

Psalm 86 - You are my God

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[0 : 00] Well, today I'd like us to turn back and have a look at Psalm 86.

Now, I'm sure that you've probably heard me say many, many times that the Bible is an amazing book, and it is an absolutely amazing book, and that is for many, many reasons.

But one of the amazing things about the Bible is that it can be so simple, and yet at the same time, it can teach us the most precious and remarkable truths.

Often, you read the Bible, and in just a word or a sentence or in a phrase, the Bible can give us an abundance of teaching.

And that's why it's always good to read the Bible slowly. In fact, it's also good to read the Bible out loud if you're able to. I find that so often I pick up the Bible and I just whiz through it, and you find yourself missing things that are there if we would just take our time.

[1 : 08] And that's why it's good just to read slowly or to read out loud, because then we just slow down and see just how much the Bible is saying.

And early on in Psalm 86, we have an example of what we're talking about. We have a very, very simple statement that is made, and yet that statement is immensely profound.

It is incredibly precious, and it's one of the most important statements that we could ever make. And you may be thinking, well, what statement?

Well, I'm referring to the last four words of verse 2. Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Preserve my life for I am Godly. Save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God.

[2 : 07] And as we think about these four little words, I want us just to focus on two key points, and the first one will be a bit brief, and the second one will be in a wee bit more detail.

You are my God. First of all, I hope that every single one of us can say these words.

These four words contain a huge amount of theology, and there's a huge amount of encouragement for us. And so if you are able to say these four words, you are my God, then there is a lot that you are saying.

And in fact, you're saying at least five things, and I want us just to highlight these things very, very briefly. When you say to God, you are my God, first of all, you are making a statement of worship. These four words are acknowledging that God is God, and that's really the most basic principle of worship. The world around us is absolutely full of idolatry, full of people making a God out of something else, and I'm sure every one of us can think of examples where people make a God out of their career, or a God out of their hobby, a God out of music, a God out of sport, a God out of socialising, a God out of an ideology.

[3 : 30] People make God out of all sorts of things. But as Christians, we want to worship nothing and no one but God alone.

And that's what you're saying when you say, you are my God. It's a statement of worship. Secondly, if you can say these words, you are making a statement of personal relationship.

These words are acknowledging that God is God, but that's not just in terms of a basic fact. They are expressing more than that. They're expressing the fact that we have a relationship with God.

And these words are in fact summing up the kind of relationship that God wants us to have with him. God's great goal is that he would be your God.

Not just that he would be our God, not that just that he would be the God, but that he would be your God. And that is an absolutely incredible privilege.

[4 : 42] The God who is above all creation, the God who is above time and eternity, the God who is beyond the limits of our understanding, the God who is bigger than we could ever know.

He looks at you and he says, I want to be yours. I want to be in a relationship with you, a covenant relationship whereby you are my people and I am your God.

And so if you can say you are my God, you are acknowledging the fact that you and God belong together. You belong together in a beautiful, personal relationship.

It's absolutely astonishing to be able to talk to God. It's absolutely astonishing to be able to say to God, you are God. Because if you think about it, we have no right to utter a word before God.

And so to be able to simply talk to God and say you are God is astonishing, but God wants you to be able to say even more than that. Not just you are God, but you are my God.

[6 : 01] It's a statement of personal relationship. Thirdly, when you say these words, you are my God, you are making a statement of loyalty and commitment.

If you look at that phrase, it's got a very exclusive tone to it. It's a statement of loyalty. When we say it, when we say the statement, especially when we say the word you, we are singling out God and Him alone as our God.

You are God. God alone is supreme. God alone is the one who reigns. God alone is the one that we worship, follow and serve.

And it's reminding us that you can't say that phrase half-heartedly. If you say to God, you are my God, but then it has pretty much no effect on your life and you've got no real sense of loyalty or commitment towards God, then you're not really meaning what you're saying.

You can't say that phrase half-heartedly. When we say you are God, we are making a statement of absolute loyalty, allegiance and commitment.

[7 : 13] And we are totally committing ourselves to God. We can't say it half-heartedly. We must all guard against the danger of half-heartedness.

If you say you are my God, you're making an absolute commitment of loyalty. And in doing so, we're making a profession to everybody else as well. We are gladly acknowledging the fact that we are exclusively and wholeheartedly devoted to God.

You are my God. We are loyal to Him and committed to Him. That's the third thing. Fourth thing you're saying is that you are making a statement of dependence.

When you say you are my God, you are acknowledging to God that you need Him. And that's really, really important because it's really important today because it goes against a lot of the current thinking in the world.

The world today is very, very individualistic in the way it thinks. People are now very much trying to emphasize their own independence.

[8 : 18] And that manifests itself in phrases like, you know, you have to be true to yourself. You have to be who you are. Do not depend on anybody else. Don't rely on anybody else. You be who you are. You stand on your own two feet.

You don't need anybody else because all that you need, you can find within yourself. That's the mindset of the world today and it's a mindset that focuses on independence and it's a mindset that does not think, that thinks it does not need God.

And people today think that dependence brings weakness. Isn't that true? Well, well, do you agree with that? I think that. I think you look at the world today and people think dependence brings weakness.

Is that true? Does dependence bring weakness? Would you agree with that? Well, as is so often the case, I think this is an example of where the world turns the truth upside down.

Because the truth is not that dependence brings weakness. The truth is dependence cures weakness.

[9 : 34] Because if I break my leg, I depend on somebody else to help me and to cure that weakness. If I have a broken heart, I depend on family and friends to help heal and cure that weakness.

We are constantly depending on others. It's written into the very fabric of humanity. We depend on other people. And above all else, we depend on God.

That's exactly what we're saying when we say these words. You are my God. So you're making a statement of worship, acknowledging God as God alone.

A statement of personal relationship. You are my God. A statement of loyalty. You are God. No one else. A statement of dependence. You are my God.

The one on whom I rely. And fifthly, you are making a statement of trust. When you say you are my God, you are expressing the fact that we trust Him.

[10:37] We trust Him as God. We trust Him as the one who will meet our needs. The one who will help us in every way that we need. And the one from whom we receive all things that we depend on.

All the things that we can't do for ourselves. You think of everything that's bound up in the word God. Just look at the word God and think about all that lies behind that word.

God is creator of the universe. God is sustainer of everything that there is. God is our source of moral teaching.

The one who shows us what is right and wrong. God is the one who protects, the one who provides, the one who comforts, the one who leads, the one who saves. Now for all of these things, the world looks elsewhere.

And so the world comes up with an alternative God of creation, the God of chance. The world comes up with a new judge of right and wrong, the God of self.

[11:39] For provision and security, the world looks to the God of money. For comfort and peace, the world looks to the God of pleasure. For guidance, the world looks to the God of the crowd.

And the world blindly follows these gods without ever stopping and thinking them through. But the Christian says for all of these things and for everything else, I am trusting the Lord.

I am trusting God. You are my God. So it's a statement of worship, a statement of relationship, a statement of loyalty, a statement of dependence, a statement of trust.

You are my God for very little words, but it is an absolutely amazing thing to be able to say.

And the vital question is this. Can you say it? Can you say to God right now?

[12:46] You are my God. I hope that every one of you says yes, but if you say to yourself, I can't say that because I know that there are other things in life that are more important than God.

Now it's all, remember how simple this is. If we put other things before God, then we are making them God instead of God.

And so if you think yourself, well, I don't think I can say that. The amazing truth of the Bible is that you can start saying it right now.

Right now you can say, Lord, up to this point, I have let other things take over in my life, but from now on, you are my God.

Every one of us can bow down to Jesus either for the first time or after many, many years of believing and follow Him. We can all say, you are my God.

[13:56] So that's the first point. I hope every one of us can say these words.

The second point, and we'll look at this in a wee bit more detail, I don't just want you to say these words, I want you to remember these words.

That takes us back to Psalm 86. The text is very small. Don't worry, I'll put it up in bigger text just now, but I've put it up with small text because I just want the whole Psalm on the screen for a minute or two.

I want us to remember these words, and Psalm 86 gives us some important teaching in regard to why that's the case. If you look at the Psalm, I hope you can see it, that's the whole Psalm there, the screen's on the side, it'll be too small, but if you can see the big screen, you'll be able to read it. If you look at the whole Psalm, you can divide it into four sections. And there's various ways that you can divide Psalms, but one of the ways in which to do so is to look for key words that are repeated throughout the Psalms.

[15:02] The Psalms are always very, very carefully structured, and if you look closely, you can see some important patterns. If you look at verse 1, 6 and 11, they all contain the same word, God's covenant name.

Now, in our translations, it's O Lord in block capital letters, that's the Hebrew word Yahweh, God's covenant name, the personal name of God himself.

And so you find it in all of these verses, verse 1, verse 6, verse 11. If you then look at verse 5, 10 and 13, they all begin with the same word, for.

And so if you look at that, you can see you've got a section starts, O Lord, and it ends for. So the first part is asking God to do stuff because for. You are good and forgiving.

Then the same pattern again, O Lord, for. And then 11 to 13, O Lord, for. And so I think we can divide it into those sections. That's three repeated sections.

[16:08] And then we have a section at the end from verse 14 that really relates it all to David's personal experience at that time.

We have a section from verse 1 to 5, another one from 6 to 10, another from 11 to 13, and the last section from 14 onwards. It's the first three sections I want us to look at for a wee while today, because each of these sections refers to a different aspect of life.

And in all these different aspects of life, it's vital that we remember the words, you are my God. In the first section, verse 1 to 5, David speaks about personal struggles.

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am Godly. Save yourself and to trust in you. You are my God. Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do 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.

[17:16] When we were reading it, I asked you to think about the circumstances that gave rise to this Psalm. Well, we don't know the exact circumstances, but the one thing that is very clear is that David is struggling.

He's poor and needy. He's crying to God all day. In these verses, he's not giving a statement of strength. He is confessing his weakness and vulnerability.

And all of that is reflected in what he asks God to do. He's saying, God, incline your ear to me. He needs God to listen to him. Preserve my life in verse two. He needs God's protection and help.

Be gracious to me. He wants God's favour, his love, his tender care. Gladden my soul in verse four. He needs to be encouraged.

And I think every single one of us can relate to how David feels in these verses. So often we're like David in verse one.

[18:12] We feel that we need somebody that we can talk to, someone who will listen to us, someone who will understand, someone who will be there for us. When we are finding life hard, when we are struggling, it is so easy to feel like we are alone and that nobody else feels like this.

Isn't that true? You feel that you are the only person struggling with this and everybody else is getting on great? I think that's one of the many perils of Facebook.

Facebook is a good thing in so many ways, but for so many people, people go onto Facebook, they're feeling struggling and everybody else's lives look perfect. And you think, what am I doing wrong?

And it can affect us in other ways too. You might have a bad experience at work or at school. You might be tired. Things might not be going well. And in circumstances like this, we need somebody to talk to.

You know how David feels in verse one. In verse two, David is overwhelmed with life and we can feel exactly the same. David was probably facing a literal physical threat on his life and the last section of the Psalm talks about enemies oppressing him.

[19:17] We don't face exactly the same circumstance, but we still face opposition. We might have critical colleagues. We might have difficult customers.

We might have temperamental family and friends. And we live in an increasingly anti-Christian society. And we can be overwhelmed by these things. Or maybe even just with the busyness of life, with the pressure and stress of work, with our own disappointments and frustration with our failures. We can feel overwhelmed just like David felt. Just like David in verse three, we can feel vulnerable and in need of comfort and care and compassion.

And often as verse four says, we need to be cheered up. We need our souls to be gladdened. Life brings many good things, but it brings many hard things as well.

And often that can leave us feeling flat. And the vital point is that in all of these circumstances, please remember these words.

[20:25] You are my God. If you need somebody to talk to, remember that God is your God and that he is there to listen and help.

The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. If you feel overwhelmed with the busyness and pressure of life, remember that God is your God, that he dwells in your heart by his spirit and that his grace is sufficient for you.

His power is made perfect in weakness. If you feel in need of care and compassion, remember that God is your God.

As verse five says, he is a bounding instead fast love. To all who call upon him God is the God of mercy, patience, gentleness, kindness, love, all of these things are for you.

And if your soul needs gladdening today, in other words, if your soul is flat, remember that God is your God.

[21 : 32] Remember that you are so special to him that he sent his only son, Jesus Christ, so that whoever, whoever trusts in him will have eternal life, will have more blessings than we could ever describe.

These words, you are my God, are not just for when you're feeling strong in faith, it's not that often that Christians feel strong in faith. They are for the moments when you find it really hard.

And so if you struggle with anything this week, remember God is still your God. He will always listen, always preserve, always be gracious, always be there to gladden and encourage you.

God is saying that when you struggle, remember that I am your God and I always, always, always will be.

So verse one to five is talking about struggles in life. Verse six to ten, the focus shifts and it becomes much, much broader. And in many ways, David here is speaking about the whole world.

[22 : 51] 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's 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. You are great and do wondrous things. You alone are God.

Now it may well have been the case that David was facing a foreign enemy at this time because throughout the Old Testament, the nations around Israel were a constant threat and a thorn in their side.

And it was a world that was hostile to God. And in that world, David calls to mind that God alone is God. No God of the other nations can compare with him or with what he does.

In fact, all the nations, as verse nine tells us, will one day come and bow down before God. As verse 10 says, you are great and do wondrous things.

[23 : 50] You alone are God. And all of this is reminding us that living as a Christian in a non-Christian world is nothing new.

Israel in the Old Testament faced constant hostility, suspicion, and ridicule from the rest of the world. And we face exactly the same today. But God is still God.

And God is still you are God. And so today, as we go through life, when we live in a world that is becoming increasingly hostile to God and where Christianity is viewed with increasing suspicion and hostility and contempt, always, always remember these words, you are my God.

And that should fill us with reassurance, knowing that God can never, ever, ever be toppled from his throne. And that either in this life or on the day of judgment, every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. So it should give us, fill us with reassurance, but it should also drive us to prayer.

[25 : 06] Because God is still God. You still you're God. And he can turn the hearts of men and women across Scotland so that sinners become committed followers of Jesus Christ.

God can still do that. God is our God. And we often think back into the periods of history where things looked great for the church.

You think back to the early centuries after the New Testament, where Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire. You can think of a period like the Reformation, where nations were transformed by the Gospel and churches were established and they thrived.

And we can think of the revivals in the 18th and 19th centuries where scores and scores of people were converted. You look back to days like that and you think, oh, they were great days for Christianity.

But do you know the amazing thing? These were days when Christianity was bitterly opposed by the world.

[26 : 21] The Romans wanted to get rid of the early Christian church. The reformers were viewed as criminals and many of them were executed.

And the revivals of the 18th and 19th century arose when the Enlightenment was telling the world that we've moved on from primitive things like the Bible.

We've moved on from believing in miracles and from believing in the resurrection. We don't need these things anymore. We know better now.

Opposition to the Gospel is nothing new and no opposition has ever, ever stopped God from doing his great and wondrous works.

God has done amazing things in his church throughout the ages of history and that God is your God.

[27 : 17] And so if you look at the world today and you see things that you wish weren't there, do not lose heart. We look at the world today, we see things in the Middle East, we see things in America, we see things in our own nation and we think, what is going on?

Whenever you feel like that, remember these words. You are my God. And lastly in verses 11 to 13, David speaks about how we live our lives.

So he's spoken about personal struggles in the first part, he's spoken about the world as a whole in the second part. Now in this third part, he's talking about how you and I live our life. 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. For if great is your steadfast love toward me, you have delivered my soul from the depths of shale, from the depths of the grave.

Having God as our God is a huge comfort when we struggle. Having God as our God gives us reassurance when we look at the world around us. But here in these verses, we are being reminded of the fact that the words, you are my God, they should have an effect on the way you and I live every single day of our lives.

[28 : 47] As we were saying, these words express our worship, our relationship with God, our loyalty to Him, our dependence on Him, our trust in Him, and all that should shape the way you and I go through every single day.

That's why David says, teach me your ways so that I may walk in your truth. In other words, he wants God to teach him so that as he walks through every day of his life, his conduct would be shaped by the fact that God is his God.

We were saying this two weeks ago, the fact that our lives should be shaped by a Christian conduct that is evident to all. And it's reminding us that God wants wholehearted commitment from us.

David says, unite my heart so that instead of his heart being divided, maybe torn towards God a little bit, but torn away from God in another way, he wants a united heart that's totally committed to God.

And so when we say, you are my God, we are committing ourselves to follow Him every day. And of course, that's exactly what Jesus called people to do, isn't it?

[30 : 14] Jesus didn't say, put your trust in me and then just go about your business. Jesus said, follow me. And that's why our goal this week is to live the way God wants us to live.

And that may well make you very different from the world around you. Living God's way means being different, different to your colleagues, different to your classmates, maybe even different to your friends.

That doesn't mean you have no contact with them. It means the opposite. It means that your contact with them is a witness. Living God's way makes us different, but in a good way.

Wouldn't it be amazing if you all stood out a mile this week at work or in whatever you're doing because you are full of love and joy and peace and patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and everything else that God commands us to be.

We are all surrounded by people who don't want to live God's way and you're going to face that tomorrow at work or in the community or at school or whatever it is you're doing and you might even face it in your own home.

[31 : 38] People who don't want to live God's way. If you do remember these words, you are my God and like Joshua, maybe lived by the conviction of says, as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.

We need to remember these words. So in just a few four words, four wee words, the Bible gives us amazing teaching.

It's an amazing statement. You are my God. And ultimately these words are driving us to Jesus Christ because it is only through trusting in him that we have a relationship with God.

It is only through faith in Jesus that we are his and he is ours. Jesus himself said, no one comes to the Father except through me.

So I really hope that you can say these words and I hope that today, tomorrow, this week and for the rest of your lives, you remember these words.

[32 : 48] You are my God. Let's pray.

God our Father, we thank you for these words. We thank you that we can say you are our God. Help us to remember these words when we struggle, when things are hard, help us to remember you are our God.

When we look at the world and we see chaos and threats and things just going almost mad, help us to remember that you are our God.

Let us we go to work or go into the community or go back to our homes or whatever we're doing in the week ahead. And as we are faced by people who don't acknowledge you as God, help us to live your way and to remember that you are our God.

And help us just to see what a blessing and a privilege it is to say these words. And we pray that we would all be able to say them from the bottom of our hearts that you are our God.

[34 : 03] Help us Lord to say these words. Help us to remember them and with all our hearts Lord we thank you that you are our God.

Amen. Thank you.