

# **“In the Day of My Trouble”**

## ***A Prayer of Trust in the God Who Answers***

### **Psalm 86**

This psalm is introduced as “A Prayer of David.” Many of the psalms contain prayer, but this psalm is especially marked by prayer from the beginning to end. David begins by pleading, “Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me,” and he ends by asking the Lord to show “a token for good.” Between those opening and closing petitions, David pleads with God; he praises God; he asks to be taught by God; and he rests his confidence in the mercy and grace of God.

The exact occasion behind the psalm is unknown. We can't be sure whether David wrote it during the persecution by Saul, the rebellion of Absalom, or some other season of danger or distress.

David's prayer is not controlled by his circumstances. It's controlled by the character of God. As we have seen in many of the Davidic psalms, David turns from his trouble to who God is: God is good (v. 5); He is ready to forgive (v. 5); He is plenteous in mercy (v. 5); He is great (v. 10); He does wondrous things (v. 10); He is full of compassion, gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth (v. 15).

That is what makes this psalm so helpful to the child of God. It teaches us how to pray when trouble comes our way. It reminds us that the confidence of prayer is not found in the strength of the one praying, but in the character of the God who hears.

So the theme of the psalm can be summed up from David's own words: “In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.”

#### **I. THE DESPERATE CRY OF THE SERVANT (VV. 1-7)**

These verses emphasize David's urgent need and repeated appeals to God. This is a cry of a needy servant who has nowhere else to turn than to the Lord.

### A. His humble condition — v.1

"For I am poor and needy"

1. "Bow down thine ear" — David is asking the Lord to give personal attention to his cry.
2. "For I am poor and needy" — not necessarily that he was financially poor, but this speaks of helplessness, dependence, and vulnerability.

Psalm 34:6

<sup>6</sup> This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles.

3. The prayer God hears is the prayer of dependence. David's need did not drive him away from God; it drove him to God.

### B. His godly relationship — v. 2

"For I am holy... thy servant that trusteth in thee"

1. "Preserve my soul" — a plea for God to guard, keep, and protect his life.

Psalm 16:1

<sup>1</sup> Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

2. "For I am holy" — the Hebrew word for "holy" (קֹדֶשׁ) here carries the thought of being godly, faithful, or devoted. David is speaking as one who belongs to the Lord and committed to Him.
3. "My God," "thy servant that trusteth in thee" —

David's prayer is grounded in his relationship with the Lord. He belongs to Him; he serves Him; he trusts in Him.

4. There's great encouragement here for the believer today. We do not come to God on the basis of our worthiness, but on the basis of our relationship to Him through grace.

### C. His continual dependence — vv. 3-4

"I cry unto thee daily"

"Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul"

1. This is a plea for grace. David knows that if God deals with him only according to strict justice, he cannot stand. He needs mercy.
2. "For I cry unto thee daily" — sometimes trouble lingers, and when trouble lingers, prayer must continue. David's repeated cries do not mean God is unwilling to hear. They show David's continued dependence upon the only One who can help.
3. "Rejoice the soul of thy servant" — this means David is asking God to comfort and encourage his soul, not just outwardly, but more importantly, inwardly.
4. "For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" — his hopes, burdens, fears, and needs are being placed before the Lord.

Psalm 56:3

<sup>3</sup> What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

### D. His confidence in God — v. 5

“For thou, Lord, art good...”

1. The Lord is good (v. 5a) — David’s trouble has not changed God’s goodness.

Psalm 34:8

<sup>8</sup> O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed is the man *that* trusteth in him.

2. The Lord is ready to forgive (v. 5b) — the character of God revealed here is that He is graciously disposed toward mercy (1 John 1:9).
3. The Lord is plenteous in mercy (v. 5c) — there is no shortage in God’s mercy toward those who call upon Him.

#### E. His earnest petition — v. 6

“Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer...”

1. This is a repeated cry of a burdened man (look back to verse 1).
2. “Attend” (אָשִׁיבָה) — David wants the Lord to give careful attention to his prayers and supplications.
3. “Supplications (הִתְחַנֵּן) carries the idea of earnest pleas for mercy. David is pleading with God from the heart.
4. The believer can plead earnestly with God. Our understanding of who God is does not forbid urgency in prayer. Our humility in the face of God does not forbid boldness.

Hebrews 4:16

<sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to

help in time of need.

## F. His confident assurance — v. 7

“In the day of my trouble”

1. He doesn't say, “if the day of trouble comes...” he says, “In the day of my trouble...” Trouble is treated as a real and present part of life.
2. “I will call upon thee” — David knew what to do when trouble came.
3. “For thou wilt answer me” — this does not mean God will always answer in the exact timing or manner David might expect. But David is confident that God hears and responds according to His mercy, wisdom, and faithfulness.

Psalm 50:15

<sup>15</sup> And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

4. The day of trouble should become the day of prayer. We may not know all that God will do, but we should know enough about God to call upon Him.

## II. THE DIVINE CHARACTER OF THE LORD (VV. 8-10)

These verses show David lifting his prayer off of his personal trouble to the immeasurable greatness of the Lord. David's confidence is strengthened by remembering who God is. The Lord is not just David's personal helper; He is the Almighty God over all nations.

### A. The Lord is unequalled in His person — v. 8a

“There is none like unto thee”

1. "Among the gods" — David is speaking in contrast to all supposed gods, idols, rulers, spiritual powers, or objects of human worship.
2. "There is none like thee" — God is not just greater than others in degree; He is altogether unique in His being. He is not one god among many — He is the only true and living God.

Isaiah 46:9

<sup>9</sup> ...for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me,

3. David's trouble may have seemed great, but his God was greater.

#### **B. The Lord is unequalled in His works — v. 8b**

"Neither are there any works like unto thy works"

1. His works include creation, providence, redemption, judgment, mercy, and answering prayer.
2. God's deeds reveal His greatness.

#### **C. The Lord is worthy of universal worship — v. 9**

"All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee"

1. The nations belong to God by creation (v. 9a) — this means all people are accountable to Him.
2. The nations will one day worship before Him (v. 9b) — this points forward to the future kingdom reign of Christ, when the nations will be brought under His righteous rule and will worship the Lord.

Revelation 15:4

<sup>4</sup> Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

3. The nations will glorify His name (v. 9c) — this is the ultimate end of worship: the glory of God.

**D. The Lord alone is God — vs. 10**

“Thou art God alone”

III. THE DEVOTED CONSECRATION OF THE HEART (VV. 11-13)

These verses are the devotional center of the psalm. David doesn't just ask God to change his circumstances; he asks God to teach, guide, and unite his heart. He prays not only for deliverance from his enemies, but for a heart wholly directed toward God.

**A. A prayer for instruction — v. 11a**

“Teach me thy way, O LORD”

1. This is the prayer of a humble and teachable servant.
2. David is in trouble, but he doesn't ask the Lord simply to get him out of that trouble. He asks for divine instruction during the trouble.

Psalm 25:4

<sup>4</sup> Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.

**B. A resolve of obedience — v. 11b**

“I will walk in thy truth”

1. The reason he wants to be taught is not to have

more knowledge, but so he can walk rightly.

2. Truth here is not merely information. It is God's faithful revelation, the dependable path by which His servant must live.

Psalm 119:105

<sup>105</sup> NUN. Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

### C. A plea for inward unity — v. 11c

"Unite my heart to fear thy name"

1. "Unite my heart" — the idea is that his heart would be made whole, single, undivided, and fixed upon the Lord. David recognizes that his heart needs God's inward work.
2. Even sincere believers can have divided hearts. We can trust God and still struggle with fear. We can love God and still be pulled by lesser things. We can pray and still be distracted. We can want God's will and still feel the tug of our own.

Proverbs 4:23

<sup>23</sup> Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

### D. A promise of whole-hearted praise — v. 12

"I will praise thee... with all my heart"

1. The united heart becomes the praising heart.
2. David doesn't want half-hearted religion. He wants a heart taught by God, directed by truth, united in reverence, and devoted to praise.

### E. A testimony of great mercy — v. 13

“For great is thy mercy toward me”

1. “The lowest hell” (Sheol) — in this context, David is speaking of deliverance from death or from the depths of danger. He is not saying he had already been in the place of final judgment, but that God had rescued him from the deepest threat, from the grave, from death’s door, or from overwhelming peril.
2. David knew what it was to be brought low, but he also knew that it was to be lifted up by the mercy of God.

#### IV. THE DETERMINED CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD (VV. 14-17)

These final verses return to David’s trouble, but now his prayer is strengthened by the truth he has confessed. His confidence doesn’t rest in the weakness of his enemies, but in the mercy, grace, patience, and truth of God.

##### A. The proud opposition against him — v. 14

“The proud are risen against me”

David’s enemies were dangerous because they were proud, and they were proud because they did not set God before them. When men lose the fear of God, they become capable of great cruelty toward others.

##### B. The gracious character above him — v. 15

“But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion”

1. Verse 15 is the answer to verse 14. Proud and violent men are real, but they are not greater than the God who is full of compassion, gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.
2. The believer must learn to put the character of

God between his soul and his trouble.

Psalm 103:8

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

### C. The needed strength within him — v. 16

“Give thy strength unto thy servant”

Sometimes we want only deliverance from the trial, but God gives strength in the trial. David knows he cannot stand in his own strength. He needs strength that comes from God.

### D. The visible help beside him — v. 17

“Shew me a token for good...”

1. A “token” (Τίκ) is a sign, evidence, or visible indication of God’s favor.
2. “And be ashamed” — the shame here would come from realizing that their opposition to David was opposition to one whom God had helped. They would be put to shame because God’s favor toward His servant would expose the futility of their hatred.

Psalm 40:14

<sup>14</sup> Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

Conclusion:

This psalm teaches us how to pray in the day of trouble. We bring our need honestly before the Lord. We remember that there is none like Him. We ask Him not only to change our

circumstances, but to unite our hearts to fear His name. And we rest our confidence in His compassion, grace, mercy, and truth.

The trouble may still be real. The enemies may still be present. The burden may still be heavy. But the servant of God is not left alone. The Lord hears, the Lord helps, and the Lord comforts.