

Mercy, Missions, and the Millennium

Psalm 67

Bible themes ought to govern our lives, directing all our thinking, speaking, and behaving. This Psalm, in only seven verses, covers a grand spectrum of spiritual and scriptural truth. In truth, these are the grand themes that ought to guide, guard, and govern the lives of every child of God, and every member of this congregation, as long as we live upon this earth.

Mercy

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah,” (vs. 1). The first verse is the first natural division of this Psalm. These words are words that God taught the children of Israel to use, particular the priests were to use them in blessing the people. This teaches us that there are no true blessings apart from the blessings of God; and the blessings of God are those which He has declared and described in His holy Word, the scriptures. **Num. 6:22-27** To desire and seek the blessings that God declares and describes in His Word is to be the occupation of the hearts of His people. Many want the cheap things of this fleeting, vain, vexing life, in much the same way that swine want husks and to wallow in the mire. Let those whom God has awakened to the truth and illuminated with the knowledge of the divine, eternal, and spiritual things of Christ crave and covet better things than the chaff and trough of this world.

“God be merciful unto us.” Is this not the first aspect of God that we experienced, His mercy? Were we not led to it by our first true knowledge of Him and of ourselves, when we found ourselves to be sinners far off from God, and He called us by His grace to the full and free pardon for all sin and the gift of eternal life in His Son Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for us? ***“God be merciful to me a sinner,” (Luke 18:13)***, became our heart’s cry and prayer; and because He was merciful as He revealed Himself to be, He blessed us with justifying mercy, grace, and truth, reconciling peace, and heart-felt, Holy Spirit-communicated assurance. **Tit. 3:3-7**

Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, we are constrained by the love of Christ and we long after Him who, in redeeming love, who longed after us, and we desire His favor and

blessing. ***“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us.”*** We do not merely want to taste once of the Lord’s goodness, but we now desire to abide under the shadow of the Almighty, never leaving His banqueting house of love, and always enjoying the sunshine of His face toward us. If we do not desire and delight in this now, how can we have any joyful anticipation and expectation of the life to come, when God shall be all in all, and His people shall dwell in His presence forever, beholding His face, always living in the light of His majesty and glory? That would be an absurdity, and yet we know that there are those who make absurd claims of being His people today, all the while taking no pleasure in doing His will, nor delighting in the blessings He bestows upon His faithful and obedient children and servants.

Does God saved us only to later destroy us? That is the devil’s lie, is it not? That, or some variation thereof, is the thought that he seeks to plant in the minds of children of God, that it is essentially of no use to serve God; to live a sober, righteous, godly life in this present evil world’ to forsake all and follow in the footsteps of the Lamb; to deny one’s self; to denounce one’s self-will and desires; to renounce the claims of others upon and over us that compete or interfere with the claims of Christ and His cross upon our hearts and lives; and to come out from among all idolatry, covetousness, ungodliness, and fellowship with falsehood, error, iniquity, and devilish influence, and be separate and sanctified unto God in body, soul, and spirit. God mercifully blessed us in saving our souls from death; He mercifully blesses us in guiding, guarding, and governing our steps from then on; and He will mercifully bless us at the appearing and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What form does this blessing take? What are we to be asking for when we pray and sing, ***“God be merciful to us, and bless us”***? What does the Bible teach us this means, and therefore what and how are we to think about it and understand it? **Gen. 49:22-26** God is the source of blessing. He is the blesser. And what manner or sort of blessings should we expect from *“the mighty God of Jacob ... the Almighty,”* who is able to *“bless thee with the blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb ... unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills”*? All blessings should be sought, looked for, and expected from our great and merciful God, who

has saved us from so great a death with so great a salvation, having loved us with so great love! The blessings of eternal things, and the blessings of temporal things. The blessings of heavenly things to come, and the blessings of earthly things in the here and now. The blessings that come from Him blessing our efforts, labors, and work, and the blessings that come from elsewhere and for which we can claim nothing except the benefit, and give Him thanks! If God is the blesser, and all blessings come from Him, then we should expect them to come by way of the channels which He has revealed to us in His Word, faith, hope, trust, humility, obedience, expectation, and whole-hearted reliance upon Him and submission to His will. We should base all our desires on this one great foundation, and look for all of our blessings to flow from this one great fountain and source, His everlasting mercies. We ought to reason thus, that if He has been so richly and immeasurably merciful to us in saving us by the shed blood and unfailing intercession of His own dear Son, then He will surely richly and unceasingly bless us with all that is good and perfect. Do not all things in the visible realm of His creation testify to that fact, that He is good and doeth good and means to do us good?

Eph. 1:3 Again, this points us to the source of, and also the nature of, all our blessings. They are from *“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”* the same who loved us with such love that it can only be said, *“For God so loved,”* (John 3:16). His love is manifested, openly displayed and demonstrated, love. *“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him,”* (I John 4:9). His love was in harmony with and working together with His mercy. *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,”* (I John 4:10). And they are not merely blessings of things in this life, but even more so of the life to come, being *“spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* **I Pet. 1:3-5** The blessings that worldly men and women crave in this life end in this life; but the blessings of God, that are according to His mercy, upon those who seek Him by faith, are going to be yet greater and greater in the life to come than even the chief blessing received now in this life, *“and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind,”* (Isa. 65:17).

“And cause his face to shine upon us.” Ah, here is the chief blessing and experience of God’s mercy, living in His

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smiling favor! The abounding, all-sufficient, good hope producing-and-maintaining grace of the merciful and gracious God is the true blessing indeed. He may grant the wicked their desires for a time, and it may seem to our feeble, frail, fault-prone, forgetful minds that they are being blessed indeed; but upon them His face does not shine. He holds them in contempt. He blesses them only to blast them. He grants them their desires so that they may pursue their own undoing thereby. They are no better, but only become worse; whereas those upon whom He causes His face to shine are not only blessed now, but shall be blessed hereafter. He forsakes them not, because they live in the sunlight of His face. Many want to live in the sunlight, but they care not whether God's face shines upon them. They mistake getting their own way for living in God's way. They *"therefore do greatly err,"* (Mark 12:27). **Ps. 4:3-8; 31:13-16; 80:1-7** The favor of God, His taking pleasure in and delighting in us, is all. Let it be all to us. Let it be life, because in His favor is life to be found and enjoyed. Let it be joy and happiness to us, because in His favor is fullness of joy forever more. Let it be our pleasure and our delight to be found pleasing in His sight, and to have Him delight in us.

This Psalm does not end here; but this is the beginning. If we have not tasted that the Lord is gracious, and we do not live by His mercies and favor, how can we possibly hope to tell others of Him and point others to His bountiful goodness and grace? There is a proper pause and rest at the end of this first verse; and well we should be still and meditate upon these truths before we move on. And move on we will, if we meditate upon them aright, because such mercy and grace and blessing will be more than can be kept locked up inside of us, but will overflow and flow out from us, that others may also be blessed.