

A Portrait of Marital Bliss: The King

A Sermon on Psalm 45:1-9

by

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1. Introduction (Superscription and v. 1)

2. The King's Beauty in Form and Speech (v. 2)

a. The godly husband is ruled by words of grace.

i. The Psalmist begins his portrayal of the king as one who is fairer than all other men around him.

1. He is undoubtedly a striking man in his appearance, but the psalmist is focusing on his stature as a whole.

2. In every meaningful way, he is a king who stands head and shoulders above the rest because he has made it his delight to fear the Lord.

a. In essence, this is the portrait painted of an ideal husband: his character must be godly and all his ways must be informed by wisdom.

b. It is easy to find one who *looks* like a king should look; it is an altogether different thing to find one who is worthy of this role, and the same applies to marriage.

ii. The godly king, however, is apparent to all, and one of the clearest indications you find of this is how he speaks.

1. Notice the psalmist draws attention to the fact that grace is poured out upon his lips. His point here is simply that the king is characterized by graciousness in both speech and his conduct.

- a. As we look to the book of Proverbs, we find much that speaks very plainly to this concept. It is the way one speaks, both privately and publicly, that reveals the state of their soul.
 - b. Contrast the way of the righteous man and the wicked man by their speech, and you will find this to be self-evident.
2. In all of it, the idea is much the same as Christ spoke of when he said that from the heart the mouth speaks. One's true character will be revealed by how they speak, and this is especially true within a marriage.
 - a. One might be given to a flattering tongue in public, yet privately destroy those they are closest to.
 - b. Within the context of a godly marriage, the wise husband is one who is honest, gentle, forgiving, and even confesses his sins openly so that he might seek forgiveness and turn in repentance.
- b. *The godly husband's words of grace are indicative of God's blessing upon his life.*
 - i. When the psalmist says that the Lord has blessed this man forever, he is showing that the king's gracious character and speech are evidence of this blessing.
 1. In every single manner, the favor of God rests upon this man and it is evident to all who see him.
 - a. Think of this description in light of the wicked kings that came to prominence in Israel's history.
 - b. Few kings conducted themselves with honor and integrity—and few were known as ones who exuded graciousness from every pore.
 2. As we move throughout this psalm, we will only see further indications that this king was a *good* king.

- a. He is the embodiment of a *righteous* king, who loved the Lord and as the people gathered to celebrate this day, it made their wedding ceremony all the more precious and worthy of celebration.
 - b. The reason for this is relatively simple: his righteous conduct on the throne would most certainly extend to how he upheld his covenant with his wife-to-be.
- ii. When you have a man who is ruled by gracious speech, who controls his tongue to use it for edification and beautification rather than wickedness—you know you will see a wife who flourishes under his headship.
 1. The natural result of a man who is characterized by dignity, grace, and truth, is that his household will likewise be clothed in dignity, grace, and truth.
 - a. His words will provide nourishment of the souls in his care. The godly husband will continually lift up that which is good, true, and even beautiful—all because his goal is to honor his Lord and to bless others
 - b. In other words, if you wish to know what a man thinks of Christ, look no further than how he speaks to the woman he claims to love.
 2. The speech of a husband is a window into his soul and a portrait of what he believes about the gospel.
 - a. The more like Christ he becomes, the more his words will fall like dew upon the garden he seeks to cultivate that is his wife.
 - b. His reputation will precede him, meaning simply that when people speak of this man, what comes to mind is a man who speaks the truth, but who also speaks it in love.

3. The King's Valor in Truth, Meekness, and Righteousness (vv. 3-5).

a. *The godly husband contends for that which is good (vv. 3-4).*

i. “Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and your majesty! And in your majesty ride on victoriously, for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome things.”

1. This next section focuses on a series of imperatives given to the king in light of his character, reminding him of his task before God.

2. The first command given to the king is that he is to prepare for battle in his splendor and majesty.

a. The idea here is that he has an awesome appearance that commands respect.

b. He is described as a “mighty one,” and this goes well beyond that of a man who is fit for battle. He is a true hero in the fullest sense of the word.

c. The idea here is that he is a man of great courage and cunning. He encounters danger head-on and does not shrink back.

3. The second command given to the king is that he is to ride on victoriously, but for a very specific cause: truth, meekness, and righteousness.

a. By truth, it simply means that he is to be ruled by faithfulness to the Word of God in all he does, even as he goes to war.

b. By meekness, the idea is that he is a man who holds his strength under control.

c. By righteousness, the psalmist is speaking to that which comes from God Himself.

4. The third command is that he is to let his right hand teach him awesome things.

- a. Here, the psalmist speaks to what would strike fear and reverence into the hearts of men.
 - b. The expression of his right hand is a figure of speech that speaks of his authority and rule, which is a safeguard to those who do good, but a thing of terror for those who do evil.
- ii. The full depiction given here is of a man of virtue who pursues God with all his might. When we look to this within the context of the marriage, the natural extension of his bravery and strength will be harnessed properly even here.
- 1. In the home, he will not be reactionary in his leadership. His focus is solely on how he might please the Lord, and so he is actively on the offensive in order to see this characterize his household.
 - a. He is always battling against evil so that the cause of truth, meekness, and righteousness will prevail in his home.
 - b. To put this in clearer terms: he does not seek to just keep evil at bay, but to push it back, and in its place, advance all that God declares to be good.
 - 2. In order to do this, the godly husband must know what the truth is, how to keep his strength under control, and even how to exercise his authority in righteousness so that the household is ruled by the commandments of God.
 - a. If you look at how a godly man might lead by truth, the plain fact is that he must be the one to ensure that the Word of God reigns supreme in his home.
 - b. As to keeping his strength under control, this is the same concept of meekness illustrated above.

- c. And this folds naturally into the last description of this man, which is that he advances the cause of righteousness.

b. *The godly husband prevails over evil (v. 5).*

- i. “Your arrows are sharp; the peoples fall under you; your arrows are in the heart of the king’s enemies.”
 - 1. The point in v. 5 is much the same as it was in vv. 3-4, in that the king will indeed go forth in battle against the forces of evil—but the anticipated result is that he will be successful in his campaign.
 - a. Part of his work as king is to advance God’s cause, which is to simply say that part of his role is to go war.
 - b. As we have already seen, his task is not merely one of preservation, but to advance everything that is good, and yet that requires not only a wartime mindset, but skill in battling.
 - 2. The idea is not that these are secondary motives of the king, but that his whole business is to fight on behalf of these virtues.
- ii. This promise is specific to the one on the throne of David, but there is a principle that informs our duties as husbands.
 - 1. The man of valor is one who enters into the battle with an expectation that goodness will prevail.
 - 2. We must realize we have been called to this purpose, we are ones given the charge to protect, guard, cherish, and even die if we must, for that which is good—but the results are ultimately up to God.
 - a. What this indicates is that a faithful husband will be faced with a legitimate battle, even though he may never pick up a literal sword.

- b. And yet what it draws out even more clearly for us is that we must never grow weary of our duty before the Lord fight this war for those we love.

4. The King's Rule in Justice and Righteousness (vv. 6-7).

a. The everlasting rule of the King of kings (vv. 6-7).

- i. As we come to this section, there is a fuller meaning to these two verses. The reason for this is because vv. 6-7 are quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9, where it refers to Christ and His eternal rule. The fact that the author of Hebrews uses this text to refer to Christ has caused no shortage of controversy in how people understand this whole psalm.

- 1. Some have taken it to refer exclusively to Christ, and treated the psalm as a Messianic psalm.

- a. When people interpret this psalm as a Messianic psalm, they look at vv. 2-9 as if they speak exclusively of Christ, vv. 10-15 as if they are speaking of the church, and the final two verses of the psalm then must be spiritualized to speak of the Great Wedding Feast.

- b. The problem with this view is that it doesn't answer the question raised by v. 7: "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of joy above your fellows."

- 2. Others have understood it to be the psalmist bursting forth in praise of God in the middle of the wedding song. This still does not answer the question of why the psalmist feels the need to clarify by saying, "...your God."

- 3. Another view, which is the view I hold, is that these two verses are messianic, but the psalm itself still folds within its original context and meaning.

- a. What this would mean is that the psalm was written for a particular king with a particular bride in mind.

- b. While we do not have any mention of who that particular king is, we do know that he is from the line of David, given vv. 6-7
 - c. The challenge to this is that vv. 6-7 refer to this king as “god,” but what’s important to know is that the term used for “god” here is not Yahweh, but Elohim, which is often used as a generic title of authority.
 - d. In each instance where the term “elohim” is used of men, it is not referring to them as if they are divine beings, but that due to the position they hold, they are God’s representative on earth.
- ii. This is where it becomes particularly important that we understand this in light of the promise given to David, more specifically, the promise that One would come to reign on the throne of David forever (2 Samuel 7:1-29).
- 1. In 2 Samuel 7:16 in particular, God gives a promise to David that after he dies, that his house and his kingdom shall endure before God forever, and his throne shall be established forever.
 - a. Here in Psalm 45 then we find this same promise reiterated, and its ultimate reference point is in the Messiah who is to come.
 - b. The promise then refers to both this earthly king, who inherits the promise given to David, and to the Messiah, who is the fulfillment of this promise.
 - 2. This is the ultimate reference point for this psalm, but it doesn’t divorce it from the context of a royal wedding song.
- b. The immediate rule of the earthly king (vv. 6-7).*

- i. As we then look at the immediate context of these verses, what becomes clear is that the king's rule is set within justice and righteousness, as these things are to characterize how he rules.
 1. Since he is God's representative on earth, he is to embody the ideal government of God, and rule with justice and equity.
 - a. Notice how vv. 6-7 frame things in light of the scepter of uprightness, which means that righteousness and fairness characterize his rule.
 - b. V. 7 then gives this further clarity in saying that this king has loved righteousness and hated wickedness.
 2. As a result of his devotion to God and His Law, God has anointed him with the oil of joy above all others.
 - a. What he means by this is that God has blessed this king and His favor rests upon him.
 - b. This is a unique blessing that comes upon him as a result of his faithfulness and his undivided heart, and it shows once more how special this marriage will truly be.
- ii. The ideal expression of marital bliss that the psalmist displays for us here is one where a husband leads according to God's righteous standard.
 1. Yet the implication of these verses is that if he does not love righteousness and hate wickedness, none of the qualities that characterize this king will be present.
 - a. In other words, it is a love of righteousness and justice that produces a man of character that matches the ideal husband portrayed in this psalm.

- b. In every manner, this husband seeks to make his home flourish by knowing the Word and ordering his household under the authority of the Word.
- 2. Thus, my simple admonition to husbands and those who wish to be husbands is that you cultivate a love of righteousness and an utter hatred of wickedness.
 - a. In every single way, you and I must learn to cherish God and His Word.
 - b. Marriage is one of the many things that is uniquely designed to testify; your marriage is a living, breathing, walking sermon. The question is merely what kind of sermon you are preaching.

5. The King's Queen As His Helper (vv. 8-9).

a. *The opulence of the wedding day.*

- i. "All of your garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made you glad. King's daughters are among your noble ladies; at your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir."
 - 1. Verses 8-9 describe the wedding day in all of its glory.
 - 2. The point here is merely to show that this was a grand celebration in all of the land. The people came joyously to celebrate this *very good* day.
- ii. We will see the procession when we come to the queen's portrait of marital bliss in vv. 10-15, but for now, notice how elegantly the queen is described.
 - 1. All of this is used to simply say that for this wedding, they moved heaven and earth to display its grandeur—but it's actually worth it. It also testifies of the loveliness of the wedding day itself.
 - 2. Where our culture has cheapened and diminished the beauty of marriage, this psalm portrays it in all its loveliness.

b. The opulence and majesty of the queen.

- i. Then the king brings his queen to stand at his right hand, and this is a way of showing that she has come to a place of prominence that no other person on earth does.
 1. There is an aspect to this where her glory is seen in his glory; she completes him, just as woman was designed to do since the beginning of Creation itself.
 2. In this, her splendor adds to his, and she is rightly seen as complementing his rule. By elevating her to his right hand, she is, in other words, his helpmeet.
- ii. We see then this truth on full display: that even this king, as majestic and awe-inspiring as he is in his form and character, is incomplete without his bride. She completes his majesty, and stands as the crowning jewel to his rule.
 1. This is such a beautiful portrayal of what marriage is intended to be, as it brings us back to the creation account with Adam and Eve.
 - a. It reminds us that the norm for humanity is marriage.
 - b. And yet it simultaneously testifies of his wife's dignity.
 2. As we look at this final aspect of a man's leadership in a marriage, it is simply that he elevates his wife above all others in this life.
 - a. He has chosen her among all and pledged his faithfulness to her alone. She is, in every meaningful way, shown dignity and honor as his own flesh, for he loves her, and has made covenant with her.
 - b. The two shall become one, and the bonds of this covenant, when rightly understood and acted upon, shall only add to the increase of their joy.

6. Conclusion

Small Group Questions:

1. How does this psalm deepen and widen your appreciation for the beauty of marriage?
2. In a day where marriage is ill-defined and made to be something perverted from its original form and intent, how do we live in light of what we are called to as husbands? How do wives help their husbands in this? How do single people likewise help in this?
3. Given that this psalm portrays, at least in part, the beauty of the true King, Christ, how do we properly see marriage as a reflection of the gospel?