

Jerry Monette - Love Of God

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The title of Brother Jerry's remarks are the Love of God. Once again, we are very delighted to have Brother Jerry. He has served us this convention in the past and we very much look forward to his ministry and his example and his remarks. In the hour to follow, this will be a PowerPoint presentation, I believe, if Brother Jerry is still planning such. So, Brother Jerry, greetings to you.

Warm greetings to you, and may we turn the meeting over to you, please? Thank you. Thank you. Brother Wes. Greetings to you as well and all the brethren.

We bring the love from our brethren here in Hartford who voted to send their love to convention. Before I begin my remarks, I would just ask if you can see the screen. Okay. Yes, it looks good, Brother Jerry. Thank you.

Okay. Very good. Thank you, Brother Wes.

Our. Our assignment is love of God. Love of God. Now, there's two parts to this assignment. One is how God loves us, and the other is how we love God.

First, we'll look into how God loves us. We'll start by asking the question, what does it mean by us? Does us mean the whole world to mankind, or does us mean followers of Jesus? It could be either one or it could be both. For the purposes of this discourse, the us means those who have entered into a covenant with God.

Those who are not in covenant relationship with God are not included in the conversation of how God loves us. To demonstrate what I mean by saying the love of God could refer to the whole human race, those in covenant relationship with God, or both. Let's read perhaps the most well known scripture in the New Testament, John 3:16. John 3:16 reads, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God demonstrates his love for the entire human race by giving his Son as a ransom for Adam.

But it is not until we accept what God has offered us and we made a covenant by sacrifice, that God demonstrates His love for us by forgiving our sin and begetting us to life in Christ. Now why is it so important to understand that God's love is best understood within a covenant relationship? Because it helps to answer the age old question, if God is love, then why does he allow so much pain and suffering and misery and death, especially to the innocent? And the even more difficult question, why does God command the genocide of the people who are living in the land that God gave to Israel? As we Read in Deuteronomy 20, verses 16 and 17, but the cities of these people which The Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance.

Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely the Hittites, the Amorites and the Canaanites and the parasites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

Did God love these people he condemned to death? Yes, he did. They are a part of the world that God gave his son a ransom for. That is how God demonstrated His love for them. Will he ever demonstrate his love to them in the future?

Jerry Monette - Love Of God

Yes, he will, when they will have entered into a covenant with him, the new covenant in the times of restitution. But because they were not in in covenant relationship with God when He ordered their death, God was under no obligation to demonstrate his love towards them beyond the giving of his son a ransom for Adam. Now I know this sounds harsh and it is a stumbling block for many who can't accept the Bible because as they see it, the God of the Bible is an angry, genocidal tyrant. But for those of us who understand God's beautiful plan, who believe that God is love, the best way to understand God's love is to understand that God's love is demonstrated through covenant relationship. It is this understanding that gives us comfort and peace when we're confronted with the unspeakable evils and tragedies in this world.

With this as our premise, let's take a more detailed look at how God loves those he is in covenant with relationship with.

We read earlier one of the best known scriptures about God's love in the New Testament. Let's now look at one of the best known scriptures about God's love in the Old Testament. In chapters 32 and 33 of Exodus, we have the incident with the golden calf in chapter 34 as part of God's response to this apostasy. Moses hears God's self proclamation, God's description of himself in Exodus 34, verses 6 and 7, and I'll be reading from the RSV.

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed the Lord the Lord, a God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation, even in the face of the ultimate apostasy, the worshipping of other gods in the form of idols, God remains loyal to the covenant. He does not end his covenant relationship with Israel, but offers the possibility of pardon and forgiveness. God describes Himself to Moses as abounding in steadfast love, specifically in connection to forgiveness and the holding back from a punishment due to those in covenant relationship with him who broke that covenant. It is imperative that we grasp this point that God's steadfast love is given in Close the door. Close the door.

Come down. Come on down, Grace that God's steadfast love is given in connection to staying loyal to and forgiving those in covenant relationship with Him.

This term steadfast love comes from the RSV translation. The RSV is not cross referenced to the Strong's concordance. So I went to the King James Version for the equivalent wording for steadfast love in Exodus 34:6 and found that it reads abundant in goodness. Now the word goodness is a translation of the Hebrew word *chesed* strong's number 2617. Now it's pronounced.

Its first sound is a guttural sound, kind of like you're clearing your throat.

It's described in Strong's as kindness, loving kindness, mercy, merciful, and pity.

Because this word *hased*, which is used of God to describe himself, and the concept behind it seems to be fundamental for understanding the character of God, who he is, and how he interacts with his people, it is important that we understand the baseline meaning of the word, which is one of the most important words in the Bible. In order to do this, we'll need to do a quick word study by looking up all the times *chesed* turns up in the Hebrew Bible. When we do this, we find that it turns up about 250 times in the Old Testament, and of the 250 times the word *hased* shows up in the Old Testament, 127 of them, over half show up in the Psalms, where they were singing about God's infinitely complex love. The word *hasid* is most often the object of the verb to do.

Jerry Monette - Love Of God

Chesed is something that is done. It is an action you do chesed.

Now when it comes to translating this Hebrew word into English, we find the normal situation where translation is never word for word from an ancient language to modern English. But some words are particularly difficult. Not only could the English translators not find one word that was a precise equivalent to hesed, they couldn't come to any consensus at all, and to my amazement, it turns out that this one Hebrew word is translated a whopping 169 different ways in English translations, depending on what the translation wanted to emphasize as well as the context. As an example, here's just a very partial list of how hesed is translated into English.

Love Loving Kindness Loving Instruction Unfailing Love Steadfast Love Faithful Love Covenant Love Covenant Friendship Covenant Loyalty Unswerving Loyalty Loyalty Kindness Faithfulness Righteousness Goodness Compassion Devotion Favor Mercy Beauty Grace so as English readers, when we read the Old Testament, we don't realize that the same exact Hebrew word, chesed, is popping up all the time because it's translated into so many different English words. When it's used in regard to human to human interactions, the word has said basically means that you do good to someone else, you have the best outcome or the best result for the other person as your end result, and you act accordingly. But when it is used within the relationship between God and His covenant people, it goes far beyond these normal parameters because it offers forgiveness which leads to life over death as an act of hesed. In considering how God loves those he is in covenant relationship with, there are four basic things we have to keep in mind. The first is that God's hesed is not described as a feeling or an emotion.

Now we might properly describe the love we have for our spouses or our children in terms of feelings and emotions. But God's hesed is not a feeling, it is an action. He gives, has said he extends, has said, he remembers, has said, he keeps, has said God's love is active. It is not something he feels, it is something he does. Second, hesed is a relational term.

It takes place within a relationship. It is a term relating to loyal to loving loyalty within a relationship. Third, chesed is done for another with whom there is already a relationship. Where a relationship has already been established, the term does not appear in context where there is no relationship between the parties, and fourth, our final point to keep in mind is that not only is God's has said love in relationship, it is most importantly love in covenant relationship.

Now, in the Old Testament, God makes three covenants, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, and the Davidic. A brief survey of these will help us to better understand God's covenant love. So let us now trace God's hesed for those he's in covenant relationship with.

While hesed is never explicitly mentioned in connection with the Abrahamic covenant, God's forgiveness of Israel is ultimately grounded in the perpetual and unconditional commitment to Abraham that was made apart from and prior to the giving of the law, the giving of the land, nationhood, or kingship. When it comes to the Mosaic covenant, we have already seen in the golden calf incident that forgiveness and life were the result of God's hesed, and that these were not based on Israel's complete obedience.

Psalms 103 refers back to this incident and God's forgiveness as an act of Hesed. Psalm 103, verses 7 to 13 reads, he made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in hesed in mercy he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his chesed his

Jerry Monette - Love Of God

mercy toward them that fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

This concept of forgiveness as an act of God's hesed was life to Israel, which should have been condemned to death for making and worshiping idols. We read of God's covenant hesed next for David in Psalm 89, and we're going to read verses 1 through 4 and then 28 to 34 Psalm 89, verses 1 through 4. I will sing of the hesed the mercies of the Lord forever with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said has said, mercy shall be built up forever.

Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations, and now verses 28:34 of Psalm 89 My mercy, my hesed, will I keep for him forevermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure forever and his throne as the days of heaven.

If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes and keep not my covenants, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my hesed my loving kindness, will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail my covenant? Will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips?

Here God's commitment to David is described as God's covenant love. God swears the covenant will stand firm and the relationship will endure, and even though David's people, the nation of Israel, will be unfaithful to their covenant. God says he will be faithful to the covenant because his loving kindness, his hesed, will not fail. In these verses we see another dimension of God's hesed.

Not only does God demonstrate his love by acts of kindness and mercy and forgiveness, he demonstrates it through acts of discipline. He says, if those in covenant relationship with him are not faithful to the covenant, he will visit their transgressions with the rod of discipline. This is in complete accord with Proverbs 13:24, where it says, he that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes and also Deuteronomy 8:5, which says, Thou shalt also consider in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee, and this same dimension of God's love as discipline is Also in Exodus 34, 7, which we read earlier, where it says, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation God demonstrating his love for his sons by the rod of discipline.

Proof is for the cleansing and purification of the people so they might have life. It is not a contradiction of hesed as loving kindness. It is just another dimension of God's loving kindness as discipline, and so the Scriptures assure us that when God makes a promise to his people, he keeps it. He follows through.

He is faithful to his word and has said is something that he does in response to that covenant. So we see that covenant loyalty is an excellent definition of God's love, God's chesed. It is God standing with his people in the midst of challenges, being faithful to them through difficulty, through suffering, even through their disobedience and disloyalty. He is with them, he is for them. He is working things to their good.

Jerry Monette - Love Of God

Now one of the clearest expressions of this concept of God's has said his covenant loyalty in the Old Testament is found in the book of the prophet Hosea. In this book, God's love for Israel is pictured by Hosea's love for his wife Gomer. In Hosea 1 verses 2 and 3 we read the beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea, and the Lord said to Hosea, go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms, for the land hath committed great whoredoms departing from the Lord So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, which conceived and bear him a son.

God tells Hosea to marry a woman who will be unfaithful to him. God then goes on to compare Gomer's repeated unfaithfulness to Hosea to Israel's repeated unfaithfulness to him.

In Hosea 4, verses 1 and 2, we read, Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel. For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy or hasan, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break out and blood toucheth blood.

Hosea here is acting as a prosecuting attorney. He's announcing charges from God to a people who have betrayed God and have gone into such disloyal behavior that they have committed spiritual adultery. God is angry and is now pronouncing his judgment upon them. God is bringing this sentence upon them because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. The truth that God is talking about here is the truth of himself.

The truth of God had been neglected, and secondly, there is no mercy, no hased, no covenant loyalty, and chesed is the basis of God's relationship with his covenant people, and he can't find it in Israel.

Now what are the consequences of no truth, no hased, no covenant loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land? As verse two tells us, it is godlessness, lawlessness, and bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land and everything in it mourns in death. There is none of the life promised to God's covenant people, and then in verse six we read, my people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge.

Because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me. Seeing thou has forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

God says, my people, the people that I have chosen, the people that that I made a covenant with and redeemed from slavery through the Exodus, are now being destroyed, not through lack of military power, nor for lack of food, but for lack of knowledge of God and lack of hesed, lack of covenant loyalty, and then God says, I made you a nation of priests. I've called you to be a light to the Gentiles. But because you've forgotten me, you have removed yourselves from covenant loyalty.

Now we have similar criticism and judgment in the second chapter of Hosea, and it is not until verses 19 and 20 that we see hope for the future. When God says, in Hosea 2, verses 19 and 20 and I will betroth thee unto me forever. Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving kindness and in mercies. Incredibly, God says to his unfaithful wife, Israel, I am going to get engaged to you again.

I am going to remarry you again in spite of your adultery and my chset. My covenant loyalty will triumph in this relationship, and then the instructions come to Hosea for this remarriage. But notice

Jerry Monette - Love Of God

that Hosea has to go and purchase his bride out of slavery, as we read in Hosea 3 and verses 1 and 2.

Then said the Lord unto me, go yet love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord, toward the children of Israel who look to other gods and love flagons of wine. So I bought her to me for 15 pieces of silver and for an homer of barley, and in half omer of barley in 21 of Hosea Hosea was commanded to take a wife to get married. In three one Hosea is commanded not to marry a wife because he's already married to her. The second time the thing to be done is to love a woman who is already his wife. He is to reclaim the wayward, adulterous wife and start the marriage all over again, treating the defiled woman as if she were pure.

Now, the word love here doesn't mean to court or declare the love you feel. Hosea is urged to reaffirm his marriage by acts of love. Hosea being commanded to love is hard to understand for people who consider love the spontaneous expressing of deep, felt feeling. But Hosea is commanded to love his wife in the same way God loves Israel, and God's love is not a feeling, it is an action.

It's what he does. It is expressed as loyalty within a relationship. So when Hosea is commanded to love his wife, it is a command to love like God loves, and to be loyal to that marriage vow. Just like God loves Israel, to whom he is married, in spite of the fact that Israel loves other gods, so Hosea is to love his unfaithful wife, and then something unusual and seemingly out of nowhere happens in Hosea 3 and verse 2, Hosea bought or purchased his wife.

He paid for her with silver and barley. While there is no hint anywhere in the book that Gomer had become a slave, Hosea redeeming her for a price approximating that of a slave and other places in the Bible suggests she had somehow in fact become a slave. This principle of Hosea doing based by purchasing his bride out of slavery is elevated in the New Testament as a way of describing Jesus purchasing his bride out of slavery to sin and to Satan. That is what Paul is getting at when he says in First Corinthians 6:20 for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. The essence of God's love, of how God exercises his steadfast loyalty.

His chesed is found in the cross where Jesus purchased us from slavery. Now for my final thought on how God loves us, let's go to Paul's letter to the Romans. After Paul goes through how we, being Gentiles and not a covenant people, are adopted into the family of God, he says in Romans 8:31, what shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? This captures the whole concept of God's chesed, his loyal covenant love.

God is for us. What shall we say then? If everybody is against us, who cares? So what if God is for us, it doesn't matter who is against us. So when Paul says in Romans 8:35, who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ?

The answer to that question is nothing. No one and no power because has said the loyal covenant love of God is eternal and immutable. It is a love that is inseparable. So that we who have the Father's love because we are in a covenant relationship with him, have his unrelenting, never ending, redemptive love. We have it now and we will have it forever.

Let's now turn our attention from how God loves us to how we love God.

Jerry Monette - Love Of God

Just as God's has said his love for us is based on covenant loyalty and covenant faithfulness, so our love for God is also based on covenant loyalty and covenant faithfulness. In Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5, Israel is commanded to love God as it is written. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

What is Israel's love to God based on? It is based on what is said in Deuteronomy 6:1 and 2, which reads, these are the commandments, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded to teach you that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it, that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee, thou and thy Son, and thy Son's son, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged.

Deuteronomy speaks of Israel's love for God in the context of of the covenant established at Mount Sinai. Obedience, service, reverence and covenant loyalty. Love is a duty owed to God in the context of covenant loyalty, and like Israel, we should love God willingly despite being commanded to do so. But in a very practical sense, how are we to love God who we can't see?

We are not left on our own to figure this out because Jesus tells us in Mark 12, verses 28 to 31, where we read and one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, the first of all.

The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment, and the second is like namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Jesus is telling us that how we love our neighbor is how we love God. The evidence that we love God is demonstrated in the activity of loving my neighbor as myself.

Everything we do is about loving others, helping others, doing has said to others, doing good to others, sharing the gospel, where there is a willingness to hear, always having the best outcome for the other person as our motivation in any interaction or relationship. Remember that he said is a relational term. It takes place within a relationship, and also recall that it is not a feeling, it is an action. It is something we do.

It is not just talking a good talk. Saying we love God, we have to do has said the activity, the action, the loving our neighbors and especially our brethren as ourselves.

So when Jesus said that loving God and loving others was the most important commandment, I think he had the concept of hased covenant loyalty in mind, and to understand covenant and covenant loyalty, we have to understand hased. Now we in modern times have a tendency to think of covenants in terms of contracts entered into and binding on very specific and narrowly defined parties. But the covenant Israel entered into with God was not such a covenant. Their covenant wasn't just between them as individuals and God.

It was with them as an entire people and God, and they were required under their covenant to look after and care for all the people of the covenant, and especially the most vulnerable and needy among them, the poor, the widow and the orphan, and they were to demonstrate their chesed, their

Jerry Monette - Love Of God

loyalty to the covenant by acts of kindness and compassion to each other.

And it is even so with us. Our covenant with our Heavenly Father isn't just between him and us as individuals. When we enter into the covenant he offers us, we become engaged on a covenant basis with all of his people. His people become our people, and we have a covenantal responsibility to do hased, to do good, to love and look out for the welfare of our brethren.

This includes hospitality to the lonely, visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, raising the spirits of the depressed, making those on the margins feel part of the fellowship and so much more. Our love for God is demonstrated in loving our neighbor, but it is especially demonstrated in our love for the people we are joined in covenant with, with each of us, doing our part to create a fellowship of extended family where everyone feels honored, where everyone feels at home, and this is how we love God. May the Lord add His blessing and overrule anything that might have and said not according to his will.