



EMBRACING GOD'S MISSION FOR YOUR LIFE

PSALM 67

By: H.B. Charles, Jr.



SERMON MANUSCRIPT

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Psalm 67 is not as well known as some of the other psalms more famous psalms. But prominence and significance do not often walk together hand-in-hand. Such is the case with Psalm 67. Even though it is somewhat obscure, Psalm 67 has an important message that can change your life and change the world. The message is that the Lord God desires to use your life to reach the world for his glory.

Psalm 67 is considered THE MISSIONARY PSALM, because of the emphasis it places on God being known, praised, enjoyed, and feared by all the nations. In fact, this psalm emphasizes the worship of God being spread to all nations more than any other psalm. Yet this missionary psalm has a very personal dimension. As a member of God's covenant people, the writer begins this psalm by asking for God's blessings and ends it in anticipation of God's blessings. And the idea that I want to impress upon you from this psalm is that the writer's personal desire for blessings and his missionary zeal for the nations are not in conflict. They are harmoniously related and even dependent on each other. Yes, the psalmist wanted to be blessed. But more than that, he wanted to be a channel of God's blessings, not a terminal – a river of God's blessings, not a reservoir – a pipeline of God's blessings to others, not a faucet into his own house. He wanted to be blessed and to be a blessing. And I submit to you that this is how God desires to operate in and through our lives and this church. God desires to use you and me to reach the world for his glory.

I think I know what some of you are asking yourself. I ask myself the same questions as I meditate on the message of this psalm. Is this really true? How can God use someone like me to reach the world? Does God actually want me to be uprooted be planted in some foreign land as a missionary? The answer is yes and no. Yes, God is calling some of you into foreign fields of missionary work. And I encourage you today to heed the call of God on your life. But this is not the case for most of us. Yet the Lord still has a mission for your life. The story is told of a king who was converted to Christ and decided to denounce his throne in order to serve Jesus with his life. But in prayer, the Lord convinced him to stay on the throne and serve him as a king. The point is that the Lord has called every Christian to be a missionary. But only some of us will have to leave the country to obey that call. If that is not you, the Lord is calling you to embrace his mission for your life right where you are. And Psalm 67 reveals three ways in which God wants to use you to reach the world.

I. GOD WANTS TO USE YOU SO THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW HIM.

In Numbers 6:24-26, God commands Moses to instruct Aaron and his sons – the priests – to bless the people with these words: *“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 priestly benediction is the prayer of the psalmist. Verse 1 says: *“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.”* The NKJV uses the word “merciful” in verse 1. But the word “gracious” is the more accurate translation. In fact, this Hebrew word is generally translated “gracious” in the priestly blessing in Numbers 6:25. The distinction is significant. The psalmist is not asking God for mercy, which restrains the divine punishment one deserves. He asks God for grace, which grants the divine blessings one does not deserve.

This is the psalmist's request: *“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.”* Notice that the gracious blessings of God are pictured here in physical terms, with God's face shining on his children. The psalmist did not want to experience the darkness of having God turn away from him. So he asks God to smile on him in such a way that the glory of God's shining face would light up his life. Simply put, the psalmist asked God to bless his people in a great way. And this request teaches us that there is absolutely nothing wrong with asking God to bless your life. In a real sense, the psalmist was asking God for blessings that were already his. The point of the priestly blessing was to remind Israel that they were God's blessed people. In Numbers 6:27, God says: *“So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”* And if you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord by faith, you have already been blessed. Ephesians 1:3 says: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”* In Christ, we are God's blessed people. And through Christ, we have access to the blessings of God in our lives.

Verse 1 records the prayer request for God's blessings; verse 2 records the intended result of these blessings: *“that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.”* The psalmist teaches us here how to pray personally and selflessly at the same time. He prayed for the blessings of God. But he was not just thinking about himself. And he was not just thinking about his family, tribe, or nation. He was thinking about people that he, most likely, would never personally meet. He was thinking about all the nations of the

earth. The psalmist prayed personally and selflessly at the same time. And his example confronts us with the fact that we should not seek God's blessings primarily for our own comfort, benefit, and prosperity. WARREN WIERSBE writes: "*A blessing is a gift from God that glorifies his name, helps his people, and through them reaches out to help others who will glorify his name.*" Mark it down: God blesses us that we might be a blessing to others. And God will soon stop sending blessings to you if he cannot send blessings *through* you.

So the psalmist prayed for personal blessings with selfless intentions: "*that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.*" The psalmist wanted to be blessed so that others might know God's way. The implication here is that people will not – cannot know the way of God naturally, inevitably, or automatically. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve at us out of house and home. And our own sin has shut us out of the way to God, the way to truth, the way of righteousness, the way of forgiveness, and the way to heaven. The good news is that there is a way back to God. And God wants to use you and me to show lost people the way home to God. God wants to use us to get the message out that the only way back to God is through the righteous life and atoning death of Jesus Christ. In John 14:5, Thomas said to Jesus, "*Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?*" And in John 14:6, Jesus answered: "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" We who live on this side of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter know that God's way and saving power are only known through the Lord Jesus Christ. So we should live, pray, and serve so that everyone may know who Jesus is.

HOW TO REACH THE MASSES, MEN OF EVERY BIRTH
FOR AN ANSWER JESUS GAVE THE KEY:
"AND I, IF I BE LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH,
WILL DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME."

II. GOD WANTS TO USE YOU SO THAT THE WORLD MAY WORSHIP HIM.

In the opening verses of this psalm, the writer prays for the blessings of God, so that all the nations might know God's ways and God's

saving power. But verses 3-5 show us that world evangelization itself must not be our goal. The salvation of the nations is simply a means to an infinitely greater end: the glory of God. We pray that the nations may know God so that the nations may worship God. In *Let the Nations be Glad*, JOHN PIPER writes: "*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.*" This is the passion of the psalmist. He is convinced that God is worthy of the highest praise. And it is expressed by his longing that all the nations would join in praising God. In fact, this is the refrain of Psalm 67. It is recorded in verse 3 and repeated in verse 5: "*Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!*"

The author of Psalm 67 is anonymous. But whoever it is, it is clear that he was a true worshiper of the Lord God. But the proof that he was one who worshiped God in spirit and in truth is not found in his personal worship or his corporate worship with the assembly of Israel. The proof of his worship is found in the fact that he longed for the unsaved people of the Gentile nations to repent, believe, and worship the true and living God. He desired to see the exhortation of Psalm 100:1 fulfilled: "*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!*" This is the passionate longing of every true worshiper.

O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES TO SING
MY GREAT REDEEMER'S PRAISE
THE GLORIES OF MY GOD AND KING
THE TRIUMPHS OF HIS GRACE

Matthew 28:18-20 records what we call THE GREAT COMMISSION. Jesus declared, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord that reigns over all creation. And he has charged his followers to lead those who do not know him to repent of their sins, trust him for salvation, and follow him in obedience. But note the scope of this mission. Jesus does not call us to make disciples of our family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and classmates - even though the unsaved people in our circle of influence desperately need our witness for the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But Jesus calls us to a mission that is far greater than just our family and friends. He calls us to make disciples of all the nations

– of all the unreached peoples of the world. This is a mission that is as small as your neighborhood and as big as six billion people. Yet because Christ has authority over all creation, all the nations of the world should love, trust, and serve him. This is the ultimate goal of our evangelism and missions and outreach – that a greater number of worshipers will praise the Lord!

This psalm uses a literary device called Inklusio. Inklusio is when a statement is repeated to give emphasis to what is said between the repeated statements. Psalm 67 is an example of this. In verses 3 and 5, the psalmist expresses his longing that all peoples would be converted to worship God. But verse 4 is the central, pivotal statement the psalmist seeks to emphasize in this psalm: *“Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.”*

True worship is a two-sided coin. It is in spirit and in truth. It is rooted in both personal experience and external truth. The WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM may explain it best: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” These are the two sides of worship. The glory of God is to rise far above and beyond us. But the enjoyment of God is to dwell within us. Our text reflects this. Verses 3 and 5 call for the nations to glorify God: *“Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!”* But verse 4 calls for the nations to enjoy God: *“Let the nations be glad and sing for joy.”* Why should the nations of the earth renounce their idol gods turn to the living God in joyful singing? Verse 4 gives two reasons: *“Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the people with equity and guide the nations upon earth.”* This statement affirms the holy justice and sovereign authority of God. But it does not point to these divine attributes as reasons to avoid God in the search for joy. Rather, it presents them as reason why unsaved, unbelieving people ought to be converted and sing for joy in God.

THERE IS JOY IN THE HOLY JUSTICE OF GOD. Verse 4 says of God: *“you judge the peoples with equity.”* I know it may sound odd to speak of finding joy in the judgment of God. But the psalmist does not call for the nations to be glad about the judgment of God itself. He calls for them to rejoice in the manner of God’s judgment. God judges the peoples with truth, equity, and righteousness. The nations

should be glad in God because you can trust God to always do what is right. And do not indict the holy justice of God by the poverty, racism, violence, injustice, and corruption that is so rampant in the world. Blame sin for that; not God. Instead, measure God’s holy justice by the cross of Jesus Christ. It was there God judged the nations by placing the guilt on our sins on his own dear Son. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* On the cross, God treated Jesus as if he had committed all of our sins, so that by faith he might treat us as if we have performed all of the righteousness of Christ.

THERE IS JOY IN THE SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY OF GOD. Verse 4 says: *“Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the people with equity and guide the nations upon earth.”* The nations of the world are in need of guidance. But where should we turn to find it. The psalmist says the nations should rejoice in the fact that God guides the nations. This term *“guide”* does not refer to the wisdom with which God works in the world; it refers to the authority with which God works. The NKJV renders it better: God will *“govern the nations on earth.”* God rules over the nations. Psalm 103:19 says: *“The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.”* Our God is sovereign. That means he reigns in perfect authority over everything and everyone at all times. God is in charge of everything. God is God all by himself. And we ought not to be turned off by this. We ought to rejoice and be glad to know that our lives and the direction of our world is not the result of chance, accident, or circumstance. Romans 8:28 says: *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”* God guides, guards, and governs everything that happens in this world. And the nations should rejoice to know that he has the whole world in his hands.

III. GOD WANTS TO USE YOU SO THAT THE WORLD MAY FEAR HIM.

Psalm 67 ends the same way it begins: with a statement about what it means to be blessed. Verse 6a describes the blessed life in agricultural terms: *“The earth has yielded its increase.”* The grammar of Psalm 67 is somewhat complex. Consequently, translators disagree as to whether this statement should be rendered in the past tense (*“The earth has yielded its increase”*), or the future tense (*“The earth shall yield its increase”*). But either way you read it, it is affirmation of the faithfulness of God. Foundationally, this statement highlights the dilemma of human inability. Think about it. The farmer works the field. But he cannot make the earth yield its increase. God must bring the harvest.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, Paul says: *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."* Paul could not produce a harvest on his own. He needed to partner with the labors of Apollos. But Paul and Apollos couldn't produce a harvest together either. All of their labors would have been in vain if God did not give the increase and make it grow. So the fact that God causes the earth to yield its increase affirms that we can trust the faithfulness of God to take care of us when we cannot take care of ourselves.

SUMMER AND WINTER, AND SPRING-TIME AND HARVEST
SUN, MOON AND STARS IN THEIR COURSES ABOVE
JOIN WITH ALL NATURE IN MANIFOLD WITNESS
TO THY GREAT FAITHFULNESS, MERCY AND LOVE

Furthermore, the earth yielding its harvest is a picture of the constant, providential, and generally unnoticed manner in which God takes care of his people. The process of crops growing in the field is not a noisy, obvious, and sensational thing. The earth yields its increase quietly. But it is a mighty work that only happens because of the faithfulness of almighty God. In Genesis 3:17-18, God punishes Adam's sin by declaring: *"cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you."* Because of sin, all we can produce is thorns and thistles. Only God is able to make the earth yield its increase. And God is faithful to provide. But the faithfulness of God is most often not demonstrated in sensational ways – a new this, I bigger that, a better the other. The faithfulness of God is regularly demonstrated in the ordinary but perpetual ways God takes care of his children. You have life, health, and strength because God is faithful. You have food, clothing, and shelter because God is faithful. You have family, friends, and loved-ones because God is faithful.

And because we can put our confidence in the faithfulness of God, we can be confident about the favor of God. Verses 6-7 read: *"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!"* In verse 1, the psalmist prays that God would be gracious to him and bless him. Now, in verses 6-7, he announces the future arrival of God's blessings with confident expectation. But he does not expect the coming

favor of God because he has earned it or deserves it. His confidence is in the faithfulness of God, not his own. Because God faithfully causes the earth to yield its increase, the psalmist was confident that God would bless them in the days to come. And I submit to you because God is faithful, you too can live with the expectation of God's blessings on your life. In Lamentations 3:21-24, Jeremiah says: *"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in him."*

I repeat: Because God is faithful, you can live with confidence that God knows when – where – how to bless you. He is ready, willing, and able to bless in such a great way that all the nations will fear him. Verse 7 says: *"God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!"* What is the fear of God? The fear of God is the fear of God. That is, if you really know and worship God; there ought to be some things you are afraid to say. There ought to be some things you are afraid to do. There ought to be some places you are afraid to go. This is the goal of God's blessings in your life: that the ends of the earth should fear God. But the good news of the fear of God is that if you really fear God; you don't have to fear anything else. Psalm 23:4 says, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."* Psalm 46:1-3 says, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling."* And Psalm 118:6 says, *"The Lord is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

WHAT A FELLOWSHIP, WHAT A JOY DIVINE
LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS
WHAT A BLESSEDNESS; WHAT A PEACE IS MINE
LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS

WHAT HAVE I TO DREAD, WHAT HAVE I TO FEAR
LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS
I HAVE PERFECT PEACE WITH MY LORD SO NEAR
LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS