

## Changed into His likeness - Lovingkindness

It's a great privilege to be able to return to the subject - Being changed into His likeness.

This evening I want to look at the fourth of the five facets of God's nature that The Lord proclaimed to Moses on Mount Horeb when He gave him the second pair of stone tablets.

God's desire is to have as many people as possible in a close intimate relationship with Himself both in this life and for eternity. His compassion sees, hears & feels the suffering & bondage that we are in, His grace (His unmerited favour) reaches out to us to give us undeserved blessing, His slow to angerness perseveres with us, persists in dealing with our weaknesses and pursues us when we go astray. But His lovingkindness is the part of His nature that really binds us to Him.

The Hebrew word used is Heseb or Chesed. It is variously translated as "mercy, steadfast love, lovingkindness, compassion and goodness"

It is the heart or kernel of God's relationship with His covenant people.

A couple of examples of many to show that Covenant and Loving kindness go together is 1 Kings 8v23-24 & Daniel 9v4.

The covenant between God & His people was real, everlasting, intensely practical and very powerful. So next

I want to show that His lovingkindness is not sloppy or wishy-washy but is very powerful and active.

In 2 Chronicle 20 we have the story of Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat's prayer was calling on God's covenant promises, & the praise, going into battle, was specifically proclaiming the covenant by declaring God's Hesed or lovingkindness.

I want to go to Hosea 2v14-20 to look at how God deals with Israel. (Achor - Ishi - Baali).

Charles Ryrie's note in my bible to Hosea 2v19 states:-  
"The Hebrew word Hesed is used about 250 times in the OT. It means loyal, steadfast or faithful love and stresses the idea of a belonging together of those involved in the love relationship. Here it connotes God's faithful love for His unfaithful people. In the OT communion, deliverance, enablement, enlightenment, guidance, forgiveness, hope, praise & preservation are all based on God's Hesed - Lovingkindness."

In Jeremiah 9v23-24 we see God presenting His statement of values.

Note that in Exodus 34v6 The Lord states that He is abounding in lovingkindness. Overflowing with lovingkindness or in plentiful supply. There can be no shortage of Hesed - it is unfailing and limitless.

So is lovingkindness also at the heart of the New Covenant? And if Jesus is the "radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Hebrews 1v3) we should expect Him to really major on *Hesed*. And of course that is exactly what is recorded in the New Testament. Only in the NT Greek the word is *Agape*.

John 3v16

John 15 v7-11

John records Jesus emphasis on God's *agape* for Him & His *agape* for the disciples. John also restates the teaching in His letter.

1 John 4v10-16

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 gives His famous description of Love that reveals more of how God's love operates. It ends with "But now faith ,hope, love abide these three; but the greatest of these is love. Pursue love,. . . ." Just tipping into chapter 14v1.

1 Cor 14v1 is variously translated, "Make love your aim, follow the way of love, follow after charity". The amplified bible says" Eagerly pursue and seek to acquire [this] love [make it your aim, your great quest]"

Like a pack of fox hounds chasing after a fox or like a cheetah hunting its prey, we should be constantly chasing after love.

In both New and Old Testament God's love His Heseid/Agape, His lovingkindness is constant, eternal and available to all who want it.

Old and New testament both require repentance and faith in order to receive this powerful love.

Repentance - turning away from sin and towards God.

Faith - trusting God fully for past, present and future.

To the unbeliever God reaches out in compassion and grace to save.

To the believer God reaches out in Lovingkindness to care, provide for and protect.

So as we remain in His presence and persist with being face to face with Jesus, we should expect to be changed into the Lovingkindness of God and see it overflowing to those we meet.

Before I close I want to emphasis that all the facets or faces of God's glory, His nature work together in His dealings with us. And in the same way they should also shine forth in and through us.

And I want to end with John 17v20-26.