

Blessed to Bless

Psalm 67:1-7

Halifax: May 8, 2005

Introduction:

What a blessing it is to be a Christian!

- God has shown us His glory through Jesus Christ.
- He has opened our eyes to delight in His excellent excellence...
 - He has restored you to life with Him as your Father.
 - You are forgiven and filled with grace to live in His family.
 - You have an eternal hope of glory.

And because you have been reconciled to Him, you now love Him...

- And the more He pours out His grace on you, the more you love Him...
- And the more you love Him, the more you want the world to love Him.

If you are a Christian, down the very core of your soul there is an ardent yearning that He would be praised by the whole world!

- You want that for the world's sake—so that they will not miss out on the blessing of knowing Him...
 - And you want it for the Lord's sake—that He would have more praise.
- No doubt,
 - this yearning is often weakened by misunderstanding, guilt, impatience, confusion, distraction, and the pressures of this world...
 - But if you are a believer, that yearning is always there.
- There is a sense in which you cannot rest until all the world is praising your God.
 - Nothing else will do as far you are concerned.
 - Anything less is a grave injustice and you cannot bear it.

In Psalm 67, the Lord has given expression of this longing for God's universal praise in a song.

- Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, is the One who leads the church in singing the psalms before the Father.
 - He is the One who prays for all of us, we join with Him by the Spirit of God.
 - God's Spirit works in us to stir up these longings in all who are born again.

- Though we do not yet possess these desires nearly as purely and perfectly as we should,
- Yet, the Lord uses this Psalm (and all other psalms) to bring our minds into conformity to Christ who has these longings to perfection.

So today, I present this Psalm to you with the goal of stirring up these longings in you.

- I pray that the Holy Spirit will blow upon whatever spark of desire is there and make it grow into a raging fire...
 - That He will stir up ardent prayer in your soul...
 - That He will purify those mixed desires that are there now and make them holy and pleasing to God.

So come now, and line up your heart and soul with Psalm 67.

I. First, I want you to see how universal praise is indeed the central passion of this Psalm.

A. Right in the very middle of this Psalm you have the request that the nations of the earth would praise God!

1. Look at verses 3-5!

- Ps. 67:3-5: Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, And govern the nations on earth. Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

2. As the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus sings these words before the Father with ardent desire...

- And He wants the whole church to join Him.
- He wants us to sing these same words with the same fervent desire that He has!

B. And just look at what is being asked for here.

1. Did you notice the repetition?

a. Verse 3 repeats the request two times...

- “Let the peoples praise you, let all the peoples praise you.”

b. And if that were not enough, verse 5 comes along and repeats the same double request again!

- “Let the peoples praise you, let all the peoples praise you.”

c. Something is definitely being emphasised here!

- There is a very fervent desire that the peoples would praise the Lord!
2. But what does this mean... “Let the peoples praise you?”
 - a. What is being asked for here?
 - When it says “**peoples**” it is talking about those who are yet outside the covenant...
 - In the Bible, when it says “**people**” (singular) it usually refers to God’s people or the people of a particular nation (such as the people of Philistia).
 - But when it says “**peoples**” as it does here—in the plural—
 - It is not talking about just one nation or family;
 - It is talking about the people from every tribe and tongue and nation and kindred and family.
 - b. And notice also that it adds the word all:
 - “Let **all** the people praise you!”
 - This is emphasised very strongly in the Hebrew where the word all comes at the very end of the verse—
 - It literally says,
 - “Let the people praise you, let the people praise you, all of them”
 - This construction makes the “**all**” even stronger.
 - It is a request for universal praise.
3. The word **praise** that is used here is that wonderful Hebrew word “Yada” that I have told you about before.
 - a. It is a word that properly means “to confess”—
 - 1) It is used for example, of confessing sin.
 - When you confess your sin, you say the truth about your sin—
 - You admit what you did, and you admit the wrong of what you did.
 - 2) But here (and in many other places) “yada” is used of confessing God!
 - When you confess God, you say the truth about God...
 - You acknowledge who He is in truth...
 - But there is something unique about confessing the truth about God.
 - When you confess the truth about yourself, you are often having to own up to things that are wrong about you...

- But when you confess the truth about God, you are always praising Him!
 - Anyone who confesses the truth about who God is always praises Him...
 - You can say nothing that is true about God that is not most excellent, most holy, most pure, most wonderful and praiseworthy.
 - Nothing true about Him is ignoble or unworthy—
 - That is why Yada, when it is used with reference to God,
 - is often translated by the English word praise—
 - It is a very proper translation!
- b. But now, look at what is being requested here so vehemently!
- It is that all the peoples of the earth would confess God,
 - that everyone would acknowledge what is true about Him...
 - or that everyone would praise Him (which is the same thing).
4. And I want you to see further that this praise is a joyful praise!
- a. There will people on the day of judgement that will confess God in a very miserable way—
- They will see His glory and they will confess Him...
 - But it will be a confession in abject horror and trepidation!
 - They will bow before Him and confess that He is holy and mighty and righteous and pure,
 - but with the full realisation that all these glorious attributes are contrary to them and are turned upon them for their rebellion.
 - They will confess Him, but in a most miserable way.

TRANS> But that is not the kind of confession that is being sought in Psalm 67.

- b. The confession or praise of Psalm 67 is a confession of joy and delight.
- 1) v. 4 makes that very clear.
 - v. 4: Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, And govern the nations on earth.
 - 2) This is a picture of the peoples delighting to be under God's rule!
 - a) The nations are glad and singing with joy because of God is reigning over them!

- They take great delight that He has come to judge them righteously or with equity!
- b) The word “judge,” as is often the case in the Old Testament,
- Does not refer here to sentencing them with punishment...
 - It speaks of coming to be their ruler who guides them into true and right ways...
 - like the judges in the book of judges who come to bring the people back to live before the Lord.
 - Here the idea is that the Lord Himself comes to rule over them as their judge!
 - And when He does, He makes everything right.
 - He delivers them from all that is wrong, all that is corrupted, all that is ruined and miserable!
 - Of course, this speaks of the gracious reign of Jesus Christ,
 - The one of whom Isaiah says:
 - Isa 9:6-7: For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.
- c) Everyone who willingly comes under this government is filled with joyful delight!
- How could it not be so for the peoples of the earth?
 - For so long they lived without God and without hope in this world!
 - They lived under the twisted rule of Satan...
 - But now they are brought into the joyful ways of the Lord, beholding His glory and living before Him as His people!
 - “Let the nations be glad and sing for joy! Let all the peoples praise Him!”

C. What an ambitious request this is!

1. This Psalm puts the prayer in your mouth that all the peoples of the earth would live joyfully in the Lord!

- It is a request that the day would come when the whole earth joyfully confesses His glorious name and lives under His rule!
 - Jesus Christ is gathering people into His kingdom every day until that happens.
2. This is His great desire and the prayer that He prays...
- But it is also the prayer He gives you to pray with Him!
 - “Let the peoples praise you let all the peoples praise you. Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For you shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations on earth. Let the people praise you let all the peoples praise you.”
3. How great was this desire of the Lord Jesus!
- a. He went to the cross with this desire for the nations...
- It was for the joy of seeing them happily established in God’s kingdom that He went to the cross!
 - He paid for the sin of the nations that the nations might be glad in God and confess His name in joyful exuberant praise!
- b. Do you desire to see His desire fulfilled?
- Do you yearn to see the nations praising Him?
 - He gives you these words to sing to Him from heart!

TRANS> But surely it is very easy to despair when you do not see the people’s praising Him.

1. Just look at our world!
- You could hardly call it a world that is filled the praise of God!
 - Oh yes, there are people from all over the world that are praising Him,
 - but most are not!
2. We live in a society that is often called a post-Christian society.
- a. Perhaps it is more scriptural to call it a covenant breaking society...
- Many of our forefathers truly knew the glory of God and worshipped Him.
 - They knew the gospel and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - They rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God and were full of praises.
- b. But today we see their children turning away from the living God!
- We see them trading in their gold for saw dust.

- We talk to them and we see bitterness toward God.
 - We talk to them and we see false hopes and dreams in the passing pleasures of this world.
 - We talk to them and we see them blind and terribly distracted from the things that really matter.
 - We watch them and we see them in bondage to sinful desires and pleasures.
- c. Their lives are empty and meaningless,
- yet they want nothing to do with our God!
 - You go to them with the glorious gospel and they brush it off and want nothing to do with it.
 - They may even mock and sneer or at least think you to be a bit silly.
3. It is very easy to despair!
- a. It is easy to say, “What’s the use?”
- Why should I continue to pray that the people around me would praise God when I see them die without Christ?
 - Why should I continue to invite them to church when they never come?
 - Why should I seek the reform of the church when it continues to decline and falsehood abounds?
- b. I mentioned something of this when we were looking at Matthew 10...
- When Jesus first sent out His disciples with the glorious news that the Messiah had come,
 - they surely expected that everyone would be thrilled with the wonderful news!
 - but Jesus told them that instead they would experience rejection and opposition.
- c. What is it that kept them going?
- What is that kept them going when they were arrested and told not to speak in the name of Jesus any more?
 - What is that kept Paul praying so ardently for his fellow Israelites when he said that as a whole, they had rejected the gospel?
 - What is it that kept Daniel praying for the deliverance of Israel from captivity when he saw by prophetic vision that their deliverance would not be a very complete one?

TRANS> What is it that kept them from despair?

- What is there to keep **you** from despair?
- Is it not the assurance that the whole world **will** praise God?
 - If you knew that God would bring the world to praise Him, would you not be much more motivated to pray and not faint?
 - Surely you would!
 - And I tell you...

II. The assurance that the whole world will praise God is given to you in this Psalm.

- Not only are you taught to pray and long that all the nations will praise God,
 - You are also assured that all the nations will indeed praise God!
 - You are given this assurance in two ways:
- A. First of all, you are given assurance that all the peoples will praise God by the simple fact that such a request is made in this Psalm.
 1. The Psalms are not merely the prayers of men, but they are songs and prayers that are inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - a. This is not a song that Fanny Crosby or Isaac Watts wrote!
 - The Psalms are the words given to us by the Holy Spirit of God.
 - b. And you can be sure that Holy Spirit would not give us words to sing and pray to God that are not firmly rooted in the promises of God!
 - We may not know exactly how the Lord will bring the nations to this place, but we know that He will do it!
 - We know that it will involve purging out the wicked and casting the tares into the fire,
 - but it also seems that it will involve bringing the whole world to Himself—
 - not so that there are no tares—
 - but so that the tares at least **look** like wheat.
 - In other words, the scriptures seem to envision a time when there will only be few who are still in rebellion...
 - And they will be ashamed to openly rebel and will at least pretend outwardly praise the Lord.
 - It will be a time when all the world will be serving Christ, and for the great majority, it will be a time for tremendous joy.

- The nations will be glad and sing for joy.

TRANS> The Holy Spirit would not give us these words to sing before God if God was not determined to bring about such a day.

2. We can strengthen the argument that God will answer all the prayers given to us in the psalms by considering that Jesus prays all these prayers as the head of the church...
 - a. Jesus, the Head of the church, who offered Himself to God and was accepted by Him prays that
 - “all peoples will praise God and that the nations would be glad under His rule!”
 - b. When Jesus was on earth, He sang all 150 psalms in worship before God...
 - And you can be sure that Jesus did not sing one prayer in vain!
 - He did not sing them in a cold detached way without meaning what He said...
 - And do you remember what Jesus said about His prayers when He stood by the grave of Lazarus to raise him from the dead?
 - He said,
 - John 11:41-42: Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me.”
 - c. Do you see the point?
 - If Jesus sang all the psalms before as Father as Head of the church,
 - and if it is true that the Father always hears Him,
 - Then we can be sure that the Father heard Him when He sang Psalm 67 and asked God to cause all the peoples of the earth to praise Him!
3. And so Christian,
 - You see that you do not need to despair!
 - If the Lord has given you this Psalm to sing and it contains a prayer that all the peoples of the earth will praise Him, they will!
 - It doesn't matter what it might look like to you now!
 - God is going to do it or He would not lead us to pray for it with His Son!
 - Pray in faith, not by sight.

TRANS> But there is even more assurance than that given to you in this Psalm...

- even more assurance that all the peoples will praise God!

B. Verse 7 expressly states that it will be so—

- It says
 - v. 7: “God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”
- 1. The “**ends of the earth**” are the places that are the farthest from the centre.
 - The most out of the way place, the most backward place, the most remote place.
 - Even these places will fear the Lord!
 - No place will be excepted!
 - God’s praise will extend to the extremities of the earth
 - “All that ends of the earth shall fear Him.”
- 2. And of course “fear,” as it is used here, refers to being a worshipper of God...
 - This ties in very much with what I showed you before about the nations praising or confessing God.
 - To fear God, as it is used here, means to own Him as your God, to be his worshipping disciple...
 - It is the kind of fear that is spoken about in Deuteronomy 6:13:
 - Deut 6:13: You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.
 - It is the recognition of who He is in such a way that pleasing Him becomes more important than anything else.
 - You know Him for who He is, and because you do, you take your place under Him as a trusting disciple.

TRANS> So you see that this Psalm not only teaches you to long for all the peoples of the earth to praise God,

- but it also supports that longing by assuring you that they **will** praise God.
 - You may not see these prayers answered in our generation...
 - It is unlikely that you will.
 - But knowing that they **will** be answered in time is a huge encouragement to keep going!

- This is what kept Paul going,
 - this is what kept Daniel going,
 - this is what kept Jesus going even in His hour of greatest rejection when all the disciples forsook Him.
 - He knew that God would truly give Him the nations as His inheritance!
- So take heart Christian!
 - You need to know what God has promised to do so that you will yearn for Him to do it.
 - When Israel came out of Egypt, they failed to go into the land of Canaan at first because they did not believe that God would deliver the Canaanites into their hands.
 - They looked at the might and power of Canaan and they said,
 - “It is impossible—it will never happen...”
 - and so they did not pray,
 - nor did not attempt to take the land.
 - So it is that if you do not believe that God will bring the nations to praise Him,
 - you will neither pray for it nor labour for it.
 - You will say, “It is impossible, it is too much.”
 - My friends, such an attitude needs to change!
 - There is a very real sense in which God will not bring His blessing to the world until He has first changed us!
 - He will not have the world to worship Him until we are worshipping Him and trusting Him and praying that He will do it.
 - This a principle we looked at recently in Matthew 10...
 - and third thing I want you to see from Psalm 67:
 - namely that...

III. God will not bring the world to praise Him until He has first worked in His people, the church.

- Do you remember that message?
 - We looked at how the Lord Jesus instructed His disciples to go to the Jews first and not to Gentiles or even to the Samaritans.

- A. God has an order about the way that He builds His kingdom...
1. And that order is that He always begins with those who are already His people...
 - He blesses them first,
 - and then the blessing they have received spills over into the nations!
 - a. We looked at Exodus 32 when God threatened to cast away His people after they had worshipped the golden calf and raise up a new nation...
 - And how Moses interceded and told God that He couldn't do such a thing because of His promise to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob...
 - The promise that He would bless them and their seed...
 - And that through their seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed!
 - b. That is the modus operandi of God.
 - He begins with His covenant people first—
 - He blesses them first—
 - And then through them He blesses the nations.
 2. Psalm 67 refers to this same order in what it declares in verse 7:
 - Ps 67:7: “God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”
 - a. We just looked at the promise that is given in this verse,
 - but now I want you to notice that the promise that the nations will fear God is the result of another promise...
 - It is the consequence of God first blessing His people!
 - “God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”
 - You see?
 - It starts with God's people—it starts with “**us**,”
 - **us**... the people who are singing this song!
 - “God shall bless **us**,”—
 - It is only then that the ends of the earth shall fear Him.
 - b. There is a very real sense in which this has already been fulfilled...
 - 1) God did not send the gospel out to the nations until after He had first blessed His people.
 - For hundreds of years, the Gentiles were

- “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise”
 - They were, “without God and without hope in the world.
- 2) There was a sense in which Israel had nothing to give to the world at that time because although God had promised to bless them,
- He had not yet done it.
 - Of course I don’t mean He had not blessed them all, but I mean that He had not sent Jesus to save them from their sins...
 - They had much because they had Jesus promised, and by faith in Jesus promised, their sins were forgiven...
 - But if Jesus had not actually come and died for them,
 - they would have had nothing!
 - Without Jesus, all the promises to them would have been nullified!
 - There would have been no heaven.
- 3) But God did bless His people by sending Jesus,
- and Jesus did offer Himself as a sacrifice for their sins...
 - And God did accept His sacrifice for them and pronounce that their sins were forgiven.
 - You see, it was only after **that** was done that they had something to offer to the world.
 - God blessed them first with salvation...
 - Then they were called to take this salvation to the ends of the earth...
 - And then the ends of the earth can rejoice in that blessing of salvation!
 - Jesus told them:
 - Matthew 28:18-20: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.

TRANS> Truly, God did not bless the nations until He had first blessed His covenant people, the descendants of Abraham.

- And now all those who believe have become just as much a part of Israel as Abraham.
- You who believe are truly God's covenant people.

B. But you need to recognise how the modus operandi of God, as it is presented in Psalm 67, applies to you today.

1. Look around you.

- Would you say that all the peoples are praising God and that the nations are glad and singing for joy because Jesus is their king?
 - Of course not...
 - But do you want them to do this?
 - Of course you do—if you a Christian!
 - You want them to come into the full joy of the Lord.
 - You want them to praise Him!

2. But what needs to happen first—

- what needs to happen first according to the principle by which God works?
 - a. We who believe must first be blessed!
 - God is working today through the remnant of His people,
 - and He is working mightily all around the world...
 - But before He brings the fullness of His promised blessing to the world...
 - He will first bless those who already know Him!
 - And on a smaller scale,
 - If we want to be a blessing in our city—we must look to God to bless us first!
 - Until He does, we have nothing to offer the world!
 - Until you have come to delight in God, how can you lead others to delight in Him?
 - Let Him begin His work in us!

b. This is exactly what Psalm 67 teaches us to pray for!

1) Look at verse 1-2 and you will see it!

- Psalm 67:1-2: God be merciful to us and bless us, *And* cause His face to shine upon us. That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.
- Do you see it?

- The central passion of this Psalm is that the whole world would praise God...
 - But we begin by asking God to bless us—
 - To bless us in order that His saving work may be known among the nations.
 - If that blessing is not seen in His people,
 - How can it be known among the nations?
 - If we are not visibly transformed in the sight of the nations as God's people,
 - why would the nations come to God to share in our blessing?
 - Why would they come to receive a blessing that we don't seem to have?
- 2) This request in verse 1 that God would “be merciful to us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us”
- is a reflection of the benediction given in Numbers 6.
 - In Numbers 6, the LORD said:
 - Num 6:23-27: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: ‘The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.’ So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”
 - By putting His name on the people,
 - the LORD meant that He was established with them as their God...
 - established with them so that He was revealed to the world through His dealings with them.
 - By blessing them and keeping them,
 - He would show forth His grace to all the world!
 - They had become His vessels of mercy where His mercy would be displayed to all.
- 3) And so you see that in Psalm 67,
- a) You are taught how to respond to God's benediction on you if you are one of His people!
 - You are taught here to look to God for this blessing...

- Ask Him to make it happen!
 - Ask Him to powerfully work in your life and in our life as His people so that all the world will see His grace!
 - As it says in verse 2,
 - “that your way may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.”
- b) Do you want God to be praised among the nations?
 - Then begin by praying that He would bless us, His people!
 - And then pray that through His grace to us all the nations might start praising Him!
 - But let it begin with you, Christian!
 - What sincerity is there in your prayer that the nations will praise Him if you are not praising Him?

Conclusion

- The Lord Jesus is praying Psalm 67 for His church and for all the peoples of the world.
 - He has given us these words.
 - Let us join Him in praying for these things and then we can say with all assurance:
 - “God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”