

we have things to learn and we pray that you would teach us to walk in your way as was said in the psalm. And some of us have forgotten the things that we learned and need to learn them again, so we pray that we would be relearning and re-repenting as we come before you this evening. Please forgive our sins, we constantly fail you and fall short, but grant us too to have in our hearts really to follow you and not to be content with our failures, but to be pressing on, to be picking ourselves up and going forward. So help each one of us, Lord, and we pray that you would bless us as your people, bless all those who are tuning into this, and not just blessing us with cheerful, happy thoughts, but with genuine godliness and becoming more like Jesus Christ, being strong in the strength of the Lord and in his mighty power and being able to be witnesses in this dark world of the light and purity and goodness of Jesus Christ. So we pray that you would bless us this evening in the name of Jesus. Amen. So the scriptures that we're going to be looking at are those in [8 : 08] Psalm 86. So before Phil speaks, I will read Psalm 86. So this is Psalm 86, a prayer of David.

Hear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard my life, for I am devoted to you. You are my God, save your servant who trusts in you. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long.

Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love, steadfast love, to all who call to you. Hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy. In the day of my trouble, I will call to you, for you will answer me. Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord. No deeds can compare with yours. All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord. They will bring glory to your name, for you are great and do marvellous deeds.

You alone are God. Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord, my God, with all my heart.

[9 : 39] I will glorify your name forever, for great is your love towards me. You have delivered me from the depths of the grave. The arrogant are attacking me, O God. A band of ruthless men seeks my life, men without regard for you. But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me. Grant your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant. Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame. For you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. We thank God for his word. And I'm going to hand over to brother Phil Moon to lead us now and he will speak and include a prayer at the end of his talk. Hello everyone. Real pleasure to be able to speak to you from Psalm 86 this evening. And let's pray now as we come to God's word.

Father, we see in Psalm 86, it's a psalm with huge, enormous treasures in every verse. And we pray, Lord, that you may speak to us, encourage us, build us up, help us to cope with the ups and downs of life. And we pray, Lord, we may hear your voice tonight and be obedient servants for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Well, I wonder if you've had a week like this. Last week, my dog was run over. Yesterday, I was made redundant. Last night, I was phoned up by my GP to say that there were some pretty dodgy looking results and I needed to come in and see him. Today, it was all sorts of horrible stuff happening. And NHS Test and Trace said, I've been got to isolate because of coming near someone with COVID. And then my wife asked me for a divorce. Well, maybe not exactly like that. And I've never had a week quite like that. But there are times, aren't there, when life is difficult, when it's a real struggle, when there are some real downs, as well as maybe one or two ups. Well, how do you react?

[12 : 19] How do you react when rubbish things happen? How do you react as a Christian when rubbish things happen? And they do, don't they, to all of us. But how do we react to it as Christian people? Because I guess sometimes Christian people just react to it in the same way that anyone else does. And we struggle through. But actually, there is a clear way that Christian people should be reacting to some of the really difficult and hard times in life, when we're in particular needs. And Psalm 86 is looking at that whole area of what we do when we're in need. And David, as he writes this, was clearly in need. You see in the first verse there, hear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. I am poor and needy.

There is some indication, a little bit later on in verse 14, the arrogant are attacking me, O God, a band of ruthless men seeks my life, men without regard for you. So there's some indication that there's maybe some military conflict, or maybe he's in one of those times when he's being chased by others and so on, but his life's in danger. But we don't know exactly what it was. And curiously, that actually makes it slightly easier for us to be able to apply this Psalm to our lives. Because when there are particular needs, how do we respond? Well, there are some really precious truths that we see here in Psalm 86, and as we go through this this evening. As I was preparing this, I was thinking, Psalm 86 feels a little bit like getting up really close and personal to an Impressionist painting, say a Monet or something like that. Because when you get very close, you just see lots of little blobs of paint, don't you? And you think, well, that's just blobs of paint until you come back, and then you see, oh, wow, this is extraordinary, this is beautiful. And with Psalm 86, when you look at it, you can think up close and personal. There are just lots of individual things, and there are absolute treasures, absolute gems in every clause going through this Psalm. But actually, I think sometimes it helps too, or many, all the time it helps as well, to get to draw back and get the bigger picture of what is happening here. And this is Hebrew poetry. And as you look through this, this is not just random blobs and ideas that are there. No, this is carefully constructed. So, for instance, it's, you look at the first four verses, they go together in a stanza, it's called, then the next three, and the next three, and the next three, and then it ends up with four at the end. So it goes four verses, three, three, three, four verses. And there is a clear structure to this. It may be poetry, it may be something that warms the heart, but there is a very clear structure to it as well. And we need to be clear as well that when we look at this, I'm afraid I can't possibly cover everything that's here. There are so many wonderful gems. So there are bound to be bits that we will just have to pass over fairly quickly. But I hope we get the big picture. And I hope this encourages you to go back and to read Psalm 86 for yourself, maybe every day this week, to get this really into our minds and our hearts and our lives. So the thing is, how do we get on? What do we do when life is tough, when we're needy? And there are five points. They relate to each of those five groupings of churches. And the first one is this, from verses one to four. How do we react? What should we do? First thing is, come and trust our merciful God. Come and trust our merciful God. This whole psalm is a prayer. It's headed there, a prayer of David. And it's clearly a prayer. Verse one, hear, O Lord, and answer me, I am poor and needy. He's clearly praying. You go on to verse three there, have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long. So he's not just praying. It's a persistent praying as well, isn't it? He's not just praying once and saying, right, that's done. I'll put my feet up and wait for God to answer. No, he keeps on praying. And he prays with honesty. And he prays clearly with persistence. And it's a persistence that's based on David's personal relationship with God. So you look at verse two here, and he says, guard my life, for I'm devoted to you. You are my God, save your servant who trusts in you. That's a wonderful little cameo picture, isn't it? Of a relationship with God. He trusts in God. For David, God is his God. David is God's servant. And there are a couple of things we need to see here. The first of one is structural. When you read Psalm 86, do take note of the number of times the word for, F-O-R, not the number, but F-O-R comes. It's there in this section. It's in verse one and two and three and four. It's also in verse five, but the NIV doesn't translate it. And then the word for is there in verses seven and 10 and 13 and 17 as well. And what they're saying, what that little word is saying is that David is praying on the basis of a personal relationship with God. It's saying that, please, will you do these things? Because we have this relationship with each other. We will come back to that. But he's in a personal, committed relationship with God. And the second thing to note here is there is an awful lot of covenant language. There is an awful lot of covenant language going on here and through the psalm. So David has a personal commitment to God. God has a personal commitment to David. They are in a covenant relationship with each other. So, for instance, in verse two, where David talks about himself as God's devoted servant, those are covenant words. And there are covenant words in verse five, abounding in love. That's a covenant phrase. You go on to verse 15, which is a direct lift out to [18:18] Exodus chapter 34 and verse six, the end of verse six. There's more covenant language. And it's saying there that God is utterly committed to his servant. And David is responding in utter commitment to his God in love. It's a beautiful picture of a great relationship between God and his servant. And as we read verse two, it is challenging, isn't it? You have a look at verse two, I am devoted to you. You are my God, save your servant who trusts in you. Could you say that? Could

you say that honestly and truthfully?

Sometime it's a good idea to have an MOT of the heart, isn't it? You know, our cars have to have an MOT every year. And actually, I've got that. I got the certificate from the MOT from our little car was done back in April. And on the certificate, they say whether it's a pass or fail. And then they might give you some advisories as well. So, for instance, we've got to keep an eye on our rear number plate, which is deteriorating and on the rear tyres, which are getting a bit perished. And when we have a spiritual MOT, there may well be advisories which come up there, things that we think to ourselves, oh, I really need to keep an eye on that. That's not good. That needs some work on. But there might also be the kind of pass fail, the big, some big thing that's going on that actually is really serious. And you need to pay attention to that and get that sorted now. And what David is doing here in verse two, I'm devoted to you. You are my God, save your servant who trusts in you. It just seems to me it's a good idea and a good opportunity for us maybe to just pause and give ourselves a spiritual MOT. It's that relationship of love with God, which is so significant, isn't it? Where we're enfolded and protected by it. Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, Victorian times said this, it is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord. [20 : 28] Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him. Sickness is his medicine. Reproach is his honour. Death is his gain. And if you're in that covenant relationship with God, then any bad time that's happened, any time where there is clearly, where we're clearly in needs, is actually a great opportunity for growth and development in our Christian lives. There's so much more I could say on that first point. Do read Psalm 86 carefully, slowly, maybe a phrase at a time.

And that first thing, when you're in need, come and trust our merciful God. Second thing to do, speak to our loving God. And that's the next stanza group of verses, verses five to seven. And there's a continuing theme of praying here. So you look at verse six, hear my prayer, O Lord, listen to my cry for mercy. And verse five is itself praying. You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call on you. And what encouragement here, isn't there, for David and his prayers and for ours as well. God is forgiving and good. That's in verse five. If God wasn't forgiving and good, it'd be very difficult to pray, wouldn't it, if you think about it? But he is. He is abounding in love, as you see at the end of verse five. God hears and listens. We see that in verse six. God answers in verse seven. A real encouragement for people who pray that the fact that God is good. God is not only good himself, but also he brings good things. [22 : 08] Handley Mole said this, there is no situation so chaotic that God cannot, from that situation, create something that is surpassingly good. He did it at the creation. He did it at the cross. He's doing it today. We have a good God who does good things and creates good things out of rubbish situations. When you're in need, remember that God is good and also forgiving. He's a forgiving God.

And we all know, don't we, that if you've got a friendship or perhaps in your marriage where you've done something wrong or where maybe you need to forgive your spouse or your friend for something that they've done to you and so on, that when you do that, actually the relationship suffers until you have forgiven, until you've talked it through and so on. And we read here that in Jesus and because of Jesus, God is forgiving. God is forgiving. He is a God who has forgiven us because of, and unable to do that because Jesus has died for us. And in his love, he wants to forgive us, which is an extraordinary and wonderful thing and actually really encourages us to come to him genuinely and faithfully in our prayers. So let's go back to verse five. It's worth memorising. I don't know if you're in a habit of memorising verses. It's a really good thing to do. Verse five, you are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call on you. And this abounding in love, this overflowing love, this covenant love, committed love that God has for his people, it is life-changing. It is absolutely life-changing.

A guy called Alexander McLaren said, God's love is not drawn out by our loveliness, but wells up like an artesian spring from the depths of his nature. And as he captures all of our hearts, it means that we will want to naturally turn to him in prayer when we're in need, when things have gone wrong in life, say, when problems come, when we struggle. And have you noticed verse five comes before verses six and seven, which seems like a good order, really. Verse five is the foundation. God is forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who calls on him. And then verses six and seven of the actions which are based on that foundation. Hear my prayer, O Lord. Listen to my cry for mercy. I will call to you in a day of my trouble. I will call to you for you will answer me. That is the

action. If you have children or grandchildren, or if you have parents or grandparents, you will have seen, and you know, there's a good relationship there. You will see and know the love that there is between those different members of the family. So for instance, we've got a five-year-old granddaughter, Isabel, Belle. And when we're on, they live up in Norfolk. And when we manage to get there or we FaceTime or something, she's a real little chatterbox and wants to tell us everything. She just wants to talk, talk, talk. I mean, no one else can get her words in edgeways sometimes. And it's delightful because she wants to talk with

Nana and Grandpa and tell us all sorts of things that she's been up to. And it's on the basis of that love of God the Father that he has for us and ours for him, that actually we can come to him and we will come to him and bring our needs and our aches and our worries and all those things to him, especially perhaps when the times are difficult. So a question, a very simple question. How's your prayer life? How's your prayer life? When in need, come and trust our merciful God. Second, speak to our loving God. Third, acknowledge our sovereign God. And that's verses 8 to 10. A.W. Pink said this, to say that God is sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that he is the Almighty, the possessor of all power in heaven and earth, so that none can defeat his counsels, thwart his purposes or resist his will. Now we come to the central part of Psalm 86 and it's in verse 9 here. All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord. They will bring glory to your name. The central verse, and often in Hebrew poetry, that's a significant place to be in the middle. And what a verse, and what confidence that David has as he writes this. God is sovereign and his creation coming to worship him and bring him glory. And when's it going to happen?

[27 : 05] Well, surely it will happen at the new heaven and a new earth and a new creation, won't it? Of course, it didn't happen in David's day. It might happen in our day, but it will certainly be there when we go to be with Jesus in the new creation after we die. Our sovereign God. And one day, everyone will bow to him. Everyone. Everyone. It's interesting, the word Lord there, it's used quite a lot in Psalm 86. In fact, it comes seven times. And for instance, in verses 8 and 9 and 11 and 12, you see the word Lord there. But it's not the all very big capitals that you see in our Bibles, which denotes the word Yahweh. But this is a slightly different word. It denotes the Hebrew word Adonai, which is a word which means master or sovereign. So when you read verse 8 here, you can say, among the gods, there is none like you, O Lord, O master, O sovereign. No deeds can compare with yours.

So he's not saying here that God is just one of many. He's just the best. You know, he's the best model there is at the moment. Because that has a problem, doesn't it? I mean, you may have had the best model car you could possibly have in 1970. But now, 51 years later, it will be absolutely terribly out of date and just hasn't got any of the latest stuff in it, which we come to expect in modern day cars. No, no, this is saying there is one God. People may make their idols, but there's only one God, capital G God. There is just one God and he is incomparable.

So the end of verse 10, you alone are gods. You alone are God, of course. I wonder if you ever paused and read this out to God, out loud, say verses 8 to 10, or maybe the whole psalm, just read it out loud to him and to say, Lord, this is what I believe. I'm praising you because you are the one God. Well, better still read out the whole psalm. Wouldn't that be great?

And if when you're going through a rough time, there is even more reason then, isn't there, to do it, to read this out loud to God, to read verses 8 and 9 and 10 out loud to God, to read Psalm 86 and acknowledge God's sovereignty, because that gives us a huge, simple, straightforward, growing confidence in God in the face of bad times or bad people.

I love this story about John Chrysostom, around about 400 AD. He was on trial for his life and the emperor said to him, we will banish you. And Chrysostom replied, you cannot banish me for the whole world as my father's home. To which the emperor replied, well then, we will execute you.

[30 : 00] And Chrysostom said, you cannot. My life is with Christ. And the emperor said, well then, we will dispossess you of your estate. Chrysostom replied, you cannot. I haven't got any. All my treasure is in heaven. The emperor, well then, we'll put you in solitary confinement. Chrysostom said, you cannot. For I have a divine friend from whom you can never separate me. I defy you.

There is nothing you can do to hurt me. That's extraordinarily beautiful, isn't it? Acknowledge our sovereign God who has us in his hands and who loves us extraordinarily and wonderfully. So in tough times, in difficult times, when in need, come and trust our merciful God. Speak to our loving God. Acknowledge our sovereign God. And the fourth thing is this. Praise our faithful God. Verses

11 to 13. This psalm moves. It progresses. Derek Kidner wrote a lovely commentary on this. And he said, Psalm 86 is heading resolutely forwards to clearer skies. Resolutely forwards to clearer skies. There's been a great deliverance. He talks about it in verse 13. And now, verse 11, teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name. Now, where does praise come from? Where does genuine praise come from? Well, look at verse 11 then again. Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name. Or verse 12, I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart. In other words, the core of our being.

And if we're going to praise God, we've got to be right with God, haven't we? We won't be able to praise God unless we are actually right with him. If your heart's wrong, then the praising isn't going to happen, is it? And we see here both a taut heart and an undivided heart, which is then praising God.

So teaching, for instance, as we need to be taught as Christians. And it needs to go not just to our minds, but metaphorically, if you like, it needs to go down our necks and to our hearts, to the core of our being. And the teaching from God's word is not just an academic exercise.

[32 : 28] So therefore, we're not just feeding information into our minds and understanding and so on. Of course, teaching must be aimed at our understanding. I hope that, you know, we're understanding verse Psalm 86 a little bit better as I'm speaking now. But it's got to be with a purpose. And the purpose is that our hearts might be right with God, that our hearts may be hearts where we will want to be more and more praising God, that our hearts will be undivided.

But so often our hearts are divided, aren't they? We're half-hearted, half with God, half distracted, or we're half obedient and half rebelling, or we're half loving God and half loving ourselves, or half loving God and half loving our idols. David here prayed with an undivided heart.

We would say wholehearted. I don't know if you know Ian Barkley. He's one of the members of our church family at BH. He's in his late 80s now. He's pretty much confined to bed as he's nearing the end of his life. And he was the minister at St Luke's in Prestonville in Brighton. And he recounts a story that he had had dinner with a friend. And then as his friend left to go home and get on the train at Waterloo Station, a couple of other guys got on the train with him. And as they left the station, one of these other guys who got on fell down on the floor and started having a fit. And his companion helped him. He made sure he didn't bash himself and so on. And they got him back on the seat and loosened his tie and then turned to Ian Barkley's friend and said in American accent, I'm really sorry, but this kind of thing does happen from time to time. You see, we were out in the Korean War together. And my friend here was out in, I was out in no man's land. And my friend here came out to injured. And my friend here came out to get me and to drag me back to safety. And then when we are nearly back on our side, a shell landed nearby and we both ended up in hospital. I recovered.

But then my English friend here, I then found out he would never quite recover. He had come out and saved me and he would never quite recover. And then he said this. So I broke off my engagement.

[34 : 54] I sold my house. I sold my car. I gave up my job. And I came over here to look after him. You see, he did that for me. There's nothing I wouldn't do for him.

And there's that kind of wholehearted commitment, which is a wholehearted commitment to Jesus, which actually David is wanting here. God wants an undivided heart, a wholehearted person.

Someone talked about having your heart absorbed with praise, like a sponge absorbing water, a heart full of praise for God. And then this is a very special because verse 13 looks forward rather than back. It's a historic present. It's looking forward with certainty. And what's all that about? Well, look at verse 13 here. It says, for great is your love towards me. You have delivered me from the depths of the grave. It may refer to David and future battles, but I think it most clearly points to Jesus. So when we're in difficult times, praise our faithful God, come and trust our merciful God, speak to our loving God, acknowledge our sovereign God, speak to our loving God, acknowledge our sovereign God, praise our faithful God. And finally, just very briefly, remember our gracious God, verses 14 to 17. David's situation in verse 14 suggests ferocious and ruthless forces. And yet his priorities are still his relationship with God based on God's perfect character. So you look at verse 15 here. But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. That's a wonderful verse, isn't it? Another one to remember. And remember, it does come from

Exodus. And he pleads with his God in verse 16, turn to me and have mercy on me, grant your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant. And he pleads with God to give him strength, not to do it for me, but to give me strength so that I may be able to do it. There's a significant difference there. And all this because of our covenant God. You see the covenant language there in verse 15 there, all those covenant words. And in verse 17 there, right at the end, give me a sign of your goodness. That's another covenant word from God. And when we're going through bad, troubling times, sometimes we need to just pause and remember, don't we? Sometimes we need to read something like Psalm 86.

Sometimes we need to just get our Bibles out, open it up, find something good to read and which will make us to remember. To remember just how loving God is. To remember just how gracious God is. To remember just how committed to us he is. Just how verse 15 God is. Remember your gracious God.

[37 : 56] You may want to do something specific to help you to remember that this week. I'd say again, why not read Psalm 86 every day. So that's it. When in need, come and trust our merciful God, speak to our loving God, acknowledge our sovereign God, praise our faithful God, and remember our gracious God. Except it's not quite it, is it? Because the most important bit is this. Who did this best?

Who did this best? Who did Psalm 86 best? Who does this best describe? Who would have this, have had this recited to him as a young boy by his mum? The son of the maidservant. Who would have sung this at work as a young man? You know, this only really makes sense when we think of Jesus.

And we think, when we think of him living this out. And when we think of him dying this out. Because in the end, Psalm 86 is actually about Jesus. And so we see verse 14 on Good Friday, for instance, the arrogant are attacking me, O God, a band of ruthless men seeks my life, men without regard for you. And we might think perhaps of Jesus praying verse 16 or reciting verses 1 to 4. Perhaps in the Garden of Gethsemane, maybe thinking about that on the way up to Calvary. And praying in agonised confidence, verses 8 to 10. Do take Psalm 86 and read it afresh, but with Jesus in your mind. Why not do that tonight? Very, very slowly, with Jesus in view, in his hour of need. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we do thank you so much for this psalm. Thank you it points us to you. And thank you it helps us to understand you more and more precious and more deeply. And it helps us to know how we should be responding when there are difficult times in our needs. And we pray, Lord, you would help us to do that, to come to you, to speak with you, to acknowledge you, to praise you and to remember you. And we pray, Lord, that if there are those difficult times now, you'd help us to do those things today for your name's sake. Amen.

Phil, thank you so much for that encouraging and challenging word and the prayer that followed.

[41 : 22] We're going to bring our meeting towards a close by singing that psalm itself. It's number 86, Psalm 86, number 86, and it starts off, Bow down your ear, O Lord.

Let's go. Bow down your ear, O Lord, and hear, Thou poor and needy, I draw near, Preserve my life, O God.

Have mercy, Lord, I cry to you, Rejoice, your servant soul, and you, I look to you, O Lord.

O Lord, so ready to forgive, Since all who seek your mercy, Let me please to hear my prayer.

Receive my earnest heart's request, When troubles, fears, and foes molest, Save me from every snare.

[43 : 17] Among the gods of all the earth, And all their works of little worth, No God like you is known.

All nations at your feet shall fall, To name you mighty Lord of all, For you are God alone.

Teach me your way, your truth, my aim, Unite my heart to fear your name, And sing your power to save.

I'll praise you, Lord, for evermore, Your mercy, rich, abundant shore, Has fed me from the grave.

O God the proud hath brought me strife, The Lord has tried to take my life, May you not see your face, Lord, so to anger, You abound in love, And deep compassion, Drowned with mercy, truth, and grace.

[45 : 10] O Lord, in mercy, turn and see, Grant new reserves of grace to me, And save your faithful Son.

Give me a sign that all is well, Shame all my foes that I may tell, Of all that you have done.
So the song said in O Lord, in mercy, Turn and see, Grant new reserves of grace to me, And save
your faithful Son. Give me a sign that all is well, Shame all my foes, That I may tell of all that you
have done.

Now let's close with a prayer, And then we'll move in real time To a Zoom feedback session with
Phil Moon. Thank you, Lord, that you notice the needy, The poor and needy.

Thank you that you are a covenant God Who is faithful, And a real God who hears prayer. And we
thank you for the times That we've found that to be true in our experience. But we too pray that we
might learn your ways, And have undivided hearts, That we might pass that spiritual MOT, And be
found moving on with you, In good spiritual health and strength, And looking to you in faith, And
loving you with our hearts, And walking in ways that please you.

[46 : 58] So we thank you together tonight, And pray that you would continue to bless us, Through
this new week, In Jesus' name, Amen. So we're just going to go to a feedback session, And I hope
you're going to be able to join us with this, But either way, From this recording, I'll just say bye-bye
just now.

Bye-bye. Bye-bye.