How Missions Should Promote the Greatness of God and the Gladness of the Nations (Psalm 67) - *Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on 5/9/2010* www.goldcountrybaptist.org

Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 67. Last week we looked at Ps. 22, which the NT makes over 20 references/allusions to, most of it which Christ fulfilled on cross. But I mentioned there are verses in that Psalm that were not fulfilled at Calvary, and are still being fulfilled, and Ps 22:27 is one of those that has not yet been fulfilled: *All the ends of the earth will ... turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations will worship before You.*

This is a grand theme of the psalms, the worship book of ancient Israel, which says again and again that the worship of Israel was not to be an end to itself and was never to be the end of the story. We are not at the end of the Bible's message until all the ends of the earth turn to the Lord, and all the ethnicities and nations have voices around the throne of the Lamb who redeemed from every tribe and tongue on earth to be one people treasuring King Jesus.

And I know that not just from what Revelation says repeatedly, or from Jesus saying the gospel will be preached to all before the end (Mt 24) or our great commission to make disciples of all nations (28). I know that and ancient Israelites knew that *from the OT*, and Psalm 67 is just one example of many in the psalms. If you come back tonight we'll see the great commission actually starts in the earliest chapters of the Bible. The gospel was preached in Genesis (not just "pictured"). Inspired Scripture in the NT says the gospel was preached to Abraham through whom all families of nations on earth would be blessed -- through Abraham's physical seed (Jews and ultimately Christ) to His spiritual seed (including us), but that's not the end, either. Gospel blessing doesn't end by going to us, it must flow through us to the ends of the earth, for the sake of God's greatness and glory and for the nation's gladness in this God

The so-called "great commission" is really a re-commission

Psalm 67 (NASB95) For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. 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.

The big idea of Ps 67, a big God with big plans for this big world, has big implications for us. The language and point of Ps 67 is so clear, it doesn't need detailed word-by-word expounding, but I pray God will use this text in *expanding* our vision for missions for God's glory and man's gladness. '1644, the Corporation of London invited the two houses of Parliament to a grand banquet ... The Westminster Assembly of Divines and the Scottish Commissioners were also invited ... Stephen Marshall, a noted preacher of the day [preached?] ... Baillie gives a full description of the rejoicings and tells how the feast ended with the singing of the 67th Psalm, Dr. Burgess reading the line, that all might take part, 'a religious precedent,' says a chronicler of the time, 'worthy to be imitated by all godly Christians in both their public and private meetings.'

It was around that same time that the same Westminster Assembly of Divines that was there (Puritan/Presbyterian/Reformed pastors and scholars, etc.) were in the process of drafting the Westminster Confession of Faith and Westminster Larger Catechism, which begins with this question that also goes very well with Psalm 67:

- Q. 1. What is the chief and highest end of man?
- A. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.

They understood rightly and biblically that the reason man is here on the planet is to glorify God and to fully enjoy God. There is no higher purpose than that. The also knew that God had blessed Europe with the Reformation and England with the gospel, but all over the planet man was not glorifying God or enjoying God. And so what grew out of Reformation soil was a missions movement aimed at bringing God glory and bringing the nations gospel joy.

Calvin mobilized missionaries, and those in the reformation tradition in England took it further across the Atlantic.

As one source says it: 'Between 1627 and 1640 15,000 people emigrated from England to America, most of them Puritans ... the seal of the colonists of Massachusetts Bay had on it a North American Indian with these words coming out of his mouth: "*Come over into Macedonia and help us*," from Acts 16:9 ... [The founding pledge of the colony: 'win and incite the Natives to the knowledge and obedience of the only true Son and Savior of Mankind and the Christian faith'²] ...

Puritans saw their emigration to America as part of God's missionary strategy to extend his kingdom among the nations... [They knew from NT God had elect from *every* nation] Cotton Mather [noted] twenty tribes of Indians in that vicinity ... [he intentionally called them "nations" of Indians, to make clear their part of the Great Commission. 11 years after the Mayflower came to these shores, John Eliot also came and] could not avoid the practical implications of [reformed] theology: If the infallible Scriptures promise that all nations will one day bow to Christ, and if Christ is sovereign and able by his Spirit through prayer [and proclamation of the gospel] to subdue all opposition to his promised reign, then there is good hope that a person who goes as an ambassador of Christ to one of these nations will be the chosen instrument of God to open the eyes of the blind and to set up an outpost of the kingdom of Christ.

And so when he was slightly over forty (not twenty but forty!) years old, Eliot set himself to study Algonquin. He deciphered the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax and eventually translated the entire Bible [the first Bible printed in America was not in English, but Algonquin!] ... By the time Eliot was eighty-four years old, there were numerous Indian churches, some with their own Indian pastor ...

[Eliot labored *on top of his job* at an English-speaking church where he was pastored well over 60 years! Modern Americans live 60 years and want to stop working, Eliot *preached for more than 60 years*, and didn't stop till his heart stopped beating!]

... This [passion for the nations] gripped the Puritan mind and eventually gave birth to the modern missionary movement in 1793 ... William Carey was nourished on this tradition, as was David Brainerd and Adoniram Judson and ... a host of others who gave their lives to reach the hidden peoples of the world. The modern missionary movement did not arise in a theological vacuum. It grew out of a great reformation tradition that put the promises of God and the sovereignty of God square in the center'3

They believed literally promises like Psalm 67:4, that even though all the nations of the earth were not yet being guided and governed by God, that one day the Lord will govern all nations on earth, and lead them as a shepherd-ruler (Heb. term of v. 4). The Puritan hope of Christ's kingdom ruling earth fully someday (whether post-mil or pre-mil, they were *pro-missions!*), combined with their view of God's absolute sovereignty, motivated ministry to the nations with the confidence that they were a part of an endeavor Jesus promised would ultimately succeed and the gates of hell couldn't stop, as Jesus had promised in Matthew 16:18 "I will build My church."

They believed God's promises like Psalm 66:4, right across the page: "All the earth will worship you ..." (not might, will worship). Notice that Ps 66:4 is not a promise that all of heaven will worship God (which of course heaven will). It promises that all the earth will worship God. And in Psalm 86, look a few pages forward, it speaks of a day when all nations will come and worship:

All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name.

For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God.

This OT theme of a coming kingdom was not an exclusive Jewish worship club (as some even in NT times wrongly thought). It was always God's plan and promise that one day all Gentile nations would worship and treasure the Lord together with them, not because Israel was so great, but because the LORD is so great.

<u>Last book of OT: Malachi 1:11</u> (KJV) ¹¹For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same **my name shall be great among the Gentiles [the nations]**; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for **my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.**

My Hebrew professor Dr. Barrick has said to this day 'Jewish synagogues sometimes display Psalm 67 on the front of the reader's stand. They arrange the psalm's words in the form of a seven-branched menorah ...Some rabbis have pointed out that Psalm 67 [minus heading] consists of 49 Hebrew words ... They also associated these 49 words with the 49 days between Passover and Pentecost. Some even practiced reciting this psalm on each of those 49 nights.'

But God didn't want Israel just to sit around and recite this psalm or just to sing it or just to make pretty pictures out of it. He wanted this to be their mission and passion and heart cry, that Israel would bless the nations with God's saving grace. So in God's providence, on those very days, Jesus Christ comes down to re-launch this OT plan Himself, by dying on Passover for Jews *and Gentiles*. Then 49 days later while Jews were celebrating the Feast of Pentecost, God's Spirit was poured out by giving the Galilean Jews the ability to speak in other tongues/languages of all the nations and people groups represented, and 3,000 of those became worshippers of Christ, with many more to come, in Jerusalem, then Judeah, and even the remotest ends of the earth.

And if/when Jewish churches kept sitting around in their own club, God would send persecution to get them out and doing their task. Psalm 67 is still in process.

We as a church in 2010, get to be a part of this psalm and a grand global eternal plan of God using us people to reach *all His people*. God will accomplish His saving purposes in the earth, and if the Western church just sits around and sings and stays in its own club, God will get His plan done with others in the persecuted church in China, Africa, South America, and even the Muslim world. But we must not repeat Israel's errors and be apathetic to the nations! We have a golden opportunity to be a part of God's global final work and our chief end, which is to glorify God and enjoy God and to spread the glory of God and joy in God to the ends of the earth.

Outline:

- 1. A prayer for missions (v. 1-2: make us a channel of blessing)
- 2. A passion for missions (v. 3-5: let the nations be glad in worship)
- 3. Our part in missions (v. 6-7: using God-given resources)
- 1. A prayer for missions (v. 1-2: make us a channel of blessing)

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.

Every OT Jew hearing v. 1 would recognize language from their classic benediction in the Torah, recorded in Numbers 6:22-27:

²²...the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: ²⁴ **The Lord bless you**, and keep you; ²⁵ **The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you**; ²⁶ The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.' ²⁷ "So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them."

And why would God be gracious and bless and cause His face to shine on Israel in favor? Psalm 67:2 says *That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.*

<This is also rooted in Genesis 12 as we'll study tonight]</p>

The inspired author of Psalm 67 rightly understood that blessing / salvation to the Jews was never the end, it was the beginning. From the beginning of the Bible and the beginning of God calling out the nation Israel through Abraham, this is what God tells him / them:

Genesis 12:2-3 "I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you ... And so you shall be a blessing ... And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."
This was and is God's plan, which includes us, the NT declares.

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light ... [v. 9 calls us "strangers and pilgrims" (NKJV)] ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans [or nations / Gentiles] that ... they may see your good deeds and glorify God

<Look over at Gal. 3 for a moment>

If we have been given light, it's not just for us or to keep under a bushel, or in our little group ("us four, no more"). Jesus said:

Let your light so shine before men so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16)

This is our chief and highest end: glorifying God by enjoying God. If our face doesn't shine with joy in God our light will not shine as brightly and men will not ask the reason for the hope within us *if we look as gloomy and unhappy and unthankful as the rest of the world!* The indictment on sinners in Rom 1 is they didn't *glorify God nor were they thankful*. Our chief end: glorify and enjoy God, not just privately but publically, globally, so others who don't will. If the physical children of Abraham wouldn't fulfill this mandate, the prophet said God can raise up from stones Abraham's children with new hearts, *spiritual children of Abraham* to fulfill this task.

Galatians 3:7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.
The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you."
So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham ...
For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus ...
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

If we spiritual children of Abraham in America don't fulfill our task like many of the physical children in Israel didn't, God will be glorified still *in* other nations *by* other nations, but we'll miss out. As Western Christianity weakens, declines in conversion growth, South America, Africa, and Asia are seeing extraordinary growth (more than they have enough trained pastors or good churches to keep up with) and these other nations are stepping up to missions.

- Did you know there are more cross-cultural Christian workers from Brazil active outside their homeland than from Britain or from Canada? Or more churchgoers in Kenya than Canada?
- Or last Sunday more worshipped in Nagaland than Norway?
- Or in Tanzania more Anglicans attended church than in Britain, Canada, and U.S. combined (the same was true in several other African countries where Anglicans are also more conservative)
- Would you have guessed last Sunday more Presbyterians went to church in Ghana than in Scotland? Or that "active Christian adherence has become stronger in Africa than in Europe"?
- Did you know last Sunday more Christians attended church in China (many illegally) than in all of "Christian" Europe? Or that the number of practicing Christians in China may soon be approaching and eclipsing the number in the United States and here Christianity is normal/legal in this "Christian nation"?⁵

Europe 100 years ago contained over 70% of the world's Christian population. By 10 years ago it dropped to 28% and is still falling rapidly. And if trends continue, many European countries will have Muslim majorities within this generation. But by the 21st century, *Africa's* Christian population has risen to an estimated half of their overall population, rising from 10 million in 1900 to 360 million in 2000, which quantitatively may be the largest shift in religious affiliation that has ever occurred anywhere.

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Christ is building His church, and He can do so without us, but I for one don't want to miss out on being a part of the process! And I hope you aren't content to sit comfortably and complacently while people who have never heard of Christ are dying – we need to pray like v. 1 says, for God to be gracious to us and if His face shines on us in favor it will be as v. 2 says so that the way (and truth and life) of salvation given to us goes through us to others around, abroad. What we see and sing and celebrate together in our Savior we can't be content to keep to ourselves, we must see others join in our joy!

Which leads us to our 2^{nd} point, prayer for missions stirring in us **2.** A passion for missions (v. 3-5)

Point of v. 3-5 in 1 sentence: "Let the nations be glad in worship." I love to sing praises to my glorious and matchless Savior, but my heart longs for others who don't know Him to join in the chorus. You've heard of "preaching to the choir" – well, this is preaching *for the choir!* To preach/study this psalm faithfully you must desire more voices added to heaven's choir, sinners changed to singers!

'Are our hearts dismayed and burdened because most people curse God rather than praise Him and love Him? Does it concern us that there are so many joyless faces and empty lives? Our destiny is to be fulfilled in worship. Few are experiencing this today. Even the church is [dead] and apathetic. Large segments of God's people hire professional worshipers and then watch them perform. Thus the pews are filled with spectators and critics.'

Where is our care for the nations? Where are our prayers for the nations? We shouldn't assume our church is healthy without that. I could show you pictures of poverty-stricken kids with flies around their mouths to move your emotions ... but I want to aim higher.

John Stott: 'The highest of missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission (important as that is), nor love for sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God ...), but rather zeal – burning and passionate zeal – for the glory of Jesus Christ ... concern for His Imperial Majesty Jesus Christ, and for the glory of His empire...the honour of his name – [we should be] troubled when it remains unknown, hurt when it is ignored, indignant when it is blasphemed. And all the time anxious and determined that it shall be given the honor and glory which are due to it.'8 [Rom 1:25]

Stott's voice was an attempt to simply echo Apostle Paul's voice in Romans 1:5 where Paul says his calling as a sent-one was "to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles / nations for the sake of His name." Paul didn't do this for his own sake, or even primarily for the sake of the Gentile nations in the Roman Empire and beyond. It was for the sake of God's name and empire!

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. ⁵ Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

And though it was ultimately and primarily about the greatness of God, his missionary heart was also for the gladness of the nations. The chief end of man (to glorify God and to enjoy God) comes together in worship and worshippers calling others to join them.

Romans 15:8 says Christ became a servant to the circumcision (Jews) "to confirm the promises given to the fathers [like Ps 67?], and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "Therefore I will give praise to You among the Gentiles, And I will sing to Your NAME." [2 Sam. 22:50] 10 Again he says, "REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE." [Deuteronomy 32:43] 11 And again, "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, And let all the PEOPLES Praise Him." [Ps 117:1] ... 13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ...

[There it is: Glorify God (v. 9), Enjoy God (v. 10, 13)]

David Brainerd's voice only lasted till he died at age 29, but as a missionary to the Indians in colonial America his passion ignited Jonathan Edwards and through him much of modern missions. As Brainerd is spitting up blood, a week from death he writes his final words that really exemplify Ps 67, glorifying God/enjoying God: 'Friday October 2 [1747]. My soul was this day, at turns, sweetly set on God: I longed to be "with him" that I might "behold his glory." ... Oh, that his kingdom might come in the world; that they might all love and glorify him for what he is in himself; and that the blessed Redeemer might "see ... and be satisfied." Oh, "come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen."

Christ is very glorified in us when we see and are very glad in Him. But we shouldn't be satisfied with Christ's sweetness for ourselves only, our heart must long for others to savor and treasure Christ, for others to join us here and good churches globally. If Jesus is as glorious as we sing, Christ for the world we must sing!

Lawson adds his voice: 'An exalted view of God should compel the believer to do great things for God ... The higher a believer's view of God, the stronger should burn his passion that others will come to know this glorious God. Psalm 67 inspires this kind of fervor – a holy zeal that more and more unconverted people from among the nations will become worshippers of the one true God ... This is the highest motive for outreach and missions. God will receive greater glory by an increasing number of worshippers who are glad in God and who declare his greatness on a global scale.' 10

Piper's voice sounds this note as well as any: 'Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over ... missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.' 11

But as Romans 1 says the problem is people aren't by nature worshipful toward God, thankful for God, or joyful in God. And though men know God, they don't glorify God/enjoy God, but they try and find joy in their worship of lesser things of our little world, exchanging infinitely satisfying eternal glory for earthly mud-pies.

Piper calls this the universal 'ultimate problem...ultimate outrage'

- 'The glory of God is not honored
- The holiness of God is not reverenced
- The greatness of God is not admired
- The power of God is not praised
- The truth of God is not sought
- The wisdom of God is not esteemed
- The beauty of God is not treasured
- The goodness of God is not savored
- The faithfulness of God is not trusted
- The commandments of God are not obeyed
- The justice of God is not respected
- The wrath of God is not feared
- The grace of God is not cherished
- The presence of God is not prized
- The person of God is not loved [is this true of you? GOSPEL]

The infinite, all-glorious Creator of the universe, by whom and

for whom all things exist – who holds every person's life at every moment (Acts 17:25) – is disregarded, disbelieved, disobeyed, and dishonored among the peoples of the world. That is the ultimate reason for missions ... [and its ultimate goal is worship, which he defines as] essentially an inner stirring of the heart to treasure God above all the treasures of the world:

- a valuing of God above all else that is valuable
- a loving of God above all else that is lovely
- a savoring of God above all else that is sweet
- an admiring of God above all else that is admirable
- a fearing of God above all else that is fearful
- a respecting of God above all else that is respectable
- a prizing of God above all else that is precious [turn to Acts 13]

In other words, worship is right affections in the heart toward God, rooted in right thoughts in the head about God, becoming visible in right actions ... God intends for his glory to be public ... he does not redeem people so that they will have merely private experiences of his preciousness. His aim is that his glory be openly reflected ... seeing, savoring, and showing the glory of all that God is for us in Christ Jesus ... among all the nations of the world.'12

In Acts 13:47 Paul and Barnabas exemplify the spirit of Ps. 67 (glory of God and gladness of the nations) as Jews to Gentiles: ⁴⁷ "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" [OT prophet Isaiah] ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. ... ⁵² And the disciples were continually filled with joy ...

What a joy it is to be involved in spreading the Word! Our chief end in missions: glorifying God so others can enjoy God forever. Psalm 96 is another text linking the greatness of God's glory with man's greatest gladness.

Psalm 96:1 Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth ... ³Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. ⁴For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised ... ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples [i.e., nations / ethnicities], Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name ... ¹¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice ...

We do not glorify God if we do not enjoy God, rejoicing in God. And if we are not glad in God, our heart will not long for the nations to be glad in God, because we will be focused on self. So what do you do if you've lost the joy of the Lord as your strength? Pray like Psalm 51:12-13 "Restore to me the joy of your salvation ... Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will be converted to you" – we may need to pray that before praying Ps 67

"Let nations be glad" – believers I met in Ecuador jungle, joy of Philippines believers, formerly communist Russia ... joyless American Christians need to be awakened by the God of Ps. 67!

Ps 67 gives a prayer for missions, a passion for mission, and also:

3. **Our part in missions** (Ps 67:6-7: using God-given resources)

The last 2 verses are so clear they almost need no comment: God blesses us so His fear, His gospel can go to the ends of the earth. If God has blessed us, and He has, it is so that we can bless others with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATIONS:

- 1. Go
- 2. Give
- 3. Get involved / informed / praying
- 4. Grow cold in your heart and disobedient

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.

¹ John Ker, *The Psalms in History and Biography*, p. 94.

² Lee Biondi, From the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Bible in America, Legacy Ministries, 2009, Spire Resources, Camarillo, Calif., p. 37

³ John Piper, "Let All the Peoples Praise Thee," Missions Week, November 9, 1986, Bethlehem Baptist Church. Also in Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions, 3rd ed., 2010, Baker, p. 73-75.

⁴ Dr. Barrick, Sunday School Notes, www.drbarrick.com, citing Amos Hakham, Psalms with The Jerusalem Commentary, 3 vols., The Bible: The Koschitzky Edition (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 2:69.

⁵ Mark Noll, The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Academic, 2009), p. 10, 20.

⁶ Piper, 16, citing Philip Jenkins, professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, in *First* Things 168 (December 2006), p. 13.

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⁸ John Stott, Romans: God's Good News for the World (InterVarsity, 1994), p. 53.

⁹ The Life and Diary of David Brainerd, available in The Works of Jonathan Edwards, or as a single volume published by Baker, 1989.

10 Steve Lawson, *Psalms 1-75*, Holman OT Commentary, p. 335.

¹¹ Piper, p. 35.

¹² *Ibid.*, 230-32.