**In Desperate Need: Worship Through Petition**

**Psalm 86 (ESV)**

September 15, 2019

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It’s a sweet thing as a church thinking about the topic of worship. It’s hard to overestimate the value of worship. In fact, it’s not just worship in song; it’s worship in life. It’s the total response of who we are to what is revealed to us about who God is. It’s responding to God. We’ve been thinking about this topic of worship in the book of Psalms. We’ve thought through various seasons of life in which worship manifests. Sometimes it comes out as thanksgiving and sometimes it comes out as lament. Sometimes it comes out with great joy and other times, it comes out through petition in times of need. And that’s where we’re at this morning. It’s worship through petition, through asking God for help. We’re in Psalm 86. The prayer of David is given here to help us know what it looks like to worship the Lord and pray in times of need.

*A Psalm of David*

***1*** *Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.* ***2*** *Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.* ***3*** *Be gracious to me, O LORD, for to you do I cry all the day.* ***4*** *Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.* ***5*** *For you, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.* ***6*** *Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.* ***7*** *In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.*

***8*** *There is none like you among the gods, O LORD, nor are there any works like yours.* ***9*** *All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O LORD, and shall glorify your name.* ***10*** *For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.* ***11*** *Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.* ***12*** *I give thanks to you, O LORD my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.* ***13*** *For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.*

***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.* ***15*** *But you, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.* ***16*** *Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.* ***17*** *Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.*

It was an evening talk show segment. The host would leave the studio to walk the streets and test Bible literacy. The results were highly unflattering. One person couldn’t name a single apostle, but had no problem listing off the Beatles. The host asked someone, “Who was swallowed by a great fish?” The response was “Pinocchio.” When he told people to name one of the Ten Commandments, here was the most popular answer. “God helps those who help themselves.” It’s a statement that proved to be quite popular in America in polls through the 90’s and 2000’s. One researcher found that 75% of Americans agreed with that statement along with over 60% of what he called “born again Christians.” Elsewhere, it was claimed that over 75% of American teenagers believed it was the central message of the Bible. “God helps those who help themselves.”

Now, there is a basic principle that God rewards hard work, but this statement has clearly come to convey far more than simple work ethic. Many people use this phrase to mean that when God decides whom He is going to help, He goes to those who are hard at work saving themselves. According to this statement, the best source of help comes from within. When taken like that, this message is certainly not one of the Ten Commandments, and it’s not even in the Bible. It certainly proves to be the farthest thing from the central message. Think about the popularity of this statement. But God’s Word teaches something entirely different.

The Good News that God offers is not about human diligence. The Good News God offers is about divine grace. The Bible is a unified story that is far less about what we need to do and far more about what God has already done. That is why the news is good. It’s a message that is found throughout all of Scripture, and here especially in Psalm 86. The essence of it is this: God is not one who helps those who help themselves. He is a God who helps those who cannot help themselves. That is a message that brings real hope. God is a God who helps those who can’t help themselves.

In this life, there most certainly are times in which we face deep need, desperate need. There are moments that come in all sorts of forms; whether we’re overlooked by our own family. Or maybe we’re burdened with just menial work. Maybe we suffer seasons of loneliness. We’re not invited to important gatherings. Or maybe some have experienced the pain of war. Some have suffered the loss of spouses. Some are racked with guilt. Some suffer domestic crisis, even blended family rivalries, even their own children fighting and even abusing one another. Some have lost newborns. Some have been betrayed by their own family. Others are victims of great jealousy. Others just carry a heavy burden of leadership, the weight of a nation on their shoulders. Some face the nightmare of having made bad decisions that lead to tragedies, sometimes even to thousands of lives.

It’s hard to imagine all these times of desperate need. And yet, what’s harder to fathom is one man experienced all of those in his life; a man named David. Here is a man who understands desperate need. And through him, God recorded a prayer here. This is the only prayer of David found in Book Three of the Psalms. And it’s a prayer for those in times of desperate need. It’s a prayer that teaches us how to get help. I don’t know exactly what season of need that you are in, but I know who does. And this is a prayer that He has given to us. It’s what we call petition; asking God for help. Worship is great when times are good. But how do we still worship in times of need? The answer lies not in trying to help ourselves. It is found in sensing our need and petitioning help from God. We’re going to look at how to worship God through petition and the ways that we talk to Him in time of need.

This prayer unfolds in four movements, in a sense. It’s a common poetic structure that is somewhat like the statement, if you’ve heard, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” It’s sort of like an x, where it moves its way to the center of the psalm, and x marks the spot in verse 11. That’s sort of the key message. And then it repeats itself on the way back out. And so, as we look at the psalm, we’re going to see the parallels; how the start relates to the end, how subsequent sections correspond and the inner segments match, but the middle stands alone. And that’s where we’ll finish our time this morning. But we begin with the bookends, the beginning and the end, and we’ll

**1. Ask God for help. (1-4, 16-17)**

When we say, “ask,” we’re just talking about prayer; talking to God. And it’s one of the simplest steps that far too often goes untaken in times of need. We just don’t express our need. And the first way to interact with the Lord in times of need is to ask Him for help. You see in verses 1 through 4 where David expresses his need. In verse 1 he says

***1*** *Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.*

And he follows through verse 4 with just these appeals for God’s help. And you see that echoed back again in verses 16 and 17, especially in verse 16. He says

***16*** *Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.*

You see repeated appeals for God’s help.

I think my brother was maybe three at the time, or two. We were watching tv in one room and he was in the other. As we’re watching, we started to hear these echoes coming from the room. We listened closely and my mom could hear him. We heard him saying, “Somebody help the boy. Somebody help the boy.” We’re like “What is going on?” “Somebody help the boy.” Mom goes around and we find that he had leaned over the toy chest to try to get a toy and somehow had found himself teetering on the edge. He couldn’t go forward or backward, and was just saying, “Somebody help the boy.” (Laughter!) It was a time of need for the little guy. He couldn’t really express it in a real dynamic way. For whatever reason, he just was able to say, “Somebody help the boy.” And in times of need, sometimes we don’t have a lot of articulate words. We’re just crying out, “Somebody, help me!” But it’s good to take a moment and look at what David says and see how he cries to God for help. And we can see that we can learn from David what to pray for and how to ask.

Let’s look at first, what to ask for. This is the kinds of petitions that we can voice. There are at least 15 petitions in the psalm, total, but I think here, there are some repeated, so we’ll just look at six that we can voice. First, you can ask God for attention. You see him ask in verse 1.

***1*** *Incline your ear, O LORD,*

And this is repeated in verse 16.

***16*** *Turn to me*

He’s asking God to listen. It’s interesting because we know God is everywhere. We know that He hears everything. And yet, David is asking Him to incline His ear. We know God doesn’t have a physical ear that needs to be turned to better understand. So what is David asking for? He’s asking God for a particular kind of listening. God hears everything, but sometimes He listens with favor, with a particular favor for His own people. And that’s why David speaks to God with His name.

***1****…O LORD,*

There is a personal relationship that he has with God, and he is appealing to God to listen to him with favor. It’s to listen to him particularly or to give regard. We recognize that this is an okay prayer to ask, to appeal to God. We know that there are things that we can do that can hinder the favor with which God listens, in the sense that if we’re not in a right relationship with Him or with people, that kind of ear is not turned toward us in the same way. Let me give you an example. In 1 Peter, Peter is talking to husbands and he says

**1 Peter 3:7** Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

There’s a sense in which when we abandon what God has told us and we don’t listen to Him, our voices are hindered from reaching the listening, favoring ear of God. He hears us, but there’s a sense in which God is asking something of us. David is acknowledging that “I need your favor. I’m in such need!” He is appealing to God for attention and he is appealing to God to listen with favor for a particular kind of attention. This is what he is desiring and seeking. It’s action. He asks God to not just listen, but to answer in verse 1.

***1****…and answer me,*

More specifically, in verse 17 he says

***17*** *Show me a sign of your favor,*

It’s that we’re in right relationship. “I want to see a sign of your favor.” He’s asking God to act. He wants to see some evidence that they are still together, that this relationship that he has with this God who makes promises, that it still exists. He’s asking God to act. He also asks for protection. He says

***2*** *Preserve my life,*

“Don’t let me die. Keep me alive.” He prays for protection, for God to spare him. And that’s going to manifest through, fourth, salvation. He says

***2****… save your servant,*

***16****… and save the son of your maidservant.*

He’s acknowledging that God is the master. “I’m your servant. I belong to you. And even the son of a maidservant. I wasn’t born outside. I’m inside this household and I belong to you forever.” He appeals to that relationship. “God save me.” And fifth, he asks for compassion. He says

***3*** *Be gracious to me, O LORD,*

And again in verse 16

***16****… and be gracious to me;*

He asks for grace; God’s undeserved kindness. It’s perhaps the most important word in this psalm. The Hebrew word for that word “grace” is *hanan*. It’s where we get the name Hannah. It’s actually why probably a lot of families name their daughter’s Hannah Grace. Grace is what David seeks. It’s the help he needs; God’s compassion. And six, we’ll say this. He asks for revitalization. This just means he needs fresh life. He needs to be revived. He needs to be encouraged. He says in verse 4

***4*** *Gladden the soul of your servant,*

It’s his innermost being, his soul. “God, gladden my soul.” And in verse 16 he says

***16****…* *give your strength to your servant,*

“Gladden me. Strengthen me. I need you not just to save me, but revive me. Not just in body, but in spirit. God, I want to have joy again, to be glad again. Encourage me.” This is what we can ask for when we ask God to help. The petitions we can voice. But we can learn from David too, how to ask. We see the postures we can embrace. In the same verses, there are these requests that David makes, but there are also reasons that are interwoven throughout. And you can see how he is asking. First, he asks from a position and embraces the posture of neediness. In verse 1 he says, “God, listen to me

***1****…for I am poor and needy.*

He tells God honestly how he feels. It’s a phrase that is used to explain “I am weak. I am not enough on my own. I need help.” It’s a posture to embrace. Second, faithfulness. He not only tells God honestly how he feels, but he tells God sincerely who he is.

***2****…for I am godly;*

He’s not claiming to be sinless. He’s claiming to be loyally devoted to God. “There’s a line in the sand, and I choose to be on your side! I am yours, given to you. I long to be faithful to you.” Third, he expresses that even stronger with allegiance, belonging to God. He now tells God earnestly in whom he trusts.

***2****… save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.*

He breaks the rhythm here and just blurts out, “You’re my God. I’m with you.” It’s full allegiance and a cry of devotion. And fourth, persistence. You can tell God relentlessly whom you await. You see there in verse 3 that he says

***3****…* *for to you do I cry all the day.*

It’s consistent, incessant crying. Do you know who is really good about embracing that posture of persistence? 2 year olds. Most mornings, our two year old kind of gets up a little bit before everybody else. And then it starts. “Mom…mom…mom…mom… mommy...mommy awake? Mommy sleeping? Mommy coming? Dad…dad…daddy awake? Daddy sleeping? Daddy coming? Daddy.” And then the combo. “Mom, dad…mom, dad…daddy, mommy.” And if you’re trying to get some extra sleep on a Saturday morning, I can tell you a very ineffective strategy will be to test her persistence. (Laughter!) There’s no doubt that she could cry out all the day. She knows how to tell us relentlessly whom she awaits. When you think about your heavenly Father, there is a posture of persistence that we can embrace. And fifth, reliance. We can tell God resolutely in whom we hope. He says

***4****… for to you, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.*

He’s embracing this posture of complete reliance, trusting His master. He acknowledges that he cannot heal his own soul. When we have something special to us, it’s hard to trust it to someone else, whether it’s a child with a toy that is broken or we maybe have a phone or a computer or a car. We try to fix it ourselves, but eventually there’s a time when we have to rely on someone else, and we give it up and we say, “I can’t fix it.” And there’s a recognition that David says, “When it comes to my own soul, as precious as it is, I can’t fix it. I lift it up to you.” It’s complete reliance. And last, we can do so with hopefulness. We can tell God respectfully what is at stake and what we hope for. In verse 17, you see a little more detail of what David is asking from God. It’s action from God, for a sign. And the petition here is one that is hopeful. He says

***17*** *Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.*

He is hopeful that God will act and that God will show a sign of favor; that He is a God who keeps His promises and that David belongs to Him. He wants this sign for who to see? He wants to see God’s favor, but he also wants who to see? His enemies. He wants them to see and recognize who his God is and to give glory to his God. David is hopeful that God will receive the glory. This is about Him and God’s glory is at stake. And he embraces that posture of hopefulness.

We see here through David these two realizations of what David prays for and how he prays. This asking helps us recognize that God likes it when His people ask Him for help. It’s not a drudgery to Him; it’s a delight. He loves to help those who cannot help themselves. It’s who He is. He is a God who hears. All through Scripture we see He hears; Hagar out in the wilderness with Ishmael. He hears requests from Abraham, from His people in Egypt, or Moses or Joshua, or through the Judges or from His prophets or those in exile. He hears the people even as they pray with Zechariah at the temple. He is a God who not only hears, but He answers and He acts and He sends His Son to meet His people in their most desperate need. This God came as Jesus. And when Jesus taught us to pray, He taught us to pray to a loving heavenly Father who already knows what we need before we ask. To voice our petitions, but to do so believing that He will answer. And the very reason that we can believe that will happen with confidence and hope is because Jesus proved and guaranteed God’s willingness to love and care for His people in relationship through His death on the cross, and He rose again victorious. In Jesus, we can ask God for help and we can be comforted.

**2. Share What You Face (5-7, 14-15)**

Share what the difficulties are; what is hard, what is happening, what is causing your need. And you see David mention what he faces on those two ends again. He talks about the help he requires in verse 7. He faces first, a day of trouble.

***7*** *In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.*

And then in verse 14 he says

***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.*

He is facing both times of trouble and also times of attack. He is experiencing these kinds of problems and he’s sharing them with God. But in both sections where David voices and shares those problems he faces, he also states the promises that he trusts. And they’re both coupled in verses 5 and 15 with very similar statements.

***5*** *For you, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.*

***15*** *But you, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*

He is sharing what he faces with God. He’s doing that because he trusts the promises of who God is. And that motivates him to share.

One of the more popular novels in the last decade or so was J. R. Tolkien’s *The Return* *of the King*. And in this novel, there is a steward who is in charge of a city and he’s trying to defend it. But he sends his son out to go help defend an outer city and it is overrun with enemies. The son returns and shares, “Hey look! This is what I face. This is what is going on.” And Denethor doesn’t want to hear it. He is displeased and has no compassion. He just charges him to go and keep fighting the war, and sends him to certain death. And when we think of God like that kind of a ruler, like a disapproving pitiless father who doesn’t care about what we face and just sends us back into life, then of course we’re hesitant to share what we face. We don’t want to voice what we’re going through. But David knows he can share what he faces because he knows the promises that he can trust in who God is. And look at what he shares about these promises of God. This is why he can share. You see first, of who God is. He says

***5*** *For you, O LORD, are good*

What David has in mind here in verses 5 and 15 is one of the highest points in the Bible that came before him. When Moses was on the mountain and when God revealed himself to Moses and shared in Exodus 34, he says

**Exodus 34:6** The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness

That’s a core promise of who God is that David is reaching back to and holding on to.   
And so he says, “I can trust you because you are good.” We can trust in God’s goodness and that He does what is right, and even that He is kind. But not only His goodness, we say, “God’s good. That’s fine, but I don’t really deserve His goodness. What if I sin?” Well we can trust in God’s forgiveness. He says in verse 5 that God is

***5****…forgiving,*

***15*** *But you, O LORD, are a God merciful*

He doesn’t give us what we deserve. And he is

***15****…and gracious,*

He is kind even to sinners. God is a God who is forgiving. But what if He decides He’s done enough? Why would He keep loving a sinner like me? We can trust in God’s steadfastness. He is

***5****…* *abounding in steadfast love*

He doesn’t run out. He has more than enough. He’s overflowing in steadfast love. That’s His loyal covenant-promised love. It’s His relationship love. He has tons of it, and it’s steadfast. You might say, “Maybe that’s for some people, but certainly not for me. I don’t even want to love me. There’s no way God loves me.” Look at His willingness in verse 5. Who does God extend His goodness, forgiveness, and steadfastness to?

***5****… to all who call upon you.*

To anyone who would cry out to God, He is willing to extend this kind of love. You say, “Well what if I’ve messed up too many times? I’ve made too many mistakes. I’ve spent it all.” Look at His patience. He is

***15****… slow to anger*

The word picture there is that God doesn’t have a short fuse. The word actually is looking at people who have a short fuse or short temper, that they’re short-nostriled, as it were. Like a bull, they start to get angry. But God is long-nostriled, long-fused, slow to anger. This is God’s patience. And you say, “Well what if He changes His mind? What if He just decides to give up because I’m not worth it?” Well, you can trust God’s faithfulness.

***15****… abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*

It’s the same word translated later as truth. He is consistent and stable. He doesn’t waiver. This is the kind of God that He is. And when God asks us to share what we face, He is not afraid for us to dump all of our problems on the scale as if it’s going to overwhelm Him. We can dump all of those problems on the scale and He loves it. Are you sure there isn’t anything more you’re facing? “Well, also this, God.” Anything more? “Also this, God. This may be too much for you.” And then to just put His promise and who He is on the other side of the scale. He loves to show that He is far more powerful than our problems.

God loves it when we share what we face because He loves to help those who cannot help themselves, and He is eager to hear. This is the God who is so loving and caring that He came and extended that grace personally in relationship and proved who He was in kindness, through the person of Jesus Christ. And through Him, God has lavished upon us that glorious grace in richness. It’s He who promised and said

**John 6:37** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

He’s willing to extend that grace. Because of Jesus, we can share what we face. We can ask Him for help. We can share what we face. And third, we

**3. Praise Who God Is (8-10, 12-13)**

We honor and respect and admire and worship God. We don’t take our eyes off of God’s greatness when the need is high. That’s when we draw near and engage deeper. You can see that in verses 8-10 where he starts to describe who God is. And it’s paralleled in verses 12 and13, where he gives thanks to God for who He is. And this is why God is so worthy of his focus.

When you think about the kinds of people who receive praise in our world, there are individuals, musicians, athletes, politicians. There are performers or entrepreneurs. They receive great praise. But it’s interesting to watch over time, how it fades. The same boy band that receives the praise of young girls in Middle School suddenly don’t seem so great in college, and the praise starts to fade. And as you watch people make mistakes and you see people start to fail, the praise starts to dissipate. And we realize that people don’t merit the hype that we heap on them. But with God, you never have to praise Him and then fear you’ll regret it. He merits every cry of praise that He receives. He will always be worthy of that honor, always worthy of that praise. And you can see the divine person that we honor, who it is that we praise. Here are just a few reminders of who God is, the realities of God’s person that stand out. First, this God is real. He is a God who is distinct from all the other fake gods.

***8*** *There is none like you among the gods, O LORD, nor are there any works like yours.*

You are real! He is distinct. He is also powerful. It would be one thing if God was real, but insignificant, but He’s not. He’s real. Yahweh is powerful. He says

***9*** *All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O LORD, and shall glorify your name.*

They’ll recognize that you alone are God and that you alone have power. He is a dominant God. And He merits our praise not only because He’s real and powerful, but also He is wonderful. You see that God is a God who is dynamic. He does the impossible. He works miracles.

***10*** *For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.*

He stands out! And He is valuable. He is a God who is deserving.

***12*** *I give thanks to you, O LORD my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.*

“I’m consumed with who you are.” He appreciates who God is. And here’s what is special. In verse 13 you see that Yahweh is a God who is personal. David says

***13*** *For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.*

All this praise matters because it’s personal. David has experienced this God and the love and deliverance that define who God is. They describe what David has, so David gives God praise. He realizes that we praise who God is because He’s really good at helping those in need. And that’s why He loves to help those who cannot help themselves. It shows how amazing He is. And He proved that through coming.

We see Jesus as the image of the invisible God who is the answer of all God’s prophecies, who wielded power over sickness, over weather, over demons. He performed wonderful miracles. He is a God who was so real. He was in the flesh that we could see. And He proved himself valuable so much that a woman would pour her most precious alabaster jar of perfume on His feet just for His burial, and a God who proved Himself to be personal, here revealing God as the God-man who died and rose to life and who offers that kind of relationship to us even now. This is a God we can praise.

**4. Seek What God Wants (11)**

When we say “seek,” we’re talking about the end that we pursue, the aim that we’re after. And here’s what David is seeking. We see it at the very heart of the psalm in verse 11. Here’s what God’s grace is building toward. It’s what David asks for.

***11*** *Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.*

What David wants most is to want what God wants. He wants to want what God wants and he asks for help to do that. He wants to understand and to know first, God’s way. This is the emphasis that he pursues. He wants to know God’s way, to discover God’s way. Teach it to me, Lord. Help me to accurately know your way.” And the reason why is because he wants to walk in God’s truth. He wants to discover God’s way so he can commit to God’s truth, so that he can be faithful to what God desires. He wants right understanding so that he can experience right living.

***11*** *Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth;*

And then it moves toward what his cry is. It’s that he would be consumed with God’s name.

*unite my heart to fear your name.*

“All of the division that’s in my heart and the different kinds of desires, purge me of those. Purify me so that my heart has a single passion, united to fear your name. You are Yahweh; the God that we’ve just described.” He wants to fear. That means to possess a deep, abiding reverence and awe for God. It’s to live in the presence of God without any kind of double-mindedness. It’s to just be solely devoted to God. That’s what David wants. It’s to be of one heart and one mind with God. And if you want some fun homework, you can go to John 17 and look at the heart and mind of God in the prayer of Jesus, and compare it to verse 11. Look at what’s happening to David and consider what God desires to happen in us. God is doing something that is much more special than changing circumstances around us. God reveals Himself as not a God who changes just problems. He changes people. He changes our hearts. And David is asking to be transformed from the inside out, knowing that he’s not just asking God for some sort of short-term happiness. He’s asking for long-term ultimate happiness. And he knows that doesn’t come all the time with ease, but it comes with holiness, with being completely given to God. And that in and of itself is a gift of grace. He can’t do that himself, and so he says, “God, I can’t help myself. Please help me.”

You think of our great High Priest, Jesus. This is the God who reigns on high, the God who has been given the name that is above every other name. This is the God that we fear. And yet, that God who is King and rules, He listens not as one who doesn’t understand.

**Hebrews 4:15-16** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Because of Jesus, we can seek what God wants. We can have His heart. We can discover His way. We can be committed to His truth. We can be consumed with His name. It is the truth that we’re sanctified in and the truth that sets us free; free to be who we were designed to be, people who love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. David gets what is going on here. And in the midst of all the chaos of this storm, as he works his way toward the center of the prayer, he understands what God is doing. It is what he holds onto and that moves its way out back to what God is doing today.

There was an accident with a submarine. Apparently a leak ignited a torpedo explosion and the ship sank to the bottom of the sea. There was a hole in the hull that allowed sea water to come in and flood. And it quickly took almost 100 lives. But about two dozen of the crew survived. They fled to the ninth compartment. Those crew members survived for at least several hours, it said. This was a sad tragedy, this accident. But one thing makes it appear to be even worse. According to several sources, even though other countries volunteered to help with the rescue effort, the government of that crew refused outside help for days. And it was a week after the accident that they were finally able to reach the compartment and discover that it was too late. Now to be sure, there were lots of complications and lots of factors in all that. But in the end, it was a sad delay. It was a sad delay that despite their great need, they tried to take care of it themselves.

Far too often, we don’t realize our need, but even when we do, sometimes we refuse to ask God for help. We think that God helps those who help themselves and we start to work harder. But this is the message Jesus had to teach the Pharisees in Mark chapter 2. They were saying, “Jesus, you’re kind of being with those people who aren’t helping themselves, people who are sinners.” They said, “Why are you eating with sinners and tax collectors?”

**Mark 2:17** And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

In this sense, the best way to get help is to be like a child. That’s the only way we can enter the kingdom of God. Do you need help? The answer you’re looking for is not in yourself. Those whom God heals are not those who help themselves, but those who cannot. It is those who know their need. Jesus said

**Matthew 16:25** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

There’s a word for that idea. It’s called grace. God’s help is offered to you this very day in Jesus. His grace is ready, but are we?