

God's Delight and Delight in God

Psalm 45:1-17

By [Dr. J. Ligon Duncan](#)

October 5, 2003

If you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to Psalm 45. We're working our way through the second book of the Psalms, Psalms 42 to 72, on Sunday evenings, and over and over we have been asking and will continue to ask, "What does this psalm teach me about Christ and what does this song teach me about Christian experience?" Over the last three weeks, we have been in the depths of Christian experience in that complex of Psalms 42 and 43 and the divine word of "longing," those prayers: "How long, O Lord?" and "Why, O Lord?" Then things got worse. We went to Psalm 44, and we considered that Psalm as it dealt with the struggles and pains and weaknesses and difficulties and tragedies about which the psalms so frankly and realistically speak. But tonight, we scale the heights; we come to Psalm 45.

Let me outline the Psalm before we read it together tonight. This is a royal wedding song. The Psalmist is describing the marriage ceremony of the Davidic king. It's Solomonic in its proportions and in its language, and it's also Messianic; that is, it points to the Messiah King and His royal wedding. We see the author's introduction in verse 1; that's the first part of the song. It's a very unusual introduction; you don't normally get these kinds of descriptions of the occasion and the heart of the one who's writing the psalm before the psalm proper commences. Verses 2 through 9 are an address to the king. They are words of praise to the Royal Bridegroom, the One who is Messiah and the One who is King. And so we see in verses 2 through 9 the second part of the psalm, the praise of the king. Verses 10 to 15 give us the third part of this psalm. It's counsel to the one who is the bride of this royal messianic bridegroom, and it's a description of her bridal train and the glory of her processing out from her bower to meet the king in the royal wedding ceremony. Of course, behind it is something great and deep and encouraging and important for us that we'll speak of in a few moments. And then finally, verses 16 and 17 are a divine promise from God to this Messiah King. And so these will give you the four parts of this psalm. We'll look at it tonight in three parts, but those are the four divisions of the psalm. Before we read God's word and hear it together, let's pray for God's Holy Spirit to illumine our hearts and minds as His word is read and proclaimed.

Our Lord and our God, even before we read it and speak it aloud, we sense that

the greatness of this word will stagger our minds and eclipse our ability to express the glory of the truth which is contained within it. But it's Your word, and so we ask that in it You would exalt Yourself in the hearts of Your people. To Your everlasting praise and to their everlasting good, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us hear God's holy word:

For the choir director, according to the Shoshannim. A Maskil of the sons of Korah. A Song of Love. My heart overflows with a good theme; I address my verses to the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Thy lips; therefore God had blessed Thee forever. Gird Thy sword on Thy thigh, O Mighty One, in Thy splendor and Thy majesty! And in Thy majesty ride on victoriously, for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let Thy right hand teach Thee awesome things. Thine arrows are sharp; the peoples fall under Thee; Thine arrows are in the heart of the King's enemies. Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee with the oil of joy above Thy fellows. All thy garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad. Kings' daughters are among Thy noble ladies; at Thy right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house; then the King will desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, bow down to Him. And the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; the rich among the people will entreat your favor. The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is interwoven with gold. She will be led to the King in embroidered work; the virgins, her companions who follow her, will be brought to Thee. They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing; they will enter into the King's palace. In place of your fathers will be your sons; you shall make them princes in all the earth. I will cause Thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the people will give Thee thanks forever and ever.

Amen, this is God's holy inspired and inerrant word. May He add His blessing to it.

Here in this great passage tonight, we see three things. We see the believer's delight in God in verses 1 through 9. We see God's delight in His people in verses 10 to 15. And we see God's delight in and promise to His Messiah in verses 16 and 17. Let's consider these things together tonight.

I. The believer's delight in God.

First, verses 1 through 9: Here we see an address. The Psalmist is addressing a word of praise to this Davidic king and this word of praise is ultimately Messianic in substance. The praise is of God's king, but ultimately we find that this king is not only God's king, but this king is God's divine Messiah King. And so, the praises of the Psalmist are ultimately an expression of delight in God.

True believers delight in God and here we have a divine expression of how the Christian delights in God. The Psalms beginning is *sui generis*. If you look at verse 1, you'll notice that it begins in a way that you won't find other Psalms beginning. "My heart overflows with a good theme; I will address my verses to the King." The Psalmist is almost telling you the state of heart in which he was when he penned these words, and you don't often get that kind of a glimpse into the heart and mind of the Psalmist. But from the very beginning, as he addresses these verses to the King and the context of a royal wedding, his delight is in the one who is the king and is fair among the sons of men.

We immediately see the parallels with the Song of Solomon. He calls this a "song of love." It's a royal wedding song and the imagery is so similar to the Song of Solomon. And, of course, we know that this is a Messianic Psalm because the author of Hebrews tells us it is in Hebrews chapter 1, and we'll look at those words in just a few moments. And so, we have here in this psalm an expression of praise to the King, which is ultimately an expression of praise to the Messiah, which is ultimately of course an expression of praise to the Lord Jesus, who is Messiah. And so we find here the basis of interpreting this Psalm in light of the truth of the beauty of Christ. And that, of course, has led interpreters to look at the Song of Songs and find the same themes. But importantly, this song is addressed to a king of the Davidic line. Now remember that later it's going to come to play as we study it together. But it's very clear--just hearing it read you sense the splendor of Solomon--the king isn't identified, but the splendor of Solomon rings everywhere in the prose of this song. At the very heart of true religion is delight in God, and the Psalmist delighting in the King is an instruction to us on our delighting in God. The Psalmist is enraptured with the beauty of his king. We as believers ought to be enraptured with the beauty of our God.

Now, verses 2 through 5 and 8 and 9 of Psalm 45 give us a description of the king. The Psalmist is praising the king by describing him. He describes the king's character in verse 2, "You're fairer than the sons of men". He describes the king's words in verse 2, "Grace is poured on your lips." He describes the king's might in verse 3, "Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and in your majesty." He describes the king's victories in verse 4, "In your majesty ride on victoriously." He describes the king's just causes in verse 4, "For the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness let your right hand teach you awesome things." He describes his crushing defeat of his enemies in verse 5, "Your arrows are sharp, the peoples fall under you." He describes the splendor of the king's garments in verse 8, "All your garments are fragrant with myrrh." He describes the king's train in verse 9, "King's daughters are among your noble ladies and at

your right hand stands the queen in gold.” It is a glorious description of the King of Israel.

Did you know that verse 4 of this Psalm inspired the description of another king? Many of you will know Henry Milman’s old hymn, *Ride on, Ride on in Majesty*. It was verse 4 of Psalm 45 that led him to pen the words of this hymn. You may want to take your hymnals and look at it in # 237. Especially those first two stanzas: “Ride on, ride on in majesty. Hark all the tribes ‘hosanna’ cry. O Savior meek, pursue Your road, with palms and scattered garments strode.” It’s a picture, isn’t it, of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. And the children are singing “hosanna to the Son of David,” and palm branches are being waved, and the street is strewn with these branches as the king rides in on a donkey. And then you see the next stanza, “Ride on, ride on in majesty, in lowly pomp, ride on to die. O Christ, Your triumphs now begin o’er captive death and conquered sin.” He rides in lowly pomp to die. He brings victory through His own death. Nobody ever caught it better poetically than Robert Southwell, in that portion of a poem which Benjamin Britain uses in his “Ceremony of Carols.” Many of you have sung that song or heard it sung at Christmas performances. It goes like this:

This little Babe so few days old,
Is come to rifle Satan's fold;
All hell doth at his presence quake,
Though he himself for cold do shake;

For in this weak unarmed wise
the gates of hell he will surprise.
With tears he fights and wins the field,
His naked breast stands for a shield;

His battering shot are babish cries,
His arrows looks of weeping eyes,
His martial ensigns Cold and Need,
And feeble Flesh his warrior's steed.

His camp is pitched in a stall,
His bulwark but a broken wall;
The crib his trench, haystacks his stakes;
Of shepherds he his muster makes;

And thus, as sure his foe to wound,
The angels' trumps alarum sound.
My soul, with Christ join thou in fight;
Stick to the tents that he hath pight.

Within his crib is surest ward;
This little Babe will be thy guard.

If thou wilt foil thy foes with joy,
Then flit not from this heavenly Boy.

The King that's being described here is far greater than David, far greater than Solomon, far greater than the whole combination of all the kings of Israel and Judah combined, and it's almost as if these words move the Psalmist into that thought and anticipation in verses 6 and 7 because he transcends himself, doesn't he? Look at verses 6 and 7. Suddenly this Psalmist, who's praising the king on his wedding day, suddenly, suddenly he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever!" Now he's talking to *The King*. Remember, I told you, remember this is the Davidic king. "Your throne, O God" Suddenly the King is identified with God. "Your throne, O King, is forever, a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness therefore God, Your God has anointed You."

Now there's another problem. One minute the King's throne is God's throne and he's addressing the King as if he were God, the next minute God's giving Him something. And you see that again at the end of the Psalm in verses 16, especially verse 17 where God says, "I will call to the King. I will cause Your name to be remembered."

What do you do with that? Well, you do with it just what the author of Hebrews did with it. Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 1. This utterly unexpected ascription of praise to the king as God is quoted in Hebrews chapter 1, verses 8 and 9, where the author of Hebrews asserts that Christ is the ruler of the empire of God. "But of the Son," Hebrews says, "but of the Son, He says, Your throne, O God, is forever." The author of Hebrews tells you that ultimately this Psalm is about Jesus. Christ is the fulfillment of the Messianic picture of this Psalm. He's the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." This phrase highlights His divinity. It is of the Son that He says, "Your throne, O God." He is the sovereign of the kingdom. He's ruling as God the Father's representative. He is exalted to His position due to His righteousness. He's covenantally righteous on behalf of His people. He's earned their salvation.

And here we see this glorious clear Christian claim that Jesus is the divine Messiah foreshadowed in the Old Testament. It's based right out of Psalm 45 verses 6 and 7. This glorious picture of the king is really a glorious picture of the Savior, and I want you to think about your Savior for a few moments, this Savior-King who is described here, because he who values not Christ above all, does not value Christ at all. And the Psalmist is straining: He's at the edge of his words and at the edge of his comprehension to give you a picture of the glory of this King. And I want you to think about the glory of our Savior King.

You know, every stanza of William Wallsham's, *For all the Saints* is encouraging, but my favorite two stanzas are the last two stanzas, when he moves us from the future victory of faithful Christians who have fought the good fight in this life to

that yet more glorious day. And he has us sing,

“But lo! There breaks a yet more glorious day; the saints triumphant rise in bright array; the King of Glory passes on His way. Alleluia, alleluia!

From earth’s wide bounds, from oceans farthest coast, through gates of pearl stream, in the countless host singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost-‘Alleluia, alleluia!’”

And it’s this glorious picture of the triumphant processional of King Jesus.

But, you know, we see His glory even in His earthly ministry. You remember that time in John 7 when the Pharisees sent officers to seize Christ to kill Him? And they beat Christ, and He speaks to them, and those officers go back to the Pharisees, and they say, “We’ve never heard a man that speaks like this.” They don’t seize Him: they’re seized by Him. You remember the disciples in the boat--the day where He wakes up, and He tells the winds to be calm, and they’re talking amongst themselves, and they’re saying, “Who is this that commands the winds?” And everybody who knew Him, they’re transfixed by His glory, the glory of His person.

I have a former professor who wrote these words about the glorious person of Jesus Christ. He says:

“These two things constantly weigh with me as I reflect upon Jesus Christ. The first is this: I do not believe that anyone could have created Jesus Christ. I am told by many scholars today that He is the creation of gospel writers. I find that utterly incredible. The man who criticizes the apostles, criticizes His own culture, who moves so freely among women, who teaches the most splendid parables, who preached the Sermon On the Mount, who prayed the prayer of John 17-*whocreated Him?* Which of the gospel writers had that kind of literary genius? They were unlearned men, unlettered men; which of them created Jesus? And then there’s this that weighs with me: that He is unsurpassable. Anselm once said that “God is that than which a greater cannot be conceived.” Well, to me that is Jesus Christ exactly: “a great cannot be conceived.”

He is great in the glory of His person as the God-man, that marvelous combination of transcendence and elevation on the one hand and compassion and sympathy on the other. He is great in His teaching, great in His work, great in His promises--where would I improve Him? Where would I alter Him? Where is His equal? Where is His superior? If I couldn’t worship Jesus Christ, I would worship the man that created Him. I remember constantly the great words of William Guthrie of Finnick, “When faith looks at Christ it says, ‘Less would not satisfy and more is not desired.’ For me the search for truth ends with Christ. Less would not satisfy me; more is not desired. If this light went out, all the lights in the world would go out.”

A soul in love with the beauty of Christ. And, my friends, in religion everything turns on our views of Christ. What do we think of Him? Is He in our estimation, incomparable? Do we regard Him as fairer than the children of men? Is He not the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely? "If you love Him not and admire Him not, if you would not put on a fair trial to die for Him, you're none of His," William Plumer once said. Delight in Christ, intoxication with Christ, preoccupation with Christ, glory in Christ is at the very heart of Christian praise and at the very heart of Christian experience. And this Psalm is given for you as an instrument, as a tool in the hands of the Spirit to render up praise to the One who is most worthy of praise in all this world-- fairest Lord Jesus.

The Psalm doesn't end there; it goes on. The focus in verses 1 through 9 is on the soul's delight in Christ. We have here the tools for a Christian expression of delight in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it goes on, doesn't it?

II. God's delight in His people.

In verses 10 through 15, stunningly, we have a picture of God's delight in His people. We have a divine expression of God's delight in us. You see, verses 10 through 15 are first of all an address of counsel to the King's bride. You see them in verses 10 through 12. These are the wise attendants, the wise ladies-in-waiting taking this bride. She's the daughter of a King, and they take her aside, and they say, "Now let me, let me tell you just a few things. Before you're married to the King, to the royal bridegroom, listen to me. Forget your people. He's your people from now on, and His people are your people from now on. You forget thatking, your father; you forget the country that you've come from. He's your man; His people are your people." And then these words: "The King will desire your beauty"--this expression of the King's delight in His bride because He is your Lord. "Bow down to Him, and the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift."

As she submits herself to her King, she suddenly finds that she's exalted; even the daughters of kings are coming to bring her gifts. The rich people in the land are coming to bring her gifts. Isn't that a picture of the Church? When she humbles herself before the Savior, she's exalted. When she bows the knee, she's lifted up. When she dies, she lives. When she denies herself, she's given everything. This is a picture of the Lord God's love through His Son for the Church. You see this address of counsel and then the description that follows on in verses 13 through 15. These descriptions of the marital privileges of the King's bride, they all point to the Church. And can you believe it--that the King delights in your beauty.

And you say, "I know myself, and I don't have any beauty to delight in." He's given you beauty. He's clothed you with His righteousness. He's made you beautiful, and He delights in you. Here the Psalmist is forcing you to revel in that-

-stunning as it is, unexpected as it is, improbable to us as it is, as hard to believe as it is, as difficult as it is to take in--to revel in the fact that the Lord Jesus glories in your beauty and desires you as His bride.

III. God's delight in and promise to His Messiah.

Yet, the Psalm still isn't finished. In verses 16 and 17, we have this divine declaration of God's purpose to fulfill the Davidic Covenant for the Messianic King. "In place of your fathers will be your sons. You shall make them princes in all the earth." This is the Father saying, "You're going to have descendants, heirs after you, generation upon generation. Your marriage is going to be fruitful, and sons are going to sit on the throne."

You remember the background to this. It's 2 Samuel chapter 7, when God says to David, "I'm going to build you a house, and I'm going to put your Son on the throne, and He's going to reign forever." And in this Psalm, God the Father says to God His Son, "You will reign forever," and Your people with you. And I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations, and therefore the peoples will give you thanks forever and ever." It's the Father saying to the Son that He will cause Him to reign, and He will cause Him to be remembered, and He will cause Him to be worshipped, and He will cause Him to be thanked forever and ever, amen.

It's a pledge, you see. Behind it is the covenant of redemption; behind it is the promise that the Father has given to the Son from before the foundation of the world: "As You give Yourself for them, I will give You a people and no one will take them from Your hand, and You will reign forever and ever exalted in Your person and in Your word." You see, behind this word of promise to the Messianic King is the promise of God from eternity to His Son, a promise that cannot be broken. This Psalm takes us to the height, and it supplies us with such material for praise of our glorious God that we cannot do it justice. May God use it to encourage our hearts even this night. Amen.

©2013 First Presbyterian Church.

This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template.

Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any website error to be with the webmaster/transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker. For full copyright, reproduction and permission information, please visit the First Presbyterian Church Copyright, Reproduction & Permission statement.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).