

TRIED, TROUBLED, BUT TRUSTING

Psalm 86: 1-17 and II Samuel 7: 22-24 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Okay, you say, which of us did you get the title of your message from? I smile because this title just may be a title many of you might have for this time in your life—“Tried, Troubled, But Trusting!” We have come to the only psalm in the third section of the psalms that is written by David. Isn’t that amazing? From Psalm 73-89—in these seventeen psalms, 11 are written by Asaph, 4 are by the sons of Korah, 1 is by Ethan the Ezrahite, and 1 is by David. Psalm 86 is also known as one of the five prayer psalms—Psalm 17, 86, 90, 102, and 142. Psalms 17, 86 and 142 are written by David, Psalm 90 by Moses, and Psalm 102 is anonymous, the prayer of one afflicted.

This psalm is really like fragments fused together in a stained glass window. This psalm is a prayer that is truly a mosaic, an artistic composition created by inlaying small pieces of variously colored glass or precious stones in a mortar of cement so as to form a picture. Around 20 other psalms are laid down to create Psalm 86, and there are also additional thoughts in Psalm 86 from the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Jeremiah. From this fact, may the Lord help us all learn: (1) **that the virtue and the value of our prayers do not consist in any primary way of our words to God being necessarily original with us,** provided that they are the genuine expression of our hearts that are offering up our hearts and souls and spirits to the Lord. (2) **that the value of being able to quote scripture as we pray allows us to actually pray the very words of God back to Him in our daily prayers.** Yet, remember (3) **that as we quote from the Word of God as we pray, it does not rankle God or take away from the originality of our prayers that we are praying back the words of God to Him.**

I read this week about a man who worked as a messenger for a photo lab. He got a message on his beeper instructing him to pick up a package at an unfamiliar company with a long, difficult name. He looked skyward and exclaimed, “God, where am I supposed to go?” Just then, his pager came on, this time with the client’s exact address. A man nearby witnessed this scene. Raising his arms to the heavens, he cried, “Why don’t you ever answer me?” Do you ever wish that prayer worked like that all the time? We pray and instantly a voice from heaven gives us the answer we’re looking for! Wouldn’t we all say, “Sign me up!” Prayer usually proves to be a much more difficult process. All of us need all the help we can get on how to pray more effectively. Sometimes praying such a beautiful prayer as David prayed in Book Three of the psalms isn’t the highway to everything working out well for us. Dr. John Ker writes in Graham Scroggie’s commentary about a contrasting lesson Psalm 86 gives us a helpful lesson on prayer. God’s psalms are dynamite. They need to be spoken aloud and sung, until they are stamped on our

minds. History records that French pastors and old Dutch believers their forefathers, the French Huguenots who were chained together, and pulled through the streets. As they lurched through the streets, trusting God more than fearing their captors who were going to kill them or who were killing them, they sang song versifications of the Psalms. And do you know their favorite song to march to their martyrdoms? It was psalm 86. Let me explain what psalm versification is. If we turn to Psalm 23: 1, 2, one translation we all know is: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.” But what is a paraphrase? It gives the sense, but not in word for word translation. A paraphrase from the Message goes, “GOD! my shepherd. I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from” But what is versification? It is putting a psalm to poetry and music as the French Hugenots did in their well known Geneva psalms. Isaac Watts, that great hymn writer wrote words to sing of Psalm 23: 1,2, words published in his song book called, “The Psalms of David” published in 1719. . Here they are: “My Shepherd will supply my need: Jehovah is His Name; In pastures fresh He makes me feed, Beside the living stream.”

I encourage all of us to notice how often as we sing our worship to the Lord, that we are actually singing from the Psalms. Psalm 86 is the earnest, heartfelt cry of a man of God in a desperate situation laying hold of the God whom he knew well. Psalm 86 is peppered with 15 requests, some of them are repeated, the appeals are called out to God with a strong sense of urgency. Psalm 86 falls into four stanzas or strophes: In Psalm 86: 1-7, David is crying out in great need and desperation, asking God to hear him and act immediately on his behalf. In Psalm 86: 8-10 is a praising of God as the only true God, the Lord of the nations, and the words are seen as Messianic by almost every interpreter of the psalm. These verses reveal that the answer to the psalmist's prayer has not yet arrived. The pressure the enemy has placed on David has not let up, but the psalmist though tried and troubled, is still trusting the Lord. In Psalm 86: 11-13, David asks God to teach him His way and to unite his heart to fear God's name, so that he will glorify His name forever. Finally in Psalm 86:14-17, in light of David's fierce enemies, he again appeals to God's mercy and grace to deliver him. Perhaps the overarching lesson on prayer in Psalm 86 is that our many great needs should drive us to our knees to pray, to turn to our great God for He alone is able to deliver us. This psalm thus becomes a primer for us in praying, something I need to learn and relearn and then re-relearn. Let's look today at four simple questions that may be on our minds that Psalm 86 helps us answer. These questions in brief are: (1) Why should we pray? (2) Whom should we pray to? (3) How should we pray? And (4) What should we pray for?

FIRST OF ALL, WHY SHOULD WE AS BELIEVERS PRAY? (I.) We should pray because we are all needy people. Our needs are massive and many. Notice

verse 1. “Incline Your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.” Our great needs should drive us all to our knees. If you are truly a needy person, as your pastor is, our many huge needs have a way of taking the proud blinders off of our eyes. When none of our fix-it plans work, and we’ve done all that we can do, we all perhaps have turned to God in prayer. Sadly, by the time that happens, how many days and how many ways have we already tried that have not worked and finally, as a last resort, we cry out in our great need and neediness. I love the words of John Bunyan who once said, “You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.” Amen to John Bunyan. Prayer should be our first order of business as we face our needs and our last order of business. Needs should drive us to prayer. Would you right now pray verse one with me. Repeat after me. “Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.” Perhaps for each of us, whatever the need is that we face, we need to pray, “Dear Lord, show me clearly what my greatest needs are in this situation, and show me that only You can meet my needs.

As we pray as poor and needy believers, we need to pray another prayer. David prays in Psalm 86: 2, “Preserve my life, for I am godly: save Your servant, who trusts in You—You are my God.” You say, “What is the need here? The need is imbedded in Psalm 86, that believers wish and desire and strive to be godly, and God help us as we tell God that we are godly that our prayer is an acknowledgement of our need for godliness and holiness—as we sing, “Holiness, holiness is what I long for. Holiness is what I need. (Faithfulness, righteousness, and brokenness). The Hebrew word is not as strong as our word “godly” or the KJV translation of “holy.” The Hebrew word here is **chaciyd**. Chaciyd means devout or devoted. Strong’s Concordance states of chaciyd means one who patterns his life after God. The picture in David’s prayer is not that David is not a sinner, but even this psalmist who wrote Psalms 32 and 51 about his sins of deceit, lust, adultery, and murder, yet this forgiven sinner speaks of himself as a man who is seeking to pattern his life after God. Is that a needy area in your life? Might we all not pray, “God, you know my heart and my flesh. You know I long and I strive and I seek to follow you in a holy and godly way. Preserve my life for that is my pattern. Save Your servant because I trust in You, my God.

The neediness goes on in verses 3, 4. “Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to You do I cry all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.” Here the neediness is so intimate. How many of you have been crying this past week about your neediness—sometimes over and over all day long? How many of us have asked God to dry our tears and gladden our soul as we lift our broken souls up to Him. Do you remember as a child bringing your broken toys to your daddy and crying, “Daddy, will you fix this for me?” We as believers are composed of body, soul, and spirit. Our bodies are what we look like. Our souls are

what we feel like, and our spirits are who we are. Have you learned to pray to God about your broken soul—your broken heart, your broken, agonizing feelings—as it were, the broken bones of your soul?

On July 4th, this year-2014, in an accident fileting fish, I stabbed my filet knife through all four fingers of my right hand. The blood squirted everywhere. My daughter had a first aid kit with about a pint full of cayenne powder. She said it wouldn't burn, but it would coagulate the blood. Almost instantly, that is what happened. What a provision of God. But these four fingers still hurt, and have painful or numb spots since nerves were cut. I had more than broken flesh. I still have broken, slashed into nerves and it is a rare day since the 4th of July that I do not say, "Lord, touch my hurting, stabbed and slashed fingers from trying to repair a filet knife." I try not to even remember seeing the knife piercing through all four fingers." It gives me the willies just thinking of it, and more that one person has said, "How did you pull out the knife." I give credit to God for that. Just like my fingers, my soul and yours get stabbed and slashed and opened up, and cut out and laid open and laid bare and traumatized by knife points in our many relationships. As it were, with our bloody souls, we all need to raise them up, all coagulated with cayenne and looking like there's no tomorrow and we need to pray, "Fix it, Daddy. Help me, my Father." We should pray because we are needy people—in v. 7, because we cry in our day of trouble, in verse 13, because God has delivered our soul from hell, sheol, and the grave, will He not deliver us again in our great need? Secondly,

SECONDLY, WHOM SHOULD WE PRAY TO? (II.) Don't let this be too obvious so that we discount it. Remember getting hurt as a child, pounding a thumb or getting hit in the head or being stung by a hornet and running in circles round and round your house? I did that as a boy. I wanted relief, but who did I turn to? I turned to myself at first, that somehow I could outrun the pain. I couldn't. Eventually either Mom or Dad slowed me down in my running and screaming and picked me up. It would take more than a kiss to kiss it away. They said, "What happened?" And guess what each of us did? Each of us poured out our souls and spirits to our parents in between sobs. We knew who to tell—and who was it we told? We told the one who heard our cries for help. God does incline His ear, v. 1. He does answer us, v. 1. He does preserve our life, v 2. He is gracious to us, v. 3. He does know how to gladden our souls, as we lift our souls up to Him- 4

This is no small question. Whom should we pray to? Verse one—says—"O Lord. V. 3 says, "O Lord." V. 4 says, "O Lord." V. 5 says, "O Lord," v. 6 says, "O Lord," v. 8 says, "O Lord." V. 9 says, "O Lord." V. 11 says, "O Lord" V. 12 says "O Lord," V. 15 says "O Lord and v. 17 says, "Lord." Eleven times in 17 verses

David knew who to pray to. When you are tried and troubled, call and cry and pray to the Lord. Seven of these occurrences of O Lord come from the Hebrew **Adonai**. Adonai means, God of all gods, Lord of all Lords, or Lord over all. David went to the top with His needs. Four of the occurrences of O Lord come from **Yehovah or Yahweh**. Yehovah or Jehovah or Yahweh means the self-existent or eternal God or the God who effects His will or who brings it to pass. The most literal translation is “I Am or I Am That I Am—The Great I Am the Bread of Life...That’s where Abraham went to Jehovah Jireh. I am the God who provides. Five times David calls the Lord, “My God—v. 2, “You alone are God” – v. 10 “O Lord my God” – 12, “O God, v. 14 and “A God, merciful and gracious.” V. 15 The Hebrew word for God is Elohim. Four of the five times, the word is **Elohim**, meaning the Plural of Majesty, the Supreme God and in Psalm 86: 15, the word is singular—**El** meaning God almighty. Beloved, don’t be afraid to repeat the name of the Lord in your prayers. Don’t be afraid of using the Name “I Am” or Jehovah or Yahweh. Don’t shy away from calling the Lord “my God” or “Almighty God.” The best prayers are full of Him. The word Adonai used 7 times expresses the special belonging we have as children to God, and of standing under His immediate guidance and protection. This connection of us to God is wonderful. David uses the intensely personal words “I,” “my,” “me,” or Your servant 35 times. This prayer is not intercession for others. Rather, this prayer is petition or supplication to the Lord of Lords, the Great I Am, Elohim, Almighty God. Whom do we pray to? We go to the very top. When we pray, it is no sin to pray for ourselves as David did. It is not selfish. David models this kind of powerful petition so we will tap into it and learn to pray for ourselves as well as others. We’ve looked at why we pray and whom we pray to. Thirdly,

THIRDLY, HOW SHOULD WE PRAY? (III.) Along with praying with strong prayers of petition, what else is David teaching us? Here are five lessons **(1) We should pray earnestly, fervently, intensely**—David’s intensity in this psalm is obvious as this prayer is full to overflowing with David’s awareness of his need so he is pouring out his heart. David knows he is sunk without the Lord so he cries, “Incline Your ear, v. 1 and answer me.” “Save me,” v. 2, Be gracious to me—to You I cry all the day,” v. 3 “Give ear, listen to my plea for grace.” v. 6. We can come like a starving man or woman dying of hunger and thirst. This is no mindless mumbling or some formal liturgy. We are crying earnestly. **(2) We should pray continually**. Notice v. 3—“For to you do I cry all the day. This means we keep coming back to God in prayer over and over throughout the day and when we wake in the night. **(3) We should pray thankfully, gratefully**. Notice v. 12—“I give thanks to you, O Lord my God with my whole heart.” **(4) We should pray humbly, with humility**. David is humbly pouring ourhis heart in this entire prayer. There is no demanding or commanding of God. There is no complaining. He calls for God to be gracious, v. 3 and he refers to himself as God’s servants, v. 2, 4, and

“the son of Your maidservant,” –v. 16 David speaks of himself as poor or afflicted and needy, v. 1 and in great weakness, in need of strength, v. 16, and in need of comfort and help, v. 17. **(5) We should pray trustingly, in faith.** Psalm 86: 2—save your servant who trusts in You.” Notice v. 7—I know you’ll answer me. “In the day of my trouble I call upon You for you answer me. David is not praying with doubt in v. 17, but after years of trusting in faith, he is asking God for a sign of His favor, that those who hate him may see it and be put to shame because of God’s help. When we pray in faith for God’s glory and our good and our growth in grace, God will answer us. Fourthly,

FOURTHLY, WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR? (IV.) The list is long for all we should pray for. Beloved, write all these down. **(1) Pray for salvation and deliverance. v. 2.** If you’ve never been saved, this is your primary need. If you are in a treacherous situation, one of your primary needs is God’s deliverance. **(2) Pray for joy and a gladdened heart in trials—v. 4.** Charles Spurgeon once said, “We ought to be rejoicing in the Lord or pining after Him. Ask God to make you miserable unless His conscious presence makes you joyful and happy.” **(3) Pray for a teachable, reverent, single-minded, obedient heart.** Notice v. 11—“Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.” Beloved, it is easy to detect un-teachability in others, but much harder to see it for what it is in us. Be willing to learn whatever God wants to teach you however He divinely designs to teach you. **(4) Pray for God to unite your heart to fear His name.** This is a deep and awesome prayer for God to give you and me a unified life. Are your conscience, your will, your intellect, your emotions, and your reason all in harmony with God’s leading in His Word and in His promptings. Or sadly, do we stonewall God with our lives lived in pathetic and tragic conflict, our will with our intellect, or our emotions with our reason. Pray fervently, “Unite my heart to fear Your name.” Pray not to have a divided heart, but be single-minded, wholly devoted to Jesus. **(5) Pray for God to show His lovingkindness to all who call upon Him.** v. 5, 12-16, **(6) Pray for God’s kingdom to come, for Messiah to return, and for all nations to worship the Lord. Pray for God to reign supreme.** Notice these Messianic verses in Psalm 86: 8-10. This is John’s prayer in Rev. 22: 20, 21. “Even so, come Lord Jesus, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Dear God, please teach us all as your people to pray, knowing why, to whom to pray, how to pray, and to know what to pray for, in Jesus’ name. Amen.