

Let The People Praise God

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[0:00] Psalm 67, verse 1. May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us.

! That your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God. May all the peoples praise you.

May the nations be glad and sing for joy. For you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, O God.

May all the peoples praise you. Then the land will yield its harvest and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us and all the ends of the earth will fear him. My text is Psalm 67, to which you have just turned and which you've just heard.

[1:06] This is a missionary psalm. Just a simple reading of it makes that very clear, doesn't it? May the nations praise you. And then the last verse.

And all of the ends of the earth shall fear his name. The Old Testament is full of missionary passages. And this is one of the clearest and most dynamic of them as far as I am concerned. I notice that the blessing of the Lord is connected with this prayer. Or that salvation of the nations is connected with this prayer. That the Lord would bless us.

See, verse 1 says, May God be gracious to us and bless us. How is it that God blesses us? Well, the psalmist answers that question in the psalm by saying that the blessing of God for us is to see the nations worshipping God.

So when we ask the Lord to bless us, what are we asking for? Well, many times when we think of the Lord blessing us, we say, well, we need a job.

[2:19] I'm out of work. A lot of people have experienced that in the last four years. Lord, would you bless me? Would you give me a job? Or we might say, I'd like a different house.

And the Lord blesses us. And we get the home of our dreams. Or we might say, Lord, would you please bless us and help us? We're going to be hosting a general assembly in April of 2013.

And the Lord answers that prayer and gives the help, gives the job that is needed. And those are blessings of the Lord.

They certainly are. But this psalm is not talking about that kind of blessing. This psalm takes blessing to new heights. And this psalm really is asking God for two basic blessings.

And it's these two blessings that I want us to consider together this morning. For which the psalmist is asking. And I'm going to start with the lesser blessing first.

[3:19] Because we always like to save the best to last. That's the way Jesus did at the wedding feast of Cana, wasn't it? I mean, they served the wine. And then they ran out of wine.

And then he turned the water into wine. And the leader of the marriage feast says to the ruler of the feast. He says, you know, everybody serves the best first.

But you saved the best to last. So I'm going to follow the example of the Lord Jesus and save the best for last. So we'll look at the lesser blessing first. And then the primary blessing, the best blessing, we'll look at last.

So then after I've done that, what I want to do is to draw some applications and make some applications from this psalm. Well, here is the psalmist praying. May God be gracious to us and bless us.

And make his face shine upon us. That's the prayer. God bless us. God make your face shine upon us. Well, the first blessing, which is the lesser of the two blessings that we'll consider together.

[4:25] He's asking God to bless his people by saving the nations. Now, that's very clear in the psalm. Look with me at verse 2. That your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

That's the prayer. God bless us. How is the blessing going to be proved? How are we going to know if God blesses us? When salvation comes amongst the nations.

Look at verse 3. May the peoples praise you, O God. That's when we know the blessing has come. When we see the peoples praising you. And all the peoples praising you.

In verse 3. And in verse 4. The blessing comes when we know that the nations are glad and singing for joy. We heard the exhortation this morning that when we worship God, there must be reverence. We must be careful and worship him. But there must be parallel with that a great joy. Worship to our God is not worthy of worship if it doesn't have those two elements.

[5:32] Reverence and joy. And that's what the psalmist wants. He wants the nations to sing for joy to our great and glorious God. And we see the same thing in verse 5.

May the peoples praise you. He wants the nations saved. He wants the peoples saved. So that everyone is worshipping God. And then he says in verse 6.

God our God will bless us. God will bless us. And all the ends of the earth will fear him. So this is the first blessing that we'll consider. It's the lesser. It's the secondary blessing, but we want to save the best to last.

So we'll look at this secondary blessing together. We're asking the Lord to bless us. And we know that he has blessed us when the nations come to worship God.

You see, it's not just that God answers our prayers and give us all these other things, which are blessings from him. The thing for which we should be very, very concerned is that the gospel would triumph among the nations.

[6:43] And we need to remember something. It's very, very important. The scriptures prove this. The history of missions proves this. And that is that when blessing comes, it comes through difficulties, trials and suffering.

The scriptures make this very, very plain. You remember our Lord Jesus told his disciples. He said to them, remember the word that I said to you.

A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also.

And remember our Lord had already told his disciples. Well, he would tell them a little later, actually. He says, as the father sent me, even so I will send you. As the father sent me, sent me into a world to suffer, to be rejected, to die, to be rejected by my own people.

So he said, I'm sending you on the same mission, the mission to reach the nations with the gospel. And you can expect suffering, rejection, persecution, trials, all of these things you may expect and should expect.

[8:12] Because that's how I'm sending you. And this is exactly what the apostles experienced, isn't it? And early on in the church, from the very beginning, they experienced this persecution.

We read about it in the early chapters of the book of Acts. And that is, when they had preached the gospel, they were called in by the authorities. And they said, we've already commanded you, they told Peter and the others, not to preach the name of Jesus.

And yet you're filling Jerusalem with his name. And they said, well, we've got to obey God rather than man. The first martyr, Stephen, was martyred because he was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And when the apostle Paul went forth to preach, what did he experience? Well, you know his story. All the persecutions, difficulties, shipwreck, and everything else that he experienced.

Why were they experiencing these things? It's because they wanted the blessing of God to come to the nations. And when the blessing of God comes to the nations, it is always accompanied with trouble.

[9:29] Always accompanied with trouble. Listen to what the apostle Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, 10 through 12. He says, you, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my sufferings.

He says, that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, which persecutions I endured. Yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. And he's talking to Timothy, a minister of the gospel.

We must understand that what Paul is telling Timothy is, you live godly in Christ Jesus. You preach the gospel. You witness for Christ. And what I experienced is what you are going to experience.

You remember when the apostle Paul, and it's not just for ministers of the gospel. When the apostle Paul returned at the end of his first missionary journey in Acts chapter 14, verse 22, He says, he was strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying, we must, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God.

[10:55] You know, you and I live in a country where we don't experience the kind of persecution that many of our brothers and sisters are experiencing in other parts of the world. Our persecutions are different.

They're there. They're different. We're not experiencing what a friend, a new friend, an acquaintance, I should say, that my wife and I met in Rome experienced.

When he was dragged out of his home one day after he'd given a Bible to a man who had been coming to their little meeting for three months and requested the Bible, they thought it was safe to give him the Bible.

It wasn't. He was arrested the next morning. He was thrown into prison. And there he languished for some time in God's kindness. He was eventually delivered from that prison.

And reunited with his family who had to flee to another country. And now lives in Rome. We don't experience that kind of thing. But you know as well as I do that if you bear witness for Christ, if you live a godly life in the workplace, in your neighborhood, that there is the kind of subtle persecution that comes to those who live godly in Christ Jesus.

[12:22] And that's the way it's going to be. That's why the Lord Jesus told us that we must not be surprised by this. But rather we must rejoice in these persecutions and these trials and these rejections.

Because it is in this way that God brings the gospel to the nations. Now let's think about this for a moment. Here's our prayer. Oh Lord God, bless us.

Cause your face to shine upon us. What are we praying? We want God's face to shine upon us so that the gospel will go to the nations. You know what else we're praying for? God, bring the trouble on.

Because we know that's the way he's going to shine on the nations. It's going to be through these trials and difficulties. Think about it, dear friends.

How were you saved? It was through persecution, trial and death that you were saved. Jesus Christ is your savior. What did he experience?

[13:23] He came unto his own. His own received him not, the Bible says. They rejected him. Even though he went about doing good. Even though he healed their sick.

Even though he raised their dead. Even though he fed their multitudes. Even though he taught them. Even though he only did good to them.

Yet Jesus Christ was rejected. He was, false witnesses were brought in to testify against him. And he was delivered over to the Roman authorities.

And told, the Roman authorities were told, that if they did not crucify him, they were not the friend of Caesar. Because he had come to overthrow the Roman government.

Which was the farthest thing from the truth. And so they crucified him. But that wasn't all, was it?

[14:24] Because when Jesus Christ was crucified, there were these three hours of darkness. And prior to that, there was this time in the garden. When he cried out, If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

The sufferings of Jesus Christ were brutal on the cross. But there were two thieves who were also brutally crucified on the cross.

On two crosses with him, weren't there? It wasn't just the fact that it was a brutal physical suffering. It was beyond that. Because you know that the death on the cross in the Roman world was the death of shame.

Anyone who died on the cross was considered to be the worst dregs of society. But not only that, when he died on the cross, he died as a Jew.

And the Jewish scriptures made it very plain that anyone who died on a cross was cursed by God.

[15:33] And not only that, when he died on the cross, the wrath of God was poured out upon him so that he absorbed all God's wrath for his people so that his people could be delivered from their sin.

And it is through the sufferings of Christ in his taking the place of sinners on that cross that blessing has come upon us.

Amen. And when we pray, Oh God, bless us. Shine your face upon us. Because we want the nations to be saved.

We want the peoples to praise your name. We know that there is one who has gone before us who has suffered so that that may be accomplished. But we also know that our leader has told us that in delivering that message, we also will suffer.

And it seems, it seems to me, that those who go into new places to preach the gospel are the ones who suffer the most. And when we read missionary biography and missionary history, that becomes quite plain.

[16:50] We talked this morning about Adoniram Judson. I didn't talk to you about all of his sufferings. There was one time he had to go over to England at the bidding of the congregational church because they said, we want to co-opt with the London Missionary Society and work together to send our missionaries over to India and Burma.

And so Adoniram was appointed to cross the ocean. However, the ship he was on was commandeered by Spanish privateers and he was taken to Spain.

And he was thrown in down into the hold of the ship. And it was filthy. And Adoniram was a very clean, careful man.

He thought, well, this will be good missionary training. He was thrown down into the hold of the ship. No one could speak English. He finally found someone who could speak some Latin because he knew Latin quite well in addition to Greek and Hebrew.

And he was able to converse with them that way. He got over to Spain. He was paraded through the streets. And he yelled at the top of his voice, I'm an American. I want someone to rescue me.

[17:57] I shouldn't be here. And a fellow came by and said, be quiet or they're going to kill you. He says, I'll help you out. And he was delivered. And he made it over to London. And London said, no, you Americans go on your own. We're not going to help you.

You either come with us or have the help. And then the sufferings that he had in 21 months of prison there in Burma. But you know, the gospel was opened to Burma.

And you know, there are nations today that need the gospel. There is, for instance, in northern India, there are areas of India that have been evangelized very, very little.

There are some states, and there are some five states, I'll not name them because I can't even pronounce them correctly, but there are some five states that have about 360 million people in them.

360 million people. It's estimated that there are 650,000 professing Christians. But of those 650,000, it is thought that there's probably only 120,000 that are really true believers in Jesus Christ.

[19:04] See, 70% of the Christians in India are in the south. In the northwest, northeast, I should say, there's very few. And in the northwest, there's even fewer professing Christians.

There are areas of northern India where the forward castes are with 91 million people and only 5,000 Christians. And here we are praying, Oh, God bless us.

We pray that the nations, that the nations would gladly praise and rejoice in your great name. And we do pray that. We do want that.

That's the blessing of God to see millions worshipping God in northern India and in other places of the world. The gospel will go forth to them.

But you know what? When we send someone there and when we pray for them, we can be assured the gospel will conquer. But it will conquer through suffering.

[20:07] O Lord, cause your face to shine upon us. So when we ask God to bless us, we're asking God by his grace that he would save the nations.

But that's the lesser of the blessings. That's the secondary blessing. We want to save the best to last. What is the primary blessing for which we are praying when we pray this prayer that God would bless us?

Well, the primary blessing is this. It's found in the psalm. It is that God would bless his people by glorifying his own name. Let me read you some verses from this psalm again with a little bit different emphasis.

Verse 1 says, May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us that your ways may be known on the earth. Your salvation among the nations.

may the peoples praise you, O God. May all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy for you rule the peoples justly.

[21 : 23] And implied or necessary, you are the one who guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, O God. may all the peoples praise you.

Then the land will yield its harvest and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us and all the ends of the earth will fear him.

Dear friends, here is the primary blessing. We can't go any higher than this. Why do we want God to bless us? We want God to bless us so that his name will be glorified.

That's our prayer. O God bless us that your way may be known upon the earth. You see, a psalmist wanted men to praise God. Why does he save the nations?

The purpose in saving the nations is ultimately so that they will glorify and worship the true and the living God. As long as men are not worshiping God, then God is not being glorified as we want him to be glorified.

[22 : 29] He is glorified as men come to worship him. You see, our motivation for missions is not primarily that people be saved from hell. It is primarily that people be saved so that they will worship and glorify the true and the living God.

And that's what the psalmist is teaching us here in Psalm 67. How is it that God is glorified? He is glorified when he's worshiped. He's glorified in this congregation this morning as we sing his praises, hear his word, make prayers to him, and make him the focus and the object and the central one in our entire worship.

In that way, he is glorified. And that is the prayer of the psalmist. He is glorified when he is worshiped as the creator of the heavens and the earth. It pierces our hearts when we go to the great wonders of the world, to the Grand Canyon, or we see some of God's creations, and we hear the knowledgeable men proclaiming to us how long it took for these creatures that we're looking at to evolve, to get to where they are.

Oh, how we long for men to praise God as the creator. Or when we go with the astronomers to look at the heavens and they tell us, well, at some time in the past, there was this big bang and it took all this time for this to evolve and no knowledge and no credence is given to God as the creator.

that pierces our hearts. We want men to be saved so that they will worship God as creator. When they look into the heavens, they will be able to say, the heavens declare the glory of God.

[24 : 31] Now, when you and I look into the heavens, that's what we say, isn't it? We would say, how can a man not believe in God when you look into the heavens?

Well, it's very easy. Why he can't believe in God when he looks into the heavens? It's because his heart hasn't been changed. He hasn't come to know God. He hasn't come to know God through Jesus Christ.

And when he hears of the vastness of the universe, that even on the clearest night, all that the human eye can see is only 3,000 stars, but there's an estimated 100 billion, that's with a B, 100 billion stars in our galaxy, and it's estimated that there are 1 million such galaxies in the range of our most powerful telescopes.

We want men to worship God as their creator. But you know why they won't worship God as their creator? The reason men will not worship God as their creator because they've never known God as their redeemer.

It is when men come to know God as their redeemer that then they will worship him as their creator. And men come to know God as their redeemer as Jesus Christ, the redeemer, is proclaimed to them.

[25 : 58] When men see Jesus Christ and see their sin and see one who takes away their sin, then it is then that men will come to worship him as their creator.

And really not till then. This is why Paul said, I preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. That was his message. He said to the Corinthians, he says, I wanted to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ.

That's the only one I preached. He didn't preach philosophy. He didn't display his great knowledge which he had, but he preached a message which he knew that was to the Gentiles foolishness and to the Jews was a stumbling block.

But it was the only message that he was determined to preach because it's the only message that can save men's souls and bring them to a place where they will worship God and worship him as

their creator and worship him as their redeemer.

And so he preached Jesus Christ in that way. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians.

[27:13] He said, For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

This is what pleased Paul. Men were saved so they would serve God. And we serve God first and foremost by worshiping God, the creator.

Jesus Christ himself said, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. This is the ultimate reason for missions.

It is the glory of God himself. This is what propels us in missions. This is what keeps men going in missions. when we read about some of the great missionary giants of the past we must ask the question why is it that they continued on in the midst of all the difficulties and all the trials which they had?

I remember a missionary that was in the church basement of the church I pastored for so many years and Max Bells was there that particular day and he asked this missionary to Africa who had explained how it was that he had to go through all kinds of trials and difficulties and cross streams and put a wench on his truck and pull it through the mud and sometimes had flat tires and then he'd go to a village and they wouldn't listen to him and Max asked this missionary he said what is it that keeps you going?

[28:47] and the missionary gave the right answer thankfully if he hadn't Max would have nailed him but he gave the right answer and he said it is the glory of God a love for God and Max was anxious to point out this simple truth he says if you go out to win the world because you have a love for men's souls and want to see them saved they will so soon disappoint you they will soon turn against you and if that is your primary motivation you will quit your primary motivation must be your love for God and to see the glory of God displayed and knowing that God will glorify himself through the salvation of the nations that's why I say the lesser the blessings is to see the nation saved the primary blessing the greatest blessing is to see our God glorified and that is why we do missions

John Piper put it this way in his book let the nations be glad he said missions is not the ultimate goal of the church worship is missions exist because worship doesn't worship is ultimate not missions because God is ultimate not man when this age is over and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God missions will be no more it is a temporary necessity but worship abides forever missions is for now it's a temporary thing it's a very temporary thing it will end when this world ends but worship will never end for all through the ages of eternity men will be worshiping God and that dear friend is the primary blessing for which we pray oh God bless us God cause your face to shine upon us because what we want more than anything else in the world is for our

God to be worshiped to be glorified to be praised as our creator to be praised as our redeemer blessed be our God well let's reflect on these truths just a little bit and I want to draw some some applications from them since this is so since the psalmist makes it plain that our prayer for blessing is that God would be pleased to bless us and cause his face to shine upon us primarily so that he be worshipped secondarily so that the nations be praised how should this affect us oh first of all it teaches us to pray this is what this psalm is it is a prayer may God be gracious to us and cause his face to shine upon us and then the prayer that your ways may be known may people praise you oh God the whole psalm is a prayer and missions begins on our knees it begins with prayer and it continues with prayer there's missionary activity that goes on every week in this church I'm confident of it as Jesus Christ is proclaimed from this pulpit your prayers must first of all be for those whom God has appointed and set apart to preach the gospel from this pulpit but your prayers must stop there and I think I have good reason to believe that they don't your prayers must continue and about to pray for those who are proclaiming the gospel in other places both here in the states Warsaw and France and China and many other places around the world praying oh

God bless us that your name will be glorified and God bless us so that the nations would hear and believe the gospel and thank God he's answering your prayers because people are being saved and people are coming to worship God I know you have a close affinity with David Vaughn as we do and what a delight to go to that church in Grenoble and to look at these men and women and realize there are former atheists and agnostics now who are devout worshipers of the true God the gospel conquered their hearts pray that's the first thing we must do we must pray a second

application I would bring and that is we must always remember that the major motives for mission is the glory of God this is very important this is sometimes I think forgotten in the broader evangelical community in our day our primary goal is not church growth why do we want more people to be saved it's a question we must always ask ourselves we want more people to be saved so there be more people worshiping

[34:23] God our primary motive is the glory of God you see when we forget this then we can descend into using unbiblical unwarranted and questionable methods of trying to get people saved we don't want that we don't want to use those methods because we want to use God's methods and God's methods bring people to a place where they worship him where they respond to the exhortations from the word of God to worship him in spirit and truth with and so we must always remember this we must understand that we must have the joy of the Lord in our own hearts Piper says in his book again he says missionaries will never call out let the nations be glad who cannot say from their heart I rejoice in the Lord I rejoice in the Lord and I want you to rejoice in the Lord it is in the Lord that we rejoice a church will never become missions minded that doesn't grasp the centrality of the glory of

God and the joy in worshipping our great and glorious God it's when we grasp that that we can begin to look outward and want others to have that same desire a third application that I would make is this we must understand that the entire church is to be involved in the promoting of missions for the glory of God did you notice this in the psalm may God be gracious to us and bless us the psalmist does not say I am the anointed preacher and prophet God be gracious to me and bless me no he says bless us yes he's the anointed prophet he's the one who's being carried along by the spirit he's the one who writes the scripture but he broadens it out he says Lord bless us we all want to be involved in promoting the gospel from the earliest days of the church there has been this universal involvement in gospel progress how many were in the upper room 120 on how many did the spirit fall 120 on how many were speaking the praises of

God 120 how many preached to thousands one that's a simple thing isn't it if we just understand those first books of Acts we've got the whole matter of evangelism solved God has anointed appointed preachers who preach to the multitudes not everybody does that but I do note that everyone gives praise to God everyone received the spirit of God everyone had the words of Jesus on his lips and with the words of Jesus on his lips the multitudes were saying are they drunk no they can't be drunk it's too early in the morning no the spirit of God has fallen on every one of them and dear friends we're all involved we all should be speaking the praises of God in our neighborhoods in the public places and then God raises up gifted!

to the multitudes that's God's way it's that simple but we're all involved but in different ways you see in different ways and that's what we see in the psalmist saying may God bless us all of us may God bless us that his way may be known you see we can there's a narrow road here and some fall off on one ditch and some fall off the other there are some reformed people who say well you know it's only the preachers who should be speaking and who should be witnessing there really are some reformed people who say that I don't believe that at all it's not what the Bible teaches it's not what we see in the examples of the Bible there are others that say well you know there's really no on the evangelical side there's really no appointed preachers it's just everybody should should be able to get up and preach no that's not true either you have both in this perfect balance but we're all involved in this gospel progress this is a universal psalm now

I want to conclude just by asking some probing questions may I do that you say well I guess you're going to do it you're up front and I'm sitting here so let me ask some probing questions these are questions that all of us must answer you and I both must answer them especially in our American culture I believe are you so wrapped up in this world that you forgotten about the glory of God the gospel and the worldwide proclamation of the gospel has your life become too comfortable is it hard to leave the comforts of what we have in this country to be able to go to the unreached parts of the world where the comforts may not be quite at the level that we accept as normal we must ask those questions you know I think of William Carey and Ednar Judson and many others who were so overwhelmed in their own souls with a zeal and with a love for

[40:12] Christ that they were willing and indeed they did this to leave with the expectation they would never return to their homeland William Carey never did Ed and I did for about 18 months but they made their homes among the heathen who soon came to worship and they had new friends new brothers new sisters in Christ how important is the gospel to you how important is it are you

willing to give up sons and daughters for the sake of the gospel are you willing to give yourself for the sake of the gospel of God should so call you and then we must ask ourselves another question how do we view the multitudes here in our country you know there's a huge cultural divide that exists in our country

I'm not telling you anything new there am I it's a huge cultural divide that has come about in the last well in my lifetime I've seen it the last 50 years 50 years ago when I was a teenager I never could have imagined the kinds of things that are being promoted and approved and as what's happening today it's unbelievable and yet it's there but how do we look on the multitudes how do we look on the multitudes all around us that are imbibing this and beginning to embrace it and in many cases do embrace it how do we look at them as stupid idiots who should know better because they live in this country where the gospel has been preached or do we look at them as Jesus looked at them when he saw the multitudes as sheep having no shepherd and he had compassion on them dear friends the multitudes around us who have embraced these these sinful wicked lifestyles Jesus looks at them and says I love them I understand they're being led astray by false teachers and oh how they need to be rescued and that's how we need to look at them do we look at them that way we must begin to look at our fellow citizens with that kind of heart or our professed love for the lost heathen in northern India will seem very shallow indeed there are people who need Christ who need to be loved people on whom we must have compassion even though they are so strident sometimes and so opposed to the truth of God in the scriptures and so we must in that way view people in that way by the grace of

God reach people but I would just remind you again as I close in this psalm we are taught clearly that the two greatest blessings that we can have are first of all and the most primary blessing the one we looked at last to see God worshipped to see him glorified and secondarily to see the nation saved so that our God may be glorified let's pray together our father we thank you for your word we thank you that we have this psalm and we confess to you our own sin and weakness and that we do not view the multitudes as Christ did and we pray that you would forgive us of that we ask that you be pleased to hear our prayers and that you would bless us and cause your face to shine upon us so that the nations worship you that your name would be glorified and these nations would come to the same joy and knowledge of

Christ that you have given us by your grace may you hear our prayers and may you be pleased to bless we ask this in Jesus name Amen