

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

A Missionary Psalm

By

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4/25/04 Villa Rica

Psalm 67:1-7

- ¹ God be gracious to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us – *Selah*.
- ² That Your way may be known on the earth,
Your salvation among all nations.
- ³ Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.
- 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. – *Selah*.
- ⁵ Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.
- ⁶ The earth has yielded its produce;
God, our God, blesses us.
- ⁷ God blesses us, That all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

Psa. 67:1-7

The intense desire of the Psalmist is that the whole world might know the salvation of God. This is the only proper attitude of any born again person. I should rather say that it is the only truly spiritual attitude.

I. God's Grace Is The Source Of Blessing

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the same God who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 4:6

First comes the shining of God's truth upon our own hearts and then we understand the meaning of the word "grace." The Psalmist wanted God to bless the Israel of God with His light so that they might in turn be the instruments of God's grace to others in the world.

Let us look for a moment at the connection between our own salvation and that of others.

We must first see the hopelessness of our own sinful condition before we are able to be His witnesses. This is so because first of all the sinful heart is selfish and uncaring about the spiritual needs of others. How can a person be concerned about someone else if he is not even concerned or enlightened to the wretched condition of his own soul?

Before I became a Christian I had a concern for people's physical needs. I went to work in a restaurant as a teenager and continued in that line of work for some time, even rising to management positions. I enjoyed serving others tasty and nourishing food. There is a ministry of people in the service industries to simply help people enjoy life more than they otherwise would.

I later went to work as a labor organizer so that people could attain to a higher standard of living. That seemed to me to be a worthy way to help others who were lower on the economic ladder than I

thought I was. That was practically a religion with me before I was converted. But I had no concern for anyone's soul because I was myself unsaved and in darkness about my spiritual condition.

When the Lord revealed His Son to me it completely changed me. I now felt that the greatest need for others was to have the light of the Gospel that I had been given. I still had a concern for people's physical needs but it was not nearly so high on my priority list. After I had been called to the ministry and had gone through seminary and was established as a minister of the gospel I was asked to go back to work in the Labor Movement by my former superior in the Union, but I declined his offer. I simply no longer had the zeal or the concern that I had previously had for improving people's standard of living or job security.

The psalmist does not ask that God cause His face to shine upon us so that he could take some system of economics to other people. No. What he says in verse 2 is, **That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.**

We are a saved people and salvation becomes the all-important thing in our lives. Now we have a heart for others to have the same benefit.

When Jonah was ordered by God to go to Nineveh he balked and didn't want to go. He took a ship to Tarshish to try and evade the call, but God saw to it that he went anyway. However, he continued to feel unkindly toward those hated Assyrians. His heart was not disposed to see any of them enjoy the salvation of God or the mercy of God. He would rather see them perish than gain heaven. This should not have been his attitude.

When the king issued a proclamation that the whole nation should fast and put on sackcloth and turn from its wicked ways and pray to the Lord for mercy and that He would turn from His burning anger, the king himself did according to his decree and even sat in sackcloth and ashes. Then God relented and did not bring the calamity on Nineveh that he had said he would do.

But the scripture says that it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry, and he prayed to the Lord this prayer, **"Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. ³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life."** And the Lord said to Jonah, **"Do you have good reason to be angry?"** (Jon. 4:2-5)

Jonah did not have good reason to be angry. Jonah certainly knew what the psalmist knew, namely that God is merciful to all who call upon Him and that he relents of sending calamity and judgment on those who repent of their wickedness. He tells us in his prayer that he knew God to be gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

God expects those upon whom he has bestowed his grace and salvation to be merciful as he is merciful and to be desirous of seeing others receive the same grace, mercy and salvation that they have received. Surely it ought to come naturally to all who have received salvation to proclaim the message of salvation to others, even to one's enemies.

But there is more reason for us to want others to know the Lord than only that the Lord would have us see others be saved. There is a reciprocal benefit when others are saved that touches us and blesses us. When other nations are praising and blessing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then there is peace and greatly improved relations between us. Jonah didn't see that if the Assyrians came to know His God it would mean they would no longer be the enemies of Israel but their friends.

We see attempts at peace in the Middle East between the Arabs and Israel. But we also see how much hatred there is between these two groupings of people. In the case of Israel, unfortunately, at the present time there is no national Christianity. The Jews for Jesus and other Jews who know the Lord have

great difficulty in trying to take the gospel to their own people. And if the people of Israel do not know Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Lord then they can hardly be in a position to take the Gospel of His love to their neighbors. They will first have to come to know the Lord as I did before they will have a heart for their neighbors' souls.

The Psalmist's prayer in verse 1 is most appropriate for the nation of Israel today, "**God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us -- that Thy way may be known on the earth, Thy salvation among all nations.**"

What a difference it would make if the ancient people of God would return to Him and be saved! When they turn to Him many others will also turn to Him. Then there can be peace in the Middle East. But until that happens I predict that there will be no lasting peace in the region. Jonah was sent to Assyria as a missionary but he never wanted the Assyrians to know His God. His heart was never in the work.

II. God's Mercy Multiplies Blessings To People

When people know the Lord they cannot help but praise Him and love Him. Their joy is a garland to their heads, and the government of God turns to be a source of great blessing. God will smile upon the people whose God is the Lord (*see Deuteronomy 28 for the blessings of God when there is obedience and then the curse when there is disobedience*).

The Psalmist is saying much the same thing in Psalm 67. When people know the Lord then the Lord causes them to prosper. The earth yields its produce. There is increased fertility and bountiful harvests.

When Adam sinned God cursed the ground because of him. The earth was not responsive to his touch as it once was. Thorns and thistles and briars came upon the ground making it more difficult to farm. But when God shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ into a person's heart, then all is changed. The curse of Adam was put upon Christ and the land can be reclaimed and be caused to yield abundantly as in the beginning.

Have you come to Him? Is he your God today? He invites you to come to him through His Son who died for my sins and your sins. He is the only way to the Father. As he said, No one comes to the Father but by Me. Come to him. Ask him to be gracious and merciful to you. Repent of your sins and trust him today.

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