

Psalm 45

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[0 : 00] Well, I wonder if you spotted the surprise in that royal wedding of Psalm 45 as we read it. ! Who is the centre of attention? It is the bridegroom, isn't it? It is the man, the king, not his bride. We see that by how it is introduced to us there in verse 1. It is a love song for a royal wedding addressed to the king, to the bridegroom.

Which is rather unique in the whole Psalter. Every other psalm is either addressed to God or it is about God. But here it is about the bridegroom. The bridegroom remains the centre of attention even throughout the whole song.

The bridegroom gets ten verses from verse 2 to verse 9 and verse 16 and 17. And the bride, she just gets three verses. Verse 13, 14 and 15.

This love song is about the bridegroom on his wedding day. Not about the bride on her wedding day. The songwriter in verse 1 may be the king's best man, which I think makes good sense.

[1 : 16] He's certainly someone who knows the king and has great admiration for him. And his admiration is so great that his heart overflows into song for him. The older versions have the lovely phrase of his heart bubbling over into song.

Here's a best man who can't keep his wedding speech to himself. He has to sing it to everyone. And it is sung before it is written.

Did you see that in verse 1? My heart overflows with a pleasing theme. I address my verses to the king. My tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

It's in his heart first, then on his tongue, before it flows out of his pen. That's the best kind of love song, isn't it? One that comes from the heart.

But what is it about this king that makes this songwriter burst into spontaneous praise? Well, the answer is there in verse 2.

[2 : 20] You are the most handsome of the sons of men. It's the beauty of the king. This is the big surprise of this psalm.

The bridegroom out-beautifies the bride. He's the center of attention. He's the beautiful one. The songwriter shows us that he's beautiful in six ways.

Number one, there's the beauty of his words. The beauty of his words. Verse 2. You are the most handsome of the sons of men.

Grace is poured upon your lips. Therefore God has blessed you forever. Here's another surprise in this royal wedding love song.

The defining mark of beauty in this king is not his looks, but his lips. It's not his height, or his hair, or his eyes, or his physique.

[3 : 20] It's his speech. It's not what he looks like that is beautiful. It's what he sounds like. His words drip with grace. They're full of forgiveness, freedom, favor.

They cleanse the dirty. They release the captive. They forgive the guilty. They're full of grace. Spurgeon puts it beautifully. His words turn our midnight into morning.

Our winter into spring. This is what it would have been like in the Israeli daily the day after the wedding. The king's speech. Sounds like a movie we know, isn't it?

What is King George VI remembered for? His speech. Speech impediment. But his speech as we went off to war in the Second World War.

And that's the identifying mark of this royal bridegroom. His speech. His gracious words. And for his grace. Did you see that in verse 2?

[4 : 24] He receives a reward. Therefore, God has blessed you forever. There are three therefore in this psalm.

And this is the first one. As a reward for his grace. He receives blessing from God. Eternal blessing.

In Bible times, the concept of blessing was primarily physical. Material. In this case, it would be primarily linked to the king having children. So for being a man of grace, he gets to be a king with posterity.

He's blessed with an eternal dynasty. He gets a son on his throne forever. So that's the first way this songwriter shows us the beauty of this king.

There's the beauty of his words. Second, there's the beauty of his war. Verse 3 to 5. The beauty of his war. Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one.

[5 : 26] In your splendor and majesty. In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness. Let your right hand teach you awesome deeds.

Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies. The peoples fall under you. If in verse 2, he is a king who knows how to forgive.

Here, he is a king who knows how to fight. His lips drip with grace. But on his thigh is a sword. And on his back is a quiver full of arrows.

It's not a toy sword. They're not plastic arrows. Verse 5. They pierce the heart of his enemies.

People fall down before him on the battlefield.

He is a warrior who slays his enemies. That's what makes him and his war beautiful. Now that might sound like a bit of a contradiction, doesn't it?

[6 : 28] How can a warrior and his war ever be called beautiful? How can war ever be beautiful? Well, let me take you to Buchenwald.

Buchenwald, one of the Nazi concentration camps in Germany in the Second World War. Jackie and I visited it a few years ago as we traveled through Germany. We saw the inhumane conditions that the Jewish prisoners lived in.

We saw the bear cage beside the wire fence where the Nazis would feed the bears with meat to taunt the Jews that the bears were better fed than them.

We saw the gas chambers. We saw an execution chamber where the Nazis for fun would line up the Jews against a wall and ask them to look through a hole in the wall.

And on the other side there were Nazi officers taking shots to see who could get a bullet through the hole in the wall. I remember we both felt physically sick as we walked around this camp.

[7 : 32] But there was one thing that spoke of freedom from the torment. It was the clock at the entrance gate. It read 3.15pm.

It has never read anything else since the end of the war. Because that was the time when the American soldiers discovered Buchenwald and released the prisoners from their captivity.

Now imagine the Jewish prisoners that day seeing American soldiers roll up in their tanks and military vehicles and in their uniforms and with their guns.

These were fighting men. Were they horrible men? Or beautiful men? Beautiful of course.

Because of what they fought for. What did the Second World War look like to those Jewish prisoners? A beautiful war.

[8 : 35] Because it was a just war. A good war. A war that won their freedom from the tyranny of evil men. Fighting men can be beautiful men.

When they have a just and good cause to fight for. And that's like this King's War. The songwriter celebrates the beauty of this King's War because of what he fights for.

Verse 4. In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness. Do you see that?

His war is beautiful because of what he fights for. He fights to replace lies with truth. Pride with humility. Wickedness with righteousness.

But the question is, why is this songwriter speaking of war at all? This is a love song, is it not? For a royal wedding. It's not a military song for battle.

[9 : 38] So why combine war and wedding? Well, in the case of King's wedding and war go together. Just think about Prince Charles or Prince William on the day of their weddings.

What did they get married in, if you can remember? Their military uniforms. Why the military uniform? They could have worn a nice set of tails or a nice tuxedo.

Why the military uniform? Well, because for King's wedding and war go together. The defense of the realm is linked to the continuation of the royal line.

Kings are called to defend their kingdom. And one of the ways they do that is by extending their kindred. If you have no kindred, no offspring, then when you die the enemy comes in and takes

over your kingdom.

Wedding and war, when you're a king, go together. And that's why the songwriter includes this aspect of the king's beauty in his wedding song. Because the establishment of this king's kingdom will be connected to his marriage, to his bride.

[10:51] It's why there's such interest in Prince William and Prince George. Because Prince George symbolizes the future of the British Empire.

They ensure the Queen's dynasty. They ensure that the British Empire will continue to stand. To stand for goodness, for truth, for justice.

And if we're going to grasp the beauty of this king this morning, we need to see him as a fighting king. Not just a forgiving king. He's a forgiving king, yes.

He's also a fighting king. Who is about to get married. And that's what makes him beautiful. His war. There's the beauty of his words.

And there's the beauty of his war. And third, there's the beauty of his rule. The beauty of his rule, verse 6 to 7. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.

[11:49] The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of righteousness. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. The king's throne is an eternal throne.

The last forever, verse 6. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. Now addressing the king as God is not entirely out of place in the Old Testament.

Since the king was called God's son in Psalm 2. He had divine-like status. His rule was to feel like God's rule. And that's because of the kind of kingdom he establishes, verse 6.

A kingdom of uprightness. His rule is founded in the right. It maintains the right. It promotes the right. He's no usurper or oppressor.

He is a good king who stands for righteousness. And this is because of the kind of person he is, verse 7. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

[12:50] There's no neutrality in him. He understands the great antithesis in the world between righteousness and wickedness. And he loves the one and he hates the other.

This is what serves as the foundation to the kingdom of uprightness. His moral compass. His moral affection for good. His moral disaffection for evil.

In other words, this king's beauty is not so much outward. It's inward. We look on the outside. On the outward appearance.

This songwriter is looking on his heart. And what he sees is a man who loves righteousness. And hates wickedness.

And just as there was a reward for the beauty of his words. In verse 2, he was eternally blessed by God. So now there's a reward for the beauty of his war and rule.

[13:51] You see that in verse 7. Therefore, your God, God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.

He is joyfully anointed. Coronated as king. Anointing here speaks of some kind of ceremonial occasion. Perhaps his coronation following his victories in battle.

But the sounding note. Do you see it? It's gladness. For his love of righteousness and hate of wickedness. For his war on lies, pride and wickedness.

In the name of truth, humility and righteousness. This king gets to be the happiest man on earth. The happiest man who has ever lived.

Which is a nice reward if you've just been at war. The note of gladness is there with the oil. But also with the smell of the nice fragrances on his clothes.

[14:52] Verse 7. Myrrh and aloes and cassia. Then there's the music echoing through his ivory palaces. Verse 8. And the guests in attention.

Verse 9. Royal daughters of other kings come to honour his beauty. And then there's the queen. Now the queen here might be his bride. Or it might be his mother.

The queen mother. Who herself is decked out in the finest gold available. If the queen is the bride. Then the songwriter sort of fast forwards proceedings.

And gives us a snapshot of the king in his palace. With his new bride on his right arm. But I don't think that's the case. I think if that's the case. It breaks the flow of the psalm.

The wedding has not yet taken place. The bride doesn't enter until verse 13. All glorious is the princess in her chamber. With robes interwoven with gold.

[15 : 51] And many coloured robes she is led to the king. With her virgin companions following behind her. Do you see? I think it breaks the flow. I don't think it's the bride.

I think it's the queen mother. She's the one waiting at the side of her son. Before the bride enters. But in either case we get the picture.

The oil. The clothes. The smell. The ivory palace. The music. The beautiful ladies in the room. The queen mother. Decked out in the finest gold. That's the gold of Ophir.

It's a picture of perfect joy and gladness. Isn't it? Or is it? Boys and girls you can help me here. Why is this picture of this beautiful king. With his beautiful smelling clothes. And his ivory palace. With the music playing. And the beautiful ladies surrounding him.

[16 : 49] Why is this not the perfect picture. Of joy and gladness? Who's missing? It's the bride isn't it?

You can't have a love song. About the most beautiful man in the world. The most handsome of the sons of men. And he's on his own. He has to get married.

As Jane Austen put it. It is a truth. Universally acknowledged. That a single man in possession of a good fortune. Is in want of a wife. And this king is in possession of a good fortune.

Having won his battles. Having access to the gold of Ophir. And he's in want of a wife. And so we're waiting for the bride to walk in.

And that's what we'd expect to happen next. In verse 10 right. He's sitting in his chamber.

Everything's ready. The music's playing. He's waiting. And you expect it to go to verse 13.

[17 : 49] All glorious is the princess. As she is led to the king. But no. Verse 10. Hear oh 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.

The people of Tyre. Will seek your favor with gifts. The riches of the people. If this man is the most beautiful of men. With a good fortune.

Surely the bride's on her way. Surely she can't wait to marry the king. But did you see the surprise there. In verse 10 to 12. Sounds like she's not coming.

She's hesitating. She's having second thoughts. Notice again the four rapid commands. In verse 10. Consider. Consider. Incline.

[18 : 45] Forget. Hear. Oh daughter. Hear. Consider. Incline. Forget. It's an exhortation to the bride. To not delay. To not look back.

To not be distracted. To come. To the wedding of her king. This is the tense part of any wedding. Isn't it? The beginning. Will the bride actually turn up?

In our culture. That's the tradition. Isn't it? She's supposed to be a little bit late. Adds to the tension.

Will she follow through. With her commitment. To marry the man.

Who proposed to her. Who put an engagement ring. On her finger. Or will she back out? And that's a bit like. What's going on here. It's as if she's.

Feeling the weight. Of what she's about to do. And perhaps. Feeling slightly unsure. Perhaps having sideways. Glances at other men. She knows. Because getting married.

[19 : 41] Is a lifelong commitment. To one person. And it's a big commitment. Especially for a girl. The Anglican book. Of common prayer. Says that marriage.

Is not to be entered. Inadvisedly. Lightly. Or wantonly. Why? Because marriage. Is a big deal. And I think.

That most couples. Have moments. When the weight. Of what they're about to do. In their courtship. Or in their engagement. Hits them. A lot of couples. I know. Who are happily married now.

Had wobbles. In their engagement period. Or courtship. Jackie and I. Were no different. We had a wee wobble. I still try to tell myself. That Jackie had the wobble.

Because she was feeling weak. At the knees. Because she couldn't believe. Her luck. But. The Jackie side of the story. Is that marrying me. Was a big deal.

[20 : 35] Because marrying me. Meant leaving her family. Who she had lived with. Up until the age of 21. And leaving her country. No small thing.

For a young girl. If you're married. Internationally. Or cross culturally. Then you know exactly. How we both felt. It involves. At least one of you.

Leaving your family. And your country. Marriage is a big deal. And it was the same. For this bride. She's clearly from another country. From another people.

She clearly lives at home. With her father. And her family. Leaving her home. And her country. Was a big deal. And that's why there's this. Interlude in this song.

That's why the songwriter. Sort of stops the flow. Of the song. Of the wedding. And pauses. To exhort. The bride. To come to the wedding.

[21 : 29] And he exhorts her. By giving her. Some motivation. You see that. If she leaves her father. And family. To cleave to the king. The king.

Will desire. Her beauty. She. Will become. The center. Of his attention. He might be the center. Of attention. In this song. But she.

Will become the center. Of his attention. If she leaves. Her father. And family. She will come under. His authority. As her lord. Nothing bad. About that. If he is a man.

Of truth. Humility. And righteousness. If she leaves. Her father. And family. She will become. A woman. Of influence. Tyre. Was the most.

Prosperous neighbor. To Israel. The richest. Of the peoples. Especially. In Solomon's day. Yet the people. From Tyre. Will come. To her.

[22 : 22] For favor. It's a bit like. Kate. The Duchess. Of Cambridge. Do you remember. When her. And William. Had their wee wobble. They broke up. For a time. Well. Let's imagine.

They'd never. Gotten married. Do you think. Kate. Would have been asked. To open hospitals. Attend charity balls. If she just remained. Kate Middleton.

Or married. Someone else. No. It was her marriage. To Prince William. That made her. A woman of influence. For good causes. Perhaps.

That was one of her. Motivating factors. Not a bad. Motivating factor. Along with her. With William. Desiring her beauty. And we all know. What happened. In that royal wedding.

William and Kate. Got over their wobbles. She came to the church. And so does this bride. Verse 13. All glorious. Is the princess.

[23 : 16] In her chamber. With robes. Interwoven with gold. 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. This brings us. To the fourth way. We see.

The beauty of this king. His bride. The beauty of his words. The beauty of his war. The beauty of his rule. And here. The beauty. Of his bride.

But notice. Where her beauty. Comes from. The only thing. We are told about her. Is her dress. We are not told about her hair. We are not told about the color of her eyes.

We are only told about her dress. It is multicolored. And it is interwoven with gold. Which means. She could only have received that. From the king himself. Gold was the most.

[24 : 11] Expensive material. The gold of Ophir. Verse 9. Only kings. Could afford to buy gold. In the ancient Near East. And to wear clothes. With gold in them.

Which means. Her robes. Have been given to her. By her groom. She couldn't have afforded this dress. Her beauty. Is given to her. By her husband to be.

She looks beautiful. But only because of him. And this focus on the bridegroom. And his beauty. Returns. In the closing verses here.

Verse 16. In place of your fathers. Shall be your sons. You will make them princes. In all the earth. Here is the fifth. Beauty of this king.

The beauty. Of his posterity. The beauty of his posterity. This is. This is a bit like. The best man's toast.

[25 : 08] At the wedding reception. Only this is. Not his best wishes. For the groom. But rather. A prophetic prediction. About the groom. The your. In verse 16.

In place of. Your fathers. Shall be your sons. Is singular. The bride. Is just being led. To the king. And you would expect. Verse 16.

To say. In place. Of yours. Fathers. And yours. Sons. The two of you. But no. It's in the place. Of the king's. Fathers. Shall be his. Sons. He will make them princes. In all the earth. The beauty here.

Is that this king. Has a posterity. He has. Sons. And he has sons. Who will rule. The earth. That's the fifth way.

[26 : 01] We see the beauty. Of this king. And then finally. Sick. The beauty of his praise. The beauty of his praise. Verse 17. I will cause.

Your name. To be remembered. In all generations. Therefore. There's the third. Therefore. Therefore. Nations. Will praise you. Forever and ever.

Boys and girls. At present. When we sing. The national anthem. In the UK. We're singing. About the queen. God save our.

Gracious queen. But one day. In your lifetime. You'll sing. A different national anthem. One day. The queen. Will die. And prince Charles. Or prince William.

Will sit on the throne. And when they do. Then the national anthem. Will change. We'll no longer sing. God save our. Gracious queen. Will sing. God save our. Gracious. King.

[26 : 57] Why? Because the queen. Will be dead. And we'll have a new king. Prince Charles. Or prince William. Will be king Charles. King William. And we will praise.

Him. We will sing. To God. About him. Not the queen. But that will never. Happen to this king. In psalm 45. Did you see that? The songs.

Will not be about him. And then his children. The songs. Will only ever. Be about him. He will have. Sons forever. Who will reign the earth. But the praise. Will always be his. His name. Will be remembered. Forever and ever. Which makes.

Makes us ask. The question. Just who is this royal wedding song. About. Who is it about? We've seen the beauty of his words.

[27 : 53] The beauty of his war. The beauty of his rule. The beauty of his bride. The beauty of his posterity. The beauty of his praise. But who is this about?

Well in the first instance. It certainly relates to a real king. In Old Testament times. The mention of the gold of Ophir. In verse 9. And the people of Tyre.

In verse 12. Give the song. A historical setting. Some people think. It's a love song. About Ahab. And his marriage to Jezebel. Who was from Sidon.

A foreign country. But that wasn't a marriage. Any Israelites. Could write a song about. I think Solomon's marriage. To Pharaoh's daughter. Might be the best guess. We know Solomon was a handsome man.

From the song of songs. His father David was handsome. Solomon was known. For his wise words. Words of grace. We might say. We know he married a foreigner.

[28 : 51] Pharaoh's daughter. Who had to leave. Her father. And her country. She was like a latter day Ruth. Who committed herself. To the faith of Israel.

Tyre was the most prosperous neighbor. To Israel in Solomon's day. So there are good reasons. To think that this is a song about Solomon. But that can only be a guess.

And that's the point. It's only a guess. Why? Because this songwriter. Has written this song. In such a way. That he has left us guessing. If it was about Solomon.

Why didn't he just tell us? Besides. Some of these descriptions. Seem larger than life. Too good to be true. Too beautiful to be real.

A man beyond our wildest dreams. He seems in another league. To Solomon. Just glance back over the passage. And I'll show you what I mean.

[29 : 48] Verse 2. You are the most handsome of the sons of men. The sons of men there. Could literally be translated. You are the most handsome of the sons.

Or you are more handsome. Than the sons of Adam. It's as if this king. Is in another league. To the descendants of Adam. In verse 2.

He is said to be blessed forever by God. Solomon was blessed initially by God. But not eternally. God judged him. And split the kingdom. After his idolatrous worship.

Through his multiple marriages. To foreign women. In verse 3. This king is presented as a warrior. And the only other great warrior. In the Old Testament. Who rides forth.

In splendor and majesty. Is God. The warrior. In verse 6. He is addressed as God. And yes. Sometimes in the Old Testament.

[30 : 44] Angels and kings. Were given the title of God. But only in a God like sense. This king is addressed as God. God. Which naturally raises our eyebrows.

In verse 7. He is anointed the happiest king on earth. In verse 9. He is the envy and praise of the daughters of many kings. In verse 16.

He is promised princes who will rule over the earth. Not just Israel. As it was for Solomon. In verse 17. He is promised eternal praise.

From the nations. Here is a king. Who is peerless. Here is a king. Who is beautiful beyond compare.

Here is. A king. Of all kings. Here is Jesus Christ. The most beautiful of men. Because he is more beautiful.

[31 : 42] Than all the sons. Of Adam. Because he himself is. The last. Adam. There is the beauty of his words.

They drip with grace. They forgive. They free. They favor undeserved sinners. Like you and me. His words. Are his defining mark of beauty.

Because Isaiah tells us. That there was no outward beauty. That we should behold him. That we should desire him. Have you ever thought of that? Jesus probably had.

A really big nose. Sticky out ears. Or a mono bra. Or a square face. Or dull eyes. There was no beauty about him. If you saw him in a crowd.

You wouldn't take a second look. Or if you did. It would have been because of his ugliness. Yet when he spoke. People were captured.

[32 : 41] There is the beauty of his war. He fights for good and just causes. In the name of truth. Humility and righteousness. Just think of how he went to war.

With the devil in the wilderness. He spoke the truth. Just think of how he went to war. With the Pharisees in his day. He condemned their wickedness. Just think of how he went to war.

With the world authorities in Jerusalem. He exposed their pride. By riding into Jerusalem. On a donkey. He humbled himself.

Yet further. By becoming obedient to death. Even death on a cross. At the very heart. Of the war. He hung.

On a cross. In humility. That's the kind of war he fights. And that's the kind of way he fights it. There's the beauty of his rule.

[33 : 36] His cross was his throne. And from that throne. He established a king of uprightness. On the cross. He demonstrated to us. That he loves righteousness.

And hates wickedness. And now seated at his father's right hand. He rules the world with uprightness. Still loving righteousness. And healing wickedness.

There's the beauty of his bride. That's you and me this morning. But remember. Our beauty. Doesn't come from ourselves. It comes from him. That's why we're not the center of attention.

In this royal wedding. How could we be? We have no beauty of our own. That's why Paul tells us. In Ephesians 5. That he died. So that he might present us.

To himself. In splendor. Without spot or wrinkle. Or any such thing. As Robert Murray McSheehan put it. When I stand before the throne.

[34 : 36] Dressed in beauty. Not my own. There's the beauty of his posterity. That's us two. And that's you boys and girls. If you choose to follow this king.

Then you can be the young princes. And princesses. That rule the earth one day. And cause the nations. To eternally praise this king.

And finally. There's the beauty of his praise. He will be praised. Across this world. By all the nations. And one day. All those nations.

Will gather before the throne. To praise King Jesus. That's who this song is about. It's about King Jesus. Spurgeon said.

If we think it's just about Solomon. Then we're short sighted. If we think it's about Solomon and Jesus. Equally. Then we're cross eyed. It may be about Solomon.

[35 : 32] In the first instance. But only as a shadow. Of one greater than Solomon. Because all the way through the song. The songwriter was dropping hints. That this is a king of all kings.

This is Jesus Christ. And that's why this love song was written. So that we might fix our eyes. On the king. The one who is the fairest of ten thousand.

The one who is more beautiful. Than all the sons of Adam. It's what love songs do. Isn't it? They stir our affections. And our emotions. Towards the one exalted in the song.

That's what this song. Ought to do for us this morning. We. Brothers and sisters. Are the betrothed bride. Of this king. So whatever your life circumstances at the moment.

God says to us. Don't take your eyes. Off the king. Whatever your struggles. In your singleness. Or in your marriage.

