

Psalms 86

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[0:00] So last week we saw that the psalmist says, when I'm afraid I will trust in you. I will trust. When the child of God is afraid, he or she trusts.

That's the mark of a Christian. That should be the mark of a Christian at the moment. In the midst of all that's going on, we trust. But this morning, this afternoon, wherever we are, I want us just to see to verse 7.

That in the day of trouble, the Christian, the person who trusts in the Lord Jesus, will call upon God. They call. The psalms, to a great degree, are songs of theology in action.

They're filled with teaching and doctrine. But in the psalms, what we find is that truth is explained experientially. We see what it looks like.

They are God's truth in action, being lived out in the experience of the people of God. What does it feel like to be a Christian? In the concrete experiences of life, what difference does God make?

[1:08] And one of those experiences is that of trouble. Job 5, verse 7, the Bible is wonderfully realistic. It says, man is born into trouble as the sparks fly upward.

It's been a joy to get the wood-burning stove going the last few weeks. And you put the wood in, and sometimes the wood sparks, and the sparks always fly upwards in a fire.

And as surely as we live on earth, your life and my life will be subject to trouble. And we will experience trouble in all kinds of ways.

And Psalm 86 says, this is how the Christian deals with trouble. The Christian is determined that, verse 7, in the day of my trouble, I will call upon you, for you will answer me.

And we've got here just a determination to pray, and the context of that prayer is trouble. The Bible says, as Christians, we're to pray at all times, we're to pray without ceasing.

[2:10] But the experience of the psalmist, the writer of this psalm, is that of trouble. And the word here has a really broad scope of meaning. It's translated in various ways, trouble, distress, affliction, adversity, anguish, tribulation.

It's even used for the noun adversary. And in his book, on the psalms, which I'm stealing kind of lots of my material from for this series, P.B. Power describes the different kinds of trouble we face.

There's provoking trouble, perplexing trouble, overwhelming trouble. But if you just look at verse 7, none of those adjectives are there, are they? But there's one small word.

It's a word that qualifies the trouble, and it's a word that's gripping more than any other word. The psalmist says, in the day of my trouble. That's the trouble he's talking about. It's very particular.

It's very personal. He calls it my trouble. And I think it's helpful for us to know, as we think about the Bible, that 1 Corinthians says, that no temptation has overtaken you, except that which is common to man.

[3:21] That's understanding that the troubles that we face are common to humanity. That's helpful to us. It keeps us plunging into self-pity.

It encourages us. And yet, in your experience and my experience, the trouble that you are facing is very aptly described as my trouble.

Now, in what sense can trouble be particularly my trouble? It reflects your current circumstances.

It's the trouble you're facing today.

It's the thing that's on your mind tonight as you try to go to sleep. It's something that may be happening to you, or in you. And you may call this particular trouble that you're facing, my trouble, it may arise out of some personal weakness that you have.

It may be some temptation. It may be a struggle that seems custom-made to you for your personality, for your family background, for your likes or for your dislikes.

[4:26] The Puritan pastor, Thomas Brooks, says this, The devil loves to sail with the wind. And what that means is that our personality lends itself to certain troubles, certain issues that we struggle with, so that they can be called my trouble.

Maybe the trouble that you're dealing with today, you bear it alone. Perhaps it's something that could be shared, but you've never shared it. Maybe it's something that wouldn't be appropriate or helpful to bring to others, and so you bear it alone.

Perhaps it's something that your parent or your husband, your wife, your closest friend, they don't even know about it. And no one knows about this trouble except you and God.

And when you think about it, you can call it my trouble. Have you come here this morning with trouble? Well, then listen to God's word to you.

He says, doesn't he, in verse 7, In the day of my trouble, I call upon you, for you will answer me. And so in response to whatever is going on in the psalmist's life, the resolution, the remedy, is prayer.

[5:44] Can you see that? Paul said to the Philippians later on in the Bible, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God.

And I think there's an interesting question that we need to ask ourselves. Why does the writer in Psalm 86, verse 7, why does he need to resolve himself to pray? Why does he need to be so deliberate?

So determined? Isn't prayer, prayer, in time of trouble, a natural thing? I think I've said that in the past, but actually it's not. There may be many times when we're in trouble that we don't naturally pray, that we don't first turn to God in prayer.

I think firstly, we're naturally self-sufficient, self-reliant people. That's what we're taught. We can handle it. We can do it.

We don't need help. And so when we come into a time of trouble, what's often our reaction? Our reaction is we get busy, we see what needs to be done, and we get to it.

[6:57] But the attitude of self-reliant prayer is poisonous. A self-reliant pride is poisonous to prayer. Pride is antithetical to prayer. The proud man or the proud woman doesn't pray.

Why don't they pray? Because prayer is an acknowledgement of need. And prayer is an acknowledgement of dependence, of poverty, of spirit.

I think it was B.B. Warfield who was once asked to summarize, what is the Reformed faith? What is Christianity? Christianity? And he said that it was dependence upon God.

And nowhere is dependence seen more clearly than in prayer. God helps those who help themselves.

It might be popular, but it's not right. The Bible says, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. So why don't we pray in the day of trouble?

[8:03] Well, perhaps it's because we don't understand what is involved or what is at stake when we experience trouble. The Bible says that we, in our battles and in the difficulties we face, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual enemies.

And any trouble, whether it's physical or material or financial or relational, any trouble has a spiritual dimension. And sometimes I think we forget about that so we don't pray.

Think about Job who experienced, didn't he, such great troubles. And sometimes we read it and we think, well Job, if only you knew what we knew from the start of the book.

If only you'd had a glimpse of what was going on behind your troubles of the enormous spiritual and cosmic dimension of the trouble that he was going through. How he would have changed the way that he received that.

And interacted with it and interacted with God. If he'd have known that his life was on the stage of the universe and holy, heavenly beings were watching him, what he would do as a child of God in the day of trouble, well, it would have changed that.

[9:27] And you see the understanding of what is really involved and what is really at stake as we seek to try to live out our fragile Christian lives, it would compel us to pray.

We may not pray in our trouble because we're embarrassed to pray. I think this is more common than we might think.

I meet a few Christians, particularly young Christians, who are embarrassed to pray. And we might think, well, I've not got the right words to say. We cannot pray as we've heard others pray. And so we're slow to approach God in prayer. Think of little children. Think of maybe your own little children.

And don't you love to hear them as they begin to talk? The speech, as they begin to form words, their lisping, stammering, stuttering words.

[10:26] And we love it, don't we, when they're able to begin to just articulate words. Welcome words. And so don't worry this afternoon if you can't pray as eloquently as someone else.

Or you think, I'm not able to articulate things in the way that others do. Don't worry about that. Your Father loves to hear your prayers. And we may be slow to pray in our day of trouble because we may simply be embarrassed to be in trouble.

But we've got to recognize that everyone, every one of us has troubles and recognize that God knows our situation before ever we pray. You don't pray to God to inform Him of what is going on in your life.

He knows it before we ask. And we don't pray to inform God of anything so we should have no sense of being embarrassed about the mess that we've got ourselves into. He knows it all together. But perhaps our reluctance to pray comes from a specific embarrassment. The embarrassment of sin. Power writes, Satan might whisper to you, God will not listen to you if you can do no better than you've done lately.

[11:50] You may as well not pray at all. And the consequence is that the Christian is very often put on a wrong track altogether. He waits or she waits until he can work himself or she can work herself into a better frame of mind.

For prayer till he thinks he can pray better and thus engaged with his mind turned in on himself he gets weaker than stronger. Why don't we pray sometimes we think I can't pray you haven't seen how I've lived in the last few days and weeks I need to be in a better state before I can pray I need to smarten up my act.

And what happens is that we turn in on ourselves and we become weaker rather than stronger. And that's precisely what the devil wants to bring about. So this lunchtime be encouraged to come to God just as you are with all your imperfections with all your shortcomings nothing can atone for those things except the blood of Jesus who has already paid the price for them if your prayers were offered through faith in him and so often we must resolve to pray because of unbelief that is still mixed in with our faith we begin to think does my trouble outweigh God's remedy of grace?

We may doubt this lunchtime God's power to be able to save us but we remember the promises don't we that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or think according to the power that works within us.

Perhaps it's not that we doubt God's power but we doubt his love or his concern for us he may be able but is he willing?

[13:49] And if that is the case well again you need to hear this promise from the apostle Peter cast all your care on him because he cares for you in your trouble in the day of trouble I will call on you and unbelief says it's no use but faith responds I must and I will call upon God maybe we don't pray because we're afraid of the answer to our prayers remember Paul's thorn in the flesh he called upon God three times that this trouble would be removed from him but it wasn't there's no guarantee is there prayer is not like the genie's lamp but the trouble that you are in will be taken away or will subside but what did Paul learn Paul learnt that the grace of God would be sufficient for him in his trouble it's a great promise isn't it it's often quoted that God says to his people when you go through the waters

I will be with you and when you go through the fires I will be with you God doesn't promise you that you won't go through fires God doesn't promise you that you won't go through waters but he does promise you that if you will put your hand into his and if you will trust in his son you will know his abiding preserving and strengthening grace and presence for whatever you're facing God knows your name Jesus knows his sheep by name and he knows you as an individual and he wants you to bring your troubles to him to lay those things before his throne of grace and he invites you to do that Psalm 62 verse 8 trust in him at all times you people pour out your heart before him God is a refuge in the day of trouble I will call on him notice as we finish up notice the time of his prayer from this verse in the day of my trouble

I will call on you it's not after the day of trouble so often we try everything else and as a last resort we pray don't we that is backwards in the day of trouble he says the first supernatural instinct of the Christian is to pray there's a sense also isn't there of not before our trouble in the day of trouble I will call on you and we may pray advance I hope you do pray for that I hope you pray that God will not lead you into temptation but he'll deliver you from the evil one but in other words we must not make trouble a reality in our lives until it actually occurs it's easy to do in other words stop worrying about things that haven't happened yet Jesus said don't worry about tomorrow it's got enough trouble of its own and Jesus knew all about trouble didn't he Jesus was a man of prayer why was Jesus a man of prayer

I think Jesus was a man of prayer because he was also the man of sorrows and he was acquainted with grief and in the day of his trouble the Lord Jesus called to his father and his father answered him you think of the garden of Gethsemane before Jesus went to the cross as he faces the prospect of death and the anger of God the trouble that he is facing was our trouble there is an exchange isn't it that takes place where Jesus takes upon himself our troubles and our trouble is born by him as our substitute the trouble of ours became his trouble and what do we see Jesus doing in that garden we see him praying he experiences great trouble with great drops of sweat like blood he calls out to his father in the day of his trouble and so if the

God man he himself prayed in the day of trouble how much more ought we to in John 11 42 Jesus says to God he says I know you always hear me it's a remarkable thing he says to his father I know you always hear me the only begotten son of the father could say I know you always hear me the amazing truth today is this that if you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and if you are believing in him if you are in Christ by faith you have exactly the same encouragement that the Lord Jesus had that if we are the adopted children of God we have the same assurance that Jesus himself had as the only begotten son of God in the day of my trouble I will call on you for you will answer me and that was his great confidence and so your heavenly father this lunchtime will never turn a deaf ear he will never ignore you or dismiss you like an earthly father might children talk incessantly sometimes don't they and occasionally

[19:24] I am reading and they will ask me something and I will just continue reading my father used to infuriate me and they will say to me they will say I know you're listening and you're trying desperately not to listen to them but they say I know you're listening God isn't like that he's never looking somewhere else hoping you'll stop talking he'll never ignore you or dismiss you look at what he's described as we finish look at verse one he is the Lord that is the great covenant God he's a God of faithfulness he's the almighty one verse three he's gracious verse five he's good he's forgiving he's abounding in steadfast love and so what a blessing to be able to pour out your heart to such a God he will hear and he will answer and you can be assured that that answer of God will be for your good might not be what you want but it will be for your good and only a person who knows and trusts the wisdom of the love of God will cry out to him we entrust ourselves to his wisdom and his love and we want his way not our way even if that way is the way of trouble and so I suspect that you need

Psalm 86 verse 7 as much as I do and if you don't need it today there will come a day when you do in the day of my trouble I will call upon you for you will answer me let's pray