

Psalm 86 • The blessing of being poor and needy

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Psalm 86 is a prayer of David, believe it or not. We haven't heard from David in a long time. This Psalm is a prayer for God to deliver David from the hands of his unrelenting enemies. In that sense, it's very similar to many of the previous Psalms that we've read, written by David. He says,

“¹ Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. ² Preserve my life, for I am godly; (And that doesn't mean he's perfect. David never, ever claimed perfection. But he said) save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God. ³ Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. ⁴ Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. ⁵ For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.” (ESV)

We saw this in David's prayers earlier. David brings up the character of God regularly. Notice what he says: You're good, You're forgiving, You abound in steadfast love. He talks about these things, and he reminds himself in these prayers about the One to whom he is lifting up his soul.

“⁶ Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. ⁷ In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me. ⁸ There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. ⁹ All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.”

And we'll talk about that later.

“¹⁰ For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. ¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. (In other words, unite my heart to yours.) ¹² I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. ¹³ For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol (and that is the grave). ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ But

you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. ”

Look at that—once again, outlining these character attributes of the Lord. So, he says:

“¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. ¹⁷ Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me. ”

What I love so much about this Psalm is really just the simplicity of a sincere cry from the heart of a believer to his or her God that just says, I need help. I need You. I need You to help me. And so, it's such a beautiful picture of the heart of the child of God turning to the One whom he believes will deliver him.

And verse 1 begins with a statement that I think is a key to understanding how God dealt with David. If you'll notice again in verse 1, he says, *“Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.”* Did you catch that? That's the heart of the Psalm. That's the heart of it right there: *“...I am poor and needy...”*

Let me ask you a question: Are you poor and needy? Are you poor and needy? It's a realization that comes into our lives that I don't think you can teach it to someone. I think it can be taught, but only by probably the school of suffering. And many times, the school of suffering does just that; it teaches us that we are poor and needy.

So, my question again to you is: Are you poor and needy? Do you find yourself to be poor and needy? And I'm not talking about necessarily poverty in any sort of financial sense; I'm talking about a different kind of poverty. We're talking about a poverty of self. Are you poor of self? If you are, you're blessed. That's exactly what Jesus said. I don't know if you remember that statement. He said it in what we call His Sermon on the Mount. Let me put it on the screen for you from Matthew, chapter 5. Jesus said,

Matthew 5:3 (ESV)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the poor of themselves. Blessed are you when you are poor of self, for yours is the kingdom of heaven. I think people sometimes look at the life of David, and they scratch their heads because they can't really figure it out.

This is a man who made some serious mistakes. I mean, this guy sinned big time. He not only took another man's wife while that man was out defending the kingdom and had physical relations with this other man's wife, but then he sought to hide that information once he got her pregnant. Then he sought to have the man killed in battle to cover up his sin.

And we look at that, and we learn about it in the scripture, and we see the mistakes, the gravity of the mistakes that David made. But then we look at how much God blessed his life, and we're kind of like, how does that compute exactly? How do you do that? Well, the key is those five simple words that I had you focus on there in verse 1: “...*I am poor and needy*...”

David never forgot that. David never forgot that he was poor and needy in the sight of God. When he sinned, he confessed his sin before God. He was broken, and he was contrite in his relationship and his approach to God. David understood what it meant to be broken before God. He knew what that meant.

In fact, way back in the 51st Psalm, when he's praying repentance after committing adultery and planning the murder of this man, of this woman's husband, he talked about this. Let me put this also on the screen for Psalm 51:

Psalm 51:17 (ESV)

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The sacrifices of God (he wrote) are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart (he said that), O God, you will not despise.

And so, a broken and contrite heart is simply the knowledge that I am poor and needy. That's all it is. And that is the key to why David, or how David, walked in such blessing from the Lord, even though he was a man of great error and mistakes.

And frankly, he wasn't a great father. Several of his boys were very wayward, and yet he was a man who experienced that understanding, that revelation of his own personal condition that caused him to cry out, “...*I am poor and needy*...”

And it also caused him to cry out in such a way that we see in verse 11. Look with me there in verse 11, he said, “*Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may*

walk in your truth; unite my heart...” In other words, unite my heart with Yours so that I might fear Your name. It's a broken heart. It's a contrite heart that cries out to God and says, teach me your ways, forgive me for my sin. I'm poor and needy. And it also keeps us from getting puffed up. And that's something that we all need—not to get puffed up.

When people praise you, what does that do? The Bible even talks about how a man is tested by the praise he receives. He's tested by what he's going to do with that praise. Is he going to get puffed up?

Hezekiah, King Hezekiah, went through a testing of praise after he was healed from a sickness. The Lord gave a great sign that he would be healed, and it caused people to come from all over to the kingdom of Israel to ask Hezekiah about this sign that the Lord had given him. And Hezekiah got puffed up over that thing when he was suddenly this celebrity.

Everybody was like, wow, God does things like that for you. Whoa! And Hezekiah forgot that he was poor and needy. And it's easy to let go of that.

When you are being praised, when people are talking positively about you, do you remember who you are before God? Lord, I'm a weak, sinful man. That's who I really am.

I've heard someone say at one point, think of your absolute worst moment in life. That's who you are apart from Christ. Now that's not meant to get you down. It's meant to give you the proper understanding of who you are so that you would come to God, seek him for his grace, his healing, his deliverance, and not get puffed up about yourself.