

Studies in Psalms by [John T Polk II](#)
For [The Fellowship Room](#)

Psalm 86

1/14/13

Vs. 1-7 give God reasons to give help;
Vs. 8-10 give God glory;
Vs. 11-17 give God a willing servant asking for help.

Probably written by David, but there is no historical certainty upon which to base a background setting.

Verses 1-7: God is requested to: "bow down" His ear and "hear" (**verse 1**); "preserve" a "life" (**verse 2**); "be merciful" (**verse 3**); "rejoice the soul" (**verse 4**); because the one making this request is: "poor and needy" (**verse 1**); "holy" (**verse 2**); crying to God "all day long" (**verse 3**); lifting up his soul (**verse 4**). Requesting favor from God is not being made by someone who has lived life with disdain for God and then, in trouble, prays, but rather, someone who stays in constant effort to contact God! A Christian equivalent might be in [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#). The character of God is that He is: "good" (**verse 5**), "ready to forgive," "abundant in mercy" to "all those who call upon" Him.

The New Testament emphasizes this: "in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" ([Acts 10:35](#)). God will hear "supplications" (not demands!) from the obedient (**verse 6**). The Psalmist declares: "In the day of my trouble I will call upon You" (**verse 7**), but this is by no means the first time God is approached by this person (**verses 3, 4, 11, 12**). To "call upon" God cannot mean lifting the voice only without also lifting the life. Jesus taught: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" ([Matthew 7:21](#)).

Verses 8-10: Since nowhere in the Bible is the term "gods" used of angels, then "gods" (**verse 8**) must refer to all humanly - invented deities, which by comparison have no comparison with God. "Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*" ([1 Corinthians 8:4-6](#)). God's "works" are unmatched, such as making nations (**verse 9**; [Acts 17:26](#); [Colossians 1:15-20](#); [Philippians 2:9-10](#)), or the "wondrous things" He has done (**verse 10**; [Genesis 8:22](#); [Acts 14:14-18](#)).



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Verses 11-17: God responds, of course, to a heart willing to be taught to walk in His Way (**verse 11**), uniting the heart to “fear” God’s Name ([Ecclesiastes 8:12](#); [Ecclesiastes 12:13](#)). “Praise” and “glory” should go to God (**verse 12**) because of His “mercy” in delivering the Psalmist’s “soul from the depths of Sheol” (realm of departed spirits whose dead bodies are in the grave). The Psalmist praises God for sparing him from death (**verse 13**).

The problem with “proud” and “violent” enemies who jeopardize his life, has arisen (**verse 14**). Interesting to see how often pride and violence accompany the godless! To state God’s qualities (as in **verse 5**) is to praise Him (**verse 15**; [Exodus 34:5-8](#)). The final request is that God grant “mercy,” “strength,” and salvation to a faithful follower (**verse 16**). A “son of Your maidservant” is a way of indicating that he had been raised by a godly mother, like Timothy in the New Testament ([2 Timothy 1:5](#); [3:14-15](#)). For God to grant the prayer of David would be “a sign” to his enemies they are in the wrong and should be ashamed of their hatred of one who does good (**verse 17**).

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