

A Particular Prayer for Universal Praise

Let's turn to our Bible. So, Psalm 67. Psalm 67.

That's 67 months so far. One Psalm a month. Still not sure how I'm going to do a Psalm 119.

Let us listen attentively to the word of God. Psalm 67. God, be merciful to us and bless us.

And cause His face to shine upon us. Let your way be known on 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 shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations of the earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you.

Let the earth shall yield her increase. God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Let us pray. And here in this Psalm, gracious God above, you've given us by the inspiration of the Spirit that we would sing praises to you. That we would learn anew through our particular prayer, the desire even of the Old Testament for universal praise of you.

That they knew, the psalmist knew, David knew God, that the redemption that you have is not just and merely and only for biological Jews, but for any and all who call upon the Lord. And that was seen in a number of cases in the Old Testament. Our Lord, we see the fullness of this prayer being answered in this day and age, here and now.

May this bring joy and excitement in our lives, God, that you are with us. That you have answered the prayer of David and others of the Old Testament, God. And you continue to answer them until the day our Lord and Savior shall return.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen. So, it is easy to get lost as you can imagine, in the details of the Old Testament since it's two-thirds of the Bible.

It's a lot of stuff going on here. We read of Abraham and of his family, to the exclusion, it seems virtually at least, of all other families. Then the remainder of the Old Testament is about the fruit of his loins, the history of Israel.

The rest of the Old Testament books of the prophets are mostly books of the prophets who went to and fro across the land, warning and encouraging the Jews to repent from sin and to follow the Messiah to come. We do read of other nations of course, before the time of Abraham. That's where we mostly read a lot of that.

But from there on out, references to the heathen lands is, it seems, more or less about them coming to bring judgment upon Israel, for example. They are accursed in Deuteronomy of strange nations invading them in order to teach them to trust the Lord. In some cases, there

are reasonable pagan nations, of course, such as the time of Solomon, who made a mutual pact with Hiram, king of Tyre.

So they got along pretty well. In the midst of this intensely Jewish Old Testament, we have a running theme, however, from the time of Abraham himself, that the redemption they had access to would be available to the entirety of all the nations of the world. What the Jews called the goyim.

You've probably heard that word. It's right out of the Hebrew. Often translated nations, not always.

And of course, as we know, by the time of Christ they were often looked down upon and even ridiculed by the Jews. Nevertheless, they would be and were and are right now being brought into his kingdom. In Genesis 12, we read specifically in case we forgot, this is the Lord speaking to Abraham.

Now the Lord said to Abram, for his name change, go out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. He's minding his own business. God comes to him and says follow me.

I will make you a great nation, we read. I will bless you and make you a great name. And you shall be a blessing.

And I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you. That we remember. But then he ends, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

There we have a hint of the gospel, of the good news being greater than the Jewish nation state. And that first promise to Abraham, right? Near the end of Abraham's life, the Lord repeated the covenant promise by expanding the details in Genesis 17. When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am almighty God.

Walk before me and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly. Then Abram found his face and God talked with him saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with you.

And you shall be a father of many nations. There it is again. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be called Abraham.

For I have made you, what? A father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful. I will make nations of you and kings shall come from you.

So here we have the nations of the world tied into the covenantal promises. This promise, like all the Lord God's promises, was ultimately spiritual. It was physical to be sure.

Actual nations came from his loins. But ultimately it was spiritual for our Lord God is a spirit. And so in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul applies the promise to the fact of salvation by what? Faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone.

That the father of nations was not reducible to biological father, but found into fulfillment as Abraham as being the spiritual father. And yes, this morning's theme was about fathers and superiors and inferiors, wasn't it? Of all who believe Jews and Gentiles alike. Romans 4.16. Therefore it is a faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations. Tying that language into the covenant of grace. All that's the background to explain this psalm, which is a psalm of a particular prayer and praise about universal praise, about the nations, not about Israel.

Particular Prayer

So it's a particular prayer, verse 1, God be merciful to us, right, the Jewish people, God's people, the Old Testament church, and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us. Cry for mercy, the word mercy here, gracious, kindness to the undeserving. An implicit acknowledgement, of course, of being what? Undeserving, I don't deserve, I should not be given this goodness from our Lord God.

David and the Old Testament saints often cried for mercy, because they knew they needed it. It wouldn't come naturally, it shouldn't have come naturally. Humility means acknowledging, they didn't need it, we don't need it.

The help and kindness from the Lord of the universe should not be taken for granted. It's a theme in the Psalms, as we know, a general cry in Psalm 123, have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. The cry for deliverance, Psalm 86, 16, O turn to me and have mercy on me, give your strength to your servants, and save the son of your maidservant.

He wants this deliverance from his foes and ultimately from his sins. It's a cry based upon a promise as well, in Psalm 119, verse 58 we read, I entreated your favor with my whole heart, be merciful to me according to your word. Not according to my goodness, my greatness, my Jewishness.

It's not what he does. Some of the Jews did, as we know, especially during the time of Christ, but here the psalmist in Psalm 119 and elsewhere does not plead about how wonderful he is. Rather, according to your word, his word being what? The word of promise, the good news that God saves sinners.

The covenantal promise in particular. There is no other ground for help. So when he says, God be merciful to us and bless us and cause his face to shine upon us here, it's all in the assumption of grace and mercy comes to them by the Lord God of the covenants, not because they are special, but because he is a gracious God and desires to give his mercy and his compassion and his goodness upon his people.

The mercy here, be merciful and bless us. He's saying two things here. Be merciful and as well, bless us.

But that blessing, it seems to me, should be obvious. What kind of blessing does he want? He wants a merciful blessing. A good blessing.

Again, a blessing not based upon his good works. It's a common word used all over the Old Testament to bestow something good upon another, used of God and of man, and not just general blessings, although that's included, but clearly here a blessing of mercy, a blessing of help, a blessing of something beyond what we deserve mercy in that the Lord would preserve them. Ultimately, body and soul.

We have an interesting phrase here, that his face to shine upon us and cause his face to shine upon us. The latter part of verse 1. Shining there, the idea is used different ways in the Bible, as you can imagine. It's a metaphor, so it can be flexible to some degree.

Illumination, which would imply, of course, knowledge, but also could include health and goodness in general. It's not always just about what you know. I got more illumination, I got more shining, but the shining forth of good health, of goodness, of good things and good gifts from the Lord God above.

A face shining, therefore, is a picture of favor, of mercy, of goodness of some sort upon the person is being looked upon himself. It's a metaphor for the person with the power to be favorable. I want the king to be favorable to me.

That's how we would say it today, or the president. They would say it because they were very earthly back then. They used lots of tangible things.

May his face shine upon us. A brightness of the face, we'd say today. We have a similar metaphor.

We have an opposite metaphor as well. We talk, perhaps sometimes in poetry, of a cloudy face. It's a darkened face upon us, which is the opposite of someone being happy or shiny.

The phrase occurs, interestingly enough, only five times in the psalms. Psalm 31, twice in Psalm 80, another three times in this psalm, that phrase, a face to shine upon us. It occurs several times as well outside of the psalms.

One of the earlier usages is in number 623. You heard that this morning. That's the Aaronic blessing.

Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, this is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them, the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

So clearly there, in fact, to everyone else, it means good things. You pray for good things to the person who has the power to give you those good things. That their face would be facing you and not away from you out of anger, perhaps.

But facing you with goodness and blessing and a light of shining favor, that God would favor them with covenantal grace. Proverbs 16, 15, And the light of the king's face is life, and his favor is like a cloud of the latter rain. Psalm 44, 3, For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them.

But it was your right hand, your arm, and the right of your countenance, a similar phrase there, countenance, their face, because you favored them. You look down upon them with goodness. That's what it's referring to over and over again.

And of course, behind that is what? The unmerited favor and goodness of our Lord and Savior. But what specifically does he want? Cause his face to shine upon us. That your way may be known on the earth, your salvation among all nations.

Be good to us, be merciful to us, with the effect that there's greater redemption, there's greater knowledge, and the whole world would ultimately rejoice. So from here, verse 2 to the rest of the psalm, he talks about the ends of the earth, he talks about the going, he talks about the nations, he talks about the peoples, and the good things that come from what? The knowledge that they may, that your way, you God Almighty, may be known on the earth. That is, the language of verse 2 is the language of universal salvation.

Of course, you know I don't mean that as a universalist. Of the unbelieving mainline churches, and the Methodists, and the Presbyterians, with these massive churches that believe that everyone goes to heaven, regardless of what they do. They don't have to repent, they don't have to believe.

God is a merciful God, and that mercy means it swallows up justice. That's what they teach. That's not what I mean, that's not what this psalmist means.

We see that especially in verse 7, the air shall fear him. There's going to be evidence of someone believing in God. So the psalmist prayer is not just for Israel, but for any and all who would call upon the name of the Lord.

We already read the promise given to Abraham, and you all, the families of the earth, shall be blessed. Nations shall come from you. Being a blessing from God, it's a spiritual blessing ultimately.

Elsewhere in the Psalms, we have this picture of goodness going and flowing throughout, outside of Jerusalem, outside of Israel upon the heathen nations, the goyim. A little hint here, and he gets stronger in other places. And so, Psalm 2, we know this one, Psalm 2.8, we have a picture of the ownership of the air.

They're going to come voluntarily submitting to King Jesus. God's way known on the earth here is not just an intellectual knowledge, it is clearly in parallel with the other half of the verse, your salvation among all the nations. That your way may be known on the earth, your salvation among the nations doesn't have a verb.

The verb is implied there from the first part, that your salvation may be known. Your way should be known, and your salvation shall be known. Way and salvation are saying the same thing.

That they would understand who the Savior of the world is, Jesus, and submit to Him and follow Him all the days of life. So, the prayer here is of the Old Testament saints. He is praying that the rest of the world would know the salvation of God.

And, of course, knowledge there is not just again intellectual, but a saving knowledge. The rest of Psalm unpacks that. Let all the nations be glad, we read.

Let them sing for joy, we read. And how can they be glad of God and sing for joy for the Deliverer, if He's not their Deliverer and their God? He clearly means here, He's praying and desiring. The Old Testament Jews, the best of them, wanted the rest of us saved.

They're not like the Pharisees of the New Testament, who went a different route unfortunately. So, it's a prayer that the nations would have a saving knowledge of the Most High. And, therefore, they can shout for joy and praise God continually.

For Universal Praise

Have a universal praise beyond Jerusalem and Israel. Verse 3-4, Let the peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you. Another theme, of course, in the Psalms is that the people praise the Lord.

People often, of course, as the Old Testament saints, as Israel and Judah, let Ephraim rejoice and things like that, we read there in the Psalms. That's true, that's a great thing, that's what he wants. But he also wants the whole world to come in alongside him and rejoice before God.

Come with me, fellow human, goyim, and rejoice in the Lord's deliverance. He is a great and mighty God and praise Him for His excellent greatness. The praising here, of course, of those who receive deliverance from God, what other kind of praise would there be? It would make no other sense.

The Gentile nations are praising Him because of what He has done for them. And we do that right now. What do we do this morning? We sing praises to God.

What do we do this evening? We sing praises to God. This in fulfillment of this Psalm, which is a prayer and a praise, combined together, mostly a prayer that God would bring His knowledge of deliverance to the unbelievers in the four corners of the earth. And that's us.

David and the rest of them had no idea there was a North America, a South America, an Australia, a Japan. They just knew they lived in their own little world. They knew there was more out there and they wanted them to be saved as well.

Their prayer was fulfilled and is fulfilled here and now. We praise the God and we continue to pray for others as well. That we have a particular prayer that the rest of the world will believe in our Lord and Savior and praise Him with us.

In verse 4 we have, it continues here, O let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations on the earth. Govern the nations on the earth. It's talked again of other Psalms, the judgment of God.

Arise, O Lord, do not let men prevail. Let the nations be judged in your sight. Psalm 9. Psalm 2 again.

Ask of me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession. That is, He will be the ruler and king over them. That's obviously the picture there in Psalm 2. This is the king.

Judge here, however, for you shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations on earth. Very much like verse 2 where you have your way may be known and salvation among all the nations. These two go together.

That judgment and governing are the same idea. People and nation are the same idea. And of course implicitly in the second half, to govern the nations on earth, parenthesis, righteously.

Clearly, not unrighteously. He's saying it in other words twice. Typical Hebraic parallelism.

Repeats himself with different words. You shall judge the people and govern them. All that to say, when he says he will judge them, he's not saying, oh, I got you.

You're in trouble. I got you now, you goyim. But rather, he's governing them.

A good governor judges and rules over his people instead of sending them for ruling. Their words, they don't have a lot of words the way we do, can be used in a lot of different ways. And that word sometimes means just that.

A judge presiding over a decision. I found you guilty. I found you innocent.

Here, it could have that, but it's built into the broader idea of what a king does. He governs his people. Part of that may be, I have declared that you are righteous in Christ Jesus.

That's a good judgment. Not all judgments have to be bad in the Psalms. And I think that's exactly the case here because the parallel with the word govern.

To rule over, a righteous rule, through Jesus Christ in the Gospel. And the goyim, the rest of us, the heathen, have been declared. We have been judged by our king and we've been declared righteous in him.

Praise be to his name. So, it's a good thing to be ruled by King Jesus. That's what he's saying here.

We have the rule of our Messiah, of God, of the covenant, and I want the rest of the world to have the rule of God, the Messiah as well. And he does. He had, of course, back then by providence as the creator God.

He's in charge of all things. And as I preached in 1 Corinthians 15 and the resurrection, that Christ Jesus rules in a two-fold sense. Particularly over his own people, of course.

But in general, he rules all the nations as the God-man. Something a little different from the Old Testament. He wasn't there yet.

He hadn't died on the cross. He was still in heaven. He came with a body as the God-man.

Now he rules over the nations for the good of the church. Something has changed, that's true. But that's part of what that's expressed there.

And we see that here, this prayer being fulfilled in Christ Jesus in this two-fold reign, or duplex reign as it's described in the older theologians. And this is why we rejoice. The ancestors, our ancestors, my Germanic and Swiss blood, yours as well, wherever you came from, were in darkness for generations.

They were the isles of confusion and the lands of wickedness. And the gospel came to us. Came to your neck of the woods.

Came to the rest of the West. And brought us deliverance. And brought us the fulfillment of this.

And we, to the extent that we are believers, that we are following him, we are under his rule. And he is guiding us and protecting us. They understood, not just the Jews, but the rest of the pagans around them.

Because, as you know, some of the non-Jews joined the Jews at the Old Testament. Hints of things to come. And they had a better understanding of the superior-inferior relationship than we do today.

As I preached on this morning, right? They want a strong superior. They don't want a wimpy man that gets pushed around. Because they know how dangerous the world is.

And they want a strong king to guide and watch over them. Of course, a king that loves them and cares for them. And identifies with them.

He did. He became one of us. Isn't that great? That's the context of the ancient Near East mindset that we've lost today and don't fully appreciate.

So, when a nation, a goyim, a heathen, a pagan sees this, they're like, I want that kind of a king who takes care of his people. Not this tyrant, this despot that I have over here in Egypt or Babylon or whatever the case is. That's the way they're thinking back then.

So, if they did, and they did join the Jewish church, as you know, that's what they're thinking. This is what I want. I want that kind of a king.

I want that kind of a ruler. I want that kind of power protecting and watching and guiding me. Universal praise again in verse 5. Let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you. Making it emphatic. That's his desire and prayer is that there's a universal praise.

And, of course, behind that, universal salvation. That is a salvation beyond the Jewish borders to any and all who repent and believe and follow Jesus Christ. So, he's repeating verse 3, emphasizing the call to save people and their ongoing praise reflecting in the greatness that is God of His goodness and His blessings upon them through Christ Jesus.

The psalmist prays that many more than just Jews would sing praises to God. All kinds of peoples. And then we end in verses 6-7 for universal blessing.

Not just universal praise. Of course, it all goes together. All the goodness of God.

For Universal Blessing

Universal blessing. The Lord's blessing is always two-fold. Maybe you never thought about it this way.

And I use the word always. This is what I mean. Always.

Two-fold. Not sometimes. Always.

But by always, of course, I mean in God's time. Material and spiritual. We want the material now.

We want the resurrected body now. I know you do. You're tired of this thing falling apart on you.

But it is a promise. You're going to have it. And it's going to be in God's timing.

Because it's going to be a body that fits a new heaven and a new earth. It's a new body. But that's one of the promises.

Don't forget that. His promises are two-fold. Spiritual and material.

The material is there. We see a lot of material, of course. The physical.

Physicality. The economics. The military.

The socioeconomic. All of that in the Old Testament. We see a lot of that.

That's true. And part of that is because the weakness of the Old Testament saints. They were very carnal in one sense.

They saw a lot of the physical things. Their temple represented that. They wanted to have all these tangible things.

They could smell it. See the animals. Hear them bleeding.

Bleating. And even bleeding. Because their faith was weak.

That's true. It doesn't change the fact that God still blesses us materially. Even today.

He gives us good things by his hand. Which is a blessing for us. And of course it's also the spiritual thing.

So when we read here, in other words, the earth shall yield her increase. I read it as both. Material increase.

But of course also a spiritual increase. The increase of the number of nations that convert. The number of peoples that follow.

The number of individuals that say yes to Jesus and no to the world. The earth is indeed yielding her increase in that regard. God, our God, shall bless us.

So he starts out in verse 1. God be merciful to us. And then he changes the referent point in saying that your knowledge of salvation may go to all the nations. And that they would praise you.

They would submit to your judgments. And they would praise you even more. And now he comes back to us, that is the Jews.

And maybe he's now incorporating all the saved. Going, perhaps, in his prayer here. Our God shall bless us and have this wonderful blessing upon us.

All blessings are from our God and Savior. Your family fed and provided for. Your boss who paid you the money that you deserved.

That still comes from the hand of the Lord. He is behind all of that. He takes a special interest in his children, in you, and guides you through the difficulties of life so that you do indeed have such blessings of good health.

And therefore you should praise him and honor him. And it's God, our God. Not just that God out there.

Who once in a while is good to us. But he is our God. He is your God.

They have this special covenantal relationship. He is your God and we are his people. You are his people.

It shows the exclusivity of the covenant of grace. Not everyone can say that. That he is our God.

And he is our Father and one who will protect us. Our King and our Lord and our Master who loves us with an everlasting love. This is covenantal language.

A wonderful way of reading this. When you pray to the Lord, pray to him not as a distant third person but to your God. He is yours.

He is ours. And he is ours collectively as well. There is no idea of individualism, the man on the island mindset of the Christian religion.

It is the man or the human or the individual in community. It is always ours. The conclusion of the matter here.

God shall bless us. He does continue to bless us. And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

The blessings and the mercies of the Lord are always received by faith. And exercised by love. And godly fear.

One that highly respects, honors and adores the Most High. That is godly fear. Not a fear of a slave waiting for an irrational beating that can come at any moment.

But the child who fears to bring shame upon his father. Who is so compassionate and caring for his limitations and his weakness. That is the kind of fear he speaks of.

We have mentioned this before because it is there in the New Testament. It speaks of godly fear. It is one of the attributes of a Christian who follows the Lord.

And it should be there. We should not water that down again. The ancient Near East understood what it meant to have a superior and an inferior.

And they feared their kings. The worst kind of course were the tyrants. They were afraid of irrational beatings.

What is going to happen next? What is this guy up to? As opposed to the most loving kind of king and father like David and Solomon to a large degree. Who were much more considerate. They knew what to expect.

They had much prosperity and blessings under them. Every man was under his own fig tree. That is a good king.

He cared for his people. And they feared him so far as they didn't want to make his name fall into the mud. And bring shame upon Israel and shame upon him.

That kind of fear. It is a beautiful picture of the New Testament era. The converts, the Gentiles, the nations, they will fear the Lord if they are converted.

To leave their pagan ways of worship and hate it and embrace the law and gospel of our Lord and Savior. That is what we have done in promise and fulfillment of this prayer. It is a beautiful picture of the New Testament age as I said.

Where the Jewish trappings are laid aside. We don't need all this Jewishness anymore. Praise be to his name.

So Gentiles, either Japanese or Germans or Brazilians can be redeemed without having to travel to Jerusalem. And becoming a Jew and do Jewish things anymore. They can still be Brazilian and German and have their unique culture.

As long as it is not a wicked culture. This is not the end. Let us keep praying for more converts from our own nation brothers and sisters.

He prays with zeal for the world that they would praise and honor him and submit to Jesus, the King, the Messiah to come. We pray the same of course throughout the world. I am kind of inverting it now.

There is a lot of emphasis in the Old Testament about prayer for his own people. God be merciful to us. God our God shall bless us.

We should pray for our own people as well. Our own churches. That God will continue to have mercy and to bring more converts into the church.

So let us pray to him that more would know him savingly and rejoice with us with exceeding joy. Let us pray. Father God above bring the nations.

Continue to gather many across the globe and even within our nation especially God we pray. Given our heritage in the west. To come back to you.

To return and to submit to your judgment and to your governance among them. Our Lord and Savior may we be an example in our lives. Help us to submit to you as our sovereign, as our superior.

And how you deign to work in our life God these things for our deliverance and our salvation. We ask and pray these things by our Lord and Savior. Amen.