

Surprised by
Hesed

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Surprised by
Hesed

Our Pain,
God's Love,
and Psalms

MARK FEEZELL

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<https://DrFeezell.com/surprised-by-hesed>

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Please note that the following changes have been made from the Berean Standard Bible:

1. The word **hesed** has been substituted in the translation anywhere that **hesed** appears in the underlying Hebrew text.
2. All the original line breaks, verse numbers, psalm dedications and psalm titles have been removed.
3. Paragraph breaks have been added where there are stanza breaks in the BSB text.

Because of these changes, the psalm versions in this book should not be cited as definitive versions of the Berean Standard Bible translation. Readers are encouraged to read the original Berean Standard Bible at bereanbible.com and to compare the BSB with other translations.

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Soli Deo gloria

*Today rabah to Andrew and Bethany Case of Aleph with Beth and the band Miqedem for encouraging me to begin my journey into the Hebrew Psalms when my heart was crushed. Thank you for leading the way with excellence and humility. May He crown you with *hesed* and compassion.*

I will sing of the **hesed** of the LORD forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, “**Hesed** is built up forever; in the heavens You establish Your faithfulness.”

You said, “I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant: ‘I will establish your offspring forever and build up your throne for all generations.’”

—Psalm 89:1-4

While they were describing these events, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” But they were startled and frightened, thinking they had seen a spirit.

“Why are you troubled,” Jesus asked, “and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself. Touch Me and see—for *a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.*”

—Luke 24:36-39

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction: God's Hesed Love</i>	1
---------------------------------------	---

PART ONE: CRYING FOR HIS HESED

Psalm 13	6
Psalm 6	7
Psalm 44:13-26	8
Psalm 69:1-17	10
Psalm 88	12
Psalm 42	14
Psalm 86	16
Psalm 77	18
Psalm 31:1-16	20
Psalm 109:21-31	22
Psalm 143	23
Psalm 57	25
Psalm 51:1-13	27
Psalm 130	28

PART TWO: HOPING IN HIS HESED

Psalm 23	30
Psalm 91	31
Psalm 63	33
Psalm 36:5-12	34
Psalm 121	35
Psalm 61	36
Psalm 62	37

Psalm 40:10–17	39
Psalm 85	40
Psalm 103	42
Psalm 90	44
Psalm 59:9–17	46
Psalm 25	47
Psalm 32	49

PART THREE: PRAISING HIM FOR HIS HESED

Psalm 100	52
Psalm 108:1–6	53
Psalm 138	54
Psalm 136	55
Psalm 98	57
Psalm 92:1–8	58
Psalm 118:1–24	59
Psalm 33	61
Psalm 145	63
Psalm 147:1–11	65
Psalm 107	66
Psalm 115	69
Psalm 29	71
Psalm 117	72
<i>Postlude: What Next?</i>	73
<i>Appendix One: FAQs</i>	83
<i>Appendix Two: Reading Plans</i>	97
<i>Index of Psalms</i>	99

INTRODUCTION

God's *Hesed* Love

Are you hurting?

DOES IT FEEL like God is against you? Does it seem that God has abandoned you? Have you screamed alone at God about his injustice? Have you cried alone in your car or in your closet? Have you felt the accusing eyes of others on you?

Have you been told you should have more faith, you should pray more, you should read the Bible more—but you already tried all that? Have you been told that you need to be a better parent? That you need to believe harder? That you must have sin in your life? That you need better theology?

Do the easy answers of your church friends sound hollow? Is “He’s God, so shut up” not good enough? Or is your pain so deep that you avoid church entirely?

This book is for you.

God sees you, and He’s not angry at you. He has always loved you, and He loves you even still.

No matter what happened. *Really.*

Hesed love?

HEBREW HAS A special word for God's love for you: **hesed**. It rhymes with the two-syllable version of "bless-ed." (In Hebrew, the first letter makes a throaty sound like the German CH in Bach, but you can just say "**hesed**" in English.)

Hesed has been translated as "loving devotion," "faithful love," "steadfast love," "lovingkindness," "loyal covenant love," "grace," and "mercy," but there's really no way to express it well in English. When we say "love," even Christian love, we don't always include quite what **hesed** does.

Hesed love is fierce love. It has guts. It chases us down and calls after us and waits for us and searches until it finds us. **Hesed** is the father who runs out the door to hug the long lost son returning home. **Hesed** is the mom who stays up waiting anxiously for her daughter. **Hesed** leaves the 99 sheep to find the one that wandered off.

Hesed stands up for the crushed, the hopeless, the struggling. It seeks out those nobody else sees. It runs into the dark places. **Hesed** fights the human traffickers. It adopts the orphan. **Hesed** is the friend who stands by no matter what.

Hesed has grit. It follows you deep into the woods when the sun is setting. **Hesed** rushes out beyond the safety railing to pull you back from the edge of the cliff. It sleeps on the floor of the hospital room. **Hesed** walks across glass.

Hesed always keeps its word. It loses everything because it made a promise. **Hesed** never looks behind, and it never counts the cost. **Hesed** is the soldier who runs into enemy fire to carry out the fallen, then turns around to do it again. **Hesed** takes the bullet so the family will never have to. **Hesed** never wavers, it never turns back, and it never hesitates.

Hesed bleeds. **Hesed** dies.

Jesus embodied **hesed** when He took the beating and the crown of thorns. It was **hesed** when Jesus let them nail Him to a cross, and it was God's **hesed** that has "given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4, BSB).

You need to know God's **hesed** love in the midst of your pain. This book journeys through a series of psalms that have helped me better understand God's **hesed**. In these psalms, God's **hesed** love will meet you in your pain with care and compassion, not judgment. God's **hesed** is chasing after you.

God knows your thirst. He has seen your tears. Read on and drink pools of water.

PART ONE

Crying for
His *Hesed*

Psalm 13

“How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?”

—Psalm 13:1a, BSB

HOW LONG, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I wrestle in my soul, with sorrow in my heart each day? How long will my enemy dominate me?

Consider me and respond, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death, lest my enemy say, “I have overcome him,” and my foes rejoice when I fall.

But I have trusted in Your **hesed**; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for He has been good to me.

Psalm 6

“...all night I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.”

—Psalm 6:6b, BSB

O LORD, DO NOT rebuke me in Your anger or discipline me in Your wrath. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am frail; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are in agony. My soul is deeply distressed. How long, O LORD, how long?

Turn, O LORD, and deliver my soul; save me because of Your **hesed**. For there is no mention of You in death; who can praise You from Sheol?

I am weary from groaning; all night I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes fail from grief; they grow dim because of all my foes.

Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for the LORD has heard my weeping. The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer. All my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed; they will turn back in sudden disgrace.

Psalm 44:13–26

“You have crushed us in the lair of jackals; You have covered us with deepest darkness.”

—Psalm 44:19, BSB

YOU HAVE MADE us a reproach to our neighbors, a mockery and derision to those around us. You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples. All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face, at the voice of the scorner and reviler, because of the enemy, bent on revenge.

All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten You or betrayed Your covenant. Our hearts have not turned back; our steps have not strayed from Your path. But You have crushed us in the lair of jackals; You have covered us with deepest darkness.

If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, would not God have discovered, since He knows the secrets of the heart? Yet for Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

Wake up, O Lord! Why are You sleeping? Arise! Do not reject us forever. Why do You hide Your face and forget our affliction and oppression? For our soul has sunk to the dust; our bodies cling to the earth. Rise up; be our help! Redeem us on account of Your **hesed**.

Psalm 69:1–17

*“In Your abundant **hesed**, O God, answer me with Your sure salvation.”*

—Psalm 69:13b

SAVE ME, O God, for the waters are up to my neck. I have sunk into the miry depths, where there is no footing; I have drifted into deep waters, where the flood engulfs me. I am weary from my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God. Those who hate me without cause outnumber the hairs of my head; many are those who would destroy me—my enemies for no reason. Though I did not steal, I must repay.

You know my folly, O God, and my guilt is not hidden from You. May those who hope in You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of Hosts; may those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel. For I have endured scorn for Your sake, and shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers and a foreigner to my mother’s sons, because zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult You have fallen on me. I wept and fasted, but it brought me reproach. I made

sackcloth my clothing, and I was sport to them. Those who sit at the gate mock me, and I am the song of drunkards.

But my prayer to You, O LORD, is for a time of favor. In Your abundant **heseḏ**, O God, answer me with Your sure salvation. Rescue me from the mire and do not let me sink; deliver me from my foes and out of the deep waters. Do not let the floods engulf me or the depths swallow me up; let not the Pit close its mouth over me. Answer me, O LORD, for Your **heseḏ** is good; turn to me in keeping with Your great compassion. Hide not Your face from Your servant, for I am in distress. Answer me quickly!

Psalm 88

“But to You, O LORD, I cry for help; in the morning my prayer comes before You.”

—Psalm 88:13, BSB

OLORD, THE GOD of my salvation, day and night I cry out before You. May my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol. I am counted among those descending to the Pit. I am like a man without strength.

I am forsaken among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, who are cut off from Your care.

You have laid me in the lowest Pit, in the darkest of the depths. Your wrath weighs heavily upon me; all Your waves have submerged me. *Selah*

You have removed my friends from me; You have made me repulsive to them; I am confined and cannot escape. My eyes grow dim with grief. I call to You daily, O LORD; I spread out my hands to You. Do You work wonders for the dead? Do departed spirits rise up to praise You? *Selah*

Can Your **hesed** be proclaimed in the grave, Your faithfulness in Abaddon? Will Your wonders be known in the darkness, or Your righteousness

in the land of oblivion? But to You, O LORD, I cry for help; in the morning my prayer comes before You. Why, O LORD, do You reject me? Why do You hide Your face from me?

From my youth I was afflicted and near death. I have borne Your terrors; I am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me; Your terrors have destroyed me. All day long they engulf me like water; they enclose me on every side. You have removed my beloved and my friend; darkness is my closest companion.

Psalm 42

“Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.”

—Psalm 42:11b, BSB

AS THE DEER pants for streams of water, so my soul longs after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When shall I come and appear in God’s presence? My tears have been my food both day and night, while men ask me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things come to mind as I pour out my soul: how I walked with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God with shouts of joy and praise.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him for the salvation of His presence.

O my God, my soul despairs within me. Therefore I remember You from the land of Jordan and the peaks of Hermon—even from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of Your waterfalls; all Your breakers and waves have rolled over me. The LORD decrees His **hesed** by day, and at night His song is with me as a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God my Rock, “Why have You forgotten me? Why must I walk in sorrow because of the enemy’s oppression?” Like the crushing of my bones, my enemies taunt me, while they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.

Psalm 86

*“In the day of my distress I call on
You, because You answer me.”*

—Psalm 86:7, BSB

INCLINE YOUR EAR, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am godly. You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You. Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I call to You all day long. Bring joy to Your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

For You, O Lord, are kind and forgiving, rich in **hesed** to all who call on You. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and attend to my plea for mercy. In the day of my distress I call on You, because You answer me.

O Lord, there is none like You among the gods, nor any works like Yours. All the nations You have made will come and bow before You, O Lord, and they will glorify Your name. For You are great and perform wonders; You alone are God.

Teach me Your way, O LORD, that I may walk in Your truth. Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify Your name forever. For great is Your **hesed** to me; You have delivered me from the depths of Sheol.

The arrogant rise against me, O God; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, with no regard for You. But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in **hese** and faithfulness.

Turn to me and have mercy; grant Your strength to Your servant; save the son of Your maidservant. Show me a sign of Your goodness, that my enemies may see and be ashamed; for You, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Psalm 77

“Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, but Your footprints were not to be found.”

—Psalm 77:19, BSB

I CRIED OUT TO God; I cried aloud to God to hear me. In the day of trouble I sought the Lord; through the night my outstretched hands did not grow weary; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered You, O God, and I groaned; I mused and my spirit grew faint. *Selah*

You have kept my eyes from closing; I am too troubled to speak. I considered the days of old, the years long in the past. At night I remembered my song; in my heart I mused, and my spirit pondered:

“Will the Lord spurn us forever and never show His favor again? Is His **hesed** gone forever? Has His promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has His anger shut off His compassion?” *Selah*

So I said, “I am grieved that the right hand of the Most High has changed.”

I will remember the works of the LORD; yes, I will remember Your wonders of old. I will reflect on all You have done and ponder Your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so

great as our God? You are the God who works wonders; You display Your strength among the peoples. With power You redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah*

The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You and swirled; even the depths were shaken. The clouds poured down water; the skies resounded with thunder; Your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder resounded in the whirlwind; the lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked.

Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, but Your footprints were not to be found. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Psalm 31:1–16

“My times are in Your hands.”

—Psalm 31:15a, BSB

IN YOU, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; save me by Your righteousness. Incline Your ear to me; come quickly to my rescue. Be my rock of refuge, the stronghold of my deliverance.

For You are my rock and my fortress; lead me and guide me for the sake of Your name. You free me from the net laid out for me, for You are my refuge. Into Your hands I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD, God of truth.

I hate those who cling to worthless idols, but in the LORD I trust. I will be glad and rejoice in Your **hesed**, for You have seen my affliction; You have known the anguish of my soul. You have not delivered me to the enemy; You have set my feet in the open.

Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes fail from sorrow, my soul and body as well. For my life is consumed with grief and my years with groaning; my iniquity has drained my strength, and my bones are wasting away. Among all my enemies I am a disgrace, and among my neighbors even more. I am dreaded by my friends—they flee when they see me on the street.

I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind. I am like a broken vessel. For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side. They conspire against me and plot to take my life.

But I trust in You, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in Your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Make Your face shine on Your servant; save me by Your **heseḏ**.

Psalm 109:21–31

*“Help me, O LORD my God; save me according to Your **hesed**.”*

—Psalm 109:26

BUT YOU, O GOD, the Lord, deal kindly with me for the sake of Your name; deliver me by the goodness of Your **hesed**. For I am poor and needy; my heart is wounded within me. I am fading away like a lengthening shadow; I am shaken off like a locust. My knees are weak from fasting, and my body grows lean and gaunt. I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they shake their heads.

Help me, O LORD my God; save me according to Your **hesed**. Let them know that this is Your hand, that You, O LORD, have done it. Though they curse, You will bless. When they rise up, they will be put to shame, but Your servant will rejoice. May my accusers be clothed with disgrace; may they wear their shame like a robe. With my mouth I will thank the LORD profusely; I will praise Him in the presence of many. For He stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from the condemners of his soul.

Psalm 143

“Let me hear Your **hesed** in the morning, for I have put my trust in You.”

—Psalm 143:8a

OLORD, HEAR MY prayer. In Your faithfulness, give ear to my plea; in Your righteousness, answer me. Do not bring Your servant into judgment, for no one alive is righteous before You.

For the enemy has pursued my soul, crushing my life to the ground, making me dwell in darkness like those long since dead. My spirit grows faint within me; my heart is dismayed inside me.

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I consider the work of Your hands. I stretch out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land. *Selah*

Answer me quickly, O LORD; my spirit fails. Do not hide Your face from me, or I will be like those who descend to the Pit. Let me hear Your **hesed** in the morning, for I have put my trust in You. Teach me the way I should walk, for to You I lift up my soul. Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD; I flee to You for refuge. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. May Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

For the sake of Your name, O LORD, revive me. In Your righteousness, bring my soul out of trouble. And in Your **hesed**, cut off my enemies. Destroy all who afflict me, for I am Your servant.

Psalm 57

“Your **hesed** reaches to the heavens,
and Your faithfulness to the clouds.”

—Psalm 57:10

HAVE MERCY ON me, O God, have mercy, for in You my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of Your wings I will take shelter until the danger has passed. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me. He reaches down from heaven and saves me; He rebukes those who trample me. *Selah*

God sends forth His **hesed** and His truth. My soul is among the lions; I lie down with ravenous beasts—with men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; may Your glory cover all the earth.

They spread a net for my feet; my soul was despondent. They dug a pit before me, but they themselves have fallen into it! *Selah*

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make music. Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.

I will praise You, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing Your praises among the peoples. For Your **hesed** reaches to the heavens, and Your faithfulness to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; may Your glory cover all the earth.

Psalm 51:1–13

“Create in me a clean heart, O God.”

—Psalm 51:10a, BSB

HAVE MERCY ON me, O God, according to Your *hesed*; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me clean of my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be proved right when You speak and blameless when You judge. Surely I was brought forth in iniquity; I was sinful when my mother conceived me.

Surely You desire truth in the inmost being; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence; take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You.

Psalm 130

*“...with the LORD is **hesed**, and with Him is redemption in abundance.”*

—Psalm 130:7b,c

OUT OF THE depths I cry to You, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice; let Your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy.

If You, O LORD, kept track of iniquities, then who, O Lord, could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, so that You may be feared.

I wait for the LORD; my soul does wait, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning—more than watchmen wait for the morning.

O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is **hesed**, and with Him is redemption in abundance. And He will redeem Israel from all iniquity.

PART TWO

Hoping in
His *Hesed*

Psalm 23

*“Surely goodness and **hesed** will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”*

—Psalm 23:6

THE LORD IS my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and **hesed** will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 91

“When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him.”

—Psalm 91:15, BSB

HE WHO DWELLS in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, “You are my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

Surely He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly plague. He will cover you with His feathers; under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the calamity that destroys at noon. Though a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, no harm will come near you. You will only see it with your eyes and witness the punishment of the wicked.

Because you have made the LORD your dwelling—my refuge, the Most High—no evil will befall you, no plague will approach your tent. For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will lift you up in their

hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and cobra; you will trample the young lion and serpent.

“Because he loves Me, I will deliver him; because he knows My name, I will protect him. When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation.”

Psalm 63

“Your **hesed** is better than life.”

—Psalm 63:3a

O GOD, YOU ARE my God. Earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You. My body yearns for You in a dry and weary land without water.

So I have seen You in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and glory. Because Your **hesed** is better than life, my lips will glorify You. So I will bless You as long as I live; in Your name I will lift my hands.

My soul is satisfied as with the richest of foods; with joyful lips my mouth will praise You. When I remember You on my bed, I think of You through the watches of the night. For You are my help; I will sing for joy in the shadow of Your wings. My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.

But those who seek my life to destroy it will go into the depths of the earth. They will fall to the power of the sword; they will become a portion for foxes. But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by Him will exult, for the mouths of liars will be shut.

Psalm 36:5–12

“...in Your light we see light.”

—Psalm 36:9b, BSB

YOUR **HESED**, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the highest mountains; Your judgments are like the deepest sea. O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your **hesed**, O God, that the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings! They feast on the abundance of Your house, and You give them drink from Your river of delights. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.

Extend Your **hesed** to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of the proud come against me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away. There the evildoers lie fallen, thrown down and unable to rise.

Psalm 121

*“The LORD will watch over your coming
and going, both now and forevermore.”*

—Psalm 121:8, BSB

LIFT UP MY eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber. Behold, the Protector of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is the shade on your right hand. The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The LORD will guard you from all evil; He will preserve your soul. The LORD will watch over your coming and going, both now and forevermore.

Psalm 61

“...Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

—Psalm 61:2b, BSB

HEAR MY CRY, O God; attend to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call out to You whenever my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been my refuge, a tower of strength against the enemy. Let me dwell in Your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. *Selah*

For You have heard my vows, O God; You have given me the inheritance reserved for those who fear Your name.

Increase the days of the king's life; may his years span many generations. May he sit enthroned in God's presence forever; appoint Your **hesed** and Your faithfulness to guard him. Then I will ever sing praise to Your name and fulfill my vows day by day.

Psalm 62

“He is my fortress; I will not be shaken.”

—Psalm 62:2b, BSB

IN GOD ALONE my soul finds rest; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress; I will never be shaken.

How long will you threaten a man? Will all of you throw him down like a leaning wall or a tottering fence? They fully intend to cast him down from his lofty perch; they delight in lies; with their mouths they bless, but inwardly they curse. *Selah*

Rest in God alone, O my soul, for my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress; I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor rest on God, my strong rock; my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts before Him. God is our refuge. *Selah*

Lowborn men are but a vapor, the exalted but a lie. Weighed on the scale, they go up; together they are but a vapor. Place no trust in extortion, or false hope in stolen goods. If your riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.

God has spoken once; I have heard this twice:
that power belongs to God, and **hesed** to You, O
Lord. For You will repay each man according to
his deeds.

Psalm 40:10–17

*“Your **hesed** and faithfulness will always guard me.”*

—Psalm 40:11b

I HAVE NOT COVERED up Your righteousness in my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and salvation; I have not concealed Your **hesed** and faithfulness from the great assembly.

O LORD, do not withhold Your mercy from me; Your **hesed** and faithfulness will always guard me. For evils without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, so that I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart has failed within me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; hurry, O LORD, to help me.

May those who seek my life be ashamed and confounded; may those who wish me harm be repelled and humiliated. May those who say to me, “Aha, aha!” be appalled at their own shame. May all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; may those who love Your salvation always say, “The LORD be magnified!”

But I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my helper and deliverer; O my God, do not delay.

Psalm 85

*“Surely His salvation is near to those
who fear Him...”*

—Psalm 85:9a, BSB

YOU SHOWED FAVOR to Your land, O LORD;
You restored Jacob from captivity. You
forgave the iniquity of Your people; You
covered all their sin. *Selah*

You withheld all Your fury; You turned from
Your burning anger.

Restore us, O God of our salvation, and put
away Your displeasure toward us. Will You be
angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your
anger to all generations? Will You not revive
us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?
Show us Your **hesed**, O LORD, and grant us
Your salvation.

I will listen to what God the LORD will say; for
He will surely speak peace to His people and His
saints; He will not let them return to folly. Surely
His salvation is near to those who fear Him, that
His glory may dwell in our land.

Hesed and faithfulness have joined together;
righteousness and peace have kissed. Faithfulness
sprouts from the earth, and righteousness looks
down from heaven. The LORD will indeed provide

what is good, and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before Him to prepare the
way for His steps.

Psalm 103

*“He knows our frame; He is mindful
that we are dust.”*

—Psalm 103:14, BSB

BLESS THE LORD, O my soul; all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all His kind deeds—He who forgives all your iniquities and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit and crowns you with **hesed** and compassion, who satisfies you with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the people of Israel. The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in **hesed**. He will not always accuse us, nor harbor His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins or repaid us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His **hesed** for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He is mindful that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass—he blooms like a flower of the field; when the wind passes over, it vanishes, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the **hesed** of the LORD extends to those who fear Him, and His righteousness to their children’s children—to those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts. The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.

Bless the LORD, all His angels mighty in strength who carry out His word, who hearken to the voice of His command. Bless the LORD, all His hosts, you servants who do His will. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Psalm 90

*“So teach us to number our days, that
we may present a heart of wisdom.”*

—Psalm 90:12, BSB

LORD, YOU HAVE been our dwelling place through all generations. Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.

You return man to dust, saying, “Return, O sons of mortals.” For in Your sight a thousand years are but a day that passes, or a watch of the night. You whisk them away in their sleep; they are like the new grass of the morning—in the morning it springs up new, but by evening it fades and withers.

For we are consumed by Your anger and terrified by Your wrath. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence. For all our days decline in Your fury; we finish our years with a sigh. The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty if we are strong—yet their pride is but labor and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

Who knows the power of Your anger? Your wrath matches the fear You are due. So teach us to number our days, that we may present a heart of wisdom.

Return, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on Your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with Your **hesed**, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as You have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen evil.

May Your work be shown to Your servants, and Your splendor to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish for us the work of our hands—yes, establish the work of our hands!

Psalm 59:9–17

*“I will sing of Your strength and proclaim Your **hesed** in the morning.”*

—Psalm 59:16a

I WILL KEEP WATCH for You, O my strength, because You, O God, are my fortress. My God of **hesed** will come to meet me; God will let me stare down my foes.

Do not kill them, or my people will forget. Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield. By the sins of their mouths and the words of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride, in the curses and lies they utter. Consume them in wrath; consume them till they are no more, so it may be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob. *Selah*

They return in the evening, snarling like dogs and prowling around the city. They scavenge for food, and growl if they are not satisfied.

But I will sing of Your strength and proclaim Your **hesed** in the morning. For You are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. To You, O my strength, I sing praises, for You, O God, are my fortress, my God of **hesed**.

Psalm 25

*“Let me not be put to shame, for I
take refuge in You.”*

—Psalm 25:20b, BSB

TO YOU, O LORD, I lift up my soul; in You, my God, I trust. Do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Surely none who wait for You will be put to shame; but those who are faithless without cause will be disgraced.

Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; all day long I wait for You. Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and **hesed**, for they are from age to age. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my rebellious acts; remember me according to Your **hesed**, because of Your goodness, O LORD.

Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He shows sinners the way. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way. All the LORD's ways are **hesed** and faithful to those who keep His covenant and His decrees. For the sake of Your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, for it is great.

Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the path chosen for him. His soul will dwell in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. The LORD confides in those who fear Him, and reveals His covenant to them. My eyes are always on the LORD, for He will free my feet from the mesh.

Turn to me and be gracious, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart increase; free me from my distress. Consider my affliction and trouble, and take away all my sins. Consider my enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with vicious hatred.

Guard my soul and deliver me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in You. May integrity and uprightness preserve me, because I wait for You.

Redeem Israel, O God, from all its distress.

Psalm 32

“...**hesed** surrounds him who trusts
in the LORD.”

—Psalm 32:10b

BLESSED IS HE whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose iniquity the LORD does not count against him, in whose spirit there is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was drained as in the summer heat. *Selah*

Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not hide my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

Therefore let all the godly pray to You while You may be found. Surely when great waters rise, they will not come near. You are my hiding place. You protect me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. *Selah*

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will give you counsel and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or mule, which have no understanding; they must be controlled with

bit and bridle to make them come to you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but **hesed** surrounds him who trusts in the LORD.

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous ones; shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

PART THREE

Praising Him for
His *Hesed*

Psalm 100

*“For the LORD is good, and His **hesed** endures forever...”*

—Psalm 100:5a

MAKE A JOYFUL noise to the LORD, all the earth.

Serve the LORD with gladness; come into His presence with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and bless His name.

For the LORD is good, and His **hesed** endures forever; His faithfulness continues to all generations.

Psalm 108:1–6

*“Your **hesed** extends beyond the heavens, and Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.”*

—Psalm 108:4

MY HEART IS steadfast, O God; I will sing and make music with all my being. Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise You, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing Your praises among the peoples. For Your **hesed** extends beyond the heavens, and Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; may Your glory cover all the earth. Respond and save us with Your right hand, that Your beloved may be delivered.

Psalm 138

*“On the day I called, You answered me;
You emboldened me and strengthened
my soul.”*

—Psalm 138:3, BSB

I GIVE YOU THANKS with all my heart; before the gods I sing Your praises. I bow down toward Your holy temple and give thanks to Your name for Your **hesed** and Your faithfulness; You have exalted Your name and Your word above all else. On the day I called, You answered me; You emboldened me and strengthened my soul.

All the kings of the earth will give You thanks, O LORD, when they hear the words of Your mouth. They will sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great. Though the LORD is on high, He attends to the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar.

If I walk in the midst of trouble, You preserve me from the anger of my foes; You extend Your hand, and Your right hand saves me. The LORD will fulfill His purpose for me.

O LORD, Your **hesed** endures forever—do not abandon the works of Your hands.

Psalm 136

“His **hesed** endures forever.”

—Psalm 136:1b

GIVE THANKS TO the LORD, for He is good.
His **hesed** endures forever.
Give thanks to the God of gods.
His **hesed** endures forever.
Give thanks to the Lord of lords.
His **hesed** endures forever.
He alone does great wonders.
His **hesed** endures forever.
By His insight He made the heavens.
His **hesed** endures forever.
He spread out the earth upon the waters.
His **hesed** endures forever.
He made the great lights—
His **hesed** endures forever.
the sun to rule the day,
His **hesed** endures forever.
the moon and stars to govern the night.
His **hesed** endures forever.
He struck down the firstborn of Egypt
His **hesed** endures forever.
and brought Israel out from among them
His **hesed** endures forever.
with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.
His **hesed** endures forever.

He divided the Red Sea in two

His **hesed** endures forever.

and led Israel through the midst,

His **hesed** endures forever.

but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea.

His **hesed** endures forever.

He led His people through the wilderness.

His **hesed** endures forever.

He struck down great kings

His **hesed** endures forever.

and slaughtered mighty kings—

His **hesed** endures forever.

Sihon king of the Amorites

His **hesed** endures forever.

and Og king of Bashan—

His **hesed** endures forever.

and He gave their land as an inheritance,

His **hesed** endures forever.

a heritage to His servant Israel.

His **hesed** endures forever.

He remembered us in our low estate

His **hesed** endures forever.

and freed us from our enemies.

His **hesed** endures forever.

He gives food to every creature.

His **hesed** endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven!

His **hesed** endures forever.

Psalm 98

“Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!”

—Psalm 98:4a, BSB

SING TO THE LORD a new song, for He has done wonders; His right hand and holy arm have gained Him the victory. The LORD has proclaimed His salvation and revealed His righteousness to the nations. He has remembered His **hesed** and faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth—let your cry ring out, and sing praises! Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, in melodious song with the harp. With trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

Let the sea resound, and all that fills it, the world, and all who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy before the LORD, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.

Psalm 92:1–8

*“How great are Your works, O LORD,
how deep are Your thoughts!”*

—Psalm 92:5, BSB

IT IS GOOD to praise the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High, to proclaim Your **hesed** in the morning and Your faithfulness at night with the ten-stringed harp and the melody of the lyre.

For You, O LORD, have made me glad by Your deeds; I sing for joy at the works of Your hands. How great are Your works, O LORD, how deep are Your thoughts! A senseless man does not know, and a fool does not understand, that though the wicked sprout like grass, and all evildoers flourish, they will be forever destroyed.

But You, O LORD, are exalted forever!

Psalm 118:1–24

“I will not die, but I will live and proclaim what the LORD has done.”

—Psalm 118:17, BSB

GIVE THANKS TO the LORD, for He is good; His *hesed* endures forever. Let Israel say, “His *hesed* endures forever.” Let the house of Aaron say, “His *hesed* endures forever.” Let those who fear the LORD say, “His *hesed* endures forever.”

In my distress I called to the LORD, and He answered and set me free. The LORD is on my side; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The LORD is on my side; He is my helper. Therefore I will look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off. They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off. They swarmed around me like bees, but they were extinguished like burning thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off. I was pushed so hard I was falling, but the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.

Shouts of joy and salvation resound in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD performs with valor! The right hand of the LORD is exalted! The right hand of the LORD performs with valor!" I will not die, but I will live and proclaim what the LORD has done. The LORD disciplined me severely, but He has not given me over to death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I will give You thanks, for You have answered me, and You have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is from the LORD, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 33

*“Surely the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His **hesed** to deliver them.”*

—Psalm 33:18, 19a

REJOICE IN THE LORD, O righteous ones; it is fitting for the upright to praise Him. Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to Him with ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.

For the word of the LORD is upright, and all His work is trustworthy. The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of His **hesed**.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the stars by the breath of His mouth. He piles up the waters of the sea; He puts the depths into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere Him. For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm.

The LORD frustrates the plans of the nations; He thwarts the devices of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the purposes of His heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He has chosen as His inheritance!

The LORD looks down from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From His dwelling place He gazes on all who inhabit the earth. He shapes the hearts of each; He considers all their works. No king is saved by his vast army; no warrior is delivered by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for salvation; even its great strength cannot save.

Surely the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His **hesed** to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our hearts rejoice in Him, since we trust in His holy name. May Your **hesed** rest on us, O LORD, as we put our hope in You.

Psalm 145

“The LORD is faithful in all His words and kind in all His actions.”

—Psalm 145:13b, BSB

I WILL EXALT YOU, my God and King; I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever.

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; His greatness is unsearchable. One generation will commend Your works to the next, and will proclaim Your mighty acts—the glorious splendor of Your majesty. And I will meditate on Your wondrous works. They will proclaim the power of Your awesome deeds, and I will declare Your greatness. They will extol the fame of Your abundant goodness and sing joyfully of Your righteousness.

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in **hesed**. The LORD is good to all; His compassion rests on all He has made. All You have made will give You thanks, O LORD, and Your saints will bless You. They will tell of the glory of Your kingdom and speak of Your might, to make known to men Your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and

Your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is faithful in all His words and kind in all His actions.

The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

The LORD is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call out to Him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and saves them. The LORD preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth will declare the praise of the LORD; let every creature bless His holy name forever and ever.

Psalm 147:1–11

*“The LORD is pleased with those who
fear Him, who hope in His **hesed**.”*

—Psalm 147:11

H ALLELUJAH!
How good it is to sing praises to
our God, how pleasant and lovely to
praise Him!

The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; He calls them each by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit. The LORD sustains the humble, but casts the wicked to the ground.

Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music on the harp to our God, who covers the sky with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the hills. He provides food for the animals, and for the young ravens when they call.

He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the leg power of the man. The LORD is pleased with those who fear Him, who hope in His **hesed**.

Psalm 107

*“Let him who is wise pay heed to these things and consider the **hesed** of the LORD.”*

—Psalm 107:43

GIVE THANKS TO the LORD, for He is good; His **hesed** endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy and gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no path to a city in which to dwell. They were hungry and thirsty; their soul fainted within them. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He led them on a straight path to reach a city where they could live. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His **hesed** and His wonders to the sons of men. For He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and chains, because they rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. He humbled their hearts with hard labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help. Then they cried out

to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke away their chains. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His **hessed** and His wonders to the sons of men. For He has broken down the gates of bronze and cut through the bars of iron.

Fools, in their rebellious ways, and through their iniquities, suffered affliction. They loathed all food and drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. He sent forth His word and healed them; He rescued them from the Pit. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His **hessed** and His wonders to the sons of men. Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and declare His works with rejoicing.

Others went out to sea in ships, conducting trade on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep. For He spoke and raised a tempest that lifted the waves of the sea. They mounted up to the heavens, then sunk to the depths; their courage melted in their anguish. They reeled and staggered like drunkards, and all their skill was useless.

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. He calmed the storm to a whisper, and the waves of the sea were hushed. They rejoiced in the silence, and He guided them to the harbor they desired.

Let them give thanks to the LORD for His **hesed** and His wonders to the sons of men. Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people and praise Him in the council of the elders.

He turns rivers into deserts, springs of water into thirsty ground, and fruitful land into fields of salt, because of the wickedness of its dwellers. He turns a desert into pools of water and a dry land into flowing springs. He causes the hungry to settle there, that they may establish a city in which to dwell. They sow fields and plant vineyards that yield a fruitful harvest. He blesses them, and they multiply greatly; He does not let their herds diminish.

When they are decreased and humbled by oppression, evil, and sorrow, He pours out contempt on the nobles and makes them wander in a trackless wasteland. But He lifts the needy from affliction and increases their families like flocks. The upright see and rejoice, and all iniquity shuts its mouth.

Let him who is wise pay heed to these things and consider the **hesed** of the LORD.

Psalm 115

*“Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to
Your name be the glory, because of Your
hesed, because of Your faithfulness.”*

—Psalm 115:1

NOT TO US, O LORD, not to us, but to Your name be the glory, because of Your **hesed**, because of Your faithfulness.

Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?”

Our God is in heaven; He does as He pleases.

Their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak; they have eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear; they have noses, but cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel; they have feet, but cannot walk; they cannot even clear their throats. Those who make them become like them, as do all who trust in them.

O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield. The LORD is mindful of us; He will bless us. He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron; He will bless those who fear the LORD—small and great alike.

May the LORD give you increase, both you and your children. May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth He has given to mankind. It is not the dead who praise the LORD, nor any who descend into silence. But it is we who will bless the LORD, both now and forevermore.

Hallelujah!

Psalm 29

*“The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD is enthroned as King forever.”*

—Psalm 29:10, BSB

ASCRIBE TO THE LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the LORD is heard over many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD strikes with flames of fire. The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in His temple all cry, “Glory!”

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever. The LORD gives His people strength; the LORD blesses His people with peace.

Psalm 117

*“For great is His **hesed** toward us...”*

—Psalm 117:2a

PRAISE THE LORD, all you nations! Extol Him, all you peoples! For great is His **hesed** toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Hallelujah!

POSTLUDE



What Next?

My pain is still here. What now?

PLEASE KNOW THAT God sees your pain, and here's the proof: think about the chain of events that led you to read this book. It wasn't an accident or a "coincidence." This book has no advertising budget, and there is no corporation pushing you to purchase it. God himself brought it to you—through a friend, through a coworker, or maybe even by working through a matching algorithm or search algorithm online. *He sees you. He sees your pain.*

Romans 8:15–25 speaks to the pain we carry in the world, and it is worth reading (or reading again):

“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery that returns you to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. And if we are children, then we are heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him.

“I consider that our present sufferings are not comparable to the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons

of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but because of the One who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until the present time. Not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved; but hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he can already see? But if we hope for what we do not yet see, we wait for it patiently.”

—Romans 8:15–25, BSB

Our world is broken, and we know that. Still, it hurts when that brokenness touches us. The pain is real. Yet Jesus loved us so much that He carried the brokenness of the world to the Cross, and in His Resurrection we have hope for the future restoration of the whole world. But it's not here yet, so we “groan inwardly” as we wait for “our adoption...the redemption of our bodies” (verse 23).

In a divine mystery, we “suffer *with Him*, so that we also may be glorified *with Him*” (verse 17). Just think about that for a minute: you aren’t suffering alone—you are suffering *with Jesus*. Our suffering has a purpose: it’s so we may one day be *glorified with Jesus*. We become like Jesus in knowing suffering so that we will, one day, become like Jesus in being glorified.

To be clear, we aren’t “earning” our salvation through our suffering—God does that, not us. Paul addresses this at the start of chapter 8:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For *in Christ Jesus* the law of the Spirit of life set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, *God did by sending His own Son* in the likeness of sinful man, as an offering for sin.”

—Romans 8:1–3a, BSB

If you haven’t yet accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, or if you need to come back to Him again, would you consider taking that step right now? Ask Jesus to forgive what you have done wrong (He will, no matter what it was), and ask Jesus to guide you into your next steps. If you aren’t sure, start reading Mark or John in the New Testament. God will guide you, and you don’t have to suffer alone; get help from a friend or pastor.

Going Deeper with the Psalms

THE BOOK OF Psalms begins with an instruction manual of sorts: Psalm 1. That psalm starts off with a contrast between two types of people:

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all he does.”

—Psalm 1:1–3, BSB

To go deeper with Psalms, we need to decode three words: “delight,” “law,” and “meditate.”

In Jewish tradition, the word translated “Law” here (*Torah* in Hebrew) is often used to refer to all God’s teaching and instruction, not just the laws and rules. Even Jesus used the term Law to reference Psalm 35 in John 15:25 (BSB): “But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated Me without reason.’” Jesus again uses Law to reference Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34 (BSB): “Is it not written in your Law: ‘I have said you are gods?’”

So in the context of Psalm 1 as the start of Psalms, “delighting in the law” especially emphasizes *delighting in Psalms*.

But what does it mean to “delight”? Here the parallel structure of the psalm helps us. The first verse has three parallel ideas: not walking, not setting foot, and not sitting. Verse 3 also uses three ideas in parallel: yielding fruit, leaf not withering, and prospering. Likewise, in verse 2 the phrase “delight in the Law of the LORD” is matched by the parallel and explanatory phrase “on His law he meditates day and night.”

It seems that “delighting” is a choice, not a feeling. *We choose to delight in the psalms by meditating on them.*

“Meditate” has nothing to do with the meditation you may have heard about. In Hebrew this word means to think about something over and over, muttering it under your breath, singing it, pondering it, reading it, writing it, mulling it again and again until it becomes part of your daily thought pattern. This is not because the Scripture is a magic spell or incantation, but because our hearts are so dry. Dirt in a drought needs water poured on it over and over before it becomes saturated.

Putting it all together, here’s my personal paraphrase of Psalm 1:1–3:

“Do you want to be blessed? Don’t go about things the way bad people do, or stand with people who hate God’s ways, or gripe about other people or God. Instead, delight in the teaching of the LORD by thinking about it over and over all day long and into the night, repeating it until it becomes second nature. Then you will be like a tree planted by streams of water, giving fruit at the right time, whose leaves never shrivel up, and whose efforts always seem to bring good results.”

—Psalm 1:1–3, author’s paraphrase

In the next section, we will apply this idea of “meditating on God’s instruction” to Psalms in more detail.

How to Meditate on the Psalms

NOW THAT WE know we need to meditate on the Lord's instruction day and night, how exactly do we do that? Here's one approach based on the advice of Psalm 1:

1. **Choose** a psalm. It could be Psalm 13 (the first one in this book) or Psalm 23 or Psalm 103 or whatever psalm seems right to start with. You can't go wrong because God will be there helping you along the way.
2. **Read** the psalm (or find a faithful musical setting or audio version and listen to it). Then read it again. Then a third time. In fact, read or listen to that one psalm over and over all throughout your day—ten times, twenty times, fifty times.
3. **Listen** to what God might be saying to you in the psalm. What stands out? What connects to how you feel or what you are going through?

You should reread and listen to the psalms themselves over and over, however you do it. The more you eat, sleep, and breathe the Psalms, the more God will use them to heal you. Don't just read about Psalms; rather actually *read the psalms themselves*. This is by far the most common mistake people make. Of course, as you spend time

learning them, you can certainly look for good commentaries and devotionals based on Psalms; but don't skip the step of soaking in them first!

A free audiobook for this book (read by the author) and more free versions are available online at <https://DrFeezell.com/surprised-by-hesed>, and there is also a *Spotify* playlist at the time of publication called "Surprised by **Hesed**."

Many other people are also rediscovering Psalms. The Psalms Project is an ongoing project to record songs that faithfully reproduce all the psalms (<https://thepsalmsproject.com/>). Another resource on YouTube and Amazon Prime is "The Psalm Project," (singular "Psalm"), which sets the first 20 psalms to captivating visuals.

Above all, push through. Sometimes it may take many, many times of listening to and reading Psalms for the Lord to change us. It took me at least a few months to begin, and I'm still on the journey. *Don't be discouraged!* God has seen your pain—maybe this very book is His way of letting you know that *He sees you!* His **hesed** is stronger than death, and it is enough for you in Jesus. Though it may be hard to see it right now, I pray that you will know His unfathomable **hesed** love and mercy very, very soon.

APPENDIX ONE

FAQs

Why did you use the Berean Standard Bible, and why did you write the psalms in paragraphs, not as poems?

THIS BOOK USES the Berean Standard Bible translation of Psalms. The Berean Standard Bible is carefully translated from the original languages and is public domain, so you are free to share this book, copy it, translate it, make new versions, and so on (visit **SellingJesus.org** and **Copy.Church** for why I'm giving this book away so freely). The only change to the BSB text is that I have used the word "**hesed**" every time that word appears in the underlying Hebrew.

The other change is that I removed the line breaks from the Berean Standard Bible translation. The line breaks are a great tool for studying the parallelism and technical features of the Hebrew poetry, but they are not in the original manuscripts. That's right: *all those line breaks you see in your Bible were put in by editors and are not in the original Hebrew poetry.*

Does this mean they are evil or incorrect? Not at all. Many smart, prayerful people have worked hard to determine the underlying structures and bring those out in the formatting. And yet, many modern Jewish Psalm books (called *Tehillim*) include no line breaks at all.

Why would that be? Surely Jewish people know that the psalms are poetry, right? Of course they know this.

Christians often miss out when they read Psalms because they skip a vital step. Think of it like this: Imagine you were dying of thirst, parched beyond belief after walking days under the hot desert sun. When you finally use the last of your strength to crawl across the burning sand up to a pool of clear, cool water, do you need to study the science behind water and contemplate all its technical properties? No. If you're dying of thirst, you need to DRINK the water.

So yes, it is beneficial and good to study all the structures of the psalms, and we should do that. But many of us hardly know the psalms at all. We are parched from lack of them. Drink deeply first. Satisfy your thirst. Then when your thirst has been satisfied, you can use any number of widely-available tools to contemplate the structure of the psalms and go even deeper.

Aren't the Psalms written to Israel and not Christians? Doesn't God's *hesed* really only apply in the context of His covenant with Israel?

THE GOD WHO loved Israel with *hesed* is the same God who sent Jesus to die for us. His character has not changed, so the faithful love God showed to Israel is the same faithful love He shows to us. In a divine mystery, the Cross enables us to take part in God's plans and promises to Israel. So it is reasonable (even required) for Christians to use Psalms to grow closer to God.

Many books have been written about this, and this is a question you should explore with careful and prayerful thought. As a start, Paul discusses this in Ephesians 2, which I will quote in its entirety from the Berean Standard Bible:

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you used to walk when you conformed to the ways of this world and of the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience. All of us also lived among them at one time, fulfilling the cravings

of our flesh and indulging its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature children of wrath.

“But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might display the surpassing riches of His grace, demonstrated by His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.

“Therefore remember that formerly you who are Gentiles in the flesh and called uncircumcised by the so-called circumcision (that done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the

promise, without hope and without God in the world. *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has torn down the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in His flesh the law of commandments and decrees. He did this to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace and reconciling both of them to God in one body through the cross, by which He extinguished their hostility.

“He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In Him the whole building is fitted together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together into a dwelling place for God in His Spirit.”

—Ephesians 2:1–22, BSB

Isn't **hesed** for the Old Covenant and
agape love for the New Covenant?
 Shouldn't Christians love
 with *agape* rather than **hesed**?
 Isn't *agape* a higher love than **hesed**?

THE NEW TESTAMENT does often use the Greek word *agape* to describe the selfless love that Christians should have as well as the selfless love of Jesus. For example, the famous 1 Corinthians 13 “love” passage uses *agape* for love.

Just like English, *Koine* Greek doesn't have a single word that exactly matches the range of meaning of **hesed**. In the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament often read in the first century), the Hebrew word **hesed** is often translated as the Greek word *eleos* (“mercy”). But “mercy” doesn't nearly cover the wide range of meanings given in Hebrew to **hesed**, as the psalms in this book show.

Agape love may (or may not) be a “higher love” than **hesed**, but *agape* is NOT less than **hesed**. The same God that had **hesed** for Israel has *agape* for us. So if we want to understand and live out the *agape* of God, we surely must (at a minimum) understand and live out God's **hesed**.

***Hesed* is not the correct transliteration or pronunciation of the word.**

I KNOW (AND THAT'S a statement, not a question, by the way). If anyone wants to be more correct on this, there are many resources online about it. I made the decision not to over-complicate someone's initial encounter with this life-giving concept by putting funny symbols on the word every time it appears throughout the book. The other common transliterations (*chesed*, *khesed*) seem to only increase its strangeness in English. By all means, if you know how to pronounce it correctly in Hebrew or want to learn how, please do so.

Shouldn't we just follow Jesus? Why do we need Psalms when we have the gospel now?

Yes, we should certainly follow Jesus—and Jesus studied and knows Psalms by heart:

Jesus: “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? No, it is for this purpose that I have come to this hour.” (John 12:27, BSB)

Psalm 6:3 “My soul is deeply distressed. How long, O LORD, how long?” (BSB)

Jesus: “Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness!’ ” (Matthew 7:23, BSB; also Luke 13:27)

Psalm 6:8 “Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for the LORD has heard my weeping.” (BSB)

Jesus: “Have you never read: ‘From the mouths of children and infants You have ordained praise?’” (Matthew 21:16b, BSB)

Psalm 8:2a “From the mouths of children and infants You have ordained praise.” (BSB)

Jesus: About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46, BSB; also Mark 15:34)

Psalm 22:1a “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (BSB)

Jesus: Then Jesus called out in a loud voice, “Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.” (Luke 23:46a, BSB)

Psalm 31:5a “Into Your hands I commit my spirit;” (BSB)

Jesus: “But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated Me without reason.’” (John 15:25, BSB) [Note the term “Law” to reference Psalms; cf. Psalm 1:2]

Psalm 35:19 “Let not my enemies gloat over me without cause, nor those who hate me without reason wink in malice.” (BSB)

Psalm 62:4 “Those who hate me without cause outnumber the hairs of my head; many are those who would destroy me—my enemies for no reason.” (BSB)

Jesus: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5, BSB)

Psalm 37:11a “But the meek will inherit the land.” (BSB)

Jesus: "...I know whom I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the Scripture: 'The one who shares My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' " (John 13:18, BSB)

Psalm 41:9 "Even my close friend whom I trusted, the one who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." (BSB)

Jesus: "But I tell you not to swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King." (Matthew 5:34-35, BSB)

Psalm 48:2 "Beautiful in loftiness, the joy of all the earth, like the peaks of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the great King." (BSB)

Jesus: "For the Son of Man will come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will repay each one according to what he has done." (Matthew 16:27, BSB)

Psalm 62:12b "For You will repay each man according to his deeds." (BSB)

Jesus: "Is it not written in your Law: 'I have said you are gods?'" (John 10:34, BSB) [Notice the use of the term "Law" to reference Psalms; cf. Ps 1:2]

Psalm 82:6 "I have said, 'You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High.'" (BSB)

Jesus: “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you.” (Luke 10:19, BSB)

Psalm 91:13 “You will tread on the lion and cobra; you will trample the young lion and serpent.” (BSB)

Jesus: Jesus said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord’? For he says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand until I put Your enemies under Your feet.” ’ ” (Matthew 22:44, BSB)

Psalm 110:1 “The LORD said to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’ ” (BSB)

Jesus: Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” (Matthew 21:42, BSB)

Psalm 118:22-23 “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is from the LORD, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” (BSB)

How can I learn more about *hesed*?

THIS BOOK EXPLORES *hesed* in selected psalms and portions of psalms. To see all the verses in the Bible that use *hesed*, search online for “Strong’s Hebrew 2617.” As of this writing, one good list is available at https://biblehub.com/hebrew/strongs_2617.htm. You can also search for a great video on “Loyal Love” produced by *The Bible Project*.

Probably the best place to start learning more about *hesed* is by studying the Book of Ruth in the Bible. Although the word itself only appears three times in the text, the concept of *hesed* infuses the entire narrative—Ruth, Boaz, and God all evidence deep *hesed* throughout. There are many studies available that explore *hesed* in the book of Ruth if you search for them, but if you haven’t read it, or haven’t read it in awhile, you should start by simply reading Ruth.

My pain is still here. What now?

BE SURE YOU go check out the “What Next” postlude section above. It has some specific thoughts about how God can help us through our pain as well as next steps.

Appendix Two (on the next page) lists some options for reading plans to go through the psalms in this book again. Most of us need to read and think over them *many* times before they truly start to soak into us. So read them again and again.

If you haven’t already, seek help—from a friend, from a pastor, or from a Christian counselor. Don’t suffer alone. We all need others to help us, and there is no shame in getting help.

Jesus promises rest for you when you bring Him your burdens:

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

—Matthew 11:28–30

Remember, God sees you, and He wants to help! Above all, don’t give up. God is working in your life. Keep turning to Him, and He will meet you where you are each and every day.

APPENDIX TWO

Reading Plans

Devotional Reading Plans

IF YOU WANT to read the psalms in this book again, but want a new way of experiencing them, consider one of the following plans:

1. **Psalm-a-Day Plan (42 days):** Read one psalm each day, maybe morning, noon, and night.
2. **Cry-Hope-Praise Plan (14 days):** One psalm from each section (*Crying, Hoping, Praising*). Start from the current day of the week:

Week One:

Sunday: Psalms 13, 23, 100 (pgs. 6, 30 & 52)

Monday: Psalms 6, 91, 108 (pgs. 7, 31 & 53)

Tuesday: Psalms 44, 63, 138 (pgs. 8, 33 & 54)

Wednesday: Psalms 69, 36, 136 (pgs. 10, 34 & 55)

Thursday: Psalms 88, 121, 98 (pgs. 12, 35 & 57)

Friday: Psalms 42, 61, 92 (pgs. 14, 36 & 58)

Saturday: Psalms 86, 62, 118 (pgs. 16, 37 & 59)

Week Two:

Sunday: Psalms 77, 40, 33 (pgs. 18, 39 & 61)

Monday: Psalms 31, 85, 145 (pgs. 20, 40 & 63)

Tuesday: Psalms 109, 103, 147 (pgs. 22, 42 & 65)

Wednesday: Psalms 143, 90, 107 (pgs. 23, 44 & 66)

Thursday: Psalms 57, 59, 115 (pgs. 25, 46 & 69)

Friday: Psalms 51, 25, 29 (pgs. 27, 47 & 71)

Saturday: Psalms 130, 32, 117 (pgs. 28, 49 & 72)

INDEX



Index of Psalms

Index of Psalms

1: 77	91: 31
6: 7	92: 58
13: 6	98: 57
23: 30	100: 52
25: 47	103: 42
29: 71	107: 66
31: 20	108: 53
32: 49	109: 22
33: 61	115: 69
36: 34	117: 72
40: 39	118: 59
42: 14	121: 35
44: 8	130: 28
51: 27	136: 55
57: 25	138: 54
59: 46	143: 23
61: 36	145: 63
62: 37	147: 65
63: 33	
69: 10	
77: 18	
85: 40	
86: 16	
88: 12	
89: vii	
90: 44	

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