

Psalm 45

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[0 : 0 0] Do you have a seat? If you would open your Bibles to Psalm 45 with me. I don't know if there are certain passages of the Bible that you feel really speak to you.

! Things that you go back to time and time again. Maybe you've got a few. If I had to pick out one verse of the Bible that I feel really speaks to me.

It's something I want to read every day when I get up in the morning. I would have to take you to Psalm 45 and the first line of verse 2.

The more you laugh, the more it hurts my feelings. After some closer reading, I'm not sure this psalm is all about me. But we'll see.

I think most of us have probably experienced a relationship at some point in our lives that has gone somewhat stale at some point.

[1 : 1 0] Where things just aren't the way they used to be. Whether it's with a close friend. Maybe your husband or your wife. Maybe your parents or your children.

You used to get on so well. Everything seemed to be just the way it was meant to be. But then for no apparent reason, things just aren't quite clicking like they used to.

You don't share the same stories. You aren't as open with one another. Maybe you feel like they just don't care about you in the same way as they used to.

And to your knowledge, you've not done anything to make this change. Not done anything to preserve the cold shoulder.

For some reason, you've just drifted apart. And you've no idea why it's happened. It can be a really miserable feeling. And one I'm sure we all know to some degree.

[2 : 1 3] Maybe you've felt that way about your relationship with God. Life is falling apart around you. Work is miserable.

Family life is difficult. You pray and pray and pray. But nothing seems to change. You don't know what you've done wrong.

But for some reason, God doesn't seem to be listening anymore. It's almost as if he's sleeping. And if you've ever felt like that, you're not alone. Most famously, the disciples, as they cross the Sea of Galilee.

Do you not care that we are perishing? They ask Jesus as he sleeps in the bow of the boat. Or the whole nation of Israel in Psalm 44.

Just look up there with me to verse 23. Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself. Do not reject us forever.

[3 : 1 7] I mean, it sounds almost blasphemous. God's sleeping. But take a quick look through the sand. And you can see the reason for their anguished cry.

Why they are wondering where God is. Well, look at verse 9 there of Psalm 44. But you have rejected us and disgraced us. And have not gone out with our armies.

You have made us turn back from the foe. And those who hate us have taken spoil. You have made us like sheep for slaughter. And have scattered us among the nations.

Verse 17. All this has come upon us. Though we have not forgotten you. And we have not been false to your covenant. Our hearts have not turned back.

Nor have our steps departed from your ways. Yet, you don't seem to be doing anything. Where are you, Lord? What is going on?

[4 : 1 6] The people of Israel cannot understand what's gone wrong in their relationship with God. They've stayed faithful. And yet, they are like sheep being led to the slaughter.

Everything that can go wrong seems to have gone wrong. And God, despite their faithfulness, doesn't seem to be anywhere. The people of Israel cannot figure out what's gone wrong.

Why has the relationship gone stale? Why does God no longer care? And it's been this way since Psalm 42. From the beginning of the second book of the Psalms, it's been a very sorry state of affairs.

The repeating refrain of Psalm 42 and 43. Why are you cast down on my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me? Then we come to Psalm 45.

And it seems to be this seismic change of tone. Those of you who are married, I don't know if you've got a wedding album. Or maybe a video of the day you got married.

[5 : 21] Something that brings you back to that day. The moment of union to one another. Where you made vows to one another. You make promises.

You make a covenant. And that covenant stands firm through thick and thin. Regardless of what it feels like, however many years down the line, a covenant is a covenant.

And when God makes a covenant, you can be certain that it will stand forever. And so what we have in Psalm 45 is the Old Testament version of a wedding album.

They didn't have photos, but they did have songs. And this is a song about a day when a covenant was made. When a man and a woman devoted their lives to one another.

But this isn't just any wedding. This is a royal wedding. And the king, the bridegroom, he is the one who is very much center stage. So we're going to go through this Psalm and see the day when a man and a woman are united.

[6 : 25] When they become one. When they give their lives to each other. We'll see the king in all his majesty and the queen in all her beauty. So as we go through this Psalm this evening, we're going to sort of put together this wedding album as we go through.

And we'll see six or seven different pictures of the wedding and bring back the memories of these covenant promises. And as we fill up the album, we'll see how the Psalmist reminds the people of Israel and us of the character of the king and of his love for his bride.

Not to renew a relationship, but to serve as a reminder to a potentially worried bride. The Psalm itself breaks down quite simply.

Verses 1 to 9 are addressed to the king. Verses 10 to 15 are to the bride. And then 16 and 17 are to the king again. So we're going to look first at the king and then at the queen.

So three characteristics or pictures of the king. His grace in verse 2. His gallantry in verses 2 to 5.

[7 : 39] And his glory in verses 6 to 9. So firstly, the picture of his grace in verse 2. And who this Psalm was originally written to or about it is kind of unclear.

But the best friend is probably King Solomon and his marriage to the Egyptian princess. And to start off with, that seems to fit. I don't know what you find most attractive in a person.

Maybe it's how they look. Their wealth. A good sense of humour. At least decent personal hygiene. It's probably necessary. Maybe it depends on the clothes they wear.

Or if they're trustworthy or kind or confident. That there are lots of different things we can find attractive about someone. But look at what makes this king the most handsome of all the sons of men.

It's not his wealth or his confidence or his fashion sense. Verse 2. The handsomeness of the man is in the words that he uses. It's the grace which has been poured upon his lips.

[8 : 52] The gentleness of his words. The wisdom with which he speaks. That that is what makes him more attractive than anybody else. He is a delight to listen to.

What we often think of kings as ruling with authority and might and power. But a king would rule over his subjects most of the time with words. It's how our leaders still rule over us today in so many ways.

But our own leaders it feels like rarely do very well. I mean I don't really care where your political allegiances lie. I don't think you can deny that politics is just a world of lies and deceit.

Where people will say anything they'll promise anything they'll slander anyone to either try and get into power or try and stay there. If you fancy a stroll through Donald Trump's Twitter account it's very entertaining but I don't think you could say that grace has been poured upon his lips.

But not so with the king of Sam 45. If this king had Twitter the media would probably be quite disappointed. It would be a bit boring from their perspective but you can be sure it would do a lot more good.

[10 : 14] And I think we do we find the words of people very influential when we gauge their character. For some reason it might not make an immediate appearance on our list of priorities or it

rarely wouldn't mind.

But the words a person uses the way they speak to people the way they speak about people that that's so often what influences the way we think of someone.

I mean I don't think anyone actually dislikes Donald Trump because of his hair. And I don't think people like him just because he's rich. It's what he says that divides people.

But this king this king he speaks with grace poured upon his lips. Now that's not a promise that he won't divide people. I mean think of King Solomon himself.

and the most famous story of his wisdom that the two women fighting over a baby. Solomon speaks with great wisdom. He speaks rightly and the right choice is made.

[11 : 22] The baby goes to the right mother. But you can be sure that one of those women walked out quite unhappy with King Solomon. Gracious words doesn't mean universal popularity but it does mean that you can trust the person.

And you can trust this king to do what is right. Not necessarily according to men but you can trust him to do what is right according to God. And if doing what is right according to God is our core most concern then we will love to follow a king like this whose words are full of grace.

and the grace that the kindness of his words is evidence of his blessedness. God has blessed you forever.

This is a God given gift. But already here at the end of verse 2 we have the first hint that maybe this is talking about someone greater than King Solomon. Forever.

But we will come to a more conclusive answer a little later on. So the king is a king of grace.

Someone you want to listen to. Someone you want to lead you.

[12 : 35] Someone you can trust when things don't seem to be going in the right direction. Here is a king you can rely on to have the right words to say. I'm sure we've all had a moment or two in our lives where we've said something we probably shouldn't have.

I can think of three such occasions in the last six hours. And I've probably missed a few in that time. It just slips out and they think oh I should not have said that.

Sometimes it takes years before you realise what you've done. But not so this king. He knows what to say. He knows when to say it. This kind of man, this king is the kind of person people would hear and say no one ever spoke like this man.

This is a king you want to follow and you want to listen to. Secondly, in verses 3 to 5 we have a picture of a gallant king. And if you were in Israel's position of Psalm 44 and you were told of this great king who always had the right words to say you might well be forgiven for thinking so what? But this king isn't just good with words. He seems to be pretty handy with a sword too. The king is armed in verse 3. His arrow is sharp in verse 5.

[13 : 58] He's ready to fight, ready to defend his kingdom. He's not just softly spoken, kind-hearted with warm words. He is ready to protect his people. Ready to defend his kingdom.

We had our own royal wedding in this country not too long ago. I don't know if you watched it. I did not. watched the highlights, which affirmed my decision not to watch it.

In our day and age there's always an awful lot of talk about the wedding dress. I don't know if it's always been that way. But if the news coverage is anything to go by it's a pretty big deal.

And I didn't really understand the hype. Nobody really cares. And then I saw Megan come out of the car. I still didn't really care. It's a white dress, isn't it?

No surprises there. What I thought was considerably more interesting was what Prince Harry was wearing. And it only occurred to me while preparing this why he was wearing it.

[15 : 02] Because Prince Harry wasn't wearing a suit or a tux. He wasn't even wearing a kilt.

Prince Harry was wearing his military uniform. I don't think it's compulsory, but it's certainly traditional.

That the prince gets married in his uniform. Because a king is expected not only to rule his people, but he has a duty to defend his people as well. Prince Harry, Prince William, that they have a history of military service because they have a duty to not only rule, but also to defend.

And that is true of this king too. But again, the motives of the king are assuredly good. he's not some raging tyrant looking to conquer everything in his path by force.

He rules with words of grace and he fights for, in verse 4, the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness. The king is equipped with a sword and arrow to fight for what is right.

this is, again, this is a king who you can trust. You can trust his words and you can trust his actions. A king who you can trust to say the right thing and to do the right thing.

[16:23] It is a short but comprehensive summary of everything you want in someone you're going to be led by. Trustworthy in word and deed.

But also look at how he fights in these verses. The end of verse 3, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty, verse 4, in your majesty ride out victoriously.

Let your right hand teach you awesome deeds. It's splendor and majesty. He doesn't fight quietly on the sidelines letting someone else do the work or instruct from behind the front lines.

He fights for his people. He rides out victoriously. His enemies, the end of verse 5, they will not stand before him. The peoples fall under you.

And again, all this talk is very well. It sounds good, but put yourselves in the Israelite's shoes and it all sounds good. You'd quite like to see some evidence of it on the ground.

[17:28] The king sounds magnificent, but they are still surely like sheep being led to the slaughter. And I think we can also so often find ourselves in the same shoes. We wonder who really is winning the battle on the ground.

Maybe when you read of the persecuted church or you see the spread of false religions or every nation just seeming to go stray further and further from what is right. You start wondering who really is in control.

Who's really winning this war? But our questions are answered in the coming verses because verse 6 to 9, this is where Solomon just falls out the picture.

Reading from verse 6, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.

These very verses are quoted in Hebrews 1 of the father speaking about the son. The psalm at this point is unquestionably messianic. Nowhere else in the Old Testament is God used to describe someone without some kind of added qualification.

[18:46] This is a king far better than Solomon. This points to a greater king and a greater kingdom. It's hard to know what the Old Testament readers would have made of the psalm.

even if they had some understanding of the Trinity, there can be little doubt it would have been somewhat perplexing. This is a case of the Old Testament really bursting out of its banks. But we are in the privileged position of knowing this king, of knowing exactly who the king addressed in verse 1 is, even if the psalmist wasn't aware of the time.

And when you see that these verses are all about Jesus, it adds a slight twist to what we've just seen in verses 2-5. Because we know Jesus did come to establish a kingdom for the quick cause of truth and meekness and righteousness.

But he certainly didn't come with a sword or an arrow, some of the literal ones. He didn't come with a sword, but he did come with something that Hebrews calls sharper than any two-edged sword. Ephesians calls it the sword of the spirit. Because Jesus established his kingdom with his words. His gallantry in verses 3-5 is evidenced by the grace upon his lips in verse 2, that they're almost the same thing.

[20:11] His words, they bring grace to those who hear and listen to them. It's good news for friends of the king, but the very same words are like swords and arrows to his enemies.

And we know that the kingdom that he is establishing is not of this world. And so in the chaos, we can be sure that he is in control.

He is king over the earth. But this is not where we should expect to see the fullness of his kingdom. So we've seen the grace and gallantry, and now we see the glory of the king in verses 6-9.

First of all, his throne is eternal. This is an everlasting kingdom. We've already seen that this points to something greater than Solomon, greater than the greatest earthly kings or queens.

This is a king who rules eternally. He loves righteousness, he hates wickedness. Therefore, he's been anointed with gladness. Sounds like a pretty good thing to be anointed with.

[21:14] In verse 8, he also smells good. Don't really know what else to say about that. Then we see stringed instruments being played from ivory palaces, all in praise of this glorious king.

Ivory palaces appear very rarely in the Bible. I mean, they just sound amazing. And they're always associated with the splendor of a king, the greatness of his house.

Ivory lined palaces from which music pours forth. Bringing gladness to the king because he deserves gladness. Because the king is worthy of the highest honours. He is worthy of the most beautiful music from the most beautiful palaces. He is a king of glory. He loves righteousness and hates wickedness. He is honoured by those around him because he is worthy of it. he deserves the praise he receives. He is a graceful king, a gallant king, and he is a glorious king. [22 : 26] But he's not alone, as is the way with weddings. There's someone else there. And the bride is atypically playing second fiddle to the king.

And she makes an appearance in verses 10 to 15. And if we know this is the messianic set, and we know that Jesus is in place of the king, he is fulfilling the role of bridegroom here, then that leaves the role of the bride to be filled by the church.

And while we have to be careful drawing exact parallels, the overall picture can certainly tell us a few things. So we're now looking at the bride as the bride of the messianic.

And I want us to put together another three pictures. This time with the bride at the center of attention. The bride of the king, the bride of Christ. Three pictures of the bride.

She is adopted, she is admired, and she is adorned. Adopted, admired, and adorned. Firstly, adopted in verse 10. And we can see the bride switches allegiances, or has at least been called to switch allegiances.

[23 : 38] She is removing herself from one family and being taken in by another. See there in verse 10, Hear, O daughter, and consider and incline your ear.

Forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him. That's what marriage is.

It's been that way since Genesis 2. It's how God ordained it. a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

Leaving your family to join a new one is a big moment. And it isn't something we can expect to be taken lightly. I've never been a bride myself.

But I don't think you have to have experienced it to have some appreciation of where some of the nerves come from. you've been part of one family, one household all your life.

[24 : 41] That's all you know. It's what you've grown up with. It's what in some ways at least you've grown to love. And when you are asked to leave all that you know for something you don't, as part of a lifelong commitment, it's an understandably daunting moment.

moment. And when we leave our own lives behind to be united with Christ, it's a big moment. It should be. When I became a Christian, I don't think I was really aware at the time of what it meant leaving behind.

I'm sure I'm not alone in that, but it's a big commitment. commitment. And that's why it's so important we recognise and understand what we've seen in the king. When we see the king in all his glory, leaving our old lives behind to follow him becomes easier.

The more we appreciate the greatness of the king, the less appealing our old family becomes to us. And we can see the queen in verse 10 needs a fair bit of encouragement to leave behind her father's house and become one with the king.

[26 : 04] There's four commands there in verse 10. Here, consider, incline, forget. Multiple commands that come again and again. And that's something we need, isn't it?

To be told again and again that we need to leave behind our past. We need to know that we are part of a new family, a new house.

We submit to a new king. It can be so easy to look on the past with rose-tinted glasses and think things used to be so much better to look long and back to where we've come from.

But remember the king. And remember where we are now. We are joined to a king who loves righteousness and hates wickedness, whose throne is forever and ever, who rides forth in splendor and majesty.

The bride is told, forget about where you come from. Forget about it. We have a new lord, a new master, a new king. So the queen has been adopted into a new family.

[27 : 11] And secondly, the second picture of the queen, she is admired. She is admired by the king, bridegroom, which is good, and by interestingly, the people of Tyre, who seek her favour with gifts.

But the bride is unsurprisingly attractive, not only to the bridegroom, but to the onlookers. And when we think of a wedding, that's quite normal. The bride gets the attention because the bride is beautiful.

I don't think there will be any disagreements with that. But if we remember that this queen is the bride of Christ, and we go forward to the New Testament, we see who that bride is, we see it's the church, the people of God, the people sitting here in Dean Hall this evening, who meet together on a Sunday, all the church of Christ is his bride, and the bride is, we see here in verses 11 and 12, admired by the king and admired by outsiders.

The bride is beautiful, and that's how it should be, beautiful to the king and beautiful to outsiders. I think we live in something of a victim culture, and that's fair to say, everyone likes to play the victim, everyone wants to think they're the ones that are oppressed, and I think there's a degree of that to which we can fall susceptible to, to start to think about that, and almost boast about how difficult life is as a Christian, how opposed the world around us is to the church and to all that she stands for. And there are times when persecution is very real, and I don't want to take anything away from that. But if we're honest about it, I think in this country it's quite rare. We probably all know somebody doesn't like the fact we're a Christian, but they are in a very small minority.

[29 : 02] I've been doing the book table on Greenford for a couple of years now, and there have been a few aggressive individuals who obviously really don't like the church and have something against us. people. But I reckon in all the conversations I've had, you could count those people on one hand.

Pretty much everyone else is generally fairly neutral, that they just don't know anything about the church. And I think there's something quite sad about that. Because the king's bride should be seen as beautiful.

She should be admired, not only by the king, but by some of the outsiders too. the church should be a light shining in the darkness. And yes, some people will despise the light, but I think most people will be positive about the church.

They should see the goodness of the bride of Christ. That there's a danger we can somehow dig ourselves into some kind of asceticism, where if we're not provoking people, we must be doing something wrong, as evangelism, some kind of bear poking exercise.

But while there will be some opposition, the bride of Christ should be admired both by the king and by the omnipotors. The bride is not there to be tucked away in some cupboard.

[30 : 18] Her beauty should be evident for all to see. Adopted, admired, and the final picture of the bride adorned in verses 13-15.

And you can see in these verses that the beauty of the queen is in her outward appearance, which is in quite stark contrast to much of the king's majesty.

Look back to the king. Verse 2, he speaks with grace. Verse 4, in his majesty, he rides out victoriously for righteousness and meekness and truth.

His scepter in verse 5 is a scepter of uprightness. Verse 6, he loves righteousness and hates wickedness. That the king's beauty is evident from his own character.

But the queen's splendor, her glory, comes from the garments she wears. Look there in verse 13. All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold.

[31 : 21] In many colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her, with joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king. The beauty of the queen is all about what she's wearing, about what she's been adorned with.

And the garments are so beautiful, so rich, that in all likelihood she could not have afforded them herself, that they would almost certainly have had to be provided for by the king, one of the few people who could afford such fine clothing.

the bride's beauty paid for by the king. And we know the bride of Christ is no different. The church is covered by robes that only the king, only the bridegroom can afford.

He covers our sins and adorns us with righteousness. The words of Isaiah 61, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall exalt in my God for he has clothed me with garments of salvation.

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bride prude decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress and as a bride adorns herself with jewels. And as the king adorns the queen, so our king, our saviour adorns us with the garments of salvation.

[32 : 48] The beauty of the bride should be, as we looked at a moment ago, recognised by outsiders, but it's all for the king. It is all for him.

He is the one who is our lord. He is the one whom we bow to. He is the reason the bride is beautiful. The bride is beautiful for the king. In living for our king, in doing what is good for him, the beauty should be evident to everyone.

So we've had three pictures of the queen, adopted, admired, and adorned. And finally, one last picture to see. And that is the king and the queen together.

The greatest treasure of all for the queen, better than the praise of the nations, better than the garments she's been given, the greatest treasure for the queen is that she now gets to be with the king.

And this is our seventh and final picture of the king and the queen together in their palace. She is brought into the palace with the king at the end of verse 15. At his right hand at the end of verse 9.

[34 : 00] The greatest joy for the bride, the primary source of gladness, is union with the king. The unsurpassable privilege of being united to the king of kings.

And that is where we stand now as the bride of Christ, united to the king. And by being united to the king, we share in all the good things that the king has won for his bride.

So you see three pictures of the king, three pictures of the queen, one of them together, and the psalm closes looking into the future of the newlyweds. And these last verses are addressed specifically to the king.

It's his name that will be remembered. He will be the praise of the nations. And I think we as the bride need to remember that. That ultimately it's all about the king.

Though he loves his bride, he treasures his bride, and he cares for his bride, it's the king who's majestic. The king who's worthy of praise.

[35 : 08] It's a beautiful picture of king and his queen. And it is our picture of our king and us. And there probably will be times when we wonder where our king, our god is, when we can't understand the intricacies of his plan, when we are dumbfounded by the seeming strangeness of his providence.

But let's remember we are so privileged as to be united to our glorious king. His name will be remembered in all generations. The nations will praise him forever.

It's all about the king. Let us pray.