

## ***Spiritual Certainty during a Time of Uncertainty*** ***Psalm 86***

More than ever before, our country and even the world is struggling with one question, namely, what is the best way to return to work after the pandemic caused by the Coronavirus? There is not easy answer to this question. Currently, there are many Americans voicing their strong opinions in opposite directions of quickly returning to normal and cautiously waiting lest we rush into another relapse.

This is a time of uncertainty. It is a good time to remind ourselves that while some things may be unstable, other things are just as stable and dependable today as ever. Psalm 86 reminds us of the realities that are fixed and secure.

This psalm is one of five psalms (psalm 17, 86, 90, 102 & 142) that explicitly claim that they are "*a prayer*". Whereas Psalm 90 boldly declares that it is "*a prayer of Moses*", this psalm states that it was "*a prayer of David*". It is interesting that this psalm is placed here because it is the only psalm of David in Book 3 (Psalms 73-89).

David gives a few clues as to what was going on in his life. Some scholars look at what he wrote and conclude that he must have written it during the 10 years when he was in exile, running from King Saul. As you may recall, David and a few men had to hide in caves and dodge Saul's troops in the wilderness areas. He must have struggled with feeling isolated, detached, and alone.

We know from some of the personal references within the psalm (35xs David uses personal pronouns) that he must have been feeling - disheartened (v. 1), in danger (vs. 2, 13-14), discouraged (v. 4) and distressed (v. 7).

David must have been driven to the Lord, as was President Abraham Lincoln many years later. Lincoln once wrote, "*I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go.*"

We are going to discover in this psalm seven spiritual anchors that will give us the stability and the certainty that we are craving in 2020.

First, let's just read the text. I encourage you to read Psalm 86 in your copy of God's Word. I will paste Psalm 86 below in the ESV translation so that you will know the version that I am basing my comments upon.

*<sup>1</sup>Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.*

*<sup>2</sup>Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.*

*<sup>3</sup>Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day.*

*<sup>4</sup>Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*

*<sup>5</sup>For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call*

upon you.

<sup>6</sup> Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.

<sup>7</sup> In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.

<sup>8</sup> There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

<sup>9</sup> All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

<sup>10</sup> For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.

<sup>12</sup> I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.

<sup>13</sup> For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

<sup>16</sup> Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

#### **Anchor # 1: Governing of God, 86:1-4**

A good place to begin our study is with the sovereign control of God over all of life. There may be many things that we would have to admit that we do not know this day, but there is one truth upon which you can build your life - God is in control.

David believed that God was governing life despite the threats of Saul and his men. As a matter of fact in this psalm David uses three primary Hebrew names for God. Each of these names represents a significant aspect of God's control:

Jehovah, vs. 1, 6, 11, 13 - reminds David that God keep His covenants

Elohim, vs. 2, 10, 12, 14 - reminds David that God created & designed him

Adonai, vs. 3-5, 8-9, 12, 15 - reminds David that God controls his life as Boss

#### **Anchor # 2: Goodness of God, 86:5**

It baffles me how often I am tempted to question that goodness of God when I am in the midst of hardships. The Bible mentions the word *good* 690 times. There are about 61 different places in the Bible where it proclaims that God is good.

If you are facing a bad situation in your life, please don't allow that to lead you to presume that God is no longer good. I predict that in Heaven one of the reasons why we will fall down prostrate before God will be because we will know the truth then of how good He was to us all along. No one in Heaven has doubts about the goodness of God. Right now, they are praising Him for His goodness. If we can just get a glimpse of His goodness, so will we.

**Anchor # 3: Grace of God, 86:3, 6, 15-17**

I have often heard people define grace as "*God's unmerited favor*". David was asking God to show him a sign of His favor in verse 17. Why would David even ask the Lord for grace in verses 3 & 6? Does God owe us anything? He gave us a life and breath and a beautiful planet on which to live. What is it that we have given Him so that He is forever in our debt?

David knew something that had been revealed to Him about the character of God. He had learned that God was gracious, forgiving and merciful. This is His character. David wasn't appealing for God's intervention based upon what he felt that he deserved. He was asking for grace. He got it! We were given grace in Christ also! this is why I love Ephesians 2:8-10. It reminds me of the story of God's grace that flows through my life.

**Anchor # 4: Glory of God, 86:9, 12**

There is, of course, one thing that we can give to God. Do you know what it is? We can choose to give Him glory. Would you say that you are glorifying God these days? David was in a tough spot. I am sure that he was uncomfortable as he ran from Saul's army for 10 years. That is a long time to be in isolation, isn't it? He probably didn't have a nice meal out there in the wilderness three times a day. Yet, David still felt that the Lord was worthy of glory.

I don't mean to sound trite with this, but we could remember it better if I put it in simple terms: even when my circumstances remain the same, I will choose to glorify His name. This is where all of history is heading, so we might as well prepare now for expressing our praise to Him later.

**Anchor # 5: Greatness of God, 86:10, 13**

Another anchor that David dropped into the churning sea was the anchor of God's greatness. This prevented his ship from drifting with the currents of circumstances and emotions.

It seems to me that when David thought about the greatness of God two things in particular came to his mind. First, he pondered the greatness of God's ability (v. 10). Think about how God designed the human body. Do you realize all that is going on today inside of you? God have us 60 trillion cells. Every second millions of cells die within the human body. Sad, right? But wait, every second God causes millions more cells to be created within the body. How? You will have to ask Him.

David also could not fathom the greatness of God's affection for him. I think it blew him away to mediate upon the steadfast love that God had for him (v. 13). The only word that seemed big enough to describe God's love was the word...*great!*

Are you drifting with the currents of life? Why not toss the anchor of God's greatness into the sea and watch how steady your life becomes anchored by His greatness.

### **Anchor # 6: *Guidance from God, 86:11***

In light of the 22 million who lost their jobs due to the Coronavirus, many will be trying to make decisions as to what they should do next. Where can a person go for guidance? Others have discovered deep emotional wounds during their time in quarantine. Where can they turn for counsel?

David knew the answer to these questions. He had to ask the Lord for direction over and over again during his time in exile. One mistake, and his life could be over. Verse 11 tells us the compass that he used to navigate through difficult times.

A close examination of Psalm 86:11 reveals a three-fold strategy of guidance from the Lord. First, we ask Him for clarification of His way. Then, we must apply what He has shown us to our daily life. Finally, we need to continue to walk in His direction and not allow our hearts to be divided over which way is the right way.

### **Anchor # 7: *Guarding by God, 86:13-14, 16***

There is nothing wrong with implementing the guidelines that the medical community is recommending for protection from the Coronavirus. Wash your hands, wear a mask, avoid touching your face, maintain 6 feet in social distancing, etc. But ultimately, we also have to trust in the Lord as our shield. The Coronavirus is not the only thing out there that will harm you.

David had learned that God would deliver him from death until it was time for the Lord to call him Home (v. 13). By this point, He had already helped David through the conflict with Goliath.

David knew that the men who were trying to capture or kill him were overlooking one important point - God was David's defense (v. 14). He was trusting Him to do what he could not do.

This young exile also was aware that his strength came from the Lord. The time in the caves were only intended to develop his spiritual muscles and enrich his character (v. 16). So, his prayer was that the Lord would make him strong in His strength. Philippians 4:13 has something similar to say to us.

### **Conclusion**

My father-in-law designed big oil tankers for a living. He is with the Lord in Heaven right now, so I can't ask him questions about the types of anchors and the purpose behind the design of each type. If this kind of subject interests you, then I recommend an article that I read on a website called, Marine Insight. The article was entitled, *A Guide to Types of Anchors*. You can find it by going to the following link: [www.marineinsight.com/naval-architecture/a-guide-to-types-of-anchors/](http://www.marineinsight.com/naval-architecture/a-guide-to-types-of-anchors/). Ever heard of the USS Nimitz? The anchor was removed in 2015. It weighed 60,000 pounds! Each individual link in the 57-link chain weighed 350 pounds! Now, how much stronger would each of these seven anchors be than the anchor of the Nimitz?