

Systematic Theology session 19
The Doctrine of God, "I Am Who I Am," Part 13

- The special love of God toward His people.
 - The saving love of God toward His elect as distinct from the non-saving love of God toward mankind generally.
 - The love of God toward His people is often referred to by the Hebrew word "chesed" in the Old Testament.
 - This word tends to be translated "lovingkindness" in the KJV, or "steadfast love" in the ESV.
- The special love of God for His people, steadfast love, is sovereign.
 - The definition of God's sovereign will: "The will of God, which is not conditioned or bound by any other power and thus exists as the supreme and sovereign reality over all else."
 - The objects of God's steadfast love are chosen by God; His choice is not conditioned or bound by any other power, or by merit of the person He chooses to love.
 - It is a mystery why God chooses some to be vessels of mercy, and others to be vessels of wrath, since we all demerit His love, and have earned judgment.
- The special love of God for His people, steadfast love, is a love that God initiates.
 - God carried out the plan of salvation while we were still His enemies.
 - Humans tend to have love that is responsive to the love of another, but God initiates His steadfast love.
 - "We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19).
- The special love of God for His people, steadfast love, is a timeless love.
 - God knew His people and predestined them, by name, before the foundation of the world.
 - God predestined His people "in love" (Ephesians 1:3-6).
 - Just as God's steadfast love for His people existed in eternity past, it will exist through eternity future ("so we will always be with the Lord" -- 1 Thessalonians 4:17).
 - The steadfast love of God for His people is an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3).
- The special love of God for His people, steadfast love, is unchanging and enduring.
 - "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)
 - God's immutability, His inability to change, means that God's favor to His people never varies. God is not capricious like the false gods of Greece and Rome were imagined to be. There is no variation or shifting shadow with God's steadfast love (James 1:17).
- The special love of God for His people, steadfast love, is characterized by depth of relationship.
 - The relationship between God and His people is assured and guaranteed by God's commitment to His people in the form of a covenant.
 - The summation of the covenant: "I shall be your God, and you shall be my people."
- The special love of God for His people, steadfast love, is possessive.
 - Those to whom Christ has given eternal life will never perish, and no one can snatch them from Christ's hand or the Father's hand (John 10:25-30).
- The special love of God for His people, steadfast love, is manifested to us, through the merits of Christ, in mercy and grace. This does not mean that God suspends justice—it means that for His people, justice has been satisfied by Christ, as our substitute, at the cross.