth stanzas of the metrical version in our red hymn book puts it:

Amid your glorious train
kings' daughters waiting stand,
and fairest gems bedeck your bride,
the queen at your right hand.
O royal bride, give heed,
and to my words attend;
for Christ, the King, **forsake the world
and ev'ry former friend.**

Monday: Read Psalm 45:1-6 and John 3:22-30

The Bridegroom's Kingdom

The writer of Psalm 45 says that his heart is literally “bubbling up” with words of praise for the king upon the celebration of his wedding. We are not sure for whose royal wedding in Israel this Psalm was original penned. Some think it speaks of Solomon, who did have marriages to foreign women (making the exhortation at the end of the Psalm to forget one's people an appropriate word of exhortation). But alas, Solomon defiled the institution of marriage with his many foreign wives and so could hardly be the primary focus of this wedding Psalm.

However, the initial occasion of this Psalm, it is clear that the Sons of Korah prophetically wrote a poem whose ultimate fulfillment would be in Christ, the Bridegroom. As the prophet John the Baptist says (John 3:29), all the prophets (including the author of Psalm 45) are simply “friends of the Bridegroom.” When Messiah comes, only His marriage to His church would be celebrated.

To sum up, we can group Psalm 45 with other Psalms that are directly tied to Christ as Messiah. For example:

Psalm 2:2 - Messiah's kingdom in conflict with the rulers of this world – a direct reference to Christ.

Psalm 16:8 - the Messiah's holy obedience and its fruit in the Resurrection.

Psalm 22 - Messiah's priestly sufferings and death.

Psalm 40:6 - His sacrificial self-offering of the “body” which His Father prepared for Him.

Psalm 72 - Messiah's kingdom ruling over all.

Psalm 110 - Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God the Father at His Ascension.

How fitting for the marriage song of the Messiah to be included in this collection of Psalms that speak directly of the kingdom which He would inaugurate!

Meditate and Pray: Sing about Christ's love for His church and His holy jealousy that is aroused when other lovers seek to win the affections of His beloved bride. Here are the rest of the verses of # 169 in our Red Trinity hymnal:

1 My heart does overflow,
a goodly theme is mine;
my eager tongue with joyful song
does praise the King divine.
Supremely fair you are,
your lips with grace o'erflow;
his richest blessings evermore
does God on you bestow.

2 Now gird thee with your sword,
O strong and mighty One,
in splendid majesty arrayed,
more glorious than the sun.
Triumphantly ride forth
for meekness, truth, and right;
your arm shall gain the victory
in wondrous deeds of might.

3 Your strength shall overcome
all those that hate the King,
and under your dominion strong
the nations you shall bring.
Your royal throne, O God,
forevermore shall stand;
eternal truth and justice wield
the scepter in your hand.

4 Since you were sinless found,
the Lord, by you confessed,
anointed you with perfect joy—
you are supremely blessed.
Your garments breathe of myrrh
and spices sweet and rare;
glad strains of heav'nly music ring
throughout your palace fair.

5 Amid your glorious train
kings' daughters waiting stand,
and fairest gems bedeck your bride,
the queen at your right hand.
O royal bride, give heed,
and to my words attend;
for Christ, the King, forsake the world
and ev'ry former friend.

Tuesday: Read Psalm 45:1-6; John 3:29 & Luke 25:27-32

The King in His Beauty

As the Psalmist does in Psalm 45, we need to regularly fill our hearts with the good theme of the beauty of Christ in all Scripture. The Psalms do this uniquely. As the Puritan John Owen says (I paraphrase):

The principal design of our Christian lives is to acquaint ourselves with Christ in all the Scriptures, responding with faith, love, adoration and conforming to His righteousness. This is the life, beauty and power of Christian religion, without which it is but a useless, lifeless carcass.

Daily, we need the experience of Luke 24:27-32; our hearts need to burn and to be reminded that the life, power, beauty of our Christianity is not tied merely to propositional truths, but to our Bridegroom in all His glory!

Meditate and Pray: Sing this hymn about the beauty of our Savior (# 546 red Trinity Hymnal):

1 The sands of time are sinking,
the dawn of heaven breaks,
the summer morn I've sighed for,
the fair sweet morn awakes;
dark, dark, hath been the midnight,
but dayspring is at hand,
and glory, glory dwelleth
in Emmanuel's land.

2 The King there in his beauty
without a veil is seen;
it were a well-spent journey
though sev'n deaths lay between:
the Lamb with his fair army
doth on Mount Zion stand,
and glory, glory dwelleth
in Emmanuel's land.

3 O Christ, he is the fountain,
the deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted
more deep I'll drink above:
there to an ocean fullness
his mercy doth expand,
and glory, glory dwelleth
in Emmanuel's land.

4 The bride eyes not her garment,
but her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
but on my King of grace;
not at the crown he gifteth,
but on his pierced hand:
the Lamb is all the glory
of Emmanuel's land.

Wednesday: Read Psalm 45:1-6

Graceful Truth

The winsomeness of Christ is what attracts us, the Bride. The Psalmist does not simply use superlatives (“You are the most excellent of men”) but also underlines *just how practical the beauty of our Savior is* by pointing out *His speech* which has been anointed with grace (Psalm 45:2). In other words, Christ’s personal beauty as our Savior is first of all characterized by *grace on His lips*. He always has “a word to sustain the weary” (Isaiah 50:4). Ours is a Word-centered faith. And we are continually amazed as we confess, “No one ever spoke like this Man” (John 7:46).

Christ’s working as “the Mighty One” is characterized by His verbal power that cuts through all opposition like a sword (Psalm 45:3). It is the spoken word that is the agent of His power to “cut us to the heart” (Acts 2:37) producing in us the painfully necessary repentance that works for our salvation.

In verse four we see the chariot of Christ’s Kingdom that cleaves through all opposition, riding the wheels of God’s truth to a surprising victory: truth, meekness and righteousness. The first characteristic of Christ, then, is the verbal power of His truth that persuades and enables sinners to come.

Meditate and Pray: Here we are to ponder the great difference between Christ and other Old Testament conquerors. Take Joshua, for example. He lacked the prophetic power to subdue nations because he only had a physical sword. Only Christ has power to finish His holy war by destroying His enemies with the Word of His mouth. By that Word, He destroys our heart opposition to Him, moving us to surrender to His will and Lordship over our lives.

Thursday: Read Psalm 45:1-7 and John 3:34**Joyful Hope through the Spirit**

We must confess that not all is comforting to our sinful frames in the picture of the power of the Messiah in Psalm 45:1-6. Without the grace which anoints Christ's lips (Psalm 45:2) and the anointing oil of joy which the Holy Spirit pours on our Savior in Psalm 45:7, the sword of Christ's Word and the breath of His mouth would devastate sinners like us. The arrows of His Law would pierce us and render us unable to stand in His presence (Psalm 45:5). But Christ's anointing with the Spirit "without measure" (John 3:34) is what makes His rule in our lives life-giving, life-sustaining and eternally joyful.

Meditate and Pray: In meditating on God's Word, do you have a real pleasure in doubling down on the Christ-centered focus of the Scriptures? Father in Heaven, give us a real delight in focusing on Christ every day. As Jonathan Edwards, said in recent Bible Notes – but worth repeating again:

When we are delighted with flowery meadows, and gentle breezes of wind, we may consider that we see only the emanations of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see His love and purity ... When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beautiful rainbow, we behold the shadows of His glory and goodness; and, in the blue sky, of His mildness and gentleness ... Christ is so often compared to these things, and called by their names, as the Sun of Righteousness, the morning star, the rose of Sharon, and lily of the valley, the apple tree among the trees of the wood, a bundle of myrrh, a roe, or a young hart.

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Psalm 45:6-7 and Romans 5:1-5**Double Take**

We have discovered so far that the first and chief reason to study Psalm 45 is to grasp something of the beauty of our Savior, the LORD Jesus. He is the Bridegroom and King whose wedding is celebrated in Psalm 45, and it is His stunning winsomeness, power, strength and righteousness that are to chain our gaze to Him.

Let's try to sum up our appreciation for how the Psalm opens by looking closely at these Hebrew constructions:

- "You are the most handsome of the sons of men" (verse 2) is literally, "You are very, very handsome," Here, the basic verb to be "beautiful" has its first two Hebrew letters doubled to emphasize His exceeding beauty.
- "Your throne is forever and ever" (vs 6). In the same way, when the Psalmist praises *the durability* of Christ's throne, he is not content in saying it simply once; He must double it. Such is the intensity of communion in love which we are to share with our Savior. The superlative language about our Savior is to underline that His love surpasses all other loves in our lives.

But I can sense an objection. Have you ever read a Christian biography that discouraged you because your joy and loving enthusiasm for Christ seem to fall so far short of the man or woman described? We may grant that the sweet Psalm singer of the Psalms (David) or his son Solomon (known the world over for his wisdom) had good reason for joy in Christ's Kingdom because they possessed the *tangible blessings* of that Kingdom. But with our weary eyes, we may not see such blessings right now in our lives. We may bemoan the cool temperature of our life of faith, compared to such intense passion for Christ as expressed in this Psalm.

But don't miss the title of this Psalm, "a song of loves." Most translations simply translate it as a "love song." But the Hebrew word for *love* is plural. Yet another way that the Hebrew language emphasizes a truth by *intensifying it*. This Psalm's title has what is called in the Hebrew language a "plural of intensification." For example, in Daniel 9:23 Daniel is greeted and comforted by an angelic messenger from heaven who declares that he is "greatly loved." This same construction is used to underline for Daniel the high esteem in which the LORD holds him. Daniel is literally a "man of loves." God's love for him is too great to be constrained by the singular.

Here we see even the grammar of the Bible expressing Christ's love for us as our Bridegroom. His love is so speaking about his love without the most intense language. Thus we are to learn that we put our confidence *not in* the strength of *our* love for Christ, but in the *intensity of His love* for us. This is a theme worth celebrating!

Another layer of meaning in this plural "song of loves" is that it may refer to Christ's affection *embracing every single believer*. In other words, Christ showers His conjugal love again and again towards each of His elect! We are each celebrated as belonging to Christ. We are cherished as "one flesh" spiritually with our Savior! He sings over each one of us His love song!

You may say, "I am no marital catch. I don't feel that my lowly Christian life is worth singing over ..."
Encourage your heart with Scripture's testimony about Christ's love for *each member* of His church! By faith swallow this truth and trust that its glorious weight will prove true over time in your experience.

Meditate and Pray: As the Church married to Christ, what do we have that will last if we do not have a mighty sense of being in love with Him and (even more important) His being in love with us? May God stir our hearts as He did the author of Psalm 45! Father, we pray for authentic felt awareness of your love, rooted in the eternal truths of your Word.