

Thoughts From Other Minds:

12. Earnest, importunate prayer will be heard, vv. 3-7. For a while God may seem to disregard our cries. But in his own good time he will show himself gracious. But let us never forget that noise is not earnestness. Amesius: "That prayer which brings consolation principally consists in an elevation of the heart, not of the voice," v. 4.
14. All our hope and all our confidence must ultimately rest on the known nature of God revealed in Holy Scripture, vv. 5, 15.
15. Every man has his troubles, v. 7. The king on his throne is no exception. The sources and kinds of our afflictions are as diversified as the countenances of men.
16. A great difference between saints and sinners in prayer is that sinners who pray at all pray only when they are in trouble, whereas saints cry daily unto God, vv. 3-7. Compare Job 27:10.
17. The reason why God never wrought a miracle to convince an atheist of the divine existence is that the works of creation and providence are as wondrous as any miracle, v. 8. If men will not believe the former, neither would they the latter.
18. As God's right to claim the homage of all things is in his holy word rested in part on his having created them, v. 9; and as Jesus Christ is often in Scripture declared to be the Maker of all things, John 1:3, 10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10; our worship is no less due to the Son than to the Father. By parity of reasoning we should honour the Spirit, as we honour the Father and the Son; for he garnished the heavens; compare Gen. 1:2; Job 26:3; Ecc. 11:5.
19. There is hope for the heathen; not in the innocence of their lives, not in the harmlessness of their views and practices, not in their sincerity or morality; but in the promise of God that they shall yet worship him and glorify his name, v. 9.
20. While Christians earnestly pray for the conversion and salvation of the heathen, they ought most tenderly to compassionate their condition. The ancestors of every man now on earth were once sunk in horrible idolatry. Israelites are no exception, Josh. 24:2. Most persons who speak the English language can readily trace their origin back to some race that worshipped false gods with rites as cruel as any now known on earth. Surely the spirit of missions is the spirit of the gospel.
21. But whether for the heathen or for ourselves, whether in temporal or spiritual affairs our distress prevails, our hope is in God alone, v. 10.
22. Without divine guidance and divine teaching we shall never know anything or do anything aright, v. 11. We cannot therefore be too urgent in our prayers for special grace and special enlightening at all times.

W S Plumer, Doctrinal and Practical Remarks on Psalm 86, *Psalms*, pp. 810-11.

Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Charge

31 January 2016

Sermon: 'Worship Him who is alone God' (text: Psalm 86:1-17)

Scripture: Psalm 86:1-17: Revelation 15:1-8

Sermon Notes

Introduction: Our penultimate New Year's study in psalms that call us to worship God is in Psalm 86. As we have seen, 'worship' is prostration, sometimes of the body, always of the inner person, of the mind and heart. Worship is submission.

Most people do not worship the alone God, the true God, for they from him to worship idols (Rom 1:21-23). So for our encouragement and our warning we are reminded that in due time all the nations will worship God as the alone God. Psalm 86 teaches this truth in the context of prayer and of David's worship of him.

1. Calling on God

This psalm is a prayer of David; it is both a prayer prayed in desperate circumstances, and a carefully crafted prayer, composed with thought, reverence and understanding, worthy of God and of careful study, that we might imitate David in his careful and reverent and understanding approach to God in prayer.

Firstly, it's four divisions are marked by the fourfold use of the covenant name of God, 'the LORD' - 'Jehovah', or 'Yahweh' (vs. 1, 6, 11, 17). So David prays to God not merely as someone who knows about him, but as a man in covenant with him; God is his God, and he is God's man (cf. vs. 2, 12—'my God').

Prayer is worship, submission to God; prayer acknowledges God as God and ourselves as created by him and as completely dependent upon him. We can only pray with confidence if we can pray to him as 'my God'; he becomes our God by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son, who died for sinners on the cross.

Secondly, seven times David calls God 'Lord' (vs. 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 15); in the scriptures, seven indicates completeness. 'Lord' = 'master', or 'owner'; seven times David states he is not a 'Christian' in name only, for God is his Lord. This, too, is worship, for we worship by submitting to him as master and owner, as our creator and as our redeemer; rebellion against him hinders prayer (Ps 66:18; 1 Peter 3:7).

Thirdly, David in prayer reasons with God— 'for' - v. 1, v. 3, v. 4, and v. 5 (NIV omits—'for you are forgiving and good ...'). When we pray, do we ask why the Lord should give us what we ask for, and plead those reasons with him? Do we pray with urgency, with passion, as though we really want God to say 'yes'?

2. Confession of God

David prayed in earnest, for his life was in danger (v. 14); he needed urgent help and so he renewed his prayer in the confidence that God would answer him (vs. 6-

7). Some say prayer is good because it makes us feel better; David believed God answers prayer, and so must we.

Some speak about whether prayer ‘works’ - but the truth is that God works in answer to prayer; that was why David prayed: ‘for you will answer me’. How could he be so confident, without any ‘not my will, but yours’?

Firstly, because he was in effect pleading the promises of God to him; he was the Lord’s servant, and so he could pray in confidence that the Lord would protect him and deliver him from those who sought his life.

Secondly—and this is the reason he expands—because his God was able to do what all the other so-called gods could not do; hear and answer prayer (v. 8). It was in this same confidence that Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:24).

The LORD is God—and that connects vs. 8 and 9: ‘[you are the only real God and therefore] ‘all the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord ...’. Now God permits people to worship false gods—but he is God, and so he will be worshipped (v. 10, Isa 45:20-23).

Whatever marvellous deeds of God David had in mind, his New Covenant deeds are more wonderful; his sending his Son to live the life we ought to live and do not, and to die the death we deserve, so that we might through faith in him have eternal life! He is the Father’s last word to humanity, and the judge of the nations (Acts 17:30-31) the only Saviour (Acts 4:12) and all the nations will bow to him (Phil 2:10).

That God is ‘alone God’ means that if we worship him, we cannot join with others who try to approach him without recognising Jesus Christ as the only mediator between God and mankind without dishonouring him.

It also means that we must not join with others in so-called ‘inter-faith’ worship; such ‘worship’ is a practical denial of the truth that he is ‘alone God’. Also, while there is only one God, and all other ‘gods’ are idols, behind idols are demons; and so people who worship other gods worship demons; we must ‘flee idolatry’ (1 Cor 10:14), for we cannot part partake of the Lord’s Supper and worship demons (v. 21).

That God is ‘alone God’ means that we must give account of ourselves to him (Rom 14:10-12); . So David prays for himself (v. 11) - not to earn acceptance, for he prays as a believer (vs. 12-13), but as someone who has experienced the redeeming love of God in the forgiveness of his sins and who looked forward to heaven.

Friend, can you praise the Lord as David praised him? Have you felt the weight of your sins, and your need of his great mercy? Have you found that mercy through faith in the Lord Jesus, who died so that God might have mercy on all who believe in him? If not, then ‘Seek the Lord while he may be found’ (Isa 55:6-7).

Having received mercy in the forgiveness of our sins we must pray with David, ‘Teach me your way, O Lord, and will walk in your truth ...’ - and become his students, his learners, by searching the scriptures daily, praying that he would give us an undivided heart to walk in his truth to stand before him with joy when he comes.

My Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. How can studying David’s prayer in psalm 86 help us to pray in ways that please God?
2. How does psalm 86 speak to us of David’s relationship with God? What does this have to say to us about the relationship with God that is necessary if we are to pray with confidence?
3. What biblical answer ought be given to someone who says that the reason we pray is because prayer makes us feel better, or because prayer ‘works’? Why did David pray? (vs. 6, 7, 8).
4. How does the fact that God is ‘alone God’ give us confidence that the present majority refusal by people to worship him will not continue indefinitely?
5. What spiritual danger is there in joining with others in the worship of other gods? (1 Cor chs. 8, 10, esp. 10:14-22).
6. Why does David pray, “Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name”? What spiritual state is a prerequisite to this prayer? What must we do after praying it?