

Psalms 67 "What does it mean to be blessed by God?"

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Date: 07 July 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, you know the condition that we're in right now. You know, Father, some of us might be filled with joy, some of us having some worries. Father, we know that you know. And so, Father, we know that your Word addresses who we really are in the states of our real hearts. And we know that your Word is very powerful, important to us, especially since we all struggle at different times and maybe a lot with worry. So we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would bring your Word deep into our heart, that your Word would form our heart and shape our heart and heal and renew and give life to our heart. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior.

Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Amen. A lot of people aren't often conscious of when they worry. I mean, obviously some of us know that we're worrying, but a lot of us aren't actually that conscious when we're worrying. But one of the times when worry really comes home, and we all, you know, maybe you'd say that's not like me, but if you have a good friend or a sister or a brother or a mom or a dad or a wife, they'd say, yeah, yeah, that's, he's talking about you.

You know, I say, what are you worried about? You say, no, I'm not worried. And I know that you're worried, right? So, but one of the things that really brings worry home to us is when we try to sleep. And things that are worried just stops us from being able to fall asleep or stay asleep or fall back to sleep.

[2 : 5 7] That we wake up in the middle of the night for whatever reason, and then we just, the worries go around and around in our minds and we just can't get back to sleep. Often the worries that we worry about are more like the tip of an iceberg.

One way to think about worry and what it's like to be a human being with worry is to think of every one of us, every human being, as we walk around throughout the day, we're actually pulling a little red wagon behind us.

If you don't like the color red, it can be a blue wagon, yellow wagon, whatever, orange wagon, whatever color you like. But we're pulling a little wagon behind us. And so something comes up that I start to worry about and I put it in that little red wagon.

And then something else, you know, and then there's some things maybe I've been worrying about for months, for years, that just, it goes in the little red wagon. And so a lot of times what we don't realize is we see human beings walking around and we don't see the invisible wagon that they're pulling.

And we don't realize that some people, those little collections of worries, some of them small, like just teensy-wingsy things, some of them quite big. But for many of us, that wagon is actually stacked higher than the ceiling here.

[4 : 06] And we're pulling this wagon behind us and all these worries are tottering. And in fact, actually what happens is another source of worry is that our worries are tottering and that they're going to sort of undo us.

And so often, even when we have worries in the middle of the night, it's the tip of the iceberg. And some of us know we begin by worrying about one thing, but then we wake up in the middle of the night and we worry from this, we worry about that and we worry about that.

But really, there's a whole little red wagon of worries that we pull around all the time and we don't often know what to deal with. The psalm that we're going to look at today, that Uzo read, Psalm 67, is actually a very, very, very, very wise and helpful psalm slash prayer slash song that talks about worry and is a bit of an antidote to worry.

And especially when, as I'm going to show you in a moment, it's connected to ancient practices, it's a very, very powerful thing for us to consider trying to use more of and make more a part of our lives.

One of the things, I don't know how many of you have ever gone to Costco, but the first maybe three or four times I went to Costco, I kept getting it wrong. Now, if you've never been to Costco, you'd wonder, like, how could you go to a Costco and get things wrong?

[5 : 27] Well, the first thing is, like, I go to a, you know, a Loblaws or whatever, you just walk in, right? No, you can't just walk into Costco, you have to have your membership card out. You have to show your membership card. If you don't show them that card, you can't get in.

And then, like, you know, a very other simple very thing is that when it comes to the cash, you don't put the cash, everybody else makes you hold on to your cart. Costco makes you let go of your cart.

In fact, you can always tell the people who've just joined Costco when you're in the lineup, and you see the people trying to bring their carts the way they normally do, and the people, the staff say, no, no, no, you have to put the cart this way.

It's, we've been formed, we don't realize it, but, you know, Loblaws and Metro and all these grocery stores, they formed us into a particular way of doing carts. I've only been to England a couple of times.

Every time it's been very, very short, just it was a work-related thing for, like, two days or three days. And I'd love to go sometime for a longer period of time. But one of the worries I would have about going to England is that they, from my point of view, drive on the wrong side of the road.

[6 : 30] And I'm so deeply formed with driving on the right side of the road that I would worry that if I was in a car, I would keep going into traffic and having accidents, just because we've been deeply formed.

So we're a wide range of ages here, small congregation, but wide range of ages. And one of the things for Christians, especially Christians under 35, increasingly they are wanting, they're sort of becoming very conscious of how the world, how Canada forms you, how there's, in a sense, a type of a forming power of our culture all the time.

And they're looking for new ways to be formed. In fact, many of them are looking into ancient practices, like having morning or evening prayer or something like that.

And so why am I saying all of this? In the English Reformation, which happened in the mid-1500s, one of the things that those early reformers did, which was very, very wise, first of all, they didn't want to just get rid of everything in the Christian past.

They'd say, well, like, why would you get rid of Augustine? Like, why would you get rid of John Chrysostom? Like, why would you get rid of some of these really beautiful prayers that have been written? Like, why would you get rid of that? But they did realize that some stuff had developed over time in how Christianity was practiced.

[7 : 50] And there's a lot of stuff that had to be purged. Things had to be reformed to be made more biblical and to also make the gospel more clear. And so that's what they did.

And one of the primary things that they did, this was a very, very bold vision in the mid-1500s. They said, you know, we would like to see every Christian on one hand like a monk.

What they meant is that it had developed within Christianity that, well, I could just go ahead and live my life, but the monks are supposed to pray and the monks are supposed to read the Bible, but I just go ahead and live my day.

And they said, no, no, it's not that the Reformation wanted to create the priesthood of all believers. It wanted to create the monkhood of all believers. It wanted to come to the place where the average person, the housewife, the shopkeeper, the farmer, the soldier, the business person, the artist, that all of them would develop a habit of praying in the morning and in the evening and reading the Bible in the morning and in the evening.

And so what they did is they went and looked, and monks had developed this really complicated way of praying six times a day. And they took three of them, the three for the early part of the day, and then they were sort of going to group them together, cut out a whole pile of stuff that was going on there and make sure that everything that was done was biblical and reflected the gospel and the three things that connected more to evening.

[9 : 18] And they created this service called Morning Prayer, and it's actually something that a group of people can do together, but it's actually something that the early Christians, like over almost 500 years ago, they wanted people to get into this habit, that every morning they would say some prayers and read the Bible, and every evening they would say some prayers and that they would read the Bible, and it would be a bit of a discipline.

And one of the things with this type of a discipline is they wanted to make sure there were certain things that really helped to form you, that were good to say every day, so they made sure the Lord's Prayer was in there, that you'd pray the Lord's Prayer every morning and every evening.

The Creed would be there, that you would say the Apostles' Creed morning and evening, because it's impossible to read the Bible without knowing the Creed. I mean, not read it correctly, it's a great help. And then they also sort of took these very foundational or formative texts that you could pray, whether from the early church or whether it was from certain Bible texts.

Now this is a long introduction to say that what they thought they would do is that they would say every second night we'll have people pray and read Psalm 67.

Every second night. That's what we'll have people do. Now let's just have a read about it, and you'll see why this is actually quite a brilliant thing. Well, I'm going to read the whole psalm through, and then I'm going to go back and say a few more things about it, but just listen to this again.

[10 : 46] Psalm 67. And just sort of remember, you know, we... See, here's the thing. One of the things that we have a problem with is we think, ah, you know, we're really smart Christians, and we're really, you know, knowledgeable Christians, and those Christians back, you know, 500 years ago, like, what did they know?

How could they possibly know as much as we know? Like, we know... No, no, no. They often knew the Bible way, way better than we do. And they knew the human heart better than we do.

And they knew there was a problem with worry. And they knew there was a problem with selfishness and narcissism. And they knew there was a problem of having small visions and only thinking about yourself.

And they knew that that was the human condition. And so they picked Psalm 67 as one of these texts to really form you in a deep way. By praying it every second night. And here's... Just listen to it.

So here I am. It's coming up to the end of the day. I have my little red wagon. It's really piled high with my worries. And then I pray.

[11 : 54] May God be gracious to us and bless us. And make his face to shine upon us. That your way may be known on earth. Your saving health, power among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy. For you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon the earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you. The earth has yielded its increase. God, our God, shall bless us.

God shall bless us. Let all the ends of the earth fear him. What a powerful thing to pray. To pray on a regular basis. To pray as you read the other bits of the Bible.

Now, so this, in a sense, this psalm was something that they wanted you to read on a regular basis.

[12 : 55] To remember all of the time as you're reading the other parts of the Bible. So that, in a sense, would start to form you. That it could be memorized. That it forms just how you think about the world and see the world.

And it's made even more powerful if you understand some of the bits in it. And, in fact, I mean, I don't... So, by the way, I know that Christians aren't happy and upbeat all the time.

I mean, that would actually be sort of weird if you always were. Like, you know, you never get tired. You never get hungry. You never get grumpy. Like, really? We have a range of emotions.

But one of the things I think... I mean, actually, what led me to become a Christian was to see in other people the emotional power and beauty of the Christian faith.

That's what led me to become a Christian. I mean, afterwards, I discovered, you know, lots of doctrines and apologetics and all of that type of stuff. But, you know, there is...

[13 : 59] For people outside of the Christian faith, they don't realize that as you enter into the Christian faith and it becomes deeper, you become deeper in it and it becomes deeper in you. There really is something emotionally powerful and beautiful in it.

I mean, obviously, you know, we have bad times and depression and all those things. But there is, in fact, still this something which, as it takes hold of us, is emotionally beautiful. And you can see that when you look at the little bits of it.

Let's look at verse 1. We're going to camp in verse 1 for a bit. But look at verse 1 of Psalm 67. May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.

Just a little while ago, there was one of the people who works at a coffee shop that I go to regularly. I came up to get... In that particular one, if you buy with a card, you can get free refills.

And I like to get free refills because... Free. So I like free. That's very powerful to me.

[15:06] Free. So I go up for my free refill and I said to him, I said, I just press send and now my day's done. I'm going to have this tea. I'm going to head for home. And so he said to me, well, what do you do?

You obviously don't work in an office. You work from home. And then I said to him, I said, well, I don't. Maybe you don't know this because you've only been working there about a month. I said, I'm a pastor of a local church.

Now, here's the funny thing. He said something which completely surprised me. I found out later on, I mean, he's like his grandparents, great-grandparents were Catholics or something, but he himself has nothing in practice.

Anyway, so I said, I'm a pastor of a local church. And he said, oh, that explains how you always have a positive attitude with us. I thought, well, that's... Not everybody thinks Christians are the bad guys.

I mean, that was one of the first things I thought. But now, one of the reasons is that I actually very self-consciously tried to be a source, like a type of secular blesser to the people in the store so that as I get to know them, I make a point of, like when I'm leaving, for instance, to say, and this is what I mean by a secular blessing, I hope you have a really great shift.

[16:19] I hope you have a great evening. I hope you have a great rest of the day. Like, I want to try to be an encourager to them. And so I was really surprised when he said, yeah, that fits. You're a pastor.

You have this constant positive attitude. Now, the reason I'm mentioning that is this very word, this very powerful word, blessing. And it's going to be important. Look at it again. Verse one, may God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.

If you could put up the first point, this is a bit wordy, and I need to qualify it a little bit and I probably should have shortened it, but what's a blessing? A blessing is power from the triune God for you to thrive.

Like, that's actually the main thing to remember. A blessing is power from the triune God for you to thrive. And then I've tried to make sure you understand.

It's a power for you to thrive. And it can be one or more of this, some combination in physical things, like in health. It can be what I call soulish, because I didn't think of a better word.

[17:22] I sort of made up a word, soulish. It had a big red mark underneath it and they didn't like it. Google or whatever was very unhappy that I used that word. But soulish, and that basically means just like everything that goes on internally, like, you know, your emotions, your mind, your will.

And then, of course, the social, because we're, you know, social human beings. And it's a blessing in the, a blessing is power from the triune God for you to thrive in any of those spheres, one or more.

And it's also a blessing in terms of either the original creation, which is what we live in right now, or the new creation, which is the new, the coming new heaven and the new earth. So what does this mean?

It means that, so for instance, I could pray for somebody that God would bless them with a good night's sleep. Well, that's something physical and something for their soul, and it's something of this creation.

I could maybe pray in my own prayer that God would bless a Muslim that I know, that not only would he grant them a good night's sleep, but that Jesus would appear to them in a dream. You can pray that, by the way.

[18 : 24] That's a good thing to pray. Now here, obviously, I'm not only praying for a physical thing that they would thrive, but obviously a different type of thriving if Jesus was to appear to them in a dream.

You know, you could pray that there'd be harmony in the family. Well, that's a social thing. That's part of this creation. That's something that God would obviously would like.

You could pray that somebody would become more prayerful. Right? So this is all, this are all that God would bless this person with a deeper prayer life. So that's what a blessing is.

And so it can be about, you know, sleep, physical things. And it's why you can pray blessing, God's blessing on people outside of the Christian faith, on all sorts of people.

A blessing is power that comes from the triune God for you to thrive. And now here's, just look at verse one again.

[19 : 24] May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us. When I became a Christian, I knew the Bible was special, but if you do ask me what the doctrine of the Bible is, I wouldn't have been able to tell you.

In fact, if you, if I, if you, if maybe in, you know, maybe one of the things they'll do in heaven for us to all have lots of a big laugh with each other is to play back what we said when we were younger Christians.

And for some of us, we'll be cringing and everybody else will have a good belly laugh over the dumb things that we said or the dumb things that we believed. And over time, you learn. That's the hope of the Christian faith that you learn.

And, and so, but the Bible, one of the things which is so powerful when you understand that Jesus wants you to know that the Bible is God's word written, that God was the one ultimately responsible for the Bible being written.

The words that are there are the words that he wanted. So what you're hearing when you hear the Bible is you're hearing God speak. That's what you're hearing. And, and so this on one hand causes trouble for people.

[20 : 28] A bit of a pre-announcement. The first weekend in the fall, we're bringing Paul Copeland to Ottawa, the Dig and Delve Apologetics Ministry, because sometimes if you read parts of the Old Testament in particular, it looks as if God's called for genocide.

It looks like he's called for holy war. Some people will say that it looks as if the text is justifying women being captured and raped. It looks like it's justifying slavery.

There's a range of issues and people say, well, if this is what God's word says, how can you, how can I worship that God? And we're bringing in this fellow Paul Copeland. Bring your questions, bring your skeptical friends, bring your Christian friends who are worried about the Christian faith.

And we're going to have a Friday evening and Saturday morning and there's a chance he's going to be the preacher the next, the following Sunday, the first Sunday in October here at Church of the Messiah. But that's in a sense that not the danger because the Bible doesn't teach those things.

It's just a matter of understanding what the Bible actually says. I mean, I probably read the Bible twice a year from cover to cover. And the more I read the Bible, the more I know that it doesn't teach any of those things.

[21 : 41] But anyway, that's a bit of an aside. But here's the important thing. If you understand that the Bible is God's word written, he wants you to pray this.

Like, what is God thinking right now in heaven? God is thinking right now in heaven. I want George to learn how to pray like this. I want George to pray about things like this.

I want the people in Church of the Messiah to do this. It's not being selfish. It's not being high. He wants me to say, God, be gracious to me and bless me and us and make your face shine upon me and us.

He wants me to pray that. See how it talks about worry? To go to bed saying, one moment. Okay. And by the way, a lot of your worry, you know, they're real things.

You know, they're real things. You have worries about maybe your job, your credit card bill, all sorts of things. I'm not saying there's no worries. But as you go to bed, God is saying to you, George, I know you got that little red wagon, but here's what I'd like you to pray.

[23 : 00] Here's how I'd like you to pray. This is what I'm hoping you'll pray, how you will pray. God, please bless me and my family.

Please be gracious to us. I know you are, and I know your face is shining upon me, and may that be true to me.

May that become more real to my life. He wants you to ask for this. It's part of the, see, this is what I was saying. It's part of the emotional beauty of Christianity.

That as we realize, God wants me to pray that. Like, he wants me to pray that. In the context of my worries and my hopes and my dreams.

And it's not just that. There's something in here which shows the, and this is connected to the emotional beauty and power of the Christian faith. faith. And it's something which is completely and utterly unique, which is seen here in verse 1.

[24 : 07] It's throughout the entire Old Testament. Look at it again. May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us or upon you.

You know, I've had, I had my times after I became a Christian faith where I had doubts about the Christian faith. And as I've shared before, for me, at that time, that I wasn't losing my Christian faith to become a, you know, like a Buddhist or a Muslim or any, I, for me, it was atheism.

It's always been atheism. That was my, that was a source of my doubt. But, you know, one of the things, it was both the low point of my atheism but in some, like my doubting my Christian faith and being pulled towards atheism or not wondering whether Christianity could be possibly true and whether, you know, all of secularism and agnosticism and there is no God and all of that, that that's actually the true thing.

And it was both on one level the depths of it but also a turning point I remember almost in every case that I'd be in some place where you could actually see the starry sky maybe a little bit outside the city and I could see the stars and the black but you know what, I didn't see the stars and I didn't see their beauty, I saw the emptiness.

I saw the void. That's the faith of atheism and secularism. It's the void. Lifeless, indifferent, empty space.

[25 : 44] It is not the God who you can become in such a way that his face shines upon you. To my friends of other faiths, you cannot possibly imagine a text like this about Allah.

There is no possible way that there would be any text like this that says Allah's face smiles upon you, shines upon you. There is a sternness and an indifference to Allah.

For Buddha? Well, even in my neighborhood I have lots of, I drive by places that have statues of the Buddha and the Buddha, the way Buddhism is portrayed is not that at the end of the day you will appear before a person whose face can shine upon you.

The Buddha is self-contained. learning to be indifferent to desire. And here is the wonderful thing when it says his face to shine upon you and especially as you go throughout the rest of the Bible and even in this psalm, it is a smile.

It is a beaming smile. It is a smile that reflects goodness. It is a smile that is pure. It is not the smile of a salesman hoping or a saleswoman hoping they can manipulate you into buying something.

[27 : 25] It is not the smile of a person hoping they can so charm you that they can get you into bed. It is not anything which is impure. There is a purity to his shining upon you.

It is affection. It is delight. It is love. And this is how God is described. This is what the ancient reformer said, you're going to go to sleep.

As you go to sleep, remember that if you are in Christ, this is how God is looking at you right now. Some of you are worrying about very, very hard things and some of you might be in a position where you are very emotionally down.

I have no authority in and of myself to say this. All I have is the authority of God's word to say that if you are in Christ right now, God's face is shining upon you.

You see, in a sense, this prayer of Psalm 67 is forming me to ask, Father, may you help me to have a humble walking knowing that in Christ you look at me and your face shines as you look at me.

[28 : 59] Now, let me tell you what I've just said about God being described here. Obviously, that's not a proof for Christianity. But if you're outside the Christian faith, don't you want this to be true?

Like, don't you want this to be true? I mean, for everyone who is outside the Christian faith, I mean, you have reasons why you're not a Christian.

I acknowledge that. I know that. I know that from the inside in my earlier life. But there's also a part of you that doesn't want Christianity to be true. But when you hear this, don't you want it to be true?

Now, some of you might say, well, George, this just sounds to me like the type of a narcissist prayer. Bless me, face shine upon me. It's the prayer of a tyrant.

Well, there's a couple of reasons why that is not the case. And the first one of them is just seen in verse 2. So verse 1 is, may God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.

[30 : 08] And it's all part of the same sentence. The ESV preserves that it's one sentence. You know, two stanzas but one sentence. So may God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us that, that, your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

So, if you could put up the second point, that would be very helpful. He blesses you to be a means by which he blesses others from every nation.

He blesses you not so you can just get bloated with his blessings and just get bigger and fatter with his blessing. Looking within, happy at your blessing.

Everything in the world is going to hell and a hand card and you're just getting fatter with his blessing. No. I mean, that's one of the things he does is when that starts to happen to us, he punctures us.

He punctures us because that's not blessing inside, that's hot gas. That's something foul that's making us really big like that.

[31 : 25] He punctures that. His word punctures that. It's, it's, it's, this is teaching me to ask the complete opposite of narcissistic questions.

If I've been blessed with a good mind, the question for me is God has blessed me with a good mind. How does he want me to use my mind to bless others? If God has blessed you with good, large financial resources, now he's not asking you to give it all away, but the question you need to ask if you have really good financial resources is, okay, he's blessed me with these financial resources.

How does he want me to give my money away to be a blessing? You know, maybe he's blessed you with time, you know, and leisure. Not that you just have to do all of your, you only spend all your time in, you know, doing, you know, praying, but God's blessed me with this time, with this leisure.

How am I to use this to bless others? I mean, one of the things I sometimes tell people that are older, that are, you know, that are, you know, retired and everything like that, is I said, you know, if you have a harried mom who's doing, trying to keep her sanity while looking after three young kids under six, if she manages one minute of prayer, that actually might be worth an hour of prayer for you.

I'm a bit nicer than that and not sort of mean, right? Because gosh, it's just so hard when you're harried with kids, but you know, but it forces me to ask, you know, and it forces us as a congregation to ask these very, very non-narcissistic questions.

[33 : 04] If God has blessed you with a good house, why has he blessed you with a good house? Is it to show hospitality to people? Is it to have people over? Is it to have people from the congregation who maybe are single or lonely into the congregation to invite your neighbor?

Like, see, this psalmist force is inviting us to ask this other question because he blesses you. He blesses you. He blesses you. He blesses us.

What do we do with the blessing? And it's one of the things which is so wonderful about this in Psalm 67. It's a big vision. Okay, he didn't just bless me so that I can bless the other people who have my political views, like the same type of music.

No, no, no. There's these nations that have come from all over the world to come to Canada. How do I bless them? How do I bless... I mean, this is why we support missionaries in Angola, why we support missionaries in Northern Africa.

I'm going to be recommending to the council because we have some extra money to give to missions that we adopt a mission by the end of the summer that's trying to bring the Christian message to Afghanistanese in Derry.

[34 : 19] Isn't that something we should want to do? Help somebody tell people about Jesus stuck in Afghanistan in the Derry language.

It's why we want to plant churches. It's why we want to have a seminary. And more and more, how can... God is blessing us. How is that supposed to go out? That's what this psalm is teaching us.

It's teaching us a really, really big vision. It's the opposite of narcissism. Now, I have to wrap things up in a moment, but there's something in here which is going to get at the deepest part of how God wants to bless us, and it's found in a type of a riddle.

Look at verse 2 again. that your way may be known on earth. Your... Look at this. Saving power. I mean, this gets a lot of Canadians nervous.

Your way? The good news is that God has made a way. Let me tell you. If I give you a way to make to reach God, get a beer instead.

[35 : 31] Don't listen to me. I can't reach God. Good grief. What a ridiculous idea. The Bible is the biggest critique of religion and spirituality, but what if God made a way?

And what if his way that he made to us was a way where his saving power can come to ordinary people like you and me? And then it continues, verse 3, let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon the earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you. So here's the riddle, which is within this text. The Bible is rejecting self-salvation. It says it doesn't work.

You have to receive or surrender to or come into what God has provided. In fact, actually, you could put up the third point. That would be very good. Claire, the greatest blessing is to surrender to God's power to save you through faith in Jesus.

[36 : 32] The greatest blessing is to surrender to God's power to save you through faith in Jesus. Well, how can this work and how does this make any sense? So you see, the big problem is, and basically, every religion or spirituality other than Christianity, which is absolutely unique, doesn't solve this issue.

You see, really what happens, like if you think of something like Islam, what you actually just have is that God has favorites. Sucks to be you, sucks to be you, sucks to be you, sucks to be you, sucks to be you.

Oh, like you, boop, sucks to be you. You know, he just has favorites. It's sort of like when Biden, or whatever's going to happen now with Biden, but when he steps down, he's going to give pardons, right?

I've used this analogy many times, and most people don't think it's justice. It's just think he's letting his cronies off, and a Republican will do the same thing. This isn't any political type of comment, and nobody thinks that these are all profound acts of justice.

Occasionally, they are, that they'll give a pardon to where there's been a clear miscarriage of it, but usually, it's just their business cronies, their political cronies, their friends, and they just give them a pass, and that's what a lot of people basically think in terms of how salvation works, but that's not what Christianity is.

[37 : 45] In Christianity, grace isn't unjust, and grace is not favoritism. justice and the demands of justice is met in a way that if it grabs you, should just gobsmack you, and I haven't used this analogy for a long time, but I'll use it again because it's a brilliant analogy.

I actually learned about it from a person from Thailand who'd converted from Buddhism to Christianity, and here's the analogy. Imagine, we're going to have to go back a few years.

I can't remember the last time that England was in the Euro Cup and made it to the finals, but, you know, whatever, 10 or 12 years ago. Imagine that England finally won the Euro Cup.

It's hard for us to imagine. Go watch some things. When your country wins, they go completely berserk, bananas with joy. So England wins the Euro Cup. First thing they've won since they won the World Cup in 66 or something like that, and there's a big victory celebration in Wembley Stadium.

Sits 110,000 people, and the English soccer team is there. There are 110,000 people going completely crazy. British rock stars are singing and all of that type of stuff, and then all of a sudden, the lights go down.

[38 : 59] A voice comes on and says, all of the exits have been lost. There's a small nuclear device in the very center of Wembley Stadium, and we're going to blow it up because it's time for England to pay for its crimes, and we're going to blow it up.

Goes out on the Internet, goes out on the radio. If the police try to do anything to try to let the people come out, do anything at all, we're going to push the button. We're going to kill everybody, but we want to have a time to humiliate the nation first.

And especially now in the age of the Internet and social media, that would go around the world instantly. In fact, large parts of the world would stop looking at what's happening in Wembley Stadium.

Now, I've used this analogy before, but it's still a good analogy. If I was to somehow or another, you know, I found out that one of you is actually a hacker, and they're able to hack in, and I call up the terrorists and say, listen, let the 110,000 people go and all go sit in the nuclear device.

They'd laugh. Why would we do that? That's stupid. But if the Queen of England was to call them up and say, I will go and sit on that nuclear device if you let the 110,000 people go, they would take it.

[40 : 20] They would take it in a moment. You think the whole world is watching while 110,000 English people are in Wembley Stadium? Just imagine what would happen if the Queen of England was sitting on that nuclear device.

They'd know they have all of England in their grip. England's past and present and future. And all the Commonwealth nations, they have them in their grip because that's who the Queen can represent.

And if they ended up detonating and killing her, there'd be more mourning, almost, over her death than 110,000.

We can all see how the one can represent the many. And this is the power and the beauty of Christianity. God, the Son of God, the Queen can represent all of England.

The Queen can represent the democracies. The Queen can represent the Commonwealth. Only God, the Son of God, can represent every human being who has ever lived. And He is the one who took our place.

[41 : 31] And He willingly took upon Himself the judgment. If you could put up the point, that would be great.

The greatest blessing is to surrender to God's power to save you through faith in Jesus. Now, I need to wrap up. My time is up. If you could just put... Actually, we'll just read verses 5 to 7 in closing and then put up the point, Claire.

So it continues. Let the peoples praise you, God. Let all the peoples praise you. The earth is yielded. It's increased. God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us. Let all the ends of the earth fear Him.

If you could put up the final point. Why is it that I pray that people I know come to a saving faith in Jesus? Why is it that I think it's so important to plant churches?

Why is it that I think it's important to support missionaries? Why is it? Well, the Lord desires more and more ordinary people from every nation to know the joy of worshiping Him?

[42 : 35] That's why you pray. Listen, your testimony might be, listen, I'm not going to tell you about necessarily what God is doing in my life right now because really right now I, frankly, I'm having a really hard time.

But I know that my Savior is my Savior. I know there will be joy. It has been joy. There will be joy. Why do we pray for others to become Christians?

The Lord desires more and more ordinary people from every nation to know the joy of worshiping Him. The greatest blessing? Surrender to a saving power by putting your faith in Christ.

Remember that God is blessing you to bless others. Remember that when you are in Christ, like right now, I can't say this in my own humanistic power, but right now, God is looking at us and His face is shining upon us.

Like right now. Let's pray that we live out of that truth. I invite you to stand. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you are a person, that you love us and you made us as people to know you and to love you, that you made us to glorify you and enjoy you forever.

[44 : 07] That's why you made us. That's what you made us for, to glorify you and to enjoy you forever. That you desire that even on this side of the grave that we would know the joy of worshipping you, of self-effacing looking at you and what you have done.

And we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for what he did for us on the cross. Father, if there are any here or any online or watching downstream who have not put their faith and trust in Jesus, Father, help them even now just to surrender.

Surrender into his hands. Surrender and say, Jesus, you are Savior. You are Lord. I am yours. Knowing that he will take all who say that to him. And Father, we ask that you help us not only to count our blessings, but as we count each blessing to also think how is it, why is it that you have blessed me with this?

How is it that this is to be a blessing that I can use to bless others? Father, we ask that you do that for us as individuals, that you help us to do it as a church. And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior.

And all God's people said, Amen.