

a sermon from PSALM 86:5

THE LORD'S MERCY BE UPON THE DEPARTED SOUL OF THE UNBELIEVER

כִּי־אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי טוֹב וְסִלַּח וְרַב־חַסֵּד לְכָל־קְרֹאִיךָ

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I. AN OPENING PRAYER FOR GOD’S MERCY

Let us pray, “O Greatly Merciful GOD, Infinite Goodness, ...mankind calls out from the abyss of its misery to Your Mercy – to Your compassion... O Lord, [You who are] Goodness beyond our understanding, Who are acquainted with our misery through and through, and know that by our own power we cannot ascend to You, we implore You: anticipate us with Your Grace and keep on increasing Your Mercy in us, that we may faithfully do Your holy will all through our life and at death’s hour... For JESUS [CHRIST] is our Hope: through His merciful Heart, as through an open gate, we pass through to Heaven!”¹ In The Name of GOD The Father, Son and Holy Ghost. AMEN.

II. A SCRIPTURE VERSE – PSALM 86:5

כִּי־אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי טוֹב וְסֶלַח וְרַב־חֶסֶד לְכָל־קֹרְאֶיךָ²

KIY-‘ATTAH ADONAY TOV VESALLACH VERAV-CHESED LEKAL-

QIR’EYCHA!³ For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee!⁴

III. A PROPOSITION

The Lord is all good. The Lord is ever ready to forgive. The Lord is all full of Mercy towards all who call on His Name! Therefore, let us trust in The unshakable Divine Mercy of our GOD!

IV. INTRODUCTION

We gather today to lament with one another, before The merciful Good Lord, the death of this man, our seemingly unbelieving brother. We shed our tears first for the loss of this loved one with his family and friends, for in this life, he is no more. Of these tears, we may be sure that they are well shed, for the reality of his physical death in this very real physical world is undeniable for those left behind.

¹ 1, Diary of Saint Faustina, # 1570, p 557.

² 2, BHS, PSALM 86:5.

³ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter א ayin = “

⁴ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:5.

But of the tears that are shed for fear that this loved one is eternally separated from GOD, though to our knowledge he did not confess faith in our Lord JESUS CHRIST in this life, may well be shed needlessly! For this dearly departed man heard The Word of GOD from you his family and friends, in word and in deed, all his life. He had sat occasionally within The Ark of The Church with you, his believing loved ones and companions, through the years. He had seen the blessed evidence of a true and living Christian faith of charity and good works in you, his Christian family and friends - and in The faithful Church - down through the years.

And who knows what may transpire between a man and The Almighty as a man takes his last breath on his deathbed? Who knows what words and intentions may pass between a man's soul and The Eternal Creator as a man's soul departs his mortal body at the moment of physical death? The answer, of course, is that only GOD knows! Therefore we should not despair on behalf of this departed loved one's soul so desperately!

For he had heard and seen The Gospel of salvation preached in Word and deed all his life because of you, his Christian loved ones and friends. He had possession of The Truth of GOD at the moment of his death. Now combine these facts with what we know of The Almighty: He is all good. He is all forgiving. He is all merciful. For The cleansing Blood of The Lamb of GOD is ever ready for application to the doors and lintels of our souls by The Grace of The Lord! For His arm is not too short that He can not save anyone who but comes to Him confessing and believing!

And though we would certainly prefer to hope that this loved one is a peace and rest in Eternal Joy with GOD in Heaven because of a clearly known earthly profession of faith, still we need not despair in this regard so intensely! Let us trust in The unshakable Divine Mercy of our GOD! As David prays in PSALM 86:5, "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee!"⁵ Such

⁵ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:5.

is our comfort – for this departed loved one, for our loved ones still in this world, and for ourselves - as we shall see!

V. FIRST, THE LORD IS ALL GOOD

⁶ כִּי־אֲתָה אֲדֹנָי טוֹב

KIY ‘ATTAH ‘ADONAY TOV! ⁷ - “For Thou, Lord, art good...!” ⁸ First, David confesses that The Lord is all good. This PSALM is titled, “A Prayer of David.” He begins in verses 1-2 by crying out to GOD in prayer, Whom he knows is all goodness, “Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul... O Thou my GOD, save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee!” ⁹

The word - טוב – TOV here, referring to GOD, means that He is perfectly and totally good, kind, right, appropriate and excellent. ¹⁰ GOD is all just, ¹¹ perfect and without corruption, ¹² fully competent, ¹³ all benevolent ¹⁴ and completely faithful. ¹⁵ And does GOD ever cease from being all good? No, never! So Saint Clement of Alexandria takes us back to The Seventh Day of Creation in GENESIS 2:1-3, The Day on

⁶ 2, BHS, PSALM 86:5.

⁷ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter א ayin = “

⁸ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:5.

⁹ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:1-2.

¹⁰ 4, Strong’s Data, 2896 טוב – TOV, Meaning: adjective 1) good, pleasant, agreeable 1a) pleasant, agreeable (to the senses) 1b) pleasant (to the higher nature) 1c) good, excellent (of its kind) 1d) good, rich, valuable in estimation 1e) good, appropriate, becoming 1f) better (comparative) 1g) glad, happy, prosperous (of man's sensuous nature) 1h) good understanding (of man's intellectual nature) 1i) good, kind, benign 1j) good, right (ethical) noun, masculine 2) a good thing, benefit, welfare 2a) welfare, prosperity, happiness 2b) good things (collective) 2c) good, benefit 2d) moral good noun, feminine 3) welfare, benefit, good things 3a) welfare, prosperity, happiness 3b) good things (collective) 3c) bounty. Usage: good 361, better 72, well 20, goodness 16, goodly 9, best 8, merry 7, fair 7, prosperity 6, precious 4, fine 3, wealth 3, beautiful 2, fairer 2, favour 2, glad 2, misc. 35; 559.

¹¹ 5, Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, “good,” noun, 5, p GOO - GOR.

¹² 5, Ibid., “good,” adjective, 3, p GOO – GOO.

¹³ 5, Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ 5, Ibid., 20.

¹⁵ 5, Ibid., 21.

which GOD rested from His work of creation and so sanctified it,¹⁶ observing of The Almighty's goodness, that "GOD's resting [here] is not... that GOD ceased from doing. For, being [all] good, if He should ever cease from doing good, then He would cease to be GOD..." which is impossible.¹⁷ His goodness both creates and sustains! Therefore David says in PSALM 34:8, "O taste and see that The LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him!"¹⁸ We taste and see The Lord's goodness in our being and continued existing, and most especially in The Grace He showers upon us at The Cross, for as Saint Paul says in ROMANS 3:23, "...all have sinned, and come short of The Glory of GOD!"¹⁹

But wait, you say! Our beloved departed one never, as far as we know, prayed to GOD! His heart was never heavy, as far as we know, for his sins before The Almighty! He never confessed, as far as we know, to be a servant of The Most High, that he trusted in Him! But that is exactly the point here, "as far as we know!" Who can see into a man's heart but The Creator? Who can weigh the eternal merits of a man's life but The King of the universe? Who can judge a man's soul but The Eternal One?

Who indeed, but GOD alone! And therein is our hope for this loved one, that we first trust in GOD's goodness, as it is certainly possible that this man did as well. For in whatever last moments in body and soul at death which passed between The Lord and this loved one that we did not perceive, there is an eternity of hope! Recall David's great hope in GOD's Mercy in PSALM 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou [O LORD] art with me..."²⁰

¹⁶ 3, KJV, GENESIS 2:1-3, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on The Seventh Day GOD ended His work which He had made; and He rested on The Seventh Day from all His work which He had made. And GOD blessed The Seventh Day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which GOD created and made."

¹⁷ 6, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, "GOD," 1st entry, p 310. "Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.513.

¹⁸ 3, KJV, PSALM 34:8.

¹⁹ 3, KJV, ROMANS 3:23.

²⁰ 3, KJV, PSALM 23:4.

David knows GOD's goodness, and so he throws his soul first upon the goodness of The LORD. As Matthew Henry says here, "...the best self-preservation is to commit ourselves to GOD's keeping and by faith and prayer to make our Creator our Preserver!"²¹ Think of all the good things that The Good Lord gives us in this world – the breath of life, our intellect, our free will, our ability to love, our spouses and children, the fruits of our labors, the blessings of all the earth, The Word of GOD, The Cross and The Church. Shall we not then trust His goodness to judge which souls shall enter into His eternal Kingdom Above and which shall not?

VI. SECOND, THE LORD IS ALL FORGIVING

²² כִּי־אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי טוֹב וְסָלַח

KIY-'ATTAH ADONAY TOV VESALLACH²³ - "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive...!"²⁴ Second, David claims the promise in his prayer that The Lord is ever ready to forgive the repentant sinner. Recall that David was a pious man of GOD, and a leader of The Lord's people, even a very king of ancient Israel. And yet his sins were very great: lust, adultery, conspiracy, murder, deceit, greed and abuse of power! But in verses 3-4 of This PSALM he cries out in prayer, "Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto Thee daily. Rejoice the soul of Thy servant: for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul!"²⁵

The word - סָלַח - SALLACH here, referring to GOD, means He is ever ready to forgive the repentant sinner, of which David was chief.²⁶ Towards the penitent man who confesses and laments over his offenses against GOD's Law, our Eternal Good

²¹ 7, Matthew Henry Notes: PSALM 86, Verses: 1-7, I., 1., (v. 2).

²² 2, BHS, PSALM 86:5.

²³ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ' and the letter ע ayin = "

²⁴ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:5.

²⁵ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:3-4.

²⁶ 4, Strong's Data, 5546 סָלַח - SALLACH, Meaning: 1) ready to forgive, forgiving. Adjective. Usage: ready to forgive 1.

Shepherd is ever ready to pardon, to treat the offender as not guilty, to overlook the debt which our sins would otherwise incur upon us.²⁷ Therefore Paul says in ROMANS 5:8-10, “But GOD commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to GOD by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” given up for us!²⁸

Saint Tertullian says, “GOD is both a perfect Father and a perfect Master. He is a Father in His Mercy, but a Master in His discipline. He is a Father in the mildness of His power, but a Master in its severity. He is a Father Who must be loved with dutiful affection. Yet, He is also a Master who must be feared. He is to be loved, for He prefers mercy to sacrifice. Yet, He should be feared because He dislikes sin. He should be loved because He prefers the sinner’s repentance over his death...,” most clearly seen at The Cross of our Redeemer!²⁹

But wait, you say! Our departed loved one never once prayed for GOD’s forgiveness, as far as we know! He never lifted up his eyes to Heaven and cried out, O Lord, wash away the guilt of my sins and cleanse my soul of its iniquity, as far as we know. He never lifted up his hands in Church to The Saviour JESUS CHRIST, calling out for the cleansing Blood of The Son of GOD to cover his offenses against GOD’s Moral Law, that he might be called a righteous son of The Most High in Heaven Above forever, as far as we know!

But again, there is that “as far as we know.” Who indeed may know the heart and soul of a man, even at the very last moment of earthly life, as the body breathes in and out the last breath of life? Who indeed, but The merciful Creator of the universe! Recall

²⁷ 5, Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, “forgive,” verb, 1, p FOR – FOR.

²⁸ 3, KJV, ROMANS 5:8-10.

²⁹ 6, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “GOD, 7th entry, p 310. “Tertullian (c. 207, W), 3.308.”

that, after David was confronted by the prophet Nathan³⁰ - after his many sins related to his adultery with Bathsheba³¹ and murder of her husband Uriah³² - David falls upon The ever forgiving LORD. He laments His sins. He confesses his sins. And he repents of his sins. So David cries out to GOD in PSALM 51:1-2, “Have mercy upon me, O GOD, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!”³³

Why hope in GOD’s forgiveness? Saint Augustine answers, that we may take hold of this “...hope before GOD, because His Mercy is great, [and so] let us say unto Him, ‘For unto Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul.’ ...[I stand only because] Thou gavest me strength... From infirmity [of my sins do] I sink [down, O GOD]: heal Thou me, and I shall stand: strengthen Thou me, and I shall be strong. But until Thou do this, Thou bearest with me: ‘For Thou, Lord, art good and gracious, and of great Mercy.’ That is, not only ‘of Mercy,’ but ‘of great Mercy:’ for as our iniquity abounds, so also aboundeth Thy Mercy, ‘Unto all that call upon Thee!’”³⁴

³⁰ 3, KJV, II SAMUEL 12.

³¹ 3, KJV, II SAMUEL 2 Samuel 11:2-5, “And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.”

³² 3, KJV, II SAMUEL 2 Samuel 11:14-17, “And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.”

³³ 3, KJV, PSALM 51:1-2.

³⁴ 8, Augustine on The PSALMS, PSALM LXXVI, 7, p 629-630.

VII. THIRD, THE LORD IS ALL MERCIFUL

³⁵ כִּי־אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי טוֹב וְסֶלַח וְרַב־חֶסֶד לְכָל־קְרֹאֲיֶיךָ

KIY-‘ATTAH ADONAY TOV VESALLACH VERAV-CHESED LEKAL-QIR’EYCHA!³⁶ - “For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee!”³⁷ Third, David rejoices in his prayer that The Lord is full of Mercy towards all who call on His Name! So in verses 6-7 he again lifts his voice to Heaven, “Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee: for Thou wilt answer me!”³⁸

The word - חֶסֶד - CHESED here, referring to GOD, means that He is full of perfect mercy, goodness, kindness, faithfulness and pity towards us.³⁹ This is The Divine benevolence and tenderness which disposes The Almighty to overlook our offenses towards His Law, that Divine disposition which tempers His Divine justice, that forgives our trespasses and forbears the just punishment due us for our sins – all this, if we confess and turn from our sins before Him! It is then that The LORD showers upon us His Grace, that Divine clemency, because of His perfect tenderness and pity towards us.⁴⁰ As Saint Paul says in ROMANS 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of GOD is eternal life through JESUS CHRIST our Lord!”⁴¹

³⁵ 2, BHS, PSALM 86:5.

³⁶ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter ע ayin = “

³⁷ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:5.

³⁸ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:6-7.

³⁹ 4, Strong’s Data, 2617 חֶסֶד - CHESED, Meaning: 1) goodness, kindness, faithfulness 2) a reproach, shame. Usage: mercy 149, kindness 40, lovingkindness 30, goodness 12, kindly 5, merciful 4, favour 3, good 1, goodliness 1, pity 1, reproach 1, wicked thing 1; 248.

⁴⁰ 5, Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, “mercy,” noun, 1, p MER – MER.

⁴¹ 3, KJV, ROMANS 6:23.

Saint Ignatius says, “Therefore, let us not be ungrateful for... [GOD’s Mercy] For if He were to reward us according to our works, we would cease to be, because we are all sinners!”⁴² Our entrance into Heaven is only by GOD’s Mercy, as Saint Polycarp says, for it is “...’by Grace you are saved, not of works,’⁴³ but by the will of GOD through JESUS CHRIST... But He Who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also – if we do His will, and walk in His Commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness.”⁴⁴

But wait, you say! Our departed loved one never raised up his soul to The Saviour at The Cross, nor ever besought Him in tears of repentance and confession, as far we know! He never cried out as in LUKE 23:42, like the good thief on the cross next to JESUS on That Day when they crucified The Messiah – “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom!”⁴⁵ – as far as we know. He never, like the sinner woman who washed CHRIST’s feet with her tears, longed to hear The Words as in LUKE 7:48-50, “...Thy sins are forgiven... Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace!”⁴⁶ – as far as we know.

But again we must confess the smallness and limitedness of this “as far as we know!” Your departed loved one knew of the consequences of denying GOD and the hope of The Divine Mercy at The Cross of CHRIST because of many of you, his family and friends, who lived in word and deed your Christian life in testimony before him. So it is most reasonable that he would have called out to The Almighty at his last moments of life from his soul with such Words as those in ISAIAH 63:7, “I will... [sing] the praises of The LORD, according to all that The LORD hath bestowed on us... [in His] great

⁴² 6, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Salvation, II. Role of Grace and Faith in Salvation,” p 575, 12th entry. “Ignatius (c. 105, E), 1.63.”

⁴³ 3, KJV, EPHESIANS 2:8-10, “For by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of GOD: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

⁴⁴ 6, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Salvation, II. Role of Grace and Faith in Salvation, p 575, 14th entry – p 576. “Polycarp (c. 135, E), 1.33”

⁴⁵ 3, KJV, LUKE 23:42.

⁴⁶ 3, KJV, LUKE 7:48-50.

goodness..., according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses!”⁴⁷

As John Calvin says here, “The point upon which David now insists is, that GOD is bountiful and inclined to compassion, and that His Mercy is so great, as to render it impossible for Him to reject any who implore His aid. ...[So David] ascribes to Him the attribute of pardoning sin, which is a modification of His goodness. It were not enough for GOD to be ‘good’ in general, did He not also extend to sinners His forgiving Mercy... [Therefore, David confidently proclaims] that every man, without exception, from the greatest to the least, may be encouraged confidently to betake himself to the goodness and Mercy of GOD!”⁴⁸

VIII. LET US THEREFORE TRUST IN THE DIVINE MERCY OF OUR GOD!

Let us conclude. We have noted that, though our hearts ache for the loss of this departed loved one from our company in this world, there is much reason to hope that he is with The Lord JESUS CHRIST in Heaven now. For his life was filled with Christian testimony in word and in deed from you – his family and friends - of the consequences of refusing GOD’s Grace and of the blessings of receiving GOD’s Mercy. And who knows within that twinkling of an eye at the moment of death, as a man draws his last breath in and out for the last time and his soul ascends to meet The LORD, what confession of repentance and faith may be made? Who indeed, but GOD alone!

⁴⁷ 3, KJV, ISAIAH 63:7.

⁴⁸ 9, Calvin’s Commentary on The PSALMS, PSALM 86:1-7, Verse 5, p 230-231.

So here is our certain Hope: First, that The LORD is - טוב – TOV, that is, all good. Second, that The LORD is - סָלַח - SALLACH, that is, all forgiving. Third, that The LORD is - חֶסֶד - CHESED, that is, all merciful. Therefore we read in PSALM 86:5 David’s confessional prayer of faith to GOD:

⁴⁹ כִּי־אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי טוֹב וְסָלַח וְרַב־חֶסֶד לְכָל־קֹרְאָיוֹךָ

KIY-‘ATTAH ADONAY TOV VESALLACH VERAV-CHESED LEKAL-QIR’EYCHA!⁵⁰ Or in The King James English, “For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in Mercy unto all them that call upon Thee!”⁵¹

Remember then, my friends, what we have observed that is offered to all people at The Cross of The Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Let us trust in Who GOD is, both for this departed loved one, for family and friends still with us here in this life and for even ourselves. And let us not hesitate for a single moment more to take hold of The Grace of GOD, for the blessing of our earthly lives and the salvation of our eternal souls! For The Lord is all good. The Lord is ever ready to forgive. The Lord is full of mercy towards all who call on His Name! Therefore, let us trust in The unshakable Divine Mercy of our GOD! In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost! AMEN.

⁴⁹ 2, BHS, PSALM 86:5.

⁵⁰ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter ע ayin = “

⁵¹ 3, KJV, PSALM 86:5.

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