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## Psalm 67

### May All People Praise the Lord

I *love* missions. As long as I can remember, I've always been fascinated, inspired, convicted, encouraged, and challenged by missionary stories. Even when I was a kid, I was captivated anytime I heard a missionary newsletter read or a missionary came to speak at our church. I was shaped early on by the biographies of famous missionaries like William Carey, Hudson Taylor, Adiniram Judson, Lottie Moon, Jim and Elizabeth Elliot, and many others. I'm still moved to my very core whenever I hear stories about how much Christians are willing to suffer in order to bring the gospel and the Word of God to others, even in the most dangerous and perilous of circumstances. And I know this is true for many of you, as well. A love for missions is one of the most common characteristics of Baptists. In fact, the biggest reason we partner together with other churches (like in the SBC) is *for missions!* To train up pastors and missionaries and send them out around the world, praying and financially supporting them as they take the gospel and go to make disciples and plant churches among all peoples and nations, to the ends of the earth! Clearly, we think missions is a big deal!

But that begs the question: "Why is missions so important? What, exactly, is the big deal?" So let me ask you: what is the purpose of missions? Why is it important? Why invest so much time, effort, money, and prayer into missions? Perhaps you're thinking to yourself: "Well, the purpose for missions is for lost sinners to be saved by the gospel of Jesus Christ so that they will not die and go to Hell, as we all deserve, but will instead receive eternal life by grace through faith in Christ, just like us! That's why missions is so important!" And I want to give a hearty amen to that. But I always want to add to it; missions is urgently important so that sinners can be saved; but I also want to make clear that there is actually an *even more important* reason as to why missions is so important. Listen to how John Piper answers that question, in his book "Let the Nations be Glad," a book all about missions; he begins that book by saying,

"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists 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. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal

of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory."<sup>1</sup>

Did you catch that? Listen again to why he's saying we do missions: "Missions exists *because worship doesn't.*" In other words: he's saying the greatest, highest purpose for missions, the very reason it exists, is not first and foremost for sinners to be saved, but for *God to be worshiped.* Now that's a pretty profound and provocative statement, isn't it? But I think it's undeniably biblical and true; as much as we should be driven in missions for the sake of sinners being saved, we should be driven *even more* for the Lord's namesake, for His own glory. This is, first and foremost, a *God-Centered* view of mission rather than a man-centered view.

And that's exactly what psalm 67 calls us to. It's calling us to a God-centered view of our entire lives. It shows us that the ultimate reason God blesses us - most fully with the very blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus - is not just *for our own sake*, but for the sake of others to know God and receive the blessings of salvation. But this isn't all; this psalm shows us that the blessing of salvation is ultimately *for the praise of God's glory.* We see this in the poetic structure of the psalm itself. This psalm is a *chiasm* - that's a Hebrew poetic device where the first half of the passage is mirrored, or paralleled, by the second half; this is done to emphasize the center, so that as the psalm narrows in on the center its supposed to focus our attention there. Like this:

A1: (vv.1-2) Bless us, and all the nations!

B1: (v.3) May all the peoples praise you!

C: (v.4) Let the nations be glad and rejoice in God!

B2: (v.5) May all the peoples praise you!

A2: (vv.6-7) Bless us, and all the nations!

That's the main idea of this passage: that *God's blessings of salvation are given to His people 1. So that others might also be saved, and 2. Ultimately, so that God would be worshiped and glorified above all, by all people, in all the nations of the earth.* Those are the two points that I think best summarize the point of this passage for us today, and so I want to capture that in two sermon points. First, we see that...

**I. God Blesses His People so that His Glorious Grace Might be Known to All (Psalm 67: 1-2, 6-7)**

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*, p.

We see this in both the *first* two verses and the *last* two verses. The psalm begins, in the verse two verses, by praying for God to bless His people *so that* the nations might recognize the blessing of God; that they might know God, His saving grace, and experience His blessings for themselves, becoming part of His blessed people. V.1 begins, “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.” This is a prayer for God to bless His people; it’s a benediction. In fact, it’s a direct quote from the benediction that God commands the high priest of Aaron to bless the people of Israel with, in Numb. 6:24-26: “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.” This is a beautiful pray for the blessing of receiving God’s grace and steadfast love as His people; the blessing of having favor with God, at being peace with Him! And this is the kind of blessing that can *only* be given to and receive by God’s covenant people. Aaron, the High Priest, and all the High Priests after him, were commanded to pronounce this blessing over Israel, God’s covenant people; but why did it have to be given by the High Priest? It’s because the High Priest is the one who made atonement for the sins of the people, by the blood of the sacrifice. In other words, it’s a pronouncement that God’s people can draw near to the Lord and receive the blessings of His grace, favor, kindness, love, and presence, precisely because they are *reconciled to Him*, because their sins have been atoned for, that they are God’s people, according to His gracious promises!

Verse 1 prays this prayer, praying for God’s gracious blessing, as a way of drawing near to God in faith, trusting in His promises, depending upon the Lord alone for blessing (just as we saw last week, from Psalms 127-128). Now, why would someone pray this kind of prayer? The obvious answer, that we would immediately think of, is, “So that they themselves can enjoy the benefits of being blessed by God!” But interestingly, this isn’t the answer given by the psalmist here; v.2 gives a *different* reason for asking for God’s blessing. He prays for God to bless His people so “that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.” In other words, the purpose of God blessing His people here is *so that* the other peoples and nations of the earth, *outside of Israel*, might know God! At this point in the biblical storyline, in the Old Testament, Israel was God’s chosen nation, out of all the nations of the earth; to be part of God’s people, to know and worship Him, and to be saved, you had to be part of Israel, part of God’s covenant people. To be part of the nations *outside of Israel* was to be pagan, to not know God, but worship false gods instead. For God’s “way” to be made “known on earth” is for it to be

made clear that God is the only true God, and for the nations to recognize who He truly is and what He is like. They recognize the true God and what He is like by seeing His glorious ways known through His interactions with and blessings upon His people. And this isn't just a prayer that the pagan nations would see God blessing His people, but that they, themselves would know God's "saving power." The idea here is that as the pagan nations of the world see God working out blessing, grace, salvation, and redemption for His people, they, too, would come to know God, to believe in Him, and to be saved through faith in His covenant promises, becoming part of God's people as well.

We see the same thing in the last two verses of the psalm, vv.6-7: "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!" We see here the acknowledgment of God's blessing - here pictured through the blessing of God's provision through a bountiful harvest. But there's also this repeated, determined expectation of *further* blessing of God upon His people, and not just this, but that God's blessing of His people will lead to the ends of the earth knowing and *fearing God*. It's a firm, determined faith, trusting that God's people *will be blessed*, and that because of this, "all the ends of the earth" should fear the Lord.

In other words, these verses show us that the blessings that God graciously gives to His people - the blessings of salvation, of knowing God as His redeemed people - are *not just meant for Israel*, but are meant to flow *outward*, in order to draw the nations *inward*, into the people of God. That means this psalm is tapping into a rich theme unfolding throughout the Old Testament, and finding its fulfillment in the New Testament, of God's blessings of salvation for His people beginning with Israel, but always being intended to be *for all the nations of the earth*. Or, to say it differently: this psalm is praying for the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 12. God said to Abram, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:2-3). This is a promise to turn Abraham's descendants into the nation of Israel, to be God's covenant people. God blesses Abraham, and promises to bless His descendants, but also promises that this blessing was always meant to be, ultimately, so that "all the families of the earth" shall be blessed through the family of Abraham, Israel. Psalm 67 is praying for that promise to be fulfilled. The New Testament makes it very clear that this promise is fulfilled in the gospel of

Christ Jesus. Paul writes, in Gal. 3:7-9: “Know then that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” The blessing is to be considered righteous by grace through faith in the promises of God, to be forgiven of our sins, justified, as God’s people! And this blessing only comes through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ: that though we are guilty sinners, Jesus Christ, the God-Man, came and lived a perfect life in our place, died on the cross for our sins, and rose on the third day, so that whoever trusts in Him alone for salvation will be forgiven, declared righteous, and blessed with eternal life! And the glorious good news is, this gospel is offered freely to *everyone* - not just to Jews, but to *anyone*, in all the earth, so that if we repent and believe, we too are the blessed children of Abraham! That whoever repents and believes in the gospel of Jesus Christ receives God’s blessings as part of His people!

This means that all who are in Christ today are blessed with every spiritual blessing; every spiritual blessing that exists is *ours*, purely by God’s gracious gift to us, which we receive purely through faith *in Christ*. This is entirely by the gracious work of God, and therefore, it is all to the praise of His glory! We see this in Eph. 1, that we are “blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,” and that it’s all “to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:3, 6). Therefore, as we seek and receive the glorious blessings of God in Christ - knowing God, being chosen and called by Him, having new heart, being forgiven our sins, justification, sanctification, assurance of salvation, His kind providence, His loving plan for our lives, His Holy Spirit and presence, even the sure hope and inheritance of eternal life - all of this should lead us to praise the riches of His glorious grace that He has lavished upon us in Christ Jesus!

But that’s not all; these blessings aren’t just for our own benefit, or for us to just selfishly keep for ourselves. No, they are for the sake of others! God blesses us so that He might make His glorious grace and His saving ways known *to others* - among all the peoples and nations of the earth - so that all the ends of the earth may fear and know God and be saved by grace through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ! Therefore, as we receive God’s blessings of salvation in Christ, we should share them with others, with everyone that we can everywhere that we can! We’re not meant to selfishly hoard the good news for ourselves; we’re called to share it with

others! We're called to *evangelism*. God didn't just save you for your sake; He saved you in order to make His saving grace known to those around you, as well. He saved you so that you might evangelize - that you might share the gospel with - your friends, your family members, your coworkers, your neighbors, even the people that don't like you, even those you don't yet know!

And one of the most powerful tools we have in our evangelistic toolbelt is *sharing our testimony*. Our testimony is simply telling the story of how we have come to know God and receive the glorious blessings of His salvation through faith in the gospel of Christ Jesus; of how God has graciously blessed us, even in the personal story of our own life and experience! This is a very practical, tangible way that God blesses us in order to make His ways and saving power known among the nations! We share our testimony so that others might see and hear what God has done and is doing in our lives, so that they might know God and His saving ways, and fear and believe in Him! But this means our testimony and profession of faith should be backed up and testified to in our lives; if we share about God's grace in our lives, but then live a life that completely contradicts it, it will not lead to others acknowledging God's glory and grace in our lives; this is why we must show repentance, humble awareness of our own sin, and genuine love for other people. But it also means that as we share our testimony with others, we must, most crucially, *explicitly explain the gospel to them and call them to personally respond to it in repentance and faith*. We cannot ever share our testimony simply as a story of "our own personal lived experience," or "here's what works for me," or "this is my truth." If we do that, then people will not truly know the ways and saving grace of God; if we do not warn them of their sin and guilt before God and the Hell that we all deserve, then they will never truly learn to fear God; if we do not call and encourage them to repent and believe in Jesus Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection as payment for their sins, by grace through faith in Him alone - if we do not share the full gospel with them, and call them to respond to it - then they will never truly know the saving power of God, for the gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

Therefore, if we have received the blessing of God's salvation in Christ Jesus, then let us share it with others, that they, too, may be saved! But that's not the only reason we share the gospel and devote ourselves to missions and evangelism. No, there's an even more important

reason: we do so *for the glory of God*, that He may be worshiped and praised above all and by all! This leads us to our second and final point...

## **II. Our Greatest Desire Should Be for God to Be Glorified Above All and By All People (Psalm 67:3-5)**

That's exactly what we see in vv.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 the earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" *We* are those living at the ends of the earth who have been brought the good news of Christ Jesus and have received the blessing of salvation, to the praise of His glorious grace! Let *us* be glad and rejoice in His gracious providence over our lives! As we truly know God and receive His gracious blessings as His people, all of His kind providences in our lives, and most fully, the blessings of salvation, then it inevitably and necessarily leads us to worship Him! His glorious grace so captures our hearts so that our hearts bubble up in praise! It drives us to praise God in song, but much more than that: to worship God with our entire lives! So that our driving desire in all that we do becomes the glory of God! The *most important application* of this whole Psalm is that we live for the glory of God above all things; God's glory must be our number 1 driving motivation in all that we do. That's our purpose in life: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever! God should be the center of our lives!

But if we truly desire God to be glorified *above* all, we will not be content with us worshipping Him; we will desire others to worship God as well, that He may be glorified *by* all! We start to desire for *all people everywhere* to worship, praise, and glorify God! And this leads us back to *missions* - seeking to share the gospel and make disciples of all nations, including our friends, family members, and those who live in our community around us - in order to see *God glorified*, where we live, and in all the earth! And the end goal of missions is *worship*; as I quoted from John Piper earlier, "Missions exists because worship doesn't." We share the gospel so that the lost can be saved; but even more importantly, we share the gospel so that the lost can praise, worship, and glorify God! When our greatest motivation for missions is the glory of God, our missions will be truly *God-centered* and not *man-centered*.

When our greatest motivation for evangelism, discipleship, and missions is the glory of God, even more than our desire to see people saved, then we will actually have a far more robust and stable foundation for endurance when what God calls us to do is difficult, costly, and

disappointing. For example, let's say your heart is broken by the fact that there are people living in places like the Amazon jungle, the Himalayas, the Tibetan plateau, and still others living in the heart of highly oppressed and closed off nations like North Korea and many Muslim countries around the world, who have *never once in their life heard about God, the Bible, or the gospel of Jesus Christ*. You're heartbroken over the fact that they will die, having never even had a chance of hearing and believing the gospel, and yet we know that they will go to Hell when they die because they have still sinned against God and are without excuse, according to Rom. 1:18-23. And so we pray, send out missionaries, and support them. But let's say God calls *you* to go be a missionary among one of those lost, completely unengaged people groups, one of those nations and peoples at the ends of the earth.

But then you start to realize that it's going to be incredibly, outrageously difficult and dangerous to do that; after all, there's a reason these people have never heard the name of Jesus or met a Christian before.. They're isolated; it's dangerous to hike out all the way into the dark depths of the Amazon rainforest, or all the way up into the Himalayas where many isolated tribes live, completely cut off from the modern world. It's so risky, many physically cannot make the trip; if you do, you just might die, because of wild animals: countless poisonous snakes and insects, jaguars, sting rays and piranhas and alligators and sharks - and that's all just in the Amazon river while you're trying to take a bath! But that's not all: it's often *illegal* to get into these places and contact these people or share the gospel. You might have to face persecution from governments. And then, once you actually *get to* the people you're trying to reach, maybe they're hostile, maybe they attack and persecute you or your friends and family, because of the gospel you preach. But let's say you endure all these difficulties because you keep telling yourself it will all be worth it in order for these lost people to hear the gospel and be saved; that if even *one person* repents and believes in Christ and inherits eternal salvation, it will all be worth it! But then, let's say that you give of yourself for the rest of your life to this mission, that it's grueling and painful and difficult, that it costs you everything - that you end up even losing your life for the sake of this mission. But not a single person comes to faith as a result. The question is: is it still worth it? If the goal is *only* for the lost to be saved, then we'd probably consider it all a major, tragic failure.

*But*, if our most important goal in missions is that God would be glorified among the nations, then no, it wasn't a failure; it was worth it! If you endured pain, sickness, distress,

setbacks, financial difficulty, loss, and every form of suffering and persecution imaginable, if you labored without seeing any fruit, even if you gave your life, all in order to *preach Christ crucified among the nations*, then even if they don't believe, *they have now heard the name of God and the glory of His gospel; they have now heard about the glorious riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus, and they have heard the glorious story of Christ, the name at which they will one day bow!* God was still honored and glorified through it all! And if *that* is our greatest desire and purpose in this life, then yes, it would all have been worth it! But of course, it's all the more worth it if people are saved, so that they can join us in praise and glorifying our great God, that they too may be glad and rejoice in Christ!

And if that's true for the most extreme and perilous of missionary stories, it's also true of us, in our everyday lives. If *sacrificing everything* is worth it, so that God may be glorified half-way around the world, then it is *just as worth it* to sacrificially live out our daily lives so that God may be glorified *right here*, where we live! No matter how mundane or ordinary our lives may be, no matter how frustrating or difficult or painful or hopeless our lives may be, if we have a *God-centered* view of life - if our highest goal in all that we do is to *glorify God* and live for Him - then all that we do will be worth it! It will be part of the rich tapestry God is weaving, the grand story playing out in all of History that tells of the incomparable riches of His glory! Working 40-50 hours a week at a demanding job is not worth it if we're just doing it for more money or for our own happiness or pride; but it *is* worth it if it's to glorify God in the work that we do, by doing it in a Christian way, providing for our family and others, and sharing the gospel with our co-workers. Raising kids, folding laundry and doing dishes, focusing on marriage and family: no matter how mundane it might seem, it's of eternal importance if it's all done to the glory of God! Enduring suffering and persecution of any form - no matter how big or small - takes on eternal meaning and value as we praise the Lord and glorify Him by trusting Him in the midst of it.

So what about the inconvenience, embarrassment, and time and money that it might take to share the gospel with our family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbors? Yes, it's *all worth it*; even if we keep sharing and keep praying and keep loving without seeing any response or fruit or even gratitude, even over years and years, it is *all worth it*, even *right now*, because *God is being glorified in and through you* every single time you open your mouth and share Christ with the person again and again, everytime you pray for their salvation, every time you

invite them out to lunch or into your home, everytime you bring them another book or passage to read, everytime you humbly serve or care for them, every time you do what's truly loving for them even though they don't understand, everytime they get mad and revile and ridicule you because of your Lord Jesus, *Christ is being glorified in every single bit of it!* That means it is a blessing beyond comparison, of eternal value, for us. And we can rest assured that if we're pursuing God's glory over all, then even if we never see the fruits of our labors in this life or understand why things are going the way we are, it will be successful; God will be glorified, even if we don't see how until Heaven!

So let us worship and praise our great God! Let us be glad and rejoice in Him because of the gracious blessings of salvation we have in Christ, all by His glorious grace! Let us live our lives for His glory above all! And one special way we get to worship Him is through the Lord's Supper; so if you're a baptized believer of this morning in good standing with a gospel preaching church, I invite you to join us at the table in a few moments. But if that doesn't describe you, I invite you instead to glorify God by receiving the free blessing of salvation by trusting in Jesus's death and resurrection to pay for your sins, and proclaiming for the nations to see through baptism! If you have questions about this, I would love to speak with you after the service. But now, let us have a moment of silence before we pray and come to the table.