

The Oil of Gladness

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house”—v. 10.

PSALM FORTY-FIVE

WE tend to regard the Psalms as emotional songs of worship and praise and thanksgiving, expressing the inner feelings and spiritual mind of David and of Christ. Truly they are this, but they are much more. The book of Psalms is one of the most specifically prophetic and doctrinal books of the Bible. Of the nearly 300 direct quotations from the Old Testament in the New, much more than 1/3—almost 1/2—are from the Psalms alone, and they are quoted for their specific doctrinal and prophetic evidence.

Psalm 45 is very closely related to both the Song of Solomon and the closing chapters of the Revelation. It uses very similar wording and imagery. It concerns the manifestation of Christ in power as a Man of War subduing the world—

“In righteousness doth he judge and make war” (Rev.19:11).

—and it concerns the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The theme of this psalm is Truth, Righteousness, Beauty, and Meekness. All the glory of Christ and the Bride is attributed to goodness and purity of character. All the purpose is righteousness and blessing—

“In thy Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed” (Gn.22:18).

The psalm begins—

“My heart is inditing a good matter.”

“My heart”—here are the deepest inward feelings and emotions—my heart, my whole inner being.

“Is inditing”—literally, as in the margin and RV, *“is bubbling over—overflowing—with a good matter.”* It is the figure of a fountain irresistibly gushing forth an abundance of waters: an eager enthusiasm that cannot be restrained or held in.

If we are to be accepted by Christ, this must become our frame of mind and basic mental condition: overflowing with interest and enthusiasm and thanksgiving for everything to do with God and His Truth and His Purpose and His People. We have known such, and they are a joy to be with. It is the characteristic of the true saint, though it will manifest itself in different forms in different people, for we vary greatly in our way and degree of expressing our inner emotions. The most demonstrative are not always the most deeply emotional.

We must—absolutely must—develop a frame of mind where we begrudge any time taken away from communion with God and study of His Word and the joyful work of His Truth. This will never come naturally of itself, though we may be ‘in the Truth’ for 100 years. It will come only by meditation, and prayer, and an intelligent, mature realization of the facts and realities of life in their relation to God and to eternity. But it must come if we hope for life. Verse 1 continues—

“I speak: my works are for the King.”

So must our works ever be: all that we do, all day, every day. All must be consciously for God in Christ. We are not our own: we are bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We have agreed to a complete servitude. We have no right to do anything outside the thankful service of God. If

we do not realize this, and rejoice in this privileged spiritual bondage of love, we shall find at last to our sorrow that God will not be mocked (Gal.6:7) and that He—

“Hath no pleasure in fools” (Ecc.5:4).

Let us therefore, as the Preacher there advises, wisely pay our vows.

“My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”

This is because the heart is overflowing with joy and thanksgiving concerning the King. If the heart is devoted to the right things, it will inevitably be manifested in the conversation: silliness and emptiness of speech about meaningless present things will be eschewed; gossip and rumor and criticism of others will be abhorred. The heart and mind will rather be full of spiritual things. Kindness, love and joy will be the sweet waters of every true and godly heart’s-fountain.

Verse 2: ***“Thou art fairer—more beautiful—than the children of men.”***

So in the Song of Solomon—*“My beloved is altogether lonely”* (5:16).

Literally, it is—*“Thou art made, or become, fairer than, etc...”*

It was a process, a development, a becoming. It is speaking of the only true beauty, the ‘beauty of holiness,’ and Jesus was—

“Made PERFECT through suffering” (Heb.2:10).

The beauty was the character he developed under terrible trial and affliction. We must be able to see him as the most beautiful, most attractive, most desirable object of our affections. Nothing must share that affection with him. If we love beauty and holiness, we shall love him. The love of holiness is a painstakingly learned quality of the spiritual mind: the natural fleshly mind loves fleshly things.

“Grace is poured into thy lips.”

“Poured into”—it was from without—from above. All good, even in Christ, is from without, from above. He was *“full of grace and truth”* (Jn.1:14) because he *“emptied (ekenosen) himself”* (Ph.2:7 RV) and submitted in love to God’s filling.

“Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.”

Let us note the connection indicated by the ‘therefore.’ Because he manifested the beauty of holiness and was perfectly obedient and submissive to the divine filling, therefore God has blessed him for ever. So it must be with us. God does not play favorites. There will always be a ‘because’ and a ‘therefore’ to all His ways.

The world is full of people—teeming with them—millions and millions and millions of them: all God’s people in a generic sense. 100s of 1000s are born, 100s of 1000s die, every day. Why should God bless *us*, and not them? Only because (and if) we are entirely—in our whole life’s pattern—*different* from them; entirely dedicated, our hearts overflowing with love for God and desire to serve Him.

Verse3: ***“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh.”***

Prepare for battle. Prepare to destroy all evil, and to establish world-wide righteousness and good—

“In righteousness doth he judge and make war” (Rev.19:11).

Surely in these last evil, violent, morally corrupt days, just prior to its glorious fulfillment, this must represent our prayer more directly than the prayers of any previous generation!—

“Give Him no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. 62:7).

“With thy glory and thy majesty”

These are to be ‘girded on’ with the sword. Truly he has them now, but the Psalmist is speaking of the manifestation and exercise of these attributes openly before mankind in the earth. Put on and manifest thy power. Become world ruler. Establish thy Kingdom by the righteous sword of judgment against all evil and corruption.

Verse 4: *“In thy majesty ride prosperously because of Truth and Meekness and Righteousness.”*

This must be the foundation of any true power or glory, and Jesus by submission and sacrifice and suffering laid this foundation first within himself, that he might be eternally God’s beloved and honored Son. These are essential qualifications for acceptance with God. All His family without exception must be thus developed by overcoming in this present probation. Jesus said—

“LEARN OF ME, for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Mt. 11:29).

The spirit of the world is pride and self-assertion. The spirit of Christ is lowliness and self-abasement. We must realize our complete helplessness and ineffectiveness in anything worthwhile and divine. A little present success and prosperity and accomplishment in the world’s meaningless tinker-toy economy immediately goes to our heads and makes us think our natural folly is wisdom. But at best, we are but unprofitable servants to God, the only meaningful activity. Even Christ could do nothing of himself: all he accomplished was of and through God. Pride and self-assertion are at the root of all fleshly contention—

“Only by pride cometh contention” (Prov.13:10).

Where there is lowliness and intelligent humility, and no foolish worldly desire or ambition or covetousness or greed, there is joy and peace and happiness and satisfaction. The world has everything backwards, everything upside down. The proud and self-assertive—they who *desire* things—are never happy, never satisfied. They cannot be.

“Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.”

The root of the word ‘terrible’ here is ‘fear.’ It does not necessarily mean bad things, but dreadful in the sense of being awe-inspiring, like the manifestation of God on Mt. Sinai. Of course, destructive things are involved, for the rebellious must be utterly destroyed—

“The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the Day of His wrath.”

This is how Christ’s ‘right hand’ shall teach him terrible things—it is *guided by God* in the conquering of the nations of the earth.

Verse 5: *“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies. The people fall under thee.”*

They can be sharp in two ways, and people can fall before or under Christ in two ways. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, his hearers were ‘pierced thoroughly (katanusso) to the heart’ (Acts 2.37), and repented. When Stephen spoke before the Council, they were ‘cut to the heart’ and stirred up to greater enmity, and brought on themselves final destruction. It is the same arrows and, at the root, the same enemy, but how different the result in different people!

Verse 6: *“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”*

Paul applies this to Christ in Heb. 1 to show his superiority over the angels. The angels are spoken of as ‘gods,’ but none is ever addressed in this special and exalted way.

The term ‘god’ (*elohim*: the word here) is applied in Scripture to all who represent or manifest God—all on whom God conferred power or rulership: angels, judges, rulers of Israel. Angels said, “*I am God*,” as at the burning bush. Christ pointed out—

“God called them gods unto whom the Word of God came” (Jn.10:35).

Christ was pre-eminently and without any close parallel the supreme manifestation of God of all time: the One above all “*to whom the Word of God came*”—

“God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim.3:16).

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor.5:19).

“The sceptre of thy Kingdom is a right scepter.”

That is, literally, a *straight* sceptre: true, just, fair, undeviating. The sceptre is the rod or staff of ruling power. The word is sometimes translated ‘rod.’ It is interesting that the word here translated ‘sceptre’ is the one usually translated ‘tribe,’ apparently because each tribe was under the rod or staff of a prince, just as we use the word ‘staff’ for those under a leader.

It will be a ‘rod of iron,’ truly; but it will be absolutely just and impartial and pure and holy. This is the world’s greatest need. Today there is no holiness; and ‘justice,’ even at best, is a pitiful, foolish, bumbling affair of human ignorance and error.

Verse 7: “Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

The beauty of the Bible and the purpose of God is that all is based on goodness and righteousness. We are impressed with this beauty more and more as we see the world’s morality and decency collapsing, and lust and pleasure and wealth and power increasingly becoming the objects of worship and praise.

Christ loved righteousness and hated wickedness. This is wisdom. This is understanding. This is godliness. This is the way of life and joy.

There is such a thing as righteousness and goodness, and there is such a thing as wickedness and evil, and God is the AllwiseOneWho defines them. And happy indeed is he who has the sense to love the one and hate the other. Thank God for this glorious revelation that gives us an unerring compass; a true, unwavering leading star in the darkness of the ignorant, fleshly, human night.

To “*love righteousness and hate wickedness*” does not just mean to be abstractly in favor of good and against evil. All would claim that. It means to actively practice righteousness, and have absolutely nothing to do with anything or anyone wicked.

“Therefore God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

The anointing ‘oil of gladness’—how much we all need it! All are seeking gladness. The Scriptures tell us that there is only one hard, narrow way to it, and that one way is guaranteed infallible success—complete devotion of the heart and soul to God. This was how Jesus received the comforting oil of gladness, and this is how all his brethren and sisters must.

There are difficult times in the ecclesial world today. They sadden us, but they cannot touch our basic joy and gladness, if we are wholly at one in our hearts with God. No outward sorrow or disappointment or problem can affect our joyful inner relationship to God, except to deepen and

strengthen it, and increase its value—

“Thou WILT keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee” (Isa.26:3).

There are no exceptions, no deceptive small print, in this glorious promise. If we do not have perfect inner peace, whatever comes, the trouble is within ourselves, and curable by ourselves, by taking advantage of the guaranteed help of God. No one outside us can affect it. We have no one to blame but ourselves for its absence.

“Above thy fellows”

Who are Christ’s ‘fellows’ here referred to? The meaning of the word seems to lead to only one answer. The basic meaning is to join. It means to share, to participate, to be joined together, to be knit together. It means, and is usually translated ‘companions.’ It is interesting that our English word ‘companion’ means to eat bread together, from *com*, ‘together,’ and *panis*, ‘bread.’

It is not a deprivative or competitive; it is simply a superlative. It is a harmonious supreme gladness among gladnesses. All his ‘fellows’ will, in their own proper order, share in his oil of gladness, but Jesus is supreme and pre-eminent above them all. The essential pre-eminence of his gladness will, in fact, consist in the joyful knowledge that his labors and sufferings are the root and source of all the gladnesses.

‘Fellow,’ again, turns our minds to fellowship—the most solemn and beautiful of scriptural conceptions. Fellowship is the core and nucleus of God-manifestation. Let us treat it scripturally and holily, and never degrade it to mere association for numbers or advantage.

Verse 8: ***“All thy garments are myrrh, aloes and cassia.”***

(The italic word ‘smell’ is not in the original).

These are the sweet and precious spices of anointing and of burial. It was a huge and costly store of myrrh and aloes that the suddenly-courageous Nicodemus lovingly used in the burial of Christ. Somehow death and burial are always in the background of the divine picture of redemption—but not as a tragedy or a finality: only as a marvelous and beautiful means to a joyful and triumphant end.

Myrrh and cassia were ingredients of the holy anointing oil that sanctified the Levitical priests, and certainly this verse is related to the anointing oil of gladness of the preceding verse.

These precious perfumes and spices radiated a pleasing and enjoyable fragrance to all who came within their far-reaching range. Here is a perfect figure of the character and influence of Christ, and to a lesser degree of all who sincerely endeavor to pattern themselves after him. Primarily the fragrance ascends to God—a savor of a sweet smell, well-pleasing unto Him. But it also radiates to the comfort and blessing of all mankind.

His garments *are* these joyful, healing, preserving spices. He is clothed and beautified and glorified by the virtues they represent, of character perfected under trial.

Garments are ‘for glory and beauty’ (Ex.28:2); they are to protect; they are to cover natural nakedness and shame. Garments represent state or condition or position: royal, prisoners’, widows’, virgins’, etc. In Isa.59:17, Christ is clothed with righteousness, salvation, vengeance and zeal. These are the fragrant spices that identify his work and character, and which he irradiates to all who draw near to him.

“Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad.”

That is RV, Rotherham, etc., and appears more correct.

Ivory is a very interesting figure. It is white and smooth and beautiful and precious. It is a living substance of great durability. Solomon made an ivory throne, typical of the Great White Throne of peace and righteousness from which Christ shall rule the world, after his purifying judgments.

In the Song of Solomon, both the Bridegroom and the Bride are likened to the beautiful rich creamy whiteness of ivory.

The word for ivory—*shen*—is exactly the same word that is usually translated ‘teeth.’ In the Song, the Bride is praised for the white, even, regular beauty of her teeth. Teeth give to words form and decisiveness. Teeth divide and masticate and prepare for assimilation the food that gives the body life and health and strength.

Ivory palaces are dwellings of glory, majesty and beauty. Stringed instruments, again, stir many thoughts of rejoicing, worship and praise. The basic characteristic of the Cherubim of Glory, the host of the glorified Redeemed, is intense, incessant praise. They ‘*rest not day and night*’ (Rv. 4:8) from crying ‘*Holy, holy, holy,*’ unto God. The ‘stringed instruments’ that make Christ glad are the ‘*harpers harping with their harps*’ (Rv. 14:2-3—the 144,000 singing the triumphant Song of Moses and the Lamb.

Verse 9: “***Kings’ daughters were among thy honorable women***”

This *may* refer to the submission of all the great among the Gentiles, as in v.12, and ‘kings’ (in the plural) would seem to support this. But on the other hand, its position at this point seems to indicate closer relationship to the King and Queen. That is, the individual saints who make up the Bride collectively. A possible solution that would explain and harmonize these considerations is that the ‘kings’ daughters’ are natural Israel, now restored and purified and honored and in close and special relationship with the King and Queen. The absence of Israel elsewhere in this picture of the consummation adds probability to this application.

“***Upon thy right hand stands the Queen in gold of Ophir.***”

The right hand is the position of acceptance and privilege and honor and power. The ‘gold of Ophir’ was the finest, purest, most beautiful gold. Pure, refined gold is victorious tried and tested faith.

The word for ‘Queen’ is not the usual one. It is only used twice elsewhere. It does not refer to a Queen who reigns in her own right, but to the chief and special and pre-eminent wife and consort of a King. Some versions translate it ‘Bride’ here, some ‘Wife,’ some ‘Consort.’ It relates her closely and directly to the King, who is supreme.

Verses 10 and 11 are the heart and exhortation of the psalm—by far the most significant and practical part for us—

Verse 10: “***Hearken, O daughter: consider: and incline thine ear***”

A solemn, urgent, 3-fold charge; not just to listen to this particular message but, as the words mean, to permanently and continuously meditate and ponder: Hearken, consider, incline thine ear

“***Forget thine own people, and thy father’s house.***”

Put out of your mind all your past natural connections. Put out of your mind everything to do with the world and natural things. Give yourself wholly and wholeheartedly to the King. “*Let the dead bury their dead.*” Paul says:

“*I have espoused you to one husband that I should present you a chaste virgin unto Christ.*”

Abraham was commanded—*“Leave thy kindred, and thy fathers house.”*

Henceforth we know no man after the flesh. The only real relationship we recognize now is that with Christ and those who are his. Truly we are kind to our relatives after the flesh. We try to do them good as we are able, and as they need. We try to manifest in love to them the more excellent way. We constantly pray they will be drawn to the Way of Life and the fellowship of Christ.

But we have left the natural world of the dead, and have entered a new, glorious, living world in Christ: and between them there is a great gulf fixed—*“Forget thine own people, and thy father’s house.”*

The family of God now need the utmost of your care and attention and love and companionship. Have we resolutely made this called for break and transfer in the bindings of our hearts and minds, as God requires? Let us, in wisdom—*“Hearken, consider, and incline our ear.”*

Verse 11: *“So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty”*

Two things are to be noted. The ‘so’ tells us that the King’s desire depends upon our faithful compliance with the previous verse. He will not desire us if we do not resolutely ‘forget’ and put behind us all the things and people of the world.

And secondly, *‘The King shall desire thy beauty.’* What beauty? Do we have, have we developed, are we straining every effort to develop—a beauty that he *can* desire? Remember Esther—

“Six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors” (2:12).

Esther here is just a type. The real thing goes much deeper and takes much longer. It is the real inner fragrance and beauty. And the beauty had better be there when the time comes to go in unto the inspection of the King: the beauty of holiness, the beauty of character, the beauty of knowledge and wisdom in God’s Word. We haven’t any time to spare on the passing rubbish of this world.

“For he is thy Lord, and worship thou him”

Literally, ‘Bow down to him’—as Abigail and Bathsheba bowed before David. *“For he is thy Lord.”* This is given to emphasize and enforce the command to *“Forget thy father’s house.”*

Let us not presume. Let us never be careless or thoughtless. Truly he is a gracious, loving Bridegroom, but he is also the stern Lord, Master and Judge. To bow down is to submit completely to the will and authority of another—

“Ye are bought with a price: ye are not your own.”

Verse 12: *“And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift: the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor.”*

Here clearly is the submission of the Gentiles: the riches and glory of the nations being brought unto Christ and his Bride. Isaiah calls Tyre ‘the crowning city’ (23:8). It was the richest city of the ancient world. It was close to Israel. It helped David and Solomon prepare for and build the Temple. Tyre was the world center for industry, commerce and merchandising: the mart of the nations. All this will flow to Christ: all the earth’s power and industry and wealth—such as is permitted to continue, will no longer be for the benefit of the greedy rich and powerful, but for the righteous use of the earth’s new King. Isaiah says the merchandise of Tyre shall be ‘holiness to the Lord’ (23:18).

Verse13: ***“The King’s daughter is all glorious within.”***

Surely this needs no searching out of the meaning. This is the beauty the King shall greatly desire. This is the beauty we must diligently devote our lives to cultivate—the all-gloriousness within. If there is any foolishness, or unfaithful stewardship of our Lord’s goods put in our trust, or worldly desire, or covetousness, or unkindness, or harshness, or gossip, or criticism, or any other fleshly, worldly thing, then we are not ‘all-glorious within,’ and there is no beauty for the King to be able to desire. Jesus said to the Pharisees about what was within them—

“Ye are full of dead men’s bones” (Mt. 23:27).

How easy it is to be full of the dead men’s bones of the things of the dead world! It is the natural way. It is the automatic, inevitable way—unless we make a supreme effort, with God’s help, to be different.

“Her clothing is of wrought gold.”

‘Wrought’ simply means ‘worked.’ Gold is faith. Her clothing is a worked faith, a tried faith, a faith manifested and developed and strengthened by works of faith. Gold is worked first by a fierce crucible of fire; then by pounding and cutting to the final desired shape and pattern of beauty. It is interesting and thought-provoking that gold is perhaps the most universal of metals. It is in practically everything, even in living things. There are 10 billion tons of it in the waters of the oceans. But rarely is it found in useful and practical quantities, and even there it takes great effort to produce even a little. So ‘faith’ is found everywhere in microscopic quantities, but rarely is it found in sufficient amount to have power and influence on the life.

Verse14: ***“She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework.”***

Needlework is the slow, careful, steady, gradual creation of a pattern of beauty on a prepared and suitable surface and material. It can be seen to grow daily, if the worker is industrious and diligent. Its growth is obvious to the eye; its extent is measurable. If the work has not been steadily done in the time allowed for it, it will not suddenly appear at the last moment, merely by wishing. In all this there are deep lessons. How is our daily needlework coming on our garment of beauty and glory? How much of the divine pattern is complete and visible? What do we have to show? And shall we have anything ready to wear for that great assembly soon to be called?

Verse15: ***“They shall enter into the King’s palace.”***

That is, those who are properly clothed. Those who have faithfully wrought their gold and applied themselves to their needlework. And the door will be shut. The King’s palace is his dwelling-place, and the center from which he rules. This King is also a Priest, and his palace is a Temple: a holy, living Temple, comprised of faithful foundations, tried pillars, and living stones of the translucent beauty of the finest polished white marble. The righteous people who keep the Truth enter in with joy—with ‘gladness and rejoicing’ (v.15), and go no more out. They become God’s eternal dwelling-place.

Verse16: ***“Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
whom thou mayest make princes in the earth.”***

Verses 2-9 were addressed to the King: verses 10-15 to or about the Queen. The final two verses seem most appropriately addressed to the King, or perhaps even more fittingly still to both combined, for now they have become One. The King and Bride are now the Multitudinous Christ.

Christ’s fathers—natural Israel—rejected and crucified him: and in so doing they cut themselves off from being the Princes of the earth. Truly natural Israel shall be cleansed and

redeemed and raised to honor in the Age to Come. But the real Princes will be Christ's children by faith; those who wholly devote themselves to him in these present dark days. These are the cherished, joyful fruit of the bitter travail of his soul, when for them he poured out his life unto death—

“He shall see his seed: he shall prolong his days: he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied” (Isa.53:10-11).

Verse17: *“I will make thy Name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.”*

G.V.Growcott, The Berean Christadelphian, July 1977