

The Purpose of Blessing

2026-08-16 – Psalm 67

Why does God bless us? Why do we ask God to bless us? Many simply want creature comforts in this life. We want health, wealth, and prosperity, and God is the private patron who will fulfill our consumeristic desires. Our natural inclination is to ask for and receive blessings for our own narrow enjoyment. No doubt, it is not wrongheaded to ask God to alleviate our suffering in sickness, to provide financially for our families and our churches, to give work opportunities, to give life to infertile wombs, and to bless us materially and spiritually. But we tend to confine the purpose of these blessings to our small, self-contained lives. Psalm 67 collides with such a limited, me-centered vision of blessing. Instead, the purpose of blessing was not for inward possessions. It was for an outward mission. As the Psalmist prays, “God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us—That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.” Why does the Psalmist want God to bless them? For this grand purpose: that God’s way may be known on the earth and his salvation among the nations. Blessings are not ultimately for me. Blessings are ultimately for God’s glory and the salvation of the world.

Good morning church.

This morning for our call to worship we will be reading from the Psalms again, going to Psalm 10, verses 1 through 11. So if you would please stand for reading of God’s Word as you are able.

“Why do you stand afar off, O Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? In pride, the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted. Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire, and the greedy man curses and renounces the Lord. The wicked in the haughtiness of his countenance does not seek him. All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’ His ways prosper at all times. Your judgments are on high out of his sight. As for all his adversaries, he snorts at them. He says to himself, ‘I will not be moved; throughout all generations I will not be in adversity.’ His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression. Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness. He sits in the lurking places of the villages. In the hiding places he kills the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate. He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair. He lurks to catch the afflicted. He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net. He crouches, he bows down, and the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones. He says to himself, ‘God has forgotten. He has hidden his face. He will never see it.’” (Psalm 10:1–11)

Verse 12: ***“Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand.”*** (Psalm 10:12)

This is the word of the Lord.

Pastoral Prayer

Good morning, brothers and sisters in Christ, and greetings, friends. My name is Jacob Lewis, and I've had the joy of serving this summer as a pastoral intern with Christ the King and the Formed Baptist Church. We come now to our pastoral prayer, so I ask that you please bow your head and pray with me.

Heavenly Father God, we thank you so much that we have this Sunday to gather together and praise you. Lord, we thank you so much that you've been faithful to us even when we've been a faithless people. God, this morning you gave us mercy; you gave us life. Lord, we thank you. We love and we cherish you, God. We thank you for our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Because were it not for him, our poor prayers would never make it before your throne. God, we pray to you today with confidence in Christ that our prayers are made sweet like honey before your ears. Father, we confess that we haven't lived this week without sin, though. We confess with broken hearts that our efforts to please you fall short of your glory. We confess that we are haunted by sin, and we cast ourselves away from your presence on our own righteousness. But Father, we also confess that your love is far greater than these things. We joyfully confess, too, that we are holy children, a royal priesthood. We joyfully confess that there is nothing that could separate us from the love of Christ—not our works, not our circumstances, nothing. God, we are yours and you are ours forever. Help us, Father, please, to be strong in faith, that we might not please the flesh even for a moment, and strengthen our weak knees this week and help us now, God, as we pray.

I ask, Father, that you would bless the preaching for this upcoming fall season. Lord, we marvel at the preaching of your word. Your word has to come as bread to our souls and light to our dark hearts. Please, Father, let your word come forth with power and the Holy Spirit with full conviction. We need you to bless our preaching, God, for it's you that we seek. Lord, please, we are a weary people. We are a needy and forgetful people. So please, Father, please, let the preaching of your word cause us to remember your holy promises to us. Let us bring you glory and joyful hearts at the hearing of your word. I ask, Father, that you bless today's preaching by Pastor Stephen. Father, please bless it and make it fruitful that we may rejoice today at hearing your word. Help him to proclaim the wonderful mysteries of your word with reverence. And I ask, God, that his preaching be empowered by the Holy Spirit. May we who hear his preaching listen with worshipful and reverent hearts to you. Let us be hearers filled with awe and dedicate our devotions to you upon this preaching of your word. May we all be encouraged by the preaching of your word and act, Father. As we hear your word, help us also to do it. God, as we are made bare and naked before your very eyes, let us not hide from you. As we hear your word, let us not hide from you, God, but convict us of our sin, Father, that we no longer live in sin unforsaken. God, I thank you for Pastor Stephen and your blessing upon his ministry. Please bless it this service this morning. Please, Lord.

I ask, Father, that you bless our combined services with Christ the King of Formed Baptist Church and Cornerstone Church. God, we cannot express enough the joy that it has been to meet and gather with our brothers and sisters every Sunday, every single Sunday this summer. And we are thankful to you, God. We are so thankful that you made our fellowship rich and fruitful. We are reminded by this summer that we pray through a God who hears, a Father who listens and acts according to his holy discernment. Help us please, Father, lean on you as we ought to. Help us lean on you as we continue to gather in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and let love abound in this church. Please, Lord, let love abound in this church in right worship in your presence. Please continue to help and guide us as we gather here.

I ask, Father, that you abolish abortion. Lord, abolish it completely in this nation. We grieve the countless numbers of babies murdered in this nation. And our nation is being covered in this innocent blood, Father, Lord, so many babies being murdered, not even given a name, not a care for their life. Please, let us not be a people who do nothing about it. But help us to wage war against this national evil, God. You've given us the truth. Love rejoices in the truth, God. Are we not to share the truth with those who seek to murder their children? For those poor women who are being

convinced by their boyfriends and husbands to kill their babies. God, help us. Help us to preach the truth in love. Let the wicked men and women who murder these precious ones be restored by the mercy of Christ and seek with us to destroy abortion. Let those who continue to act wickedly and kill more babies be held accountable for every precious baby murdered. God, abolish abortion in this nation and destroy the evildoers who continue to ravage these innocent humans. Please, God, end this abortion. Please, Father, please.

I ask, Father, that you save our leaders and politicians of this nation. God, we long to see our leaders submit to your authority and lead this nation to do likewise. May you please bring laborers who minister to our leaders, and may they taste and see that the Lord is good. Help us, Father, to continually lift up our leaders in prayer, knowing that in Christ you hear and answer, save and preserve their souls in Christ, and let them be a light to our local communities. Our leaders lead this nation, Lord. Help them lead this nation in a godly manner, that our nation we can truly proclaim as Christian. Lord, please, save this nation. Save our leaders, save our people. Save them, God, that we may be a nation that prays for the other nations. Please, Lord.

God, we thank you for hearing our prayers. Help us to live in a manner worthy of your calling and help us to pray. Holy Spirit, keep us from a deceitful time. We love and adore you, and we say all this in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

Message

Grace and peace to you. Would you please rise and open in your Bibles to Psalm 67? We are continuing our way through the book of the Psalms this summer, and we find ourselves in Psalm 67. Psalm 67 this morning. Keep your Bibles open as we read this together. I'm reading from the NASB 95. Hear now the word of the living God from Psalm 67.

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us— Selah.

That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.

Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah.

Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.

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

God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him. (Psalm 67:1–7)

This is the word of the living God. Amen. You may be seated.

Join me now in a word of prayer.

My gracious God, we do pray that you would keep us from a self-contained life, a narrow-minded, myopic life. Lord God, help us to be those like fountains brimming and overflowing with generosity to the nations. I pray, Father, that we as individuals and we here as a church would be those who have a great concern that your name, God, above all things would be glorified among the world. So we pray, Father, for this deep passion in our hearts. We ask all this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Well, in many ways we live in a post-Christian secular society, and because of that many Christian words are being replaced by secular words. You can think of the idea of sin as being replaced with dysfunction, or BC or before Christ—scholars want to now use BCE or before Common Era. I could think of husband and wife as now being replaced by the word partner. But there is one word I think that still maintains its mainstream popularity. And that word is the word “blessed.” We still say “God bless you.” We still say “count your blessings.” We still say “have a blessed day.” And you still see this on social media everywhere posted: hashtag blessed.

The problem is not so much that the word has been replaced with a secular word. The problem is that that word has been reduced to simply mean material private wealth and prosperity and health. You get a new girlfriend, you say, “I’m blessed.” You get a job promotion, you say, “I’m blessed.” You get a nice house and a picturesque Hallmark family and you say, “#blessed.” And you reduce blessings entirely to our private and personal well-being. Well then, what is the blessing? Why does God bless us?

Well, Psalm 67 collides with such a narrow, me-centered, materialistic view of blessing. What we see in this Psalm is that the purpose of blessing is not mainly for inward possession. The purpose of blessing is for outward mission. Blessings are not ultimately for me. Blessings are ultimately for God’s glory and the salvation of the world.

And that's the main point we're going to look at this morning. It's simply this: **God blesses us so that God may be known among the nations.**

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And we'll consider this in two points. There's two controlling questions. First of all, what is a blessing? What is that actually? What is that? So the nature of blessings. And then why does God bless us? What is the purpose of that? The purpose of blessings.

I. The Nature of Blessings (vv 1, 6)

So here's the first point: the nature of blessings. Look at this Psalm. It opens and it closes with blessing. It says, **"God be gracious to us and bless us"** (Psalm 67:1), and then go down to verse 6 and verse 7: **"God, our God, blesses us... God blesses us"** (Psalm 67:6-7). So the crucial question we need to ask is, what does it mean for God to bless us? Is that purely about material, earthly, prosperity?

Now if you look at the psalm, we can't escape the fact that earthly prosperity is a blessing from God. That's true. It would be a disservice to this text if we take out that concept of earthly blessing. Look at verse 6. It says, **"The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us"** (Psalm 67:6). So we can't immediately spiritualize this text. The psalmist has in mind here that God has given them rain and produced a crop, this overflow of crops. And if you think about it in an agrarian context where famine is a real threat, crops is a rich blessing. That's a good thing. So when the psalmist prays and asks, **"God, be gracious to us and bless us"** (Psalm 67:1), he is asking that God would bless him with abundant harvests, that God would bless him with earthly prosperity.

So then the question arises, doesn't that mean the main application of this text is to ask God to bless us with material prosperity? God, let the reins of your earthly prosperity fall on us. God, let us reap and sow, sow and reap, and reap the harvest of financial gain. Isn't that the application of this text? This is what Kenneth Copeland—this is a prosperity preacher—this is what they do. Listen how he applies it. He says, **"Maybe you're waiting for a financial harvest, a breakthrough in a relationship or healing and restoration in your body or emotions. Whatever it is, if your harvest is taking longer than you've anticipated, God's word and his promises are true. So hold on, harvest is coming."** So if the psalmist prayed and expected earthly blessing, why can't we do a one-to-one correlation and pray for earthly blessing like that today?

So do you see the problem here? Do you see the hermeneutical challenge that we have? Well, to answer this question, we have to look beyond just isolated text. We have to let the rest of Scripture help us to understand this. And in particular, we have to think about the New Testament in relation to the Old Testament. How does God draw people to himself in the Old Testament versus the New Testament? How does that work? In both cases, God has a missionary purpose to reach all peoples, but the method changes. And I call it, there is a funnel principle in the Old Testament and there is a fountain principle in the New Testament.

So here is this first subpoint. **The Old Testament has a funnel principle that emphasizes earthly blessings.** You have to understand this, right? On the one hand, we must not say that the Old Testament is purely

about physical blessings. That's an oversimplification. The saints of the Old Testament church understood that spiritual blessings were primary. Just think about how the book of Psalms starts. What's the very first verse, chapter 1, verse 1? **"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked"** (Psalm 1:1). Does it say that? How blessed is the man who is rich? No. Or chapter 32 verse 1: **"How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven"** (Psalm 32:1). Or in the beginning of this psalm, we see this in verse 1, the very first blessing that he asks for is what? **"God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us"** (Psalm 67:1). Cause His face to shine upon us. You can discern someone's attitude not by looking at their shoulders or their abdomen or their knees. You can discern someone's attitude by what? Looking at their face. The face conveys emotion. And in here, the psalmist is saying that God's face—he doesn't want God's face to turn away in anger or in disgust or in rejection. He wants God's face to shine. He wants God's face to light up. He wants God's face to have this glowing smile. So the very first blessing that the psalmist asks for is a happy and favorable relationship with God.

So we can't be overly simplistic and say, well, the Old Testament is exclusively about physical blessings, and the New Testament is exclusively about spiritual blessings. That's too much of a rigid thing. But still, at the same time, neither would it be true to ignore how much the emphases differ between the Old Testament and the New Testament. We have to understand that Jesus says, **"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you"** (Matthew 5:11). Peter says if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness you are blessed. James says, **"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial"** (James 1:12). Paul says God has blessed us not with every earthly blessing, but with what? **"With every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"** (Ephesians 1:3). So clearly the Old Testament has a different emphasis than the New Testament. And the question is, why is that? Why does the Old Testament so highlight earthly blessings?

We have to remember that in the Old Testament context, Israel was a theocratic monarchy. God's people were a physical descendant, a physical people in a physical location. And Israel, the land of Israel, was meant to picture the Garden of Eden restored. The kingdom of Israel was meant to foreshadow heaven on earth. They were meant to physically display a life unaffected by the brokenness of sin and death. And so what does that mean? It means blessings in the Old Testament and the Old Covenant context were linked with the physical well-being of the nation. And by being a nation marked by righteousness and prosperity, they were meant to attract people to them and worship the true God. Their earthly blessings were meant to show that the God of Israel was superior than all the other false gods of the other nations. So God blessed them with physical health and long life, prosperity and possessions, fertility and children, military victory and peace, rain and harvest. Why? So that Israel would be the center of gravity. And that all the people of the nations would funnel into Israel to worship the true God. So the Old Testament has this funnel principle that emphasizes earthly blessings.

Now why is that distinct from the New Testament? Well here's the second point. **The New Testament has a fountain principle going out, a fountain principle that emphasizes spiritual blessings.** We have to understand, in the New Testament, the church is not a physical nation-state that you can point to on a map and say that's where the church is, right there in that nation. The church is a spiritual entity that worships God in spirit and in truth. Remember what Jesus said to the woman, the Samaritan woman at the well. What does he say in John chapter 4? He said, **"An hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth"** (John 4:21, 23). Meaning you don't need to make a pilgrimage to the Mount

Zion there in Jerusalem. You don't have to become a descendant of the Jewish people. The church is a spiritual entity.

So then in the Old Testament, you have the funnel principle. God gave them earthly blessing so that it would attract the nations. In the New Testament, we see a fountain principle where the church would pour out into the world and spread spiritual blessings through the gospel. Remember, Jesus Christ doesn't say, "Nations, come and become disciples of the church." Jesus Christ says, "Church, what? Go." Yeah, **"Go and make disciples of all the nations"** (Matthew 28:19). Because of that, the New Testament does not emphasize earthly blessings. God does not promise the church earthly blessings to attract the nations. God promises to give the church spiritual blessings to empower their outreach.

So when we ask God to bless us today, it should not exclusively or even primarily be about earthly blessings. We can and we should pray, obviously, for physical healing, financial stability, job employment, fertility, children. And we can and should thank God for every earthly blessing that He gives us. That's a good thing to do. Jesus Christ still tells us to pray, **"Give us this day our daily bread"** (Matthew 6:11). So we're not agnostics; we're not rejecting the material lives. But still, in our context and redemptive history, the funnel principle is replaced with a fountain principle, and earthly blessings are relativized by spiritual blessings, which means what?

Here are three applications of this first point. One, **we need to value spiritual blessings more than earthly blessings**. In the New Testament, again, material prosperity is radically relativized by spiritual blessings. Consider, for example, your health. What does Paul say in 1 Timothy 4:8? He says, **"For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come"** (1 Timothy 4:8). So you see the greater, the greater thing here is godliness. Or think about when it comes to wealth. This is Jesus Christ speaking in Matthew 6:19–20. He says, **"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal."** (Matthew 6:19–20).

Earthly blessings are relativized in the New Testament and they are so relativized that you can line up every possible earthly blessing right in front of you—every treasure, every pleasure, all the beauties of all creation—and compared to the blessing of Jesus Christ, all of it is trash. What do I get? That comes from Paul himself. What does Paul say in Philippians chapter 3? He says, **"I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ"** (Philippians 3:8). Over and over again, the New Testament radically relativizes temporal earthly blessings. In fact, Christ even demands that we be willing to sacrifice the pursuit of earthly blessings for the sake of our spiritual good. What do you think he meant when he said in Matthew 16:25, **"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"** (Matthew 16:25)? He's asking, are you willing to suffer financial loss? Are you willing to suffer relational hurt? Are you willing to suffer, yes, even bodily pain? Are you willing to give up your earthly life with all the comforts and pleasures and fame and fortune for the sake of eternal life later? If you value earthly blessings more than spiritual blessings, then you do not know what it means to follow Christ. Do you value spiritual blessings more than earthly blessings?

Here's the second point of application here. **Recognize the spiritual danger of earthly blessings**. Not only is it relativized, but also the New Testament warns and cautions against the pitfalls of health, wealth, and

prosperity. Again, this is not because God's earthly blessings are intrinsically evil. I'm not here calling you and saying you've got to make a vow of poverty. It's not necessarily good to be poor either. You can be poor and very greedy and very envious. It's true. Neither am I saying you should neglect bodily health. That's completely not what I'm trying to get across here. Health and wealth can be used for good. That's absolutely true. And we see that all throughout the Bible. The problem is not earthly blessings in itself. The problem is our sinful hearts can make earthly blessings into an idol. Our sinful hearts can make earthly blessings our source of security so that we no longer depend upon God.

This is what Jesus said in Mark 4:18–19. Notice the danger of earthly blessings. He says, ***“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful”*** (Mark 4:18–19). Think about the thorny ground of America. Or think about Revelation 3:17. He's talking to a church here. He says, ***“For you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked”*** (Revelation 3:17). Do you see the danger here? The comforts of this life can make you think less and less of eternity. Perfect health will make you never contemplate death or your standing before God. Prosperity can deplete any sense of dependence where we say, “God, I need you. I need you today. I need you to strengthen me.” Do you understand that abundance can suffocate our souls and riches can bankrupt our hearts? Earthly blessings have the great risk and potential of causing spiritual loss.

But now here's the third point of application. **Recognize the spiritual blessings of earthly loss.** In God's economy, not only can earthly blessings bring spiritual loss, but earthly loss can bring spiritual blessings. This is a remarkable thing. I don't know what earthly loss you have this morning, whatever type of suffering you are going through, whether it's chronic sickness or physical disability or the death of a loved one or poverty and unemployment or infertility and miscarriage. The question is, what does God do with that? Well, he can use earthly loss for your spiritual good. He uses suffering to wake us up from spiritual slumber. I wonder how many testimonies in this sanctuary begin with sorrow and loss. How often do people come to Christ only once God breaks them and takes absolutely everything away from them? Isn't that true? C.S. Lewis, he said, ***“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”***

God can even use earthly loss to purify our hearts to treasure God above all things. We so often don't want God. We want things from God. We want escape from pain. We want a happy, functional family. And we say, “God, we go to you to meet those ends. God, you are the means to those ends.” And even in heaven, what fascinates us and draws us most is what? A never-ending life and a glorified body, or the reunion that we have with our Christian family members, or maybe it's a disappearance of depression and anxiety, and we treat God like Amazon, like his delivery mechanism to get you stuff. And we don't want God himself. So then what does God do? He takes away friends, he takes away spouses, he takes away respectability, he takes away money, he takes away health, he takes away all your earthly blessings, and in the midst of it with no prosperity, no wealth, no health, he teaches you to say, “God is enough. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” He teaches you the treasure of God above all things.

And even more than that, earthly loss can bring us into closer fellowship to Jesus Christ. This is what Paul calls in Philippians chapter 3 the fellowship of his sufferings. Suffering has a unique potential of drawing us closer to the presence of Christ.

There was a teenager, her name was Joni Eareckson Tada. Maybe you've heard of her, Joni Eareckson Tada. And when she was a teenager, she got in this terrible accident and she became paralyzed from the shoulders down. She became a quadriplegic and the rest of her life confined in a wheelchair. And early on during that injury, the first two years or so, she suffered with depression, with suicidal ideation, with bitterness, with anxiety. But then she learned that she gained sweeter personal knowledge and sweeter personal communion with Christ by suffering that injury. And she talks about discovering this truth for the first time. She's sitting down speaking to a firefighter who lost both hands to a blaze, and she's sitting in front of him at a diner. And this is what she tells him to encourage him. She says,

"He's—or that's Christ—Christ has been there. He understands." The fireman's gaze held mine, me cheerful and sincere, he disbelieving and with scorn lining his tired mouth. "So he understands. Big deal. What good does that do me?" I answered as honestly as I knew how. "I don't know all the answers, and I'm not sure if I did that it would help. But I do know the one who has the answers." A long pause, his gaze lowered. "And knowing him makes all the difference." I then shocked myself by saying for the first time since my accident, "I'd rather be in this chair knowing him than on my feet without him."

She gained a deeper knowledge and fellowship with Jesus Christ through her suffering so much so that she says, "I'd rather be in the chair with Christ than without him." So I don't know what chair of suffering you're sitting on this morning, but even that God uses to bless you spiritually. He does it to wean you from the world. He does it to prepare you for glory. He does it to make you dependent upon God. God can use earthly loss to bless you spiritually.

So then what is the nature of blessings? Yes, earthly blessings are good gifts from God that we should pray for and thank him for. That's absolutely true, but we need to learn to also ask primarily for spiritual blessings. God does not promise you earthly blessings, but he does promise the church spiritual blessings.

II The purpose of blessings (vv 2-5,7)

So here's the second point. What do we do with that? What is the purpose of blessings? Here's the second point: **the purpose of blessings**. We turn this morning to our main idea. Why does God bless us? Well, God blesses us so that God may be known among the nations. Look at verse 1: "**God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us**" (Psalm 67:1). Why? Verse 2: "**That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations**" (Psalm 67:2). Go down to verse 7: "**God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him**" (Psalm 67:7). Why does God bless Israel? Why does God bless churches? Why does God bless you individually? The psalmist does not say God blesses us so that we can have an increased

standard of living. He does not say God blesses us so that we may have an easy life here on earth. The psalmist does not say that the purpose is for God to bless us so that we can hoard possessions. God blesses us why? So that God's way may be known among the earth, so that His salvation may be known in all the nations, so that His name may be feared. The ultimate purpose of God blessing us is so that God will be made known and glorified. And glorified among whom? Glorified among ourselves? Well, notice what the Psalm says. It does not say a single word about Israel or about the hills of Mount Zion, or about Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, or Mount Sinai. It has nothing to do with Israel. Look at this text. Look how far and wide this psalm stretches. Verse 2: *"that Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations"* (Psalm 67:2). Verse 3: *"Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You"* (Psalm 67:3). Verse 4: *"Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth"* (Psalm 67:4). Verse 7: *"God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him"* (Psalm 67:7). The scope is not restricted to Israel. The scope is all humanity to the ends of the earth. One commentator called this the missionary Psalm. Another called this an evangelistic tract to the peoples. The reason God blesses us is so that through us God may be known among the nations. Israel's blessings, their blessings were not an end in itself. It was not simply so that they could enjoy life. It was for the greater purpose of God's global mission.

So then, what do we do with this? Here's three more points of application. One, *do you have an inward or outward mindset of blessings?* How do you think about that? How often do we ask God, "God bless us, heal me of this sickness, give me this promotion, give me a spouse, give me a nice house, God bless me." Even spiritually we ask, "God, give me wisdom. Give me greater holiness. God, give me empowerment by the Spirit. God, give me peace of soul." Why? For what purpose? What is the motive? Why do you ask for these blessings?

In James chapter 4, verse 3—I think it's a good New Testament text in comparison to Psalm 67. It says, *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures"* (James 4:3). This is a problem with so much of our prayer lives, isn't it? That we ask for our own pleasures. We want God to give us more earthly blessings simply for our own selves. Augustine describes this selfishness as the core of human depravity. He says, *"Humanity is curved in on himself."* We are curved in. You think about the Lord of the Rings, you think about Gollum. We become little Gollums, so small, so curved into ourselves with hunched backs, and we become obsessed with the tiny possessions we clutch in our hands. So much so that we can even ask with sincerity, with fervor, with persistence. We can ask God, "I will not let you go unless you bless me," and all that be driven by selfish desire. We are curved in ourselves and this Psalm is trying to get us out of ourselves. God is meant to be the great chiropractor. He's meant to straighten our backs and make us look outward into the world. We are not meant to confine our prayers to us and our little lives here. We are not meant to confine our blessings to our little church here at 2 Shermer Road. And all the earthly and spiritual blessings we have and that we pray for, there must always be this wider panorama in mind. We must think of blessings with a missionary logic. We tend to use God and people to get blessings for ourselves when instead we should use blessings to glorify God and to reach the lost. Listen to Charles Spurgeon and how he describes this. He says, *"As showers which first fall upon the hills afterwards run down in streams into the valleys, so the blessing of the Most High comes upon the world through the church. We are blessed for the sake of others as well as ourselves."* So do you have an outward mindset of blessings?

Here's the second one. **Do you view earthly blessings as a means to make God known?** Now again, I'm not saying we should all become foreign missionaries. I'm not saying we should become impoverished. I'm not saying you cannot enjoy the things of this life, like food and vacations and dates with your wife and sports. But I am asking, do you view your earthly blessings with a purpose of making God known among the nations?

What is the logic behind your prayers? Think about what Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verses 10–11. He said this: ***“Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in every way for all liberality”*** (2 Corinthians 9:10–11). You will be enriched in every way to do what? To gain more stuff, to live in luxurious wealth, to get more earthly possessions? Why does he enrich you? Well, Paul says you are enriched in every way to be generous in every way. As Randy Alcorn wrote, he said, ***“When God provides more money, we often think this is a blessing. Yes, but it would be just as scriptural to think this is a test.”*** If God prospers you with earthly blessing, the question is, will you spend it on yourself and your own passions, your own pleasures, or will you spend them for the sake of others, for the sake of making God known among the nations? Again, to quote Randy Alcorn, he says, ***“God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.”***

So whenever we pray for an earthly blessing, may it always be with God's mission in mind. God, bless me with health—why? So that I can continue laboring for your kingdom. God, give me this promotion—why? So that I can be even more generous, more charitable to those around me. God, increase the budget of the church—why? So that we can send more missionaries to the unreached. God bless us—why? That your name may be known among the earth. So do you view earthly blessings as a means to make God known?

And then lastly, **do you view spiritual blessings as a means to make God known?** We can so easily reduce Christian lives, our Christian lives, to this self-centered spiritual well-being. It's all about my own peace of soul. It's all about my own personal growth and godliness. It's all about my marriage and my family. And we can reduce Christianity into this spiritualized self-help so that you can have this nice life. We come to church to get our fill of good spiritual blessings simply for ourselves. But not only should material and earthly blessings be used for God's kingdom, so too does God bless you spiritually for the sake of others. Why do you want to get peace from all your anxiety? Why do you want to be empowered by the Spirit? Why do you want to increase in biblical and theological knowledge? Why do you want to grow in your spiritual gifts? Why do you want to be more holy? Well, one critical reason should be: I want to be a more effective weapon in the hands of God for the sake of his kingdom. I want spiritual blessings for God's sake and for others.

For example, why does God give you spiritual gifts? God does bless you with spiritual gifts. Why does he do that? For your self-promotion? He does it for others. Listen to 1 Corinthians 12:4–7. He says, ***“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”*** (1 Corinthians 12:4–7). Why does God bless you with Holy Spirit power? So He gives you this bold and courageous God? He does it for others. Listen to Acts 1:8. God blesses the apostles; he says, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth”*** (Acts 1:8).

Why should we even seek greater personal holiness? Well, one of the reasons should be that I could be more effective for God. Listen to 2 Timothy 2:21: ***“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work”*** (2 Timothy 2:21). Even your holiness is meant to be for others.

Robert Murray M’Cheyne, who’s this great, wonderful preacher—his biography is amazing—he would have framed his own holiness in terms of God’s kingdom and the mission. He would say, *“It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus.”* He says *a holy minister is an awful or awesome weapon in the hand of God.* And he says *“The greatest need of my people is my own holiness.”* So he doesn’t just think “I need to be holy so that I can be holy.” He thinks “I need to be holy so I can be a sharp, fierce sword in the hand of God.” So do you understand then that your spiritual blessings are meant to be for others, even as a church here this morning? We should pray for good spiritual things, not for our own sakes, but for the sake of God making his name known among the nations. Why should we pray together, “God, bless the fellowship between Christ the King and Cornerstone Church”? Why should we pray, “God, bless us with spiritual unity and love for one another”? Why do we pray, “God bless us that way”? Is it so that God we can have a bigger budget? Is it so that we can have more volunteers for our ministries? Is it so that we can keep the lights on and the pews filled? Why do we pray for God to bless our church here? Well, it should always be “God bless us so that your way may be made known in the Chicagoland area and to the end of the earth.” It should be “God bless us because we believe we can do far more for your mission as one body than two separate bodies. God bless us with earthly and spiritual blessings. Why? So that pastors may be raised up, so that churches may be planted, so that missionaries may be sent out, so that Christ’s name and God’s name may be known.” How do you pray for the blessings of God? I plead with you to have that missionary logic that you can say, “God bless us that your way may be known among the earth.”

Join me now in a word of prayer.

Gracious God, help us not to be so insular and self-focused and narrow-minded. Help us not to be hoarders of your blessings. God, we pray that even both our material and spiritual blessings would be used not for our own sakes, but for your glory and for the salvation of the world. We pray this in Jesus’ holy name. Amen.

Benediction

We’ll go with this word, this benediction from Numbers chapter 6 verses 24 to 26.

“The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24–26)

Amen. Amen.

Scripture References in Order Mentioned or Quoted

Psalm 10:1–11
Psalm 10:12
Psalm 67:1–7
Psalm 67:1
Psalm 67:6–7
Psalm 67:6
Psalm 1:1
Psalm 32:1
Psalm 67:1
Matthew 5:11
James 1:12
Ephesians 1:3
John 4:21, 23
Matthew 28:19
Matthew 6:11
1 Timothy 4:8
Matthew 6:19–20
Philippians 3:8
Matthew 16:25
Mark 4:18–19
Revelation 3:17
Philippians 3 (fellowship of his sufferings)
Psalm 67:1
Psalm 67:2
Psalm 67:7
Psalm 67:2
Psalm 67:3
Psalm 67:4
Psalm 67:7
James 4:3
2 Corinthians 9:10–11
1 Corinthians 12:4–7
Acts 1:8
2 Timothy 2:21
Numbers 6:24–26