

Songs of Summer: Psalm 67
Pastor Carlos Sibley
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I invite you to open your bibles to Psalm 67. If you're here for the very first time, I want to personally welcome you here to Watkinsville. What we're doing in Psalms is what we do most every summer here, and so you're getting in on something that's a part of who we are at Watkinsville. We take the weeks of the summer and we look at the next Psalm in line. We've been doing this for several years and today we come to Psalm 67. That's where we'll stop for this summer and we'll pick up next summer at the end of May, first of June with Psalm 68. At the pace we're going I think it'll take us about 12 years to finish this series and I look forward to us, unless Jesus comes back, to us opening our bibles one day to Psalm 150. That'll be a glorious day when we do that.

I'm reminded of a quote that I read from Alexander Wyatt this week. Alexander Wyatt was a Scottish pastor and preacher that died in 1921. He was speaking to a group of students that were studying and preparing to be in vocational ministry and Alexander Wyatt, near his death, he said to these students, "Ah, I envy you young men with your ministry before you, and especially that you have ahead a lifetime of explaining the Psalms to your people." It was very intriguing that this pastor in his latter years would look at a young group of ministers and be envious of them, but I'm not surprised by that in ways as well. It's a rich time for us. I think many of us share again the testimony of this summer. We've heard Joel speak and Sean speak and Vic speak and I've spoken and we've covered these nine Psalms that God has really visited us with a powerful sense of his presence. There's been a fresh sense of life among us as a church, as we've praised the Lord and we've been honest before the Lord and we've acknowledged our great need and desperate need of his and praised him as being our rock and our refuge.

It's been a rich, valuable time and it just makes me anticipate with a great excitement opening our Bible again next summer to Psalm 68. Today in Psalm 67, it is a prayer. We don't know who the author is, we don't know the specific date. There is reference in Psalm 67 that goes back to Abraham's covenant and God's promise to bless God's covenant with Abraham and God's promise to bless the nations of the world through the seed of Abraham. It also goes back to Aaron and the priestly prayer where he was given these words that you will hear echoed in Psalm 67. As you read through, it's a Psalm, for many because of the lack of known author, because of the lack of known date, it has not been the most popular Psalm throughout history, but in recent years it has been noticed again in a powerful way as being a missionary Psalm. But it is a prayer for the nations. It is a prayer for the glory of God to be known on the earth outside of the chosen people of God, the Israelites. As this Israelite writer of this Psalm of praise, you can pick up in this Psalm the expansion of God's kingdom in his prayers where he's asking God to do more for them as Hebrew children, as Israelite children, so that all nations would know God more. It is a missionaries prayer, it is an accountant's prayer, it is a prayer that you look at it and you would see, hey, if this is the blessing that comes in, this is where the blessing is to go. It's a wealth investment professional. It's a wealth investors prayer. It helps us see that you want to see how to get some kind of eternal dividends on the blessings that come our way. This is the prayer that addresses that. This Psalm 67 is the Psalm that shows us that God's blessings in our life are provided to us, made accessible to us so that others would notice and in turn, worship God and love God and know him and be saved by him.

So today I want you to think about how God has blessed you. In fact, I want us to stop just specifically and participate in that way in prayer before the Lord. Let's just corporately bow before the Lord right now. Would you bow your heads? As in a way to just be able to concentrate and think for a moment? And what would you count as your blessings today? You might say, Lord, show me the favor that you have shown me. Show me the blessing. Show me the gifts. Show me the grace. Show me what I have right now. It's just from you. Name those, as the hymn says, one by one before the Lord. Amen. It's hard to know where to stop a prayer like that, isn't it? It's hard to know where to stop naming those things that God has given to us.

We look today in Psalm 67 and it's a message that we give about 30 or 35 minutes to, but the message isn't going to stop this morning. It'll continue tonight. It'll continue tonight in us celebrating what God has done through the blessings that he has given to us. I want to encourage you to be here tonight at 6:00 PM. We'll come in here to the life building and we're going to hear how God's blessings through us have been used to be a blessing to the ends of the earth. The story about Nepal is one of the most supernatural stories I have ever experienced in my life. I want you to be here to see the story and hear the story. We'll hear from what God's done in Malaysia, what God's done in South Asia. We'll hear what God has done in Zambia. We'll hear what God is doing around the globe and here locally. It's going to be a night for us to celebrate. We'll take some time tonight to walk through the new construction site. We're going to walk through the building and we're going to pray in there and get some information in there. If you have questions about where things are, you can go ahead and figure out where you're going to sit in there. I'm just teasing. It's just a concrete slab. If you want to go ahead and just write your name, lay \$500 on it right there and you can have that seat. I can't believe I just said that. We are going pass out some pens and you'd be able to write some prayers on the floor in there, and it's the time for us to do that before construction goes any further, as promises of the Lord and prayers to the Lord. Maybe prayers just like what's in Psalm 67. We'll do that tonight and it's really the picture. It's the video. It's the image that brings Psalm 67 to life for us.

Look here at Psalm 67, I want to just explain the verses hopefully not to, I don't want to suck the life out of the song, but just to try to get a grip here of what the Psalmist is praying and writing. It was a song, it was written to be sung, which means it was written to be known. It was written to be remembered. It was written to educate, to encourage. It was meant not to be just sung or prayed once, but over and over and over again. We're still doing it today, even after all of these decades and centuries. It was meant to be sung with stringed instruments according to the heading on Psalm 67. We don't know the tune. We have people through the years that have made attempts to come up with a tune that the words would fit in. We don't know the specific tune, but hear this prayer, verse one, "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us." It's a request. The writer here, the pray-er, the singer, the song writer here is making a request at the beginning of his song and he's saying to God, would you be gracious to us? Would you bless us? Knowing that already they knew God's grace, knowing that already they have been blessed, knowing already there had been times where they would describe God's face as being on them. But the song writer here is asking for more. He's saying, God, would you be gracious? Would you be merciful? Would you give to us what we don't deserve? Not what we've attained, not what we've earned. Not because you look at us and say, Hey, yeah, I'm going to give this to you because of what you've done. Would you just be gracious? Would you give to us unmerited favor? And he echoes that as the songs do over and over again by restating it. "May God be gracious to us and bless us." Would you

take your goodness, all the character of your goodness, and would you pour it out on us? It's like we sing, "Lord, would you open up heaven and pour out your goodness on us?"

The word bless is used many, many times throughout scripture in different ways. God blesses us. We bless him, we bless others, others bless us. In this case, it is a request to God. God, would you be good to us? Would you show favor? Would you show acceptance? Would you show love and kindness and pour that out on us and then make his face to shine upon us. A vivid description of what it's like in God's presence. He's saying, God, would you come and be present with us. Just be here. Just letting me be with you and you'd be with us and would you look on us? You know that experience of someone's face being turned away from you or someone's face being turned toward you. This is a phrase, "your face shine upon us" as a description of a God, in his presence, looks with favor. There's that smile, that gleam the eye of God that's saying, "I love you. You're good. I'm blessing you. Here, I've got something for you."

Maybe to understand that phrase we would flip it around and think about what it would mean for his face to be turned away from them or someone else's face to be turned away from you. You can be close in proximity and not have someone's face shining on you. You've had that experience. I think we've had it multiple times where you've been in a restaurant and you look around the room and you notice that there's a man and woman there out to dinner together. I remember specifically a time a while back and Carla asks, "What are you doing? You're people watching, aren't you?" I said, "Yeah, I am people watching." And I kept watching this couple and you've seen this couple before where they're both out together, just man and woman, and both of them have their phone. Their staring at their phone. I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about others. Others do this. It's like there for 45 minutes we were sitting there watching this. They never looked up from their phone, never spoke to each other. We'd go home that night and they would have physically been in close proximity, but her face had not shined upon him. His face had not shined upon her.

The writer of this Psalm is saying, God, give us what we don't deserve. Would you be gracious to us? Would you be good to us? Bless us? Would you be present with us? Look at us? Open up heaven toward us, smile at us? It's a request, and I'm inviting you today to join in this prayer of this Israelite songwriter. This Israelite songwriter is saying, God, with your people, would you bless us? We're asking for more. And that's what I'm saying to you this morning. I want to ask you if you would join with me and asking God for more. Would you ask him for more grace? Would you ask him for more favor? Would you ask him for more of his presence? Would you ask him for more of his good gifts? Would you ask him to bless you more? Yeah, more asking. Ask Him for more. It's the prayer of the Psalmist.

In verse two we see the reason. The reason for the request for more is verse two, "That your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations." The reason for the songwriter asking for more is that so more people would know more about God, and so that more people would be saved by God. He says, "That your way may be known on earth." "Lord bless us" remember context, Israelite children, Hebrew children, God, would you be good to your chosen people, we're identified as being people of the God of Jacob, the God of Isaac, the God of Abraham, where we identify as your chosen people. Would you pour out your blessing on us so that when people see us, have exposure to us, know us, what will happen in turn is that they know more about You. They know more of your character. They

know more of your ways. Do you realize God has ways? God has a character? God has attributes.

One of the most powerful books I read as a young pastor was a book by J.I. Packer called "Knowing God." A book that just walks through the attributes of God and how we can know him as powerful and majestic and holy and sovereign. All of these attributes that we see revealed in scripture, and the writer here is praying, God, if you would bless us with more then it would be a way when that more is put in your hands that people would know you on earth. He says, "That your way may be known on earth and your saving power among all nations." He says, Lord, as people see your blessing, they'll know how you work and they'll know what you do. They'll know that you have saving power, rescuing power. This is a missionaries prayer. This is a disciples prayer. This is a disciple wanting to see more disciples. This is a believer wanting to see more believers. This was an Israelite people saying, we want to see this good news of God go beyond just us. This is the Old Testament bringing the Gentile people into the Kingdom of God through their prayers. It says, "That your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations." You see, you may struggle with asking for more, but notice the reason for us to ask for more, according to God's word, is so that through that more other people would come to know God. It's being blessed so that we can bless. As the hymn writer wrote and we sung, many of you sang growing up, "Lord, make me a channel of blessing today. Make me a channel of blessing. I pray, lead some soul my way. Make me a channel of blessing today." And that's right out of this Psalm. He's saying, Lord, let some blessings flow through me so that they can flow to others.

And what's the response? Verse three, "let the peoples Praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" The response of God giving more so that more people can know him is that more people praise God. "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you." This could just as well have been "Let the people praise you, O God; let the people praise you." But there's something going on here in the Hebrew where the word "people" can't be just translated "people" it has to be translated "peoples." It's a broad word. It describes more than just those that were present in the room. It's not just Lord, let Watkinsville First Baptist, gathered here on July 28th, praise you. It is God, let those gathered here at Simonton Bridge Road and those in other locations around our city where your word is being proclaimed and other cities in our state where your word is being proclaimed, in other states in our union where your word is being proclaimed, in every country in our world where your word is being proclaimed, let all the peoples praise you, O God.

This was the Israelite people saying, it's not just about us, it's not just for our blessing, but this praise to the Lord is meant to spread from us, to spread to all the peoples. It's repeated again as a chorus in verse five. Verse three and verse five, the verses are the same. It sets up like a song. You have this chorus, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you." There's five again, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you." Three times in Psalm 67, the translation from Hebrew into English uses an exclamation mark for punctuation. This is a Psalmist that is exclaiming. This is a song that's just be sung with passion and energy and he says, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" Exclamation mark. Verse five, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" Exclamation mark. And then that last verse, "God shall bless us. Let all the ends of the earth fear him!" Exclamation mark.

God, let it be so that if he cuts through the heart of this church that we would bleed with the exclamation of God. Let all the nations praise you! Let all the peoples praise you!

This prayer is, God, would you do more for us so that more can know you. So that more can praise you. Now pay close attention. I'm about to show you something here about the poetry and the set up of these seven verses and it's going to be basically all I know about poetry. All right, so just listen close, right? This won't take long. When you look at the way this Psalm is laid out, I want you to notice that verse one, verse two, verse three, verse five, verse six, and verse seven takes how many lines to make their statement? How many? Said out loud, participate. Two. How many for verse four? Three. Bracketed on each side of verse four is this chorus, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" Then those three lines and then verse five, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" People smarter than me that study Hebrew writing and structure of poetry like this said that's intentional and that those three lines show us that that is the core. That is the central theme. That is the heartbeat of this song. These three phrases, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" Here's the heart of the song, "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon Earth." It's saying, let the nations be glad and sing for joy because of the kind of God you are. And I'll be glad, let them sing for joy. It's a prayer. It's a prayer for there to be this song of joy, this joyful singing, this gladness of heart coming from the nations that have found God to be a judge who rules with fairness. Equity. It means that he's the kind of God that shows no partiality and we see that evidenced in the cross of Christ.

When you come to the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no partiality. When you come to the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no pecking order. When you come to the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no class or color or country. When you come to the cross of Jesus Christ, you come before a judge who judges the people with fairness, with impartiality, with equity. And what is the verdict? The verdict is Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." But here's the grace. It's in 2 Corinthians 5, "For God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that through him we might have the righteousness of God." Amen. And so when we stand before a God who judges the people with equity, all of us, regardless of color, class, or country, we stand before God to be judged on equal ground, needing, pleading, believing in the blood of Jesus Christ to cover us. And he said, God's the kind of God that shepherds the nations upon earth. He guides the nations upon Earth. You get a judge that rules with fairness and you get a shepherd who guides. And he says, that's where gladness comes from. That's where the song of joy comes from.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote about this verse, and I won't read it verbatim, but that English preacher in the late 18 hundreds said, we live in a world where the governments of nations look for ways to make their people glad. You change systems over and over again, you go from monarchies and dictatorships. You see it right in our world today where there's the offer of communism or socialism or capitalism to be what will make the people glad. The word of God shows us that the only government that will truly make people glad forever is his government. Wonderful counselor, mighty God, and the government will be upon his shoulders. You see, we are a part of a kingdom, the Kingdom of God, where God rules, God reigns and he's saying, the nations are going to be glad. It'll be person by person, by person, by person, by person who knows the ways of God and sees his saving power. It's amazing to me

that people are describing this already as like a campaign cycle has started. Just to remind you as believers that our hope is in heart, by heart, by heart, by heart, by heart coming to know the saving power of our Almighty God. "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!"

Verse six, "The Earth has yielded its increase." It's a way of describing how they would measure God's blessing in an agrarian culture. The most obvious way that it would show that they had been blessed to the watching worlds would be for God to give them a great harvest. For them to have a great harvest would lead to them acknowledging, yes, God will bless us. God will bless us. It's a declaration of faith and belief. "God shall bless us. Let all the ends of the earth fear him." It's a prayer that the noticeable blessing in their life would be given to him in order for others to know the God they serve. "Let all the ends of the earth fear him." A recognition of acknowledgement and reverence and belief and trust in almighty God. Now, Old Testament. This Psalm is first heard in Numbers 6, in the words given to the high priest Aaron has mentioned earlier, it's heard in Genesis 12 as the promise is given to Abraham that the nations of the world will be blessed through his seed. But this is a Psalm that doesn't just look back, it is a Psalm that looks ahead.

When you look at Psalm 67 and you open your bibles to the New Testament, you see the foreshadowing of Matthew 28, it was just Jesus saying, Go ye therefore and to all the world and make disciples of, what? All nations. And you see Acts 1:8 just resonating here in Psalm 67:7 where it says, "Let all the ends of the earth fear him." In Acts 1:8, Jesus commissions the disciples to go be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all the ends of the earth. And reality is as we sit in this room today, that the high, high majority of us know Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. And the high, high majority of us do not have a Jewish heritage in our bloodline. So you and I sit here today as Gentiles and we are living testimonies to the Psalms 67 being answered by the power of God. Witnesses for Jesus Christ have gone forth to the ends of the Earth by ship and boat, by sea and ocean, by air and plane and train and told the world about his saving power. "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!"

Friday night we worked our way back through our travels to have supper with my mom and dad, Mamaw and Papa as they're known by now. Dad's 80, Mom's 78. We got back there in time to eat and Mamaw cooked. My mom cooked and we had supper and we ate and we were excited, it's great to eat what she cooks and just fun for all of us. And we had eaten, our kids were there, our daughter, Maddy was there. And I came through the kitchen and I heard her talking about, "I'm fixing more" and I thought, that sounds great. And I'd noticed that she was wrapping that plate up and she's taken it with her back to her apartment. I thought, well that was smart and you have something to eat later tonight if you're hungry. You have some to eat tomorrow. And then as the story unfolded, I realized that she had asked for more and she had prepared more and wrapped it up and she was taking it back to her roommate for her to have something to eat. So how does that fit with Psalm 67? That is Psalm 67. That is a person asking for more. Enjoying it. Loving it. Being satisfied by it. Wanting more so they can take it to somebody else so that they can have more. I wasn't there, I don't know how it goes, but I bet it went something like this. "Hey Ashley, I brought you food from Mamaw's." "Maddy, you're so sweet. Thank you so much. I'm so hungry. Maddy, you're Mamaw's an artist. Wow. Your Mamaw is so generous. Wow, Mamaw, can I just call her Mamaw myself? This is so good."

You know what happens when we ask for more, and it's not for us? When we ask for more and it's for somebody else, all the peoples praise him. I'm asking you today to join with me as a church and ask God for more. Ask Him for more people, ask him for more money. Ask Him for more time. Ask him for more abilities, ask him for more opportunities. Ask Him for more days. Ask Him for more health. Ask Him for more wisdom. Ask Him for more understanding. Ask Him for more, and if you're going to ask him for more, don't let Satan trick you into letting that more cling to you so that you have more. Period. We live in one of the wealthiest counties of the state. Found that out last week. We are considered the most educated county in the state of Georgia. I think God might be foolish that he would place me as the pastor in the most educated county in the state of Georgia. If there's a place in Georgia that the nations, that the peoples, ought to be able to see the glory of God. Listen, God, sending his blessing. Don't let it get caught up in our possession. Let God make you and me and our church a channel of blessing.

I started asking for more in 2006. I was asking God for more people, specifically asking God for more people that would respond to the call of vocational ministry to go to our nation and our world with the Gospel. I was burdened, heavy hearted, by the lack of people that I could name and could see that they've answered this call to minister. And I said, God, you said, pray for the heart, pray for the workers in the field and I'm asking you for more. I remember around 2006 just being able to identify maybe 10 or less by name, that under my watch had had responded to this life call of ministry as a vocation. I began to study that and read about it and pray about it and think about it and talk to others about it. That was kind of the doctoral work that I did at Gordon Conwell related to that call to ministry. And I remember six years later sitting down about to go in before the group of professors to defend my major project. It's a nerve wracking day, nervous, six years of labor and prayer and love and sacrifice by Carla. I went to the chapel first and I just sat down in the balcony of the chapel all by myself there at Gordon Conwell in North Boston and I was just praying. I said, Lord, I've been praying for you to call out people. And I grabbed a piece of paper and I started writing. It's about six years since I had started praying for more. As a jotted just down the name, first names and last names, first names, last names. I sat there and before I went into the dissertation, I wrote over 60 names that in that timeframe that I could identify that had either publicly answered a call to vocational ministry, they're already on the field or they were in the pipeline being trained.

Today, I believe that we could sit down and our pastors on staff could come up with a hundred names of people that are serving around the globe, from here in Watkinsville and Athens to the ends of the earth. We talk about the river that flows through here. We ask God, bring the people, bring the people, bring the people. We have emotional times where we cry and weep as God calls out people and sends them out to be the international director of this missions group and this missions group and go to this church or go to this ministry. We see it and it pulls something away from us. But at the same time, we realize what we're part of is Psalm 67. God, would you bless us and be gracious to us and that your face shine would upon us, that your way may be known on earth and your saving power among all nations. So I'm asking you today to join with me in this prayer to begin to pray, God, would you give me more so you could do more? Would you give our church more so we could do more? Would you give us more from you so that there will be more for you, so that more will know you, so that for eternity more will praise you.