

**Psalms: The Songs of the People of God**  
**Psalm 86: A Humble, Confident Cry for Help**  
Sunday, July 21, 2019

### Introduction

*When People are Big and God is Small.* It's the title of a book that I read many years ago but that I still think of often. The premise of the book is that we are prone to giving more weight to what other people say rather than to what God says. In our thoughts we make people big and God small.

In a similar way many of us are guilty of seeing our situations and thinking they are too big or too complicated while at the same time minimizing the power and care of God. We are guilty of believing that *our situations are big and God is small.*

In Psalm 86 we see a prayer of a man who has a proper perspective. While he finds himself in a difficult situation he remains confident that God hears and is able to save him. He's sure that even though his situation is dire, his God is bigger and desires to show mercy to those whom He loves.

### Structure

A common feature in ancient literature is the use of structure to highlight a main idea. In Psalm 86 David uses a distinct structure to show what's central to his thinking. While the psalm starts and ends with references to his situation and his requests for salvation, the center sections of the psalm are completely focused on God and David's devotion to God.

This structure reveals David's heart. He certainly wants to be saved from trouble (this is made clear in vv. 1-7 and 14-17) but above all He emphasizes the character of God (vv. 8-10) and his own devotion to God (vv. 11-13). The situation is difficult but He is confident in His God.

### David's Request: A Humble Plea to the God who Hears His People (86:1-7)

- **David believes that God hears and answers prayers** – In vv. 1-7 there are 8 prayer requests. At first read it may seem like David is trying to persuade God, but in fact these verses reveal David's humble confidence in God. He is praying to God with confidence that He hears and responds.
- **David appeals to God based on their relationship** – Throughout this section David emphasizes his relationship to God as His servant. He doesn't see God as a distant unreachable figure, but as his Lord who will care for those who are His own.

- **David is sure of the ways God relates to His people** – In verse 5 David recounts the ways God relates to His people: God is good and forgiving and faithful in love.

### David's Praise: An Expression of Trust and Confidence in God's Character (86:8-10)

- If we read verses 8-10 in isolation from the rest of the psalm it sounds like it would be part of a psalm of praise. It's remarkable to remember that this is included in a prayer for salvation as David is running for his life. But what's clear is that David understands the "bigness" of God and trusts that God can save him from any situation.
  - God is unrivaled in His position (vs. 8a)
  - God is unrivaled in His works (vs. 8b, 10)
  - God will be worshipped by all (vs. 9; Psalm 22:27-28)
- **Application:** How quick are you to remember the truth of who God is in the midst of a difficult time? How dialed in are you to the truth when you are going to God in prayer? Do you tend to focus on the enormity of struggle rather than on the 'bigness' of God? When we are really conscious of who God is then it should enable us to pray with boldness.

### David's Devotion: A Humble Commitment to Obedience and Worship (86:11-13)

- Without the context vs. 9 may seem somewhat ordinary, but the fact that this is included in prayer for salvation makes it more remarkable. In the middle of a prayer for protection David is asking God to grow Him and to teach Him so that He can walk in the truth.
- Even in the midst of difficulties David is focused on the character of God and he is poised to give thanks and praise to God – trusting that He will hear and save him.
- **Application:** When life gets hard our spiritual growth and the praise of God may be the furthest things from our minds, but we should want them to be front and center. We should want to love and trust God so much that even in the struggles we are asking Him to hold us close and teach us.

### David's Request Restated: A Humble, Confident Cry for Help (86:14-17)

- In many ways vv. 14-17 mirror vv. 1-7. Once again we see that while David is crying out for help he is confident in God and His ability to save him. David is also hopeful that God will be praised as others see God's protection of His servant.