

Getting to Know God: His HESED

The *Hesed* of God

*It is universally recognized that hesed is one of the most theologically significant words in the Bible.*¹

It is translated in KJV most frequently by the word mercy, most frequently in the NIV by love.

245 occurrences in the Old Testament

In general, hesed refers to the obligation assumed by one person to act on behalf of another, who is usually dependent on the aid of the first and helpless to function adequately without it.

*"it is a kind of love, including mercy, when the object is in a pitiful state."*²

Matters to observe

the obligation assumed by one person (often covenant relationship)

In salvation, God assumes an obligation

to act on behalf of another

In salvation God sent his son to satisfy his righteousness and holiness. You could not do that

who is usually dependent on the aid of the first

In salvation, you are totally dependent upon the grace of God offered in Jesus Christ

helpless to function adequately without it.

Without salvation, we are completely helpless to be saved or to have a relationship with our creator

Some texts

Psalm 23:6, Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 106:1b, Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love endures forever.

Psalm 63:3, Because your love is better than life...

Psalm 107 is in Praise of Hesed

There are four sections in vv 4-32

¹ Zemek, *Psalm 119*, pp. 149, 150.

² Zemek, *Psalm 119*, pp. 149, 150.

These four “life or death” situations represent four pictures of Israel’s desperate plight in captivity.

Hopelessly lost and hungry, 4-9

Hopelessly imprisoned behind bars, 10-16

Hopelessly sick, 17-22

Hopelessly lost in a storm-tossed sea, 23-32

Each section has a pattern

Hopeless situation described

4-5, 10-12, 17-18, 23-27

Hopeless one cries for help

6, 13, 19, 28

God delivers because of his hesed

7, 14, 20, 29-30

People encouraged to praise because of his hesed and wonders.

8-9, 15-16, 21-22, 31-32.

Does everyone without exception get *hesed*? No...

As God has expressed his hesed to you, you ought to express it to others

David thought about a promise he made long ago, 9:1.

He has sworn *hesed* to Jonathan in perpetuity (1 Sam 20:14-17; cf 1 Sam 23:18; 24:21-22) The above promise was a promise made 15-20 years ago.

David is God-like: He keeps his promises even though time has elapsed. God’s promises don’t have a shelf-life, and neither should yours.

David expressed the same hesed to Mephibosheth that God expressed to him.

David made effort to find out, 9:2-5

Mephibosheth had done nothing to merit David’s favor, he was “unworthy,” 9:8, 6, furthermore, he knew David knew he was a son of a rival dynasty.

Yet David provided protection

Kindness = hesed, v 7

David provided provision

Land, v 7 and 9-10

David provided position³

You will always eat at my table, 7, 11b, 13. Because of being crippled, he had no status. David, in kindness, granted great status.

David doesn't simply spare Mephibosheth's life, he heaps great goodness upon him. David's kindness goes from survival to sustenance.

So what?

Are you sure you are a recipient of God's hesed through the new covenant wrought by the work of Christ on the cross?

If you are a recipient, do you express God's hesed to others?

³ The threefold "p" is from Dale Ralph Davis, *Out of Every Affliction*, p. 105.