

Psalm 67

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[0 : 0 0] It's great to be with you guys tonight after two weeks of being back in the States. We were longing for this Scottish summer as we were enjoying the sun in Alabama.

Just doesn't compare. So like literally Kelly and I were like, we can't wait to get back. It's too hot here. I don't know how we did it for 45 years, but it really is great to be back with you guys.

Excited to be speaking tonight on Psalm 67. It's a song that has been dear to me. A few years ago, I watched a mini series called the Pacific, which is about the battles fought in the Pacific Ocean during World War II.

It was amazing to see what links the allies had to go to in order to end the war. One of the things that they did is they sent back one of the heroes of earlier battles.

He won the US Congressional Medal of Honor, which is the highest honor that a person in the military can win. He was given the Congressional Medal of Honor, and then he was sent back to the US in order to travel around the country and drum up support for the war.

[1 : 1 0] And basically the idea was that in order for us to continue this fight and to end this war, we have to keep those back home engaged and supporting it.

It does not happen if the people back home aren't engaged with us in supporting the war. Meanwhile, in the Pacific, the soldiers themselves, they were easily losing sight of the mission based on their circumstances.

So for instance, the enemy was trying to get them to lose focus on the bigger mission by just at night. They would send planes over. They wouldn't bomb, but the allies didn't know that they weren't going to bomb, so it would keep them awake at night.

Soon bombs were about to drop just because planes were flying over, and all of a sudden now instead of focusing on the mission at hand, they're focusing on their present circumstances.

Now that reminded me so much of us as the church and the mission of God. Oftentimes we get caught up in our present situation, our present circumstances, and the enemy uses that to take our eyes off the war that is going on around the world, the spiritual battle for men's and women's souls.

[2 : 2 3] And also, if this is going to happen, if God's mission is going to succeed, which we know it will, we'll talk about that later, but really we have to stay engaged wherever we are, even back at home.

It's easy for us to get caught up in things and forget about the battle that is waging for men and women's souls, and we need to be engaged back at home. Now for me, I was in seminary when I would say God's mission went from my head to my heart, where I knew things about God and his mission, but it really began to sink deep into my heart, where I started asking the questions, what is my part in this mission?

And this passage, Psalm 67, was a big part of what God used to open my eyes and to move things from my head to my heart.

Now what Lewis just read, it starts out, may God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us. That your way may be known on earth, your salvation or your saving power among all nations.

Now this Psalm begins with a prayer that might sound pretty familiar. In fact, we hear it often as a benediction from Numbers chapter 6, verses 24 to 26, which says, 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.

[3 : 55] Now one of the differences between the passage in Numbers and this passage here in Psalm 67 is that Numbers is a benediction. It's a pronouncement of God's promise over his people, whereas Psalm 67 is actually a prayer saying God bless us.

We're asking this blessing to be on us as a prayer. He's requesting this from God for a purpose that we'll talk about in just a second. Another difference that you might notice is Numbers says, the Lord bless you and keep you.

Well this passage says, may God be gracious to us and bless us. It uses the name God instead of the covenant name Yahweh, which we translate the Lord. And one commentator said that this could be because it's more like an evangelistic pamphlet where the nations don't know the covenant name of Yahweh, but the generic name for God that demonstrates the Creator, Sustainer, all powerful God of the universe, they might understand that language.

So one commentator, which I thought was interesting, said that this could be like an evangelistic pamphlet. You don't know the nations don't know the covenant name of God, but we want you to.

We want you to know this covenant God who we call Yahweh the Lord. And the prayer he says, be gracious to us means show favor on us God.

[5 : 18] Give us your unmerited, undeserved favor. Have pity on us, have mercy on us. He says bless us. Now this idea of blessing for an agrarian society like that back then, they would think things like bless us with fertility in our crops, fertility in our family so that we can have children, bless us with peace from our enemies so that we can live peacefully in the land.

It carries this idea that we thrive and we prosper. He's asking God, help us to thrive, help us to prosper. And even more than that, give us your presence.

Let your face shine upon us. Give us your presence. Why? Why is he asking this? We want to prosper. We want to have your grace.

We want to have your presence. Why? We have a purpose clause there in verse two that says, for the purpose that, that your way may be known on earth, your salvation or your saving power among all nations.

We want you to do this to bless us so that the nations can know your salvation. We want the nations to be saved. We want them to experience your blessing, God.

[6 : 36] Let the people's praise you, he says. Let all the people's praise you. That is a, it's a causative statement. Make this happen. We want more people to worship you, to sing and be glad, to have joy because they know you, the one true God.

Make this happen, God. Bless us so that the nations can be blessed. He says it another way in verse four, where he says, let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the people's with equity and you guide the nations upon the earth.

He's saying, let the nations be glad with the effect that the people's will know you as the ruler, that they will understand that you are the judge, you rule over them.

And then that word guide us that, that you, and you guide the nations upon the earth. This is the same word that she used many times in the Old Testament, where God is describing how he intimately leads his people.

For instance, Psalm 23, when it says, you lead me in the paths of righteousness, that is that same word there for guide. It's how God intimately leads and guides his people.

[7 : 53] And the Psalmist is saying, we want this nation, the nations to have this intimate special relationship with you.

Be their guide, be their ruler. Bless us so that this can happen. Now as I was reading some commentators on this, there's some that think that this was before the exile.

Some even think that David wrote it. Spurgeon said, I can't imagine it being sandwiched in all these Psalms of David and this not be one of David's Psalms. But basically, we know it's at a time when the nations were seen as enemies.

They're the ones that disrupt us from following God like we should. They're the ones that keep us from having blessing and having peace. They're always presenting war.

We're threatened by war. I mean, you can think, for example, Jonah and how much he despised the Assyrians and did not want to go to Nineveh.

[8 : 55] That's the situation. The nations around us are the enemy, the threat. They threaten your blessing. And the Psalmist is saying, let them be blessed as we are blessed.

And in fact, bless us so that they can be blessed. These nations that threaten our thriving and prosperity, may they rejoice and be glad and sing for joy because they know you.

Now that's pretty radical and maybe even countercultural to them, but it's actually a very old concept. Because, you see, this was actually the same thing that was promised to Abraham in Genesis, chapter 12, verses one through three.

That passage says, now the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And 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 will be blessed.

[10 : 13] In your seed, other passages say, in you Abraham, Abram, all nations of the earth will be blessed. I'm going to bless you so that all the families of the earth can be blessed.

We see this again in Exodus 19 verses five and six. It says, now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples for all the earth is mine.

And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to my people, Israel.

God is saying, as my people, a kingdom of priests, you are to be a nation of people who are like a bridge between me and the nations. You as my people are supposed to be the go between, between them and me.

You are to be the means by which all nations will come to know me, God is saying. And that's right before he gave the law. We also see this in many other passages, one of my favorites that was just pretty eye-opening for me too was in First Kings when Solomon is dedicating the temple.

[11 : 33] In about verse 44 through 46 somewhere in there, he says that as a foreigner comes and he's going to hear about your mighty arm and your outstretched hand, your outstretched arm, your mighty hand, he's going to hear about all your great works.

And when the foreigner comes to you and prays towards this house, hear them so that all the ends of the earth may know you. Even when Solomon is dedicating the temple, he's essentially saying what Isaiah said and Jesus repeated later that my house should be a house of prayer for all the nations.

You're not supposed to just store up these blessings. You are to be blessed so that you can be a blessing to others.

As I mentioned, this is all over the Old Testament and ultimately we're going to find this promise fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah who through him, the Bible says that we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies.

Every spiritual blessing through Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ. But we're not just blessed so that we can have nice, comfortable lives that we can personally thrive and prosper, but also so that we can be a blessing.

[12 : 53] We are blessed to be a blessing. The psalmist begins and ends this psalm with bless us so that all the peoples of the world may know you.

God blesses us for the purpose of the world coming to know him. It's not just so we can have better lives here on earth.

It's much bigger than that. But he pours out his richest blessings on earth so that all peoples of the earth can know the salvation of our God.

Do we view blessings in this way? Do we view money in this way? We want to say our money and biblically it's God's money, we're stewards of it.

Do we view our possessions in this way that God has given me so much blessing so that the ends of the earth can come to know him?

[13 : 59] What about our time? Do we view our time as a gift to us that we're still breathing and we're here? We have this time allotted to us so that the ends of the earth may know him.

Our homes, our technology. We're just talking this week how distracted I get by googling stuff. Like if a thought comes to my mind, it's like I feel like I got to know the answer and I just Google it. It's like, do I view technology as like I have this phone that is crazy with all that can do so that the ends of the earth may know the salvation of our God.

Now I'm not trying to put this another law on us where we're like trying to scrutinize every decision we've ever made and every decision we're making right now and say, is this for the sake of the nations?

There's another verse that would tell us it's got to be for God's glory. We should scrutinize everything in that way for God's glory, but we basically just need to ask ourselves, do we pray in the same way that the psalmist prays here?

God I really want you to bless us here so that my neighbors here can know you, but also people in the ends of the earth, people in the Middle East, people in the Far East, people on the other side of the planet can know you and sing and be glad for joy.

[15 : 16] Is this our heart? Because we know it's God's heart, right? It's all throughout Scripture and ultimately at the very end in Revelation we see how things are going to end where people from every tongue, tribe, nation, and land are going to be together before the throne singing praises to our God.

This is going to happen. We know it's God's heart. Is it our hearts now? I do think we need to ask ourselves a question and ask the question, do we have our eyes on God's mission in the world?

I was pretty devastated not too long ago when I saw that one of my favorite restaurants, Butterburger and Homie's Pizza, the Quarter Mile closed, that was a pretty dramatic statement, sorry I'll be that dramatic, but I was sad when it closed down and if you go there right now we get back from Alabama and we're walking down and we see this big sign where Homie's and Butterburger used to be that says, life's too short to share.

That's crazy all, like someone had actually gone and put like sticky notes that's like life's too short not to share, you know? But that is how our hearts are wired up.

You wake up in the morning, your default mode is, life's too short to share. God is saying, I bless you so that the ends of the earth can know me.

[16 : 51] In fact, speaking of sharing, Paul says in Ephesians 4,28, I love this, he's talking about, he said, let the thief no longer steal but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

That's the heart of the believer. I'm not just, Paul didn't say, hey, get a job so that you stop stealing people's stuff. He says, work hard with your hands so that you have something to share with those in need.

Is that our heart? That God bless us so that the people around me may know that you are good and know your ways and that they can sing and be glad for joy.

The Christian life is not hoarding God's blessings. In fact, you've probably heard this illustration a lot, but I think it's just such a good illustration. In 2018, I went to the country of Jordan and got to float in the Dead Sea.

It's pretty amazing how you just, it's almost like someone said you can't drown in it because you just automatically float in it. It's dead. Nothing can live in it because there's so much salt.

[17 : 57] I think they said like 10 times the salt that's in the oceans is in the Dead Sea. No life can exist in it. Why is it dead? Why is there so much sediment and salt in it?

Because there's no outflow. Fresh water will even flow into it, but because it just collects and then the sun evaporates it just leaving behind sediment and salt and stuff, there's no outflow.

And the Christian life is a lot like that. If you're just like trying to take in, take in, take in without an outflow, that is not the recipe for a thriving, godly walk with Jesus.

That is not his way. But many times we view our lives like the Dead Sea. It's like it's all about me. Bless me, bless me, bless me.

And we have to ask ourselves the question, is God's mission, God's heart for the world, is that our heart? Is that on our hearts? Is it on our radar to pray?

[19 : 01] Let the people's praise you, oh God. So what can we do? I think one of the things is just continually asking ourselves this question, keeping it on our minds.

Like I said, our default mode is to wake up and just to be all about us, to grumble and complain when things don't go wrong, to maybe rejoice, but also when things are going right, it really seems to be more about us.

How can we put the world on our minds? It doesn't happen by default. It takes praying the Psalm like this, bless us God, so that the ends of the earth may fear you.

One of the things, not to embarrass Kelly, I didn't ask her if I could give this illustration, but I have done it before, so I think it's okay. But one of the things that I just had just loved about my wife is the way she, just the Lord had done a work in her heart for the world.

And she wanted to incorporate this into our family. So when we adopted the boys, one of the things that she did is she decorated their room with a theme of children around the world.

[20 : 09] She's like, I want to teach them early on about the world so that they can love the world as God loves the world. That's pretty crazy that my wife would decorate a room in our house based on God's heart for the world.

But those are the kind of things we have to do to remind ourselves, to pray these things, to build it into our lives, to incorporate this into our families, to teach our children, and to pass it on.

Practically, I guess the first thing we can do is just pray. Pray this Psalm, but also think about how can we incorporate the world into our private prayer lives?

Are there places that stick out to you that maybe I could just pray for this place? Are there places that you've heard of recently that maybe the Lord put on your heart, but it's easy to kind of go away and you're like, no, I want to bring that back and pray that God would send salvation to that place and to that people?

The Virgin said, it would however be wrong to let our charity end where it begins as some do. Our love must make long marches and our prayers must have a wide sweep.

[21 : 29] We must embrace the whole world in our intercessions. We've got this kind of what I thought was an urban legend in our ministry back in the U.S.

Some of you guys might know the guys from Kentucky that the long ways are connected to, Andy and Neil. Well, in that church in Takes Creek, Prez, there was, they were kind of noticing like, we're seeing a lot of just good young Christian leaders.

People are going to the mission field, people are going on staff with ministries, people are going to seminary and church planning, all from this one little place in Kentucky called Corbin, Kentucky.

This is a place no one's ever heard of. I didn't even know if it was on a map or not. I had to actually say, is this story true? It was confirmed it is true. So they go digging around. It's like this little place in rural Kentucky where all these things like what's happening in that place that all these godly people, these good Christian leaders are actually impacting people around it.

What's in the water there? Like what are they doing? So they began to research and ask around and what they found is every Friday morning for years and years and years, a bunch of grandmothers would get together with the school yearbook and pray through every name in it week after week after week.

[22 : 58] Sometimes we might say, well, at least we can pray. Like that's the least we could do. Do you understand how powerful prayer is? What could happen if we as a church began praying for the nations?

The Lord has designed it where he works and answer to our prayer. So that's the first thing is we need to pray. We need to pray for our own roles in this.

We need to keep the nations in our private prayer lives. We need to pray together for the nations. Now the second thing I would say is we need to think about how we can send, whether it's people, whether it's resources.

And I say that and one of the things that I realize that I would probably love to hear some of you talk about is just the role that Scotland has played in missions throughout like the modern missions era.

It's pretty crazy to think that this place was once one of the largest cinder of missionaries in the world.

[24 : 08] Lord do it again. But in order for him to do a work like that, first we have to pray that he would do a work like that, but we just got to be as a church and individually committed to seeing God worshiped to the ends of the earth.

It's got to become a part of our heart, a part of our prayer and make efforts to send. And I've been so encouraged by the efforts that I hear of David and Neil and different guys that are with the free church trying to make sure the mission of God is happening.

And I know a lot of times there's an objection of like, man, there's so much work that needs to be done here. Why would we focus over there when there's so much work that needs to be done here?

And we hear that question a lot and Acts 1-8, some people will say that first in Jerusalem and we've got to reach Jerusalem first, then all G in Samaria and then the ends of the earth like it's some progression.

Like we get this done and then we move to that and then we move to that and that's just not the way it goes. In fact, if you read through the book of Acts, in fact, when I first got here, Corey and Derek were preaching through Acts and so just in the last year this has been preached.

[25 : 22] But just how the Lord even used persecution to make that happen. He spread them out from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria in Acts chapter 8 and then the ends of the earth in Acts chapter 11.

God is committed to his mission and this isn't just a like, well, there's so much work to be done here. Absolutely there's work to be done here. So much work.

But that doesn't mean that we don't have our heart for the world, our eyes on the world and our prayers going for the world as well because that is God's heart. In the spirit of the Olympics, I came across this quote.

I thought this was great. Eric Little says, it has been a wonderful experience to compete in the Olympic games and to bring home a gold medal. But since I've been a young lad, I've had my eyes on a different prize.

You see, each one of us is in a greater race than any I've run in Paris and this race ends when God gives out the medals.

[26 : 22] That guy could have had a totally different life with fame, fortune, all the success, but his heart was for China. God had done a work in the life of his family and his heart, his own heart and he says, I got to go back to China.

And when we view God's blessings in light of Psalm 67, it puts our eyes on a different prize. So may the Lord do that as we seek to send.

So pray, send. Another thing I would say is someone use the word welcome. When you look at our city and you look at the number of nations that are represented here in our city, the nations have come to us.

And instead of seeing all the peoples that are here as a nuisance because there are a lot of peoples around here and I have to remind myself, this is for the good of the city. And God can use this and we get it, but God has brought the nations to our city.

What if instead of getting frustrated with how hard it is to walk the grocery store, but instead we pray for those people that we're bumping into. That we pray for those people that stop to take all the pictures and get in our way on the pavement, right?

[27 : 40] God has brought the nations to us. How can we welcome them to our city and into our homes? Obviously, the universities are a big part of that and how can we bring uni students into our homes so that the nations may know him?

Maybe that's the reason you've been blessed with a home. Welcoming people, the nations here in our own city, in our own homes.

But we have been blessed in order to be a blessing to the world. Is this our heart? One last quote from Spurgeon.

He says, God deals in a way of mercy with His saints and then they make that way known far and wide and the Lord's name is made famous in the earth.

And that needs to be the desire of our hearts, that God's fame, that His glory would be known throughout the earth. So when we hear this benediction for God to be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us, may we have the heart of this almas that says, and we want that to happen so that the nations can be saved.

[28 : 54] Because we envision that day in Revelation 7.9 where every tongue, tribe, people and land are represented before the throne, singing praises to the Lamb that was slain on our behalf.

Through whom we have all blessings. Bless us Lord that the ends of the earth may fear you. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this Psalm that really shows us and even convicts us that it's a right prayer to pray for you to bless us.

But we should pray that you bless us in order that we may bless others. That we would be a conduit, like a pipe from your blessings to the rest of the world.

And God, we want the peoples to praise you. We want to think about that day when we will be with people from every tongue, tribe, nation and land, singing praises to the one who saved us and gave us life.

[30 : 02] The one who deserves all honor and glory and praise Jesus Christ. We long for that day. So in the meantime, we do pray that you would bless us.

But help us to have a heart like yours so that we are on mission with you. And we pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.