

- I. Session 65: The Loving Kindness of God in the Old Testament Part 1: Meaning and its nature
- a. Purpose: In this session we shall explore the attribute of the loving-kindness of God as taught in the Old Testament and also draw implication for the Christian life as a result of our study.
 - b. What is “loving kindness?” This is from a unique word in the Hebrew Old Testament: *Hesed*
 - i. This is not an easy word to translate.
 - ii. The word in non-theological usage
 1. Nelson Glueck, the first person who wrote the foundational scholarly work on the word, notes “It becomes clear that *hesed* is received or shown only those among whom a definite relationship exists.”¹
 2. Specifically we see this term used in the following relationships²:
 - a. Relatives by blood or marriage
 - b. Host and Guest
 - c. Allies and their relatives
 - d. Friends
 - e. Rulers and subject
 - f. Those who have gain merit
 3. We see even in the Old Testament this term having the idea of loyalty in non-theological usage in the following examples:
 - a. We see this demonstrated also in **Genesis 20:13** with Abraham appealing to Sarah to lie because of the basis of loving kindness. Note here this is a Husband and Wife relationship.
 - b. We see this demonstrated in **Genesis 47:29** with Jacob appealing to Joseph to bring back his body to be buried in the promise land on the basis of loving kindness. Note here that this is a Father and son relationship.
 - c. **Ruth 3:10** is an example of that strong sense of duty with “loving kindness” when Boaz mentioned the example of Ruth. Of course Ruth was faithful to her widowed mother in law after her own husband has passed away.
 4. Thus this term has a sense of loyalty and duty.³
 5. It “is very closely related to the concept of mercy, but is distinguished from it in that *hesed* is obligatory.”⁴
 - iii. The word in relations to God
 1. “God’s *hesed* can only be understood as Yahweh’s covenantal relationship towards his followers.”⁵

¹ Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati, OH: The Hebrew Union College Press, 1967), 37.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, 40.

⁴ Ibid, 69.

⁵ Ibid, 102.

2. “The significance of *hesed* can be rendered by ‘loyalty,’ mutual aid’ or ‘reciprocal love.’”⁶
- c. Summarizing definition:
 - i. Many Bible teachers often like to translate this term as God’s covenantal love.
 - ii. It is God’s loyal love. That is, it is God’s faithful love.
- d. What does the Bible in the Old Testament teaches about the loving kindness of God?
 - i. Does God have “loving kindness?”
 1. **Genesis 24:27** is the first instance this word occurs in association with God: “*He said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.”*”
 - a. In context these are the words of Abraham’s slave after finding Rebecca as a wife for Isaac.
 - b. This here is a word of praise of God’s loving kindness.
 2. A statement that God is “lovingly kind” can be found in **Exodus 34:6**: “*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;”*”
 - ii. God’s loving kindness is associated with His love: “*The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.”*” (**Jeremiah 31:3**)
 1. While it is associated with God’s love, it also is something that can be still distinguished from his love as the verse shows.
 2. God’s loving kindness involves God’s love but it goes deeper than mere love.
 - iii. God’s loving kindness is Covenantal in nature
 1. **Deuteronomy 7:12** association with the covenant.
 2. Davidic Covenant is tied with loving kindness: **2 Samuel 7:14-15, Psalm 89:29, 89:49, 1 Kings 3:6** (in the last verse Solomon calls Lord’s *hesed* as great)
 3. Hosea 2:19
 - a. Hosea uses the marriage motif and imagery of God’s marriage to believers being betrothed to God to teach about God’s faithfulness and loving kindness.
 - b. Remember marriage is itself a covenant.
 - c. Remember also marriage is one of the non-theological occurrence of loving kindness as well; now God uses this to teach us about the nature of His own loving kindness.
 - iv. Therefore God’s loving kindness is forever
 1. **Isaiah 54:10** specifically states that God’s lovingkindness will not be removed: “*For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And*

⁶ Ibid, 102.

My covenant of peace will not be shaken,” Says the Lord who has compassion on you.”

2. A formulaic confession of God’s loving kindness found throughout the Bible is that God has loving kindness: **Jeremiah 33:11, Psalm 100:5, 106:1, 107:1, 118:1-4, Psalm 136:1.**
 - a. Note that in all the verses it mentions God’s goodness and God’s loving kindness.
 - b. Note also all these verses mentions that God’s loving kindness is everlasting.
- v. **Genesis 24:27** is the first instance this word occurs in association with God: *“He said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.”*
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