

# Psalm 67 – Let The Nations Be Glad

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*Knowing God, Pt. 3*  
*January 29, 2017 – Spence Shelton*

Turn in your bible to Psalm 67. We are in a series called “Knowing God” Where we are looking at a different Psalm each weekend to see how the authors of the Bible talked about what it meant to *know* God and not just know about him.

Psalm 67 is one of my favorite Psalms and I think it comes at just the right time for us in this series. For the first two weeks we’ve been talking about our relationship with God. In this Psalm David is going to again bring up his relationship to God but then he’s going to show us where that relationship, when we truly have it, will take us. See David is going to connect our closeness with God to our purpose in the world. That’s why we need this Psalm. Because some of you have never connected your joy in Christ to God’s mission in the world. And what is so paradigm shifting

is there is not one command in this song. It’s a prayer of David to God that I desperately want to be the prayer of our church.

To get there David is going to bring up a concept that probably gets confused and abused as much as any spiritual concept and that is the idea of “Blessing.” David is going to begin by asking God to bless “us” and so the key to connecting our relationship with God to God’s mission in the world will be understanding what the blessing of God is.

ERYBODY uses this word blessing right? Bruno says #blessed and he means money & fame. Southern grandmas say, “bless your heart” meaning “you are so dumb”

Then there is my family who will ask me to “bless the food” and I’m like... That’s a big request. FRIED CHICKEN AND HOMEMADE MAC-N-CHEESE, THE FAVOR OF SPENCE NOW RESTS UPON YOU! Scott Urbanek said he’s going to start a business that sells frozen pre-blessed food. Charlie told him that’s called Chick-Fil-A.

Someone sneezes you say “God bless you.” Which actually came about thousands of years ago when people thought their souls might leave their body during a sneeze and the “God bless you” was a way to make sure the devil didn’t get in there & your soul stayed in your body. Which really ups the urgency on saying that.

Then some people say “I’m gonna go bless him out.” I don’t think that means I’m going to go encourage him in all Godliness.

But in general, whether you are a Christian or not, we have this underlying assumption that blessing, whatever it is, is a good thing. If you aren’t a Christian, and I asked you do you want God to bless your life, you’d probably say yes because you would think that would mean my life would get better than it presently is. And we hunt blessing. If we think of blessing as whatever brings us deep soul-level satisfaction, we’ll pretty quickly admit we all hunt it.

Life is a quest for blessing. The 17<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher Blaise Pascal said it this way

*“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”<sup>1</sup>*

Or to quote the great British philosopher Mick Jagger (insert Mick Jagger pic) “I try and I try and I try but “I can’t get no....Satisfaction.” I try and I try and I try because Life is a quest for blessing. For deep soul-level satisfaction.

## **TRANSITION**

I believe our psalm today tells us what this true blessing is that we are after and what we are to do with it. That is our simple structure for today’s sermon. The true nature of blessing and the purpose of blessing. Or what it is, and what you do with it. Here we go.

## **2 aspects of “blessing” in the bible**

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<sup>1</sup> Pascal, Blaise. *Pascal's Pensées*, trans. by W. F. Trotter (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), p. 113 (thought #425).

Psalm 67. Verse 1...

May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah

The psalmist acknowledges the twofold nature of blessing right here

**1. Blessings are gifts from God.** The psalmist is praying for God to be gracious and to bless us. We must guard against over spiritualizing this. The blessings of God requested here are tangible. They aren't prayers for mushy feelings. They are prayers for harvest, good cattle, healthy families, successful businesses, etc. Listen, God gives us good gifts like a father does to his children. For Israel here they know that the only way they will survive is if God blesses them with the provision they need to survive. They spent years in the desert relying on the provision of God every single day. They experienced life as a recipient of God's blessing and so they knew that for their provision they had to turn to God. This is the default mindset of Old Testament authors. So may God bless us. Verse 6 says

"The earth has yielded its increase;

God, our God, shall bless us." God shall bless us.

They recognized past blessing as a promise of future blessing and that blessing was tangible to them. This is James 1.17 – "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of lights who never changes..."

Listen, God still blesses us this way. He gives us friends, health, families, jobs...everything. The question isn't has God blessed you but are you recognizing the blessing of God all around you already? Here's why that's so important. When you recognize the good in your life comes from your father in heaven, you start to relate to him differently. It's harder to ignore someone who is constantly giving you things you need to live. This is one of the ways God meets our need for satisfaction of the soul. Everything we have is an extension of the grace of God to us. But God goes further. Not only does God give us blessings...

**2. God is himself the blessing.** Here is where God gets down to soul level satisfaction. To meeting that deep soul-level need we all really have. Cause to have true soul-level satisfaction...stuff wont do that. The soul

doesn't need material things...the soul needs things like security, approval, and peace.

### 1b - "make your face to shine upon us."

This phrase is incredibly significant in the Old Testament. Go with me for 3 minutes into OT theology ok? It's worth it. The "face of God" means the **relational presence of God**.<sup>2</sup> This is different than the omnipresence of God. The fact that God is everywhere at once is true to his character. But he is also intimately, face to face present with his children. Like at a party where people are everywhere, but one person is looking at you and engaged in talking to you. This prayer to make your face shine upon us was prayed at the end of every tabernacle service per God's instruction. The face of God shining on them

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<sup>2</sup> Eng. word usually translates Heb. *pānîm* or Gk. *prosōpon*. The Heb. word is used in many Eng. senses-of the faces of people and animals, and metaphorically of the sky; it could refer to the front of something, or its outward appearance. Then the 'face' of a person became synonymous with his 'presence', and the Heb. *lipnê* (lit. 'to the face of', and so 'to the presence of', and 'in front of') is a very common preposition. Ellsworth, R. (2006). *Opening up Psalms*. Opening Up Commentary (111). Leominster: Day One Publications.

represents something deeper than the gifts he provides. Numbers 6:24-26

[24] The LORD bless you and keep you; [25] the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; [26] the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

That's a beautiful prayer right? The face of God shining down on us. So good, but also very problematic. Because God's face means his relational presence...and God cannot be present with sin. But mankind is sinful. And the holiness of God cannot be present with the sinfulness of man. His holiness would kill them as it kills off sin. Like a blow torch and tissue paper. They cannot co-exist. When you put them together, the fire instantly consumes the tissue paper.

Here's the catch in Numbers 6...God is saying to pray this at the end of the tabernacle service. This was the service where a sacrifice was offered as atonement for the sins of the people of Israel. At that point the judgment of God was transferred onto the animal sacrifice from the people. Their sins were atoned for.

So then God could turn his face towards them and they could live. He removed judgment from them and they were now approved of by him.

Listen, if you are reading the bible and you see something like that, alarm bells need to start going off!! This is a foreshadowing of Jesus and what he would do! In Jesus, God poured out the wrath that was owed for our sin onto him. This sacrifice brought us into a position where we can see God's face. So get this...the ultimate blessing...the one that satisfies everything you need...you have in Christ. The presence of God is now with you!

- **Physically** – you will never truly die. Because he's taken the sting of death away.
- **Emotionally** – You have the approval of your true father so you can stop chasing approval of others.
- **Security** – Jesus says in you've been sealed forever with God and he will never, ever until the end of time let you go from him! Romans 8. That gives you security that money & power never could.

Do you see what the blessing is? The greatest blessing of God is God himself and he's with you in Christ!

**In Christ you have the provision of your deepest need: salvation from the judgment of God on your sin. And in Christ you have the satisfaction of the soul you've been searching for.**

Some of you have forgotten what God says about you. You need to come back. But maybe you've never heard that gospel message before. That God offers you salvation. Listen, do not wait another day. Today you need to come to him. You need to repent and choose Him. The search is over, the fight is over. You need to lay it all down and believe the gospel. That's the blessing. The gifts of God and ultimately God himself...

### **The Purpose of God's Blessing**

#### **1. To enjoy God.**

**"Let the nations be glad, and sing for joy."**

Notice the language the author uses to describe the response of the nations to the judgment of God. Let

them be glad. Let them sing for joy. The blessing of God when rightly understood creates joy within the heart of a man or woman. The Westminster shorter catechism opens with the statement “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and what...enjoy him forever.” Our enjoyment of him brings him glory. God blesses us because he wants us to enjoy him!

See, Our praise of God will only truly come out of our delight in God. In his reflections on the Psalms C.S. Lewis said it this way “I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation.”<sup>3</sup> Know what he’s saying? He’s saying when I enjoy Courtney’s chocolate chess pie...I can’t keep it to myself. My joy increases when I tell others because there is even greater enjoyment in the praise of the pie. It’s like angels put heaven on a crust and baked it for a few minutes. So this is an odd question but do you enjoy God? Not merely his gifts, but God himself?

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<sup>3</sup> Lewis, C. S. *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958), pp. 94-95.

The Israelites got this wrong all the time. And so do we. See at different times they took the provision of God...and started treating it like it was God. They started treating the gifts God had given them like they were a god. But the gifts were never designed to take the place of God, they were designed to point to God.

We do the same thing. We do it with big things like marriage or kids. If I can have them I will be satisfied but then I get them and they don’t satisfy that search. Were never meant to. We do it with little things like iphones. Lose it and you are like “my precious!” You sleep with it...you worship it. Do it with Body image. If I can just look a certain way then people will like me. Finding our joy in created things instead of in the creator himself. Romans 1 tells us we do it. What are you trying to find satisfaction in?

These good things, these gifts of God, never satisfy us completely because they weren’t intended to. They were intended to point us to God. And when our lives start to focus around the gifts, we either live distracted by the stuff we do have, or angry with God about the stuff we don’t have. Both detachment from God and

anger towards God are indicators you may have forgotten where your security and approval are supposed to come from.

The apostle Paul had this all figured out:

*[12] I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. [13] I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

Philippians 4.12-13

We often just use that last verse don't we? It's like our Christian phrase we slap on any inspirational moment. Athlete about to shoot a free throw...I can do all things. Single guy about to ask a girl out...I can do all things. Agreeing to watch the new "Gilmore girls" with your girl...that is of the devil I cannot do that.

But that's not the point Paul is making. Paul is saying that regardless of whether I am in a season of abundance or a season of need, he knew the secret to get through it. That the enjoyment of God alone was all he needed to be content. Don't build your identity and security on the gifts of God. Build them on God himself!

And if you do so, you will experience far more pleasure and enjoyment than you will in ANYTHING earth has to offer.

In his work *The Weight of Glory* C.S. Lewis said

If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased<sup>4</sup>

An aside to those who are feeling angry with God

In seasons where God doesn't seem close or faithful to provide those gifts, we can get angry with God. We ask WHERE ARE YOU GOD! And we shake our fist at him in our pain... Maybe you prayed like crazy for someone to

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<sup>4</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 1-2.

be healed from sickness and instead you lost them. I have been right there before. But listen, when we find ourselves in that season we must remember God's love and provision for us is fully proven in the cross. I am not minimizing your pain here, I'm trying to show you God's love for you in the midst of your pain. I know you hear me say God is a father and maybe that registers a bad connotation with you. Your father wasn't there or he was there and caused some damage. You certainly don't think blessing. Your earthly father's job according to the scripture was to point you toward your heavenly father. So maybe you got some bad directions. Some real pain. I want you to hear that God does not look at you that way. God is the father you were meant to have. And he loves you. He's demonstrated that love for you. He's come after you and he is calling after you. The deepest need you have for provision and approval is met in the cross of Christ. So you can face pain or hardship in a way no other perspective would allow you to. With joy. Men and women there is a reason we are in the Psalms for this series. The psalms are songs of worship and praise to God. This one especially. They lift our eyes and hearts up from their daily vision to gaze at the

glory of God. That is to lead us to worship! My hope for you today is that you leave enjoying your God. That like the nations your joy for your God increases. That's what God is after!

## 2. To bring about the salvation of the nations.

[2] that your way may be known on earth,  
your saving power among all nations.

[3] Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!

The psalmist can't get but one verse out before he connects the blessing of God to the mission of God. If you've been here to Mercy before, have you noticed how our worship service progresses? We sing the glories of God. We enjoy him. We hear of his grace to us and purpose for us through the preaching of his word like I'm doing now. Then sometimes we sing again or we take communion or baptize people all as an act of worship to God. Then at the end a pastor will come up in front of you. Stand you up, and declare something over you about how God is sending you into the world with this great blessing of the gospel we have in Christ. We call this the missional blessing. Usually the last words out of the pastor's mouth will be "you are sent."

This is very significant. This isn't throw away like we forgot how to say "goodbye." We are joining together each week to acknowledge and affirm the blessing of God given to us sends us into the world so that the ways of God will be known in the earth, his salvation among all nations.

Here it is. **A Christian is a missionary.** Period. Every single Christian is a missionary. Which means they proclaim God's ways among the nations. Here's what that looks like

**1. A Christian speaks the gospel message.** Do you know why? Because he or she enjoys God so much it would be emotionally unhealthy not to. Think about it...the things you really enjoy you want to share with other people because you think it will bring them joy as well. We share pictures of our kids, share our money our time; our recipes and crafts on pintrest (PS – one of my favorite things on earth. I've never used it, but my wife cooks indoor food at our house (I man the grill) and I'm pretty sure the quality of food has gone up 15% since my wife joined it.) . We share everything that brings us joy. Why wouldn't we share what brings us the deepest joy? "It will be awkward" is not a good enough excuse when eternity is on the line. That'd be

like saying I see that you are dying and I have the antidote here but...giving it to you would be really awkward. Student Ministry Analogy: (Peeing on a Jellyfish sting). Yeah its awkward but the need outweighs the awkward...so pee away.

Here's what we are getting at. **We are conduits for God's blessing, not reservoirs.** Another way to say it: The difference between rivers and lakes (explain)

Today as we speak there are 6,693 unreached people groups accounting for 3.11 Billion people in our world. 42% of world's population. An unreached people group is a grouping of people who share a common language and little to no access to the gospel.<sup>5</sup> These are the nations the blessing of God is intended to reach through us. And get this...we are one of them. You and I aren't Israel. The gospel went forward to the gentiles and now, if you are a Christian you are an answer to this prayer! That by the way is why the posture of the church must be to love and care for all peoples

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<sup>5</sup> Statistics come from [The Joshua Project](#). An excellent site for missions information and they publish a great book on the nations called "Operation World."

regardless of what they look like or what country they come from.

How can we see this joy of God, experience it, see God's design for it to go out...and not do anything? In 2 weeks we are going to introduce to you a lot of our short-term mission trips we are planning for 2017.

These are 7-10 day trips where you get to interact with church planters in a strategic location around the world who are giving their lives so that the nations will be glad and sing for joy.

We had many people go for the first time ever last year and I want you to go get your passport and fight with everything you have to get on one of those trips.

Story when I was in China. Probably the most vivid time God has done this in my life. Went to a campus with 9 college students who had 2 things: the joy of God & English. We just walked into rooms, knocked on doors, played ping-pong and shared this blessing God has given us. Listen, in about 4 weeks God saved something like 35 people. It was crazy. To our knowledge before that there was little to no Christian presence on that college campus. I was sharing with one guy who explained how he'd been in an abusive

relationship with an older man and now he felt like he couldn't do anything without this man's approval. He hated the psychological trauma he was experiencing years later. As I described the approval he was looking for he was finding in the wrong place, you could almost visibly see the Holy Spirit setting him free. And you know what emotion followed when he placed his faith in Christ? JOY! When someone sees & understands the gospel and the Holy Spirit saves them, what is their reaction every time? JOY! JOY!! Let the nations be...GLAD!! Sing for JOY!!

Christian: this is to be our disposition at all times. JOY! Not happiness that comes and goes with circumstances, but JOY!

**Every Christian is a missionary. The question is not whether you are a missionary but what kind of missionary are you?** Is sharing the gospel sharing your joy? If you hear me talking about missions and you bow up and say 'not me' then I humbly say its heart check time.

A guy named J. Campbell White said

**"Most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives. Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of**

Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ's purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans. The men who are putting everything into Christ's undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards."<sup>6</sup>

To which you should say...are you saying the only way to fully tap into this joy is to quit my job and become a missionary? Nope. In fact J. Campbell White was the leader of something called the laymen's missionary movement. It was founded in 1906 by a group of businessmen who saw what God was doing in a student missions movement and had to get in on it. Their goal was not to quit their jobs, but to get in on the mission of God by leveraging their skills to get the entire church onto the mission of God.

Here's what I'm saying. You don't have to quit your job and move overseas to experience the joy of being on

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<sup>6</sup> White, J. Campbell. Secretary of the laymen's missionary movement. cited in Piper, John. *Desiring God* ( ) 222.

God's mission. You need to go see what he's doing around the world yes, But then maybe your response is to take a day or two and get alone with God and ask him how is your life being leveraged for his great purpose of seeing his ways made known among all peoples his saving power among all nations?

The nations singing for joy is a prayer God is going to answer. In the book Revelation John describes the scene in heaven and this is what he saw

[9] After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10] and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

(Revelation 7:9-10 ESV)

### **Conclusion**

God is a good father who blesses his children with good gifts. The best of which is himself. Three questions I leave you with:

1. Have you ever surrendered your life to Christ? That is where your provision and approval are. I ask you to do that today.
2. Do you enjoy God? Or are you living as a begrudged Christian. Look back to your father who loves you. Find your joy in him.
3. What kind of missionary are you? Are you a conduit for God's blessing or a bucket just collecting it for yourself?