

“A PLEA FOR GRACE”

**I. Introduction**

- A. If we had to give a concise summary of what Psalm 86 is about, I think we would probably want to say something along these lines: this psalm is a plea for grace.
1. After all, this is what David calls it in verse 6.
  2. But what is grace, and what does it mean for God to be gracious to us?
  3. When it comes to salvation, there are two main ways that the Bible uses the terminology of grace.
  4. First, the term grace describes the salvation that God bestows upon sinners through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ, which is received by faith alone.
  5. We see this in Romans 3:24, where Paul says that believers “are justified by [God’s] grace as a gift.”
  6. But grace can also refer to the continued outworking of God’s saving purpose in the lives of his people.
  7. We see this in Hebrews 4:16, where the writer urges Christians to “draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
  8. In Psalm 86, David is speaking of grace in this second sense.
  9. He is asking God to bestow a fresh supply of grace to help him through the crisis that he is experiencing.
- B. As we study this psalm today, we will consider it under three headings that can be used to summarize the basic emphasis in each stanza.

1. First, we will see how this psalm teaches us to give grounds when we are pleading for grace.
2. Second, we will look at what this psalm tells us about the goal that we should have in mind when we plead for grace.
3. And third, we will consider what this psalm says about how we should respond when we find ourselves in special need of grace.

## II. Giving Grounds for Grace (1-7)

- A. We begin by looking at verses 1-7, where David gives grounds to support his plea for grace.
  1. We also see this in the other parts of the psalm, but it is especially emphasized in this first section.
  2. The grounds that David gives are frequently introduced by the word “for,” which occurs six times in verses 1 through 7.
  3. David is setting forth the reasons why God should answer his prayer.
  4. This is an important aspect of prayer, and we need to cultivate it.
  5. After all, if you can’t give good reasons why God should grant your request, then how can you have any confidence that God will grant it?
  6. Giving grounds for your prayers helps you to look at your situation through the lenses of Scripture.
  7. Ask yourself, what does the Bible have to say about what I am going through and how I should respond to it?
  8. What does the Bible tell me about God and his promises that sheds light on this situation?

- B. Let's consider the reasons that David gives for why God should grant his plea for grace.
1. First, he says that God should incline his ear to him because he is poor and needy.
  2. Keep in mind that David said this even though he was a king.
  3. Each and every one of us is in a state of spiritual poverty and helplessness in and of ourselves.
  4. This is why the life of faith is a life that is lived in dependence on God.
  5. We should regularly express that dependence in our prayers.
  6. We too should come before God as those who are poor and needy.
- C. David also says that God should hear his prayer because he is godly.
1. Now in saying this, David is not claiming that he is without sin.
  2. This is made clear in the rest of the psalm, where David speaks of his need for grace and appeals to God's forgiving nature.
  3. No, in referring to himself as godly, David is simply expressing his devotion and commitment to God.
  4. Because God has redeemed him, he hungers for God and for righteousness.
  5. This is something that every Christian should be able to say about himself or herself.
  6. You are called to be godly, to strive after holiness in all aspects of your life.
- D. Another ground that David gives to support his plea for grace is that he is God's servant.

1. The term “servant” appears multiple times in this psalm.
  2. And the most frequently used name for God in this psalm is *Adonai*, which means ‘master’ or ‘lord.’
  3. One of the drawbacks of living in a democratic culture is that we have less ability to appreciate the bond between master and servant.
  4. The master-servant relationship is one of mutual obligation.
  5. The servant owes the master his service, and the master has the responsibility of taking care of the servant.
  6. The master cannot simply cast the servant aside if he becomes sick or lame, or when he grows old.
  7. In this psalm, David is laying claim to the fact that, as God’s servant, he is entitled to God’s care.
  8. The fact that David belongs to God means that God has obligated himself to preserve David.
  9. This is an important thing for us to keep in mind in our prayer life.
  10. It is an immense comfort for us to know that as Christians we do not belong to ourselves, but to God.
  11. Though we do not deserve to be the special object of God’s care and concern, he has made us such by bringing us into saving relation to himself.
- E. We see yet another ground in verse 3, where David says, “for to you do I cry all the day.”
1. God should give him grace because he persists in crying out to God.
  2. This reminds us of the importance of perseverance in prayer.

3. Jesus taught about this in his parable of the persistent widow.
  4. God wants us to be importunate and unflagging in bringing our requests to him.
  5. When we do this, we are expressing our continued dependence on God.
  6. We are showing that we trust him even when he seems to be silent.
  7. We are demonstrating our submission to his will and his timing.
- F. When David asks God to gladden his soul in verse 4, he gives another ground: “for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.”
1. He entrusts his soul to God.
  2. The reason why this is a legitimate ground for David’s plea is because the Bible tells us that those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.
  3. That being the case, we can cite our trust in him as one of the grounds for why he should answer our pleas for grace.
  4. Even though we don’t deserve his grace, the fact that he has promised it to those who seek it means we do have claim to it.
- G. You may have noticed that in the first four verses, the grounds that David states in support of his plea have to do with himself.
1. But beginning in verse 5, the rest of the grounds that he states are directly focused on God’s character.
  2. He says that God should answer his plea because God is good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon him.
  3. God should answer his plea because he is the God who answers when his people call upon him in the day of trouble.

4. God should answer because he is a great God who does wondrous things, the only true God.
5. God should answer because his steadfast love for David is great, and he will not abandon his own to the depths of Sheol.
6. The God-centered focus of this psalm reminds us that the most important ground when we cry out to God for fresh supplies of his grace is God himself.
7. Because of who he is, and because of what he has promised, we can be confident that he will hear our cries for help when we plead his promises back to him.

### III. Understanding the Goal of Grace (8-13)

- A. We turn now to the second section of the psalm, which begins in verse 8.
  1. In this section, the emphasis is upon the goal of David's plea for grace.
  2. Here we see that David's chief purpose is not simply to find relief for himself but to see God honored and glorified.
  3. This is expressed in the beginning of this section by the confession of God's uniqueness and his universal Lordship.
  4. There is no other God like the Lord.
  5. There are no works that can compare to God's works.
  6. And the Lord is not just the God of Israel.
  7. He is the God who made all the nations.
  8. All of these nations will come before him and worship him.
  9. It took a great deal of faith for David to say that in his day.

10. The kingdom of Israel occupied a small sliver of land, and the vast majority of the world population had never even heard of the Lord.
  11. Yet God had promised Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed in him.
  12. God's gracious plan to redeem a people for himself was not limited to Israel.
  13. It is about the gathering of a vast multitude from all over the earth who will glorify and serve the living God.
  14. Though the fulfillment of that promise must have seemed a long ways off to David, he believed it.
- B. The next thing that David says in this section is found in verse 11, where he prays, "Teach me your way, O LORD, that I might walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name."
1. As we noted a moment ago, though David is faced with trouble, his ultimate concern is not merely to be delivered from his trouble.
  2. He wants God to instruct him and guide him in the way of truth.
  3. The way he expresses this in the second part of verse 11 is especially worth pondering.
  4. He says to God, "unite my heart."
  5. This points to the disintegration and division that sin produces in our hearts.
  6. David is asking God to give him a heart that is wholly devoted to him.
  7. He doesn't want to be pulled in different directions.
  8. He wants to have a single-minded commitment to the Lord.

9. This brings to mind what is expressed by the apostle Paul in Romans 7, where he laments the ongoing conflict that he sees between his renewed man and the sin that continues to indwell him.
  10. The plea for a united heart is a plea that you should be making every single day of your life.
  11. Plead for grace to help you put your old nature to death and grow in the new nature that you have received in Christ.
- C. David says that the goal of having a united heart is so that he will fear God's name.
1. The fear of the Lord is not a slavish, cringing fear.
  2. Instead, it is a fear that is characterized by awe, respect, esteem, and love.
  3. We ought to be awestruck at God's greatness.
  4. We ought to hold him in the highest esteem when we think of the goodness that he pours out on all of his creatures.
  5. And we ought to love him with our whole heart because of the grace that he lavishes upon us in Jesus Christ.
- D. David then says that he will give thanks to God with his whole heart and glorify his name forever.
1. This is the believer's ultimate goal.
  2. It is the chief end for which you and I were created.
  3. And when we receive the grace that God bestows through Jesus Christ, we are set free so that we can aspire to this great goal.
  4. As we consider the great deliverance that our God has worked for us in Christ, our hearts are fueled by gratitude to give God all



honor and praise, for all eternity.

#### IV. Responding to the Need for Grace (14-17)

- A. This brings us to the third and final section of our psalm, which begins in verse 14.
1. Here we see David's response to the situation that has put him in need of a fresh supply of God's grace.
  2. He says that insolent, ruthless, and godless men have risen against him and are seeking his life.
  3. There were multiple instances in David's life that would fit that description.
  4. We may not have people trying to kill us because of our loyalty to the gospel, but we do have people who do not set God before them rising up against us.
  5. One of the ways we see this happening is in the tendency of those who have adopted the cultural orthodoxy on homosexuality and related issues to equate traditional Christian ethics with anti-gay bigotry.
  6. If you hold to the Bible on these issues, you are accused of hating those who identify as LGBTQ.
  7. As you know, some Christians have had their livelihood threatened because of this.
  8. We are living in a society that is in many ways growing more and more hostile to the Christian faith.
  9. Our situation is certainly not as desperate as David's was when he had powerful people seeking his life, but there is no doubting the fact that today's church is facing its own day of trouble.
- B. David's response to his need is instructive for us.

1. Notice what he does immediately after describing his desperate plight.
  2. He reminds himself of who God is.
  3. He says, "But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."
  4. This is taken almost word for word from the covenant renewal ceremony in Exodus 34, where the Lord descends on Mount Sinai and passes before Moses while proclaiming his name to him.
  5. The reason why this is so significant is because it shows that David responded to the troubles that confronted him by making sure that his conception of God was shaped by God's self-revelation.
  6. He did not do what so many people do today.
  7. He did not conjure up his own thoughts about who God is and then look for solace in a god of his own imagining.
  8. He made sure that he was looking to the living and true God for grace to help him in his time of need.
- C. Having done that, David then asks God for help.
1. He asks God to turn to him and be gracious to him.
  2. He asks God to give him his strength.
  3. This is what we are doing when we plead for grace.
  4. We are asking the Lord to supply us with his own strength.
  5. And God's strength is always sufficient to bring us through whatever trouble we face.
  6. As Paul wrote from his Roman prison cell at the end of his letter to the church in Philippi, "I can do all things through him who

strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13 ESV)

- D. The last thing that David asks for is a sign.
1. He says, “Show me a sign of your favor.”
  2. That was a bold thing to say.
  3. But this is not a matter of putting God to the test.
  4. It is an instance of a believer asking God to provide him with some kind of encouragement to uphold his weak faith in a time of crisis.
  5. There is nothing wrong with making that request of God.
  6. The encouragement God that gives may not take the form that you would prefer or expect, but you can be certain that the Lord will provide what is needed to sustain you.
  7. After all, he is the God who gives power to the faint and renews the strength of the weak.