

Psalm 86: David Teaches Israel How to Pray

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Psalms was the inspired prayer and praise book of the Old Testament.
 - 1. Of the 238 direct quotations from the O.T. in the N.T., 116 of them are from the Book of Psalms.
 - 2. It was the second most often quoted book by Jesus from the O.T.
- B. Psalms is a versatile book dealing with every emotion in the human spectrum.
 - 1. The Psalms are models of devotion, sources of doctrine, songs of comfort and hope, and prayers of righteous men
 - 2. The Psalms are men speaking to God about the things that God had already spoken to man. Prayer is pleading the promises of God.
 - 3. They show us how to effectively and acceptably pray to and praise God.
 - 4. They also can be used effectively to teach and minister to others.
- C. It is important that we learn to “speak God’s language” as we communicate with Him. We can do this by saturating our mind with scripture - Col. 3:16-17
 - 1. Cultivate a habit of pleading the promises of God to Him - Psalm 143:1
 - 2. Use all Bible prayers as models of your own, not just the Psalms.
 - a. Consider Paul’s prayer in Col. 1:9-12
- D. Psalm 86 has 15 petitions to God driven by a strong sense of urgency
 - 1. Psalm 86:1-7 - David cries out for God to hear and act on his behalf.
 - 2. Psalm 86:8-10 - David praises God as the only true God
 - 3. Psalm 86:11-13 - David asks God to teach him His way and to move his heart to reverence
 - 4. Psalm 86:14-17 - David appeals for mercy and grace for deliverance
- E. Our great needs should drive us to pray to God who is greater. But, we already know this.
 - 1. Our question is “How?” to better plead the promises of God.
 - 2. Psalms was as much of a prayer book for Israel as it was a song book
 - 3. God was teaching His children how to pray at a time when they relied on priests and prophets to do their praying for them
 - 4. The Psalms, especially Psalm 86, teach us how to pray better
 - a. Why should we pray?
 - b. To whom should we pray?
 - c. How should we pray?
 - d. For what should we pray?

I. WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

- A. We should pray because we have great needs.
 - 1. Psalm 86:1 - David cries out to God for a response. Humankind has always expected God to answer their cries swiftly, decisively, directly
 - a. **Lesson one** - God will answer the prayer in His own time and in His own manner
 - b. **Lesson two** - The children of God will have to patiently wait for it

2. Psalm 86:2, 16 - The fact that he cries out for God to save him shows that David knew he could not save himself.
 - a. **Lesson three** - Prayer is a confession that we are not sufficient to meet all of our own needs
3. Psalm 86:7, 14 - Speaks of trouble and violent men seeking his life
 - a. **Lesson four** - Prayer is our healthiest response to fear and our best defense against evil
 - b. **Lesson five** - Prayer should be our first resort
4. Why do we often fail to pray for our greatest needs?
 - a. Our pride blinds us to how needy we really are, so that we rely on ourselves or on others or on some secular means to overcome our troubles. "I got this."
 - b. "You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." (John Bunyan)
 - c. Another reason people do not cry out to God to save them from their sins is that they do not see themselves as sinners. They know they're not perfect, but they aren't evil sinners!
 - d. Not only sinners, but the saved are vulnerable to sin - 1Peter 5:8

II. TO WHOM SHOULD WE PRAY?

- A. We should pray to the only true God, great in power, love, grace, and mercy.
 1. Psalm 86:5, 15
- B. God is the only true God, great in power - Psalm 86:8-10
 1. Seven times in this psalm, David uses the name, Adonai, or Lord (3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 15), emphasizing God's lordship and sovereignty.
 2. By referring to "the gods" in verse 8, David speaks of those things that men view as gods, whether idols, demons, or themselves. Nothing compares to God and His true power - 1John 4:4
 3. **Lesson six** - We can pray with confidence to the only God of power
- C. God is great in love, grace, and mercy.
 1. Psalm 86:3, 5, 15-16 - David entreats God to be gracious to him 4 times
 2. Ex. 34:6-7 - This great self-revelation of God is one of the most frequently quoted texts in the Old Testament (Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Psalm 103:8, 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2)
 3. **Lesson seven** - We can pray with the confidence that God will benevolently, compassionately listen to our prayers - Heb. 4:16
 4. Psalm 86:2 - David asks God to preserve his soul and adds "for I am a godly man" He is appealing to the (hesed) covenant love he and God share toward each another. He is not boasting, but speaking of his effort to keep his part of the covenant, pleading God to keep His, too
 5. **Lesson eight** - The righteous can expect the Divine to hear and answer their prayers - 1John 3:21-22
 6. **Lesson nine** - God's lovingkindness, grace and mercy are inexhaustible; there will not be a time when He is unreceptive to His children's prayers

III. HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

- A. We should pray earnestly, continually, thankfully, humbly, and in faith.
- B. Pray earnestly
 - 1. David's earnestness and intensity stems from his awareness of his great need. If God doesn't answer, he knows he is doomed.
 - 2. He wasn't mumbling through a formal liturgy or going mindlessly down a prayer list like a string of beads. Like a starving beggar, he was entreating God to give him food.
 - 3. "Those who come to God out of custom and formality, going through the motions of prayer, are less likely to be heard than those who earnestly pray out of the anguish of their souls." (John Bunyan)
 - 4. **Lesson ten** - Pray intensely from the heart or don't pray at all
 - a. Matt. 26:39; Luke 5:12
- C. Pray continually - Psalm 86:3; 1Thes. 5:17
 - 1. "Without ceasing" does not mean non-stop; rather, the word was used of a hacking cough and of repeated military assaults.
 - 2. **Lesson eleven** - Prayer is more of an occupation than an invocation
- D. Pray thankfully - Psalm 86:12; 1Thes. 5:18
 - 1. **Lesson twelve** - A prayer of faith is more about "Thank you, God, for what You have done for me," than it is about "This is what I need You to do for me now"
- E. Pray humbly - Psalm 86:3, 16
 - 1. Psalm 86:2, 4, 16 - He refers to himself as God's servant and in need
 - a. These were not the kind of things a king would want to put in print for everyone to read
 - 2. **Lesson thirteen** - Prince or pauper, it matters not who one is when he is on his knees before the Divine
- F. Pray in faith - Psalm 86:7, 13
 - 1. Faith is not a matter of closing your eyes to reality and leaping into the dark. Rather, faith rests on God's revealed character and on how He has answered prayer so often in the past.
 - 2. Faith does not presume to command God; faith knows if something is for our spiritual good and God's greater glory, He will do it - Luke 22:42
 - 3. **Lesson fourteen** - The petitioner knows that his prayer is less about what he wants than it is about what the wisdom of God wills

IV. FOR WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY?

- A. Pray for salvation - Psalm 86:2, 16
 - 1. God answered this prayer through the Person of Jesus - Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10; 1Tim. 1:15
 - 2. **Lesson fifteen** - Pray often for what is of ultimate importance.
- B. Pray for joy in trials - Psalm 86:4
 - 1. "We ought either to be rejoicing in the Lord, or pining after him! Ask God to make you miserable, unless His conscious presence makes you happy." (C. H. Spurgeon)

2. **Lesson sixteen** - Prayer is a confession that we will wait gladly for the Divine to answer, however long it takes and whatever form it takes.
- C. Pray for a teachable, obedient, single-minded, reverent heart - Psalm 86:11
 1. Most of us instinctively pray for quick deliverance, but David prays that he will learn God's ways so that he will walk in obedience to God's truth. He prays that his loyalty will not be divided in his heart and mind
 2. So often in trials, people who professed faith in Christ when things are going well, quickly turn to whatever they think will get them out of trials. Rather than submitting reverently to God and bearing patiently with the burden, they rail angrily at Him for allowing their suffering.
 3. **Lesson seventeen** - Prayer helps us to remain unwavering during the trial, refusing to succumb to doubt
- D. Pray for God's glory and supremacy over all - Psalm 86:9, 12
 1. God allows trials to enter our lives, and we call on Him and glorify Him when He rescues us - Psalm 50:15
 2. So in all of our troubles, we should be looking for ways to magnify the Lord, so that others will be drawn to Him - Psalm 86:5
 3. **Lesson eighteen** - Pray that God will be glorified by others when they witness God answer our prayers, regardless of whether His answer and our requests are the same or not

Conclusion:

- A. President Abraham Lincoln prayed often through the burdens he faced during the Civil War. He later said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go."