

The Loyal Love of God

Psalm 136

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

2 Give thanks to the God of gods,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

4 to him who alone does great wonders,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

5 to him who by understanding made the heavens,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

6 to him who spread out the earth above the waters,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

7 to him who made the great lights,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

8 the sun to rule over the day,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

9 the moon and stars to rule over the night,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

10 to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

11 and brought Israel out from among them,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

12 with a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

13 to him who divided the Red Sea in two,

for his steadfast love endures forever;

14 and made Israel pass through the midst of it,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

15 but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

16 to him who led his people through the wilderness,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

17 to him who struck down great kings,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

18 and killed mighty kings,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

19 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

20 and Og, king of Bashan,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

21 and gave their land as a heritage,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

22 a heritage to Israel his servant,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

23 It is he who remembered us in our low estate,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

24 and rescued us from our foes,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

25 he who gives food to all flesh,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

26 Give thanks to the God of heaven,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

Introduction

Psalm 136 is a liturgy of thanksgiving; the structure suggests that it was used antiphonally in worship, with one part of the congregation making a statement or phrase and the other part responding with the refrain ***for his steadfast love endures forever.***

As we study this Psalm, we must keep in mind that our God is the God of the covenant. He established His covenant first with Abraham, He binds Abraham to Himself, and then renews it with the rest of the patriarchs. This Psalm is about lifting our praise to the God of the covenant and to that covenant, which is the blessed "tie that binds": God choose to tie Himself with us!

The recurring refrain in Psalm 136 "*for his steadfast love endures forever*" is repeated twenty- six times in this Psalm for a purpose; firstly to make us stop, slow down and consider why it was necessary for the Psalmists to reiterate this statement numerous times, was it an intentional repetition to make this point sink in. Secondly, is to ask the question what is the meaning of 'steadfast love' or in some translations we find the word 'mercy', 'lovingkindness' or 'unfailing love.'

The word 'love' in the English language is an unclear word, used generally: it is used to describe a love for pizza at the same time it is also used to confess our love for another person: spouse, parent, sibling or our children. To comprehend how this word 'love' is used in the Bible we must first look at how the Bible characterizes God.

Exodus 34:6 states *The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in **loyal love** and faithfulness.* Loyal love is a translation of the Hebrew word **hesed**: which combines the ideas of **concrete acts of love**, motivated by **generosity** and an **enduring commitment**; it is the kind of love demonstrated by someone determined to keep a promise and motivated to endure and maintain a covenant through self-giving generosity. It describes an act of **promise keeping loyalty**; God's loyal and generous commitment to his often underserving people.

When we take time to meditate on these words we begin to see the dimensions and the depths of God's love for us. It is not an emotion or a feeling; it is concrete acts of love given to the recipient based not on our worthiness but centered on the very *character of God*. As I began to mediate on the aspects of God's love towards me, God helped me realize the extent of His love for me. I encourage each of you to take time to mediate on God's hesed for you!

1. Worship The God of Love

<p>¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for <i>his loyal love endures</i>.</p> <p>² Give thanks to the God of gods, for <i>his loyal love endures</i>.</p> <p>³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for <i>his loyal love endures</i>,</p>	<p>Who is God?</p> <p>Lord - the personal God of Israel</p> <p>God of gods - supreme God</p> <p>Lord of lords - God over all authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ He is worthy▪ He is good▪ He is perfect and brings all things to His perfection▪ His loyal love which endures forever: <i>He is the God who commits Himself <u>unconditionally</u> to His people and never <u>abandons</u> that commitment.</i>
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2. Creation is an Act of God's Divine Love

<p>⁴ to the one who performs magnificent, amazing deeds all by himself, for his loyal love endures,</p> <p>⁵ to the one who used wisdom to make the heavens, for his loyal love endures,</p> <p>⁶ to the one who spread out the earth over the water, for his loyal love endures,</p> <p>⁷ to the one who made the great lights, for his loyal love endures,</p> <p>⁸ the sun to rule by day, for his loyal love endures,</p> <p>⁹ the moon and stars to rule by night, for his loyal love endures,</p>	<p>God is Omnipotent.</p> <p>In creation God shows us His power, His order, and His sovereign plan for this world. The entire cosmos is upheld by the covenant God because of His loyal love for His people.</p> <p>The Psalmist implores his readers to always see the loyal love of God in creation around us.</p> <p>Psalm 119:64 The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!</p> <p>Acts 14:17 God 'has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy'</p>
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3. The Loyal Love of God For His People

¹⁰ to the one who **struck down** the firstborn of Egypt, for his loyal love endures,
¹¹ and **led** Israel out from their midst, for his loyal love endures,
¹² with a **strong hand** and an **outstretched arm**, for his loyal love endures,
¹³ to the one who **divided** the Red Sea in two, for his loyal love endures,
¹⁴ and **led** Israel through its midst, for his loyal love endures,
¹⁵ and **tossed** Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea, for his loyal love endures,
¹⁶ to the one who led his people through the **wilderness**, for his loyal love endures,
¹⁷ to the one who struck down **great kings**, for his loyal love endures,
¹⁸ and killed **powerful kings**, for his loyal love endures,
¹⁹ Sihon, king of the Amorites, for his loyal love endures,
²⁰ Og, king of Bashan, for his loyal love endures,
²¹ and **gave** their land as an inheritance, for his loyal love endures,
²² as an **inheritance** to Israel his servant, for his loyal love endures
²³ to the one who **remembered us** when we were down, for his loyal love endures,
²⁴ and **snatched** us away from our enemies, for his loyal love endures,
²⁵ to the one who gives **food** to all living things, for his loyal love endures.
²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his loyal love endures!

God Kept His Covenant through Jesus Christ

After centuries of Israel betraying their commitment to God and after humanity's long history of violence, death and rebellion, God still kept His promise in a dramatic and drastic way by becoming human and **binding himself to us in the person of Jesus**. In His life, death and resurrection God opened up a future for all of us and for all of creation and God did this because He is generous, loving and eternally loyal to His promises.

The account from vs.10 to 22 is the deliverance story of Israel from Egypt and it is a shadow of what Jesus Christ has done for us: our deliverance story! As we read the account and pay close attention to the words that the Psalmist employs, we cannot but remember the character of God displayed in Christ.

We have so much to rejoice and be thankful for, He remembers us, He saves us and He sustains us, because of His loyal love for each of us.

Conclusion

Let us trust in the love of God, which remains constant amid our fluctuations, and unaffected by our failures and sins, so long as we return from our backslidings with repentance on our lips.

When we experience the purity and power of God's loyal love shown through Jesus it compels us to rethink how and why we can show hesed (loyal love) back to God and to others. Hesed binds a man to His Lord and to His neighbor.

Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do **justice**, and to **love kindness**, and to walk **humbly** with your God?

Israel responded to God's request by trying to appease him with sacrifices, hoping he would then leave them alone. But sacrifices and other religious rituals aren't enough; *God wants changed lives*. He wants his people to be fair, just, merciful, and humble. God wants us to become *living sacrifices* (Romans 12:1-2) that live rightly before Him. It is impossible to follow God consistently without his transforming love in our hearts.

Prayer Items

Lamentations 3:21-24

²¹ Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: ²² Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait (hope) for (in) him."

Loyal love

Concrete acts of love

Generosity

Enduring commitment

Promise keeping loyalty

We will learn to abide in His endless love that last forever.

Church

- For wisdom in planning our return back to physical services.
- God will continue to shape our lives through His Word, allowing truth to build us as a church.
- We will be a place of prayer and worship. Teach us to pray, to stand in the gap for this nation and all the peoples of the land.
- Give us strength to live as ambassadors for Christ in the world. Where we will extend help, be compassionate and kind and take every opportunity to shine for Christ.
- We will take time to praise, worship and read His Word (our closet time).

Covid19

- Reopening of schools & economy
- Job opportunities – the unemployed
- Healing for the sick
- Comfort and strength for those who have lost loved ones
- Mental health

Healing

Carrie's parents (covid)

Nation

- God will guide the leaders of this nation.
- Racial reconciliation
- Salvation for this nation
- The Church will be God's instrument for unity, integrity and racial harmony.
- God will convict the hearts of the people of the damage that greed and corruption brings to the nation.
- Justice, compassion and mercy especially towards the poor, the foreigners and the weak.