

Renewing the Heart by Pouring it Out to God

I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 86. The title of the message this morning is one more message in that series "I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok." You know, next week we'll move on. This week is not next week. If you weren't here last week, sorry about that. Ask somebody after church what I'm talking about.

The title of the message is "I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok," and it's the eighth message in that series with the particular title of this morning's message is "Renewing the Heart by Pouring it Out to God." Renewing the heart by pouring it out to God. Ted mentioned, he and Jennifer and Patti and I rode together, a number of other folks with Laura Carpenter, rode up with us, Maria, some of the young guys, Gary and Matt and Ben and Alan, were at the conference as well, 10 people, I think, in total from our church. The Sing! conference is a conference hosted by Keith Getty and Kristyn, his wife, and it was a wonderful time of worship, celebration. We heard John MacArthur preach, John Piper, a number of other gentlemen as well, Alistair Begg, and the focus was on worship and how to worship the Lord and particularly this year they were emphasizing the Psalms. All the messages we heard preached were on the Psalms. My only criticism was they didn't have enough time for the preaching. They asked John MacArthur to preach a message in 40 minutes. I've never heard John preach in 40 minutes until that day. He always preaches at least an hour. But anyway, and I felt like, "Hey, let him keep going." Anyway. Spoken like a preacher at a music conference, huh?

But I was really blessed by just the conference as a whole and it gave us a lot of opportunity to think and we had a great time fellowshiping and with Ted and Jen and talking and even on the way home, just thinking these things through, what we had learned, how we had been challenged, but the focus on the Psalms really got me thinking as well about just the ways of God and how he deals with the heart, and the last couple of messages, we've been talking about renewing the heart, two messages ago was renewing the heart by renewing the mind, and in that message we talked about how God basically, his main strategy for changing us into the image of Christ, sanctifying us, is he addresses our minds through his written word. We said that's part of the heart, remember, the heart is made up of three components biblically. The mind is one third of the heart biblically speaking. We think in our hearts according to Scripture and the heart means basically the inner man. So thinking, so we talked about thinking is so important and having our thinking right and God addresses our thoughts, but in doing that he also through the

thoughts gets to our affections, our emotions and our will, but he comes through the mind. That's just his normal strategy for changing the heart and I mentioned in that message or it was basically teaching, that emotions follow your thoughts. This is a very important practical matter, if you want to change how you feel, you have to change how you think and this is right, this is biblical and this is clear, but it's not the whole story.

So then last week we talked about renewing the heart by renovating our behavior. We looked at how the putting off and putting on and these other things, other passages that speak to that, that God tells us to change your behavior before you feel like it. He doesn't tell you to wait on feeling like doing what is right before you do it. Your feelings follow and so he said not only do feelings follow thoughts, but feelings follow actions, that you can act yourself into a new way of feeling, in a sense, and that is true as well, and I think the Bible is saying this is how you address the heart. You don't just change your thinking, you start changing your behavior, but just in God's providence, the timing of it and looking at the Psalms and being immersed in that this week, I think there's another aspect of this that we need to think about, that the way that we renew the heart is that we have to learn how to pour it out to God; the one thing we also have to do with our emotions is know how to express them and to whom to express them. It's an important balance because you can become very anti-emotional and it's especially easy in our society today because we see, I mean, emotions are not supposed to rule you. Your affections aren't supposed to rule you, your thinking is but your emotions are a part of what God has made. He's made our hearts to be three things: your thinking, your feeling, and your choosing. Your thinking, your feeling and your choosing. Your thinking is your mind. Your feeling is your emotions, your affections. And your choosing is your will. And God has made us like himself. We talked about this in one of the early messages in the series, our hearts are a reflection of God's heart. We are created to image God, to be like him, and he thinks, he feels, he chooses. He has made us to think, feel and choose, and feelings are not to be the enemy that we can sometimes feel that way. When our feelings are controlling us, then we can treat them like the enemy and we can become unemotional in a way that does not honor God.

I remember seeing something of this and I went to seminary, I'm very thankful for my seminary training, most of it was two years, it was at Reformed Theological Seminary which is a Presbyterian school. In the late eighties it was the only place that I could find that I really felt like was committed to the Scriptures and was aligned enough with where I was coming from so I went there even though I was a Baptist. Anyway, so, and that seminary blessed me in so many wonderful ways but one of the things I did notice, a weakness of Presbyterians beside the fact that they've got baptism all wrong, and it's a continuum of Presbyterians just like there are Baptist and the Reformed folks. We're all on a journey, right, so we're in different places and different issues, but one thing that tends to be true of Presbyterians is that they can be overly unemotional. This is why the term "frozen chosen" with Presbyterians, and I remember hearing some sermons on a couple of occasions and hearing such incredible truth coming out from a person whose emotions in preaching it, it was like he didn't know what he was saying. How can you say that and not be moved by it? That can happen to all of us. I mean, Richard Baxter, I remember reading a very convicting quote by Baxter, one time he had finished preaching

and he after the prayer was broken by the Lord and he was asking himself, "How could you preach that message without tears? Do you believe what you preached?"

So we all struggle to get our hearts aligned but that God has made us so that all of these faculties are to be like him. We are to be like him in our thinking, like him in our feeling, like him in our choosing. This is what it means to be a new creation in Christ. To be like Jesus is to be the fulfillment of what humanity was made which was to be the image of God, to be in the image and likeness of God, and so that means that our hearts, our emotions are not something to be suppressed and I mentioned that the culture, when the culture is so crazy and the culture of evangelicalism is so crazy in the sense that everybody is following their feelings all the time, all the time, all the time, all that matters is what you feel, there is no thinking. I mean, to me as you look at society, that's one thing that becomes more and more clear. People are not thinking. How can they be so blind in so many areas? Just watch the news for a little while and you say, "Well, how can they think like this?" Well, they are living by their emotions.

Well, we don't want to be controlled by our emotions but there's a danger of overreacting and the pendulum swinging too far and us becoming unemotional, emotionally detached, and the biblical balance, I love this, the Scripture, the more that we understand the Scriptures and the more we rightly understand it and renew our minds and it renews our hearts, it renews our affections, and we become more authentically human and that this book is the book that understands you. It understands the way you were wired to live. It explains you and the more that we can immerse ourselves in it, the more free we are to be what we were created to be. This is the beauty of being a Christian, a true biblical Christian. This is where you find liberty. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Well, part of that is having a heart for God. It's the way we use the heart. I'm using it in different ways, right? The heart is the inner man. It's made up of thinking, choosing and feeling, but then we also have this natural I say the heart when I mean the feelings, just more of our culture, but our feelings, our affections need to be like God and we need to express them and our emotions are not something to be despised and hated, they are to be expressed. I mean, God is a God who has emotions.

I'll share this, I'll just remind you of a few things I shared a few weeks back. Genesis 6:5, the Lord was grieved that he had made man. He was grieved in his heart. He was sad. Exodus 32:10 and 12, he's angry. He's not just angry, he is burning with anger, ready to destroy the nation of Israel after the sin of the golden calf. J. C. in his prayer mentioned the Lord's joy, "He will rejoice over us." It's not just that he saves us, brings us to heaven and sits there stoically unmoved. He will rejoice over you. He will sing over you. Our God is a God who feels. His feelings are perfect, though. They are always exactly in accord with reality and that's the way our feelings should be, the problem is our feelings are not. Our feelings are all messed up. They seem to be the easiest thing to mess up, aren't they? It's the most delicate and it's the most easy to get just whacked out.

Well, God wants to calibrate and recalibrate our affections and our emotions and he does that, as we said, through the thinking, two weeks ago: renew your thinking, renew your mind, it changes your heart. Renew your actions, renovate your actions, act differently

and you will start feeling differently but it's not just changing your thinking and changing your actions, it's also learning to go to God and express your heart with transparency and that's the point of the Psalms.

I want to read a Psalm for us that is really just a point of departure. I'm not going to exposit this Psalm. We're going to talk about the Psalms in general and what God is teaching us through that in general principles, okay? But I want to read a Psalm for you, Psalm 86, and a key phrase in it is in verse 11, I'm going to start in verse 1 but it says, "Unite my heart to fear Your name." One of the things that we want to see happen in our lives as we grow is that God would unite our hearts; that our thinking, our feeling and our choosing would all work in unison out of a fear of the Lord, out of an honor, a desire to honor our God, but how that happens, what we see in the psalter is men coming to God in real life circumstances expressing their hearts openly, transparently to God, pouring out their hearts to God. So when you're feeling something, you don't just start changing your thinking and changing your acting, you also spend some time going to God, pouring out your heart to God. Do you see?

Okay, now let's read Psalm 86.

1 Incline Your ear, O LORD, and answer me; For I am afflicted and needy. 2 Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man; O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You. 3 Be gracious to me, O Lord, For to You I cry all day long. 4 Make glad the soul of Your servant, For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. 5 For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You. 6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; And give heed to the voice of my supplications! 7 In the day of my trouble I shall call upon You, For You will answer me. 8 There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord, Nor are there any works like Yours. 9 All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name. 10 For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God. 11 Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name. 12 I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever. 13 For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. 14 O God, arrogant men have risen up against me, And a band of violent men have sought my life, And they have not set You before them. 15 But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth. 16 Turn to me, and be gracious to me; Oh grant Your strength to Your servant, And save the son of Your handmaid. 17 Show me a sign for good, That those who hate me may see it and be ashamed, Because You, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Let's pray.

Our Father, how grateful we are to be able to call upon you who alone are God, to you who do wondrous deeds, to you who have stooped to speak to dust of the earth like us, to you who have shown your lovingkindness and given your salvation, and we ask, Father, that you might bless us now with the ministry of the Holy Spirit to each person here, to grant clarity and conviction and that you might cause our hearts to respond to you in joyful worship and adoration, and we pray this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

I want us to consider the message this morning under four points, and the first point is the purpose of the Psalms. It's instructive just to stop and think why did God give us the psalter, why did he give us 150 different distinct Psalms? What is the purpose of the Psalms? I mean, true it was essentially the Old Testament hymnbook, it was the hymnbook of the Jews before Christ, and it has continued to be the hymnbook of the church throughout the centuries. It's a collection of songs. It's a collection of prayers. We see in that, that is a prayer to the Lord. Now not all psalms are prayers. In fact, you see this movement, some are directed to God directly. You'll see and it's important as you are reading the Psalms to interpret them correctly, look and see how the psalmist is just speaking and how is he addressing God. Is God in the second person, "You, O Lord"? That's a prayer. Is he in the third person, "The Lord is great"? A lot of times you see movement back and forth and sometimes the psalmist is even talking to himself, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." He's talking directly to himself. It's like first-person reflexive. "Soul, bless the Lord. Why are you downcast, O my soul?" Psalm 42. But it's important to look and to watch how this changes, and a lot of times you'll see it goes, it moves through a Psalm. He starts off talking about complaining to the Lord or praising the Lord. A lot of times these Psalms are out of Psalms of experience and the pain, and so out of that pain they cry out to God. In fact, John Calvin spoke of the Psalms this way, he said in the psalter we have an anatomy of all parts of the soul. That's what Calvin said about the Psalms, an anatomy of all parts of the soul. He said that you find in the Psalms a mirror of every emotion of which we can be conscious. Anything that you can feel, you find somewhere in the Psalms and he says it's a mirror. In fact, Tremper Longman in his commentary on the Psalms adds this, referring to Calvin's quote, he says, or applying it, he said in the same way if the Psalms are a mirror of the soul, the anatomy of the soul, the mirror of the soul, he said think of a physical mirror, you look at a physical mirror to see how you're doing on the outside. You know, is your hair right? Have you got something in your teeth? Whatever, right? So you look in a mirror to see the outside. The Psalms are a mirror on the inside. You look at the Psalms to see how you're doing on the inside. Is your soul, is your heart moving toward God or away from God?

And the Psalms are of great importance in church history. It's interesting, Luther who I think when you read Luther, biographies of Martin Luther, he was a man who had an incredibly troubled soul and conscience before he came to Christ. He was a man of great passions and emotions and he was a man prone to severe depressions even after he was saved, but one of the things you see about him on his road to salvation from the darkness of medieval Catholicism, you know, how did God get him there? Well, he became, in God's providence when he decided he was going to become a monk, remember he has that experience, the lightning strikes and he says, "St. Anne, save me!" St. Anne is the

patron saint of miners and so his saint, he grew up trusting in. The darkness, believe the saints, can trust and pray to the saints, where do you get that? Luther was immersed in that. "St. Anne save me and I'll become a monk. If you save me, I'll become a monk." So he quits his law career, or he was studying for the law, now he becomes, he entered the monastery. Well, in God's providence the monastery that happened to be there was an Augustinian monastery and the saving grace, or not the saving grace but the best thing about Augustinian monasteries is that they are the ones most committed, at that time were most committed to the Scriptures of all the different lines of monks. You know, the Benedictine monks, the Franciscan monks, the Augustinian monks, they got in the Bible more and Luther studied Greek and Hebrew and then he started, he was charged with teaching it. So the first book that he taught and expounded was the book of the Psalms. He spent three or four years expounding every Psalm and then he went to Romans and then he got saved, but I wonder how much of the Psalms helped him to begin to unpack his heart and the light began to create some crevices for the Gospel to go later.

It's a book that has been precious throughout history. Calvin actually, his first commentary that he had printed for public use was a commentary on the Psalms. Calvin has commented on almost every single book of the Bible. He expounded almost every single book in the Bible, preached through them. I mean, preached on Sundays, a couple of times during the week often, so he was just always studying, always preaching, but Psalms was the first one.

But Psalms is the mirror of the soul and so God has given us a book in which we have inspired prayers, inspired songs as well, that give voice to what's in our hearts to God so that we might learn how to do the same thing to God; that we might understand what's going on in our hearts and then bring it to the Lord, to pour out our hearts to God. Psalm 62:8, David says that we need to pour out our hearts to the Lord, to put our trust in him. To pour out what's in your heart when you are emotionally overwhelmed. Go to God and pour it out to him.

So the purpose of the Psalms is to be an anatomy of all parts of the soul to reflect what's going on in us and to lead us to that sense of pouring out to God. Now, a couple of aspects of the Psalms that I want to talk about in the next point, that was the first point, the purpose of the Psalms, the second point is the power of music. The Psalms are actually songs. In fact, our English word "Psalm" comes from the Greek word that was given to this book when the translation would happen from Hebrew into Greek in the Septuagint. The Greek word "psalmos" translated a Hebrew word, "mizmor." Now the actual name for Psalms, the Hebrew name for Psalms is not mizmor, it's Tehellim, which means praises. In the Hebrew Bible, the name of this book is Praises, but in God's providence when they were translating it into the Greek, the translators that translated from the Hebrew into the Greek gave it the name Psalm which is from the word "psalmos." Psalmos is "to make music."

I said it was a translation of a word. It appears many times in the titles of the Psalms, 57 of the Psalms. You know how you have these titles above them, they'll say like, "A Psalm of David. Directions for the choir director." And those things, you should read those.

When you're reading the Psalms, read what it says up there. I believe that's actually inspired material. It was added after the original author wrote it but before it was compiled in its final form and God inspired the editing of it. Many of the books in the Bible are that way. You know, Moses died before the book of Deuteronomy was finished so somebody edited it and God inspired the final edition. Every jot and tittle on the page is inspired by God and in the Hebrew Bible, those titles are actually underneath the beginning of it. Like Psalm 1, it starts with a title. Here you have the title above and then you have verse 1 down here, right, and it seems like it's different but it's really part of it. Well, in 57 of those 150 Psalms the word "mizmor" occurs and mizmor means like psalmos, it means "to make music."

So it's music and these Psalms were sung. They were things that they sung regularly in worship. They were part of what they did as they went through the calendar of life. On Sabbath days, they sang Psalms. On holidays, the various feast days, they sang particular Psalms, and one of the reasons I think was so they could memorize Scripture. They didn't have Bibles like we do printed out that everybody could have. You know, how many Bibles do you have in your home? We are so blessed to have, I can pick up different translations in my home and you can go online and look at all these other translations. I mean, it's amazing. We are dwelling in a land of plenty and abundance and throughout history people didn't have access like that. Their only access was to go to the synagogue and then the scrolls they had there, they would read from them. Remember when Jesus goes to the synagogue and he takes Isaiah's scroll and he reads it? That's how they read their Bibles then. They had to go and read the scrolls like that and maybe they wrote some things down here and there and memorized verses, but essentially they memorized them through hearing them in public reading and the Psalms were the ones that were most familiar to them.

I learned a fact this week that did you know that two thirds of the New Testament quotations of the Old Testament, you know the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, right, in so many places, two thirds of the quotations come from one book, the Psalms; 67% of the Old Testament quotations in the New are from that one book, Psalms. Why is that? I think partly because they knew it. They were more apt to know that. As somebody is preaching to them, they couldn't be leafing through their Old Testament to find the references but they knew, "That's the Psalm we sing every Passover. That's the Psalm that we sing at the new moon. I know that verse. Yes, Jesus fulfills that. All we've been singing, Jesus is."

And music is powerful and it's a great memory tool, isn't it? I mean, how did you learn your ABCs? Most of you learned it with that song, right? In fact, I saw that the Greek alphabet has a song too. Savannah is teaching a class on the Greek alphabet and she's singing a song, I didn't listen to it, but the Greek alphabet, the same way. Like it's alpha, beta, gamma. Anyway.

The power of music. Why do we sing? God has made us to sing. There is something about singing that connects to the affections and the heart. It's amazing the power of music to express the heart, and I think that's why the Psalms which are aimed at helping

us see what's going on in our hearts and pouring it out to God, were set to music. I read something this week that I thought was intriguing and relates to us in kind of an interesting way. There was a study done by some folks at Dartmouth who were trying to see the universality of music and they made the point in the article that every human culture has music. There is no known example of human culture without music. God made us and in our DNA, in our fiber of who he made us to be, we sing. We make music.

Well, this study, they wanted to see how they could relate, how does that work, so they wanted to find people that were isolated culturally from every other culture and to see if the music impacted them the same way it impacted people in other cultures. So they did a study of students at Dartmouth and they had them listen to notes and listen to little strands of notes together and said, "What emotion does this evoke?" Then they went to, of all people, the Krom people of Cambodia. Those of you who watch the prayer requests, know that our missionaries to Cambodia, Brian and Lydia Kane., are in a remote part of Cambodia where they minister among a people group who speak the Krom language. And so they went to these remote villages, they wanted to find people, actually they found people that had just moved out of the remote villages that they could have access to and they took them and they started playing music and they said the Krom people had music too. I think maybe Brian has told us this before but one of their best instruments, they put a string around their toe and in their teeth and they pluck it with pieces of bamboo. I mean, that's showing we're going to have music one way or another.

So they play these different notes for these people and these different sounds and they have the people at Dartmouth say, "What emotion is this? Is this anger?" And they gave them a list of things and they had to work with the Krom people because they didn't have all the same words, but it was like nailed it. Peace. Anger. Joy. Music, music, music, exactly the same music, the same sounds. What does that say? God has made us that way so that music connects to the heart and helps us express what's inside of our hearts, and God gave us a book to say, you know, in the midst of your Bible right now, it's right there in the center. You open your Bible in the middle and there is Psalms. He's saying to express your heart, you need music. It's really been hitting me and we were talking about this this week, Patti and I, about we've always known we need to have music in our life and in our home, but there are times where we meant to do more than we have done. It's like, we've got to make sure that we're singing the songs of Zion, we're singing the songs of Christ, because it helps us in some way to truly express our hearts to find out what's in there to the Lord.

So the power of music. I'll just mention a couple of things to think about for you. Ephesians 5:18-20, Colossians 3:16. I haven't had time to ponder this like I need to but I want to throw it out to think about this, "Don't be drunk with wine but filled with the Spirit." What does he say after that? "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." It's like the things we need to even be speaking to each other are the Psalms. We remember them. We know what they are and there is treasure in them. Then, of course, the biblical Psalms are the

inspired ones but even, he says, hymns and spiritual songs, the ones that other people have reflected on what the Scripture teaches and tried to put it to music. When it is sound and biblical, isn't it amazing the power of a song?

The power of music. The purpose of the Psalms, to unveil the heart. The power of music to connect somehow with the heart. Then the power of poetry. The Psalms are a book of poetry. In fact, when I gave you a few weeks back a list of the various descriptions of the Bible, I think it was 50% narrative and then I gave you different percentages. Well, I failed to take account of something that I should have known better and that is that poetry is not just in the books of poetry. Poetry is all over the Bible. In fact, poetry is not in only, it's in all the books except seven; 66 books of the Bible, 59 of them have poetry in them. Some are all poetry like Psalms, the prophets, many of the prophets, most of the prophets. Why is that? Well, poetry is created to connect to the heart. I mean, poetry, the difference between prose and poetry is poetry and Hebrew poetry isn't so much about rhyming like our poetry tends to be, but it is about, it's about capturing the heart.

Its characteristics, a few characteristics of Hebrew poetry: its terseness, or you could say compactness. One of the aspects of poetry that makes poetry what it is, is that you use an economy of words to say way more than you normally could in those few words. So its terseness. Related to that would be the imagery. It's another aspect of poetry, but it's almost the same thing. The reason that you can say a lot with a few words is you can say a lot more through an image than you can through stringing out words. Like if you say, "I'm angry." Well, that's not a good example. You can say you don't really need to worry because God is on the throne, he's sovereign, he reigns and rules over all mankind, and we're supposed to trust in him when we're hurting and you need to trust in him right now, or you can just say God is a rock and fortress. Do you see what I'm saying? That's poetry. The image itself communicates more than the words that I string together that just don't say it as well.

So God gave us a whole book of poetry and his whole Bible is so poetic. He is capturing our hearts. He's saying, "I want you to express your affections, your emotions to me. I want you to get in touch with who you are. I want everything in you. I don't want just your lips, I want your hearts." So you have terseness, figures of speech. You have a sense of meter, you know, kind of a balance in the wording. In Hebrew, that balance tends to be expressed in parallelism where you have the same thing said in two different ways back to back; you know, one sentence will say it and then it will say it again.

So poetry, though, is there to capture the heart. So music is to engage the heart, the poetry is to capture the heart. God wants us to be learning how to come to him and express our hearts to him and one of the hardest things in the world is to somehow know what's in your heart, isn't it? We started this whole series quoting I think the first message was on Proverbs 20:5, the purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, are like deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out. Now think about that. There again, what an amazing amount of content in such a few words. The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters. You can't figure it out. You don't know what's going on in your heart. You can't understand what's happening inside of you, that no one else can see what's really going

on in your heart. All the different things that are in your heart, there is complexity, there is mystery. Or we looked at another passage, Hebrews 4:12 which says the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It cuts to the joints and marrow, soul and spirit. It separates these things and we talked about that was a verse that taught the complexity of the heart. "I don't know why I do what I do. I don't know why I feel what I feel. I can't understand why I am feeling like this. How can you help me?" God says, "I know I made you complex. I know I made you like that. You're like me but sin has wrecked and wreaked havoc in your soul, but the answer is my Son, loving him and abiding in the word, and the word will go beneath the surface of your heart which is a mystery to you. It's like deep waters. The word will dive down into your heart and it will separate and it will identify the purposes and the issues in your heart." So the psalter is to do that and music and poetry are part of how God gets below the surface.

The power of music, the power of poetry. The power of poetry was our third point and the fourth and final point is the power of prayer. So really the Psalms are music, they are poetry, and they are prayer. The power of prayer, you might say, is really just pouring out your heart to God, that's what prayer is. This is what the Psalms are doing. The psalmist is pouring out the heart to God. Looking at Psalm 86, he says, "Incline Your ear, O LORD, and answer me; For I am afflicted and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man; O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You."

Pouring out your heart. In fact, so look at this, in fact the word "pouring out," the key passage in Psalm 42, and when you go through the Psalms, you will find if you read them carefully and you stop and you really think and you read the heading because sometimes the headings will tell you a lot, it'll tell you like, "This is what happened after Saul tried to kill David." Well, read it in light of that and it makes a lot more sense. Or, "This is what happened after David sinned." You'll read these things and it will help you. Sometimes you don't have that much, in Psalm 42, you have,

1 For the choir director. [A musical thing, right?] A Maskil of the sons of Korah. As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? [Look at the anguish of the soul.] 3 My tears have been my food day and night."

Image, what have I been eating? I've been eating my tears. All day long I'm eating my tears, essentially I'm crying all day long. That's all that I have. That's my portion, weeping and weeping and weeping, while people around me say mockingly,

"Where is your God?" 4 These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God. [I used to know where God was because I would go to the house of God] With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. [Look what he says next] 5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?

[He's talking to himself now.] Hope in God. [Then he answers himself]
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence.

I love this, you read this Psalm and, in fact, this is such a comforting passage. I remember Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, reading his biography a couple of years ago and then going back and looking from his biography back into his book, "Spiritual Depression." He had a time of severe depression and this was one of the passages that really helped him to deal with that and he realized, and this is where that great quote comes from in his book "Spiritual Depression" I've used before, he says our problem, our problem in life as Christians tends to be that we listen to ourselves when we should talk to ourselves. I love that. We tend to listen. We let our thoughts get going and the worries and anxieties and fears or anger, whatever, it gets going and we listen and we listen and we listen. Stop it. Talk to yourself.

That's what he's doing, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? Why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God. That's what you need to do." But the honesty and openness of the psalmist, though. He was in despair and he tells us and that's what Lloyd-Jones was saying when he came to this passage and he saw this despair he was feeling in his heart, it's like it plucks that chord in your heart. This reaches down and touches that place in your soul that nothing else could and suddenly you know what you feel and you find that it's okay to feel it. Christians aren't supposed to just go around acting like they're happy all the time. I mean, true, we are to be marked by joy but it's not a Pollyanna type joy that pretends. It's a joy that faces life as it really is in all of its ugliness at times and its beauty, and on account of Jesus Christ and on account of the hope of heaven, finds joy at some point in every circumstance, but it's hard to get there sometimes.

So the psalmist is pouring out his heart to God and he's talking to himself all these verses, right? "Why are you in despair?" Then in verse 6, he turns to prayer. Now it's turning to God,

6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me.

I love that. So sometimes what's happening is you're dealing with life and you're talking to yourself, and I do that a lot too. I mean, I talk to myself too much actually, sometimes audibly, although nowadays it doesn't matter because if you act like you have an earpiece, nobody thinks anything about it. I don't know how many times I've almost answered somebody at the grocery store or something but they are talking to their phone, not talking to me. Anyway.

So he goes from talking to himself to talking to God. Sometimes he'll go from talking to himself to talking to others. They are talking to themselves and now they're talking, but listen, we need to trust in the Lord. "Trust in the Lord, O Israel." Then they're talking to God. So there is this interplay. I think that's what it's supposed to be. We're supposed to ourselves go to the Lord and talk to him, and sometimes we're talking to ourselves and we're talking to him, we're to talk to one another and to talk to ourselves and then talk to him. We are to talk to him and talk to one another. It's to be, that's the kind of the community of faith, we're to help each other deal with life as it really is and then go to

God, and one of the things that means is that the psalmist teaches you don't have to pretend you don't hurt. This is why we are supposed to mourn with those that mourn. This is something I really need to ponder and reflect on. I tend to want to provide the hope that will help you get past that too quickly, but there is a place just to cry.

This is who our God is. I mean, think about Jesus. Isaiah said he would be a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. That was his life he knew was to suffer and he suffered with others. Look at him at Lazarus' tomb, the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept." He wept over the brokenness of this world and the pain it was causing Mary and Martha and even Lazarus, his dear friend, in the tomb. He wept. Our God is a God who weeps.

A wonderful book by Joni Eareckson Tada, I mean, you know, it's pretty good. There are some areas I would tweak it here and there but "When God Weeps," Joni Eareckson Tada, the lady that's a quadriplegic. A very powerful book about how she has found comfort in knowing that God in his love and compassion, he weeps with us and hurts with us. This is just completely biblical. He doesn't afflict the son of men willingly. Even though God is sovereign and he is working in every circumstance, don't just think he's doing it like a surgeon who doesn't care about you. He's not just a surgeon who doesn't care about you, he's a Father who has compassion on his children; as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. He remembers our frame. He knows that we are but dust. He is a God of compassion. He feels what we feel.

Isaiah 49 uses that same word, Isaiah 49:15, "Can a nursing mother forget the baby at her breast? Can she fail to have compassion on the baby at her breast? Though she forget, I will not forget you, says the Lord." He says, "Do you want to know what I feel?" He doesn't just say, he doesn't say it in prose language just merely, he says in other places, "God loves you." That's wonderful. He says, "Think about the way a mother loves her baby nursing at her breast. Think about how her heart is moved from the inside." Think about how we are all moved when we see a baby. That's a beginning point to understand how God loves his people, how God loves his children, how God is willing to love anyone, and how God truly is loving toward everyone. A father who looks at his children with compassion, understands their weakness, the best father, picture in your mind what you feel the best father and that's the beginning point to understand how God loves you.

He says, "I want you to pour out your hearts to me. I want you to be honest." Psalm 13, four times the psalmist says, "How long, O Lord? How long, O Lord?" Pour out your hearts to God. Now you do it with an attitude of reverence and trust, yes, but sometimes it takes a while to get there. But just going to him in the first place is the beginning of that trust, the expression of that trust. "I know that you are good. I know what Hebrews 11:6 says, that without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who goes to him must believe that he is and he is a rewarder of all who diligently seek him. Lord, I'm diligently seeking you. Even though I don't feel anything, I'm hurting, I'm seeking you now and I know you reward those, you minister to those who seek you." That faith is going to overcome because God is true to his promises.

You may have a season, and you find the psalmist, Psalm 88 is an example, the psalmist in Psalm 88 doesn't have, a lot of times you'll see they are mourning, they are in affliction, they are lamenting something, and then they have the deliverance and then they are thanking God at the end. Often the Psalms are like that, but Psalm 88, there is no light in it. It begins and ends with sorrow and there are seasons of life that are like that, but when you are in that season of life, you remember that the God of this book is the same yesterday, today and forever, and though he afflicts, he will not leave you; though he wounds, he will not leave you in your brokenness. He will bind you up in his time. Sorrow lasts for the night but joy comes in the morning. These are all things from the Psalms.

It's just a picture, really, of who God is. I mentioned that the Father is a God who feels and has compassion, Isaiah 49, Psalm 103, I just mentioned a minute ago. Jesus himself, a man of sorrows who wept, who is a High Priest according to Hebrews 2:17 and 18, who was made like us to experience everything we experience so that he could be an effective High Priest and come to our aid. He had to experience everything we experience so he could truly come to our aid to sympathize with us. He feels and the Holy Spirit feels. John 14:16 says, Jesus says to the disciples, "Don't be discouraged that I'm going away because if I go to the Father, I will send the Comforter to you," another comforter, he says, or another counselor, another advocate, another helper. Advocate, counselor, helper, comforter, all translate the Greek word "parakletos," Paraclete. Jesus says, "I'm going to send another Comforter," implicitly he's saying, "I am God's first Comforter."

The word "Paraclete" is a wonderful word. It means "to be called alongside; to come to someone's aid." It means "to see someone in misery and need and to go to help them; to show up right there." That's your comforter. Jesus said, "I'm going to send you another Comforter." In other words, "I am God's first Comforter. This has been my role to come to your aid but I'm going to send you another one." And the word "Comforter," he doesn't come alongside and just help you like even as wonderful as we are so grateful for our first responders, EMTs. I was somewhere the other day and a person had an accident and the EMTs showed up, how blessed we are to have the system that we have. Thank God for those people and they are very kind. I spent one morning in an ambulance myself about six or seven, eight years ago actually, when they thought I was having a heart attack. I was so grateful at the time, I remember thinking, "I'm so thankful for these guys and how good they are at what they do." They were very kind but, you know, at the end of the day, I have not received any calls from those guys since I was okay. Now, I didn't call them either so they could be right back at me, "Right back at you, Ty." But what I'm saying is this: God doesn't just come to your aid in that kind of way of just doing a job, he comes to your aid because he loves you. He feels what you feel. He enters into your suffering. This is who God is.

Romans 8:23 to 27. Look at this later. I'm just going to tell you the key concept. He's talking about our suffering. Romans 8 talks about our suffering. We are suffering in this present age and he says we groan. The whole creation groans, keyword "groans." It means "to have a sense of agony that is inexpressible audibly." You can't put it into words. It's expressed audibly but not in words. Do you see what I'm saying? You're

groaning because you hurt so much. You can't put it into words how bad you hurt. He said the creation groans under the affliction of what sin has done to this world. There is groaning. There is an inexpressible pain and anguish that characterizes all of creation because of the separation from God's blessing and he says we particularly who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves. Now that we've come to participate in the divine nature and to have heaven enter into our hearts, we now know that we're not where we're supposed to be and we groan. We can't express the anguish we feel at times. We groan.

Romans 8:27, when you don't know how to pray as you ought, when you don't have words to put into a prayer, you don't know what to say to God, the Spirit himself intercedes for you, with groanings. The Holy Spirit groans with you. He hurts with you. Isn't that amazing? This is the God of the Bible, a God who is going to take care of all of this groaning eventually but who in the meantime is willing not just to tell you to buck up and keep your chin up and keep looking ahead, he enters into your suffering and he walks with you and he says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." The Lord Jesus Christ is with you and the Holy Spirit is with you and they groan with you at times.

What a glorious God. Don't you want to serve a God like that? Don't you want to give yourself to a God like that? If you haven't repented and placed your faith in Christ, today is the day of salvation. Come to him today. Give yourself to Jesus. Trust in him. He died and paid for the sins of everyone who would ever believe. Every single sin, he took it out of the way, suffered in himself the punishment that you and I were due so that he might give us his righteousness in exchange. He rose again from the dead to prove it and he reigns in heaven now, and even from heaven he's beckoning you today, "Come to me, you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest, for I am gentle and lowly in heart. You will find rest for your souls."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the wonder of who you are. Truly our words fail to be able to begin to express the beauty and glory of your majestic and wonderful being. We pray that you would help us. Lord, we get so confused, we get so distracted. We love the world too much. We don't love you as much as we ought. God, help us. Do what's necessary. Afflict us so that we hurt enough that we have to run to you. We don't want to hurt, we confess that we hate pain but, Lord, we want you to do what's necessary so that we might know the joy of walking more in your presence because there is nothing more precious and wonderful than abiding before you. In your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Amen.