

**“A Missionary Psalm”
(An Exposition of Psalm 67)¹**

This morning we are looking at Psalm 67, which has rightly been called a “missionary Psalm.”

It is a *missionary* Psalm because that is what the Psalmist has in view here – the message of God's salvation going out *to all the earth* (v.2), and *all the earth* coming to fear the Lord in the way of the salvation that is to be found by faith in Jesus Christ.

Missions (even if the word itself is *not* found here) is really what is at the heart of the prayer in this great Psalm. If you ever needed a biblical argument for praying for world missions and the spread of the gospel of Christ, look no further than this Psalm.

A Prayer for Blessing

The first thing that we see here in this Psalm is that we are taught to *pray* (and sing!) for *the blessing of our God*. In v.1 the Psalmist writes,

**“May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, - Selah”**

This is nearly identical to the Aaronic blessing or benediction found in Numbers 6:22–27, which says,

**“The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall
bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,**

**The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.**

“So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

See how the Psalmist teaches us to pray according to the will of God. He takes the blessing and promise of God found in Numbers chapter 6 and makes it our request at the throne of grace!

Notice that the *first* thing that we are to seek is *God's grace or mercy*. We must always have God's *mercy* in Christ *first* if we would have His blessing, for we can *never* earn or deserve God's blessing.

The prayer of the true Christian must *always* be that of *the tax collector* in Luke chapter 18 who cried out to God and said, **“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”** (v.13)

Remember that Jesus said it was *this man*, who approached God in humility asking for mercy, who went home justified, while the self-righteous Pharisee did not!

Are you approaching God on the basis of *His mercy and grace*, or on the basis of your own “goodness” and self-righteousness? If you would be justified by God, you must come *only by His mercy in Christ*.

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

What does it mean to have God's blessing? We use that word sometimes in rather vague ways. (We strangely speak of God's blessing upon someone when they sneeze!)

To ask for God's blessing can certainly involve material things, the things that we need for our daily lives. We are taught to ask God for **“our daily bread”** (Matthew 6:11) in the Lord's prayer, aren't we?

But God's blessing *must* be more than that. One can have all of the good things in this life, and yet be entirely devoid of God's blessing. And likewise one can truly have God's blessing *without* having much of the good things of this life at all. Proverbs 15:16 says,

**“Better is a little with the fear of the LORD
than great treasure and trouble with it.”**

And in asking further that God might **“make his face to shine upon us”** (v.1), that makes *all* of the difference in the world, doesn't it?

A believer in Christ can bear anything in this life, as long as he or she knows the blessing of having God's face shining upon them. Having peace with God, and the assurance of His love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, is greater treasure than the worldly man can ever know.

A Prayer for Missions

The *second* thing we see in this Psalm is closely related to the first – it is *a prayer for missions*. For in asking our God to **“be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us”** (v.1), the Psalmist teaches us to seek these things *with the good of others in mind*.

In v.2 the Psalmist writes of the *intended effect or purpose* of this blessing. It is:

**“that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.”**

This request for God's blessing is *not self-focused*, but has as its end and goal the hope that *through this blessing of God* upon His church, *His way* might be known upon the earth, and *His salvation* among all the nations (v.2).

We want others to see that it is good indeed to serve the Lord. As Psalm 33:12 puts it:

**“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!”**

Our life of experiencing the blessing of God is to be as the testimony of David in Psalm 34:8, where he writes:

**“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”**

Can others see your life and conclude that it is good to serve the Lord Jesus? Or do we make it seem like a dreadful burden? O may we seek His blessing and show it to be *a blessing and not a burden!*

The worldly man may have everything that this world can offer, but he should still be struck with envy and jealousy at the sight of a godly man, enjoying the blessing of God, even with little.

The Psalmist's request here reminds me of the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:13–15. There he writes,

“Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?”

Paul had a great burden for the salvation of his countrymen, his **“kinsmen according to the flesh”** (Romans 9:3), the Israelites. In Romans 10:1 he says that it was his **“heart's desire and prayer to God for them”** that they might be saved.

And yet he was the **“apostle to the Gentiles”** (11:13). And so even though he preached the gospel **“to the Jews first and also to the Greek”** (Romans 1:16), His primary mission field and work was the *Gentiles* (the non-Jews, the pagans).

And so what did Paul do? He **'magnified'** his ministry to the Gentiles in order to make his fellow Jews **“jealous, and thus save some of them”** (11:14).

That is something like what the Psalmist teaches us to pray for here in Psalm 67. We pray that God may bless and prosper His church, so that others may see it and seek the Lord and His salvation in Christ!

A Prayer for Praise

The *third* thing we see here in this Psalm is that it is *a prayer for praise*. Here he tells us that there is an even greater goal than missions and evangelism in view – even greater than the progress and advance of the gospel throughout the earth! All of this is for the express purpose *that God might be praised*.

Look at v.3-5:

**“Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. - Selah
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!”**

The desire *that God might be praised* is really at the heart and center of this Psalm. This is the real motive and reason for all of it!

The glory and praise of God must *always* remain central. *Not* our experience of blessing, *not* even evangelism and missions, as important as those things are. The great commission is still the church's marching orders - **“make disciples of all nations”** (Matthew 28:19), but God's glory comes first.

It is as the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:31, **“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”** Our goal in *whatever we do* as believers in Christ is to **“do all to the glory of God.”**

In his book on missions, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (which borrows its title from Psalm 67:4), John Piper writes,

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't.” (p.40)

He could not be more right. “Missions exists because worship doesn't.” The primary purpose in missions and evangelism is not just that sinners might be saved (as important as that is), but that *God might be glorified* in the salvation of sinners.

And perhaps this shows us the foolishness of changing the worship of God in the church to suit the preferences of unbelievers by *modeling it on modern entertainment in so many ways*. This practically *reverses* the proper focus and order, doesn't it?

We must not change the worship of God and offer strange fire on God's altar in order to attract or win the lost; rather we are to seek to win the lost to Christ in order that they might learn to *worship God acceptably* **“with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire”** (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Just as the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* opens in Q/A #1 by teaching us that the “chief end [or purpose] of man” is “to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever,” even so this great Psalm reminds us that *the glory of God is to be central to everything*, even in our prayers, even in missions and evangelism.

And when we pray for God's blessing upon us with that goal in mind, we can be sure that He hears us, and that we have the things that we have asked of Him (1 John 5:14-15).

The Promise and Prophecy of Blessing and Praise

Notice that the Psalm closes on a *note of confidence in God's mercy and blessing*, even on a note of prophecy. At the end of this Psalm the Psalmist looks forward to that great day when the desires of the believer's heart as expressed in this Psalm will most certainly come to pass. In v.6-7 he writes,

**“The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.
God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!”**

This is what some might call a “prophetic past tense.” In light of this, I think the *King James Version* rightly renders these verses in the *future* tense:

**“Then shall the earth yield her increase;
and God, even our own God, shall bless us.
God shall bless us;
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”**

In v.1 we are taught to *pray for God's mercy and blessing*, and in v.6-7 we look by faith to the fulfillment of God's promised blessing.

In v.2-5 we are taught to pray that all the nations, and even all the earth may come to know God's salvation through faith in Christ, so that they too may fear the Lord and know His blessing and the shining of His face upon them. And then in v.7 we look by faith to the fulfillment of that promise - **“all the ends of the earth *shall* fear him.” (KJV)**

As Charles Spurgeon writes,

“The *prayer* of the first verse is the *song* of the last.”²

God's promises to Abraham to *bless all the nations through him* (Gen. 12:3) and to make his offspring *as numerous as the stars in the heavens* (Gen. 15:5) are even now being fulfilled throughout this age in the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

And Revelation 7:9–10 tells us that one day in heaven there will be :

“ . . . a great multitude that no one could number, *from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages*, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

May the Lord Jesus Christ make us a *praying* church. May He greatly *bless us* that we might be a blessing to others in making His gospel known, both here and in missions.

And may we do *all* of this *for the glory of His great name*, that all the people may praise Him! - Amen

2 *The Treasury of David*, Vol.2, (Part 1), p.130