

# Draw Near to God ■ The Worship How to Approach God

by Tim Conway

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*This sermon focuses on the importance of drawing near to God through prayer, seeking His favor, comfort, and strength. It emphasizes the need to approach God boldly, recognizing His unique attributes of mercy, grace, and steadfast love. The psalmist's example of seeking God's presence and favor is highlighted, encouraging believers to seek God's intervention and comfort in times of trouble.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 86:1, Psalm 86:5, Psalm 86:11, Psalm 86:15, Psalm 86:17

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## Description

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## Transcript

Psalm 86. So let's pray. Lord, I pray that our time now would be helpful to Your people.

I pray it in Christ's name. So probably many of you, you know the difference between systematic theology and biblical theology. Basically, systematics.

Brother Andy likened it to dissecting a frog in biology class. Whereas biblical theology, he likened to the living animal. Moving, breathing.

Biblical theology is basically where you take the Bible. It's like we take a psalm. You take Psalm 86.

Instead of just reaching in here and pulling out one verse and then going over to Romans and pulling out, you're dissecting it to where you end up with topical matter. Biblical theology, you take it as you get it. You take it in the whole package.

So you unpack the pieces and the parts, but you leave it as a whole. You leave it all together. You handle it that way.

You're not just approaching the Bible to find the doctrine on the deity of the Christ and the doctrine on predestination and the doctrine on prayer or hell. Approaching Scripture that way is not wrong. But I think Brother Andy's right.

I think one is living. The other, not as much. It doesn't mean it can't be profitable.

But here's the thing. Last week, I told you I was going to wrap up this series. And basically what I was doing was I told you we were going to wrap this thing up with basically a systematic approach.

Well, we'll look at Scripture. We'll look at prayer. We'll look at fasting.

We'll look at different ways that we draw near to God. And you know what? I woke up Tuesday morning and I just had no sense that that's what I was supposed to do. I had two things emblazoned on my mind.

Worship and Psalm 86. And it wasn't even that I fully knew all that was in 86. I had to go there and look at it.

It's like why am I even thinking? Why is that? I mean, powerfully it came. And so, I'm not trying to be mystical or anything, but I'm wrapping this up. This is the seventh message on the series.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. That comes from James 4. I did not have you turn there today because what I'm going to do is this last message, I'm going to take you to Psalm 86. Draw near to God the worship.

And I began to recognize this, that whether we approach God in prayer or in fasting or through the Lord's Supper or through the assembly, however we do it, that worship is going to be a primary aspect of that. And it's really what I want. I'm going to try to unpack the entire Psalm.

Basically, I have 17 points. You'll notice there are 17 verses. And what's unique is this.

And maybe you don't know this about the Psalms, but to find a Psalm where the psalmist is addressing God in every single verse is rare. This is unique. Most of them, you will find portions that address God and portions that proclaim truths about God.

And that's okay. But the point is, is Psalm 86 is unique in that all 17, now think about it. When somebody is praying, what they're doing is they're seeking to approach God.

They are seeking to draw near. That's what I find unique about this is every one of the 17 verses, David is striving to draw near to God. And so I thought, hey, I'm going to take you here.

I want to emphasize the aspect of worship, but I want to work through every one of these verses and just draw out some things that will help you. I'll tell you this, anybody here who's serious about, what a promise, what a promise. If you're serious about this, having God draw near to you, drawing near to Him so that He draws near to you.

If you're serious about that, you will be a student of the Psalms. And what's beautiful about this is that, listen, this isn't just David approaching God. This is David under the influence of the Spirit of God approaching God.

You know what that means? That means when you come to Psalm 86 to learn how to approach God, you're not sitting at the feet of David. You're sitting at the feet of the Lord Himself. He is saying, I have left you.

For thousands of years, He has left these accounts for God's people to know God-approved ways of approaching Him. So it's extremely helpful. And so what I'm going to do is basically a running commentary, verse one all the way through verse 17.

Brethren, study the Psalms frequently. Be reading them. I know that there are, I know Brother Pat would read, I think he typically tried to read all the Psalms through in 30 days.

And you've got 150, so I guess, what? Is that what he would do? Would he actually read five a day? That seems like a lot. Especially if you're trying to read other places. I mean, if you're just, anyway.

Be a student. I've told you before, Matt Tomlinson told me one time, he had a book about praying the Psalms. Extremely useful.

Try that sometime. But here's the thing. Whether you actually go to Scripture and pray through a Psalm, what we really need to do is be learning.

We need to take the example and bring some of these principles home in order to learn how to pray. How to best approach the Lord. Okay, let's dive in.

Verse one. A prayer of David. So there's no question about who wrote this.

Incline your ear. Now the King James Version says, bow down thine ear. Now yet, the LXX, the Septuagint, is the Greek Old Testament.

Here's what's interesting. You go to that Greek Old Testament and you look at the word for incline or bow, it's the same word in the Greek used in the New Testament when Jesus said, it is finished, and bowed his head. What David is saying is, Lord, condescend and come down here where I am.

Bow down, bend down to my littleness. Condescend to that and answer me. You see that? And answer me.

Now, you know what strikes me about this? There's no please. Look at this. Bow down thine ear.

That's basically what's said. Bow down. Not please.

There's no other verbiage here. There's no other language. Come and answer me.

I mean, do you feel that? You go to the Lord and it's almost like we feel like, okay, we need to be more proper. That's presumptuous when you just kind of shout out, Lord, bow down, condescend to where I am and answer me. That is bold.

Now, here's the thing. Remember, this isn't just David. This is the Spirit of God carrying David along, saying, David, I am going to breathe the very words of God into you so that you can teach these folks in 2020 how to pray.

And I'll tell you this, what God's telling us is right from the get-go. Start off, you don't need fancy verbiage when you come to God. You can be bold.

That's what He's teaching us. It's almost awkward boldness where you feel like, it sounds demanding, doesn't it? And yet, when you go to the New Testament, aren't we told to boldly approach the throne of grace? Or our ESV say with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace. Why? So that we can receive mercy, so that we can find grace to help in time of need.

I mean, Lord, condescend to my littleness. Answer me. Brethren, I'll tell you this, as great and glorious as our God is, He loves for His children to be bold.

I hope you get that. We can be bold with Him. Don't your children get pretty bold with you? I mean, we have to approach with reverence and awe.

Scripture tells us that. And yet, I love it. And notice this, O Lord, I'll tell you this, you've got your Bibles open.

Just look for O Lord. Or look for the term God. I mean, you'll see O Lord in v. 1. You'll see My God in v. 2. O Lord in v. 3. O Lord in v. 4. O Lord in v. 5. O Lord in v. 6. It's not there in v. 7, but it's back there in v. 8. O Lord.

Back there in v. 9. O Lord. In v. 10, God. V. 11, O Lord.

V. 12, O Lord My God. I mean, there's three out of the seventeen verses where some title or name of God is not there. And it's typically O Lord or O God.

And the thing is, what you need to recognize is this, the key note. I mean, one of the key notes of this psalm is Yahweh's name. Or it comes across Adonai or El.

Have you ever heard people that pray and they use God's name over and over and over? But sometimes you get this feeling it is very vain. It's almost like they don't know what to say or what to ask. And they just keep using God's name.

It's like vain filler for people who don't know. But you know, that's not the case with this man under inspiration. And you think, wow, it's like there's, again, there's a boldness.

Lord, Lord, You Lord. You're the one that I'm talking to. You're the one that I need.

I'm drawing near to You. It's You I need. Lord, it's You that I need to get the attention of.

Why? Because I'm poor and needy. And that's how he ends this first one. Poor and needy.

Christians are people who realize the truth about themselves. And brethren, why does a guy even put that out there? Because he wants God to address his poorness and his neediness. And that's one of the things, answer me.

Lord, I'm looking for an answer. I'm poor and needy. I need help.

Which ones of you all want to pray to the wind? You want to pray to the wind? We got somebody boldly shot his hand up back there. He's going to rethink that in a second. But brethren, oh, pray to wind.

Yeah, take the D off and we'll all raise our hands to it. But brethren, we want answers. We don't want to pray to not have answers.

And that's, I'm poor and needy, and Christians are exactly. We realize the truth about ourselves. We realize, blessed are the poor in spirit.

That's what describes us. We realize without Him, we're sinners with no good in ourself, no ability to help ourselves, no ability to save ourselves. Look, those who think they're okay, those who think that they can make themselves right with God, they're not Christians.

I mean, who is it that seeks the physician? The sick. I mean, if one of the things the Spirit does is He comes and He convinces us and convicts us of sin and righteousness and judgment. But the reality is we get convinced that we're sick people, we're weak people.

Lord, that's why we need You to go, oh Lord, oh Lord, oh Lord. Why? Because we get to keep, Lord, I'm wanting to get Your attention. I need to approach You because I'm needy and I feel it.

You feel it? And that just creates a boldness. He doesn't say please once in this whole psalm. I just find that interesting.

Brethren, need, need. It's always the master argument for mercy. Okay, verse two.

Preserve my life for I am godly. Now you might want to stop right there. I am godly.

Now listen, those who rightly approach God don't make themselves out to be worse than they are. How do you get Christians? Oh, wretched man that I am. We're not going to sit here and debate Romans 7. But I'll tell you this, the reality is that this isn't the only place where David talks like this.

Now somebody could say, well, you know, that's prefiguring Christ and that's what you really want to see there. Look, I have no problem saying that Christ ultimately is the righteous One. He's the true Jew.

He is the One who came and He perfectly obeyed His Father. But listen, that's not to take away from David speaking this in the beginning. David didn't just simply step back and say, well, you know, I'm saying all this in behalf of Christ, but this has nothing to do with me.

It had an original application with him. And he could come to God like that. Listen, are we not new creations in Christ? Have not all things passed away and all things become new? Isn't that what Scripture says? Doesn't Scripture say that our old desires and passions have been crucified with Christ? Aren't we told that He Himself bore our sins on that tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness? Are we not a people who have been saved to be zealous of good works? Brethren, I'll tell you this, don't deny that reality because there's another place where this same psalmist says, we're talking about approaching God.

You remember that? We're talking about drawing near to God. Well, what's the reality? Who is it that ascends the hill of the Lord? Who is it? Who dwells? Clean hands. And you know what? When you go back to James, it says the same thing.

It says submit yourself to God, resist the devil, draw near to Him, He will draw near to you. You cleanse your hands. That's exactly what's in the context there.

Brethren, I'll tell you this, righteousness goes a long way with the Lord. Look, that's not to say we can't come as those who have something to confess. That's not to say, little children, I write to you that you don't sin, but if you do, we have an Advocate with the Father.

Jesus Christ the Righteous. Brethren, there's a place to come and confess. But I'll tell you, when you have a life that is consistently righteous and godly and holy, that is a powerful motive with God.

Powerful. And brethren, we should not hesitate to say that. Like, you know, in different seasons, it's been, Lord, we're in need.

Whether it's personnel in the church, whether it's labors, or whether it's finances, Lord, we support Grace Houses and we support missions and we support church planning. Lord, we're sending our money off to James Dolly's school and we send it off over to the Syrian refugees and we send it to the sex-trafficked Naplesese girls. Brethren, we'd be lying if we said we weren't doing that.

We are doing that. Brethren, there's a place to say, Lord, look, save Your servant. Lord, I'm Your servant.

I'm Your slave. And Lord, my life is for obeying You. Listen, don't say that if it's not true.

Don't be a hypocrite with God. And you know, He's not saying He trusts His godliness. Brethren, this can almost seem very presumptuous.

Wow, no please. It's just bend your ear. Answer me.

I'm godly. It's almost like, who's going to pray that way? And yet, that's how He's praying. We need to learn.

We need to take our cues from here. But brethren, I'll tell you this, He's not trusting in His godliness because what does v. 2 say? What does He immediately say? Not that He trusts His godliness. He says, I trust You.

Save Your servant who trusts in You. V. 3, Be gracious to Me, O Lord, for to You do I cry all the day. Now, what I want to grab out of v. 3 is this, all the day.

All day long. Daily. You know what, lost men who pray at all, they pray when they're in trouble.

Brethren, one of the things that we need to learn about drawing near to God is He wants us drawing near all the time. Constantly pressing. Constantly.

Brethren, saints. The saints of God. They keep the Lord before them all the day.

Constantly trying to press in. True seekers of God. They bang on heaven's gates and they keep banging and they keep banging and they keep banging.

You heard about it in the first hour. You've got people like kids that run away. They knock on the door and then they run.

We call that ding-dong ditch it. You ring the doorbell and then you ditch. And you hide and you watch the flustered people look around in the dark.

But brethren, here's the thing. As I was thinking about this, two verses. Psalm 22, oh my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

Now that's David too. And that finds its culmination in Christ. And for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who is perfect in His obedience, perfect in His godliness, I cry all the day.

There it is. Crying all the day. But no answer.

And there are seasons like that. No answer. I cry by night.

I find no rest. But listen to this. Isaiah 62 You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest and give Him no rest.

You see what God says? Even if you can't find Him for a season. Oh, and God likes to hide Himself at seasons. But you know what God Himself says? Give Him no rest.

You take no rest in giving Him no rest. And I'll tell you this, people that give Him no rest, they get answers. People who toy in prayer, people who toy in approaching God find very little answer.

Very few answers. Listen, God often does things to us and for us with no prayer required. But this, you have not because you don't ask.

We heard that in the first hour. Brethren, knock and you will receive. It doesn't say if you don't knock, no matter what you do, you're going to receive anyway.

Scripture doesn't talk that way. People who give Him no rest, people who are constantly praying, they're people who see. I tell you, you can have churches that are small.

You can have churches that may not have significant personalities. But I'll tell you this, you have people that are laying hold on the Lord and they keep laying hold and they give Him no rest day and night. They are the people that see the mighty works of God carried out.

This is one of the keys. All day long. Not hit and miss.

Not once in a while. Verse 4, gladden the soul of your servant. For to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Now, I like that. Gladden the soul of your servant. You see this? Isn't this how Jesus taught us? Right when He's getting ready to go to the cross, He says this, He said, ask in His name.

He told us to pray. And one of the reasons that He gave is so that your joy may be complete. I know most of you know that because often we say that to the Lord.

In our prayer meetings, that gets... But here the psalmist is saying basically the same thing. Gladden the soul of your servant. Well, how's that going to happen? He says, O Lord, to You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Well, here's that servant language again. He loves that. He said it back in v. 2. He says it again here in v. 4. He's going to say it again in v. 16.

It's the word for slave. He's saying I count it my honor to call myself again and again and again Your slave. I'm Yours.

Lord, let me approach You. Let me find You. I belong to You.

Don't leave me unanswered. Don't leave me unheard. Don't leave me outside.

It's like your servant's knocking at the door. You know him. It's not a stranger.

You say I don't know him. I'm not going to let him in. He's saying you know me.

You bought me. I've been bought with a price. That's how we become these servants.

He says this. He says, Lord, gladden the soul of Your servant. Why? Because he's seeking to lift up his soul to Him.

And brethren, lifting up our soul to God is hard when our soul is heavily laden down and weighed down. And we know it, brethren. We know these seasons.

We know the despondency, the darkness, the doubts, the discouragement when we can't find God's face. But oh, you know what it's like when God fills you with joy and He gladdens your heart? It's like you've got eagle's wings. It's like Isaiah 40.

You run and not be weary, and you walk and not faint, but you mount up with wings as an eagle. That's how it is when God gladdens our... It's like, Lord, I'm trying to lift up my soul to You. See, this is about drawing near to God.

I'm wanting to get to where You are. I'm trying to lift up, but Lord, that's hard because the height where You are is very great and I'm way down here. That's why in the beginning He's saying, Lord, bow down to where I am.

I'm way down here. I'm small. I'm groveling.

I'm a worm. I'm down here. I'm poor and needy.

Lord, the height to where You are, it's way up there. And the thing about it is, brethren, all through here, no intercession. He's not praying for anybody else.

And I'm not saying that's wrong. Of course, the Bible talks about intercession. But I want you to recognize this.

There's a place where it's just between you and the Lord. That's what drawing near to the Lord and Him drawing near to you is all about. It's between you and Him.

And that's what's happening. It's all on that level. Yes, when He's gladdened, He will pray for others undoubtedly.

But, Lord, You bid me to draw near to You and You've given me the promise You will draw near to me. That's just between You and me. Gladden my heart.

I'm Your servant. You're my God. You bid me to come.

I'm seeking to come. Lord, I'm looking for You to gladden my heart. Help me, Lord, that I might lift up my soul to You.

Brethren, do you approach the Lord in this way? Just really making a case. V. 5, For You, O Lord, are good and forgiving. Or some translations say it's ready to forgive.

Abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon You. Now, if you just let your eyes shoot down to v. 15, But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, low to anger, abounding in steadfast love and

faithfulness. You know what he does twice here? Twice.

In 17 verses, as he's striving to approach the Lord, he basically remembers the words that God spoke to Moses. In Exodus 34, when Moses said, I want to see Your glory, and God came and He describes Himself. This is amazing to me because what David is saying is I remember what You told Moses.

And that is key. We need to really focus on these realities. David likewise wants to mount up to the glory.

And that's what I want. I want it for us. And so he sets his mind on the same realities concerning the living God.

He is good. That's the first thing he says. Good.

There's none better. He's the best and highest being of all. And look what it says.

Forgiving. Or that word ready to forgive. Ready to blot out all my sins.

Not in part, but the whole. Doesn't something jump in you? I mean, I think it was Zeke was yelling out before we even started singing it. That stanza.

That's one of the greatest stanzas in all hymnology, is it not? My sins not in part, but the whole are nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Brethren, he's ready to forgive. You see what David's doing is he's saying, look, Lord, if we didn't know, if we just made this up, if we were creating You and putting different attributes on You, well, that might be one thing.

But Lord, right from the very beginning, I mean, Mount Sinai, You're given the law. It's all thunder and lightning and dark and the people are trembling. But in the middle of all that, You show mercy to whom You'll show mercy, compassion to whom You'll show.

And Moses is one of them. And You appeared to him and You said those words. And David is going to come back with these.

An abounding and steadfast love. So, brethren, what I find interesting is every translation is different. Usually, that's not the case.

I often will look at seven to ten translations when I'm studying different things of English translations. And brethren, it is very rare that none of them interpret something the same way. But listen, because if you hear them all, there's just riches here in these words.

The SV, abounding in steadfast love. The New King James, abundant in mercy. The New American Standard, abundant in loving kindness.

Young's Literal, abundant in kindness. King James, plenteous in mercy. The Holman, rich in faithful love.

The New English, show great faithfulness. The NIV, abounding in love. The Geneva, of great kindness.

It's like, Lord, are my expectations supposed to be small when You've presented Yourself to us as a God like that? I mean, does that make me feel like God doesn't want to be found? Or He's going to be cruel and angry at me if I go to seeking Him? And look what it said. This is verse 5, "...to all who call upon You." You know what? That is a common trait and characteristic of the evil. The evildoers.

They don't call upon the Lord. Why? Because they're proud. That's the characteristic of the lost.

They're self-sufficient. They don't need God. They're going to get to heaven on their own by their own good.

They're not needy. Prayerless people... listen, it's not a good sign when people join the church here and they don't come to the prayer meeting when they could. Because what that is, when people won't pray, it says, well, I don't really see it as being all that necessary.

I'm not really that needy. Brethren, listen to me. The Syrophenician woman, perfect example of somebody that knocked and sought, asked, she kept going.

Even when she got called a dog, she kept going. Blind Bartimaeus, he didn't take no for an answer. They told him, be quiet.

You're troubling the whole situation. Brethren, cry out, cry out, cry out. Persistence.

Importunity. God likes it. God wants it.

And here you have it. V. 6, give ear, O Lord, to my prayer. Listen to my plea for grace.

Now, if you are discerning here like our brother was talking about, you'll notice v. 6 is very much like v. 1. It's give ear. Bow down your ear to my prayer. Listen to my plea.

Again, no pleas. It's just he's very straightforward. He's very bold here.

And this isn't vain repetition. It's importunity. The praying man, the praying sister above all things.

We keep pressing. Why? Because we want an answer. That's what he's after.

Lord, listen. Lord, give ear. Lord, listen to me.

Answer me. Help me. Hear me.

V. 7, in the day of my trouble, I call upon You, for You answer me. Now here, he's not asking to be answered. Here, he's declaring that God does.

It's a change of strategy. A change of approach to the Lord. It's a shift in the way he draws near.

Lord, You answer me. In other words, You have answered me. Before, he was asking to be heard.

Now, he's declaring about times past. Lord, we know You really do aid those who call upon You. How do I know that? Because I've called upon You in the past and You've answered.

We as a church, we can testify to it. Have we not asked for very specific things and seen very specific answers to those prayers? We know that. We've prayed for one another in the church.

We've prayed for the church as a whole. We've seen this. Lord, we know of accounts.

We read George Mueller's biography. We read Hudson Taylor's biography. We know You are a God who answers those who call upon You.

That's why we pray. That's why we will pray. That's why we mean to pray.

That's why we're going to keep coming to You. Even if this sounds repetitious, Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, it's You we're going to. We have no other place to go.

There can be no reason for us to pray, brethren, if we have no expectation that we're going to be answered. We don't want to just waste our voices. Do you? I mean, I don't come to the prayer meeting because I've got this idea, well, you know, it's very unlikely we're going to be heard if we come here.

I recognize how desperate we are. I recognize how bad we need the Lord. Listen, aren't we told about a mercy seat? Aren't we told about a throne of grace? What good is a mercy seat? It's nothing but a mockery if I go there and there's no mercy.

If I'm told to go to the throne of grace and boldly go, why? To receive mercy? To find grace? If I go there and I don't find anything and there's no answers, it's just a mockery, brethren. In the day of my trouble, isn't that what it says? Anybody ever have one of those days? Anybody have more than one of those days? I find I have lots of those days. Lord, there's constant trouble.

Trouble fly up like sparks. Isn't that what Job said? Many are the days I'm set upon by the enemy. Many are the days I feel the powerful temptations of the flesh.

And he keeps saying, Oh, Lord, is there not reason? And again, brethren, we're being taught. God says, draw near to Me. How, Lord? Right here.

I've given you inspired examples of how to effectually draw near to Me. And then v. 8, now he shifts again. There is none like You among the gods.

And see, this is one of the things I really want to hit on. Oh, brethren, when we approach the Lord, it should be worship. There's none like You.

That's worship. When you call God out as being very singular, very exclusive, there's no God like You among the gods. That's just worship.

That's like Mount Carmel. Like, yeah, you've got Baal. Oh, I've got God.

Let's put the sacrifice out. You call down fire from heaven. I'll call down fire from heaven.

Let's see which one's God. That's where worship takes place. It's really what I want to focus on here.

There's none like You among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like Yours. Learn from this, brethren. If you would draw near, know this.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, no, it's not on that mountain and it's not over there in that city. God seeks those to worship Him in spirit and truth. But listen, He seeks worshipers.

If there's any way to approach God, it's in worship, it's in prayer. He seeks such to draw near to Him. Worship.

It comes from the Old English. Worth. Skype.

Skype through the ages became ship. Worth. This is about finding worth.

It's approaching God, recognizing the worth. And we don't want to just speak the terms. This people honors me with their lips.

You know how Scripture speaks. We don't want to be those people. Brethren, we want to so contemplate who our God is that when we come to Him, we've got some sense of His glory resonating in ourselves.

Brethren, what have the false gods ever done for you? There better be a difference. There was a time when I was a nominal Catholic and I had some strange experiences with regards to Mary. But what was all that? It was just a deception.

What has Allah ever done for His followers? Really done. I mean, look at them. Look at Muslims when they're old.

See how happy they are. See how joyful they are. Look at Buddhists when they're old.

Look at it. See where the people are at. What have the false gods ever done for them? There is none like Him among the gods.

What answers to prayer do they give? What days of trouble have they been delivered from? What miracles have those false gods ever wrought for their people? It doesn't happen. Come to the Lord with praise. And remember what I was talking about already.

We are a royal priesthood. And we are a people who have been saved precisely to draw near. Hebrews gives us two texts that are very helpful.

Let us offer to God. That's what priests do. They offer offerings to God or sacrifices.

Offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe. And then Hebrews 13, 15, through Him, through Christ, then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name. Praise.

Brethren, we need to praise the Lord. There needs to be more praise from us. One of the things I really want to encourage you to do is memorize some of the songs.

Memorize some of the psalms that we sing. If you will sing, sing when you're driving. I mean good songs.

Deep, rich theology. And there's no better way to memorize things than by song. I remember Brother John Sykes, he'd try to memorize portions of Scripture and he'd just make up tunes.

Some of you are more musically inclined. But brethren, the thing is we don't lack in hymnology. I mean, we've got a repertoire of songs that are rich and deep and introducing some new ones.

Sing unto the Lord a new song. I think we should always be introducing new songs. I think it freshens things.

It keeps things lively. But praise. Listen, the Christianity of the Scriptures, the early Christianity, that was the real deal.

It's what we find in the book of Acts. Do you know what they did? Do you know what we read about? Day by day, attending the temple together, breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. Do you know this? Pagan religion.

I remember, even though I was a nominal Catholic and darkened the doors of Catholic church buildings, probably you can count on one hand. That's the kind of Catholic I was. But do you know what is pagan religion always like? I've been in Orthodox churches in different places.

One time we had the hellish experience of going in the second largest Buddhist temple up there just south of China on the border of India. You know what? It's hellish. Do you know what pagan religion is? Do you ever look at Islam and see? Is there really joy? Is there really praising? Is that what you find? That's not what you find.

You always find pagan religions are sad and they are gloomy and they're solemn and the people are fearful. We want the authentic thing. We want what the early church had.

And what did they do? They went about praising God. That's the real thing. This is the sort of Christianity that existed back there during the early church.

It was an assembly of people that were approaching God and they were full of song and praise. And you know what? This is what reappears every time there's a revival, every time there's a spirit movement upon the land. What happens? People start singing.

People start praising. People start falling down on their face and praising. New hymn writers come along.

And not the garbage. So many of the contemporary songs are so predictable. It's rare when you get somebody that starts writing songs like Wesley and Watts and real songs, deep songs, rich songs.

That happens during the times of revival. Christianity makes people praise God. Why? Because of our salvation.

Because my sin's not in part but the whole. It's that kind of reality. That's what makes us break forth.

We have a God that it says is ready to forgive. Now that's pretty good news. That's something to shout about.

Anybody done anything that's worth shouting about that's been forgiven? I got a good list of things. Christianity, this is what it is. We have a God that's ready to rise up and help His people.

A God who's not like any of the other gods. I mean, this God saves. This God doesn't demand obeisance and offerings from us.

Yes, the kind that's praised, but that's gracious stuff. It's something He gives us first that we just simply turn around and give back. We don't come to Him earning this thing.

We come to Him desolate and bankrupt and broken. And we plead mercy. Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner.

I mean, that's what we find. We can shout, Lord, there is none like You among the gods. People who believe that they're Christians.

Because they live a good life, they're not Christians. Those people don't know this God. They're people that praise themselves.

We're people that look at ourselves and we realize where we would be and we realize what we deserve. And we realize if it wasn't for the sake of the grace of God, I am what I am by the grace of God. Verse 9, All the nations You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name.

What a statement there. Brethren, I just want you to think about this. All the nations You have made shall come.

It's future. Brethren, I'll tell you this, we may be in the minority today, but there's going to come a day when we're not going to be in the minority. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess.

But think with me. Few there be that find it is what Jesus said. Do you recognize how few people willingly praise? How many willingly worship? It's not the majority.

I mean, you can know this. When you come and approach before the Lord, when you seek to draw near to Him, the multitudes are not lining up to do that. It's just a few.

I mean, you realize when you're desperately crying out to the Lord day by day and drawing near, being bold with Him, Lord, I need an answer. You may very well be the only person in your neighborhood. You may be the only person in your part of the city.

I mean, there's few there be that find it. And yet, the day's coming when they're all going to bow down. But brethren, to be the people now who willingly are there.

Verse 10, For you are great and do wondrous things. You alone are God. What a verse.

You're great. Now back in verse 5, look what it said. You're good.

Great and good. Oh, that's good. Great.

People are great. There's been great people. I mean, great like Alexander the Great.

Doesn't that sound great? Great. But you know, I don't know that he was good. And then we've got good people.

We've got good people in here. But you're not very great. You say, well, thanks.

Well, I just mean, as good as you might be, you don't have the ability to do a whole lot with your goodness. It's very limited. But God is great.

And God is good. It's amazing, as I say it right now, I used to pray that way as a kid growing up. God is good.

God is great. I was thanking for our food by His hands. You know, I could just spit that out.

My brother and I had it down to where we could say it just so fast to keep my mom's wrath at bay. Like we could say it fast to get a response from her, but we said it just a notch below that so we could eat just as fast. We weren't thinking about what we were saying.

In fact, my hesitation right now is like I'm really realizing what I was saying. It's this truth. God is great.

God is good. And He alone is God. He's not to be worshiped as one God among many.

I'll tell you this, Christianity, it is absolutely exclusive and intolerant. Why? Because Christians are people of truth. And the truth doesn't change.

And who God is does not change. We are intolerant. And you know what? You don't have to be ashamed of that.

There is no other God. This is the God. You alone.

Isn't that again what happened at Mount Carmel? I mean, in the end, that's what was being said. He is God. And He alone.

Brethren, look what it says. You do wondrous things. Now, why did the Spirit say, David, write that.

Write that the God you're praying to, the God that you would draw near to, He does wondrous things. Because we need precisely that. We need God to do some wondrous things.

Brethren, away with your pitiful, puny expectations. Now look, I'm not saying you can't pray about the small things. But you insult this God who is not like any other God when you simply bring small requests.

Brethren, if you've got a God who puts Himself on display as the God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond what you ask or think, and when He puts Himself forth as the God of the impossible, what are you going to do? Are you going to pray for these small little things? These trivial trivinces of life? Yes, pray for the small things. We need to be going to Him all the day long. But brethren, take some big things.

Doesn't John Newton? We don't sing this song much, but large petitions with thee bring. Thou art coming to a King. What kind of King are you coming to? You know what? You really ought to make your requests somewhat equivalent or proportionate to the God you're coming to.

You see, it's not presumptuous. It's rather insulting when you go to such a great King who has basically given us a blank check in the name of Jesus Christ. Pray whatever you want! Look, I know that there are some places you can go in Scripture where there's qualifications.

There's quantifiers. There's conditions. But do you know how many promises of prayer are given with no condition? It's like, Lord, aren't You afraid that we might ask too much when You give promises like that without conditions? I mean, ask and You will receive.

I mean, what if we ask too much? Well, see, if you walk around thinking you can ask too much, then you think very little of this God who does these wondrous things. This God who set down Pharaoh. You recognize Egypt was the most powerful country on the face of the earth at that time.

And God humbled them very nicely. Sent His people out there in the wilderness. Took care of them every single day.

Sent them into the Promised Land. Knocked those walls of Jericho right down. It's been that way with God's people.

Can a little ruddy youth take on Goliath? No. Not normally. Normally, if you send the Rocket football team out against Kansas City Chiefs, what happens? What happens 1,000 times out of 1,000? They win.

They get crushed. It's a joke. Nobody would even take it serious.

You've got this monster of a man, a little ruddy guy with a couple stones and his sling. Who wins that? Nobody wins that aside from God. But see, God, this is the same David that's praying here.

There's none like Him among the gods. Brethren, pray to Him like you believe that there's none like Him among the gods. How about v. 11? Teach me your way.

See, that's what this is all about. Lord, teach us how to approach You. Teach us Your way.

Teach us the way that David's drawing near to You. Teach us these things. That's precisely what I want.

I want to be taught how to draw near to the living God from God's own instruction. That's what this psalm is. Unite my heart to fear Your name.

Unite. Unite. It means there's not two pieces.

You ever come to God with a heart and a heart? You've got this heart, but there's another heart. You come to God and you've got these competing principles inside that are struggling for sovereignty. Too many hearts.

Struggling for superiority. You've got desires that are pulling you into two different directions. And you know what? You've got to love this about the psalms.

He's willing to admit it. And I would say this, that's the best place to start. Confess it.

Have you ever done that? Come before the Lord and you're wanting to pray, and you want the right thing, but something in you wants the wrong thing and you know it. Your conscience knows it. You're being pulled.

It's like, well, if I'm really honest, this is probably the way the Lord wants me to go, but I'm trying to convince myself I should go this way. You ever been there? No? I've been there. Unite my heart to fear Thy name.

We don't want to draw near to God divided. Give us united hearts. United to fear Your name.

Make us men and women of one object. That's the way to approach. And you know, back there in James where we have this draw near to God and He will draw near to you, it says, cleanse your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The best thing to do is confess the duplicities. If there's any God-challenger vying for your affections, just confess it like David does here. And what happens? You go to v. 12.

I give thanks to You, or I will praise You, is what some of the translations say, O Lord my God, with my whole heart. Well, you see this? Unite my heart, and I give thanks to You with my whole heart. When our hearts are one, when they're not divided, we give the Lord God all of it.

That's a united heart. That's all of it. And the idea here is I'll thank You.

I'll praise You. I give thanks to You. Praising God.

Thanking God. Remember, that's what's said in Romans 1 that they didn't honor Him and they didn't give thanks to Him. You see, we need to be recognizing what God has done.

That's a good way to approach one of the highest and purest acts that the Christian can be involved with. And brethren, it's sad when we are not giving God more glory. Because I was thinking about this just reading Revelation yesterday.

You know how often harps show up in Revelation? What do you think they did with the harps? Why do you think the redeemed saints have harps? Harp ever given to anybody to murmur and complain with? And yet the truth is that it's sad that God doesn't have more glory from us. Too much murmuring, complaining, discontent. Verse 13, for great is Your steadfast love or lovingkindness or mercy toward me.

Notice this. You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. Or the King James Version says hell.

Brethren, if there's anything to compel praise and thanksgiving and for you to sing to the Lord with a new song, for you to lift up your voice, for praise to erupt out of you, it's this, that those sins not impart after the things that we've done. Am I not exactly the perfect candidate for hell? Do you ever think? I do. My life was spiraling down.

Do you ever think about where you'd be if God hadn't saved you? Pete, where would you be if God hadn't saved you? Not in a good place. Neither would I. What would we be if God hadn't rescued us? For great is Your steadfast love toward me. V. 14, 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. Now, what's interesting about v. 14 is it's the only place where any men, anybody other than David, is even mentioned. And men just have no prominent place in this psalm.

And there's a reason. He's talking about ruthless men. He's talking about those that don't call upon Him.

It's like David has little to say about men. He just keeps calling, Lord, Lord, Lord. It's like, Lord, please, I can't look to men.

Again, please doesn't even show up here, but men aren't found much in this psalm. And for good reason. Why? They're no help, especially when they're enemies and they don't call upon God.

But you know what? Even among the ranks of professing Christianity. I mean, can somebody pray for me? Yes, somebody can pray for me. Does David recognize that? Yeah, David recognizes that.

There's other psalms where he talks about the saints of God. But I'll tell you this, ultimately, all we do is call upon the same God He's calling upon. And if any help comes from our intercession, it's only because the God He's calling to right here.

Have you ever noticed? I've noticed this, I guess because I'm a pastor, that sometimes we get people that contact the church and it's like, I need Brother Tim to pray for me, or I need Brother Tim to do this. Brethren, that kind of thinking is so wrong. It's like, oh, you know, if I could get John MacArthur to pray for me, if I could get Paul Washer to pray for me, if I could have got Spurgeon to pray for me.

What are they? They're but men. Have you ever watched Logic on Fire? That biographical deal that they did on Martyn Lloyd-Jones? There's one of the guys, I think his name is Hiram. I really hope I get to meet that guy.

I hope he's still alive. He was pretty old. But he was saying, Ruby and I watched this last night, he said, I think it was the last time he was with Lloyd-Jones, and Lloyd-Jones was dying, he had the cancer, he wasn't going to live long.

And he said to this man, who at that time was quite a bit younger, now the guy's really old, but of course, Lloyd-Jones died in 81. But he says, young man, he says, I just want you to remember this, that I'm nothing but a sinner who's been saved. That's the best that men are.

They can intercede for us. That's true. But they're still just going to the God.

It's like David in this psalm. It's like, I don't even need to bring men up. Men aren't important.

Yes, he brings them up right here. But notice this. What characterizes them? They do not set you before them.

You see, this is the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous. Brethren, I'll tell you this. This is a massive test.

You want to test yourself? Are you going to the Lord? And do you go to Him and praise Him? I mean, look, the devil imitates a lot of things. The devil tries to imitate, you know, songs, singing, and saying your prayers, maybe even reading the Bible, carting the Bible around, coming to the church building. But the devil doesn't imitate worship.

Why? Because he hates God. I mean, praise. I mean, when people are experiencing joy and they're coming to the Lord and they're calling upon the Lord, these people that are evil, they don't set Him before them.

That's what characterizes them. If you look at your life, do you come to the Lord all the time? Do you find yourself needy? Do you find your mind going there? Lord, I need You. Lord, help.

Lord, thank You. Thank You. Lord, I mean, do you find when you're all by yourself, nobody else is around? It's just you and the Lord.

Do you find you talk to the Lord like this? You know, it's one thing when we have a prayer meeting and you know other people are listening. You say it the way people learn the verbiage. But what do you like when you're just like this? You and David.

Or you and David. David and the Lord. You and the Lord.

Verse 14 is what we just did. Verse 15, But you, now get that. He talked about men in 14, but you.

You see the contrast? You know, He talks about men, but you, O Lord, are God merciful and gracious. See, you're not like men. You know, the fact is, the best of men can be cruel.

The best men can be forgetful. The best of men can forget you. Because you know, they got their own life and they got their own families and they got their own problems and they got their own struggles.

And they got their own thing. People can forget you. People can be... you can walk in.

James was saying, you know, he's trying to discern if he walks in here and somebody doesn't say hello to him. He's trying to discern the situation. That's because people just forget each other.

They forget each other's feelings. I mean, that's how it is. But you.

I mean, that's what David recognizes. That's what we all recognize. Lord, You're not like others.

You're not forgetful. You're not even like a mother that may forget the child, but You won't forget. Hear God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

See, there he goes back to Exodus 34 again. Merciful. Lord, You're merciful.

Lord, I'm coming back to who You are. Let me in. Let me find You.

Let me draw closer. I turn immediately from all the human stuff, all the men, all the voices, all the noise of the world, all the raging. So often in Scripture, the world is like the foaming waves of the ocean.

It's like He turns away from all the foam and roar of the nations and man, and He wants to draw near to the Lord. Merciful, gracious, slow to anger. Men are fast to anger.

Men are cruel. And men ultimately can't help Me. And that's it.

Verse 16, turn to Me. You see, that's it. I want to draw near to You.

I've been trying to draw near to You for all these verses I've been drawing near to You. What do I want? I want You to turn to Me. That's God drawing near to Me.

I draw near to Him. He draws near to Me. That's exactly what turn to Me means.

It means, Lord, we're drawing near to You in hopes that You will draw near to us. Lord, draw near. Turn to Me.

Be gracious. One turn of His face towards You and what happens? I mean, yeah, look at this. Give Your strength to Your servant.

One look from His face. One look and what happens? Anxieties get put to rest. There's a sense of peace.

God comes. My battles get turned into victories. Anxieties are laid to rest.

This is the reality. Your night gets turned into day. Your struggles and defeats and sin, the power of sin gets broken.

I mean, that's what happens when the power of God comes upon you. What happens? You have the ability to joyfully live through life even if there's difficulties and trials. You can live with hope.

You can live with expectation. You can live in faith. You can live in joy.

You can live in praise. Lord, I need that strength. Unleash it.

The Son of Your made Servant. I mean, who is His mother? It's just, Lord, I know I'm just a servant. But that's what we all are.

He brings us into the family. He makes us sons. We come from pretty poor and pathetic stock.

But turn to Me. I mean, one turn of your face and it turns everything. And when the Lord gives His strength, all is well.

And that's sufficient. Case closed. That's what it means for God to draw near.

And then we've got v. 17. And you want to remember this. And I brought this up weeks back, but you want to remember this.

And this is worth dealing with again. Show Me a sign of your favor. That's how you want to be with God.

Again, bold. Again, there's no please. We like to do that.

Please. You know, He's so bold. He's so direct.

Lord, I want a sign of Your favor that those who hate Me may see and be put to shame because of You. Lord, You've helped me. You've comforted me.

I mean, you know, there's a sister over in Manchester. Her health is going. She had a husband.

The husband left her and died. Left her pregnant and died. She got married again.

She was pregnant. And that husband died. And her mom says, look at your health.

Look at your husband's situation. Where's your God? Oh, brethren, doesn't Moses say, Lord, you know what? If such and such happens, you know what the Egyptians are going to say? You know what the nations are going to say? Lord, I'm calling on You. You are not least among the gods.

In fact, there's no other god besides You. I'm calling upon You, the living God. My hope is in You.

Lord, You have shown me kindness in times past. I see the way that You announce Yourself to Moses. I see the kind of God that You are ready to forgive.

You're long-suffering. You're slow to anger. You are abundant in loving kindness, plenteous in mercy.

Lord, I see the kind of God that You are. I'm calling upon You. The wicked, that's what it says in Scripture, they don't call upon You.

I'm looking for You to come draw near to me. Turn to me. Let Your face shine upon me.

Lord, give me a sign that You are my God. Show me a sign of Your favor. Or as King James says, show to me a token for good.

Why? Lord, make me such a monument of good that my enemies and my friends too will see it and be amazed by it. Lord, let the devil look at me and see what You do in my life. You know, he takes notice.

You remember how it was with Job? He noticed. Well, You show him all this favor. Oh, he takes notice.

I would say, let the devil see the favor You show to me and be daunted by attacking one so assisted and aided by the Lord. I want to be assured of Your mercy. Lord, fix the mark of Your name upon my forehead.

Lord, show everybody. Show me this sign. Do this.

Give me a pledge of Your love to me. Lord, You've helped me and comforted me. And what's he saying? I want a sign for further help and comfort.

And You know it's not wrong to ask for that comfort. Lord, I don't just want the help. I want the help and I want the comfort.

I want to feel it. I want to feel comforted. I want to feel Your arms around me.

Lord, when I lift up my hands to You, I want to find You. Lord, I'm trying to touch You. I raise up my hands.

Lord, I'm looking for a sign of Your favor. I'm looking for You to do something. Give me a pledge of Your love.

Lord, You have helped me. You have comforted me. But Lord, that was yesterday.

Show me a sign of Your favor today. Not just to be helped, Lord, but to be comforted. I want the comfort of it all.

I want the joy of it all. I want the fullness of it all. Lord, there's so much in this world to bring discomfort and discouragement and dread and pain and suffering and sorrow.

Lord, Your people, the truth is if we call out and we keep calling out and we keep calling out, You don't come. Lord, it discourages us. Your people sink down in the mire.

Lord, we're not playing religion here, are we? I mean, we believe in a true God, a living God, the God of Elijah, the God of Moses, the God of David. That's the God we're calling upon. The God who's helped His people in ages past.

Lord, we want You to show us. I mean, God stepped in and what happened? There was a difference when God stepped in. There was a difference between Egypt and Israel.

That's what we want today. Lord, the difference. Now this is God teaching us all the way through here.

17 verses. David making his approach to God. Draw near.

It's David drawing near. 17 verses. If you take some of these, we don't want to get to where we're like the church of England where we have written prayers, but there's definitely a lot to be said about being taught.

And you know those early disciples, they said that to the Lord. Lord, teach us to pray. Well, here's the thing.

Teach us to approach the Lord so that He might approach us. Here is some help. Make yourselves students of the Psalms.

Pick up some of these things. If one or two principles or realities from what we just talked about will grab hold of you, it can change your prayer life. It can really help you.

I'm afraid sometimes we hear this. It's like you get people that pray in the prayer meeting. Lord, bless this.

Lord, bless that. Lord, bless the other thing. I'm afraid if they pray like that here, that's probably how they pray at home.

That's not how David prayed. That's not being the most skillful in the art of prayer. There's depths and there's maturity.

There's things to learn. Lord, teach us to pray. Teach us how to draw nigh.

Open the way. Teach us the way to gain access with You. Father, we want access in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We partake of the Lord's Supper. We think about and we remember the death, the blood. We've been given access, such access that You tell us to boldly approach the throne of grace.

Lord, I see the boldness in David. You put a fire in him to pray, not presumptuously, but very boldly. And I pray, Lord, You'd fill this church full of such bold praying men and women and young people.

I pray that You'd teach us from Your Word how to pray, how to approach, how to draw nigh. Lord, please, turn unto us. We ask in Christ's name, Amen.

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