

The Steadfast Love of the Lord

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading for today is taken from Psalm 86.!

I cry all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer. Listen to my plea for grace. In the day of my trouble, I call upon you, for you answer me. There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things.

You alone are God. Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord, my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.

[1 : 34] For great is your steadfast love toward me. You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. O God, insolent men have risen up against me.

A band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them. But you, O Lord, are God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Turn to me and be gracious to me. Give your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame, because you, Lord, have helped me and have comforted me.

This is the word of God. Thank you very much.

Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Let's cry. Let's cry.

[2 : 48] Incline your ear to me and answer me. Answer us, O Lord, for we are poor and needy.

But these were the words of a desperate man. Father, no doubt there are some present who can echo those words.

And without doubt, O Lord, there will be some in future who will be able to say those words.

Jesus, incline your ear to me and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Our prayer today, O Lord, is that this message will help shape how we live in times of difficulty, in times of disappointment, and in times of despair.

I pray, O Lord, that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart will be acceptable to you, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

[4 : 17] Amen. Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Verse 1. The psalmist opens this psalm with those words, incline your ear to me, O Lord, for I am poor and needy.

And then in verse 2, he says, preserve my soul. Verse 3, he says, be gracious to me. Verse 4, glad my heart.

Verse 6a, give air to my prayer. 6b, listen to my plea for grace. Verse 14, insolent men have risen up against me.

And in verse 17, show me a sign of your favor. Brothers and sisters, today, I invite you to consider that the psalmist, as he wrote this psalm, was in the midst of a very trying time in his life.

[5 : 48] He was in the midst of a crisis. So let me ask you, we see how the psalmist responded to the crisis that he was in.

How do you respond to crises? The goal of this message today is real simple.

It's to encourage believers to view life's challenges through the lens of God's steadfast love.

That's what we want to do today. We want to encourage each one of us to view the challenges that we have through the lens of God's steadfast love.

But let me ask you, how do you view events in the world and in life generally?

[7 : 00] Do you see them the same way that a non-believer does? Does your faith inform the way you see things?

Does your faith, is your belief in Christ inform the way you see things, the way you hear the news, the way you receive bad news?

I'm trying to get you to focus on your perspective. What's your perspective? Perspective matters. And much of the scriptures is focused on helping us to frame our perspective so that we see things, we as believers see things differently.

Because how many of you know that all of us, believers and non-believers, we experience generally the same things.

but perspective, how you see it, how you frame it, makes the difference. A non-believer looks at something and he sees one thing, but a believer looks at the same thing and he ought to see something completely different.

[8 : 26] That's how it should be. Our experiences ought to inform the way we view things.

Ultimately, our understanding and embrace of God's love ought to inform the way we view and interact with the world and how we live in it.

If we believe that God hates us, think of it, if you believe that God hates you, then you would have much to fear. If you think that he is indifferent towards you, that he just doesn't care one way or the other, we would have much to fear.

but knowing that he loves us, knowing that his love for us is steadfast, we should be able to look at life's circumstances and know that whatever those circumstances are, that God is right there in the midst of them.

God's steadfast love is the lens through which believers are to view blessings and challenges and everything in between.

[10 : 07] let's talk specifically now about Psalm 86. Psalm 86 is the prayer of David when he found himself in a difficult circumstance.

men had risen up against him and were plotting to kill him. Now, I'm doubtful that any of us has gone through that, perhaps, maybe one or two, I don't know, I have no idea, but I doubt it.

Yet, it is true that our lives are not a bed of roses. I don't believe that anyone here will say that his life has always been and is now and will be a bed of roses.

Indeed, heartaches, disappointments are a part of our lives.

Say that again, heartaches and disappointments are a part of our lives. We constantly deal with difficult situations like the sudden death of a loved one, a personal injury, a terminal illness that we did not anticipate or could not forecast, a business failure, a divorce, injustice, crime, uncertainty, rejection, betrayal, unemployment, and the list goes on and on and on.

[12 : 14] And we as believers are not exempt from these things. I wish we were, but the truth is we're not. And David, this man who wrote all of these signs, he stands as exhibit A, as a reminder to us that we're not exempt.

Many of us can relate to the words found in Job chapter 14, verse 1, where Job said, man who's born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble.

Be not exempt. Of course, the trials of life do not exist in isolation or by themselves.

For some, these trials are expressed in various ways, in different kinds of ways. For some people, when they have these trials, they're accompanied by sleeplessness.

For others, it's grouchiness. For still others, it's just a lack of trust, an abandonment of trust in others.

[13 : 48] for still others, it's misery for some, it's a deep and abiding sadness.

For some, it's envy. For others, it's anger. And for still others, it's a long-term physical and mental deterioration.

but what should be the distinctiveness? What should be the mark of the believer in the face of life's certain challenges?

That's the question. What should distinguish you and I as brothers and sisters here today, standing and sitting in Kingdom Life Church?

What should mark us? us? And I agree with Pastor, there's no better place to be than here. Should it be that we respond the same way as an unbeliever?

[15 : 03] believer? Let me give you a hint. The believer should view life's challenges, as we said, through the lens of God's love, steadfast love.

love. Let's explore. We're going to, just for a brief moment, and despite this long introduction, we're going to explore what that looks like in three points.

The first is we're going to consider the nature of God's love. love. Secondly, we're going to consider the expressions of God's love.

And then finally, the power of God's love, all drawn from Psalm 86. Let's consider now the nature of God's love.

You will know, brothers and sisters, that books have been written about the nature of God's love. We don't intend to explore this to any great or philosophical degree.

[16 : 42] I don't believe we need to do that. I think we have to talk, we have to have a conversation. Because I believe what we're talking about is real for us.

There's a brother at the back, he always says, you know, you got to get real. This is real stuff. And so I think we got to get real about this.

love. So I want us to talk for a moment, have a conversation. As we read Psalm 86, as you've read it, perhaps you noticed the number of times David mentioned God's love in these 17 verses in Psalm 86.

He did so three times. That frequency suggests to me, here is a man who is going through a major struggle in his life.

And his concentration, his focus, is on the steadfast love of the Lord. In verse 5 he says, for you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

[18 : 17] And in verse 13, for great is your steadfast love toward me. And in verse 15, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

I want to suggest to us that he's sending us a message. He's telling us something here. Apart from the fact that David mentioned the word love three times, notice also that he uses two adjectives here.

What were they? David said, abounding, which is great. Bounding, abounding in steadfast, abounding and steadfast.

David modifies this word love and he says, it abounds and it is steadfast. he has a man going through tremendous challenges and he focuses on the love, the abounding, abounding, brothers and sisters, the abounding and the steadfast love of the Lord in the midst of his challenges.

Jesus. Yes, for David it was man who rose up to kill him. For some it's something completely different.

[19 : 53] It's a long-term illness. It's a financial challenge for others. But David says, I'm going to consider the abounding and steadfast love of the Lord.

What is the Holy Spirit through the inspired writings of David telling us? When David refers to God's love as abounding, I think he means simply that it is great.

God's love, David says, is great. It is without end. It is abounding. God's abounding love might be better understood if we consider what it means to have a little bit of love and to contemplate love's practical opposite.

If we could measure the depth of God's love, we would be miserable indeed. Brothers and sisters, if you and I, let me, I want you to get it, if you and I were able to measure the depth of God's love, we would be miserable indeed.

love, if his love was finite, if we could see how much love it is, we'd be miserable indeed.

[21 : 28] It would mean that he would be keeping score of how much we draw from his love. Well, if you will, and you and I, I believe, I know for me, I would have run out of the well.

My well would have been dusty, dust, that's it. But his love, it's abounding love.

The scripture tells us in Psalm 103, 17, the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters, you and I can be comforted in knowing that no matter what we have done, no matter where we have been, that the love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

That means it don't run out, it can't run out, that's what that means, it's from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him.

[22 : 49] I don't know about you, but I find tremendous comfort in knowing that God's love is abounding, that it's everlasting, it's eternal, love.

Because as often as I mess up, I know that I can go back to the well, I can go back to the well every time, and there I will find love, and I can be assured to find it.

Because it's not my love, it's his love. It never runs out. You see, the abundance of God's love is not dependent on me, but it's dependent on him.

Brothers and sisters, you got to get a hold of this truth. But the abundance of God's love is not dependent on you, but it's dependent on him, the sovereign one.

We get a better appreciation of the abounding characteristic of God's love when we consider its practical opposite, which is indifference.

[24 : 09] You know, indifference is the opposite of love. Indifference is like a whatever. You know, people say hate is the opposite of love, but can I tell you indifference?

You know, you ever been in a relationship or perhaps you know somebody and really they just don't care whether you are there or anywhere.

It makes no difference whatsoever. The worst thing in the world is when someone is indifferent, when they ignore you. Indifference is like whatever.

It means it does not matter one way or the other. You're here, good. You're not here, good. Makes no difference. You're feeling fine, good.

You're not feeling fine, good. No difference whatsoever. But that's not God's love. Love is abounding.

[25 : 12] God's love propels him to act. He is not a casual observer, unconcerned about our circumstances.

He is not indifferent. The second attribute that David highlights about God's love is that it is steadfast.

This word steadfast, it's an interesting word. It's defined as resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering.

It doesn't change. That's what it means. David reminds us that the Lord's love doesn't change.

It's the same. In other words, David is telling us that God's love is unconditional.

[26 : 27] God's love for us is not based on anything we do or say and that will not change.

In other words, God's love, my brothers and sisters, my family, God's love is not based on your performance and God's love is not based on my performance.

God's love is without condition, the Hebrew word for steadfast love is the word hazard.

Hazard. And this word is found over 250 times in the Old Testament, 123 times in the Psalms alone.

God's hazard, God's abounding love, it's covenantal. It's based on it is who he is.

[27 : 55] God's love when God revealed himself to Moses. Remember that? When God revealed himself to Moses, this is what the Lord said about himself.

He said, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands.

Now, God could have said, I am the Lord thy God. I am the most powerful being there is. He could have said that.

But he said to Moses, he said, I am the Lord thy God, abounding in steadfast love.

His love is steadfast. Now then, we have a clear picture of abounding and steadfast love through which you and I are to engage the world.

[29 : 13] You know, I know that the Lord's love for us, it's abounding, it's steadfast, it's not conditional, it's not circumstantial, it's not based on our performance.

In a moment, we're going to consider the power of that love. But before we do, let us see from Psalm 86, how God's love is manifested in our lives.

will consider now the expressions of God's love, the expressions of God's love. By the expressions of God's love, we mean the manifestation of his love.

That is to say, when God's love shows us, what does it look like? what does it look like? What does it produce? That's what I mean.

If you love me, tell me, that's fine. If you love me, don't just tell me, show me.

[30 : 29] as we consider these manifestations of God's love, I want us to remember the context.

Here's a man, David, who's otherwise challenged by life's circumstances, and now he prays to the Lord. Now, I want you to see, my brothers and sisters, I don't believe believe listen, we got to get a hold of this truth.

I don't believe that David woke up one morning, and he went to the Lord, and he said, incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me.

And then by noon, he got all the answers that he was looking for. I don't believe that God answered him like a microwave. I don't think that if you disagree with me, say something, but I don't think you disagree with me.

David, it's likely that David prayed this way for days. And some of you present, you understand what I mean, because you have been praying this way, not just for days, but for weeks, for months, and some for even longer.

[31 : 52] prayer. But in the midst of your prayer, wait for the manifestation.

You and I know that we serve a God who loves us, who cares for us, who will not leave us.

So David here, David is a man who challenged by life's circumstances, as we said. And now he prays to God with expectation, mindful that God's love is eternal and steadfast.

Right out of the gate in verse 1, we see that God's love is founded on communication.

David prays to the Lord. He speaks to the Lord. David expects to be heard.

[33 : 01] He speaks with the expectation. He says, incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, and give me a sense of what is happening to me.

Speak to me, O Lord. Grant me wisdom in these circumstances. Lord, until there is manifestation, until this bad feeling, until this anxiety goes away, Lord, would you help me to endure it?

Would you help me to understand, O Lord, what is happening? in the midst of this difficulty? The Lord cared for David, and the Lord not only listened to David, the Lord answered David.

We can take comfort in the fact that during times of difficulty, when we cry out to the Lord, he will both listen to us and grant us wisdom.

There's a bonanza of blessings that David references in this psalm. As David goes through these challenges, David talks about the preservation of his life, talks about grace being his, the meat of the downhearted, and a gladdened heart for the distressed, wisdom and holiness.

[34 : 58] It's fruits. So it's gratitude. Brothers and sisters, what I'm trying to tell us is that in the midst of our difficulties, we are to remain strong.

We are to say to the Lord, Lord, in the midst of what I'm going through, gladden my heart. Lord, it's true that my business is struggling.

Gladden my heart so that I might be a blessing. Cause me, O Lord, not to stay away in the midst of my troubles.

Verse 17, to the one who is feeling the weight of a broken world, the Lord gives help and comfort. Take a look at this verse 4 for a moment.

I just want us to look at this for a moment. In verse 4, David prays for gladdened soul. Notice that David is not here asking for a 10-step program to happiness.

[36 : 25] For a 10-step program to happiness. Instead, David says to God, God, supernaturally intervene and grant me joy. David makes clear in the second part of the verse that he lifts up his soul to the Lord to be gladdened.

Let's take a look. Brothers and sisters, what I'm saying to us is that in the midst of what we are going through, we can ask the Lord to gladden our hearts.

one sees the imagery of someone who, holding up a cup and asking the Lord to fill it. In times of challenges, as in all times, we should lift our souls to the Lord and to him alone to be filled with joy.

Listen again to what verse 11 tells us. Teach me away, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name.

In the midst, brothers and sisters, I'm saying to you that in the midst of his challenges, David is saying, Lord, I don't want to neglect you.

[37 : 51] I don't want to walk away from you. So often when you and I are going through difficulties, we want to make the situations worse, walking away from the Lord, but David says, Lord, teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.

Those are the words of one who is humble, whose heart is postured to hear from God so that his actions might be adjusted.

David not only prays for his walk to be adjusted, he asks that his heart be aligned. Notice that David didn't say, Lord, just cause my walk to be adjusted.

He said, God, cause my heart to be aligned because David not only wants to walk right, he wants to enjoy the walk that he is on.

Lord, would you adjust both my walk and my heart. Lord, make the walk of holiness sweet, make forgiveness of the one who wronged me a delight, cause my heart to leap for joy as I turn the other cheek to the one who scolds me, affect me, so that I pray earnestly for the granting of salvation and success to one who, but for the grace, for your grace, I would despise.

[39 : 36] And then finally in this section, we observe in verse 17 that David has expectation that the Lord's love will be expressed in his ultimate comfort and help.

Yes, the Lord is our comfort in the time of trouble. He is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble.

I want to continue. Consider what the psalmist says, though, in verses 2 and 3 of Psalm 46, just to highlight the point.

Psalmist says, therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and form, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

In other words, the psalmist is saying, it doesn't matter what's going on around me. It doesn't matter what the difficulties are. I know that the Lord, who loves me, whose love is abounding and steadfast, that he is going to bring me through.

[41 : 06] Let's now consider our third and final point, briefly. The power of God's love. We come now to a very important element of God's love.

It's, I mean, if you know, it's one thing to know the nature of God's love and even the intent of his love. But if it has no power, power behind it, then his love is of little use in the circumstances of our pain.

David amplifies the fact that the one whose love is abounding and steadfast and whose intentions are favorable is uniquely qualified to cause those things that are desirable to us to be realized in our lives.

Listen to what he says in verses 8 and 9. There is none like you among the gods. Remember now we're talking about the power of his love.

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. all nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

- [42 : 39] There is none, brothers and sisters, family members, there is none like the God who loves us. there is no God as powerful as he.

Everything is within the scope of his control and his power.

Indeed, he made the nations and the universe and everything and everyone will be subjected to him on that day.

Notice all for God's glory. He made everything for his glory. In the midst of David's trials, in the midst of his struggles, he understood that the plans of the Lord could not be thwarted.

David understood that the plans of the Lord could not be thwarted in his life. There's none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

- [43 : 56] All nations you have made shall come, David said, they shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

It made sense, therefore, for David to engage the Lord, knowing the power of the Lord. David's reasoning went something like this, I'm in trouble.

God loves me no matter what. I'll take my concerns, therefore, to him. I'm certain that he will hear me, and he that is the Lord will do whatever pleases him.

That's what David reasoned, which has such clarity and confidence in God's love. Believers like you and me should be able to rest.

When we see through the prism of God's love and power, we can take our burdens to the Lord and leave them there.

- [45 : 17] Brothers and sisters, what a privilege we've got. you and I, the world, that's why Pastor was right when he said, there's no better place to be than this place today, because you and I can take our burdens to the one who created the nations and who will cause them to bow down and give him glory.

Yes, we can take our burdens to the Lord and leave them there. There's a song that all of you know, you've heard, written by an African American.

His name was Charles Tindley, and he was regarded by his society as a slave, and he wrote this song, Leave it There.

Having no formal education, history recognizes him as one of the most eloquent preachers and hymnologists of the day, of his day.

listen to the words, some of the words of this popular and timeless song Mr. Tindley wrote in 1906.

- [46 : 53] If the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold, and you have to get along with meager fear, just remember in his word how he feeds the little bird.

Take your burden to the Lord, and do what? Leave it there, brothers and sisters. If your body suffers pain, and your health you can't regain, and your soul is almost sinking in despair, Jesus knows the pain you feel.

He can save, and he can heal. Take your burdens to the Lord, and leave it there. When your enemies assail, and your heart begins to fail, don't forget that God is in heaven.

He answers prayer. He will make a way for you, and will lead you safely through. Take your burden to the Lord, and leave it there. When your youthful days are gone, and old age is stealing on, and your body bends beneath the weight of care, he will never leave you then.

He will go with you to the end, take your burden to the Lord, and leave it there. Brothers and sisters, as we conclude today, we might sum up our message this way, because God's everlasting, and because of God's everlasting and steadfast love, we can face every situation, pleasant and unpleasant, with the confidence that God's plans will come to fruition.

[48 : 59] Does it mean we are going to enjoy it? Does it mean we are going to be skipping around saying, oh, I'm happy, you know, everything is pleasant? No, that's not what it means.

means that we're going to allow God's hazard, God's steadfast love, to inform our responses to challenges.

His steadfast love never ceases, and His mercies never come to an end. Scripture tells us, brothers and sisters, that though He causes griefs, He will have compassion according to the abundance of His hazard, His steadfast love.

You're going through grief today, and perhaps it's of your own making. Know that He still loves you, He will have He will have grief, He will have compassion according to His steadfast love.

The mountains may depart and the hills be removed. removed. This is what the Lord says, My hazard, my steadfast love shall not depart from you.

[50 : 43] Yes, the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you and my covenant of peace shall not be removed.

the psalmist tells us that when I thought my foot slips, your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up.

But brothers and sisters, we cannot end without being reminded of the greatest expression of God's love, be once his enemies and without any hope demonstrated his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, he sent his son to die for us.

Then the apostle Paul reminds us and tells us and forms us in Romans chapter 8, that there is nothing in this world that will separate us from the love of Christ.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord. Oh, Lord. Father, we pray that you would cause all performance to be removed from our hearts.

[52 : 33] Lord, we pray that you would cause us to look to you. Father, we are reminded in this moment that we all have our challenges.

We all hunger for food. We're all thirsty in some way. We're all challenged, oh, Lord.

Whether because of something we've done, or something someone has done to us, whether it's because of life's circumstances, whatever it is, oh, Lord.

Oh, Lord, we've prayed to you. Lord, we know that some, oh, Lord, have even thought not to pray again, not to ask again.

Some have grown weary. Some have grown tired. Father, in the name of Jesus, we pray, Lord, that you would cause us to be reminded of your abounding and steadfast love.

[54 : 09] We pray, oh, Lord, that none will give up. We pray, Father, that as we walk through this life, that as we wait for the manifestation of the things that we pray for, but that we will take the light life, in living holy lives, that we will not live in isolation, but that we will share our pains and our sufferings, our desires with our brothers and our sisters.

God, we pray that we would indeed be a true family. We pray, oh, Lord, that you would cause there to be a practical outworking of all of the things we have spoken of here today.

In the name of Jesus, we pray and all God's people say amen. All God's people say amen. Amen.