

Psalm 67: Its Chiastic Structure and A Proposed Three Story House of Prayer Model for its Visual Exegesis

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Introduction

Traditionally Psalm 67 is regarded as a thanksgiving hymn to God in praise for a bountiful harvest, mainly because of verse 6, which is by the way the only past tense¹: “The earth has yielded its produce.” (NAS) Accordingly there are various headings to this psalm like “A Song of Thanksgiving”; “A harvest thanksgiving”; “Harvest song”; “Thanksgiving for harvest.” Today’s English Version (TEV) title must often be recast using verb phrases; for example, “The psalmist sings a song and thanks God.”² However, the original Hebrew title is different as follows: לְמַנְצֵחַ בְּנִינֹת מְזֻמֹּר שִׁיר (WTT), that is, “To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.”

Actually, when it comes to the difference between an original title and its translated one, or now prevailing title, we have to even trace back to the original Hebrew title of the Book of Psalms, which is סֵפֶר תְּהִלֹּת & תְּהִלִּים *sePer Tehilot* (“book of praises”) or simply *Tehillim*, that is, the plural form of תְּהִלָּה (*Tehilla*, meaning “song of praise”). If we know that the word “Psalm” took the place of “*Tehillim*” which was and is the original Hebrew title of the book, only because it had to be translated in Greek, when Septuagint was produced by seventy Jewish scholars at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, king of Ptolemaic Egypt, we are alarmed especially by the fact that the original meaning of the original Hebrew title which strongly defined the character of the Book, could have been lost or severely damaged, for the Greek word “Psalm” which came from the name of a musical instrument “Psaltery,” could never contain the same original meaning of *Tehillim*. Here, some of lengthy explanations in this regard from other theologians:

The English word “Psalms” is a transliteration of the Greek *psalmoi*, which is the title of the book in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (see also Luke 20:42; Acts 1:20). “Psalter” is a collective term, meaning all 150 psalms. The Latin title *Psalmi* is found in some printed editions of the Hebrew text. The Hebrew name of the biblical book is *sePer Tehillim* (“book of praises”) or simply *Tehillim*. By extension the Hebrew noun “praise” means also “song of praise,” as in the Hebrew title of Psalm 145, “A Song of Praise by David” (see also its use in 22:25a, “my praise”).

¹ R. G. Bratcher & W. D. Reymann, *A translator’s handbook on the book of Psalms* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 10.

² Ibid.

Most translators will have translated the word “psalms” in Luke and Acts. Now, however, the translator must think in terms of a meaningful title for the complete collection of the psalms, since these are bound to play an important role in the church, which until now may have known them, if at all, through a second language. In some languages “The Book of Psalms” is translated “Songs of worship,” “Chanting for praising God,” “Songs about God.”³

The Psalms: the Hebrew name of this book is “Book of Praises.” The word translated “praises” is used in the normal sense of the noun “praise” (see 22:3; 34:1; 48:10 in the Revised Standard Version [RSV], which uses the English noun). It is also used in the sense of “a song of praise” (see 40:3b; 106:12b), which is what it means in the title of the book. It is used as a title of a psalm only for Psalm 145, “A song of praise of David.”

In the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the title is PSALMOI, the plural of a Greek word meaning “song of praise” (see the plural in Luke 20:41; 24:44; Acts 1:20; and the singular in Acts 13:33). The English word “psalm” comes from the Greek word.

Translators often transliterate some form of the word “Psalms,” usually from Greek or from a major language in the area. Some languages use expressions such as “Songs of praise,” “Songs of worship,” or “Chants to praise God.” In some languages it is necessary to say, for example, “The book of the songs to praise the Lord.” In Muslim areas where the Arabic term *zabur* (plural *mazmur*) is widely known, it may be best to transliterate this title and, if appropriate, to add a descriptive subtitle.⁴

Jesus most likely never used the word “psalm,” for as we know, He spoke in Aramaic in mostly Aramaic-speaking community, then Judea.⁵ And Aramaic counterpart of “*Tehillim*” is “Mazumur,”⁶ almost identical to Hebrew word מִזְמוֹר “*mizmor*,” the meaning of which is “melody,” or “song of praise.”

Some psalms indicate what kind of composition they are; several different Hebrew terms are used, and the meaning of some of them is in dispute. The RSV rendering of these terms follows: (1) “Psalm” translates the Hebrew *mizmor*, which means a song accompanied by musical instruments. It appears in the title of fifty-seven psalms (see Psa 3) and appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Old Testament. It is translated *psalmos* in the Septuagint.⁷

This shows how crucial, even decisive, is to dub a correct title to a book, or to an individual psalm. In this sense, the now prevailing title of Psalm 67, which is quite different

³ Ibid., xii–1.

⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁵ Please visit and read the following link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_of_Jesus

⁶ <https://theholyyaramaicscriptures.weebly.com/luk-24.html>

⁷ R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reyerburn, Ibid., 10.

than the original Hebrew title, should be put under scrutiny, for it could give the impression other than the original title would do. In order to do that, we need sufficient knowledge on the psalm regarding the text, its structure, its use of vocabulary, and new plausible perspective. For this purpose I will first investigate the text, then show its possible chiastic structure, then suggest a new model for its proper exegesis.

Now that this is not an extensive dissertation on Psalm 67, but a short essay about a new perspective on the psalm, there are clear delimitations in depth and width of the study. Therefore, I hope that prominent scholars and spirit-driven pastors may contribute to the furtherance of this study in near future.

The Text

- 1 For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.
God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us-- Selah.
- 2 That Thy way may be known on the earth, Thy salvation among all nations.
- 3 Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee.
- 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For Thou wilt judge the peoples with uprightness,
And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.
- 5 Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee.
- 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. (NAS)

The heading of this psalm, here the first half of v. 1, reveals some crucial aspects on the essence of the psalm, and the psalms in general. First, it is music consisting of voice and musical instruments. This directly connects us to Psalm 150 which urges us to praise God with at least eight different musical instruments.⁸ With the word **נָצַח** (“*nizeach*,” music director, or choir director), it strongly shows that the psalm is a music piece which can only be rendered adequately by professional musicians as was the case with the followings:

And these are the singers, heads of fathers' houses of the Levites, who dwelt in the chambers and were free from other service; for they were employed in their work day and night. (1 Chr. 9:33 ASV)

Moreover, David and the commanders of the army set apart for the service some of the

⁸ A cursory glance on the palette of those instruments shows that there are all four divisions of musical instrument in modern orchestra, namely, string instruments (v.3: harp (Nevel), lyre (Kinnor)/ v.4: stringed instr. (Minim)), woodwind instr. (v.4: flute (Ugab)), brass instr. (v.3: trumpet (Shofar)), percussion (v.4: drum (Tof) / v.5: small cymbals (Tzitzlei Shama), big cymbals (Tziltzelei Terua)). Roughly since D. Shostakovich and Igor Strawinsky, piano gradually became a part of modern orchestra (not as solo instrument), creating a new division of musical instrument in the orchestra, keyboard group. Also to note is that Shofar is not a real brass instrument, but it could and should be regarded as such, mainly for its loudness of sound.

sons of Asaph and of Heman and of Jeduthun, who were to prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals; and the number of those who performed their service was:
Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king. (1 Chr. 25:1-2 NAS)

As mentioned earlier, the word “psalm” at the heading is the translation of Hebrew word מִזְמוֹר “*mizmor*,” and the word “song” that follows is originally שִׁיר “*shir*,” meaning a song (of any kind). In sum, the title of the psalm employs at least four different terms related to music, which shows how the author wanted to emphasize the musical aspect of the psalm.⁹

The second part of verse one, or the verse one after the heading, if you will, is surprisingly similar to Numbers 6:23-26¹⁰:

"Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:
The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.' (Num. 6:23-26 NAS)

Who does not know this uniquely beautiful priestly prayer which is in and of itself a powerful blessing at the same time? Ps 67:1 shows that Num 6:24-26 was very popular and beloved song or prayer at that time too. However, a closer look will reveal a slight but meaningful change in the order of main three words, “gracious, blessing, and Thy face.” If the order of three words in Num. 6:24-26, that is, “blessing, face, gracious, (then face appears again, and all of which are wrapped up by the word peace) pretty much focus on the word blessing and its content—Surely it should do so, for Num 6:23 already defines the essence and subject of the prayer that follows as such—but the order of those three words in Ps 67, that is, “graceful – bless us – Thy face” shows rather a process, the process of knowing God deeper. It is even more so, as the first word “grace” can mean also “merciful,” for the original Hebrew word חָנַן “*Hanan*” can mean also that way¹¹, which is why KJV translates it as follows: “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.”

⁹ In this sense, it is regrettable to see how the Book of Psalms in general became just a favorite subject of Sunday’s sermon and poetry at best, with its musical aspect almost totally neglected or ignored. And there seems to be not many theologians or pastors who care.

¹⁰ Psalm 67:1 is based on the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24–26. – R. B. Hughes & J. C. Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 217.

¹¹ I. חָנַן (*hā-nān*): v.; ≡ Str 2603; TWOT 694, 695—1. LN 88.66–88.74 (qal) **have mercy**, be gracious, take pity, be kind, i.e., show an act. of kindness, compassion, or benefice to another (Ps 6:3[EB 2]); (nif) (Jer 22:23+), see 634; (polel) **move to pity**, be kind (Ps 102:15[EB 14]; Pr 14:21+); (hof) **be shown compassion**, get mercy

How does one come to know Jesus? Yes, it would be impossible to make a formula for it, because there could be myriads of different ways to do so. But in general, we come to know Jesus this way: First, after hearing gospel, we realize on the one hand our sinfulness before the Holy God (Rom 3:23), on the other hand God's eternal love (Jn 3:16), all of which lead us to repent our sin and accept Jesus as personal Savior: Second, we enjoy all the blessings provided by our Father, thanking and praising God for his love, grace, and abundant blessings: Third, finally we begin to realize that what God really wants is the intimate relationship between Him and us, for we became lawfully and rightfully His children and He became our loving Father. Further, this process (gracious – bless us – Thy face) constitutes the beginning part of the bigger picture spanning from v. 1 to v. 3, even to v. 5 of this psalm. (We will get at this later.) Another invaluable insight is gained by Augustine who said to the effect that if God's face shines upon our face, then we could see ourselves, only to find His image:

[2654] Thou hast made us Thy coin; but Thine image ought not in darkness to remain: send a ray of Thy wisdom, let it dispel our darkness, and let there shine in us Thy image; let us know ourselves to be Thine image, let us hear what hath been said in the Song of Songs, "If Thou shalt not have known Thyself, O Thou fair one among women." [2655] For there is said to the Church, "If Thou shalt not have known Thyself." What is this? If Thou shalt not have known Thyself to have been made after the image of God. O Soul of the Church, precious, redeemed with the blood of the Lamb immaculate, observe of how great value Thou art, think what hath been given for Thee. Let us say, therefore, and let us long that He "may lighten His face upon us." We wear His face: in like manner as the faces of emperors are spoken of, truly a kind of sacred face is that of God in His own image: but unrighteous men know not in themselves the image of God. In order that the countenance of God may be lightened upon them, they ought to say what? "Thou shalt light my candle, O Lord my God, Thou shalt light my darkness." [2656] I am in the darkness of sins, but by the ray of Thy wisdom dispelled be my darkness, may Thy countenance appear; and if perchance through me it appeareth somewhat deformed, by Thee be there reformed that which by Thee hath been formed.¹²

(Pr 21:10; Isa 26:10+); **2.** LN 59.48–59.61 **be generous**, i.e., give a large amount of something in abundance (Ps 37:21); **3.** LN 79.9–79.17 (pilel) **charm**, ingratiate, i.e., to act. or speak in a way which is considered favorable or lovely (Pr 26:25+); **4.** LN 33.161–33.177 (hitp) **plead for grace**, beg for mercy, make supplication, request favor, i.e., make a request for a merciful or kind act. from another, human or deity (Ge 42:21) -- J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. 1997)

¹² Augustine, Saint. *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine: The Confessions, On Grace and Free Will, The City of God, On Christian Doctrine, Expositions on the Book Of Psalms, ...* (50 Books With Active Table of Contents) (Kindle Locations 72373-72383). . Kindle Edition.

In verse two, we encounter two main vocabularies, “Thy way,” and “Thy salvation,” which remind us of 2 Tim 3:15-17: “And that from a child Thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make Thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” However, there is a remarkable difference between two verses: While 2 Tim 3:15-17 directs to us the reader, the beneficiary of Ps 67:2 is not the reader. This prayer is aiming at others, that they may know God’s way, and be saved. This perspective is a sudden change from the previous verse which aims at us, the reader with full force. So here we see a progress, a process to a bigger picture, or a higher goal. (We will get at this later.) Surprisingly Augustine does not seem to give attention to it; rather he focuses on the full exegesis of the word “Thy way.”¹³ But NJB and TEV clearly show this change in their translation as follows:

The request is that all the people in the world (verse 2a *earth*; verse 2b *all nations*) may learn from experience God’s will for them (literally, his *way*) and his *saving power*. NJB translates well: “Then the earth will acknowledge your ways and all the nations your power to save.” The Hebrew verb “to know” here means not only intellectual knowledge but an experiential knowledge, that is, knowledge that results from experience. *Thy way* or TEV’s “*your will*” must often be rendered as a verb phrase; for example, “so that all the people will know what you want them to do.” *Thy saving power* again must often be translated as a clause; for example, “so that the people of all the nations may be saved by you,” or “so that all the nations may be saved” or “... know that you have the power to save them.”¹⁴

¹³ 5. "That we may know on earth Thy way" (ver. 2). "On earth," here, in this life, "we may know Thy way." What is, "Thy way"? That which leadeth to Thee. May we acknowledge whither we are going, acknowledge where we are as we go; neither in darkness we can do. Afar Thou art from men sojourning, a way to us Thou hast presented, through which we must return to Thee. "Let us acknowledge on earth Thy way." What is His way wherein we have desired, "That we may know on earth Thy way"? We are going to enquire this ourselves, not of ourselves to learn it. We can learn of it from the Gospel: "I am the Way," [2657] the Lord saith: Christ hath said, "I am the Way." But dost thou fear lest thou stray? He hath added, "And the Truth." Who strayeth in the Truth? He strayeth that hath departed from the Truth. The Truth is Christ, the Way is Christ: walk therein. Dost thou fear lest thou die before thou attain unto Him? "I am the Life: I am," He saith, "the Way and the Truth and the Life." As if He were saying, "What fearest thou? Through Me thou walkest, to Me thou walkest, in Me thou restest." What therefore meaneth, "We may know on earth Thy Way," but "we may know on earth Thy Christ"? But let the Psalm itself reply: lest ye think that out of other Scriptures there must be adduced testimony, which perchance is here wanting: by repetition he hath shown what signified, "That we may know on earth Thy Way:" and as if thou wast inquiring, "In what earth, what way?" "In all nations Thy Salvation." In what earth, thou art inquiring? Hear: "In all nations." What way art thou seeking? Hear: "Thy Salvation." Is not perchance Christ his Salvation? And what is that which the old Symeon hath said, that old man, I say, in the Gospel, preserved full of years even unto the infancy of the Word? – Augustine, Saint. *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 72383-72397.

¹⁴ R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reyerburn, *Ibid.*, 574-5.

Verse three should be dealt with great attention, not only for its content, but also for it being repeated in v.5 without any change. When the author prays “Let the peoples praise you, let all the peoples praise you,” the beneficiary of this prayer is actually God and not human. Yes, somehow human could also be given at least a part of blessing that would result from this prayer. But the primary and direct beneficiary of the prayer is God, which means that v.3 is a prayer for God, and God’s name. Sure, there is no question about that God cannot be a beneficiary from our activity by any means, for God is by definition the one who is self-sufficient, from whom everything gets its being, every blessing flows. Therefore, the only benefactor in the universe is God, and all other beings within are the beneficiaries from Him. But the point here is that the prayer is toward God, and not toward human.

Grammatically the word יְשַׁבְּחֶיךָ “*yoduka*” (let sb. praise) is jussive form which indirectly commands someone to do something.¹⁵ This is actually a call to praise God for everyone who has breath.

The call for universal praise of God is repeated in a two-line refrain (verses 3, 5). The nations are called upon to “be glad and sing for joy” (verse 4) in recognition that God is a just judge and that he guides all nations. He is the ruler of all the world, not only of Israel. The indirect commands expressed in RSV with *let* and in TEV with “*may*” in some languages must be expressed as direct commands or as requests; for example, “Praise God, all you people” or “I ask all you people to praise God.”¹⁶

Consequently this form of command pretty much requires the action of the prayer himself. If we pray “Lord, let peoples be saved,” then it is obvious that we do something for people’s salvation, like sending missionaries, supporting them, meeting their needs, etc. Interestingly Augustine begins his exegesis on this verse, using the word “confess,” instead of “praise,” but in the middle of it, he introduces the word “sing,” or “song.”¹⁷ The main reason of this is that the Hebrew word יָדָה “*yada*” (original form of יְשַׁבְּחֶיךָ) has mainly three

¹⁵ **jussive** — ‘Jussive’ refers to a third person expression of volition; that is, a wish or desire, expressed in the third person (“let him worship!”, “let them worship!”, “let it worship!”). The jussive is typically marked by a shortening of the usual third person imperfect verb form. Note that the jussive is also used to express a negative command in the second person (i.e., negative לֹא with the second person jussive form; “do not walk!”). – M. S. Heiser & V. M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology*. (Lexham Press, 2013)

¹⁶ R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reburn, *Ibid.*, 575.

¹⁷ Augustine, Saint. *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 72405-72418.

meanings like “thank, praise, and confess (acknowledge).” 2 Sam 22:50 is an example how “thank,” (KJV, ASV, NAS, LUT) and “praise” (NIV, NIRV) are interchangeable, when it comes to this word. Further, 2 Chr 6:24 shows even “confess” (ASV, KJV, NAS, LUT) and “praise” (NIV, NIRV, NAB) are interchangeable, when this word is translated, let alone that any bible can translate this very word in few different ways according to the context. But here comes a serious question about how Hebrew language can deliver the exact meaning of the speaker. Actually, almost all human languages do not work that way, for it will cause lots of unnecessary even serious confusion. And it would be very easy to prevent such confusion; They only need to create or employ just two more words, and it will suffice. But, then we have to face another question like why in the world Hebrew language seems to allow such semantic confusion. And the answer is very simple: there must be a reason. The first knowledge we gain from it is that in Hebrew, those three meanings are somehow, or even very much related to each other, to the point that they cannot be separated. C. Westermann even asserts that Hebrew language does not have a designated word for the meaning of “thank.”

In view of these facts, it is clear that the O.T. does not have our independent concept of thanks. The expression if thanks to God is included in praise, *it is a way of praising*.¹⁸

In relation to God, the concept of thankfulness and that of giving thanks are liable to be misunderstood when they are divorced from the concept of praise. The vocabulary of praise never expresses anything like an attitude or a feeling of gratitude. Where a worshiper in the Psalms says, “I will praise the Lord...,” he does not mean, “I will be thankful to God,” but, “I will respond to him for what he has done for me.”¹⁹

He further argues that when the word יָדָה “*yada*,” is translated, this fact should be taken into consideration very seriously, in order to keep the original meaning of it.

Thus today when we translate 118:1 as “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures for ever!” this sentence must of necessity be understood in a false manner. An uninstructed member of the congregation can scarcely understand this in any other sense than that because God is good, and his steadfast love endures for ever, we are called upon to thank him. That is, (a) we should be grateful to him, (b) we should express our thanks for what God has given us: “I thank thee, O God, that thou ...” This is not what is meant. Where is there to be found in the entire Psalter a prayer of thanks with this type of structure? What there is in the Psalter, however, seems at first to be a minimum, but it strikes deep. With this *hōdū* we are not called to a sentence in which *I*

¹⁸ C. Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, (Atlanta GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

am the subject, but to one in which *God* is subject. There is such a sentence in the same Psalm a few lines later in verse 5. This difference, that in the thanks of the Psalter God is always the subject, but in our thanks almost always “I” or “we” is the subject, can scarcely be overestimated.²⁰

In light of this, we could understand v. 3 as a call to everyone for praise with thankful heart and confessing God as the Lord, the idea of which is reinforced and consummated in v. 4.

The call for universal praise of God is repeated in a two-line refrain (verses 3, 5). The nations are called upon to “be glad and sing for joy” (verse 4) in recognition that God is a just judge and that he guides all nations. He is the ruler of all the world, not only of Israel. The indirect commands expressed in RSV with *let* and in TEV with “*may*” in some languages must be expressed as direct commands or as requests; for example, “Praise God, all you people” or “I ask all you people to praise God.”²¹

And now the big question arises regarding why v.3 had to be repeated exactly as it is, right after v.4. Is this just a recurring refrain as following, or will there be another specific reason?

Psalm 67 is neatly structured into three units or stanzas, each stanza being closed by a recurring refrain. The first stanza (verses 1–2) closes with verse 3, *Let the peoples praise thee...* The second stanza (verse 4) closes with the identical refrain in verse 5. The final stanza (verses 6, 7a) closes with a variation of the refrain in 7b. It is important for translators to recognize the form of a psalm and to reflect its formal features in the printed edition.²²

While Augustine and multiple commentators like R. G. Bratcher, G. Rawlinson do not seem to put much attention on the fact that v.3 is repeated in v. 5²³, A. Harman holds that “the use of the recurring refrain serves to draw attention to the theme of universal praise that dominates throughout this psalm.”²⁴

²⁰ Ibid., 29-30.

²¹ R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reyburn, Ibid., 575.

²² R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reyburn, Ibid., 574.

²³ Augustine, Saint. Ibid., Kindle Locations 72448. / Bratcher R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reyburn, Ibid., 575. / G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, *Psalms, The Pulpit Commentary vol. 8*, (Grand Rapids, MG: WM. B. Eermans Publishing Co., 1962), 40.

²⁴ A. Harman, *Psalms: A Mentor Commentary (Vol. 1-2)*, (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2011), 489.

Further, Gordon Wenham's analysis of Genesis, especially his aspect on chiasm could shed light on it, from quite different perspective, enabling us to see a big picture. (We will get at this later.)

Verse 6 needs a closer look regarding whether it could be, as frequently said, decisive in determining the subject or general character of the psalm.²⁵ D. Kidner doubts whether the past tense of v.6 really defines the setting of the psalm as a festival of harvest home.²⁶ Some argues that the tense is rather precative perfect which therefore should or could be translated differently.

In verse 6a most translations take the perfect tense of the verb (literally "has given") to refer to past action: "*The land has produced*" (TEV; also RSV, FRCL, NEB, TOB, NJB, AT, NAB, GECL, SPCL; Briggs, Weiser). Some, however, contend that this is an example of what is called the precative perfect, that is, the use of the perfect to express a petition, and so should be translated "May the earth yield ..." (Dahood; NJV, NIV). If so, the psalm is to be thought of as a lament or a petition, not as a prayer of thanksgiving for a good harvest. The clause *The earth has yielded its increase* is difficult in some languages, because the land alone is not said to perform this event. Therefore in some languages one must say, for example, "On the land the harvest has grown."

Line b of verse 6 should be translated like line a, either as a statement or as a petition. *God, our God* must often be translated as "the God whom we worship."²⁷

According to some, this psalm, like Ps. Lxv., is a harvest thanksgiving (Hengstenberg, Cheyne). But the single expression (in ver. 6) on which this view is grounded seems insufficient to support it, more especially as that expression may well be understood figuratively (see Ps. Lxxxv. 12; Jer. Viii. 20; Hos. Vi. 11; Joel iii. 13; Matt. Ix. 37, etc.). The real idea of the psalm appears to be an aspiration after the general conversion of the world, to be effected by God's special manifestation of his mercy upon Israel. This will draw all nations to him. The psalm is one of three stanzas, consisting respectively of two, two, and three verses. The second and third stanzas have the same initiatory refrain (vers. 3, 5). In the first stanza the "selah" is a pause of reverence, not a break in the sense.²⁸

Usually classified as a harvest song sung during the Feast of Tabernacles (Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, p. 462), or a hymn of public thanksgiving for the crops of the earth (so

²⁵ Refer to the introduction of this essay.

²⁶ The only past tense in the whole poem is that of 6a: 'The earth has yielded its increase.' But if the setting of the psalm therefore seems to be a festival of harvest home, it is remarkable (as Weiser points out) how nature is overshadowed by history, and the psalmist stirred by hopes that have no material or self-regarding element. – Derek Kidner, *An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, D. J. Wiseman, General Editor, (Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 236.

²⁷ R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reburn, *Ibid.*, 576.

²⁸ G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, *Psalms, The Pulpit Comentary vol. 8*, (Grand Rapids, MG, WM. B. Eermans Publishing Co., 1962), 40.

Mowinckel in VT 5 [1955], 29), this psalm assumes a different aspect with the recognition that vs. 7, *nāṭ^enāh*, “may ... yield,” in tandem with the jussive verb *y^ebār^ekēnu*, “May he bless us,” is a precative perfect. Hence this poem expresses a wish, a prayer.²⁹

The decision is a difficult one, but I have decided that the psalm is most likely to be a prayer rather than a thanksgiving psalm and that vv2, 7, and 8³⁰ should be expressed in this mode. The reasons are as follows: (1) LXX indicates jussive verbs, except in 7a; (2) the probability that the verbs in v2 are jussive is good, and, if so, it is likely that the verbs in 7b-8 are also, because these colons match v2 in the structure of the poem (Crüsemann, 200); (3) the perfect in 7a may be read as precative or optative (so Dahood, 126: *CBQ* 32 [1970] 632-33), but I have chosen to read it as characteristic: “the earth yields its produce,” perhaps recalling Lev 26:4 (cf. Ezek 34:27), with the following prayer language asking for a continuation of that process. The statement in 7a forms the basis for the supplication to ask God to continue his blessing in that form.³¹

With all this knowledge, we can safely say that v. 7 does not just reflect on the past, rather anticipates God’s blessing in near future. But the problem gets more complicated, even multifaceted, if we have to add to this tense-related aspect, one more aspect related to the span of the blessing pronounced here, for it is not only for the Israel, but seems to be for the whole world. (v. 2-7) Actually for this reason this psalm is also dubbed *missionary psalm*,³² or even messianic.³³

Having said that, now we are concluding text analysis which is by no means extensive though, and with some reservations, hoping that we have better understanding from form analysis.

The Chiasm

There are few different views regarding the form of our psalm. While Dahood divides it into three parts as v.1, v. 2-5, and v. 6-7,³⁴ Bratcher argues that it is neatly

²⁹ S. J. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II 51-100, The Anchor Bible*, (NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1983), 126-7.

³⁰ Here it means, vv 1, 6, and 8, for some bible including Hebrew bible use this numbering.

³¹ M. E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary vol.20, Psalms 51-100*, (Dallas TX: Word Books, Pub., 1990), 155.

³² G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, *Ibid.*, 42.

³³ M. E. Tate, *Ibid.*, 159.

³⁴ S. J. Mitchell Dahood, *Ibid.*, 127.

structured into three units or stanzas, each stanza being closed by a recurring refrain like v. 1-3, v. 4-5, and v. 6-7.³⁵ Rawlinson shows another possible division, that is, v. 1-2, v. 3-4, and v. 5-7, in which the second and third stanzas have the same initiatory refrain (vers. 3, 5).³⁶

Dahood supports his own division by introducing the notion of chiasm, which is notable.

The poem divides into three parts. Verse 2, with three jussives followed by one precative—all in the third person singular—expresses the request. Verse 3-6, employing direct addresses in the second person singular, set forth the reasons why God should accede to the supplication of the people. Concealing one of the most subtle and sophisticated examples of chiasm in which one precative perfect is followed by three jussive forms in the third person, vss. 7-8 balance the three jussives and one precative perfect of vs. 2, and render explicit the request obliquely stated in vs. 2.³⁷

The notion of chiasm, or chiasmus is succinctly, nevertheless well described by R. G. Bratcher as follows:

Chiasm or chiasmus is a literary device in which the various semantic elements in line b appear in reverse order of that followed in line a.

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob! (Psa 84:8)
Let my prayer come before thee,
incline thy ear to my cry! (Psa 88:2)
With long life I will satisfy him,
and show him my salvation. (Psa 91:16)

In the following example (Psa 37:21–22) the two verses are chiasm: “the wicked ... the righteous ... those blessed by the Lord ... those cursed by him”; and the second line contrasts in some way with the preceding one, traditionally called “antithetic”:

The wicked borrows, and cannot pay back,
but the righteous is generous and gives;
for those blessed by the Lord shall possess the land,
but those cursed by him shall be cut off.³⁸

The understanding of possible or hidden chiasm structure of a certain literary work could be even decisive, for in such form the conclusion or the emphasis is put at the center of

³⁵ R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reayburn, *Ibid.*, 574.

³⁶ G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁷ S. J. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II 51-100, The Anchor Bible*, (NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1983), 127.

³⁸ R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reayburn, *Ibid.*, 4.

it, and not at the end of it. Another simple and almost visual explanation about it comes from D. Slager.

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE (CHIASTIC) refers to a reversal of the order of words in a parallel construction in order to create some special literary effect (such as focus or emphasis) or to serve as a discourse boundary marker. This device produces a cross-over (X) structure, as in the following example from Eccl 3:8:

a time to love		and a time to hate
a time for war		and a time for peace

However, more complex chiastic structures also appear, as in Psa 51:5:

A.	I	
B.	was brought forth	
C.	in iniquity	
C'	in sin	
B'	did my mother conceive	
A'	me. ³⁹	

As mentioned earlier, G. Wenham has analyzed the Genesis Flood narrative and has shown that it is essentially an elaborate chiasm.⁴⁰

Gen. vi 10 to ix 19 appears to be a palistrophe containing 31 items. It begins and ends with a reference to Noah. Then Noah's sons are named and so on. Particularly striking are the references to days (lines H, I, L, O). The periods of time form a symmetrical pattern, 7, 7, 40, 150, 150, 40, 7, 7. The turning point of the narrative is found in viii: "God remembered Noah." /.../ Though a palistrophe is an appropriate form for describing the flood, there are certain features in the story which reflect the large element of contrivance in casting the whole tale into this form. /.../ The second unnatural feature of this narrative is to be found in the duration of different phases of the flood, though this is not immediately apparent. The 7 days of waiting for the flood is mentioned twice, and matches the 14 days of waiting for the water to subside. The 160 days of water prevailing correspond to the 150 days of water abating. In other words, the rise of the flood seems to take exactly the same time as its decline, namely 204 days, and these time spans are fitted very neatly into the palistrophe.⁴¹

³⁹ Slager, D, *A Handbook on 1 & 2 Kings Vol. 1-2*, P. Clarke, S. Brown, L. Dorn, & D. Slager (Eds.), (New York: United Bible Societies, 2008), 1393.

⁴⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, The Coherence of the Flood Narrative, *Vetus Testamentum* 28 (Brill, 1978), 336–348

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 337-339

Regarding why the author of Genesis did this painstaking work, Wenham suggests a reasonable explanation as follows:

It should also be pointed out that certain items in the story do not fit the palistrophe exactly. For example, Noah's sacrifice (viii 20 ff.) does not form part of the pattern. This is inevitable to some extent if the writer was to be faithful to the traditions he had received. He managed to mention the initial 7-day period of waiting twice, and to reduce the final 21 days to 14 for the sake of the palistrophic structure. But there are limits to this process if he was not to alter the contents of his sources as well as their form. Further, if he had achieved total and perfect symmetry, the story might have lost some of its interest. In most works of art perfect repetition and symmetry are not desirable. It is the variations of shape and form against the background of an established pattern that give the viewer or listener such pleasure. Total formlessness is incomprehensible. Absolute repetitiveness is dull. While the palistrophic structure provides him with a framework which draws attention to the main point of the story, he does not allow it to override his concern to reproduce the contents of his sources faithfully.⁴²

With this in mind, we are now in the position of dealing with Ps 67:5 which is pure repetition of v. 3, from a broader perspective. As mentioned earlier, to some authors v.5 is not something that draws attention; to Bratcher it is closing refrain of each stanza⁴³; to Rawlinson it is initiatory refrain of each stanza.

The psalm is one of three stanzas, consisting respectively of two, two, and three verses. The second and third stanzas have the same initiatory refrain (vers. 3, 5). In the first stanza the "selah" is a pause of reverence, not a break in the sense.⁴⁴

Now if we envisage the whole psalm with chiastic possibility, it would look like:

(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 Thy way may be known on the earth, Thy salvation among all nations.
- 3 Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee.
- 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy;
For Thou wilt judge the peoples with uprightness,
And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.
- 5 Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee.

⁴² Ibid., 340.

⁴³ See ref. 22.

⁴⁴ G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, Ibid., 40.

- 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. (NAS)

According to the definition of chiasm, it could be analyzed with minor adaptation as follows:

- v. 1: God bless us.
- v. 2: the contents of blessing (Thy way, Thy salvation)
- v. 3: Let all the peoples praise you. (identical to v.5)
- v. 4: Let the nations be glad and sing (for God will judge and guide)
- v. 5: Let all the peoples praise you. (identical to v.3)
- v. 6: the contents of blessing (products from earth)
- v. 7: God bless us.

Verse 4 should be regarded as the continuation of the idea of v. 3 with the subordinate clause (beginning with *כִּי* “*Ki*,” meaning “because”) which shows reason. Actually there seems to be no compelling reason to repeat v. 3, after v. 4, if it is not due to formal balance needed for chiasm, as in the case with Gen. viii. If that is the case, it is quite certain that the author wanted to elevate v. 3-5 as a conclusion, which is also supported by M. Tate and A. Harman as follows:

The centerpiece of the psalm is v. 5, (in our system, v. 4) which is surrounded on either side by a refrain in vv4 and 6. (that is v. 3 & v. 5) V 5 is a tricolon with “peoples” (using two different words) repeated in each colon—in fact, “peoples’ is found in each of the seven colons of vv 4-6. The major theme of the psalm is the importance of Yahweh’s blessing Israel for the peoples of the world (Crüsemann, 201)...⁴⁵

This psalm goes further than the previous ones as it includes a prayer for double blessing—first on Israel, and then on the Gentiles. The repetition of the refrain in verses 3 and 5 highlights the vision of the Gentiles sharing in the saving mercy of God, and it also divides the psalm into three parts. The beginning and the end invoke God’s blessing (vv. 1–2 and 6–7), while in verses 3–5 God is addressed directly. Such a switch in address is not unusual in Hebrew poetry.⁴⁶

Be aware though that chiastic structure is not an unchanging solid formula, nor there is always very clear demarcation line between chiastic work and non-chiastic one. The following example shows how the demarcation line could fluctuate:

⁴⁵ M. E. Tate, *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁶ A. Harman, *Ibid.*, 487.

The theme of Psalm 15 is given in the opening questions of verse 1, which consist of two lines that are nearly equivalent in meaning and identical in syntax, except for the “going beyond” element in the second clause. There “holy” is added. The structure of the poem is a neatly balanced arrangement of plusses and minuses. Verse 2 has three positive verbs. Verse 3 follows with three negatives. Verse 4 switches back again to three positive statements until the end of verse 4c, where again the negative reappears (and does not change), making with verse 5a and 5b three negatives. The poem closes then with a positive and a negative. In diagram form we have:

- 1. Question
- 2. + + +
- 3. - - -
- 4. + + +
- 4c-5ab. - - -
- 5c. + -

In terms of the alternation of plusses and minuses, it is possible to think of the poem as chiasmic, or perhaps simply as alternating lines ABABab. The contrast of plusses and minuses set down in alternating lines serves the purpose of focusing the attention upon the exemplary conduct of those who would enter the Temple for worship.⁴⁷

Sure, there is also almost perfect chiasmic structure which could serve as an ideal example. (See Table 1) But in many cases, it could be very difficult to discern whether there is chiasmic relationship between the lines. (See ref. 37) In any case, it is crucial to find out the intention of the author.

Three Story House of Prayer Model

Even before I propose this model, I have to admit that any proposed model for easier or deeper understanding of God’s word contains danger of reductionism. The now prevailing Creation-Fall-Redemption-Sanctification-(Glorification) Model, or scheme is a superb one which shows very succinctly and clearly what is all about in OT and NT. However, this theologically proven model is suddenly silenced or at least dwarfed before Isa 43:21 which reveals the purpose of God’s creating human in an indubitable way. So it is safe to say that there is no human-made model that works perfectly in understanding God’s word. Nevertheless, a well-conceived model has more merits than drawbacks. In this sense, I propose a model which I hope could contribute to deeper understanding of our psalm.

The psalm is in and of itself a prayer, but not just a prayer for Israel; it is a prayer for the whole world. This view is shared by quite a few theologians. R. B. Hughes concludes that

⁴⁷ R. G. Bratcher, & W. D. Reburn, *Ibid.*, 133.

[Table 1]

Genesis vi 10-ix 19

A	Noah (vi 10a)
B	Shem, Ham and Japheth (10b)
C	Ark to be built (14-16)
D	Flood announced (17)
E	Covenant with Noah (18-20)
F	Food in the ark (21)
G	Command to enter ark (vii 1-3)
H	7 days waiting for flood (4-5)
I	7 days waiting for flood (7-10)
J	Entry to ark (11-15)
K	Yahweh shuts Noah in (16)
L	40 days flood (17a)
M	Waters increase (17b-18)
N	Mountains covered (19-20)
O	150 days waters prevail ((21)-24)
P	GOD REMEMBERS NOAH (viii 1)
O'	150 days waters abate (3)
N'	Mountain tops visible (4-5)
M'	Waters abate (5)
L'	40 days (end of) (6a)
K'	Noah opens window of ark (6b)
J'	Raven and dove leave ark (7-9)
I'	7 days waiting for waters to subside (10-11)
H'	7 days waiting for waters to subside (12-13)
G'	Command to leave ark (15-17(22))
F'	Food outside ark (ix 1-4)
E'	Covenant with all flesh (8-10)
D'	No flood in future (11-17)
C'	Ark (18a)
B'	Shem, Ham and Japheth (18b)
A'	Noah (19)

Gordon Wenham's Chiastic Analysis of Gen. 6:10-9:19⁴⁸

the psalmist prayed for God's blessing for the purpose of causing all peoples to know (Ps. 67:2) and fear him (see 67:7).⁴⁹ G. Rawlinson makes it also very clear, as he says "Its most remarkable character is its world-wide breath of sympathy, hope, and prayer."⁵⁰ He further argues that for the people of Israel this kind of prayer is possible only by the Holy Spirit.

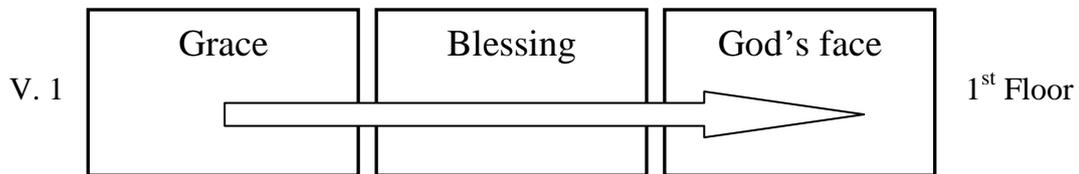
⁴⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *Ibid.*, 338.

⁴⁹ R. B. Hughes & J. C. Laney, *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 217.

⁵⁰ G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, *Ibid.*, 41.

It is like a beam from the unrisen sun of Christianity. The more one studies the intense narrow national sentiment of the Jews, the more plain is it that strains like these could be inspired only by the Spirit of God. The psalm is Hebrew of the Hebrews—sung probably for ages in the temple. Yet its aspiration can be fulfilled only by the gospel and kingdom of Christ.⁵¹

Now what we want to do is to examine the structure or the order of this fascinating prayer. In v. 1 there are three things the author asks of God: mercy, blessing, and God’s face. So if we want to build a house of prayer in our imagination, it would be the first floor with three rooms: the first room is named “grace”; the second room ‘blessing’; and the third room “God’s face,” as [Table 2].



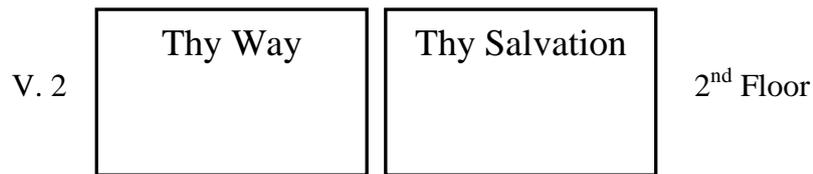
[Table 2] The first floor of the house

As mentioned earlier, these three rooms, or the order of them beautifully show the process through which we come to know God. Actually our prayer shows not only what we need, but also who we really are, even how spiritually mature we are. In this sense, v. 1 is very unique in that no other bible verse contains those three words in one verse. So “No wonder this beautiful little psalm has been enshrined so prominently in the worship of the Christian Church.”⁵² This prayer is a prayer for the one who prays and not for others, which is also meaningful in that the first step toward higher prayer is to pray for oneself. It would be ridiculous to pray for world peace, if we do not have peace with God. As Jesus said, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” (Mk. 12:31 NAS) he assumed that you know how to love yourself, or at least he pointed out how important is to love yourself.

If v. 1 is about a prayer for oneself, v. 2 is definitely a prayer for others. It focuses on two main terms, Thy way and Thy salvation, hence two rooms on the second floor.

⁵¹ Ibid., 41.

⁵² G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, Ibid., 41.

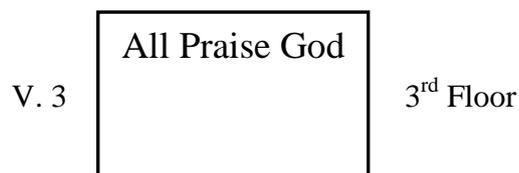


Rawlinson asserts that God’s way has threefold meaning as follows:

God’s way is: (1) The revelation he has made of himself in his dealings with mankind. In its wildest sense this includes his universal providence (Acts xiv. 17; Prov. Viii. 22; Isa. Lv. 8, 9). (2) The revealed path of man’s duty (Ps. Xxv. 9; Matt. Xxii.16). (3) The way of salvation; of return, reconciliation, access to God (Acts xviii. 26; John xiv. 6).⁵³

The term “way” almost instantaneously reminds us of Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life. (Jn 14:6) If we remember the universal call of this psalm for all nations to praise God (esp. v. 3 & 5), it is natural to connect the psalm to Christ, because what the author is praying for will only be fulfilled through the gospel of Jesus.

Now v. 3 introduces to us another level of prayer, and that is a prayer not for oneself, nor for others, but for God. For this verse I envisage the third floor with one room.



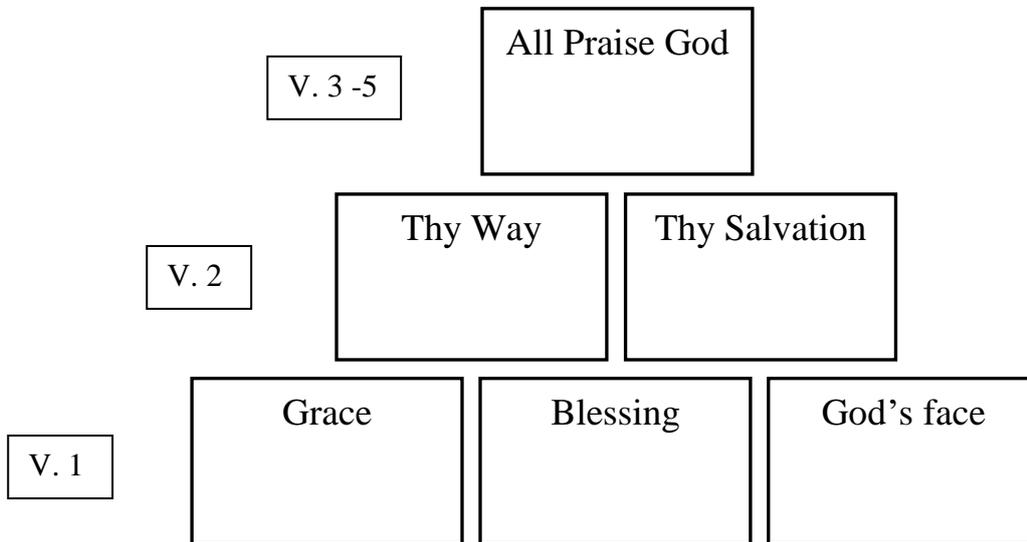
Why does the author of the psalm pray like this? Or what made him pray like this? On the second floor, we begin to see others, their need, their agony, and their sinfulness with its dire consequence, which makes us pray for them. And this prayer directly corresponds to the Great Commission (Mat 28:19, 20) by Jesus, for which myriads of churches send missionaries who give their life in foreign countries. As a result, there are many who had never a chance to hear gospel, became the disciples of Jesus, after being saved. And here I am very sure that most of all Christians will end their prayer, without knowing there is one more story to go, for they never heard of it, thinking that’s all they are supposed to do in prayer.

But why do we have to go up to the third floor of the house? What is the thing that you want to get through v.3 prayer? It is not for your blessing, nor the salvation of others. Then what is that you want to accomplish through v.3 prayer? Yes, it is a prayer for God

⁵³ G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, Ibid., 41.

alone. And I'm sure this prayer is the ultimate prayer among all other prayers, for we all exist for God, (1 Cor 3:23, 8:6) and created for Him alone. (Isa 43:7)

Now we can assemble those modules which are just part of three story house as follows:



[Table 3] Three Story House of Prayer

This simple but robust structure, resembling Egyptian pyramid, a three story house of prayer, which is intrinsic to Ps 67, has almost inexhaustible teachings not only on prayer, but also on holistic life in the Lord. We see too often someone got stuck in the first floor since forever; someone dedicating him or herself to others, while personal relationship to God is broken; someone enjoying intimate relationship with God, but ignoring others; someone living altruistic life, evangelizing people, but from pure altruistic love, and not from love for God; someone claiming to love God, but never showing love for neighbors, and such story can go on and on. Further, we might use this structure even as plumb line to evaluate how healthy is your church. If this model would work for individual, surely it will work for the church too. It is encouraging to see there are many churches fostering missionary activities in foreign countries with financial sacrifice and enthusiastic prayer support. Sure, they reached the second floor, which is thankful. However, it is regrettable to see there are just few churches which pursue to please God with praise in a biblical sense, which belongs to the third floor. Most of them even think they please God, while they actually please human with

praise music.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, this kind of misunderstanding happens all the time, the main reason of which is the ignorance of God's word. Paradoxically, here we see hope. Hope for change, hope for fundamental change. Yes, but only if we know the reason and we want to correct anything according to right knowledge on God's word.

Few more thoughts on the third floor. Actually v. 3 (supported by v. 4, 5) directly points to Isa 43:21: "The people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise," (NIV) for its ultimate character is found also in Isa 43:21. If you really want to serve God, to understand His word, so His will, should be the first qualification you need. (cf. 2 Tim 2:15) Why do you have to do that is because you need to know His plan, and ultimately His purpose. Otherwise you might pursue your own goal, while thinking you pursue God's purpose, which we see too often in the church. And it would be hard to find a bible verse that tells the purpose of God's human creation more plainly than Isa 43:21. Isa 43:7 also reveals indirectly God's purpose of human creation, which is to glorify God, Isa 43:21 more specifically elevate the importance of praise ministry as the sole and ultimate purpose of human creation. Earlier I discussed about the relationship between those two verses and the message embedded in them as follows:

This verse makes it very clear that we Christians were created for the purpose of God's glory. But what is not clear here is what is meant to be created for His glory? How should we live in order to live up to this verse? Yes, there are some other verses which might shed light on this like Ephesians 2:10 which reads "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Through this verse we know that doing good works is equivalent to glorifying God, for we are created to glorify God, and at the same time to do good works, and therefore doing good things cannot be different from glorifying God. That is what we normally understand regarding our purpose of life as Christians. However, there is another important truth we need to learn. /.../ Here the bible pinpoints what is meant to be created for His glory. The Hebrew word translated in English as 'praise' is Tehilla, (תְּהִלָּה) which means praise song or praise music, so it doesn't allow a broader and vague notion of praise like a way of living glorifying God, or anything that reveals God's glory. It does not mean there is only one way to glorify God. No, there are many ways. But the fact that this verse clearly pinpoints the praise ministry as the sole purpose of God's human creation, shows us the heaviness and even ultimate importance of praise ministry before God's eye. If that's not the case, and praise ministry is just one of myriads of

⁵⁴ It is easy to discern whether praise ministry of a certain church is geared to human or to God, if you know how they select music. Quite a few churches select praise music according to senior pastor's personal music style.

ministries for God, Isaiah 43:21 would be redundant, because already Isaiah 43:7 clearly teaches glorifying God as the purpose of our being.⁵⁵

The first half of Isa 43:21 also draws attention: “The people I formed for myself...” The message is very plain and powerful, as if it is further echoing, “and I did not form you for yourself.” The Hebrew word “לִי” *Li*, translated as “for myself” is a combined form of two, particle preposition and 1st person common singular suffix, which make the meaning of “to me, or for me.” It is not in the scope of our study to delve into the full meaning of this fascinating preposition. But just to mention few like “to, for, towards, at, in, into”⁵⁶ shows how many thought God had in mind, as He designed and created us, according to the purpose He set for us, and how abundant our relationship to God could be. This very preposition is directly connected to 1 Cor 3:23 and 8:6:

and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God. (1 Cor. 3:23 NAS)
“yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.” (1 Cor. 8:6 NAS)

Unfortunately, there seems to be too many Christians who still think they need God’s help and His blessing in order to fulfill their own dream, which shows that they are still at the center of their own life and God is just a generous helper, and powerful protector. They can barely go up to the second floor, but never could or will they go up to the third floor where there is only God’s glory, thick cloud of glory, and nothing else is important. Yes, we have to climb up to there, where no other prayer is needed, but the prayer for the praise from all the nations to God, for only it matters there and forevermore!

⁵⁵ M. W. Johann Kim, *The Necessity of Church Choir in the Context of Cambodian churches*, *Aletheia, The Journal of CTPI*, Vol. 1, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Cambodia Presbyterian Theological Institute, 2017), 210-220.

⁵⁶ alw. prep., expressing existence or action towards, over against, or for s.thg or s.one: — 1. spatial: **to, towards**: movement in a given direction (arrival at a destination not at issue): lammizraꞑ to the east Ne 3₂₆, l@f¹n¹m forward Je 7₂₄; p¹n¹ l@darkô turn to his own way Is 53₆; — 2. **to** e*xpressing arrival at destination): l¹°ref to the ground Ps 44₂₆, q¹rab laššaqat comes near to the Pit Jb 33₂₂; — 3. temporal: a) **until**: labbœqer Dt 16₄, lammœ±çd 1S 13₈, l@±dl¹m forever Gn 3₂₂; b) **at, in**: l@±çt ±ereb at the time of evening, in the eve. Gn 8₁₁, l@rûm hayyôm in the cool of the evening Gn 3₈; l@yôm p@quddâ on the day of ... Is 10₃, lamm¹%o¹r during rain Je 10₁₃; w. inf. l@da±tô when he knows Is 7₁₅; c) for a time > for a duration: l@y¹m¹m ±ôd šib±â after 7 more days Gn 7₄, lišn¹tayim after 2 years 2S 13₂₃; — 4. direction (no physical movement): niksaf¹ l@bêt you long for the house of Gn 31₃₀; he¹@m¹n l¹hem feel secure toward them = believe them Je 40₁₄; — 5. therefore w. vbs. of saying, **of, about**: °imr¹ l¹ say of me Gn 20₁₃; l@±itt¹m ... nibb¹° prophesy of times ... Ez 12₂₇; therefore in superscriptions: lann@b¹°¹m concerning the prophets Je 23₉; — 6. intention, purpose of an action: office or station to which s.one is appointed (in Eng. **into**, ... **to be** ..., or 2 acc.): ±¹¹ l@ Gn 12₂, n¹tan l@ 17₆, °¹m l@ Is 5₂₀ all: make s.one s.thg; b¹n¹ l@ build out into Gn 2₂₂; material or obj. into which s.thg is made:-- from Bible Works version 10.

This teaching reminds us of Jesus' teaching on prayer in Mat 6:9-13. It begins with "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven." (NAS) In our term it is already Third floor prayer. What is at stake here? From Luk 11, we know this prayer should serve as a model prayer for the disciples who asked Jesus for such. It begins and ends with the prayer for God, which embrace the prayer for ourselves. In our term it begins in the third floor and comes down to the first floor, only to return to the third floor. It almost visually depicts Jesus' round trip from heaven to earth, which is consummated by resurrection and ascension. But there seems to be at least one very important lesson regarding prayer.

Jesus teaches that the most important prayer, or even the ultimate prayer is the prayer for God's glory to the extent that any prayer for human need cannot precede it. At that time people in general were living in a dire situation, plagued by primitive medical care, malnutrition, and exploitation by Roman rulers, so there were always urgent human needs and so prayer requests. Therefore, the way Jesus began the prayer seems to say to them, "I know you are in urgent needs; nevertheless you should begin prayer like this, for asking for God's glory is the most urgent prayer." As M. Luther exegetes The Lord's Prayer, he describes a very similar view:

The First Petition. Hallowed be Thy name. This is, indeed, somewhat obscure, and not expressed in good German, for in our mother-tongue we would say: Heavenly Father, help that by all means Thy name may be holy. But what is it to pray that His name may be holy? Is it not holy already? Answer: Yes, it is always holy in its nature, but in our use it is not holy. For God's name was given us when we became Christians and were baptized, so that we are called children of God and have the Sacraments by which He so incorporates us in Himself that everything which is God's must serve for our use. Here now the great need exists for which we ought to be most concerned, that this name have its proper honor, be esteemed holy and sublime as the greatest treasure and sanctuary that we have; and that as godly children we pray that the name of God, which is already holy in heaven, may also be and remain holy with us upon earth and in all the world.⁵⁷

Further, M. Henry emphasizes this point, comparing The Lord's Prayer with the ten commandments:

II. *The petitions*, and those are six; the three first relating more immediately to God and his honour, the three last to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual; as in the ten

⁵⁷ M. Luther, *The Martin Luther Collection: 15 Classic Works*, (Waxkeep Publishing. Kindle Edition), Kindle Locations 10873-10883.

commandments, the four first teach us our duty toward God, and the last six our duty toward our neighbour. The method of this prayer teaches us to seek first the *kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and then to hope that *other things shall be added*.⁵⁸

Here we can even catch a glimpse of the Grand Lineage like “*Ten Commandments—Ps 67—The Lord’s Prayer*,” in which Ps 67 functions as an important linkage between two giants. But the uniqueness of Ps 67 is that it specifies what is the ultimate ministry God expects all nations to fulfill, and that is praise ministry.

Gospel in its fullness

According to A. Harman, three psalms in a row, 65-67, share the same view on God’s blessing for every nation:

Psalms 65–67 are all linked together because of their universalism. The expression ‘all [the ends of] the earth’ occurs in each one (65:5; 66:4; 67:7). The link with Psalm 66 is even more patent, as it ends with the phrase ‘blessed be God’ (*bârûch ʿlohîm*), while Psalm 67 begins and ends with the thought of God’s blessing on his people (‘may he bless us’, *vîvâr ʿkênû*, v. 1, and ‘may God bless us’, *y ʿvâr ʿkênû*, vv. 6 and 7). This psalm goes further than the previous ones as it includes a prayer for double blessing—first on Israel, and then on the Gentiles. The repetition of the refrain in verses 3 and 5 highlights the vision of the Gentiles sharing in the saving mercy of God, and it also divides the psalm into three parts.⁵⁹

E. R. Conder and W. Clarkson together wrote a homiletic which combines Ps 67 and gospel in a wonderful way, especially regarding the scope of the prayer of this psalm:

“On earth;” “among all nations.” St. Paul says that the *gospel was preached beforehand* to Abraham, in the promise that in his offspring *all nations* should be blessed. We are apt to take too narrow a view of the gospel and of salvation. We think and speak of “saving souls.” That is the beginning; for there is no reconciliation to God but by *personal* repentance, faith, turning to God. But nations have their life: their collective action, righteousness, guilt, growth, decay, prosperity, ruin. Knowledge of God’s truth, and obedience to God’s law, are the conditions of national welfare. We have a message to “all nations” as well as to “every creature.” We are to labour as well as pray, that God’s will may be “done *on earth*, as it is in *heaven*.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ M. Henry, *Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1638.

⁵⁹ A. Harman, *Psalms*, *Ibid.*, 487.

⁶⁰ G. Rawlinson, E. R. Conder, W. Clarkson, *Ibid.*, 41.

In other sense also I doubt whether we are accustomed to a too narrow view of the gospel and salvation, that is, the gospel without the third floor idea which is actually the purpose of the gospel. And this is clearly testified by Eph. 1:3-6.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,
4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love
5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
(NAS)

It is almost unbelievable that in very short span, from v.3 to v.5, Paul not only mentions but also connects the core terms of the gospel like, blessing in Christ, election, sanctification, love, predestination, adoption, sonship, in a way that reveals the essence of the gospel. But, many theologians tend to forget the importance of v.6 as the purpose of it. The Greek text “εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, ἐν ᾗ ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ· (Eph. 1:6 BYZ)” begins with preposition εἰς, “*eis*,” meaning “spatially denoting motion toward a place; logically indicating purpose in order to, with a view to, for the purpose of (Mt 26:28).⁶¹ Therefore, it is not exactly right to regard v.6 as a result of v.3-5 as R. G. Bratcher comments as follows:

Without a break the text continues: “for the praise of the glory of his (God’s) grace” (Hdb). A variation of this is found also in verses 12a, 14c. This is the final result of God’s salvation through Christ: his people will praise him. The expression *Let us praise* is not a request for permission but a kind of exhortation and is equivalent in many languages to an expression of obligation, for example, “we should praise” or “we must praise.”⁶²

The result and the purpose of something or a plan could look similar, when it is successful. But they are way different in that there should be first a purpose and an act should begin to pursue the purpose, long before we get to the result. In order to understand God’s will, especially in the bible, we need to know His purpose. Therefore, the use of preposition

⁶¹ Friberg, *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Bible Works 10).

⁶² R. G. Bratcher & E. A. Nida, *A handbook on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 15.

εἰς especially here should be taken very seriously, for it thereby reveals the purpose of the gospel which embraces actually the whole bible, especially related to God’s salvific plan. In that sense we could even extend the Grand Lineage proposed beforehand as “**Ten Commandments—Ps 67—The Lord’s Prayer—Eph 1:3-6**. Unfortunately many Christians, even many spiritual leaders do not seem to care much about God’s purpose. Sure, they care about God’s glory. But many seem to think that God’s glory is directly related to the number of the church, or the amount of offering, or even the size of the church building. However, Ps 67 and Eph 1:3-6 show clearly that God’s glory is much more related to the praise to Him than any other.⁶³

Further, in this regard the second word from v.6, that is ἔπαινον, “*epainon*” draws our attention, which consists of two word “ἔπ” and “αινον.” The first word is prefix meaning “upon,” while the second word is a verb meaning “to praise.” Now the question is this: if the second word is already verb meaning “praise,” then why Paul had to add the prefix to it? Unfortunately, there is no bible commentary—as far as I searched so far—which takes it very seriously and expounds on it, that is, the possible difference between the meanings of αἶνον and ἔπαινον in detail. Fortunately though, there are few dictionaries which give a glimpse on it.

A 1: αἶνος (Strong's G136 Noun Masculine ainos ah'ee-nos) primarily "a tale, narration," came to denote "praise;" in the NT only of praise to God, Matt 21:16; Luke 18:43.

A 2: ἔπαινος (Strong's G1868 epainos ep'-ahee-nos) **a strengthened form of No. 1** (epi, upon), denotes "approbation, commendation, praise;" it is used (a) of those on account of, and by reason of, whom as God's heritage, "praise" is to be ascribed to God, in respect of His glory (the exhibition of His character and operations), Eph 1:12; in Eph 1:14, of the whole company, the church, viewed as "God's own possession" (RV); in Eph 1:6, with particular reference to the glory of His grace towards them; in Phil 1:11, as the result of "the fruits of righteousness" manifested in them through the power of Christ; (b) of "praise" bestowed by God, upon the Jew spiritually (Judah == "praise"), Rom 2:29; bestowed upon believers hereafter at the judgment seat of Christ, 1 Cor 4:5 (where the definite article indicates that the "praise" will be exactly in accordance with each person's actions); as the issue of present trials, "at the revelation of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet 1:7; (c) of whatsoever is "praiseworthy," Phil 4:8; (d) of the approbation by churches of those who labor faithfully in the ministry of the Gospel, 2 Cor 8:18; (e) of the approbation of well-doers by human rulers, Rom 13:3; 1 Pet 2:14.⁶⁴ (bold font added by the author)

HELPS Word-studies

⁶³ Isa 43:21 will make this view much easier to understand.

⁶⁴W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Kindle Edition), Locations 27967-27982.

1868 *épainos* (from 1909 /*επί*, "on, fitting," **which intensifies 136** /*αῖνος*, "praise") – properly, fitting (apt) praise, i.e. accurate acknowledgment (appropriate commendation, recognition); enthusiastic acknowledgment for what deserves praise.⁶⁵ (*bold font added by the author*)

From Mt 21:16 and Lk 18:43 which are two only verses in the bible where *αἶνον* is used, we know that this word is sufficiently serious. And there is no reason to believe that Paul, knowing the heavy meaning of it, just added the prefix to it on a whim. Therefore, the only reasonable conclusion is that the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul to use that word *ἔπαινον*, had a solid reason to do so, and the reason is to strengthen the meaning of *αἶνον*. Moreover, Paul employs practically the same clause *εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ* (for the praise of his glory of grace) two more times, that is, totally three times in very crucial place in the same chapter:

11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,
12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be **to the praise of His glory** (*εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ*).
13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,
14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, **to the praise of His glory** (*εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*). (Eph. 1:11-14 NAS) (*bold font added by the author*)

In fact it appears in v. 12 and v. 14, but v. 11 and 13 are also included for better contextual understanding. Facing these two relatively complicated sentences, our first job is to find what is subject, verb, and object or purpose. The first sentence (v. 11, 12) could be reduced to “we have obtained an inheritance /.../ to the end that we /.../ should be for the praise His glory (or we should praise His glory), and the second one (v.13, 14) to “In Him you were sealed with the Holy Spirit to the praise of His glory (or we should praise His glory).” In effect Paul says “the purpose of our obtaining an inheritance and our being sealed with the Holy Spirit is (*not for our own sake, but*) for the praise of God’s glory.” Then with v.6 where he said that the purpose of our salvation is “strengthened praise to the glory of His grace,” Paul seems to have decided to make it very sure that all three pillars of our spiritual life, that is, salvation, obtaining inheritance, and eternally being sealed by the Holy Spirit, are conceived (from eternity to eternity) by God for the praise of His glory! And do not miss or

⁶⁵ <https://biblehub.com/greek/1868.htm>

relegate the fact that Paul uses three times the term ἔπαινον (strengthened praise) right before the most worshiped word δόξης (glory), to something secondary or just auxiliary. We tend to teach “Live for the glory of God,” and many bible verses also teach the same. But here, Paul expounds the meaning of “living for the glory of God” as “(strengthened) praising God’s glory, and in so doing, he elevates the status of praise up to the one we found in Ps 67 and Isa 43:21. Simply put, he restores the original status of praise to its fullness in the frame of the gospel in its fullness.

Yes, the purpose of the gospel is not just human salvation and their blessing and sonship, and not just to praise the glory of His grace, but (strengthened) praise of God! And this again supports Three Story House structure. But then we run into another question like, “How can we translate this word into foreign language, if there is no such word in it?” And the answer is sadly “we do not have any means to make it right.” My two cents: the only way to make it straight is this: First, theologians should examine it; if it is really so, they should teach it to pastors and seminary students; then pastors should teach the church about it; and the church should make the most of it, especially when they evangelize people. In this way, through toil and prayer, we could recover the fullness of the glorious gospel.

The main problem we encounter when the above teaching is ignored is that if we lose this God’s purpose from our sight, we surely will become man-centered, which is happening in far more places than we imagine, and since too long ago. In fact all the main issues prevailing in contemporary churches could be regarded roughly as ramification of ignoring or neglecting the third floor. In fact the authors of the bible again and again remind us of the utmost importance of it, which many cannot see, for they are too much accustomed to the salvific perspective. Now is the time we need a different perspective, the perspective of praise, which helps us easily move to the third floor and hit the bull’s eye.

Concluding Thoughts

In light of this, R. B. Hughes’ title to our psalm, “A Call for Universal Praise to God” should be regarded as a very thoughtful one.⁶⁶ And with this we end up confronting the subject of the introduction of this article again. It is certain that this psalm does not belong to

⁶⁶ R. B. Hughes & J. C. Laney, *Ibid.*, 217.

Messianic Psalms.⁶⁷ But it clearly expects Messiah to come and accomplish God's mission for the whole nations, that all the nations be blessed according to God's providence.

Thus the psalm invites a messianic perspective which looks forward to an age when the relationship between Yahweh's saving work in Israel and his blessing-work in all creation will no longer be obscure but will lead the peoples of the world to rejoice and sing of his judgments and guidance (v 5).⁶⁸

Furthermore, it points to the third floor as the ultimate place where only God's praise matters. Again, if we know Isa 43:21 is not redundant even in view of Isa 43:7, we have to be serious about praise ministry. And if we really want to be serious about it, we need to open our eyes, ears, and heart to those words in the bible which reveal what is God-centered praise and what is not, what is God-pleasing praise and what is men-pleasing one, and how we should start authentic biblical praise ministry. And be expectant, for someday the whole book of Psalm, that is, the Hymnal in essence, if you will, will near you not just as Hebrew poetry, but as a praise book where God's words, be it comforting, inspiring, aspiring, strengthening, transforming, illumining, guiding, elucidating, educating, or even commanding, are meticulously weaved with human voice of worship, praise, and prayer, beautifully elevated with music, offered to God as sacrifice!

For this we pray, "Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee."

⁶⁷ Messianic Psalms: 2; 8; 16; 22; 41; 45; 69; 72; 89; 102; 109–110; 118; 132

The messianic psalms are those that predict aspects of the person and work of Jesus Christ. While skeptics have questioned the validity of such a category of psalms, Christ explicitly declared in Luke 24:44 that the psalms speak of him. Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 as he hung on the cross (Matt. 27:46), thus demonstrating its messianic significance.— R. B. Hughes & J. C. Laney, *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶⁸ M. E. Tate, *Ibid.*, 159. (v.5 here is in fact v. 4.)

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Appendix

Three Story House for Prayer

(Sermon text on Ps 67:1-3)

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song . God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us-- Selah.

2 That Thy way may be known on the earth, Thy salvation among all nations.

3 Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee. (Ps. 67:1-3 NAS)

From long ago The Book of Psalm is regarded as very unique, revealing, and even intriguing; very unique in the sense that there is no such book in the bible consisting of 150 praise songs, very revealing in the sense that it contains lots of new information and messages that were not included in Mosaic law, and very intriguing in the sense that we still cannot say we got a full knowledge on it, for quite a few passages are prophetic pointing to the end of the world.

If you want to understand something which is huge, a good start is to figure out whether it has clear division in it. Let's say you have the bible and the first understanding is that you have two big parts in it, that is, OT and NT.

And there are few prominent theologians who did great jobs regarding categorization of Psalm. Unfortunately today we don't have time for studying it, comparing those categorization methods. Rather, we want to focus on categorization of prayer, for as far as I know, no other verse in the bible reveals the category of prayer more clearly than today's verse.

These three verses at the beginning of Ps 67 virtually and visually show a house building which has three floors. So I want you to draw a fancy three story building in front of your eyes mustering all of your power of imagination. But wait a second, here is the draft of it: you have to build a three story house of which the first floor has three rooms, the second floor has two rooms, and one kind of big room in the third floor. So, If you have six rooms total and the general shape of the house somehow resembles kind of Egyptian pyramid, you're in good shape. And we name it Three Story House of Prayer, so TSHop instead of iHop, or Tshop.

Now a good news is that this house is yours, and better news is that you have the manual, according to which you can fill all the six rooms with prayer, and today's verse is the manual. Today's sermon is nothing less and nothing more than the skill about how to fill it biblically, and the study about the meaning of it.

Now before we tackle it in detail, I'll show you the big picture to help you have some idea on that: v. 1 is responsible for the first floor of TSHop where you have three rooms; v. 2 is about the second floor with two rooms; and v. 3 is about the third floor with one big room. Let's read again the first verse: God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us-- Selah.

This verse shows that first thing we should do in our prayer is to ask God for his grace. A sinner like you and me needs desperately God's grace. And without it you're not saved; you have no relation to God; your sin is not forgiven, and you're damned. In that situation whatever you do is opposing God. Even your good deed is as Kierkegaard rightfully said "a shining sin." But thank God, he loved us so much so and sent his own Son Jesus to die on the cross on our behalf, that those who believe in him may be saved, as in John 3:16, and as our brother Wally said multiple hundred times.

The bible tells us further in Eph. 2: 8,9:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9 NAS)

Through this we know that all the salvific cause, progress, and result revolve around the very word "Grace." Actually even Jesus himself was with God's grace as follows:

And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Lk. 2:40 NAS)

So whenever you begin prayer, you should check whether you're in His grace. Yes, it is true that once you got his grace, you'll never lose it. But if you take it lightly, you will become more and more arrogant before God, to the point that you ignore God's grace, and your relation to God will be broken. Asking for God's grace is not just a few sentences you talk to God every day, rather it defines your attitude before God. KJV uses the word "merciful" instead of "graceful" in this verse as follows:

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. (Ps. 67:1 KJV)

No wonder, for the original Hebrew word means "to show favor." When you ask God for his grace and mercy, we have to prostrate ourselves before God in a very humble manner, and how could you not? Therefore in the first room you should define who you are before God as someone who is a desperate sinner whose sin was totally forgiven by God's grace and purely cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Then we enter the next room which is the room of blessing. Do we have to ask God for his blessing, even after we're virtually too much blessed? And the answer is "Yes." God's blessing is unseen. But there are wide variety of visible and invisible fruits from which we know God's blessing: his guidance, his presence with us, his help, forgiveness, intervention, healing, his word, our family, our church and even suffering because of his name are those, just to name a few. Material blessing is just one of them. Actually the biblical meaning of blessing is quite different than what many people think today.

First, it is the recognition that God is the source of blessing. Let's read Gen. 12:2-3.

And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen. 12:2-3 NAS)

Here we find God who is the source of blessing in his essence, to the point that he is so, even as he hasn't blessed at all. Let me put it this way: we all know God is God of love, but how do we know that? And the answer is by the cross of Jesus. But, my question is this: if there hasn't been the cross of Jesus, is God not God of love? By no means! He is God of love from everlasting to everlasting. His love isn't dwarfed by any inch even without the cross of Jesus, for God is love in his essence which never changes.

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 Jn. 4:8 NAS)

But, if there is no cross of Jesus, we have problem. How do we know that God is God of love, if we don't know the cross of Jesus? Let's read verse 9:

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (1 Jn. 4:9 NAS)

Here the word "manifested" shows clearly that God's already existing love is shown to us through the cross of Jesus, and not that God began to love us as he decided to send his own Son to us. Likewise, God is God of blessing, even as he did not bless at all. Therefore, when we pray for God's blessing, it shouldn't point to the blessing itself, but God who is God of blessing.

Second, it is the recognition that God's intention is not curse, but blessing:

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jer. 29:11 NIV)

As we ask God for his blessing, we admit that God is the only source of blessing and his intention is blessing, and there is no other god who can bless us.

Third, the blessing is the counterpart of curse.

We all remember the weird story of Jacob who asked his father for the blessing to the point of deceiving him for it.

And Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your first-born; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me." (Gen. 27:19 NAS)

Now I'm asking you this silly question: will you do like Jacob did for your father's blessing? I definitely won't do it, not because I'm better person than him, but because I don't think the blessing is that decisive, without which I'll be like cursed. But OT has only two options, blessing or curse.

"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if

you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known. (Deut. 11:26-28 NAS)

Sure, we can have a different view on God's blessing today, but we're not allowed to miss out on the lesson it bears: the blessing and curse dichotomy very clearly points to the final judgment and eventual eschatological dichotomy of heaven and hell. If we understand this continuity, we understand why the devil in this world so fervently promotes postmodernism which never allows this kind of dichotomy, instead, saying that whatever fits you is truth for you. In that sense, we're not allowed to forget or ignore the original meaning of blessing in the bible. If we think like "Yea, I can do on my own, I'm in good shape, even without God's blessing," it's arrogance, and I'm sorry you're in very bad shape. Every time we pray, we have to ask God for his blessing, knowing that he is the only source of blessing, and he will gladly do it in his abundance.

The third room is the room of relationship with God:

God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us-- Selah.

What is that God wants to give us most? It is not just salvation, nor just a happy life, not just a blessing. It is God himself, and without the intimate relationship with him, it is impossible to receive God every day.

As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake. (Ps. 17:15 NAS)

The psalmist didn't ask God for more, for he didn't have to, for he had everything in his face. And you know what, there is a hidden word here. And that word is "Love." If you don't love somebody, just looking at his or her face won't make you happy.

Last Friday, no sooner had we arrived in NY JFK Airport, than we realized that Wally passed away. And that news changed everything: we had to cancel our trip to Boston, cancel important meeting with a piano professor there; air ticket from Boston to Louisville became useless for it was non-refundable; instead, we had to buy tickets from NY to Louisville in a hurry; we had to rearrange returning rent car not to Boston but to La Guardia airport, and I know most of you did that kind of change too. And why did we do that? Just to see Wally's face one last time, before we meet him in heaven. And thank God we arrived in Louisville at 5:00 PM sharp, and the visitation was only until 6:00 PM, so we had to hurry and with God's grace we could make it! And seeing his face and hugging Betty made us weep but thanked God that he let us see Wally's face one last time, for there was nothing we ask God more. That's it.

And this sort of Mission Impossible story reminds us of one thing: do we long to see God's face this much, and that every hour? Are we truly satisfied with His likeness, or do we need something else for our happiness? And that's the teaching we learn in the third room. If you feel you're dry, or your soul is empty, even with lots of blessings, the only remedy is God's face.

A good news is that his face is already shining upon you. You only need to open your spiritual eye and vacate your heart in order to accept him. Now we finished filling the three first floor rooms, which are grace, blessing, and God's face. And do you know the common denominator of those three rooms? It is about myself. All three rooms are on behalf of me. So You need grace, you need blessing, and you need personal relationship with God. And if you keep those three in your prayer, you're on the right track!

And now it's time to go up to the second floor.... Let's read verse two:

That Thy way may be known on the earth, Thy salvation among all nations.

In the second floor of TShop, you have two rooms: first room is dubbed Thy way, and the second room is salvation. At first glance it feels like we're very familiar to those words, for Jesus said:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (Jn. 14:6 NAS)

The way is very important. If you're in a pit and have no way out, you're virtually dead. Yes, there are many ways in the world. But unfortunately, many of them, or most of them lead to destruction and death. Actually, even as it seems that there are many ways to God, there is only one way to him, and that is Jesus. Thank God the bible gives us the new way, which is God's way, and it is Jesus! If there is someone who is still on his or her own way, I even beseech you to walk on God's way and live up to his word.

The second room of the second floor is salvation, and we know very clearly what kind of salvation is this. There are many kinds of salvation in the world: salvation from dreadful situation or political persecution, salvation from poverty, salvation from incurable disease, curse, even salvation from solitude... But here the bible is talking about the salvation of our soul through the blood of Jesus, for if your soul is not saved, all other salvation is meaningless. People tend to be satisfied with whatever salvation they longed for. But if your soul is not saved from your sin and its consequence, that is eternal death, you're not saved at all. Now as we see, the contents of the second floor and their meanings are pretty much obvious. But the most important thing is not yet touched, and you know what? It is the change of the perspective on the recipient. While the first floor is a prayer for me, the second floor is a prayer for others.

That Thy way may be known on the earth, Thy salvation among all nations.

No wonder, we're in the second floor where we have better and broader view. In the first floor we just see ourselves, but in the second floor, through the window or on the balcony, we see others, their need, their problem, and their agony, their sinfulness, their final destination... And that is the reason why we have to be in the second floor. Are you in the second floor yet? If you just pray for yourself, your children, your family, your job... I'm afraid you're still stuck in the first floor. Yes, we have to spend enough time at the first floor, but that doesn't mean you have to stay there forever. God wants you to go up to the second

floor and see other people and pray for their desperate need for salvation, and even go to them to preach God's way and salvation.

Prayer doesn't mean just prayer. If that prayer is genuine, it automatically entails action. Let's say you pray for intimate relationship with God, and don't read the bible which is God's very word, your prayer is not genuine, and you know it. If you pray for God's blessing on you and you ignore his very word, everybody knows that your prayer is fake and not going to be heard. Likewise, if we pray for other people's salvation, we have to do something for it.

Every time I receive financial support from our church, I'm very humbled, for I know that the financial situation of VSBC is not that affluent from of old, and that very fact makes it very clear that your prayer for my ministry and mission is genuine, and I'm very happy to say to you "thank you"! So we know that when Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples in Mt. 28:19,20, he was at the second floor too.

Now let's move on to the third floor and read verse 3:

Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee.

This prayer is about God, about God's glory, and about his name. If we follow verse three carefully, we somehow feel what the psalmist feels. His expression becomes stronger. And if we read verse five, it is even more real:

Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee.

Wait a second! Are you sure it is verse 5 and not 3? Please compare those two verses with your own eyes with your own bible. Wow, verse 3 and 5 are identical! And what do you think is the reason the author of this psalm had to repeat it? Yes, this is poetic escalation, and if we study further, the psalm 67 has chiasmic structure, in which the conclusion is not coming to the end, but in the middle, and so these verses from 3 to 5 are the powerful conclusion. And I'm very sure that the psalmist had to employ this specific literary device in order to deliver the powerful touching of the Holy Spirit as it was, which was stirring even the deepest part of his soul. Every time I read this verse, I almost hear his exciting voice which is very loud. Can we read together in a loud voice?

Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee.

Do you somehow feel the powerful stirring in the psalmist's heart? Yes, there must be a prayer for God, for his glory, for his name's sake. In order to complete our prayer, we have to come to this far! We have to come up to the third floor. I told you that on the second floor we gain the view on others, for it is higher than first floor. Now the third floor is the highest one, and you're very near to God's glory. So no wonder we pray for him. So this TShop model works very well. Now I ask you a very essential question: what if there is only two floors and no third floor? What would our prayer house look like? Let's say, all of your prayer in the first and second floor were successfully heard, for God is gracious to you. If that's the case, are you happy with that? You may, but I'm not.

Look at the picture very carefully. There is no God! And if this is all we want, we're not serving God, we just serve people including yourself. We need God on our behalf. O my goodness! This is a religion which is perfectly human-centered, relegating God to a tutelary deity who exists for our good. But the bible teaches exactly the opposite: God created all things for his glory, and God created human that they proclaim praise to him and for him!

the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise. (Isa. 43:21 NIV)

the people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise. (Isa. 43:21 ASV)

the people whom I formed for myself, so they might praise me." (Isa. 43:21 NET)

I do it for the people I made for myself. I want them to sing praise to me. (Isa. 43:21 NIRV)

This verse very clearly reveals why God created us, what was the purpose of God's creation of human, and so what is the purpose for which I exist. And this essential, ontological recognition of who am I is being proclaimed and defined here. Now one sad thing is that this maybe the most important prayer is too much ignored or neglected. Sure, I know very well that we pray for God's glory every day. But we have to check whether it is just the pretext for more blessing. If we really want to glorify God and live up to God's purpose, we're not allowed to leave out this prayer.

Now, if we genuinely pray for this that all the peoples praise God, we have to also figure out what we should do for it. Let's me ask you "Do you really want all the peoples to praise God?" Then here is my two cents for you: Please let their children praise God first. If we could manage to let the children of all nations praise God, then I'm sure in few years all the peoples will praise God! Actually we see those things happening already. Unchurched families became church members, after children began to praise God in their family. Those who left their church for some reason returned to God after being touched by children's praise. And there are many such testimonies. And if all the peoples praise God, he will be glorified, and his name will be magnified like never before! And here is the utmost importance of children's praise ministry. But don't get me wrong, I'm not giving this sermon to promote my ministry, rather I'm telling you why I have to do this ministry among other urgent ministries.

The prayer for God's cause is not only written here. You remember how the Lord's prayer begins:

'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:9-10 NAS)

If you think this is the model of prayer, and yes, it is, you know the structure of this prayer reveals something very important. And look at the beginning... everything is related to God, his will, his name! As Jesus taught prayer to his disciples, he couldn't help but start like this, saying to the effect "Hey, I know you have lots of things to ask God for, you need desperately this and that, maybe you're in great pain and you're in very bad shape. Nevertheless you should first ask God for God's cause and not your own cause! For any human cause cannot

surpass God's cause." If you compare this with Psalm 67, we know that Jesus hit bull's eye from the very beginning. Yes, he is already on the third floor!

As I conclude my sermon, I pray that we come to God nearer everyday, living a life that is pleasing to God through this God-centered prayer which ultimately give God glory and praise.

Let's pray.