



December 4, 2022 - Pastor Rafael Aristy
Thankfulness for God's Blessings

Psalm 67:1-7 NIV

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—^{1b}
²so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.
³May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
⁴May the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you rule the peoples with equity
and guide the nations of the earth.
⁵May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
⁶The land yields its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us.
⁷May God bless us still,
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

This Psalm begins with a **communal benediction**, or a blessing shared by the community. This was not a concept foreign to the Israelites.

In Numbers 6, God commanded Moses to have the priests declare a blessing over His people.

Numbers 6:22-27 ²²The Lord said to Moses, ²³"Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: ²⁴"The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.⁷ So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

There are similarities. In Psalm 67, the psalmist is calling the community to invoke the blessing God had declared over them.

1 May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us

- May God display His grace and blessing.
- May God give us what we know we don't deserve.
- May God's face shine upon us.
- May God show us His face. May He turn His face towards us. May the glory and splendor of His presence be reflected in our lives. This speaks of **intimacy**.

This communal benediction is not uncommon in present day America.

"God Bless America!"

BUT- there's a difference between when we say, "God bless America," and when the Israelites said "God bless us."

- "God bless America" often carries the undertone of "God, GIVE **ME** STUFF!"
- It has a sense of "God I want what you have **FOR ME**, but don't show me your face." It's wanting what someone can offer **WITHOUT RELATIONSHIP**.

"Pronouncements of blessing and cursing in the Pentateuch (includes the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) were powerful and efficacious. Such pronouncements were actions rather than simply speeches. They had the power to change situations and to alter circumstances. Their meaning and their effect varied from one situation to another, though generally blessing led to success and cursing brought disaster. The effects of blessing included fertility, prosperity, authority, and security."

- Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch

We equate **BLESSINGS** with **STUFF**, but they are **NOT** only material things.

- It includes God causing you to prosper physically, emotionally, spiritually; things we cannot always see.
- It includes God displaying His authority. Remember, He is in control.
- It includes His protection, ability to have children, for the ground to produce what we need, etc.

When God's people are singing, praying, or saying "God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause Your face to shine upon us", there is a connection with them invoking God's blessing here and God's covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3 "The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

God promises blessing to Abraham but it's **NOT** just for Abraham, it's **NOT** just for the Jews

- "I will bless you and **ALL PEOPLES** on the earth will be blessed through you."
- Remember the phrase "I am blessed to be a blessing." That's what this looks like!

In Psalm 67, God's people are calling for God's blessing with a **PURPOSE**.

This moves from communal to **UNIVERSAL**, from bless our community to bless **ALL the NATIONS** of the earth!

Why do we ask God to bless us?

So that HIS WAY may be KNOWN on the earth, His SALVATION would be KNOWN among the NATIONS! The **WAY** of the Lord becomes known to the **NATIONS** when they observe the way God interacts with us.

In blessing us, God shows who He is. **YOUR** blessing gives purpose to the mission. The purpose of us being blessed is for others to **KNOW** who Jesus is and what his like.

The Israelites are pointing to Yahweh. We should live to always to point the lost to Jesus!

- He delivered you; He can deliver the nations.
- He healed you; He can heal the nations.
- He provided for you; He can provide for the nations.

We should live
our lives *always*
pointing the lost
to Jesus!

3 May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

5 May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

The psalmist repeats the exact same phrase in both verses. This is the GOAL and the reason we are blessed, that the peoples of the earth would **PRAISE Yahweh!** May Jesus receive the fruit of His suffering!

4 May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity (fairness) and guide the nations of the earth.

NASB translates the word equity as "fairness." Yet, fairness is in the eye of the beholder. This is not how God operates.

Matthew 5: 45 "that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

This may seem unfair to us, but even evil people benefit from the blessings we receive from the Lord. The psalmist states that the nations will be glad and sing for joy because of His fair judgement and guidance.

Our God is the judge, and He is the Righteous Judge!

- Because the nations have experienced the injustice of the rulers of this world, when they begin to know the way of our God, they will rejoice.
- The nations will rejoice because of the display of God's character and nature, and His dealings with us reflect this truth.
- Not only does our God judge with fairness, He also provides guidance.
- Not only does God use leaders (like Moses), and His written word to lead us, He also guides us Himself by His Spirit.

The psalm concludes in the same manner it began, but with a subtle difference.

6 The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us.

7 God blesses us, So that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

The first verses sound more like a prayer.

- "God, may you be gracious and bless us."

The later verses sound more like a testimony.

- "God, our God, blesses us!"

WE are a blessed people!

- Do you sleep in a safe, comfortable bed? You are blessed!
- Do you brush your teeth with running water? You are blessed
- Do you drink coffee? You are blessed!
- Do you have a Bible in your language? You are blessed!

God, you have *blessed* us!

Make us a *blessing* to others!

When we gather together to worship Jesus, it's a celebration of God's blessings!

Reflection/discussion questions:

- PR reminded us that, in the Old Testament, the use of the word "blessings" was not just regarding money or things you can tangibly see and feel. It included protection, God's authority/sovereignty, and peace or joy when it doesn't make sense. Is this the definition of "blessings" that you use?
- This Psalm reminds us that God blesses us for a purpose. What is that purpose?
- How has He blessed you tangibly and could you see purpose outside of your own well-being for why He blessed you the way He did?
- What is Holy Spirit saying to you from this message?