

Help! I'm Feeling Attacked

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[0 : 00] Amen. You may be seated. If you would turn in your Bibles to Psalm 86, I'm going to walk us through this for our good.

Imagine there is a pounding on your front door during dinnertime. And before you have a time to react, your eight-year-old bolts from his seat, grabs the plastic stepstool, puts it in front of the front door, climbs up on it, and looks through the peephole.

Dad, there's this big hairy man outside, and he's kind of scary. And he has a name patch. T-R-O-U-B-L-E.

Trouble. Dad, there's a big hairy man whose name is Trouble, and he's knocking on our front door. What do you do when Trouble comes knocking on your front door?

[1 : 30] We all know that Trouble is coming. And he wears different name patches. Sometimes that name patch, instead of Trouble, says Cancer.

Sometimes that name patch says Job Loss. Sometimes that name patch says Conflict or Criticism or Change or Persecution or Ongoing Debt.

Sometimes that name patch has the word attack on it. You're being attacked. When trouble comes knocking, when an attack comes knocking, what do you do?

Maybe you panic. Maybe you shop. Maybe you attack back. Maybe you sleep. Maybe you eat. Maybe you watch.

Maybe you analyze. Maybe you post on Facebook. And in Psalm 86, when trouble comes knocking on David's front door, in verse 7 he says this.

[2 : 34] He says, Psalm 86 is an example for us.

It shows us how to respond when trouble comes knocking. Psalm 86 can be divided into three sections. And each of these sections instruct us in a unique way of how to call upon our great God when we need help in the day of trouble.

I'm guessing there's a lot of people in the room that know what trouble is, but maybe need some help in knowing how to respond when trouble comes knocking.

So in Psalm 86, we're going to see three things in these three sections. We're going to be shown how to seek God and call upon God with persistent prayers. We'll see that in verses 1 through 7.

And then in verses 8 through 13, how to call on God with praise-filled prayers. And then at the end, in verses 14 through 17, purposed prayers.

[3 : 47] Psalm 86 is going to help us call out to God when trouble comes knocking by persistent praise-filled and purposed prayers.

So let's look at verses 1 through 7. This Psalm of David, this prayer of David. And what we're going to see in these seven verses is that when trouble comes knocking, we need to call out to God with persistent praying.

Persistence is being steady in a course of action, especially when there's difficulties and obstacles and discouragement.

It's staying on target when things get hard. That's persistence. And in Psalm 86, we see this repeated pleading of God.

Follow with me. I'm going to number them. In verse, chapter 86, verse 1, incline your heart, O Lord. That's the first pleading. And then answer me, second pleading.

[4 : 48] Preserve my life is the third pleading. Save your servant is the fourth pleading. Be gracious to me, O Lord, is the fifth pleading. The sixth pleading is gladden the soul of your servant.

And then it goes on. Give ear, O Lord. Listen to my plea. There are eight petitions that David makes in the first seven verses of this psalm.

It's kind of desperate. But there is this persistence, this repeated seeking after God. Because you will notice in almost every one of these verses in pleadings, there is a direct reference to God somehow, some way, either in an O Lord or an O God or in you.

Eight times, David cries out for help. That's what all of these have in common. They're all petitions for help. Different ways, all crying out, Help me, God.

Help me. Troubles come knocking. Help me, God. Now, it's interesting that these aren't questions. In the Hebrew, these are actually commands.

[6 : 00] They're imperatives. It's like David is telling God what to do. Help me. But you've got to take it like this. Remember when Jesus was walking on the water and he calls Peter out to walk out to him.

And Peter goes walking out on the water to Jesus. And all of a sudden, Peter becomes distracted by the wind and the waves. Remember what happened? Peter starts to sink. And you remember what he does? Oh, Lord Jesus, if you have a moment, please, would you be willing to save me out of my distress?

He doesn't ask the question. Peter says, save me, Lord. It's a desperate plea for help. And that is what is going on here in this Psalm of David.

It's not a question. It's a pleading. Pleading for help. Now, you may be asking yourself the question, well, wouldn't have one been sufficient?

Why eight? It's very instructive for us. Because I don't know about you, but when I am confronted with trouble, when I feel like I'm being attacked, it's going to take me a while to settle my heart in the goodness of God.

[7 : 14] And what we see happening over these eight petitions is David calling to mind certain things, we're going to look at it in a second, to settle his heart before God.

When we're facing trouble, it's going to take a little process of persistent praying to settle our hearts on the truth of who God is. There are a bunch of reasons in this Psalm for these petitions.

You'll notice it with the word for. Incline your heart, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Verse 2, for I am godly.

Verse 3, for to you do I call all the day long. Verse 4, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. Verse 5 is the greatest of all fours.

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. David is persistent in his praying to his God, and he persists until his heart settles on that great four in verse 5.

[8 : 38] Who God is. Yes, David is helpless. Yes, David is living a life that he is seeking to be upright in God's sight.

Yes, in verse 2, he belongs to God. In verses 3 and 4, yes, we see David turning to God, calling out to God.

But it's verse 5 that when his heart hits that truth about God, it will change the tone of the psalm. For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

The ultimate reason that David is persistent in his calling out to God for help is because he knows that God abounds in steadfast love to him personally.

David knows that God has bound himself to him through a covenant. That God has promised to be David's God.

[9 : 50] And so David's prayers for help are being heard by a loving God. All in the midst of a day of trouble.

When trouble comes knocking, what motivates our persistent praying is that God is abounding in steadfast love to each of us who call upon him.

To us. God has bound himself to us through Jesus. Through his blood. God has committed himself to us.

To hear us. To act for us. Because of what Jesus has done for us. And so in verse 7, when David prays, in the day of my trouble, I call upon you, for you answer me.

David knows that God answers him out of his steadfast love for him. All this desperate pleading, all this persistent praying, all this staying on target is staying focused on God and specifically God's steadfast love.

[11 : 12] Do we have any Star Wars fans in the house? 1977, the original Star Wars. At the end of the movie, Luke Skywalker is in his X-wing fighter.

R2-D2 is popped in the back. Beep, beep, beep, beep. He descends into that canyon in the Death Star. He is cruising. His aim is to drop two laser bombs in the exhaust port of the Death Star and blow it up.

Do you remember what happens? TIE fighters come behind him, start taking out dudes in his squadron, and there's this guy from headquarters saying, stay on target. Luke is kind of like, ah, I'm getting afraid.

Stay on target. There's these towers shooting at Luke Skywalker. They're shooting at him. Stay on target. And eventually he gets to the point, the aim drops his laser bombs.

He's out of there, blows up the point. What it points to is persistence, staying on target. And the target of Psalm 86 is not a Death Star.

[12:24] It's God. It's his steadfast love. When trouble comes knocking, we call out to God with persistent prayers, knowing that God's steadfast love compels him to not only hear us, but to act on our behalf.

Which brings us to the second stanza. In verses 8 through 13, when trouble comes knocking, we must call on our great God with praise-filled prayers.

Let me just point something out. In order for you to get to verse 8, you need to come through verses 1 through 7. In order for you to get to a point where you're praising God in the midst of trouble, you need to first settle your heart on who God is and His love for you.

So when David prays that prayer in verse 5, in which he focuses on God is good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love for all who call upon him, it changes his heart and changes the tone of his prayer.

Because now, David moves in verse 8 from being focused on his day of trouble to be focused on his God of glory.

[13:54] In verses 8 through 10, it's this theological center of the psalm. It's God-concentrated. It is theologically thick and wonderful.

So if you look at verses 8, 9, and 10, it's all God-ward. There is none like you among the gods, O Lord. That's Adonai. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord. For you are great and do wondrous things. You alone are God. So they're all God-ward, just like verses 1 through 7. But verses 1 through 7 is pleading, this is praising.

There's been a change. In verse 8, when we read, there's none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor there are any works like yours.

You could take that word gods and it could be a reference to angels like you would see in Psalm 8, 5. But given verse 9, all the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, given the global scope of this, I am persuaded that David is comparing his God, Yahweh, the God of steadfast love, to all the gods of all the nations.

[15:11] And he's saying there's no God like you in all of it. I play Smash Bros with my sons on Nintendo Switch.

And you get to pick the character you want to go to battle with. And when you go to the screen that has the options, there's like 60 options. And you know what?

I pick the one unlike anyone else. Captain Falcon! what this is saying here is that among all the nations, there's none like Yahweh.

He is unlimited in His power, unrelenting in His steadfast love, and unrivaled in His authority. He is sovereign over all the nations.

There are no works like His. He's created everything. He delivered Israel out of Egypt. He delivered sinners like you and me through the cross from sin.

[16:18] And He is going to do a work that is coming in which He consummates all things and recreates the heavens and the earth. There are no works like His. And in verse 9, David goes deep ball.

He goes eschatological. He goes outside of this moment of trouble to getting a big picture of what is coming at the end.

All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you and shall glorify your name. Shall come. Shall worship. Shall glorify. He is helping us see that when we are in the midst of trouble, there's a bigger picture to consider.

God's fame and glory among the nations for all time. I'm reminded of Philippians 2, 11 through 12.

Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. When you're in the midst of suffering and trouble and you go this way, it has an effect on your very outlook on life.

[17 : 29] that word kabod or word glory is the Hebrew word kabod that, excuse me, and shall glorify your name.

That word means to be heavy, to be weighty. And so when David's talking about all the nations coming and worshiping and giving glory to God, he's saying there's going to come a day when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that God is God to give him the glory, the weight, the praise he deserves.

This is the theological hot spot of this psalm and it's summarized in verse 10. Verse 10 is summarizing 8 and 9, for you are great and do wondrous things.

You alone are God. You are great. There's no one like you. You do wondrous things. Creation, Exodus, the cross, the coming consummation.

You alone are God. God. This verse 10 is clarifying verse 8. Verse 8 says there's none like you among the gods.

[18 : 44] And then verse 10 says you alone are God. What he's basically saying all the nations and their gods, well, we know that there's actually no other God but our God.

So the Philistines may espouse their God, the Egyptians may espouse their God, and today Muslims may espouse Allah but there is only one God and in the words of Isaiah, I am the Lord and there is no other.

Do you see what's going on here? In the day of trouble, verse 7, we'll learn what that is in verse 14, but in the day of David's trouble, David is conducting a private worship service.

He's given praise and glory to his God. There's only one God. There is no other. What David is helping us to see is how to have a private worship service when trouble comes knocking. praying. And what it requires is this persistent praying down into a settled acknowledgement of who God is and then the realization that God is glorious among the nations.

[20 : 11] There's no one like him. There is none but him. And he is full of steadfast love towards us. So if the first part of this stanza, verses 8 through 10, is the theological hot spot, verses 11 through 13, we see David responding to this.

He responds in a number of ways. In the first half of verse 11, he says, teach me your way that I may walk in your truth. I don't know about you, but when trouble comes knocking, when I'm feeling attacked, what I can start doing is trying to chart my own way out of it.

Trying to figure out, hey, how do I get through this trouble? And what we see David doing here is in the day of trouble, he recognizes, he persistently prays himself to a place where he's trusting in God, full of steadfast love.

He acknowledges that there's no one other than God, the one and only, and he says, oh God, because of who you are, would you show me the way through this? Teach me your way that I may walk in your truth.

Show me how to walk through being criticized. Show me how to walk through being in conflict. Show me how to walk through when unknown changes are coming.

[21 : 40] Show me when cancer's in my body how to walk through that. Show me. Teach me. And then in the second half of verse 11, he says, in light of this God, who is unlike any other, he cries out to this God, unite my heart to fear your name.

Unite my heart to fear your name. I can't tell you how many times I've prayed these seven words over the last two decades. Unite my heart to fear your name.

Because you alone are God. Unite my heart to fear your name in the midst of all this trouble. when the Bible talks about the heart, it's talking about the control center of a human being.

It's the place where one's logic, emotions, and will reside together. Have you driven by O'Hare International Airport on 294, and have you seen the major control tower that's directing all things going on?

Could you imagine what's going on in that control tower? It's a little picture of how the Bible talks about our hearts. It's the control center of our lives. We live out of our hearts.

[23 : 06] And what David says here, he says, unite my heart. Unite the core of who I am. And what that word unite means is to focus, to aim, to bring about a singular focus for my life.

Focus all that I am, the core of my being, on one thing. Unite my heart to fear your name.

Tony Evans, the preacher down in Dallas, talks about the fear of the Lord as taking God seriously. It's a reverencing of God.

That's what that fear means. It's a ruling reverence for God. I revere God to such a degree it is controlling the way I live my life.

So to fear God is to be governed by God. He is my chief concern in the way I'm living my life. So when David says, unite my heart to fear your name, he's saying, God, would you bring about a singular aim of the core of my being on your great name that it governs all that I do in response to God alone being God.

[24 : 33] Give me a singular aim to live for your glory, to live for your fame, to live for your purposes, to live for your name. When trouble comes knocking, the temptation will be to allow your heart to be controlled by your trouble, to be ruled by the fear of the unknown, the fear of repercussions, the fear of what people think about me.

What David is helping us with is helping us on the day of trouble to fear God above all else and to trust him of how to move forward. What we're learning here is that we don't need to be ruled by our trouble because God is greater than our trouble and his steadfast love towards you is great and unrelenting.

In verses 12 and 13, we read how David gives thanks to God and glorifies God's name. This is the evidencing of a heart that has been united to fear God's name.

It results in thanksgiving and praise. And so, just to clarify, if you're thinking the fear of the Lord is this cowering, shaking in the corner, it is praising God and living for his glory.

It is a freedom to live for God and his honor. And we see in verse 13 how personal this gets. For great is your steadfast love towards me.

[26 : 16] This is the second time we've seen steadfast love show up in Psalm 86. He says, for great is your steadfast love towards me. You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Sheol is the realm of the dead. And what David is saying here is, it's as though he's saying, I don't have to be afraid of death. It's significant in light of verse 14.

I don't have to be afraid of death because I know your steadfast love for me is abounding even before, during, and after death.

life. It's as though David has read ahead in a Bible he doesn't fully have yet to 1 John that says, perfect love casts out fear, even the fear of death.

So here's a little perspective. If God and his great love for you, brother or sister in Christ, if he and his great love for you delivered you from sin and death, which he has, you do not need to be consumed by the fear and anxiety of the trouble knocking at your door right now.

[27 : 44] Because God has already taken care of the biggest trouble you had already faced. God has made peace between you and him.

That's game changer. That's worthy of giving him praise and thanksgiving. For great is your steadfast love toward me. You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

When trouble comes knocking, we call on our great God with praise-filled prayers that shape how we live.

Could you imagine that? A church of God praising God in the midst of various kinds of trouble? people? That's the second stanza.

The third stanza in verses 14 through 17 can be summarized by saying, when trouble comes knocking, we call out to God with purposed praying.

[28 : 54] Persistent praying, praise-filled praying, and now purposed praying. there's nothing in this psalm, Psalm 86, that would indicate David had come through the trouble he was facing.

By the end of the psalm, you're left realizing he's still in it, still in the midst of it. This is a place-in-time psalm, written in the midst of trouble. He's waiting on God to act.

In verse 14, we finally learn the trouble David was facing. Oh God, insolent men have risen up against me. A band of ruthless men seeks my life. They do not set you before them.

Insolent men, ruthless men, what they're geared, aimed at, is to kill David. They're there to take his life.

Now, granted, this is a little bit more significant than being criticized on Facebook, but you can still pick up on the sense of feeling attacked. This psalm doesn't really give us any clues as to when this is taking place in David's life.

[30 : 05] All we know is what David tells us, and that his life is in jeopardy. And it's in jeopardy by men who do not fear God.

They do not set you before him, before him, David says. Verse 14, but here's what's interesting. David is very purposeful in identifying who his attackers are because he's also purposed in quoting the Bible.

He's making a contrast. He says, okay, God, insolent men have risen up against me. A band of ruthless men seeks my life and they know it sets you before them.

That's one group. Verse 15, but you, O Lord, and then he quotes Exodus 34, 6 and 7. It's a quote. He's quoting his Bible.

David's praying Bible here. It's very instructive. He says, but you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

[31 : 22] He's purposefully contrasting these two groups of people, ruthless men and his God, and their posture towards him.

These ruthless men, they are full of spite, full of hate, quick to anger, abounding in malice, abounding in ruthlessness towards David to take his life.

David's God, the God who's bound himself to David, the God of Exodus 34, 6 and 7, he's full of mercy and grace, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

That's the third time steadfast love has showed up in this psalm in the midst of trouble. David is comparing and contrasting those people who are postured towards him.

One group seeking to kill him, God is seeking to be for him, to demonstrate his love towards him.

So it's kind of like this, David is stepping back and he's saying, okay, insolent, ruthless men compared to my Exodus 34, 6 and 7 God, full of grace, full of mercy, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness to me.

[32 : 55] Who's greater? Who's more glorious? Who's more praiseworthy? Who's worthy of thanksgiving and gratitude?

Who is more trustworthy? who alone is God? That's the one I will fear. Maybe you're in the room this morning and you have some kind of chronic physical trouble.

Let's compare them. Your chronic physical trouble compared to the Exodus 34, 6 and 7 God. Who's greater? Who's more glorious?

Who's more praiseworthy? Who's worthy of gratitude and thanksgiving? Who is trustworthy? Who is God in your life? If you're experiencing criticism from other people, you feel like they're attacking you and you're tempted to be more concerned about what these people think about you than what God thinks about you, compare them.

Which one's greater? Which one's more glorious and praiseworthy? Worthy of thanksgiving and praise? Who's trustworthy? Who is God? David is purposefully contrasting these two to help us see who shall we fear in the day of trouble.

[34 : 24] We're to ask God to unite our hearts to fear him. More than fearing change, more than fearing the unknown, fearing what people think about you, fearing of what's going on in your body, we fear our glorious God.

That governs our lives. And in verses 16 and 17, David, it's like a springboard. This truth of who God is, and verse 15, David makes a series of more petitions.

He says, turn to me and be gracious to me. Give your strength to your servant. Save the son of your maidservant.

Show me a sign of your favor. More petitions, more pleadings, but these are coming from this solid understanding and resting and who his God is and his posture of steadfast love towards David, which brings me to another purpose in this.

In verse 14, David says of these insolent men, they do not set you, God, before them. They don't fear God.

[35 : 40] But here in 17, David makes this request. Show me a sign of your favor for a purpose that those who hate me may see.

What David is seeing here is an opportunity for his Exodus 34, 6, and 7, God, to be exalted through this trouble and be seen by his enemies.

For God to be exalted and glorified and for David to be vindicated. As David is praying that God would show himself faithful, he's praying this with those who are attacking him in mind.

that they would see and be put to shame. It's purposed. It's a purposed praying in the day of trouble.

David is governed by God's greatness and it's informing how he thinks about people in the day of trouble. He sees it an opportunity for God to be exalted.

[36 : 56] David. And what's got him there is a series of petitions of praying his heart to settle on his God, the God of steadfast love, to recognizing how awesome and glorious God is and asking God to unite his heart to fear God's name.

And here we have now purposed praying that God wants those attacking him to see God's character on display working on David's behalf.

It kind of raises the question, should we be praying for a sign that God would demonstrate his character on our behalf in the day of trouble? Absolutely.

Pray away. Ask God to do that. But I just want to remind you of something. We already have the greatest sign. The greatest sign has already been given that demonstrates God's steadfast love in action on our behalf.

And that sign is the cross of Jesus Christ. At the cross, God in his abounding steadfast love turned to us and was gracious to us in our greatest day of trouble.

[38 : 26] His steadfast love in Christ saved us from an eternal trouble over our sin separating us from God. So we always, if you're a Christian, have some sign to point to on the day of trouble.

The cross, God has demonstrated his love for us already. So let's say there comes a day when you're in the face of trouble and you have petitioned your way down into a settled trust in God's very character.

Your heart is saying, oh God, there's none like you among the gods. Unite my heart to fear your name. And that you're like, okay, you know what? This is tough, but compared to God, it doesn't stand.

And someone comes up to you on that day of trouble and they say, why are you so calm? You know what you get to say? The cross.

God in his steadfast love is taking care of the greatest trouble I can face. This is, this follows. This is icing. This doesn't change my trusting of him.

[39 : 42] We see here, purposed praying. Days of trouble are opportunities for God's glory. When trouble comes knocking, we must call out to God with persistent praying, with praise filled praying, and purposed praying.

And there's where we find help. Psalm 86 is an example for us of how to trust God in the day of trouble, and to find comfort and help from him.

And in closing, I just want to add one more thing. You only have a certain amount of this kind of praying you'll ever do.

These prayers in the midst of trouble, we'll only pray them for a short while. God. Because there's no need to pray these prayers in the new Jerusalem, in the new heavens, in the new earth.

There's no trouble there. There's only fullness of peace with God, yourself, each other, the new creation. So our time is limited in praying in the midst of trouble, but we'll have trouble.

[41 : 03] And when we're either being attacked or there's something going on inside of your body, on those days, we call out to our great God who has promised to help us.

Let's pray. God, thank you so much for Psalm 86. Would you take your powerful word despite my weak words, and God, would you press it into our hearts so that Psalm 86 would sing to us when trouble comes knocking.

Lord, we know that you're the sovereign over all, that when trouble comes, you don't bolt out the back door, but you are with us in all your glory and all your power and all your sovereignty to give us the strength we need.

God, help us to respond in the day of trouble in a way that honors you. It's your name we pray, Jesus. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[42 : 24] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.