

May 13

Scriptures: Read Psalms 66 & 67

Key Verse: “Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me!”
(Psalm 66:20)

Overview

Psalm 66 is the nation’s song of thanksgiving to the Lord, probably written in response to a great military victory that the Lord had given His people. It invites not only the children of Israel but all the earth to shout and sing joyful praises to God, and it bears witness to His greatness (cf. Isaiah 37:20; Revelation 15:3-4). It gives us the essence of true praise: that which honours, glorifies, and magnifies God by reflecting on His divine nature and attributes (66:2-3).

A second invitation is given for all to see the marvelous works of God, which causes everyone to stand in awe and give glory to Him. David recalls two historically important, supernatural events that display the power of God: when He parted the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross over after leaving Egypt; and when He dried up the Jordan River that His people might cross over into the Promised Land (66:6; Exodus 14; Joshua 3). The power with which He rules is so great that one day all nations will come into submission to Him and praise His name. Therefore, it is far better that nations bless and fear the God of Israel now, so they too might enjoy His blessings in the present time.

Speaking from his personal experience of trials and as the nation’s representative, David testifies to God’s work in the life of believers on their journey of faith. The Lord sustains our life, proves us through testing, refines us through fiery trials (represented by fire and water, 66:12; cf. Isaiah 43:2), but then brings us to a place of fulfillment and abundance. In the process, we become stronger in the faith, purer, freer, and better disciplined like a good soldier who is an overcomer and a victor. Believers, then, can expect trials, but be encouraged because God has a purpose (for further study see: 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; 6:3-12; 11:23-33; Romans 5:3-4; 8:18; James 1:2-3, 12; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-19).

David utters yet a third invitation; this time it is to all who fear the Lord. With a personal testimony, David tells of how God answered his prayers and had mercy upon him, which would not have been possible if he had harboured sin in his heart. For God to hear and answer our prayers, there must be no iniquity (perversity) in our lives, for sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2; 1:15-18). Since God is holy, pure, and perfect, we can only come before Him if we have clean hearts —when our sins have been forgiven and are covered by the blood of Jesus — then He hears our prayers and we can enter into His divine fellowship and grace (John 9:31; 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 32:1).

The authorship of Psalm 67 is not given in the title but is most likely a psalm of David. Some commentators believe it was sung during the harvest season on the occasion of the Feast of Pentecost or the Feast of Tabernacles (67:6). It is a brief and beautiful heart-felt psalm of thanksgiving. It begins with a familiar benediction (cf. the priestly blessing of Aaron, Numbers

6:24-26). The psalmist, however, has adapted it to show Israel's mission; they are to be the witnesses of God to the whole world, so that the Gentiles will also find salvation from God.

In order to properly reflect God to others, they prayed firstly that He be merciful to them. It is only because of God's mercy and grace that we experience salvation, and then He bestows blessings upon us, which include His divine favour of shining His light upon us, giving us guidance, enlightenment, and strength; this, in turn, allows us to see clearly, that we might walk along the straight and narrow path without stumbling and lead others into His light (for further study see Psalm 27:1; 36:9; Daniel 2:22; John 1:4-5, 9; 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 John 1:5, 7; 2:8-11; 1 Tim. 6:16; Eph. 5:8, 13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 5:14-16).

The psalmist calls for all people on earth to praise God and sing for joy. What is the reason for their joy? It is based upon God's righteous judgment and His guidance (67:3-4). When will all people praise Him? When Jesus Christ returns to rule and reign over the earth. For the present time, however, the missionary mandate is still in effect, as it was in the time of David. He prayed for God's continued blessing upon himself and others within the covenant, so they could perform their mission of proclaiming God's name to the ends of the earth. Their goal was to preach, teach, and reach people of every nation, that they too might come to know and fear the one true God (Acts 1:8). With faith, the psalmist declares "the earth shall yield her increase" (67:6), which most likely refers to a spiritual harvest of souls.

Prayer

We praise you today, dear Lord, for "Your mercy. When we deserved only eternal death, "You provided a way to eternal life. As was David's goal, may we strive to proclaim this Good News to all people.