

Psalms 86:0 ¶ A Prayer of David.

This title is self-explanatory. It is a prayer of praise as well as a petition for mercy and protection.

Psalms 86:1 ¶ Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I *am* poor and needy.

David begins his prayer by asking the Lord (YHWH) to “bow down” to listen to him—a statement of his humble position before God. He admits that he is poor (depressed, afflicted) and needy (destitute, beggar).

Psalms 86:2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

He asks for God to protect his soul, his life, because he is trying to live as a godly man. This tells us that David fears for his life. He identifies as God’s faithful servant. His confidence and hope are in God.

Psalms 86:3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

David approaches God by asking for His mercy, admitting that he is constantly seeking His help. He knew from the scripture that God’s mercy is great.

Numbers 14:18 “The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy....”

Psalms 103:11 “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.”

It is natural for one whose hope is in God and is His servant to talk to Him daily in light of his/her needs. Jesus taught that very principle and scripture affirms it.

Matthew 6:9–11 “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.”

Philippians 4:6 “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17–18 “Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Psalms 86:4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Psalms 86:5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

David pleads with the Lord to fill him with joy as he yields (from Hebrew for “lift up”) his life to Him. He is confident in the truth that God is good and ready to forgive and respond in mercy to all that call upon Him.

I think David is making that statement on behalf of those, like him, who are servants of God and have placed their trust in Him. He states that truth more explicitly in another of his psalms and it is affirmed in other scripture.

Psalms 145:18–19 “The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.”

2 Chronicles 16:9 “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”

James 5:16 “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

Psalms 86:6 Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.

Psalms 86:7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

Again, David pleads with the LORD to pay careful attention to his prayer. He is confident that when he calls out for the LORD’s help in time of trouble, He will answer him with the provision that is needed.

As I identify with David, I am always amazed at the confidence I have that God hears *me* in light of the fact that there are millions more approaching Him in prayer every day.

Psalms 86:8 ¶ Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord; neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.

Psalms 86:9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

David groups the LORD among the gods of the nations though he is acutely aware that the LORD is not anything like them. None of them can do the works that He can do. He recognizes the LORD as the Creator of all men. He knows that the day will come when all people of His creation will be made to worship before Him and glorify His name.

Isaiah 45:22–23 “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

Romans 14:11 “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

Philippians 2:9–11 “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Psalms 86:10 For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone.

David continues to praise God for His greatness and His proven ability to do miracles. He knows that no other “god” is true. There is only one true God; all others are just false pretenders that exist only in the minds of men that have been deceived by Satan and his minions. They all find their being in the spiritual forces of evil with which we are continually at war.

Ephesians 6:12 “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

I liked the words of Spurgeon: “Our God is not to be worshipped as one among many good and true beings, but as God alone; and his gospel is not to be preached as one of several saving systems, but as the one sole way of salvation. Lies can face each other beneath one common dome; but in the temple of truth the worship is one and indivisible.”

Psalms 86:11 Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

David is ever desirous for the LORD to teach him to walk in truth (faithfulness) and fear (reverence) before Him. He knows that he cannot please God with a divided heart and recognizes that this is the more important need in his life.

I liked this comment from Clarke: “Indecision of mind and division of affections mar any work. The heart must be one, that the work may be one. If this be wanting, all is wrong. This is a prayer which becomes the mouth of every Christian.”

Psalms 86:12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

David is committed to praising the “Lord my God” with his whole heart as he seeks to glorify God’s name forever. This is another statement identifying David as God’s servant. David always evidences a personal relationship with the LORD. His whole heart is a reference to his whole being—heart, soul, mind and strength.

*Mark 12:29–30 “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God **with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:** this is the first commandment.”*

Psalms 86:13 For great *is* thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

David acknowledges that he has experienced God’s mercy and his life saved because of it. This could be referencing many different times in David’s life—when he was on the run from Saul, from Absalom, from the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba, etc.

Psalms 86:14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them.

This is the closest we get to identifying the reason behind David's prayer. It was prompted by the threat of proud ungodly men that are determined to kill him.

Psalms 86:15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

In spite of the danger he faces, his confidence is in the LORD as a God that is compassionate, kind, slow to anger, merciful and faithful (from the Hebrew). I think he is remembering the words of Moses.

Exodus 34:6-7 "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...."

Psalms 86:16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.

Psalms 86:17 Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed: because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

David closes his prayer by again pleading with the LORD to look upon him with mercy and give him strength and save his life. He asks God to make a public show of His hand of protection upon him that his enemies will recognize and fear.

I thought it was interesting to note that David identified his mother, whom we hear nothing else about in scripture, as God's handmaid, one who served God as her Lord.