

The Greatness of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 July 2021

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the psalm that we read, Psalm 86. Psalm number 86. And look in particular at verse 8.

Psalm 86, verse 8. There is none like unto you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

Now as you see at the top, it says here, a prayer of David. And there are five psalms of what we term prayer psalms. Excuse me, these are Psalm number 17, Psalm 90, Psalm 102, Psalm 142, and this psalm.

They are actual prayers like Psalm 90, for instance, is the prayer of Moses. And what's really interesting in this psalm, and you'll find that with the prayer psalms, is also some of the other psalms, particularly psalms of David, that he tends to quite often use other portions.

So take us, as it were, other parts of psalms, and sometimes with portions of scripture, taking little bits from, obviously, from the earlier times.

[1 : 49] And I think it's very important for us to see that, because that's an encouragement to ourselves to be praying and to make a base so often of prayers on God's word.

Of course, when we pray many things in our prayers, but it's a really good thing. It's a biblical way of praying, is to base so much of our prayer upon God's word.

And when we do that, then we know that we are praying according to God's will, because God's word and God's will are always in keeping one with another.

And we know that when we pray according to God's will, that he hears us and that he will answer us in accordance. So it's part of one of the very helpful ways, one of the key ways in our prayer is to pray in God's word.

And I'm sure we all do that. There might be times where we specifically take a psalm and work through it or take some of the verses of it and turn that into a prayer. And so it's a very helpful thing to do.

[2 : 59] Now, in this psalm, it's a very heartfelt psalm. The plea is very definite and direct. And one of the things I like is that when David is praying, quite often you'll see his particular request, but he gives a reason to the Lord as to why he is praying in that way.

For instance, right at the very beginning, he says, incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me. And then he tells us or tells the Lord why, because he says, I am poor and needy.

And again, David is showing us here a very clear way of praying. For instance, again, say verse 11. Teach me your way, O Lord.

Now, again, you see, that's a great prayer. But then David spells out why. Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. So you see, it's so important that we pray in this particular way.

And David goes on to say that. Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name. And before we come to look at our actual verse, I think what David is saying here is such an important little prayer.

[4 : 26] It's saying, unite my heart. Because you and I know that our heart is often all over the place. And we find that our emotions and our will and our desires and our intellect and all these things, that they're often all divided.

And there's all this kind of commotion going on within our life, within our heart. And there's only one thing that will bring it all together, and that's the unifying power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that all the different aspects of our will and our emotion and our mind and everything, our desires, that all these things will come under the authority of Christ, and that his power will indeed unite it all together.

It makes a big difference to our life. And if we have that uniting power of Christ within our life, what a difference it will make.

Because it will bring a calmness and a composure into our life. Now, David knew the very opposite to that. David knew all about the divided minds.

[5 : 37] He knew what it was like to experience forces and powers pulling him in different directions. And so David knew exactly what he was praying for. And you and I know all these things as well, because David knew the potential to go astray.

He knew all about the sinful tendencies that were so much part and partial of his life. And so the thing is, you'll notice why David is saying this.

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your path. Unite my heart to fear your name. And if we have this united heart, ruled by Christ, we will fear God's name.

And the most dangerous place for the Christian is when we begin to lose the fear of God. It's always a dangerous, dangerous place. You know, the fear of God is active and real within our life.

It really acts as a barrier. It puts the brakes on our life so often. You and I know the times when maybe the fear of the Lord is not present with us in the way it should be.

[6 : 47] That there isn't that, that we don't look at sin in the way that we do when the fear of the Lord is really uppermost in our thinking. And that we can become careless and sort of almost indifferent and lackadaisical and all that with regard to sin.

So David is praying here the importance of that the Lord would unite his heart in order that they fear him all time. But then he comes to this verse.

Really, it's a psalm that he could just, there's so, so much in this psalm. And particularly in this verse that we're looking at here, and I'm just going to look at it very, very briefly. Because there's just so much in it.

Because David says very simply, Now, when David says that, he's not at any point suggesting that God is the best of all the gods.

Or that God is in competition with other gods, and that it's like he comes out on top of. That's not what David is saying. Because David acknowledges that there is no other God, but God alone.

[8 : 05] Because that's what he tells us in verse 10. For you are great and do wondrous things, and you alone are God. So David isn't in any way suggesting that there are other effective gods.

But why David is writing in this way is he's only too well aware, is that the nations all around about him, all around Israel, that they are worshipping other gods.

They're worshipping the sun and the moon and the stars and gods of wood and stone and silver and gold and all these things. And David knows that through the history of Israel, there have been times when Israel has wandered, and they too have gone their idolatrous ways, and they've began to worship.

And of course, very often throughout the history of Israel, there was a mingled worship of God and idols, where they tried to merge the two. Of course, this was always abhorrent to God.

So David is so aware that there are so many others that do worship other gods. But he's very clearly saying that actually they're not gods at all.

[9 : 21] They're totally whatever. And we've got to remember that throughout the history of idolatry, there is no question whatever, but that sometimes people who worshipped idols saw things happen.

And we ought not to be surprised at that, because we know that the power of darkness is in all idolatry. And we know that Satan is able to do wonderful things.

Of course, he's not in any way like God at all. But he will deceive people, and he will trick people, and he will pull people in the opposite direction.

And so that are tied into idolatry. There is the black arts. There's the darkness. It's satanic.

All that. But David, of course, here is focusing our mind upon the living and through God. And he says, There is none like you among the gods, O Lord.

[10 : 22] So I suppose one of the questions that we have to ask ourselves then is, What is God like? Who is God? Well, again, the Bible tells us many things. And just very, very briefly, to think for a moment, we've got to remember that first and foremost, God is a spirit.

And straight away, we know that that's very difficult for our minds to lay hold upon. But one of the wonderful things that God has done, and we know that, is that in order to help us understand the way that he works in relation very often to us, is that he uses, as it were, bodily, like as if he had bodily functions, as if he had a body.

Because often in Scripture, we talk about, we hear it written about how God smells, how God hears, how God sees, how God, we talk, talks about his fingers, his hands, his arm, all these things.

Now, of course, God does not have bodily parts. But that is used for us, because apart from that, we cannot, we cannot begin to comprehend or understand the way in which God actually functions.

But of course, we do know that God, the Son of God, did take a human body. And that we know that the human body that the Lord Jesus Christ took to himself, he has forever.

[11 : 57] And that's part of the wonder of it, that he, the body he rose with, is the body that he is in glory with just now. So he is God, of course, that's the first thing we'd see, that God is the spirit.

And we're also told that he is infinite. And that means that he's not bound by anything. We're bound at all, in every aspect.

And supposing you look, for instance, at strength, and you see some of the facts, a Scotsman just now is the strongest man in the world.

And it's, you look at sometimes, if you ever see these competitions, the world's strongest man, you just think, how on earth are they able to run and to lift what they do?

It's just, you see it yourself, it's superhuman. But it's limited. They can only do so much. It's the same with speed. Is that the, I can't remember what you said, Virgin Galactic or whatever, the space travel.

[13 : 08] And that's traveling at over a thousand miles per hour, that flight that was just done recently. And you say to yourself, how, what speed?

But it's limited. A thousand miles an hour is extraordinary. But there's a limit to it. And there's a limit to everything that is human. That is, we often are amazed and we say, well, the speed, the strength, the this, the that, but it's limited.

And we can't go beyond with regard to a human mind. We are so limited. But God's not like that.

There is no limit to his power. There's no limit to his strength. There's no limit to what he can do. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

It's a question in the Old Testament that's answered in the New. With God, nothing is impossible. So we've always got to remember that, that that is a God that you and I tonight we worship.

[14:12] It's a God that you and I tonight we serve, we love. And again, we know that God is self-existent. That all, that everything that he is, he is because of who he is himself.

And that's, in a sense, it's, he is not derived from anybody else or anything else.

Everything else is derived from him. All life comes from God. And what God is today, he has always been. And that's why he's eternal.

God alone is eternal. The angels are not eternal. They had a beginning. They were created. We're not eternal, but we will go and live in eternity.

But we're not eternal because we have a beginning. Everything has a beginning apart from God. And so this separates God from, from everything else.

[15:18] And yet the wonder of it is that this God, whose love is eternal, has set his love upon you and me. And that brings us to another aspect of who God is, that he's unchanging.

And we have to think about that in relation to his love. Now, again, we live in a world that's changing all the time. Everything changes. You and I change. Our thinking changes. Our attitudes change.

I'm sure many of us have different opinions to what we used to have. Sometimes even, even stubborn people, people who can, it's amazing how as life goes on, people may, their attitudes may change to something and they might think differently.

We're always changing. Our minds change. Our bodies change. Our environment changes. Our circumstances change. Everything changes. The Lord doesn't. He's free from change.

All was the same. And how wonderful that is when we think even just of salvation. Imagine if he was to change with regard to that.

[16:29] Imagine if he was to change his love. And the love that he had set upon you, me, he says, no, I'm changing my mind.

But he doesn't. He cannot. It goes, if he did, it would go against all who he is. There's only two things that God cannot do. He cannot lie.

And he cannot deny himself. So we, tonight, worship this unchanging God. And so this, of course, is such a great source of encouragement to us.

And it's no wonder that David says, there is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. There's no works like the Lord's work.

There's three things, obviously. There's many things that we could think about. He's a God whose work is the work of creation. Into the nothingness, God said, let there be. He brought everything into being.

[17:34] The mountains, the seas, the roaring lion, the little robin. God brought it all into being. You and me. He is a creator, God. And there's nobody else can come anywhere remotely near this.

So this sets God apart from all other. There's no work like his work. You go out at night and you look up. And you look at the beauty of the, on a starry night.

And it tells us, say, you go to Psalm 8. And it talks about how his fingers, the very handprint of God, is all throughout the creation. And then he's the God of providence.

He rules over everything. And you know, that is a great encouragement to us. Although there are many times we cannot fathom or understand his providence.

And you go to the Bible and you read through the history of God's people. And often the providence was so dark to them. And there were so many times things didn't make sense.

[18 : 39] But God is always working it out. And he's able to turn and overturn. And he's able to bring good out of evil.

He's able to bring light out of darkness. And even though in this world sometimes the things that happen to Christians will never make sense to them as long as they live in this world.

There will come a day when they will see it from a different perspective. And they'll be able to see it in the way that God has worked it. And they'll see the glory that is attached to it.

Which is impossible for us sometimes to see or comprehend here. His works of providence are not like any other works. And then with regard to ourselves, the great work is this work of redemption or this work of salvation.

There is no work like it. When you think of what he did, when you think of how God worked and purposed and planned, and of a father, son, spirit are all involved in bringing you and me to be here at this prayer meeting tonight.

[19 : 52] That from eternity this was all worked out, planned, purposed. In time it was worked out, purpose planned. And in your life and in my life all purpose planned.

It's the most amazing thing. Here we are. You and I, we're at the very centre of God's purpose and plan. And it's all part of his great work of redemption.

So it's little wonder that David says, nor are there any works like yours. So tonight may we be able to praise and to give thanks to our God.

Realising and recognising that there is no God but God alone. And what a privilege it is that he has set his love upon us and that he has worked within our hearts.

And our prayer is that he will work in the hearts of those that still within our families who may not know him, that they will come to faith in Jesus Christ.

[20 : 57] Because God so often does that. That when he begins our work, and you'll often see it, that when a light comes into a home. Remember the late Kenny MacDonald, who used to be in Ruskin, he used to say, when the Lord, he says, you know when the Lord comes into a home, he loves to linger.

It's a great expression. Loves to linger. And what he meant was, when God begins to work in one person within that home, he often will work in others as well.

That would be our prayer, that this great God, the God of redemption, the God of grace, will work, yes, in our own lives, to make us more and more Christ-like, but also within the lives of our families and all whom we love.

We're going to conclude singing from Psalm 96. And this is from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 96.