

# Beauty and Prowess Combined

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn for a short time this evening to Psalm 45 and we'll look at the first part of it, verses 1 to 5. What a brilliant start to a psalm when you immediately are aware of the excitement of the psalmist as he begins this psalm.

It's just vibrant that first verse, my heart, overflows with a pleasing theme. I address my verses to the king, my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

He is just bursting to get this out. And as you see, in those days it would be common for a scribe writing longhand following whoever was dictating, you know, what that sort of thing would have been like.

And that scribe would have to be very, very skilled in writing out whatever was being said out. It's still the case, I don't know if shorthand is used nowadays, but all those sort of situations are where somebody is speaking and somebody else has to get it down very quickly.

Well, it's rapid, it's really just full of energy. That's what he's saying his tongue is like. He is just bursting to get this out and to speak about it. But he's not just speaking about the king, he's actually speaking to him.

[ 1 : 18 ] He wants to tell the king himself all the things that he's going to set out about him, particularly his beauty and his prowess and his power and his marriage to the queen.

And of course, the psalm is messianic. The psalm really is about Christ, the Lord, the king, in terms of his relationship with his people and his prowess as a great warrior king, who, as we'll see in these opening verses, is set out as one who is kitted out to conquer.

And I'd like to just look at these verses in relation to the Christianity Explored course, which is about to begin, God willing, tomorrow evening.

And some of the things that we think of as we come to the course, or even if we're not doing the course, or even if we're not taking part as leaders, nevertheless, there are things in the psalm here that we carry with us and want to bring the Christianity Explored course into this kind of environment in the psalm.

So that we will do the most important thing of all, which is to pray for God's blessing upon it. So the two things briefly tonight that we'll look at are, first of all, the beauty of Jesus, and then secondly, the power of Jesus, the beauty of Jesus in verse 2 especially, and then from verse 3 to verse 5, the power of Christ's prowess as a warrior king.

[ 2 : 52 ] He is, first of all, beautiful in his person. As he addresses these verses to the king and the bursting to set them forth, you are the most handsome of the sons of men.

In other words, there is nobody like this king anywhere else. There is no other human that can compare with this king. Of course, that is obviously the case with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But he is beautiful, first of all, in his person. Let's remember that the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is not his human nature. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ is that he is the Son of God.

And it is as the Son of God that he took our human nature. The person who took our nature is the Son of God.

You define who he is by his deity, by his being the Son of God, the eternal Son of God. And that, of course, has beauty really inherent or built into it or very much part of it.

[ 3 : 57 ] It's all about beauty in many respects. When you think of the Son of God as God and having the attributes of God and all that makes God beautiful, he possesses.

Psalm 27, the psalmist was there concerned to be found in the temple of God, to go into the tabernacle or the temple of God to his holy place, to dwell there all the days of my life.

One thing he desired of the Lord. This was really a priority with him. This is something that fills his heart. This is his greatest ambition and aim. And why is he wanting to do that?

To admire the beauty of the Lord. See, when we come to worship God, we don't come to admire each other.

We don't come to admire things that we ourselves are doing, even if they are spiritual exercises in his worship. We come to worship God because our concern is to admire him in his beauty.

[ 5 : 04 ] And when he comes to meet with us through his word, that is what he impresses on our hearts. That he is most beautiful above all others. When God blesses you with his nearness, when he brings you to these moments when you are captivated by himself in your mind, and you know that he's there, and you know that he's met with you, and his word has blessed you.

It's a beautiful moment. It's filled with his own beauty. That's what we seek to experience as we come together in fellowship, and particularly in the worship of God.

To admire him in his beauty. And when you think of all the attributes of God, the things that the Bible reveals are true of him. His great attributes of love, of wisdom, of goodness, of truth, of power, of holiness, of justice.

Everything that is an attribute, all the attributes of God and everything about them, in the way they are in themselves, in the way they work together perfectly, in the way he exercises them, in carrying out his great plan and purpose for the creation, that is the beauty of Christ.

That's what makes this king beautiful. That's why he surpasses every other. But of course he's not just the son of God, in terms of his deity, he's the son of God incarnate.

[ 6 : 37 ] He now has a human nature that he took to himself. And while it's not the human nature that defines his person, he is not a person without a human nature.

He's a person to whom he has brought his human nature to be forever more connected and attached. He is the God man. And as a human being, he possesses qualities of beauty above any other human being.

Adam was beautiful and Eve when God created them. He placed them in a garden that was so beautiful that even the description of the Bible really, we cannot still imagine how beautiful Eden must have been.

Paradise on earth, filled with all the good things that God had designed for the beautiful humans that he had made, as a reflection and in his own image, a reflection of himself and his beauty, and carrying his image so that they indeed reflected perfectly at that stage the beauty of God.

And the Lord has taken out human nature to himself. A complete human nature, a perfect human nature, not a sinful one.

[ 7 : 59 ] And it's greater than Adam, at least in this sense, that where Adam's standing was but a short time, however long it was, it wasn't that long, he fell into sin and therefore brought corruption upon that nature.

And Christ stood. Christ, in every aspect of his ministry, resisted and overcame all that was designed even against him as a human being and directed even towards his human nature as if to try and make that the means of bringing him as a person into disobedience against the Father's will. As the devil said, when he was hungry, if you're the Son of God, or rather since you are the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread, why should your human nature go through these sufferings even when you're the Son of God and you can provide for yourself food that would feed your human nature?

See the design there to try and even work on the sinless weaknesses of the Lord? That's an amazing description, isn't it? Sinless weaknesses of the Lord's human nature in order to try and get through to take him off this path that he was on.

And that's taking us off on a tangent and I have to be careful not to go through that because there's so much there to explore as well. But the beauty of Christ as a person involves the beauty of his human nature as well.

[ 9 : 40 ] The Greeks and Romans admired human form, which is why some of the great artists and sculptors of the past have bequeathed that legacy that you still find with great paintings and statues.

And all the forms as they were built in, as they were built and painted, were just made as perfect as possible to portray perfections.

But of course, that's nothing at all. That's still flawed human nature. It's still flawed even in the creation of it. But this person, this beautiful human nature of Christ is perfect.

There was never a flaw in his thoughts, in his speech, in his actions. Nothing whatsoever to besmirch him, to make him less than perfect.

He is beautiful in his person. But he's beautiful too in this speech. You're the most handsome of the sons of men. Grace is poured upon or into your lips. Therefore, God has blessed you forever.

[ 10 : 55 ] And the beauty of this king is something that is focused here upon his speech, upon his lips, the medium of speech.

It's a reference to his speaking. And of course, when Christ was in his ministry on earth, you remember from way back in Luke's studies that we have been going through for some time, back in chapter 4 of Luke, there's that tremendous passage, a very significant passage and a beautiful passage, where Jesus in the synagogue takes the scroll and finds in the scroll of the Old Testament and finds in the book of Isaiah where it was written that the spirit of the Lord was upon him and so on.

And then he closed the book and rolled it up again, gave it back to the person in charge and said, today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. And it's the next verse that's really significant because it's significant for a study tonight.

It says that the people wondered at the gracious words or the words of grace that came from his lips. They were just struck with awe, with amazement at the grace shown in his speech.

And that's what's combined there. Grace is poured upon your lips. The Lord in his ministry on earth was equipped as he was sent into this world. He was endowed with the spirit of God.

[ 12 : 29 ] He was given the grace necessary for him to speak as no one ever spoke. As was said about him in another place in John chapter 7 where those who were sent out to take him captive came back to these religious authorities empty handed and they were asked why didn't you bring him?

What was their answer? They didn't say well, we couldn't they didn't say well, he's so powerful, he has so many bodyguards, he has so many guards around him, we couldn't get through his disciples.

That's not what they said. They said no one ever spoke like this man. They couldn't get near him to arrest him, to take him into custody because his words were so amazing.

They just were repelled by the words in the sense that they just could not get through. The speech of this person was just so grand, so amazing that it just kept them back from what they had intended doing to take him into captivity.

Of course, in the Garden of Gethsemane, you remember too that when they came to arrest him, at a certain moment there in relation to Christ speaking, they fell backwards.

[ 13 : 45 ] which shows that again there was a power, an awesomeness, an authority about his speech beyond anybody else, any human being who had ever spoken before.

So you see a beauty in his speech and that comes through in the Gospel. That's the speech of Christ. We must never forget that the Bible even in setting out history from long ago in the Old Testament.

It is still God speaking to us today. It is still the word of the Lord as he addresses our souls. And tonight as we're looking at Psalm 45, the teaching of Psalm 45 as it is pressed upon our minds and upon our spirit, it is Christ who is speaking to us.

Not was, but is. And when you think of the promises that scripture has for God's people, what a beauty there is and what a power there is in these promises.

Nothing can actually stop these promises from being fulfilled. There isn't a power in all the world, in all the universe, in heaven, in earth, in hell, that can actually prevent the promises of God coming to be true and fulfilled to their maximum for every single one of you who believe and trust in God and trust his word and look and hope to his promises.

[ 15 : 20 ] Nothing can stop that from taking place. There's a beauty, there's a power about it. The same with his commands. When you think of the commands of Jesus, the commands of the Lord and what they're designed for, they're not designed as people in the world will tell you to actually kill the joy out of your life.

They're not designed to squeeze every element of rejoicing so that Christians are really ending up as very dull people. They're there so that the boundaries of what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable to God and not acceptable, what is pleasing to him, what is not pleasing to him, so that the boundaries that clearly mark and the kindness of God, the goodness of God, have set them out for us.

We know where not to go and where to go in terms of what is and isn't right and acceptable. And there's a beauty about that, the beauty of truth, the beauty of God's own mind expressed in it, the power and the authority with which he has marked it out.

He is beautiful in his person and he is beautiful in his speech and we pray that that will be what this Christianity Explored course along with the gospel will actually bring out to every single person who attends, even if there are people there that will be like yourselves who are helping out with it, who are doing the course, even if you're experienced Christians already, none of us can say tonight, myself included, that I appreciate the glory and the beauty of Christ sufficiently already, that I don't need to think about that anymore, we've only touched the very bare surface of it, even in this life, even if we're as experienced tonight as I've been following him for all of these years, we want to know more of his beauty, we want to appreciate that beauty more, we want to praise him as the beautiful saviour more and more, that's what we want to come across and the power of his speech to captivate our hearts, our minds, our will, our conscience, it's the beauty of

Jesus, secondly it's the power of Jesus, because the psalmist goes on here, gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty, in your majesty ride out victoriously, and so on, three things from that, down to verse five, the power of Jesus, first of all, he's set out for us here as one who is already armed for battle, talks about the sword in verse three, verse five, your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, and you go back to those times of David, and such times as the psalms were written, and you feel David kitted out in all his battle armor, then he is ready to go to war against his enemies, he has all the equipment necessary, he's at the head of the army, he is there kitted out ready to take on the enemy, and the Lord is ready armed for battle now, people say that's one of the things that's really drastically wrong with the Bible it has all these things in it about warfare, about violent times yes, there are violent times in parts of the Old

[18:53] Testament that are not easy to expound, not easy to explain in terms of the meaning of them and it's not all about spiritualizing it, but in this instance, all of these details in Psalm 45 are things which have a spiritual meaning when it's the Lord here with a sword on his thigh and his arrows ready to pierce the hearts of his enemies that is spiritual in its meaning the Lord as he goes out to conquer lives and bring them to be in obedience to himself, that's the conquering that's meant, that's the kind of warfare that's meant he is himself ready and endowed for that battle for the battle with sin in your heart and my heart, for the battle with sin in the people's hearts who are yet to be brought into subjection to him it is he who goes out to conquer at the head of his hosts because Christ does attack people but he attacks their hearts and their minds and their conscience and attacks by his word and that especially is how he's represented here as a warrior who is going forth to conquer by the power of his word, by the power of his truth, by everything that he possesses through the Holy Spirit to conquer lives, to change them, to convert them, to bring them to know him.

And that's a great encouragement isn't it? one of our aspects of encouragement anyway in the gospel, in preaching the gospel, in witnessing to Christ and in doing such a thing as the Christian explored course, that it is the Lord himself that we pray will actually come and display his power and come to actually invade and attack and conquer and take over lives.

that's what it's all about. And indeed one of the significant aspects of the Christianity explored course is how full of Christ it is, that it is so Christ based and Christ centred and Christ honoring in what is said out there that it is really all about Jesus and his claims and our coming to be subject to him to be his servants and his followers and disciples.

And that's what you want to come through this as well. Isn't it significant that Psalm 45 is placed immediately after Psalm 44?

The placement of the Psalms is interesting, not necessarily with all of them but there are certainly some very deliberate placements amongst them. This is one of them. Psalm 44 is filled with the gloom of defeat.

[21:52] All the way through Psalm 44 the Psalmist is seeking that God will come to their help. You have made us like sheep for slaughter. You have scattered us among the nations.

You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughing stock among the peoples. All this has come upon us. Our heart is not turned back.

If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread our hands to a foreign God, would not God discover? And all the way through and then he comes to an appeal in verse 23.

Awake, why are you sleeping? O Lord, rouse yourself. Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face? Verse 26. Rise up, come to our help.

Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love. And then in comes this brilliant brightness, just like a sudden dawning of a wonderfully bright summer's morning, to scatter the gloom of defeat.

[ 22 : 54 ] How is it done? By bringing before us the glorious, the great, the majestic figure of Christ, in his prowess as a conqueror.

And that's why Psalm 45 ends in such a contrast to Psalm 44. I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations.

Therefore nations will praise you forever and ever. That's not gloom. That's glory. That's a contrast all based upon the king himself.

And he is armed for battle, but he's always victorious in battle. You see, the prayer of the psalmist here to the king for him to come and show his power is not with some sort of question as to whether he's able to do this or not.

He's actually gird your sword on your thigh and your majesty ride out victoriously. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies. The peoples fall under you.

[ 24 : 09 ] This is someone who's never lost a battle. Someone who is always victorious. We don't follow a king who knows the experience of defeat.

We don't follow a king whose leadership is questionable. We don't follow a king who sometimes is a bit suspect. And you don't know whether he's going to come through successfully or not.

He has never been defeated and never will be. Not even death was a defeat for him. His death was the defeat of Satan.

And indeed of death. death of Christ and we must not think that the death of Christ is not itself a victory and only became victorious by his resurrection.

Yes, his resurrection is a victory. It's a triumph over death and a spoiling of the grave. Of course it is. But there is a tremendous element and vibrancy of victory in the death of Christ.

[ 25 : 23 ] because remember the death of Christ is not just laying his body in the tomb. The death of Christ, the spiritual aspect of it, took place on the cross. The death of Christ is God meeting his own wrath in the power of his son through his spirit.

That's not defeat. That's majestic victory over sin. As you remember from Romans chapter 8, that great passage where it begins there at the beginning of Romans 8, that what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, that's because of our sinful human nature, fallenness.

The law could not give us release from its own condemnation. So what did God do in those circumstances? What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh?

God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, in the person, in the human nature of the Lord.

Why? So that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

[ 26 : 53 ] But we've left out the beginning of the chapter, which really begins that whole thread of teaching which is so amazing. There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

there is no condemnation because they are in the one who is always victorious and whose very death was the victory that God himself provided against sin.

That's why it's exciting to be a Christian. That's why it's exciting to save the Lord. That's why it's exciting to climb the steps of a pulpit every Sunday because you never know what's Lloyd-Jones once said.

What's going to happen before you get down again? Because the Lord is in charge of his word and even weak and poor and beggarly instruments like ourselves are used by him in order to bring his enemies to be subject to himself.

To throw out his arrows not aimlessly not carelessly not just on chance but very deliberately to the hearts of all he wants to bring to be his people.

[ 28 : 18 ] You know yourselves tonight. What kind of arrows conquered your own heart? What aspect of the truth of God made an impression in your mind?

Touched your conscience? Brought you to think about eternal things? Who did it? Jesus did it. The Lord did it.

He girded a sword on his thigh. He rolled out victoriously and pierced your heart and brought you subject to himself. That's why it's exciting to do something like a Christianity Explorer course because that's what you really want to be the outcome of it.

People will come through that to commit themselves to the Lord to his kingship to his lordship that they will come to say of themselves truly you are my lord and king and all who trust in you are blessed.

He's armed for battle. He is always victorious in battle but thirdly just let me finish with this. He heads and fights for a great cause. For the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness.

[ 29 : 41 ] Let your right hand teach you awesome things. Truth, meekness, righteousness. Three things which all of us lack by nature or as sinners but three things which in the current climate we live in are desperately lacking among human beings and in their behavior.

Truth, there's enough falsehood, there's plenty of lying, there's a lot of cheating even by very expensively paid footballers and all the kind of things that you see happening in terms of cheating in order to get on in life.

It all has to do with an absence of truth and a respect for truth and a living by the truth. The truth of God as he has revealed it to us in the scriptures and in Jesus Christ.

His cause is one of truth and meekness. we live in a society used to and unashamedly brash and brazen in its behavior even when it is what we as Christians call sinful, sometimes even outlandishly so.

We live in a climate where children are subjected to graphic videos even when they're popular videos. And yet many people don't see the harm in it.

[ 31 : 26 ] It's just the way it is. Well it may be the way it is but what God calls distasteful and immodest and immoral and explicit and unacceptable to him has to be unacceptable to a Christian.

Because that's the standard that God expects. The standard of meekness not brashness not unashamed boldness in sin.

Yes you want to be bold for your Lord but this is talking about something which the Lord himself has as an element of his kingdom and of his cause meekness.

You see that's what he said. Come to me and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart.

Isn't it amazing that well you know this from your own experience as I do from my own too. Before you became a Christian before the Lord changed your life. The things that you thought were really very weak and not worth thinking about things like meekness and humility and forgiveness and all of these things these are kind of weak soft blobby things.

[ 32 : 44 ] Nobody really wants to live like that nowadays. That's what everybody thinks naturally. But when God comes into your life the things that you once thought of were weak and far too easy even to be thinking about they are the most difficult things of all to achieve.

You will never even begin to try to achieve them without grace. And these are great strong qualities these are things that make a person strong things like forgiveness and meekness and humility and patience.

And then there is righteousness. What is the opposite of righteousness? Well if you go to the Bible as your definition book the opposite of righteousness is sin.

He has made him who knew no sin to be sin for us. That we might become the righteousness of God in him.

There is one extreme the righteousness of God. Let's put it up there. Where is its extreme opposite? Sin. Put it down there. He has made him who knew no sin to be sin.

[ 34 : 04 ] That we might become the righteousness of God. That we might reach the furthest opposite of what we know to be sin. That's why Jesus died.

The death he died. And that's a mark of his kingdom as well. Righteousness.

You could say it's inclusive also of holiness of life. Romans 8 again. Why did God do this? So that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

That's not just a judicial standard in God's record book. It's a standard of behavior in God's people. It's there as a holy life.

That's why Christ died to enable us to reach towards holiness and to be holy. At last does God bring us to be. Well, that's just briefly looking at these verses.

[ 35 : 05 ] And let's look at the course and let's look at the gospel too in the light of these great details about Jesus himself. And as you see there that people are brought into subjection to him, to be willingly obedient to him.

When the Lord does that, you then become a follower of Christ. that means he recruits you as one of his troops. You don't just think of Jesus going out to battle, he goes out at the head of his troops. That's you and me as those who love him and follow him. And as we do so, the Christianity Explorer course for those of us who are helping out with it, don't see it as a training exercise.

it's not a pretend for the real thing. It's part of the real thing. It's part of the business of serving Christ, being among his troops, and going out to battle for him, serving him in this capacity too, so that others too hopefully will join us and come to be in subjection to him.

Lord our God, help us, we pray, to be true followers of you in all that we seek to do. We ask, O Lord, that we are faced with the great details of your beauty and your prowess, that it might instill in us a further sense of confidence and thankfulness that we serve such a great king.

[ 36 : 51 ] Grant your mercy to us, we pray, to forgive all our sin, every way that our sin affects all that we offer to you. And be with us now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.