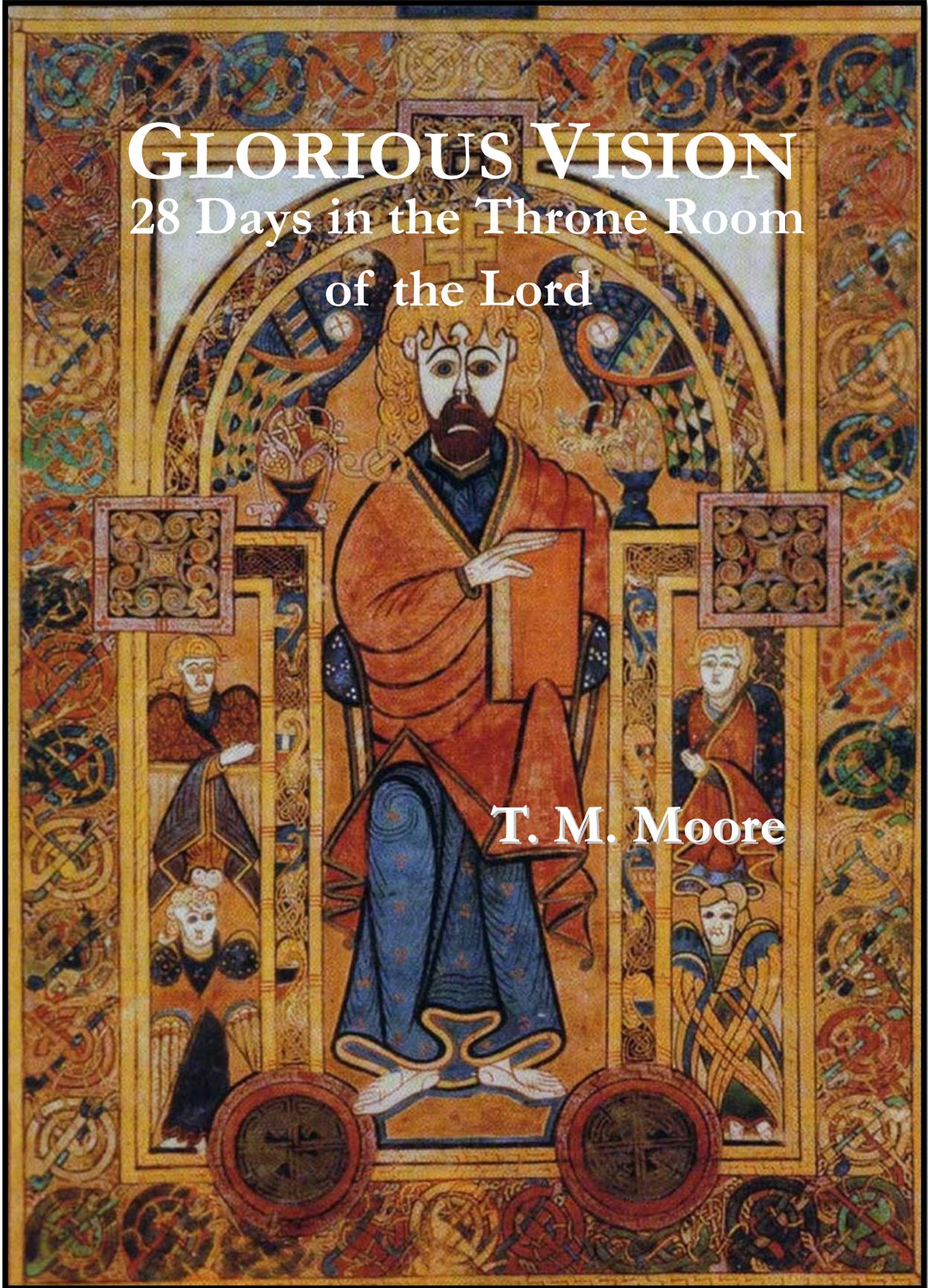


Glorious Vision: 28 Days in the Throne Room of the Lord

GLORIOUS VISION

28 Days in the Throne Room of the Lord

T. M. Moore



Glorious Vision: 28 Days in the Throne Room of the Lord
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Foreword

Jesus Christ has ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God. From there, in the presence of myriad saints and angels, He is pursuing His agenda of building His Church and advancing His Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.

This is real. Even though Christ rules from within an unseen realm, He is real, that realm is real, and Christians are called to set their minds on that unseen reality in order to gain the strength they need for their daily walk and work.

But how many of us actually take Paul's charge seriously (Col. 3:1-3)? How many of us set aside the time and have developed the ability to "see" with the "eye of the heart" (Eph. 1:18) beyond the veil that separates the seen and unseen realms, and to focus on our fairest Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our King and God?

Not many. And that's what these exercises intend to address.

In the Lord's presence, contemplating His beauty and partaking of Him (Ps. 27:4, 2 Pet. 1:4), are fullness of joy and pleasures forever more (Ps. 16:11). If we experienced those joys and pleasures more *truly* and *consistently*, we would make our way into the Lord's presence, through reading, contemplation, waiting, and prayer, much more frequently than we do.

This would change our lives and transform our ministries. Because in contemplating the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ we find grace to sustain, inspire, mold, direct, and empower us for Kingdom living here and now.

The Scriptures provide just enough in the way of revelation concerning this unseen realm to guide us in nurturing a clear and compelling vision of the larger world in which we live and move and have our being. In particular, Psalm 45 is both descriptive and suggestive of the landscape of this unseen realm and of the business which occupies the major players who operate therefrom. The exercises that follow use the encouragement of great church leaders from the past and the words of Psalm 45 to guide us for 28 daily visits to the throne room of our Lord Jesus Christ. The goal of these exercises is twofold:

1. To enlarge and improve your vision of the unseen realm, and your participation in the Kingdom work of Jesus Christ.
2. To engage others in this vision by sharing this resource and meeting with them for conversation and prayer.

Work through the exercises that follow, one day at a time. Set aside a time each day for these exercises, and try to keep it the same time for each of the 28 days. At the end of the 28 days, work through the seven questions at the end of the study to help you pull together your thoughts and experiences, and to prepare you for sharing with others who may be involved with you in this study. Enlist some friends to go through these exercises. Then meet to review the seven questions at the end.

Included in these pages are Psalm 45 from the English Standard Version of the Bible and the hymn, *Fairest Lord Jesus*, to which you will be referred at various times over the next 28 days.

Our prayer is that these exercises might begin or reinforce an important aspect of your own walk with the Lord, that of learning better how to live in the "then and there" in all the "here and now" moments of your life.

Psalm 45

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah; a love song.

- 1 My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.
- 2 You are the most handsome of the sons of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.
- 3 Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,
in your splendor and majesty!
- 4 In your majesty ride out victoriously
for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;
let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!
- 5 Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the king's enemies;
the peoples fall under you.
- 6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;
- 7 you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;
- 8 your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;
- 9 daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor;
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.
- 10 Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear:
forget your people and your father's house,
11 and the king will desire your beauty.
Since he is your lord, bow to him.
- 12 The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts,
the richest of the people.
- 13 All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold.
- 14 In many-colored robes she is led to the king,
with her virgin companions following behind her.
- 15 With joy and gladness they are led along
as they enter the palace of the king.
- 16 In place of your fathers shall be your sons;
you will make them princes in all the earth.
- 17 I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations;
therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

Fairest Lord Jesus

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature
O Thou of God and man, the Son
Thee, will I cherish, Thee, will I honor
Thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown.

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands
Robed in the blooming garb of spring:
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
And all that twinkling, starry host!
Jesus shines brighter; Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels heaven can boast.

Beautiful Savior, Lord of all nations,
Son of the God and Son of Man,
Glory and honor, praise, adoration
Now and forevermore be thine.

Week 1, Day 1 Ministering Heaven on Earth

Reflect

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:19

John Chrysostom (ca. 344-407): On the Priesthood

“For they who inhabit the earth and make their abode there are entrusted with the administration of things which are in Heaven, and have received an authority which God has not given to angels or archangels.”

The Kingdom of God advances from heaven on earth through the ministry of His Word and Spirit. In the church, pastors and other shepherds are responsible for sound teaching, careful disciple-making, and working with people so that they feed themselves on the Scriptures and other disciplines of grace (Eph. 4:11, 12). But pastors and teachers cannot nurture in their members and congregations that which they cannot “see” themselves. Only as our vision of Christ and His Kingdom becomes firmly fixed and powerfully attractive in our own lives will we be able to persuade those we serve that seeking this Kingdom as their highest priority will also result in their greatest fulfillment and joy. The Kingdom of God makes progress on earth as it is in heaven as those who have their vision firmly fixed in heavenly places lead others into this glorious vision and way of life. How thoroughly humbling and truly amazing to know that eternal and heavenly designs can come into being through our faithful handling of the mysteries of God’s Word!

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on the superscription (in the Hebrew Bible, these are regarded as part of the text of Scripture), giving prayerful consideration to the words in bold, as follows:

*To the **choirmaster**: according to **Lilies**. A **Maskil** of the Sons of Korah, a **love song**.*

Questions:

1. Why is this psalm directed to the choirmaster? How was it to be used? By whom? In what settings?
2. Was “Lilies” a well-known melody, perhaps a “pop” song of the day?
3. A “maskil” is a kind of psalm intended for contemplation and teaching so as to impart wisdom. “Maskil” derives from a root which means “to contemplate” or “to be prudent.” If the form here is a Piel participle, which it appears to be, then this adds a layer of intensity to the word. What does this suggest to you about what the sons of Korah intended for this psalm?
4. This is intended as a “love song.” For whom? To whom? With what hoped-for result?

Pray

Write out a prayer to God, based on your meditation above:

Week 1, Day 2

Hoping for Things Invisible

Reflect

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. Colossians 3:1, 2

Augustine (354-430): On the Catechising of the Uninstructed

“And assuredly it ought to be pointed out to him [a new or untaught believer], that the Lord Himself would neither thus have admonished him and urged him to become a Christian, and to be incorporated into the Church, nor have taught him by such signs or revelations, had it not been His will that, for his greater safety and security, he should enter upon a pathway already prepared in the Holy Scriptures, in which he should not seek after visible miracles, but learn the habit of hoping for things invisible, and in which also he should receive monitions not in sleep but in wakefulness.”

We don't preach or teach enough about the “invisible things” of our faith – Christ exalted and reigning, the promises of God, angels and how they help us, spiritual forces of wickedness in high places, the glorious throne room of the Lord, the ever-coming Kingdom of God. But Paul commands us to set our minds on such things. This will be difficult for the people of God to do unless someone serves as a “tour guide” to show them around these parts and teach them how to enter and enjoy them. After all, believers have a reserved seat in this glorious realm (Eph. 2:6)! Having a clear vision and a firm connection to unseen things can make for a more fruitful Christian life. Augustine believed it; he even wrote a little tract on the subject (“Faith of Things Not Seen”). The work of pastors and teachers involves, in part, leading God's people to “feel at home” in that unseen realm of glory (cf. Eph. 1:15-23). Perhaps we as ministers and teachers of the Word should make this unseen realm more a part of our own discipline and instruction in the things of the Lord?

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on the first half of verse 1a, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*My **heart overflows** with a **pleasing** theme...*

Questions

1. From the heart flow the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). What desires in your heart might keep you from desiring a greater vision of unseen things?
2. What does it feel like when your heart is “overflowing”? What are some things that make your heart “overflow” like this?
3. The word, “pleasing”, here is, in the Hebrew, “good.” Should this word point us back to Genesis 1? Why might the sons of Korah have wanted to do this? Does it suggest anything about Jesus?
4. Do you think your heart could ever “gush” (the literal of “overflow” in the Hebrew) with a love song to our exalted King? Do you think that might have an impact in your ministry?

Pray

Write out a prayer to the Lord, based on your meditation above:

Week 1, Day 3 Meditation

Reflect

Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." John 1:48

Hugh of St. Victor (ca. 1096-1141): The Didascalicon

"Meditation is sustained thought alone planned lines...Meditation takes its start from reading but is bound by none of reading's rules or precepts. For it delights to range along open ground, where it fixes its free gaze upon the contemplation of truth, drawing together now these, now those causes of things, or now penetrating into profundities, leaving nothing doubtful, nothing obscure. The start of learning, thus, lies in reading, but its consummation lies in meditation."

Time to think. Time to mull. Time to sketch diagrams, make lists, jot down observations. Time to envision unseen realms and glories yet to come. Then time to ponder all that. What minister or teacher would not long to have more such time available! Christian leaders are so busy and so much on the go, that it can be very difficult to find any extended time for meditation. But Jesus did, and so should we. Meditation is critical for sorting through things, enriching vision, gaining clarity on the things that matter most, so that we can maintain proper focus, direction, and pace in our lives and ministries. When meditation really matters to us – like it did to the psalmists, prophets, apostles, and the Lord Jesus – we'll make sure there's plenty of time available for it in our program of growing in the Lord.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 1, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I **address my verses to the king**; my **tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.***

Questions:

1. If you were to "address" something to the King, something more permanent than spoken words, what form would that take?
2. How do you envision the King, as you come to address Him?
3. What makes one a "ready" scribe? What makes one a "ready" minister or teacher of the Word?
4. Compare your preaching or teaching to the sons of Korah writing a song for the choirmaster. How do you offer your "verses" to the King before bringing them to the people you teach?

Pray

Write a prayer to the King, based on your meditation for today:

Week 1, Day 4 Focused on the King

Reflect

But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Acts 7:55

John Calvin (1509-1564): Sermons from Job

“...let us note well the lesson which is here shown to all believers: namely, when we would wish to walk properly, we must not be as it were only before men, our eyes must not be focused only on them; but we must contemplate the heavenly Judge, and we must know that it is to Him that we have to answer and render account.”

It is natural, in the midst of some trial or difficulty, to allow the circumstance and our response to it to become practically the entire focus of our lives. We dwell on our misery, on the unfairness of what has been foisted on us, or on how unlikely it is that we shall ever find respite. But God is the Lord of circumstances, hearts, and solutions. The throne of Jesus remains unshaken while we endure whatever He has been pleased to allow for our good (Rom. 8:28). If we would find the benefit He intends for us through trials, we must learn to keep our eyes on Him – both the one who suffers and the one who counsels the sufferer. We do not want to fall into sin before Him, and thus become separated from His presence; and we do not want to fail to see His beauty and glory. For only as we contemplate our risen and reigning King will we be able to draw, like Stephen, on the vast, mysterious power of unseen things to yield grace to help in our time of need. We best help those who suffer when we help them keep their eyes on the Lord. And we will be but little help to them in their trials until we learn this discipline for our own.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 2a, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

You are the most handsome of the sons of men...

Questions

1. How many different words can you substitute for “You”? Which of these speaks most dearly to you of our exalted King?
2. The word, “handsome”, in the ESV is more consistently translated “beautiful” or “fair.” This verse is the basis of the hymn, *Fairest Lord Jesus*. Sing this hymn through softly, making note as you do of all the things that describe our King as the fairest of all men.
3. The phrase “sons of men” suggests that our King is not alone in His throne room (cf. Job 1:6, Revelation 4:4). Who are these “sons of men” and what do you see them doing? Do you have anything in common with them?
4. Are you and the “sons of men” engaged in the same activity? Should this affect the way you think about and enter into this activity in the future? Why or why not?

Pray

Write out a prayer, based on your meditation for today. Share that prayer with another leader in your church.

Week 1, Day 5 True Beauty

Reflect

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. Psalm 17:15

Columbanus (ca. 543-615 AD): “Poem on the World’s Impermanence”

“The beauty of men
shall vanish in old age.
All former comeliness
is wiped away with grief.
The radiance of Christ’s face,
lovely before all things,
is more to be desired
than the frail flower of flesh.”

Paul tells us that contemplating the face of the Lord Jesus Christ can bring us into the presence of the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:6). John knew this well (Rev. 1), and would have agreed with Paul. The psalmists tell us that Jesus is the fairest of all men, and that contemplating His beauty is a great privilege and delight (Pss. 45:2; 27:4). Hopefully, by now we’re beginning to discover that this is so. Our world traffics in beauty, but it’s only the beauty of outward appearances. Sadly, many Christians prefer to fill their minds with the beauty of this world. Such beauty – whatever form it takes – can be a trap and a snare, both for those who seek it and those who parade it about. True beauty is only in the Lord, and this is beauty that does not fade, has power to comfort and transform, and is the true Source of all real beauty in the world. But do we teach the people of God how to contemplate the beauty of our risen and ascended Lord? Is contemplating this beauty a high priority in our own walk with Him?

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on all of verse 2, paying special attention to the words in bold:

*You are the most handsome of the sons of men; **grace is poured upon your lips**; therefore **God has blessed you forever.***

Questions

1. What does “grace” look like, “poured” upon the “lips” of our King?
2. David calls us to “kiss the Son” (Ps. 2:12). Imagine kissing the hand of this glorious King with His grace-rich lips. What would that be like?
3. The word, “blessed”, carries the connotation of being on one’s knees, especially, before God. In what sense is our King “blessed” of God? How do you experience that blessing, as you gaze upon the radiance of His face?
4. What is the connection, signaled by the word, “therefore”, between the lips of our King and the blessing of God? Is there counsel here for us in seeking the Lord’s blessing?

Pray

Write a prayer to the King, based on today’s meditation:

Week 1, Day 6 Contemplating the Court of Heaven

Reflect

And whenever the four living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." Revelation 4:9-11

Columbanus (ca. 543-615 AD): "Poem on the World's Impermanence"

"From earthly things lift up
your heart's eyes;
love the most loving
host of angels;
blessed family
which dwells on high,
where the old does not groan
nor the infant cry,
where of God's praise
no voice is restrained,
where there is no hunger,
where there is never thirst,
where on celestial food
the heavenly folk are fed,
where none dies
because none is born..."

Columbanus and his fellow missionaries would have been familiar with groaning, crying, hunger, thirst, and the like. The temptation, when we experience such hardship, is to focus on it, as though this were the ultimate framework and context of our existence. Columbanus taught his men to look past their trials to the joys of heaven, and to live in the "here and now" by fixing their minds on the "there and then." This they could do by singing, feeding "on celestial food/where on celestial folk are fed." In the original Latin his poems could have been sung, and doubtless were, along with the psalms and other hymns. Poetry and hymns have power to focus our thinking on the throne of Christ, where we have been seated, and where Paul instructs us to focus our most earnest and consistent attention (Eph. 3:6; Col. 3:1-3). Would it make a difference in how God's people lived if they were well trained in how to do this?

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on verse 3, paying attention especially to the words in bold:

*Gird your **sword** on your **thigh**, O mighty one, in your **splendor** and **majesty**.*

Questions

1. What "sword"? What does it look like? What is it for? Where is the King getting ready to go?
2. What is "splendor"? What does it look like? What does it look like as the King rises to gird on His sword?

3. What is “majesty”? How do those who are in the presence of the King respond to His majesty as He girds on His sword? How do you respond?
4. Our King is fair and mighty. What affections should each of these ideas stir within us?

Prayer

Compose a prayer that you might use to support the King in whatever He is girding His sword on to do.

Week 1, Day 7 Be Like Jesus

Reflect

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Romans 13:14

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Lectures to My Students

“It will be vain for me to stock my library, or organise societies, or project schemes, if I neglect the culture of myself; for books, and agencies, and systems, are only remotely instruments of my holy calling; my own spirit, soul, and body, are my nearest machinery for sacred service; my spiritual faculties, and my inner life, are my battle axe and weapons of war. M’Cheyne, writing to a ministerial friend, who was travelling with a view to perfecting himself in the German tongue, used language identical to our own... ‘Remember you are God’s sword, His instrument – I trust, a chosen vessel unto him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.’”

Spurgeon took to heart the words of a predecessor concerning the importance of maintaining a keen edge in the spiritual life. The trappings and endeavors of ministry are not the real measure of who we are as servants of Christ. What matters is the state of our souls: Are we being increasingly conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we see Him in His radiance, splendor, majesty, fairness, and might so clearly, and with such hunger, that we are being transformed day by day into that same image (2 Cor. 3:12-18)? Books, growing churches, successful programs – these can all be means for pride to take root in our souls. Christlikeness, however, will never fail us.

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on Psalm 45:1-3, including the superscription.

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah; a love song.

- 1 My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.
- 2 You are the most handsome of the sons of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.
- 3 Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,
in your splendor and majesty!

Questions:

1. In this part of Psalm 45, what affections, feelings, or emotions do you experience, as you place yourself in the position of the sons of Korah? What is causing these emotions?
2. Reconstruct these verses as a call to worship, with a part for the worship leader and a responsive part for the congregation. Read this aloud.
3. What picture of King Jesus begins to emerge in these verses? Jot down as many terms, images, or thoughts as come to mind in a 1-2 minute period:
4. How do you envision the setting within which this psalm is addressed to the King?

Pray

Compose Psalm 45:1-3 as a prayer which you might use as part of your personal devotions:

Week 2, Day 1 Stretching the Souls

Reflect

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...
Ephesians 3:20

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215 AD): The Instructor

“We, then, who are infants, no longer roll on the ground, nor creep on the earth like serpents as before, crawling with the whole body about senseless lusts; but, stretching upwards in soul, loosed from the world and our sins, touching the earth on tiptoe so as to appear to be in the world, we pursue holy wisdom, although this seems folly to those whose wits are whetted for wickedness.”

I love that image of “stretching upwards in soul.” I imagine the eternal Spirit of God, dwelling in me, stretching Himself out in my skin, expanding my vision, longings, strength, and reach in ways only He can. I imagine Him stretching me beyond the breaking point, like the fishermen’s net of John 21:11, yet so that He can do even more in and through me. Here is the way to fight spiritual complacency, by nurturing spiritual vision and appealing to the hearts, minds, and consciences of those we serve, leading and pleading with them to set their minds on the things that are above, where Christ is seated in heavenly places. Then they will rest in the inward power of the Lord to become more in Christ than they have ever dared to ask or think.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 4a, paying special attention to the words in bold:

*In your **majesty ride out victoriously...***

Questions

1. The King’s **majesty** goes with Him wherever He goes. Does it go in you? In what forms?
2. The King prosecutes His war on a powerful white steed (cf. Rev. 6:1, 2; 19:11-16). His steed carries Him and His **majesty** throughout the field of battle. What is this steed?
3. In what sense does the King “**ride out**”? How does this relate to the weekly dispersion of the people of God into the various areas of life where they live, work, play, and so forth?
4. What does a “**victory**” look like for the King? In your life?

Pray

Write a prayer, based on this meditation, as though you were that war horse, champing at the bit to carry the King to victory in your walk with Him today:

Week 2, Day 2 The Larger Vision

Reflect

And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." Acts 2:40

Isaac Watts (1647-1748): An Exhortation to Ministers

"Can there be any juster cause or season to exert fervor and zeal, than while we are pleading for the name, and honor, and kingdom of our adored Jesus? Let him live, let him reign for ever on his throne of glory; let him live upon our lips, and reign in all our ministrations: Let him live in the hearts of all our hearers; let him live and reign through Great Britain, and through all nations, till iniquity be subdued, till the kingdom of Satan be destroyed, and the whole world are become willing subjects to the sceptre of his grace!"

It's good to consider the larger, overall vision within which we conduct our ministries. We may be called to pastor churches or teach others, but pastoring churches and teaching people must not be our primary aim. We seek the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, as He goes forth every day in His people to further His holy cause. Christ is exalted at the Father's right hand; God is putting all His enemies under His feet. He sends His Spirit – the "Right Hand" of Christ – to convict, convert, and teach His chosen people, and to empower them to bear fruit, exercise spiritual gifts, and give bold witness for Christ. He is building His Church and advancing His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, and of the increase of His Kingdom and righteousness, there will be no end!

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 4b, paying special attention to the words in bold:

*...for the **cause of truth, meekness, and righteousness;***

Questions:

1. What are people like who live for a cause? How does a cause lead people to live beyond themselves? How would you summarize the King's cause?
2. In what sense is the King's cause the cause of truth? How does that play in a generation comfortable living in lies (Ps. 12)?
3. In what sense is the King's cause the cause of meekness?
4. In what sense is the King's cause the cause of righteousness? What is the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14)?

Pray

Write a prayer, based on today's meditation, consecrating this day to the King's cause in your own life:

Week 2, Day 3 The Highest Pleasure

Reflect

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
Psalm 16:11

John Amos Comenius (1592-1670): The Great Didactic

“Delight in God is the highest point to which pleasure can attain in this life, and is found when a man, feeling that God is eternally gracious to him, exults in His fatherly and immutable favour to such a degree that his heart melts with the love of God.”

Are we training people to delight in God above all else? Do you think that if people could see our King more clearly and more consistently with the eye of the heart, that they might love Him more? That you might love Him more? Sometimes Christian education can seem like a tour of the candy store, or passing out band-aids, aspirin, or vitamin pills. We don't set lofty goals for our learners; we simply expect them to come back next time. But we will not help people become real followers of Christ until delighting in the Lord is the highest aspiration of their lives. Our task is to inculcate that longing. But we must possess it ourselves first of all.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 4c, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

...*let **your right hand** teach you **awesome deeds**.*

Questions:

1. What or who is the King's "right hand"? Is there a hint in this notion of the "right hand" having a teaching aspect (Jn. 16:12-16)? What do you know about this "right hand" of the King?
2. Where does the King's right hand perform this work of "teaching"? Is there pleasure in being thus taught?
3. What would be some examples of "awesome deeds" issuing from such teaching?
4. The word "awesome" derives from a root that can also mean "frightful" or "full of fear." How does this help you to think about the "awesome deeds" which issue from the teaching of the King's "right hand"?

Pray

Write a prayer putting yourself into the King's "right hand" to be taught and used by Him today:

Week 2, Day 4 The Majesty of God

Reflect

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you! They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power... Psalm 145:10, 11

John Calvin (1509-1564): Sermons on the Ten Commandments

“All we have to do is contemplate heaven and earth and we shall see God everywhere. For what is earth if it isn’t a living image (as Saint Paul says) in which God is revealed. Although he is invisible in his essence, he is still revealed there that we might worship him. But when we turn to the Holy Scripture we find there an image by means of which God more particularly reveals himself to us than he does in the sky or in the earth. Neither the sun nor the moon, albeit they give clarity to the world, reveal the majesty of God as much as the law, the prophets, and the gospel.”

God reveals Himself in the Book of Scripture and in the Book of Creation. Jesus is the focal point and prism of all divine revelation. Thus, we should expect knowing Him as our exalted King to aid our ability to understand the revelation of God in both Books. And we should discover, as we read and study both Books, more of the majesty, beauty, wisdom, might, and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we see Jesus more clearly and consistently, finding in Him our highest pleasure and knowing more of the stretching power of His Spirit, then we will be able to encourage God’s people to delight in His Word and His works. Thus may we all draw closer to God through Jesus as we pursue knowing Him through both Books.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 4 in its entirety:

*In your majesty ride out victoriously
for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;
let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!*

Questions:

1. In what ways might the Holy Spirit teach us about Jesus through the creation? What can we expect to learn about the King in the world where He rules?
2. Relate Jesus’ riding out victoriously to His work as described in Hebrews 1:3:
3. Truth, meekness, righteousness, awesome deeds: How do you expect to see these coming to light in your part of the creation today?
4. Are you beginning to experience the Holy Spirit stretching out in you in any new ways?

Pray

Write out verse 4 as a benediction, such as you might use to conclude a service of worship or to bless a friend. Set your benediction as the signature for your emails for the rest of the week.

Week 2, Day 5 Look to the Father and Creator

Reflect

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. Colossians 3:1, 2

Clement of Rome (fl. ca. 90-100 AD): 1 Clement 19

“Thus the humility and godly submission of so great and illustrious men have rendered not only us, but also all the generations before us, better; even as many as have received His oracles in fear and truth. Wherefore, having so many great and glorious examples set before us, let us turn again to the practice of that peace which from the beginning was the mark set before us; and let us look steadfastly to the Father and Creator of the universe, and cleave to His mighty and surpassing great gifts and benefactions of peace. Let us contemplate Him with our understanding, and look with the eyes of our soul to His long-suffering will. Let us reflect how free from wrath He is towards all His creation.”

Our excerpt follows several chapters of Clement’s presenting examples from Scripture of the virtue of humility. Clement’s counsel to the Corinthians for returning peace and order to their churches is squarely grounded in Scripture and contemplation. The example of the peace they need is to be found in the Trinity, through contemplating and meditating together on God’s exalted grandeur, majesty, patience, love, and peace. That’s not the kind of advice we get from church consultants these days, who are always ready to sell us a service or program to fix whatever ails us. Have we traded the discipline of contemplation, and with it, the Church’s heritage of glory, for a mess of strategies and programs?

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 5a, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*Your **arrows** are **sharp**...*

1. What or who are the Lord’s arrows (cf. Zech. 9:13)? How do you envision these “arrows” doing the work for which the Lord sends them?
2. What do “sharp” “arrows” look like? Who’s calling is it to prepare these “sharp arrows”? How?
3. What “bow” does the King wield to launch His arrows for His cause?
4. What makes for a strong “bow”?

Pray

Write a prayer as though you and your ministry were the King’s bowmen, and the people you teach His arrows:

Week 2, Day 6 Look to the Unseen King

Reflect

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6

Clement of Rome (fl. ca. 90-100 AD): 1 Clement 36

"This is the way, beloved, in which we find our Saviour, even Jesus Christ, the High Priest of all our offerings, the defender and helper of our infirmity. By Him we look up to the heights of heaven. By Him we behold, as in a glass, His immaculate and most excellent visage. By Him are the eyes of our hearts opened. By Him our foolish and darkened understanding blossoms up anew towards His marvelous light. By Him the Lord willed that we should taste of immortal knowledge, 'who, being the brightness of His majesty, is by so much greater than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.'"

Conformity to Christ is the goal of the Christian life (2 Cor. 3:12-18); it is also what the Body of Christ should be striving for together (Eph. 4:11-16). So Clement, following Paul, pointed the churches in Corinth to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ exalted, and called on them to fix their desires and aspirations there. Scripture provides many excellent glimpses of our exalted King – Revelation 1 and 14, Psalms 2, 45, 110, for example – and by practicing meditation on these passages we can get a better sense of what God wants us to become, and what He intends to do in and through our lives and our churches.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on all of verse 5, paying special attention to the words in bold:

*Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the **king's enemies**;
the peoples **fall under you**.*

Questions:

1. Who are the "king's enemies" (Rom. 5:10)? Do you expect to encounter any of these people today? Do you think the members of your church will?
2. Where does the King intend to plant His "arrows"? What does that signify?
3. Envision the enemies of God in your community "falling" under Him. What would that look like? How would you be able to tell when that was beginning to happen?
4. The sons of Korah prayed for that outcome. Should you?

Pray

Write a prayer based on Psalm 45:5, and plan to begin using this as often as you can in your public ministry:

Week 2, Day 7 For the Love of God

Reflect

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Deuteronomy 6:5

Augustine (354-43): On Christian Doctrine

“Thus all your thoughts and all your understanding should be turned toward Him from whom you receive these powers...He did not leave any part of life which should be free and find room to desire the enjoyment of anything else. But whatever appeals to the mind as being lovable should be directed into that channel into which the whole current of love flows. Whoever, therefore, justly loves his neighbor should so act toward him that he also loves God with his whole heart, with his whole soul, and with his whole mind.”

Love for and enjoyment of God, Augustine argued, spill over into loving and enjoying our neighbors. Contemplation of the unseen Christ helps us to love Him more, and loving Him translates into more effectiveness in equipping the saints. As preachers and teachers read and study Scripture to know and enjoy the Lord first of all, they will find that they have more love for and enjoyment from the people they are called to serve. And as those people grow in love for God and their neighbors, they will be sharper for the task for which the Lord launches them from the bow of His Church each week.

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on Psalm 45:1-5, including the superscription (use your own preferred translation).

Questions:

1. Pray back to the Lord, in specific detail, the vision of Him you see with the “eye of your soul” (Clement).
2. In any areas where that vision is still murky, plead with the Lord for greater insight and clarity.
3. Call on the Spirit to search your heart and mind (Ps. 139:23, 24). Does He help you to see any increase of love for our King there?
4. Sing prayerfully through *Fairest Lord Jesus*.

Pray

Conclude by giving thanks to the Lord for what you’re learning about Him, and for any ways you find that you are growing in love for Him.

Week 3, Day 1 Beholding the Glory

Reflect

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): A Divine and Supernatural Light

“He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God’s holiness. There is not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is on account of the beauty of this divine attribute.”

Edwards is here writing about what the Puritans referred to as “experimental” knowledge – knowledge that goes beyond mere intellectual understanding and assent to penetrate more deeply into one’s soul with the “sense” – we might say, “experience” – of the holiness and loveliness of God. Such “experimental” knowledge of God effects within us a love that goes beyond mere understanding and exerts transforming power for the glory of God in the lives of those who experience it. This, Edwards insisted, is the privilege of every true believer in Jesus Christ. This must be the aim of our walk with Him, and of all our equipping.

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on verse 6, paying special attention to the words in bold:

*Your **throne**, O God, is forever and ever.*

*The **scepter** of your kingdom is a
scepter of **uprightness**...*

Questions:

1. What do you see as you contemplate the throne of our King?
2. What is a scepter? What purpose does it serve?
3. According to Ecclesiastes 7:29, how ought we to think about “uprightness”?
4. In the phrase “scepter of uprightness,” what is the meaning of “of”?

Pray

Imagine the Lord, like Ahasuerus to Esther, extending the scepter of uprightness to you as you come before Him in prayer. What do you say?

Week 3, Day 2 A Spiritual Sight of Christ

Reflect

“Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” John 13:16, 17

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): A Divine and Supernatural Light

“This doctrine may well put us upon examining ourselves, whether we have ever had this divine light into our souls. If there be such a thing, doubtless it is of great importance whether we have thus been taught by the Spirit of God; whether the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, hath shined unto us, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whether we have seen the Son, and believed on him, or have that faith of gospel-doctrines which arises from a spiritual sight of Christ.”

It will be impossible for us to lead those we teach into the presence of the glory of Christ, so that they delight in doctrine and find deep fulfillment and pleasure in learning Him, unless we ourselves are in the practice of engaging this divine and supernatural light. The challenge to us is to seek the face of Jesus by every available spiritual means, that we may then, with glowing reports, urge and lead those we teach to enter into His presence and glory as well. For here, before the face of Jesus Christ, is where real transformation takes place.

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on verse 7, paying attention especially to the words in bold:

*...you have loved **righteousness** and hated **wickedness**.*

*Therefore God, your God, has **anointed you***

*with the **oil of gladness** beyond your companions...*

Questions

1. Define righteousness and wickedness, using pairs of contrasting terms.
2. To what event, in the life of our King, does the word, “anointed” refer? Why did God anoint our King this way? Does this have any implications for us?
3. What is the “oil of gladness”? What does the King do with this oil of gladness?
4. Who are the King’s companions? Who’s with Him there in His throne room? Are they also anointed? Doing what?

Prayer

Write out a prayer committing yourself for this day to work hard at bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1):

Week 3, Day 3 What to Love

Reflect

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2:15

Columbanus (ca 543-615): Sermon III

“No other outward thing ought to be loved, according to the reckoning of truth, except eternity and the eternal will, which is inspired and quickened by the Eternal, Wonderful, Ineffable, Invisible, Incomprehensible, Who fills all things and passes beyond all things, Who is present and yet eludes our grasp. The wise man should love nothing here, since nothing lasts; for there eternal things are with the Eternal, here transitory things are with the mortal. Thus it is perilous to dwell amongst deceptions and deceits, and not to see the truths you ought to love...”

Love for God is the highest virtue and the highest calling of every believer. The better we can “see” our King and the truths of the unseen realm, the more we will love Him. Everything in our lives should pale in comparison with the love we have for our Redeemer. However, too often we let love of temporal things and love for people put a damper on our love for God. If we can focus more consistently and clearly on what we ought to love above all else, we’ll find the grace to give thanks for life’s good gifts and to bear up under the trials and struggles that come with seeking to grow the Church and make disciples.

Meditate

Pray Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 8, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*...your **robes** are all **fragrant** with myrrh and aloes and cassia.
From **ivory palaces** stringed **instruments** make you **glad...***

Questions:

1. Describe to yourself the robes of King Jesus, as you see them.
2. How does the fragrance of myrrh and aloes and cassia smell? How might you find out? Why is it important that we be told this?
3. Who lives in those “ivory palaces”, and what are they doing in there?
4. What kind of music do you “hear” as it makes the King glad? How does His face appear, hearing that music?

Pray

Sing or pray a stanza of *Fairest Lord Jesus* to the King. Sing or pray it until you sense He is glad at hearing it.

Week 3, Day 4 To Love the Spiritual Country

Reflect

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Psalm 119:97

Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604) The Book of Pastoral Rule

“But all this is duly executed by a ruler [pastor], if, inspired by the spirit of heavenly fear and love, he meditate daily on the precepts of Sacred Writ, that the words of Divine admonition may restore in him the power of solicitude and of provident circumspection with regard to the celestial life, which familiar intercourse with men destroys; and that one who is drawn to oldness of life by secular society may by the aspiration of compunction be ever renewed to love of the spiritual country.”

Pastors and teachers need daily time for meditating on Scripture, apart from any of their work of preaching and teaching. It often happens that a leader’s time in the Word becomes so commingled with his preparations that he fails to hear the voice of God speaking to his own soul. We must ever renew our vision of the unseen realm and listen in silence as the Spirit, using the Word, teaches us what we must do to further prepare for our journey to eternal glory. The “spiritual country” is our true home, and more we sojourn there in our time with the Lord, the more we will reflect our true citizenship among the people we serve.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 9, paying special attention to the words in bold:

*...**daughters of kings** are among your ladies of honor;
at your **right hand** stands the **queen in gold of Ophir.***

Question:

1. Who are these “daughters of kings”? What do they do as “ladies of honor”?
2. The “queen” stands at the “right hand” of the King. What does this indicate? Who else is there?
3. The queen is dressed in “gold.” Why the “gold of Ophir”?
4. The queen is with the King. Who is this queen?

Pray

Pray with thanksgiving, meditating on Hebrews 12:1, for the saints who have finished their course and stand, full of the Spirit, dressed in the gold with which they have been adorned by Christ.

Week 3, Day 5 Spiritual Men

Reflect

Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach... 1 Timothy 3:2

David Dickson (1821-1885): The Elder and His Work

“The office and work being spiritual, it is necessary that elders should be spiritual men. It is not necessary that they be men of great gifts or worldly position, of wealth or high education; but it is indispensably necessary that they be men of God, at peace with him, new creatures in Christ Jesus; engaged in the embassy of reconciliation, they must be themselves reconciled. We must love the Master, and the work for the Master’s sake.”

How often in our day are church leaders elected for all the reasons Dickson says are “not necessary.” And how infrequent it is to find men and women serving in leadership who “love the Master, and the work for the Master’s sake”? If your elders or leaders are of this latter kind, give thanks daily to the Lord, and make yourself available to encourage and assist them in their important work. Should your elders and church leaders be led in this study of our spiritual country, and of the spiritual vision of Christ exalted in glory? Would this help to make them more truly spiritual men and women?

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on verse 10, paying attention to the words in bold:

Hear, O daughter and consider, and incline your ear:
forget your people and your father’s house...

Questions:

1. Explain what the sons of Korah mean by “hear” and “consider” and “incline your ear.”
2. This “daughter” seems to be not in the heavenly throne room but still among her family. Not in the “spiritual country” but yet in the earthly. What do you make of this?
3. The sons of Korah now turn to speak to the “daughter” on the King’s behalf. How does this relate to your work as a pastor or leader in your church?
4. How should this earthly “daughter” “forget” those closest to her? Why?

Pray

Pray for the people of your church concerning how they hear and consider the Lord’s Word to them each day.

Week 3, Day 6 The Image of Christ

Reflect

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Sermon XI

Columbanus (ca 543-615)

“Let us not be the painters of another’s image; for he is the painter of a despot’s image, who is fierce, wrathful, proud. . . For righteousness and unrighteousness, peace and disagreement are opposed to one another. Then lest perhaps we should import into ourselves despotic images, let Christ paint His image in us, as He does by saying, My peace I give you, My peace I leave to you. But what advantage is it for us to know that peace is good if it is not well preserved?”

Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit – these are the hallmarks of the Kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17). And they are its hallmarks for the simple reason that these reflect the very Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are the garments with which the Lord would adorn His Church in these latter days. As we pursue righteousness in the fear of the Lord, rest in the peace of Jesus that passes all understanding, and rejoice in the victory that is ours in Christ, He clothes us with His own righteousness and “paints” His own image on the canvas of our lives. Then we go forth to show Jesus to the watching world.

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on verse 11, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*...and the king will **desire your beauty.**
Since he is your **lord, bow to him.***

Questions:

1. What does the “beauty” of the “daughter” look like (cf. Ps. 48:1, 2)? Of what does it consist?
2. How does it feel to know that someone “desires” you? That the *King* might “desire” you?
3. The King is the “lord” of the “daughter.” How does she “bow” to him?
4. Imagine the “daughter” as she prepares for each day, putting on her “beauty” so that her Lord will “desire” her. What is she doing?

Pray

As you prepare for the day – washing, dressing, eating, checking your calendar, and so forth – make of each aspect of your preparations a way to present to the Lord the beauty He desires in you.

Week 3, Day 7 An Eye to the Promises

Reflect

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 2 Peter 1:3, 4

Clement of Rome (fl. ca 90-100 AD): 1 Clement 34

“And let us therefore, conscientiously gathering together in harmony, cry to Him earnestly, as with one mouth, that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promises. For [the Scripture] saith, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which He hath prepared for them that wait on Him.”

This is skilled counsel for pastors and church leaders: engage each member at the point of his or her duty, then point to the far horizon of what *God* promises, if we are faithful to His will. Clement intended that the precious and very great promises of God should motivate all the good works of the Corinthians, as he urged them to unite “as with one mouth” in a common resolve to seek the Lord’s promises and the Lord’s will. The only option he left anyone in the churches at Corinth was, in effect, to choose their own will and their best hopes, rather than the will and blessings of God. But only by focusing on the “glorious promises” of Christ can we hope to “become partakers of the divine nature.”

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on Psalm 45:1-11, including the superscription, using a translation of your own choosing.

Questions:

1. Put yourself in the place of the sons of Korah. Pray these words as though they were your own words, elaborating, embellishing, paraphrasing, or substituting as you see fit, but always staying true to the intention of the psalm.
2. What in your mind are the most outstanding images that stand out from these verses? Are these becoming fixed in your mind?
3. Where do you yet need to gain more clarity in this vision of the spiritual country and the King Who reigns there?
4. Jot down the names of two or three people with whom you’d like to share a bit of this vision today – whether in person, by email, or in a phone conversation. Pray for them and for the opportunity you will have.

Pray

Sing or pray through a stanza of *Fairest Lord Jesus*. As you do, let your growing vision of Christ inform the sincerity with which you offer this beautiful hymn to our beautiful Savior and King.

Week 4, Day 1 Seek our True Home

Reflect

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? Psalm 42:1, 2

Sermon XIII

Columbanus (ca 543-615): Sermon XIII

“So still, my dearest brethren, give ear to our words, in the belief that you will hear something needful, and refresh the thirst of your mind from the streams of the divine fountain of which we now wish to speak, but do not quench that thirst, drink, but be not sated; for now the living Fountain, the Fountain of life, calls us to Himself, and says, Let Him that is athirst come unto Me and drink.”

Pastors and church leaders sometimes complain to me that their people don't seem very hungry or thirsty for the things of the Lord. Sated on the junk food of our getting-and-spending-good-times culture, generously ladled with pop, God's people have little appetite for Christ or His Word. But what about us? Do our hunger and thirst for Christ make them long for the same? Do they see in us that earnest desire to be with the Lord that tells them they're missing something of great moment? No group of believers will rise above the vision or walk with the Lord of their leaders. And leaders look to the pastors and other leaders to excite them with the vision and lead them along the true way to our spiritual home.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 12, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*The **people of Tyre** will seek your favor with **gifts**,
the **richest** of the people.*

Questions:

1. Who are the “people of Tyre”? Were the people of Tyre from the same or a different culture as the “daughter” here counseled to bow to her lord?
2. What does it mean for such people to seek the “favor” of the daughter? What “gifts” do they bring to her?
3. Where do the “richest of the people” get these “gifts” in the first place (Jms. 1:17; Ps. 24:1)? Why is it right that they should bring them?
4. What draws the people of Tyre to the daughter (Mic. 4:1-5' 1 Pet. 3:15)?

Pray

Pray for your church members, that they will show forth the beauty with which they are being adorned to all the people around them.

Week 4, Day 2 Humble and Heavenly-minded

Reflect

...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:2, 3

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): Christ the Example of Ministers

“The ministers of Christ should be persons of the same spirit that their Lord was of: the same spirit of humility and lowliness of heart; for the servant is not greater than his Lord. They should be of the same spirit of heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the glory, wealth, and pleasures of this world: they should be of the same spirit of devotion and fervent love to God: they should follow the example of his prayerfulness; of whom we read from time to time of his retiring from the world, away from the noise and applauses of the multitudes, into mountains and solitary places, for secret prayer, and holy converse with his Father...”

Christ came as a Servant, His mind fixed unswervingly on His Father and His Father’s will, and His back bent daily to meet the needs of those around Him. No one can be said to be following Christ Who does not assume this same posture and focus. God has called us to serve His flock by the example of our humility and heavenly-mindedness, just as Jesus did. We must not allow the cheap thrills of worldly attention or rewards to influence the work and business we do in the name of the Lord. Only the glory of heaven and the vision of the unseen but exalted King can lift and inspire us to serve each day as Jesus did.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 13, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*All **glorious** is the **princess in her chamber**,
with **robes** interwoven with **gold**.*

Questions:

1. Who is this princess, and what is her chamber? (Hint: the Hebrew is literally, “daughter of the King”; and the focus of the word, “chamber”, is rather more like “inward”):
2. To what does the word, “robes”, refer?
3. The daughter’s “robes” are “interwoven”, which suggests workmanship. Whose? How?
4. The queen’s robe is completely made of gold (v. 9). The daughter’s robe is merely “interwoven” with it, suggesting that, at this stage, at least, other fabric is still involved. Any thoughts about the meaning of this?

Pray

Pray, using this part of Psalm 45 to guide you, for your ongoing sanctification, and for the sanctification of those you serve in your ministry.

Week 4, Day 3 Cultivating the Mind of Christ

Reflect

For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:16

John R. W. Stott (1921-2011): Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching

“A Christian mind asks questions, probes problems, confesses ignorance, feels perplexity, but does these things within the context of a profound and growing confidence of the reality of God and of his Christ. We should not acquiesce in a condition of basic and chronic doubt, as if it were characteristic of Christian normality. It is not. It is rather a symptom of spiritual sickness in our spiritually sick age.”

Preaching and teaching require passion and conviction, and these come from having the mind of Christ teach us the things of Christ so that we are being transformed into the image of Christ. The preacher or teacher who has truly met with Christ, who sees Him in His radiant beauty and power, and feels his own mind being re-shaped to think like Jesus, will realize the seriousness and great potential of the ministry of the Word of God. We have the mind of Christ. Are we nurturing it to maturity in our lives? Are we filling our minds with the risen Christ, so that the risen Christ can fill our preaching and teaching?

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on verse 14, especially the words in bold:

*In **many-colored robes** she is **led to the king**,
with her **virgin companions** following behind her.*

Questions:

1. What does the idea of “many-colored robes” bring to mind (cf. Gen. 9:12-17; Gen. 37:3; Rev. 4:3)?
2. What does it mean to be clothed in such robes?
3. Who are the “virgin companions” and why are they following the daughter of the king?
4. How is the daughter being “led to the king”? Who leads her? How?

Pray

Who are the people in your personal sphere of influence who are not members of your church, and perhaps not even believers? Do they like what they see in you? Are they following you? Pray for the way you lead the people in your sphere of influence into the presence of the King.

Week 4, Day 4 Who, Indeed?

Reflect

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 2 Corinthians 2:15, 16

Charles Bridges (1794-1869): The Christian Ministry

“Who is sufficient for these things? Who, whether man or angel, ‘is sufficient’ to open ‘the wisdom of God in a mystery’ – to speak what in its full extent is ‘unspeakable’ – to make known that which ‘passeth knowledge’ – to bear the fearful weight of the care of souls? Who hath skill and strength proportionate? Who has a mind and temper to direct and sustain so vast a work? If our Great Master had not himself answered these appalling questions by his promise – ‘My grace is sufficient for thee;’ and if the experience of faith did not demonstrably prove, that ‘our sufficiency is of God;’ who, with an enlightened apprehension, could ever enter upon such an awful service; or, if entered, continue in it?”

The leader’s sufficiency is only and always from God and Christ. When we start relying on our own cleverness, wiles, or charm, or the “proven methods” and “successful programs” we’ve learned and run in the past, we will soon find the sufficiency of the Lord – and His presence – being withdrawn. God has tasked ministers and leaders with an awesome responsibility and charge, and He intends for them to draw all their wisdom and strength from Him in the prosecution of His calling. All the more reason why we need to flee to Him, throughout the day, and to be refreshed in our vision and love for Him. Who is sufficient for the work the King has called us to do? Only the King and His Right Hand!

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on verse 15, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*With **joy and gladness** they are led along
as the **enter the palace of the king.***

Questions:

1. What’s the difference between “joy” and “gladness”? Is one more inward and the other more outward? Can you have one without the other?
2. Who is the “they” here?
3. How do “they” “enter” the King’s palace? Where does the King have His dwelling?
4. Whom will you be leading into the King’s dwelling place today? How will you seek to make them glad to be entering there?

Pray

Pray for the people who will come within your sphere of influence today. How will they know that they are entering the very dwelling place of the King?

Week 4, Day 5 The Leader's Sufficiency

Reflect

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

Charles Bridges (1794-1869): The Christian Ministry

"How ample also are our sources of encouragement within the compass of our work! Did we depend upon the failing support of human agency, or upon the energy of moral suasion – we should cry out, prostrate in heartless despondency – 'Who is sufficient for these things?' But the instant recollection – that 'our sufficiency is of God' – 'lifts up our hearts in the ways' and work of the Lord... We have the fullest assurance, that 'the life-giving Spirit' employs our Ministry as the vehicle of conveying his heavenly influence 'to open blind eyes,' and to quicken the spiritually dead."

Paul warned us against comparing ourselves with others in the work of ministry (2 Cor. 10:12). If we try to derive our sense of sufficiency in ministry from the numbers of people we attract or glowing responses to our teaching, or if we think our ministry will only matter when we're more like the mega-church on the other side of town, then we are not wise. Our sufficiency in ministry – to guide, empower, and prosper our ministry, and to assure that we are being faithful – must come only from the Lord. He gives His Spirit, His "Right Hand", to dwell in us, teach us, empower us, and stretch out in us, so that through our ministries the Kingdom of our glorious, exalted Sovereign might come on earth as it is in heaven.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 16, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*In **place** of your **fathers** shall be your **sons**;
you will **make them princes** in all the earth.*

Questions:

1. Who are the "fathers" referred to in this verse? What "place" did they have in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ?
2. Who are our "sons"? For what should we be preparing them?
3. What is the process by which we "make them princes"? Whose responsibility is this?
4. What do "princes" in the Kingdom of God look like?

Pray

Pray for the children of your church and their families. How can you help the parents you know to gain a vision of their children becoming "princes" in the Kingdom of God?

Week 4, Day 6 Seek the Lord

Reflect

Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation... Psalm 25:5

Isaac Watts (1647-1748): An Exhortation to Ministers

“One great and general rule is, ask advice of Heaven by prayer about every part of your preparatory studies; seek the direction and assistance of the Spirit of God, for inclining your thoughts to proper subjects, for guiding you to proper Scriptures, and framing your whole sermon both as to the matter and manner, that it may attain the divine and sacred ends proposed.”

Watts is finishing up a section on the pastor’s disciplines of study, and he calls for all our preparation to be bathed and anchored in prayer, focused on Christ and empowered by His Spirit. Good advice, and not only for our study, but for all our lives, whether we are pastors or church leaders. My experience with leaders is that they do not make enough time in their schedules for seeking the Lord in prayer. Meditation plays a very small part in their personal growth. Yet, together with the ministry of the Word and their personal example, prayer (and meditation as an extension thereof) is the only other duty a pastor or leader should expect to perform in fulfilling his or her calling (Acts 6:4). Perhaps as we become more enthralled by the vision of our fairest Lord Jesus we will long to be more consistently in His presence.

Meditate

Read Psalm 45 aloud.

Meditate on verse 17, paying particular attention to the words in bold:

*I will cause your **name** to be
remembered in all generations;
therefore nations will **praise you**
forever and ever.*

Questions:

1. What does it mean to “remember” the name of the Lord?
2. What are you doing that “will cause” the Lord’s name to be remembered for generations to come?
3. Ideally, how would you like the people in your church to be involved in praising the Lord? What would the ideal life of praise look like?
4. Does that describe your own life of praise?

Pray

Compose a prayer expressing what you hope to leave behind as the enduring legacy of your life and ministry. Offer it to the Lord regularly:

Week 4, Day 7 Into Christ

Reflect

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:14

Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167): Spiritual Friendship

“And so in friendship are joined honesty and agreeableness, truth and pleasantness, sweetness and will, affection and action. All of these qualities come together in Christ, they are advanced through Christ, and in Christ they are perfected.”

In the Gospel of John we find two categories of “believers” in Jesus. Those who believe *in* Jesus (Greek: *en*) seem to have a rather superficial and self-seeking relationship with the Lord. They like hanging around Jesus and gaining whatever bennies accrue to them from His works and words. Those who believe *into* Jesus (Greek: *eis*) are those who understand what Paul was writing about: All their hope of joy, purpose, meaning, and life is *in* Christ Jesus. They seek Christ where He is, long to contemplate and know Him, desire to dwell with Him, and Him in them. They know that their true and lasting lives have been in hidden with Christ in God, and this is what they live for at all times. Friends help one another to press on toward *that* prize, the high calling of knowing Christ, abiding in Him, being clothed with Him, walking with Him, showing and declaring Him to the world. This is the real prize of friendship, and the lasting fruit of ministry.

Meditate

Read aloud Psalm 45.

Meditate on all of Psalm 45, using any version you prefer.

Questions:

1. How have these exercises helped to increase the clarity and consistency of your vision of the unseen King of glory?
2. Can you say that you have increased in love for God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as a result of these exercises? If so, in what ways?
3. Do you think it would be important for other believers to learn to live “into Christ” like this? How might you help them?
4. Can you name one way in which your ministry might be changing as a result of these exercises?

Pray

Try praying through the entirety of Psalm 45, using what you have learned to make this psalm your own as you enter into Christ and His glory through prayer.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Use the following questions to bring your thoughts and experience of the past 28 days together.

1. Have these exercises helped you in learning the importance and practice of meditation as part of your walk with the Lord? In what ways?
2. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1 my translation). Apply this definition of faith to your experience of these exercises:
3. In what ways have these exercises helped to improve your use of the “eye of the heart” to see through the veil into the unseen realm? Has your vision of this realm grown? In what ways?
4. In what ways have these exercises helped you to grow in love for God?
5. How have these exercises helped you to grow in love for your neighbor?
6. How have these exercises affected your approach to the work of ministry?
7. Were you able to enlist any others in going through these exercises? How many? Did they benefit from the exercises? In what ways?

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