



## The Psalms (Part 8) – A Blessing That Overflows

Trevor Joy – July 14, 2019

---

If you came in after the welcome, my name is Trevor Joy. I'm one of the pastors and elders here. I'm excited. We get to continue this morning in the series we've been in all summer in the Psalms. Today, we're going to be in Psalm 67. If you are just jumping in with us and joining us, I want to take a moment, because as I talked about earlier, we're over halfway through the summer. It's crazy and awesome. I just want to take a moment to catch us up, kind of give you a brief overview as we jump in here together of how we've been approaching the Psalms this summer, which has been a really incredible time in the life of our church.

Calvin said he wanted to call the Psalms an *anatomy of the soul*, because there's not an emotion in the entire human experience that can't be found here. Just like in a physical mirror we can see how we're doing on the outside, the Psalms reveal our insides to help us see if we're moving toward or away from God. I love how Eugene Peterson describes this. We quoted it before.

"People look into mirrors to see how they look; they look into the Psalms to find out who they are. A mirror is an excellent way to learn about our appearance; the Psalms are the biblical way to discover ourselves. [...] A mirror shows us the shape of our nose and the curve of our chin, things we otherwise know only through the reports of others. The Psalms show us the shape of our souls and the curve of our sin, realities deep within us, hidden and obscured, for which we need focus and names."

The Psalms help align our thoughts to the context of God's story and align our emotions to the desires of God's heart. So that's the approach we're taking to the Psalms this summer and this morning. You'll find that there are about seven different types of psalms, or genres of psalms throughout this massive book. There are genres like psalms of lament, psalms of confidence, remembrance, kingship, wisdom, thanksgiving.

Today's psalm, Psalm 67, is actually one of the harder psalms to pin down into one genre, but it is most like a psalm of thanksgiving. What I appreciate most about this psalm is the primary purpose of the theme of this psalm is not difficult to find. It's straightforward. It's right out front. You can find it in the first two verses of the psalm. So let's do this. As we're diving in together, let's start by standing up together, and we're going to read Psalm 67 aloud together before we jump in. Let's start in verse 1.

**"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power 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 judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!"**

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we come this morning and we just ask of you what we cannot do ourselves, what only you can do. Help us to encounter you in your Word. We pray, Spirit of the living God, meet us here. Illumine your Word that we might see and worship Christ. We pray that you would do that for the glory of your name, amen.

Here's the theme of today's message. This is what I want us to walk away with, what I want to be able to prove to you today. This is what this text is saying. It's really simple. *God blesses us so that we might be a blessing to all peoples everywhere.* That's a really simple theme, but I would argue it's probably one of the hardest in application. We find this theme in the first two verses of the psalm.

Verse 1 starts this way: **"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us..."** This is the same high priestly benediction recorded in Numbers, chapter 6, and it's a fitting way to start this psalm. It's a cry for mercy. Neediness is the uniting ground for all of us humans. As the Psalms have been teaching us throughout this summer, we all come to God in one way: in need, and our primary need for God is his mercy.

The request the psalmist is making here is threefold. He's saying we need God's grace. We need his blessing. We need his presence. This is a wide-sweeping prayer, encompassing all we could desire with God, both now and into eternity. He's saying, "God, we need your grace or your unmerited

favor on us." That's his attentiveness to us that we don't deserve but he gives to us out of his benevolent love for us.

He asks for his blessing. We've talked about this. That's the fullest state of human joy found in God's love. Remember the first week, for those of us who were here? Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the person..." The one who experiences true bliss is not somebody walking, standing, or sitting in the path of destruction, like the scoffer, but it's those who have chosen the path of life and joy, that this is blessing. Then it says for his face to shine upon us, which is the Old Testament theme for God's presence.

You're also going to see that God's blessing meets tangible needs toward the end of the psalm, like increased crops, cattle, healthy families, but that's not the depth of it. What makes God's blessing unique is that it doesn't just satisfy our felt needs; it's satisfying at a soul level. How it satisfies at a soul level is that we don't just get things *from* God; it's God himself who is the blessing.

Problems don't arise because we need things or love things; problems arise when we get confused about what we need and get disordered about what we love. Verse 1 is making it clear what we really need, and it's reorienting our affections to what should captivate our love. The core of God's blessing is that we get God. That's the plea of verse 1. "God, we need you, and we need you in your deliverance, your provision, and your presence."

What comes next is one of the most significant verses for your life and for my life. Verse 1 says, **"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us..."** Comma. **"...that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations."** "May God be gracious to us and bless us *so that* your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations." This comma is so incredibly important for us to understand.

We don't like to keep a comma here. We like putting a period. "May God be gracious to us. May God bless us. May God's presence be with us." We want just the "verse 1" version of Christianity. We're the passive recipients of God's grace. But that's not what is being said here. Verse 1 flows into verse 2. Verse 2 can't happen without verse 1. What I love about this is these do not stand alone. They're rooted in God's promise, his covenant with Abraham. In Genesis, chapter 12, we see this, starting in verse 1.

**"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"**

Salvation to the nations was God's ultimate motivation in making Abraham's name great. The universal promise permeates this entire covenant. Centuries later, the apostle Paul calls this promise to Abraham nothing less than the gospel. We see that in Galatians, chapter 3, starting in verse 7.

**"Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."**

Later on in Revelation 5, in the end, we see the consummation of this when the apostle John beholds a spectacular vision of worship before the throne of God. He hears the voices of heaven and earth unite in one grand symphony of cosmic praise. **"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb..."** It's this glorious end that the entire created order is flowing toward.

From Genesis to Psalms to Galatians to Revelation, we see the flow of God's purpose, that God blesses us so his way may be known on earth, his saving power among all nations. Connecting verse 1 to verse 2 in my life, in your life, is essential to plugging our lives into the flow of what God is doing in the world. This is the flow of God's story in and through us, and this is the flow of the New Testament Christian: we are a saved and sent people.

Most of these verses won't be new to you, but I just want us to continue to see this theme continue to flow through the Word of God. When Jesus appears to his disciples after the resurrection in John 20, **"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.'"** When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was in Mark, chapter 12, he says:

**"The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with**

**all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."** Love God. Love others. Second Corinthians 5:17:

**"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..."** Romans 10:14:

**"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"**

This is the flow of God's story, his blessing in and through us. Hear me, church. Any gospel that terminates in you is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not about your self-improvement, it's not about your religious affiliation, it's not about your social connectivity, and it's not another additive to your life.

The gospel is that you and I start our journey dead in our sin, separated from a holy God without hope and in deep need of rescue. It's about the God of the universe meeting you where you are, shining the light of hope into your darkness, reconciling you to himself through the cross of Jesus, breathing life into you and bringing you into the story of what he's doing in the world. *That's* the gospel.

If you're in here this morning and you think your story is beyond the reach... Maybe it's too dark. Maybe there's too much stuff in there that you just don't think God can get past. Let me tell you, the arm of God's mercy is never too short to reach past all your darkness and doubt and bring you into life and joy. David Platt says it basically like this:

"God's purpose is to be known among the nations. Let's expect, then, the blessing of God to follow the purpose of God. God's blessing is not payment for services rendered; it's power and joy for a mission accomplished. When we move toward the lost, we're not earning God's blessing; we're jumping into the river of God's blessing that is headed to the nations."

When you just want to stand on the banks and dip a cup in the river of God's blessing, you miss the entire purpose for which we've been saved in the first place. Jump into the river of God's blessings

and see where it will take you. Verses 3-7 are going to tell us where this river is going. Listen to this, starting in verse 3.

**"Let the peoples praise you, O God [the people who aren't following Yahweh]; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!"** Let *who* praise you? Let the *peoples* praise you. How many of these peoples? *All* of the peoples. Not just you, not just me...*all* of the peoples.

This story doesn't stop with you and me. It doesn't end in Flower Mound or Fort Worth. The end of this story is the cosmic praise of God that we talked about in Revelation 5. **"...by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God..."**

Then after "Let all the peoples praise you," it says, **"Let the nations be glad and sing for joy..."** Church, please hear what I'm about to say. Our God doesn't just want to be known; he wants to be enjoyed. I love the way C.S. Lewis captures this. He says, "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment..." Do you hear that?

"...praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch..."

Our God wants to be enjoyed. As Lewis just helped us see, when God is enjoyed for who he is, it has to find somewhere to land, some way to be expressed. If you were at our Celebration services a few weeks ago, you heard a testimony from one of our men who went on a Go Trip earlier this summer. The trip began with most of the men being really hesitant and timid, but then as a community began to experience some freedom in Christ...

When he was describing what God did amongst these men, it was joy that sprang up from them. They couldn't wait to get out on the streets and share the gospel, because joy in God was overflowing from them, and it had to find a place to land. I've been getting text after text from these

men, hearing this joy continually overflowing in their lives as they share the hope of Jesus with neighbors, coworkers, mechanics. One couple said they were up until 3:00 a.m. sharing the gospel with their neighbors.

The joy is just overflowing, because this is reality. I want you to hear this. A God you don't enjoy is a God you don't share with anybody, but when he becomes your ultimate joy, you can't keep him from anyone. Psalm 67 is looking to the future when God will bless his people and the nations will come to know his saving power, and in his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ secured for the nations the Abrahamic blessing the writer of Psalm 67 was anticipating.

We see this at the very end of Luke's gospel. It says Jesus, before he left his followers and ascended to heaven... It says, "**And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.**" By blessing his church, Jesus has inaugurated the day envisioned in Psalm 67. He can now say, like he does in Acts 1:8, to the church, empowered by his Spirit poured out on Pentecost, "**...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**"

The light of that day has dawned and is growing ever brighter as Christ continues his mission through us to the world. A great example of this I can think of... Several years ago now, my wife and I led a group on a trip to Israel. One of the things that really stood out to me was these two massive bodies of water we got to see while we were there, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. One sits in the north, one sits in the south.

As we traveled, we first started in the north. Both of these bodies of water have these hill/mountain-type deals where you can go up on top and see the whole body of water and all the landscape around it. We started at the Sea of Galilee. What is really remarkable about the Sea of Galilee, as you're looking at this body of water... Around it is just beautiful, lush farmland. It's really a sight to behold. It's rolling hills and farmland. It's beautiful.

I remember sitting there, and the tour guide was talking about how important this body of water was, because it's the only and main fresh water source for the entire country. He said they use it for the farming, for the land all around it, consume it for their fresh water. He was describing. He said what makes this body of water the way it is... From where we were standing, you could see the River Jordan flowing in from the north and flowing back out from the south. He said it's constantly getting fed with fresh water, constantly feeding the land with fresh water.

Then we traveled south. Not very far, we were moving from this beautiful farmland, and then it started to get more rocky, and then it just went into straight desert when we got down to the Dead Sea. Again, we were up on a hill, and he was telling us the different history of the mountain we were on. I stopped him and asked, "Hey, I'm not science-oriented, but this is different. Can you help me understand why this is different? I'm sure there's an explanation for it."

He said, "Yeah, it's really easy." He said, "Do you remember when we were at the Sea of Galilee and you saw the River Jordan flowing in and flowing out and what a difference that made?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Look at what's different about *this* body of water." I said, "Well, I can see the river flows in, but it doesn't look like it flows out anywhere." He said, "Exactly." He said, "This is just a place where it stops. They call it the Dead Sea because nothing can live here. It just consumes life, and it produces death around it. It's just desert as far as you can see."

I thought, "What a great example for us of a tale of two people or two churches." What would it be like to be the kind of church that looks like the Sea of Galilee, where the blessing of God, the love of God flows in and doesn't stop with us? It flows out from us and continues to flow into the people around us, the places around us, that we would be a life-giving people and a life-giving church and not be a consuming people or consuming church where the love of God, the blessing of God just terminates on us.

What if we stopped putting a period where God puts a comma? What kind of person, what kind of church do we want to be: a place or a people where the love of God terminates on us or a people and a place where the love of God flows through us to the world? May we desire to be the kinds of people, the kind of church where the blessings of God don't terminate on us but flow in and through us to all peoples everywhere, where we can say, "May God bless us and be gracious to us and make his face shine upon us so that he may be known on earth, his saving power among all nations." God blesses us so we might be a blessing to all peoples everywhere. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, it's just a simple thing put before us this morning but so difficult to comprehend and to live out. The reality is none of us in here has enough willpower, giftedness, space in our lives, or motivation to make this happen, to live like this, to be that life-giving person, that life-giving place. We're going to need the power of your Spirit.

God, would you empower us to boldly be these kinds of people? Would The Village Church *here*, where we are, be a life-giving body of water to the land around us, where your love, your blessing is flowing in and through us to all people everywhere...in our schools, in the stores, in our neighborhoods, in our homes?

Would we be a conduit for your love, your blessing, so that your way would be known on earth, your saving power among every neighborhood, among every school, among every workplace in this entire community? Right now in life it's very hard to be radically loving, but, God, would we be that? God, empower us to be that. Release joy from us. Release it, that we wouldn't hold on to it. Just release it, that we would experience true joy and the overflow of that joy would be praise, the overflow of that joy would be proclamation.

We just have to tell of the God we love and enjoy what he has done for us. We have to declare his way. We have to declare his saving power. They have to know. Would you spring up joy from this church, O God? That not just *these* peoples in here would praise you but *all* of the peoples would praise you. We ask that for Christ's name and for his sake, amen.