

His Lovingkindness Endures Forever

In a number of places in the Bible we read the statement concerning our Lord that, “**His lovingkindness endures forever.**” Now what exactly does that mean, and of what values is that to us?

Well, firstly, ‘lovingkindness’ is one of the attributes of God. An attribute is a quality belonging naturally (intrinsically) to someone or something. It’s a quality characteristic. But when considering God’s attributes it is important to distinguish between those attributes that belong to God’s being or essence and those that belong to His character. Those that belong to His being or essence are His **incommunicable attributes** (ones that only God has and no one else. These are what make Him God), such as His omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, triunity, providence and transcendence. On the other hand, His **communicable attributes** (ones He graciously shares with us) are those attributes that belong to God’s character, such as His holiness, love, grace, faithfulness, kindness and so on.

Lovingkindness is one of the moral qualities of God’s character, one of His communicable attributes. One that He graciously shares with us, and one He wants us to embrace and express to others.

So now let us consider closely the ‘lovingkindness’ attribute of our immutable God, an attribute which is everlasting.

I love reading a few Psalms each morning and more often than not I read parts of these Psalms in my Hebrew Bible. In doing this I often look into the literal and foundational meaning of some of the words and sometimes there are wonderful revelations. I would like to share one of these with you today.

Look at Psalms 136 for instance, in which there is repetition throughout the Psalm of the phrase ... *“for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”*

If we look at the Hebrew word from which we get our word “lovingkindness” we find is the word **תָּנָח** *ḥesed*. Every Hebrew word is based on, or comes from, a three letter root word. And in this case the three letters **תָּנָח** have the following root meaning: “Devote oneself entirely, give oneself to needs”. So when applied here to God it is saying one of His attributes, His *ḥesed*, is His **“being devoted entirely in giving Himself to the needs of others.”** Just think of the implications of that for you and me!

“His lovingkindness is everlasting” – God is eternally predisposed to devoting Himself entirely to giving of Himself to seeing to our needs – to our wellbeing. Wow! Isn’t that so amazing! So wonderful!

Jer 9:23-24 ... *“Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises **lovingkindness**, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.”*

Now, whenever I find a word like this with a meaning I have not previously appreciated, I like to see where it was first used – the place of first mention – as that normally gives the word a special significance. This word (**תָּנָח** *ḥesed*) lovingkindness first appears in Gen 19.

Before we read from Gen 19 let me remind you that Abraham and his nephew Lot had set out to the ‘promised land’ together, but when their herds became too great and conflict arose between Lot’s herdsmen and Abraham’s, they parted company and Lot, being selfish, chose to go live in the fertile

valley where Sodom was situated, leaving Abraham to inhabit the rugged hill country. Then we read what happened after that:

Gen 19:1-19 ... *"Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ² And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square."³ Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. ⁴ Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; ⁵ and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."⁶ But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, ⁷ and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. ⁸ Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof."⁹ But they said, "Stand aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door. ¹⁰ But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway. ¹² Then the two men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; ¹³ for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it."¹⁴ Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting. ¹⁵ When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city."¹⁶ But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city. ¹⁷ When they had brought them outside, one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away."¹⁸ But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lords! ¹⁹ Now behold, your servant has found favour in your sight, and you have magnified your **lovingkindness** (TON **hesed**), which you have shown me by saving my life;"*

Verse 27-29 ... *"Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the Lord; ²⁸ and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹ Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived."*

Even though Peter (2 Pet 2:7) speaks of Lot as a righteous man, Lot was a carnal and selfish man, not a truly godly man like his uncle Abraham. However, because of Abraham's love for God and God's

lovingkindness toward Abraham – God’s (hesed) toward Abraham – we see God extending His lovingkindness (hesed) to Lot to save him from the disaster, and thereby to give Abraham some comfort that His nephew had been saved.

God’s attribute of lovingkindness – His being devoted entirely in giving Himself to Abraham’s and Lot’s needs was in action here.

So from this place of first mention we see the principle that God’s lovingkindness (His hesed) is directed to us and extends to caring for those around us who we love and care for even if they are not walking with God, simply because He cares for them as well as us. Because He loves us he gives them a second chance to experience and receive His love.

Amongst other things, this should bring great hope and comfort to parents of wayward children, or grandparents of rebellious grandchildren, and to believers who have friends who are not saved. Praise God, His lovingkindness endures forever!

The Exodus: It was God’s lovingkindness (His hesed) which delivered the Israelites from the drudgery of being slaves in Egypt, and we see this word used in Exodus 15 in the song of praise to God after they had come through the Red Sea and after Pharaoh’s army had been swallowed up by the sea, where the Moses and the children of Israel sing in acknowledgement God’s lovingkindness towards them.

Ex 15:13 ... *“In Your **lovingkindness** You have led the people whom You have redeemed; in Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation.”*

The 10 Commandments: Then in Exodus 20 where the Lord gave the 10 commandments we see this word used again:

Ex 20:1-6 ... *“Then God spoke all these words, saying, ²“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³“You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶but showing **lovingkindness** to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”*

Here God assures us as obedient believers, that His lovingkindness (His hesed), His characteristic of being devoted entirely in giving Himself to caring for us, is eternally guaranteed. But it’s also a warning that His wrath is on the disobedient, on those who continually and wilfully oppose Him or ignore Him.

We see this assurance and the warning repeated in Exodus 34 where God is telling Moses to cut two new stones on which to re-write the 10 commandments, to replace the ones Moses had shattered in anger against the sin of the people.

Ex 34:6-7 ... *“Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in **lovingkindness** and truth; ⁷ who keeps **lovingkindness** for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and*

sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

Then in Numbers 14 we read of where the Israelites were rebelling and giving Moses and Aaron a really hard time, that God sees this and says to Moses that He will just wipe the lot of them out and start again. To which Moses replies and says to God that He can't do that because it will cause the gentile nations around to say that God had tried to rescue the Israelites from Egypt but had failed and to cover His failure He had blotted them out. Moses appeals to the lovingkindness (the *hesed*) of God to pardon the people. God agrees and also assures Moses that His glory will one day cover the earth.

Num 14:15-21 ... *“Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, ¹⁶ ‘Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.’ ¹⁷ But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, ¹⁸ ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in **lovingkindness**, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.’ ¹⁹ Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your **lovingkindness**, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. So the Lord said, “I have pardoned them according to your word; ²¹ but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.”*

So we see here God's lovingkindness (His *hesed* – His propensity to give of Himself entirely to the needs at hand) is invoked through Moses' intercession. This shows us that God will answer the intercessory prayers of believers and His lovingkindness will be dispensed to, or exercised on behalf of, those for whom we pray. How good is our God!

2 Chr 16:9 ... *“For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”*

Ps 23:6 ... *“Surely goodness and **lovingkindness** (His *hesed*) will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

How wonderful, how good, and how gracious is our God!

Now, God not only freely displays this attribute of lovingkindness towards us, but He also wants us to have it as a fruit of our lives. This is one of His communicable attributes. He wants us to receive and then continually express lovingkindness to others around us. He wants us to live to bless.

Mic 6:8 ... *“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness (*hesed*), and to walk humbly with your God?”*

Zech 7:9-10 ... *“Thus has the Lord of hosts said, ‘Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; ¹⁰ and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.’”*

One last passage of scripture. This is found in 2 Chronicles 5. Solomon has completed the construction of the temple and brought up the arc of the covenant and the tent of meeting and all the holy utensils which were in the tent, and placed the arc in the inner sanctuary of the temple.

Then all the Levitical singers and their sons and kinsmen with all their musical instruments lifted their voices in unison, and we read:

2 Chr 5:13-14 ... *“when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the Lord saying, “He indeed is good for **His lovingkindness is everlasting**,” then the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud,¹⁴ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. “*

1 Cor 3:16 ... *“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*

1 Cor 6:19-20 ... *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”*

What these passages are telling us is that as we acknowledge God’s goodness and His lovingkindness, His continual giving of Himself entirely to seeing to our needs and caring for us, and as we in turn show lovingkindness to those around us, then as we lift our voices in praise, thanksgiving and worship we truly are worshipping in spirit and in truth, then we can expect the glory presence of the Lord, the manifest presence of the Lord, to descend upon us and to enfold us.

He told Moses that His glory would cover the earth. Will we be those who worship in spirit and truth and experience His glory presence? Because of God’s lovingkindness we are blessed, so will we in turn live to bless?

Finally

We started in Ps 136:1 ... *“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for **His lovingkindness is everlasting**.”* So let us end with the last verse of Ps 136

Ps 136:26 ... *“Give thanks to the God of heaven, for **His lovingkindness is everlasting**.”*

Some additional verses to look up

Lam 3:22-23 Prov 3:3

Ps 86:5, 13, 15

Ps 31:7-8, 14-16, 19-21

Ps 89:1-2, **14**, 33 Ps 92:2

Ps 32:10-11 Ps 33:5, 18-22

Ps 94:17-18 **Ps 100:5**

Ps 36:5-8 **Ps 40:11** Ps 51:1-2

Ps 103:1-5, 8, 17 Ps 106:1, 7, 45

Ps 57:3, 10 Ps 59:10, 17

Ps 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31

Ps 63:3-4 **Ps 66:20**

Ps 109:21, 26-27 Ps 117:1-2

Ps 69:13-17 Ps 85:7

Ps 130:7 Ps 143:7-9 **Ps 145:8** Ps 147:11