

# Our Gracious, Compassionate, Merciful God

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, God's mercy, and the transformative power of worshipping the true God amidst life's troubles.*

**Duration:** 25:47

**Scripture:** Psalm 86:1-15

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Gods Mercy"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on Psalm 86 as a prayer of David, highlighting the reasons why we need to pray, such as acknowledging our need for God's help and seeking Him in times of trouble. The psalmist's petitions for God's ear to hear, soul to be preserved, and mercy to be shown reflect a pattern for prayer. The sermon emphasizes the importance of uniting our hearts to fear God's name and trusting in His compassion and mercy, leading to praise and thanksgiving.

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## Transcript

Well, we read the 86th Psalm, let's just turn back to it now for this morning. Tonight we will be looking at Psalm 86 through 95, and we encourage you to join with us this evening, a great evening of study of the Word of God, Psalm 86 through 95. But this morning, let's just take a look at the 86th Psalm again.

The 86th Psalm is a Psalm of David, and it is a prayer of David. And I think probably the best way to learn how to pray is to study the prayers in the Bible. And this is one of those prayers in the Bible that gives to you just really a great pattern for the form of prayer, and things to pray for, and of course, the acknowledgement and remembering who it is that we are praying to.

And so this is a prayer of David, and it's found here in Psalm 86. And first of all, it deals with why we need to pray. And there in verse one, David declares, for I am poor and needy.

We do need God's help in so many issues in life. The problems are bigger than what we can handle ourselves, and we are aware of our inadequacy, and so we do need God's help. In Psalm 61 too, the psalmist said, from the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, and when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Psalm 121 too, my help comes from the Lord which made the heaven and the earth, and thus he called upon the Lord because he realized, I am poor, I am needy, Lord, I need your help.

But then he also declares that the reason why he was praying is that he was in trouble. In verse seven, he said, in the day of my trouble, I will call upon thee, for you will answer me. It's interesting that it's when we are in trouble that we can call upon God to help us in that time of trouble.

It's interesting that God does give to us a special promise in Psalm 91 15, which we'll study tonight. The Lord said, he shall call upon me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble.

I will deliver him and honor him. In verse 14, the psalmist says, oh God, the proud are risen up against me. The assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul and have not set thee before them.

You know, it's often only in the time of trouble that we call upon the Lord. I was just considering, you know, if we would just call upon him before, we probably wouldn't be in so much trouble that we get into. You know, but well, it seems like we just are slow on this, and it's only when we're in real trouble that we then call upon the Lord.

And I wonder if the Lord isn't just in his wisdom, let us just get into trouble sometimes. Just sort of takes his hand off and lets us get into trouble so that we will call. I think that he misses you, and he misses talking to you.

And so he says, well, you know, I haven't heard from him for a while. Let's just let them get in a little trouble, you know. And so, you know, we face these problems, we get into trouble, we say, oh God help us.

Oh, nice to hear from you. You know, haven't heard lately. Nice to hear from you.

And so David does declare that in the time of trouble, he will call upon the Lord. But then through the psalm, we notice the petitions that David makes. They're in verse one.

Bow down thine ear and hear. Hear me Lord. And so asking God, listen to my prayers.

In 1 John 5 14, John said, this is the confidence that we have in him. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, then we know that we've received the petitions that we have asked of him.

So hear us Lord. Then his second petition is in verse two. Preserve my soul.

In verse 14, he speaks of how the proud had risen up against him and sought his soul. And so he's saying, Lord, preserve my soul. In verse 17, he speaks of those that hated him and were after him.

And so the prayer, preserve my soul. The next petition is there in the latter portion of verse two. Save thy servant who trusts in you.

So how important that we put our trust in the Lord and asking him to save us because we put our trust in him. Verse three. Excuse me.

Caught this thing in Texas and it just won't let me go. Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I cry unto thee daily. In Psalm 103, the psalmist said, the Lord is merciful and gracious.

He is slow to anger. He's plenteous in mercy. Psalm 116, verse five.

Gracious is the Lord and righteous, yea, our God is merciful. Psalm 117 too. For his merciful kindness is great toward us.

And the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord. It seems like David was always calling for mercy.

Mercy is getting something that you don't deserve. I don't really deserve the mercy of God, but yet I call upon him for mercy. And usually it's mercy so that I don't get what I have coming to me.

Lord, be merciful to me. I know that I really have, you know, a punishment coming, but Lord, be merciful. It's interesting that David was calling so often for the mercy of God to be upon him.

It's also interesting that when he was praying for others, he often prayed judgment. God break their teeth in their mouth, you know, but be merciful to me. And I think that's probably sort of typical for a lot of us when we talk about ourselves, we want mercy.

When we talk about those that have done us wrong, then we want judgment. Lord, get them what they deserve, you know, and bring judgment upon them. Be merciful to me, but judge them.

Then he said, rejoice the soul of thy servant. That's in verse four. It seems like David was a melancholy person.

He had great heights, but also he experienced great debts, which are expressed in the Psalms. So often in the Psalms, David is expressing, you know, the grief and the problems that he was going through, where he said in the Psalms that, why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted in me? And he seemed to be prone to depression. And I don't understand.

I know that there are people who are prone to depression. I don't understand them because, well, that sort of upsets my wife. She's sort of prone to see the negative side of things and to depression.

And it troubles her that I never seem to be depressed, and that depresses her. But David seemed to be prone to depression, and his soul cast down, worried, fearful. And he is so often expressing that in his prayers.

And here again in verse four, rejoice the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. And so evidently, again, it was in a time of depression, and so he's asking the Lord to rejoice his soul at that time. In verse six, give ear, O Lord, to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications.

This is sort of a repetition of the verse one, where he's asking the Lord to hear him. Bow down your ear, O Lord, and hear me. And then in verse 11, the prayer is, teach me thy way, O Lord.

How we need that. Lord, I don't know which way to go. Teach me thy way.

Help me to walk in thy truth. Lord, show me thy way. And so verse 11, then also the latter part, and this is one that really speaks to me.

He said, unite my heart to fear thy name. You know, I think that one of the greatest problems that we do face is a divided heart, where we have a heart for the Lord, and the things of the Lord, but yet we also oftentimes have a heart for the world and the things of the world, and we find ourselves sort of torn between our desire for the world and our desires for the Lord. You remember John Hilton, or some of you

might.

He used to be here, and he used to sing a song about one foot in the row boat and one foot on the dock, and you know, that's a bad place to be, where, you know, the boat's slipping away from the dock, and you've got one foot in the boat and one foot on the dock, and that's with a lot of people. They've got one foot in the world and one foot in the church, and they have too much of the world to be happy in Christ, but too much of Christ to be joyful in the world. I mean, you find yourself in that crazy place in between, where you have a divided heart, and that is a place of real misery.

So, Lord, unite my heart to fear thy name. May I not have a divided heart, but may my heart be united, Lord, to fear your name. And then down in verse 16, O turn unto me, have mercy upon me, and give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of your handmaid.

And so, here he's asking now in the petition, turn to me, have mercy upon me, and give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your handmaid. Now, why did he present these petitions to the Lord? Well, in verse 5, he declares, for you, Lord, are good. You're ready to forgive.

You're plenteous in mercy unto all of those who call upon you. And so, the incentive for praying is knowing that the Lord is good. He is ready to forgive.

He is full of mercy unto all who will call upon him. And in verse 8, among the gods, there is none like you, O Lord. He's an incomparable God.

Among the gods, there's none like you. And he said, neither are there any works like your works. He said in a previous psalm, the gods of the heathen are vain.

They are really made by men. They take a tree and carve out a little idol, and they worship it, bow down and worship it, not realizing that I'm worshiping the work of my own hands. I'm the one who created this little image that I'm now praying to.

And man-made gods. And he talks about the man-made gods. Eyes, but they can't see.

Ears, but they can't hear. Feet, but they can't walk. Mouths, but they can't speak.

And how that a man makes his own god, but makes his god less than himself, because though I carve a mouth, the mouth can't talk. Though I carve ears, it can't hear. Though I carve eyes, it can't see.

And so, I've made my god, but I've made him myself, and he's less than me, because I can see with my eyes, I can hear with my ears. And then he makes this observation. They that have made them have become like the gods that they have made.

And that's sort of a fearful kind of a thing. You make your own god, and then you become like the god that you've made. But you see, when you make your own god, you make your god less than you.

The god that you make is insensate. He can't see. He can't talk.

He can't walk. He can't feel. He's insensate.

And those, you make your own god like yourself, less than yourself, and then you become like your god. You can no longer feel the touch of god upon your life. You can no longer hear the voice of god speaking

to you.

You can no longer see the hand of god in the things that surround your life. And so, a man makes his own god, but he makes it less than himself. But he makes it like himself, but then he becomes like his god.

So, he is on a road down the worship of false gods. Man becomes like his god. We, with open faces, we behold the glory of the Lord.

We're being changed from glory to glory into the same image. Why? Because you become like your god. That's why it's so important that you worship and serve the true and the living god, because you're on an upward mobility.

For worshiping false gods, you're going down. It is a downward kind of a thing. You become like your god.

And so, our god is incomparable. There's none like unto you, O Lord. No works like your works.

In verse 10, For you are great, and you do wondrous things. So, we are calling upon god because he is able to do these wondrous things. And he says, you are the only true god.

Many false gods, but there's only one true and living god. And verse 13, For great is your mercy toward me, and you've delivered my soul from the lowest hell. And so, I'm calling upon god because his mercy is so great, and he's delivered me from destruction.

Verse 15, But you, O Lord, are a god full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering, plenteous in mercy and in truth. Talking about the god that he was calling upon. And why would I call upon him? Oh, because he's full of compassion.

He is so gracious. He is so long-suffering, and he is so full of mercy and truth. And so, we get then to the result of all of this, found in verse 12, where he declares, I will praise thee, O Lord, my god, with all of my heart, and I will glorify thy name forevermore.

And realizing how great our god is, and realizing the privilege that we have of bringing to him all of our needs, knowing that he's able to meet our needs, and desiring to help us, it always just ends up with praising him. Oh, it inspires praise and thanksgiving when you realize just how wonderful the god is whom we serve. How blessed we are to be able to come to him with our needs and our petitions, and that he will listen to us, and that he will help us as we rely and trust in him.

And so, I would encourage you, take this 86 Psalm, read it over. I just, every time I read it through, and I guess I've read it through a hundred times this past week, but every time I read it through, there's something else that just comes out and speaks to my heart from this particular psalm. It's one that you can meditate upon.

There's so much here to just really think through, and take it just phrase by phrase, and let it just really minister to you, and then use it as a pattern for prayer. Realize God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think, because he is gracious, he's merciful, and he is willing and ready to help those who will call upon him. Father, what a privilege and what a blessing that you've given to us the opportunity to call upon you in the day of trouble, knowing that you will hear us, knowing that you will answer us.

And so, Father, there are those here today who are going through some troubling situations, and Lord, you've brought them here that they might receive hope, that they might, Lord, learn to cast all of their cares upon you, because you care for them. And Lord, we pray that the burdens that they felt when they came will be lifted, and they'll go home with that confidence that, Lord, you are able, and you are willing, and you are merciful, and you are gracious in your long-suffering. And Lord, we can just trust in you and just leave our cares with you this day.

And Father, we pray that you'll just be with our people as they go their ways. Thank you, Lord, for going with them, watching over them, protecting, shielding them. And Lord, just draw us again over and over this week to the gathering with your people, and may we, Lord, just have a great week of worship and service to you.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. Shall we stand? Thank you for your prayers. The Lord got me through.

Two down, one to go. Today, if you, like David, are in trouble, if you have problems that you're facing, and you don't know what you're going to do, the pastors are down here in front to pray for you. God is able to help you, and God will help you cast all your cares upon him, because he cares for you.

He loves you, and he wants to help you. And as the scripture said, you have not because you ask not. And many times it's just that simple.

You have not because you ask not. So if you go from the service today all worried and thinking, oh, what am I going to do this week? Oh, you know, tax time. Oh my, you know, what am I going to do? And you're all worried, and your problem.

Carry it with you if you want, but you can leave it here today, and you can go rejoicing in the Lord, because he wants to meet your need. He's gracious. He's merciful.

He's long-suffering, and he is helping those who will call upon him. So the pastors are down here to pray with you, and we encourage you as we're dismissed, come on down and spend a little time just opening your heart to the Lord and to the work of his Holy Spirit, and have a great day as you go forth in faith and trust in him, watching God just open doors for you, watching God to work in your behalf, and just enjoying the wonderful work of God's love and grace in your life. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee.

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. God bless you.

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