

A Missionary's Psalm

Psalm 67

Introduction

1) Arm of the Lord, awake! Awake!
Put on Thy strength; the nations shake;
And let the world, adoring, see
Triumphs of mercy wrought by Thee!

Say to the heathen, from Thy throne,
"I am Jehovah, God alone!"
Thy voice their idols shall confound,
And cast their altars to the ground.

Let Zion's time of favour come;
O bring the tribes of Israel home;
And let our wondering eyes behold
Gentiles and Jews in Jesus' fold!

Almighty God, Thy grace proclaim
In every clime, of every name,
Till adverse powers before Thee fall,
And crown the Saviour Lord of all!
(In Faithful Witness, 46).

These words were penned in 1795 by William Shrubsole at the dawning of the modern missions movement. The hymn resounds with a number of themes found in Psalm 67, a missionary's psalm.

- 2) – Psalm 67 is anonymous
- It is part of a collection (Ps 65-68) that emphasize God's providence.
 - Here God's concern for Israel, the nations and creation finds beautiful expression.
 - The psalm is one of "blessing" that draws attention to the sovereign lordship of God.

- Some see it as a thanksgiving psalm for harvest time (v.6) that provides the basis for a worldwide witness to the mercy, blessing and goodness of the one true and sovereign God.
- The psalm is rooted in both the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12 and the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-26.
- Its missionary impulse is made clear by the fact that:
 - 1) Jew and Gentile come together to praise and fear God.
 - 2) “The nations” are mentioned 3 times.
 - 3) “The earth” is mentioned 4 times.
 - 4) “The peoples” are mentioned 5 times.
- With an identical double refrain occurring in vs. 3 and 5, it is easy to divide our psalm into 3 main movements: 1-3, 4-5, and 6-7.
- The psalmist has an undaunted confidence that God will be praised by all the peoples of the nations. What then is our role in this awesome enterprise?

I. God’s salvation must be known among the nations. **67:1-3**

- Jesus said in Luke 19:10, “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
- When God saves us, we come to know Him as He truly is. He is no longer a projection of our desires, wishes and imagination of what we want Him to be or think He should be. We now know Him as Father, Savior, and Comforter; we know Him for who and what He truly is.
- The psalmist prays that God’s salvation will be known among all nations (the last part of v.2). What do the nations need to know? What do we need to say?

1) We must tell of His mercy.**67:1**

Our God is a wonderful, loving and kind God. The Psalmist emphasizes this by praying that God will do 3 things: 1) Be merciful, 2) Bless 3) Cause your face to shine upon us. This verse draws from Aaron's blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26 which reads, "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." Verses 2-3 make clear that this blessing, originally given to Israel, is now to be expanded to encompass the whole earth and all nations.

→ "Be merciful" (NASV, "gracious") – His grace is the source of all benefits and is undeserved and unmerited. No works salvation here!

→ "Bless" – remove the effects of the curse and the Fall of Adam (Genesis 3). In contrast to deserved wrath and judgment, abundantly show your favor and goodness to us (3X!).

→ "Cause your face to shine" – Van Gemeren notes, "An Oriental monarch revealed in his facial expression either his pleasure or displeasure with the party that sought an audience with him. Similarly, God, the Great King, assures his own that he receives them and cares for them with joy." (440).

Proverbs 16:15 interestingly notes, "In the light of a king's face there is life, and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain."

Selah. Think about this.

2) We must instruct in His ways.**67:2**

- Verse 2 is a beautiful example of semantic parallelism, something quite common in Hebrew poetry. Though stated in different words, the 2 lines affirm the same truth.

- God’s blessings poured out on His covenant people will make “Your way (cf. John 14:6) known on earth. Your salvation among all nations.”
- God blesses us so that the nations will know (*yada*) His way and experience his salvation. Seeing God bless us, the nations will be drawn to come and enjoy His salvation (*yesuah*). The word carries ideas of deliverance, victory, blessing and rule in our lives. It is amazing to realize that we can, we should, pray for God’s blessing in our lives for the sake of the nations. “God bless me, but not for me, but for the nations! God bless us, but not for us, but for the nations!”

3) **We must lead in His praise.**

67:3

- The blessings of God give way to worship. But, because His salvation now extends to all the nations, all the nations join in praise.
- Verse 3 is repeated in v. 5. The phrases “the peoples” and “all the peoples” dominate the refrain.
- All the peoples praise You as their God. The phrase is repeated for emphasis and poetic effect. North and South, East and West, they praise you. Rich and poor, young and old, urban and rural, they praise you. Red and yellow, black and brown, white and any other shade of skin pigmentation praise you.
- One Hebrew aid I use literally renders v. 3 like this, “Thank you, the peoples, O God. Thank you, the peoples, all of them.”

II. **God’s righteousness must be known among the nations**

67:4-5

Our God is a great, awesome and transcendent God. He is also a God who gets involved in the world He has made. By entering into our world He reveals His character and puts on display His glory for our enjoyment. The psalmist notes 2

particular aspects of His character we should know. Hear what we should gossip about God to the nations!

1) Tell them He is a God of justice.

67:4

- The nations are encouraged 1) to be glad and 2) sing for joy. Gladness of heart and joyfulness in song should captivate our souls in worship.
- Why should we be glad in heart and sing with joy? Two reasons are given:
 - 1) You judge (*NIV*, “rule”) the people righteously (*NIV*, “justly”)
 - 2) [You] govern (*NIV*, *ESV*, *NASV*, “guide”) the nations on earth.

Here are allusions to the imagery of the Shepherd King of Psalm 23:3 who leads or guides us in the paths (the way!) of righteousness for His Names sake. This Shepherd-King of course is Jesus.

- God judges all peoples without partiality. As Peter said in Acts 10:34 when he saw the gospel convert Gentiles, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.” When God judges, there is no consideration of skin color, intelligence, nationality or place of birth.
- John Piper says, “No bribes will be considered, no sophisticated plea-bargaining. All will proceed on the basis of God’s unimpeachable righteousness” (“Let All the Peoples Praise Thee,” 11-9-86).
- There will be no “Let’s Make a Deal!” with this God.

2) Tell them He is a God of joy.

67:5

- For the 2nd time we hear the refrain of praise that all the peoples are called to shout to the one true God. The word “all” anticipates that glorious gathering in heaven around the throne of God when as Rev. 7:9-10 says, “I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes,

peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

- “The Shining Face of God” (Boice, 544) moves the peoples of the earth to exult in this great God. The praise of their lips finds its source in the joy of their hearts, a joy created there by God Himself.
- Again John Piper is helpful, “When he says, Let all the peoples praise You... he means: let all the peoples know that there is one true and living God, and let them stop serving and praising all other gods. If this were not true, if this were not the purpose of God, then missions would be the most audacious and presumptuous enterprise in the world. But if it is true, then missions is the humble response of a people who love the lost.”

III. God’s goodness must be known among the nations. 67:6-7

- The goodness of God is not limited in its scope. It has no checks and balances on its gracious abundance. The Lord blesses His people spiritually and physically, specifically and cosmically.
- This final stanza contains the only mention in the psalm of a bountiful and fruitful harvest. However, in a land where people live from day to day, where starvation is an ever present danger an abundant harvest would be the occasion for great rejoicing and celebration. It would be the evidence of the gracious blessing of God on His people, a sign to the nations that this God is the only God to trust, worship and fear.

- Indeed, the psalmist concludes with 2 crucial observations that we must make known to the nations.

1) **God desires to bless us.** **67:6**

- “Then the earth shall yield her increase.” Because the Hebrew is in the past tense, some versions translate the phrase, “The earth has yielded its produce” (*NASV*). However, this negates the pattern and flow of the passage. Further, the past tense can sometimes be used for the future, emphasizing the certainty of what will come to pass.
- Thus the psalmist can say with confidence “the earth shall yield her increase” (“give her produce”); God our God (equivalent virtually to “Jehovah”), our covenant-keeping, promise-keeping God, He will bless us.
 - What He said to Abraham in Genesis 12 He will do.
 - What He said to the nation in Deuteronomy. He will do.
 - What He said to David in 2 Samuel 7 He will do.
- Those who seek Him, trust Him, tell of Him, praise Him, and fear Him, they will be blessed by Him.

2) **God expects that we honor Him.** **67:7**

- Verse 7 begins like verse 6 ends; on the theme of God blessing His people. Once again we must not miss the crucial point: He blesses us for the salvation of the nations. Material and spiritual prosperity are not ends in themselves. God is good to us in order to be gracious to the nations, to all the ends of the earth.
- The psalmist could not be more clear. He blesses us that “all the ends of the earth will fear Him.” To know Him (v.2) is to fear Him (v. 7).

- Kidner sums it up so well, “Let God who brings much out of little and distributes it in love, bring such blessing on us as to make us, in our turn, the blessing of the world!” (237).
- So a question for all of us to consider: “How do I, at this particular time and place, play my part in the great redemptive drama to see that God, my God, is known, praised, enjoyed and feared among the nations? How do I pray? How do I give? Should I be one who goes where no man or woman has gone before?!”

Conclusion:

1) God will bless the Christian, He will bless the church, that seeks His blessing for the salvation of the unreached peoples of the world. Indeed, God is committed to bless a people who are determined to be a blessing to the nations. Psalm 67 teaches us that God-centered authentic worship is the fuel that energizes and drives a global missions passion, a global missions focus. There is every reason to believe, with great confidence, that the blessing of God will be upon a people passionate to be a blessing to the unreached peoples of the earth. By his grace, may we always be such a people.

2) I love the promise of Psalm 86:8-10, “There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations You have made shall come and worship before You O Lord, and shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous things; You alone are God.”