

Bite Size Bible Study

God's Unfailing Love for All Mankind #174

By Pastor Lee

In an earlier study we covered several important attributes of God. How he is eternal, not limited by time and space, all-powerful, and all knowing. We only touched on one of His most important attributes – His unconditional love.

The word used for God's unfailing love is often translated from the Hebrew word *Hesed* (sometimes seen as *Chesed*). *Hesed* has a wider and deeper meaning than can be expressed in any one or two English words. It is a love that is so enduring that it persists beyond any sin or betrayal to mend brokenness and graciously extend forgiveness. It is a love that sees no end; no obstacle can defeat it or make it grow weak.

God's love for us (all of mankind) is so deep and endless that He said through the prophet Isaiah "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love (*hesed*) for you will not be shaken" Isaiah 54:10.

Even though we fall short of doing things right and sometimes even deliberately do things to hurt ourselves or others, this love from God remains. For those of us that were fortunate enough to grow up in a home with loving parents and siblings, we have a tiny glimpse of how great this love is. But even then it had its limits. God's *hesed* has no limits.

"No one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though He brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love (*hesed*)." Lamentations 3:31-32

God's love is not just a "feel good" feeling; it is accompanied by action. God actively loves us. He sustains the universe in which we live. He provides for our needs. He supports us by His Holy Spirit to have faith and understanding that this physical life we are living is just the beginning of a much fuller and richer life to come. This love is extended to every human being, but not all recognize it or are able to respond to it at the present time.

In this life we will have grief and trials that may seem overwhelming but the promise of a future life helps those who can recognize it to be able to continue through all trials. These tests and trials give us the opportunity to see what is good and experience some of the things that are not so good, so that we will avoid them in the future.

Because *hesed* is often active, it's sometimes translated as "mercy" or "loving-kindness," but neither of these words fully conveys that *hesed* acts out of unswerving

loyalty even to the most undeserving. We ask ourselves how God can love someone that refuses to acknowledge Him and continues to do things that are hurtful to themselves and to others. How can we justify that behavior?

The answer may be that God sees this person, not as he or she is, but how they can be in the future. In the present this person may be experiencing issues that they are incapable of properly handling at this time. It could be issues from childhood, or issues of being deeply hurt by someone. There are millions of ways we hurt each other as human beings. Sometimes we can deal with it, other times we lash out at others and hurt them.

For those of us that can, we need to start learning and practicing *hesed*.

Hate the hurtful behavior

but

Love the person

"Love others as you love yourself" is a motto that we are taught. But that love falls short of *hesed*. We need to love others as God loves them. We need to love them as they need to be loved right now. We need to serve them actively and with compassion and understanding of where they are now in their lives and to find ways of assisting them to grow out of the hurtful things that they are living and dealing with at present.

Sometimes Christians try to differentiate between "us and *them*". However, that is not how God sees the situation. Remember, we were the *them* before we began to know God. They may very likely come to know God and trust Him as we do now. Let's not be so arrogant as to believe that we are better than *them*.

God chose each of us to come to the knowledge of who He is, at a time He deemed appropriate for each individual. It is not good for us to question His actions.

It is good to remember that He is **omniscient** – We are not. We rarely know the complete history of a person and what has shaped them to act and think the way that they do.

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