

Psalm 67 “A Thanksgiving Message: Thinking Rightly about God’s Blessings”\*\*

Main Idea: In Psalm 67, we learn how to think rightly about God’s blessings. We see three main points in Psalm 67.

- I. The Request for God’s Blessing (1)
  - A. We have needs.
  - B. What we need the Lord alone can provide.
- II. The Reason for God’s Blessing (2)
  - A. God blesses His people for His own glory.
    1. He wants to make His ways known.
    2. He wants to make His salvation known.
  - B. God blesses His people for the good of the nations.
    1. This was true for the nation of Israel.
    2. This is true for us.
- III. The Results of God’s Blessing (3-7)
  - A. When we view blessings rightly, we want to see the nations bless God (3-5).
    1. The nations are on God’s heart.
    2. God wants the nations to be on the hearts of His people, too.
  - B. When we view blessings rightly, we know more blessings will come our way (6-7).
    1. God doesn’t bless us so we can coast along to heaven in comfort.
    2. God blesses us so that through us He may be glorified in the world.

The Bottom Line: Two things will always be true...

1. We will always need God’s blessings.
2. We must always be willing to give God’s blessings away.

Why does God bless us? That’s a fitting question to ask ourselves, not just at Thanksgiving season, but throughout the year, for indeed, we are a blessed people.

We live in a land of abundance. Here we are today worshipping in freedom. To get here, we probably didn’t walk, but drove comfortably in cars. We’ll have plenty of food to eat today, and not just today either, for our cupboards are stocked for the days and weeks to come. We have plenty of good drinking water. We have warm clothing. We have a government that protects us as citizens. When we flip a light switch we expect the lights to come on—and they usually do. Millions (even billions) on this planet do not enjoy these blessings, but we do.

And it’s not just material blessings we enjoy. God has privileged us to have the truth of His Word. We have Bibles in our language. We can read our Bibles because we have schools where we learn. We have church buildings and Sunday School classes and good curriculum options.

And most of all, we have learned there is a Savior, and if we know Him personally, we have eternal life, and the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the fruit He alone can give—love, joy, and peace—virtues which are ours regardless of circumstances.

Who can deny that we are a blessed people? God has given us so much. But the question is, *why*? Why does the Lord bless people anyway?

I’m afraid that far too often I don’t think rightly about God’s blessings. I develop an entitlement view of His blessings, and the evidence of that wrongful thinking is what happens when He withholds the blessings, or at least withholds the particular blessings to which I think I’m entitled.

So what’s the right way to view God’s blessings? We find the answer in Psalm 67, and we’re going to put our attention on this psalm this morning.

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

Psalm 67 was written for use in Israel's public worship services. You'll note the heading, "For the director of music." God used music then and now to teach truth to His people, and to help them respond rightly to truth. And this psalm was intended to be sung, "With stringed instruments." So here's a God-inspired song that the Lord in His grace gave to His people to help them respond rightly to His blessings.

There was no question that God had blessed Israel. But why? The Spirit of God gave this psalm to the Israelites, and to us, so we'll remember where the blessings came from, and *why*. The psalm communicates three things concerning God's blessing.

- I. The Request for God's Blessing (1)
- II. The Reason for God's Blessing (2)
- III. The Results of God's Blessing (3-7)

### I. The Request for God's Blessing (1)

Verse 1 "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, Selah." Throughout the psalm the psalmist refers to "us." He asks God to do something for "us." The "us" refers to the community of Israel, the people of God. He wanted something for God's people, namely this. He wanted God's blessing.

Blessing comes from God. Blessing comes to people from God because He is gracious. The Israelites didn't deserve God's blessings any more than we do. Yet in this psalm they asked for it, and they asked in dependence upon the fact that He is indeed gracious.

In verse 1 he states his request. It's a threefold request, but in typical fashion for Hebrew poetry, the three requests are parallel. They are three ways of asking for what is in essence the same thing. *May God be gracious to us. May God bless us. May God make His face shine upon us.*

Please notice again that this isn't a prayer for personal blessing, but community blessing. The psalmist wanted God to bless His people.

So it's okay to ask for the blessing of God. God is gracious and delights in giving good gifts to His people. The truth is...

**A. We have needs.** And...

**B. What we need the Lord alone can provide.** And because He knows these two things, and because He's so kind and generous, He wants us to ask. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you (Matt 7:7)." James 1:5 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him *ask* of God." God invites us to *ask*. But He wants us to ask with a proper understanding of why He blesses.

That brings us to the second movement in the psalm. First, the request. Next...

### II. The Reason for God's Blessing (2)

Verse 2 "That [here's the reason for God's blessing] your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations." Why did God bless Israel? God never intended Israel to be a bucket, but a conduit. The blessings He sent Israel's way were a means to a greater end. He chose to bless Israel so that through Israel something would happen to the nations. He wanted to make His salvation known to the nations, His ways to the whole earth.

That was God's intent. He chose Abraham and entered a covenant relationship with Abraham and His descendants. He turned Abraham's offspring into a nation, Israel,

and gave that nation a promised land. He invited His chosen nation to ask for His blessing, a blessing He graciously granted them. Why? So the nations would hear about Him and come to know His salvation.

So why does God bless His people? We see two reasons in verse 2.

**A. God blesses His people for His own glory.** “That *your ways may be known...your salvation.*” There’s why God blesses His people.

1. *He wants to make His ways known.*
2. *He wants to make His salvation known.*

But known where? Verse 2 is very specific. *Known on earth, among all nations.* So there’s the second reason. God blesses His people for His own glory. And...

**B. God blesses His people for the good of the nations.** If God blessed Israel and His ways were known worldwide, the nations would experience His “salvation.”

That’s why God chose Israel in the first place. To be a trophy for the world to see, an object lesson so that the world could know what He is like. God wanted to bless Israel so the world could know Him.

But they did what we often do. They became *self-focused*. They wanted to hoard God’s blessings rather than see their privileged status as a means to an end.

Remember Jonah? He didn’t want to go to Nineveh and preach God’s Word. Why not? As he told God after Nineveh repented and was spared, “I knew You’d let them off the hook even though they didn’t deserve it...” As though Israel deserved God’s blessing?!

Friends, the reason for God’s blessing hasn’t changed. It’s always about His glory and the good of the nations. That’s why He blesses.

1. *This was true for the nation of Israel.*
2. *This is true for us.*

Beloved, we are a means to an end. Do we need God’s blessing? Yes. Should we ask God to bless us? Sure. But why? The request isn’t just for us. It’s ultimately for God’s sake. God blesses His people so His reputation spreads. And it’s for the nation’s sake. God blesses us so He can use us to bring His salvation to the lost nations of the world.

Remember Jesus’ words in John 15:7-8? “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, *ask whatever you wish* [i.e. ask for God’s blessing, but remember why]. This is to *my Father’s glory*, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” God blesses us so that through us He may produce world-wide fruit, all to His glory.

At this point I should remind you that God’s blessings come in various forms. God’s blessings may not always seem to be blessings at the time. God’s blessing may come in the form of a trial. Cancer. A job loss. But whatever God allows into our lives, He allows for our good and His ultimate glory. And that’s what the psalmist wanted more than anything, and so should we.

That brings us to the third movement in the psalm. First, the request—Bless us. Second, the reason—for your glory and the good of the nations. Third...

### III. The Results of God’s Blessing (3-7)

Notice the results...

Verse 3—“May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.” This is why we desire your blessing, O God. Bless us so that through us the peoples of the earth will come to know and then praise You. Yes, bless us so that ALL the peoples of the earth will praise You.

That’s why God blesses His people, my friend. Not so we can hoard the blessings to ourselves, but so that through the blessings others will become people who praise the true and living God.

Verse 4—“May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. Selah” God deserves and desires praise from Israel, yes, but not just Israel. His plan is for the nations to be glad in Him.

Verse 5 repeats verse 3—“May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.” The Hebrew: *Yo-do-cha ameem Elohim, yo-do-cha ameem coolam*. Why does God bless His people? The repetition makes the answer very clear. God blessed the people of Israel and here’s why, so that *all the peoples* would praise Him.

In verses 6-7 we see the same thought emphasized again: “Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him.” God blesses His people. The result is so that the peoples of the earth will come to know, fear, and praise Him.

So when we’re viewing God’s blessings rightly, two things happen. First...

**A. When we view blessings rightly, we want to see the nations bless God (3-5).** That’s verses 3-5. Notice who the psalmist says he wanted to see praising God. He mentions...*the peoples* (3), *all the peoples* (3), *the nations* (4), *the peoples* (4), *the peoples* (5), *and the peoples* (5). The repetition makes it pretty obvious that there was something on this godly man’s heart, something he wanted on the hearts of all God’s people. *The nations!* Lord, bless us, yes, but the reason we want that is so the nations will bless you.

But it’s not just this psalmist that says this. The rest of the Psalms are filled with this desire to see God’s fame spread through the nations.

--Psalm 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God; *I will be exalted among the nations*, I will be exalted in the earth.”

--Psalm 57:5 “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be *over all the earth*.” (repeated in verse 11)

--Psalm 65:5 “You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Savior, *the hope of all the ends of the earth*...”

--Psalm 72:17-19 “May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. *All nations will be blessed through him*, and they will call him blessed. Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. Praise be to his glorious name forever; *may the whole earth be filled with his glory*. Amen and Amen.”

--Psalm 86:9 “*All the nations you have made will come and worship* before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name.”

--Psalm 96:3 “*Declare his glory among the nations*, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.”

--Psalm 96:10 “*Say among the nations*, ‘The LORD reigns.’ The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”

--Psalm 102:15 “*The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory.*”

--Psalm 105:1 “Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; *make known among the nations what he has done.*”

--Psalm 108:3 “I will praise you, O LORD, *among the nations*; I will sing of you *among the peoples.*”

--Psalm 108:5 “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over *all the earth.*”

--Psalm 113:3 “From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.”

--Psalm 117:1 “Praise the LORD, *all you nations*; extol him, all you peoples.”<sup>1</sup>

--Psalm 145:10-12 “All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.”

But it’s not just in the Psalms that we see this emphasis on the nations blessing God. It’s throughout the Old Testament...

In 1 Kings 8 Solomon asked God to bless the temple he built. And why? 1 Kings 8:42-43 “...for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, *so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you*, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.” And in verse 60 “So that *all the peoples of the earth* may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other.”

Here’s what the prophet Malachi said, speaking for God in Malachi 1:11, “My name will be *great among the nations*, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be *great among the nations*,” says the LORD Almighty.”

We hear the same in Zechariah’s prophecy in Zechariah 8:23, “This is what the LORD Almighty says: “In those days ten men *from all languages and nations* will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’”

Now let this sink in. You can’t escape these two realities.

1. *The nations are on God’s heart.*

2. *God wants the nations to be on the hearts of His people, too.*

That’s why God chose Israel, and blessed Israel. But for the most part, Israel failed. Israel became self-focused and self-absorbed. Israel ignored the nations.

Then Christ came. He came to Israel, but not just for Israel. He said He came to be the *light of the world* (John 9:5). He said He came to give His life “a ransom payment for many” (Mark 10:45). He said, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen (John 10:16).”

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<sup>1</sup> Here’s a specific example of how the blessing of Israel was to affect the nations. Psalm 126:1-3 “When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. *Then it was said among the nations*, “The LORD has done great things for them.” The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”

And after He made His ransom payment on the cross, and then rose from the dead, He gave these instructions to His followers. “Go and make disciples *of all nations*... (Matt 28:19).” Literally, “of all the *ethne*,” the *people groups*. And, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and *to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8).”

The world needs to know that Jesus is the Savior, that He came to rescue sinners from eternal judgment in hell, that whoever believes in Him and His death on the cross and victorious resurrection, will receive the gift of eternal life.

This is why the church exists, my friend. We are not here as an end, but as a means to something much bigger than us. We don’t exist for ourselves, but for the Lord and His purposes. And His primary purpose in this age is to save people from every nation, tribe, and language for His glory.<sup>2</sup>

So why does the Lord bless us? Here’s why. He blesses *us* in order to reach *them*.

Now look again at Psalm 67, and specifically, take note of the words the psalmist used to express what he wanted the nations to do. Verse 3—praise you; verse 4—be glad and sing for joy; and verse 5—praise you.

What’s true of praise and singing? Those are activities of God’s people, of redeemed people. Pagans don’t praise the Lord. Pagans aren’t glad about the Lord. Pagans don’t sing for joy to the Lord.

Do you see what the psalmist is desiring? It’s his heart’s cry for pagan people to become God’s people. He wants to see the *peoples* praising God. The *peoples*, that’s plural. Yes, he wanted the people of Israel to praise God, but not just this one people. Indeed, he repeats this aspiration four times, twice in verse 3, “May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you,” and twice in verse 5, “May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.”

O God, You deserve our praise and we gladly give it to You. But You deserve so much more, and that’s my desire, that the *peoples will praise You*, all the peoples.

Do you share that passion?

Think of the people groups of the world, not just the people as individuals, but the *peoples*. God’s purpose is to redeem individuals from every tribe, language, people group, and nation (Rev 5:9). Our assignment, indeed our passion must be to see the peoples reached with the good news of Jesus so that the peoples will bless Jesus.

A few years ago Bart Allen was sitting in these pews. Do you know what he’s doing today? I got an email from him in September indicating he was hiking through the jungles of PNG on a survey trip. And a couple of weeks ago, another email revealed that he and his wife, Emily, and their children, are preparing to move to live with the Amdu people. Amdu means “mountain,” but this is no sight-seeing trip. Bart and his family are moving into this remote part of PNG because there are 800 language groups in that country alone, many of whom still don’t know Christ, and they’re going so the Amdu

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 10:34-35 “Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but *accepts men from every nation* who fear him and do what is right.” Romans 16:25-26 “Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, *so that all nations might believe and obey him*...”

will come to know and praise Jesus! It's going to cost them \$16,000 to 20,000 just for cargo flights into Amdu land.

According to the Joshua Project, there are 16,445 people groups in the world. Of these, 7,080 are currently unreached. To help us put some names to these numbers, let me read the Joshua Project posting, "10 Priority Unreached:" Aimaq, Taimani. Azeri Turk. Berber, Taznatit. Garre. Mazanderani. Najdi Bedouin. Pashtun, Southern. Tihami. Yemeni, Northern. Zaza-Dimli.

These ten people groups are just representative of the 7,080 where they are not yet praising the name of Jesus. *May the peoples praise You, God, may all the peoples praise You.*

Brothers and sisters, when we view God's blessings rightly, we want to see the nations, *the people groups*, praise God. But something else happens when we view God's blessings rightly.

**B. When we view blessings rightly, we know more blessings will come our way (6-7).** "Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him."

Interesting. He says it twice. *Then... God will bless us. God will bless us.*

There's a beautiful balance presented in Psalm 67 which we need to maintain. We have needs, and the world has needs. We need God's blessing, and we should seek it from Him. We need to give attention to the needs at home. We have kids to raise, doctor's bills to pay, church ministries to fund right here at home.

But we must never lose sight of the world's need. We need a Psalm 67 perspective. *God, bless us so that the nations will praise You.* We need strong ministries at home, so we can have effective ministries abroad.

In fact, chew on this truth.

1. *God doesn't bless us so we can coast along to heaven in comfort.*

That's not why He gives us more than we need. Rather...

2. *God blesses us so that through us He may be glorified in the world.*

It's fine to ask God to bless your family, your job, your efforts at home. But He doesn't want us asking for these blessings for selfish reasons. He's not a Genie in a bottle. He is God, and He doesn't bless us merely for our comfort sake, but for His name's sake, so that He will be great in all the world.

In past years (and WBC has been here since 1878) we've asked God to bless us as a church and He has. He's blessed us with wonderful people and resources. From time to time He's called on us to give away some of our people and resources for the good of the nations.

A few years ago we adopted a new policy as a church. We determined that if the Lord would call someone from our congregation into missionary service, we as their sending church should seek to take on a significant portion of their support need, a third if possible.

About ten years ago we had the privilege to do something many churches have never experienced. By God's calling and grace, He allowed us the joy of being a *sending church*. First, in 2003 the Lord privileged us to send Kristen Wawro, who had been serving here in youth outreach, so she could engage in pioneer missionary work at a university in Southeast Asia. Then in December of 2004 He blessed us with the honor of setting apart Gary and Nancy Storm for international ministry, after they had served at

Scioto Hills Camp and WBC in a host of ways for 25 years. In 2005 we sent Erin Wawro, who had served the previous seven years as our church secretary, to be part of a church planting team in south Brazil.

In each case it's been our privilege to send our people into the harvest, and to support them generously. Speaking frankly, our sinful tendency is always to want to hoard God's blessings. It's wonderful to keep God's choice servants *right here*. We benefit from the use of their spiritual gifts. But so do the nations. And so, when God calls, we must respond—indeed it's our privilege to respond—by giving away God's blessings.

That's what today's Harvest Offering is all about. This is our second annual Harvest Offering. Before we start spending money on ourselves for Christmas gifts (and there's nothing wrong with such gifts), we want to do something to put Psalm 67 into practice, to show in a tangible way that we're thinking rightly about our blessings.

Last year the Harvest Offering came to \$3,948, and we gave it to our missionaries who had lost funds with the unfortunate closing of EBM (the Storms, Dernlans, and Chambers). This year, the money received will go to the support of a new missionary in 2013. We have a solid team of faithful missionaries, but it's time to stretch ourselves and help a new missionary, preferably one working with an unreached people group.

Many of you joyfully participate in the ministry of giving. You've developed a biblical perspective on God's blessings, having learned that *God blesses us in order to reach them*. But some here have yet to learn this joy. This is an opportunity for all of us to get involved in the fellowship of the gospel.

I urge you to see the material blessings God has given you in light of His purposes. He has blessed us, not so we can keep those blessings for ourselves, but so we can partner with Him in reaching the nations. I invite each of you today to know the joy of participating in God's work to reach the nations.

The Bottom Line: Two things will always be true...

1. *We will always need God's blessings.* And so, we'll ask for it, through the merit of Christ.

2. *We must always be willing to give God's blessings away.* And as we do we, we'll join the Psalm in heart-felt prayer, "May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you."