

7/16/23 - Psalm 86 - "Abounding in Steadfast Love and Faithfulness"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 July 2023

Preacher: Rick Deschenes

[0 : 00] So, the text today is Psalm 86, and it reads, a prayer of David.

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am godly. Save your servant who trusts in you, you are my God.

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving and abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer and listen to my plea for grace.

In the day of my trouble, I call upon you, for you answer me. There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

[1 : 11] For you are great and do wondrous things. You alone are God. Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name.

I give thanks to you, O Lord, my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love towards me.

You have delivered my soul from the death of Shiloh. O God, insolent men have risen up against me. A band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.

But you, O Lord, are a God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn to me and be gracious to me.

Give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor that those who hate me may see and be put to shame, because you, because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

[2 : 11] This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Thank you, Llewelyn. So, as we read, today we will be continuing our summer in Psalms with Psalm 86.

And so, we're in the third book of the Psalter. If you're not familiar, the Psalms are broken into five books. We find ourselves in the third book of the Psalter.

And whenever we were deciding earlier in the summer who would preach which Psalms, Brent gave me first choice, and I jumped at Psalm 86, because there's a verse in this Psalm that is among my favorites.

But it's quite the Psalm. I wasn't really expecting to find so much in this Psalm. And so, I hope that you will come to love it as well. But David, he once again, as often, finds himself under attack, right?

A band of arrogant, violent men have come against him, and so he lifts up a prayer. And we can sense helplessness in this Psalm.

[3 : 26] He is in real, imminent danger, and so he prays to the Lord for rescue, that he will not die. And so, we find a sense of trembling in David's words.

And we'll look in detail. But I want to break this Psalm down into three sections. It's broken similarly in the Bibles, the Pew Bibles.

Different translations break it up differently. But I've titled this sermon, Abounding in Steadfast Love and Faithfulness. And I've broken it into three sections. Verses 1 through 7 will be, Give ear, O Lord.

Verses 8 through 13 will be, Teach me, O Lord. And verses 14 through 17, Be gracious, O Lord. But before we jump into studying these words, I want to ask you a question, just to set the tone.

What do you fear? Maybe failure or loss, perhaps poverty, maybe cancer, maybe disease, maybe sin, temptation, or death.

[4 : 40] What do you fear? What keeps you awake at night? What causes you anxiety? I want to note that God created us with many passions.

He created us to love. He created us to rejoice. He created us to worship. And He also created us to fear. When sin entered the creation, our passions were twisted and used to worship man rather than God.

But I want to invite you to see through this psalm that when it brings glory to God, fear is meant to be a gift. And so I'll ask again, what do you fear?

Let's pray before we dig into this psalm. Heavenly Father, I pray that you will give us wisdom, that you will open our eyes to see, our ears to hear.

Lord, that you will instruct us in your way, that you will unite our hearts to fear your name, and that you will be glorified. We pray this in your holy name.

[5 : 50] Amen. As we move through this psalm, I invite you to keep your Bible open to Psalm 86 and to follow along in the verses so that you can see where David prays, what he asks for, and what he trusts in.

So we will start in section 1 by looking at verses 1 through 7. And if we spend time with this psalm, we'll notice that David asks God a total of 15 petitions, and many of these petitions are matched with a cause for action, which is noted by the word for.

He asks God a petition, and then he says, because of this. And so the first eight petitions are in section 1, there are two in section 2, and there are the remaining six in the last section.

But we'll start in verse 1. The first petition is a request that the Lord listen, that the Lord extend and bow down his ear, and that he answer David.

The phrase, incline your ear, we find it all through the psalms. It occurs repeatedly, and this psalm is a petition made in trust, that the Lord will attend his ear and listen to those who call upon him.

[7 : 19] Some examples we find are Psalm 17.6, 31.2, and numerous others, too many to list. But then David matches his petitions with a cause for action.

Why will God listen? Why will he answer? Because David is poor and needy. He is afflicted. He is humble. He is in great need. And so he calls upon the Lord and trusts that he will descend and attend his ear to David's prayer.

He had faith that God would respond because the Lord takes thought for the poor and needy, which we find in Psalm 40, verse 17. And then he lifts up another petition.

Preserve my life. Watch over and guard me. And he gives another cause for action because he is holy. David's life and character are at stake.

Worthless men have risen against him, waged accusations. And so David prays that the Lord would protect him and vindicate him from slander.

[8 : 29] He has faith that God will respond because God promises that he hears when the godly call, as we find in Psalm 4, 3, and that he vindicates the godly, as we find in Psalm 17, 1 and 2.

And then a fourth petition, that the Lord save and deliver his servant. His cause for action, David trusts in the Lord as his source of righteousness.

David does not trust in his own righteousness, but utterly trust in God with faith that he will respond because no one who waits for the Lord will be put to shame, as we find in Psalm 25, 1 through 3.

A fifth petition, be gracious to me, extend mercy. The cause for action, David cries to the Lord all the day long. He cries out for grace.

He commits himself into the compassionate hands of the Lord. He has faith that God will respond because the Lord is the God of his salvation, as recorded in Psalm 57, 1 through 3.

[9 : 42] A sixth petition, that the Lord would gladden the soul of his servant. And the cause for action, David lifts his soul to the Lord.

He's a man of prayer, and he knows that when he again finds himself praying, his soul will be gladdened. He has faith that God would respond because the Lord promises to gladden the souls of those who trust in him.

We find this in Psalm 33, 20 through 22. David pauses his petitions and takes a moment to reflect on the truth of God's character, which is revealed in Exodus 34, 6 and 7.

He remembers that the Lord is good, forgiving, abounding, and steadfast love to all who call upon him. And so he trusts his petition to the Lord because of God's loving kindness, his steadfast love, and his faithfulness.

He knows that the Lord will not fail. And then a seventh and eighth petition, give ear to my prayer, listen to my plea. A cause for action, the Lord will answer in his time of trouble.

[11 : 02] As he lifts a plea with trembling, he knows that the Lord will attend to the voice of his prayer, as is recorded in Psalm 17, 6 and 7.

I think that David's prayer is a model prayer, that it is an example of fervent, effective prayer, which has great power as it's working.

And so I think we have a lot to learn from this prayer. And so I'll point out four things that I noticed. And four reasons why we often neglect to pray or do not pray as we should.

First, we often don't believe that we will be heard, usually because we don't believe we're worthy to be heard. Sometimes we don't believe that we'll be answered, and very often we do not know what to pray.

So I want to answer each of these from David's own example. first he prayed with boldness and faith. He let his request be made known to God, and then in the same breath he gave the cause for action and why the Lord would listen.

[12 : 21] I think for us this may seem bold, presumptuous, that we would come before the Lord and remind him why he will listen. Right?

But it's not God who needs reminding, it's the one who prays. We must be reminded of God's faithfulness, his loving kindness, and his promises.

David doesn't make demands of God. No one who is poor and needy would make demands of God, but instead he has faith to pray with boldness because of specific promises revealed in Scripture.

In this psalm he prays specifically from Exodus 34, the most quoted passage in all of the Old Testament. He prays specific truths about who God is, about his faithfulness, and he trusts in the Lord.

Our prayers matter to God. He's ready in a moment to descend from heaven, literally to attend his ear to our cry, to listen.

- [13 : 33] Notice David also prayed trusting that he was godly. Seems presumptuous again. But he didn't trust that he was sinless. He trusted that God was forgiving, that his sins were forgiven because the Lord is forgiving.

Transgression, sin, and iniquity. Psalm 66, 18 through 19 reminds us that God hears and answers when we pray so long as we do not regard wickedness in our hearts.

And if we find that sin keeps us from praying or sin keeps our prayers from the Lord's ear, all we need to do is confess, bring our sin before the Lord, and he promises to forgive and to turn his attention to those who call upon him.

Third, David trusted not only that the Lord would listen but that he would answer. He had confidence in God's unchanging attributes, in his loyal love, in his faithfulness, that the Lord would answer.

And we too come to the Lord with the same faith because the Lord is not a man that he should lie, as we recently studied in 1 Samuel 15. Rather, he has sworn by his own holiness and he will not remove his steadfast love or his faithfulness.

- [15 : 03] He will not violate his covenant, as we're reminded in Psalm 89, 35. The Lord will answer because he has promised to do so and because he cannot lie.

If you want to see examples of that, you can turn to Psalm 91 or 34 or many others. And lastly, David prayed with wisdom, knowledge, and he prayed with understanding.

He prayed in response to specific promises that he learned by studying the testimony, the precepts, and the commandments of the Lord which are revealed in Scripture. but this doesn't stop him in the next verses from praying, teach me your way, O Lord.

We too learn fervent, effective prayer by learning the way of the Lord and believing upon his specific promises. And that's what we'll focus on in section 2 as we move into verses 8 through 13.

I've titled this section, Teach Me, O Lord. I encourage you to look in your Bible and follow along in these verses because there's a pattern here that will become clear which directs our attention and brings us to further understanding.

- [16 : 23] Notice after lifting up his petitions that David's prayer turns to one of praise, to worship the Lord. He remembers that there's no other gods like our God.

There's none who saves, there's none who forgives, none who is merciful or compassionate, who does great and wondrous things. Not only is he the one true and living God, but in compared to all of the false gods that they look to around them, he is the only who is compassionate and merciful, forgiving and saving.

Because he alone is the Lord, we find in verse 9 that all the nations which the Lord has made will come and worship before the Lord.

There is no escape either in faith now and obedience or in the judgment to come. Every nation will bow. The Lord alone is great and does wondrous deeds.

Recognizing that the Lord has inclined his ear and fixed his gaze on David, David realizes that his understanding, his reverence, his fear of the Lord is found wanting.

- [17 : 50] So he brings two more petitions before the Lord in verse 11. Teach me your way, O Lord, so that I may walk in truth.

Unite my heart to fear your name. As David's prayer turned from petition to praise, he was reminded that he doesn't need to fear the arrogant, insolent men that are around him.

He's reminded that he must instead fear the Lord who is good, who is forgiving, who is abundant in steadfast love and faithfulness.

The immediate threat that had moved him to prayer fades, feels small when he considers the God that stands before him. And so he recognizes that what he truly needs is the knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

And then he continues in praise. He says, I must give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart and I will glorify your name forever.

[18 : 58] And he gives his cause for action. Your loving kindness toward me is great. You have delivered my soul from death. You are the God of my salvation and so I praise you.

I invite you to look back at verse 9. I don't know if we'll have it on the screen but you can look in your Bible and notice in verse 9 it says, all the nations you have made shall come and worship before you and shall glorify your name.

In verse 12 it says, I give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart and I will glorify your name forever. But between those two verses in verse 11 he says, teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth, unite my heart to fear your name.

Three phrases, glorify your name, fear your name, glorify your name. Intentional repetition, expectations broken, where in the middle phrase we expect again to see glorify, we instead see fear.

fear. What does the author want us to notice? Why does fear take the place of glory? Perhaps there is something about learning the Lord's way, about fearing his name that brings glory to the name of the Lord.

[20 : 36] To see how this works, I want to ask David, what did he mean by teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth?

And what did he mean by unite my heart to fear your name? And fortunately, he doesn't leave us without answer. We need only turn to Psalm 25, where he gives us in detail what he means by teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in truth.

If you have your pew Bible open, it's going to be on page 459, Psalm 25, and I want to look first at verse 4.

David prays, make me to know your way, O Lord, teach me your paths. Skipping down to verse 8, good and upright is the Lord, therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

[21 : 56] And then in verse 12, who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. we see that the Lord instructs sinners in his way, but not just any sinner.

He instructs the humble who come to him for life. He leads them in what is right and teaches them his way, and all his paths become steadfast love and faithfulness for those who learn to keep his covenant and his testimonies.

The Lord instructs us with wisdom and knowledge and understanding so that we may keep his way. If we come to him with humility and with fear, he promises to do so.

So then, what did David mean by unite my heart to fear your name? Well, again, he answers the question, but we need to look at Psalm 34.

If you want to flip to page 464, I'm going to start in verse 11. David says, Come, O children, listen to me.

[23 : 12] I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is there who desires life and loves many days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit.

Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears toward their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of their troubles. The Lord is near the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. And then in verse 22, the Lord redeems the life of his servants.

None of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. What can we take away from this? First, we notice that the face of the Lord is against those who practice evil.

He will cut off their memory from the earth. The Lord alone has the power to destroy both body and soul in hell. To those who oppose him, there is reason for fear and terror.

[24 : 26] But notice also, as said in verse 22, the Lord alone has the power to redeem. The Lord is near to the broken hearted, the crushed in spirit.

His eyes are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. What should we conclude? The fear of the Lord is meant to move us, to run to him for refuge, not to run from him.

the difference, I think, for us is made clear in the gospel. And you might say, well, David didn't know the full details of the gospel.

But he understood that the Lord redeems. He redeems those who take refuge in him. To those who take refuge in the Lord, who believe in his way, his completed work, there is no fear of death or condemnation, as we can see in 1 Corinthians 15.

Rather than fear, we are given peace with God, as Romans 5 makes clear. We're given the spirit of adoption as sons, as we can see in Romans 8, and we're given a spirit of power, of love, and self-control, as we'll find in 2 Timothy, chapter 1.

[25 : 56] But even for those in Christ, we come to the Lord with trembling, because he is an awesome God who saves with such a great salvation, the God who instructs sinners in his way, who unites our hearts to love the Lord our God with all our soul, all our strength, and all our heart.

There is none like him among the gods, and none who do such mighty works. I'll leave you with four final truths about the instruction and fear of the Lord, and then we'll move into the last section.

The fear of the Lord is a pervasive phrase throughout the Old and the New Testament, moment. But first I want to look at Jeremiah 32, 39, on page 661, if you want to flip there.

It says, and this is in regard to those who trust in the Lord, I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me forever for their own good and the good of their children after them.

rather than two hearts divided between the passions of man and the passions of God, the Lord gives us one heart united to fear his name and to follow his way.

[27 : 21] We see also in Psalm 111, verse 10, which you can find on page 509. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

All those who practice it have a good understanding. Notice, it doesn't say that fear is the source of wisdom.

Fear of condemnation may lead some for a time to obey, but even to the best of their human abilities, they will all fall short. That is because you cannot fear the Lord and then run to him for refuge unless you first have faith that he exists, as Hebrews 11 says, and that he rewards those who seek him.

When we seek him, he rewards us with understanding that we may follow his way with steadfast love and faithfulness. Exodus 20, 20, page 61, way back to the beginning of the Bible.

Moses said to the people, do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.

- [28 : 53] Kind of a contradiction there. Do not fear, the Lord has come, that you may fear him, but I think it's intentional. We must remember that we are blessed when the Lord disciplines us, when he teaches us out of his law.

The majesty, the holiness, the supremacy, the justice, the power of God are worthy of pure, holy, humble, trembling. But we find that he also gently instructs us with all long suffering and loving kindness so that we may understand and keep his way.

One more and then we'll move on. Nehemiah 111 all the way back to page 398. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name and give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

The servants of the Lord delight to fear the name of the Lord. For homework, you can read Isaiah 11, 2-3 and see some more about this.

But for now, we must pray. Teach us your way, O Lord, that we may walk in your truth. Unite our hearts to fear your name. As we move into the last section, verses 14 through 17, we can finally see how the fear of his name leads to the glory of his name.

- [30 : 40] If you want to go back to Psalm 86 in your Bible, it was on page 494, and we'll focus on verses 14 through 17 as we conclude.

We notice in these verses that insolent, ruthless men seek David's life. They do not set God before them because they do not fear his name.

But now at the point where in many of the Psalms we would expect David to cry out for judgment for the destruction of his enemy, he instead reflects again on Exodus 34 on the character of God.

Spurgeon in his commentary notes the contrast. Although these arrogant men seek his life, they do not fear God. They have risen against David.

His gaze is not fixed on the immediate threat. It's fixed with heart united on God, the God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

- [31 : 45] He now includes an additional characteristic of God. He is slow to anger. Notice that these same characteristics are mentioned in Jonah chapter 4 verse 2 when Jonah explains why he fled from the Lord.

Because he would rather flee and die than see God grant mercy and repentance to the arrogant Ninevites. But rather than pray for the judgment and condemnation of his enemy, David is reminded of God's mercy and his grace, his long suffering, his steadfast love, and his faithfulness.

And so he lifts up six final petitions. He prays as we move through verses 16 and 17.

turn to me and be gracious to me. In other words, make your face shine upon me. Show me mercy. Show mercy to one humble and in need.

Grant strength, your strength, to your servant, for you are my source of strength. I need not fear anyone or anyone but your name. Save the son of your maidservant.

- [33 : 06] Interesting phrase. I think perhaps he means, from birth I have been your servant and have learned your ways even from my mother.

So I turn to you for rescue. Show me a sign of your favor. Grant me mercy and help me. What is his cause for action? So that my enemies may see and be put to shame because you have helped me and comforted me.

These arrogant, insolent men, refuse to set God before them to fear his name. But now in seeing God's awesome work of salvation to comfort and help his servant David, they will be put to shame.

They will fear the name of the Lord. And in doing, they will bring glory to the name of the Lord. More than this, the name of the Lord will be glorified when David is rescued, when he takes refuge and finds instruction in the Lord.

The name of the Lord will be glorified when David finds help and comfort. And finally, the name of the Lord will be glorified when his enemies are put to shame.

[34 : 20] All of this will bring glory to the Lord. What can we take away from this? Well, when we face failure, perhaps, rather, fear of failure, when we face loss, when we face cancer, disease, disability, temptation, or death, we can trust that God will hear our prayers, that he will extend mercy and grace, help and comfort, because he is steadfast in love and he is faithful.

When we pray, all of our other fears will fade as we take refuge in the Lord. He will unite our divided hearts to fear his name.

He will refine us as a loving father who instructs us in his way, that we may share in his holiness. And finally, he will put to shame all who slander, who kill, who destroy.

And when they see that the Lord has helped you, his servant, and comforted you, they will fear his name. They will give glory to the name that is above every name.

Another homework, if you want, you can read Philippians 2, 9-13 and see in the New Testament a picture of this reality.

[35 : 46] But I'll leave you with five specific takeaways from David's prayer. First, the Lord inclines his ear to your prayers. But first, you must pray.

He cannot incline his ear if you do not pray. When you pray, if you do not know what to pray, turn to specific truths and promises found throughout the scriptures.

Good place to start? Pray the Psalms. They're full of promises. If you're lacking in wisdom, in knowledge, in understanding, in obedience, ask in humility.

the Lord will instruct you in his way. When fear divides your heart, ask, and the Lord will unite your divided heart with one passion, one focus, to fear his name.

And whether you find an immediate answer or perhaps the patience to wait upon the Lord, don't forget to give thanks with your whole heart and to glorify the name of the Lord.

[36 : 55] And finally, I'll leave you with one image. Find courage. When the enemy comes to steal, to kill, and destroy, he faces a mighty roaring lion.

But when you cry out to the Lord, you will find mercy, help, and comfort in the lamb who was slain. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.