

Introduction: Why do some people begin to provide foster care for needy children? (love or money?) Why do people seek blessing from God? As with foster care, there’s more than one answer. This Psalm says a lot about blessing and the reason to seek it. So let’s consider what the Psalm teaches us.

A. What blessing did the Psalmist have in mind?

1. Some would say “material” (cf. v.6), and there certainly are spiritual and material blessings!
2. But we need to see that, when this Psalm speaks of blessing, the writer had several Scriptures in mind. We need to have them in mind, also, to understand the Psalm.
 - a. Verse 1 clearly looks back to the priestly benediction recorded in Numbers 6:24-26. Notice that 6:27 tells us that the blessing puts the Lord’s Name on the people. NAME is not just a label; it speaks of God’s presence and favor – relationship!
 - b. Verses 2-5 and 7 use various expressions that bring the whole world into view (review these). On the basis of what Old Testament promise does the saving power of God come to be known among all nations? The language of the Psalm points back to the ancient promise made to Abraham – Gen.12:1-3 – He and his offspring (Gal.3) would bring blessing to the world!

SUMMARY OF “A” – God’s presence with His people, and the fulfilling of His promise to Abraham.

B. For what purpose did the Psalmist seek blessing?

1. Before we answer this, let’s be clear that there are wrong reasons for seeking blessing, self-centered reasons that are not the path to blessing.
 - a. Hebrews 12:17 tells us that Esau sought blessing with tears, but not genuine change of heart.
 - b. James 4:3 speaks of those who ask and do not receive because they ask wrongly, to spend on their own passions. **MAY GOD HELP US TO RECOGNIZE WHEN OUR LONGING FOR HIS GOOD GIFTS HAS MORE TO DO WITH OUR OWN COMFORT, WEALTH, SUCCESS, PRESTIGE OR PLEASURE THAN WITH HIS GLORY** (as our culture directs us)
2. For this Psalm gives a reason to seek blessing that is anything but self-centered or self-indulgent.
 - a. The reason for seeking the high priestly blessing is found in v.2.
 - b. The Psalm contains a refrain –v.3 and 5 -- which reinforces this understanding of the proper desire for blessing (here, note that the proper translation is peoples, not people).
 - c. V.4 tells us the result of such knowledge of God’s ways (v.2) – joy over God’s fairness in judgment and His shepherd-like rule (“guide”) of the nations.
 - d. V.7 connects confidence in blessing with a desire that the whole earth deeply revere HIM.

SUMMARY OF “B” – That the world might see the greatness of God in His people and praise Him.

C. To what conclusion does the Psalm direct us?

1. Clearly, this approach to seeking God's blessing is a goal for us to pursue.
2. But take comfort, people of God. The burden isn't on you, for the Psalm also directs us to Christ!
 - a. For Jesus let go of His own blessedness, lived for the glory of His Father, bore the curse in our place to reconcile us to God, and now lives to make intercession for us. In Him is not only all blessing for all eternity for His people, but also power to put God's glory ahead of your own and to long that the peoples, all the peoples, praise Him.
 - b. So the brightness of God's face shines on us – 2 Corinthians 4:6! Why? Because Jesus is the Great High Priest who offered Himself in the place of sinners.
 - c. And the promise given to Abraham is fulfilled in those who believe – see Galatians 3:7-9.
3. In the end, the Psalm also directs us to the end of all things – a harvest and a restoration – as we read in Revelation 7:9-10.

Conclusion: Years ago, Pastor Harry Grimes told me the story of someone in his town who came to him for prayer. He ultimately realized that the person for whom prayer was asked was a character in a daytime soap opera. How silly! But it is worse than silly to ask God's blessing for any reason other than, ultimately, that glory would come to Him through the Lord Jesus. (v.3)