

Word Study on “Loyal Love” or “Lovingkindness” Psalm 136

1. Different ways this word is translated:

The Greek word, “cheched,” has most frequently been translated to mean “mercy,” appearing 149 times in the NASB. It also has been translated as “kindness” (40 times), “lovingkindness” (30 times), “goodness” (twelve times), “kindly” (five times), “merciful” (four times), “favour” (three times), and “good,” “goodliness,” “pity,” “reproach,” and “wicked thing,” each once. The word can mean goodness, kindness, faithfulness, a reproach, or even shame (Strong, 1996).

2. Transliteration:

The transliteration for the Greek work in English is “cheched” (Strong, 1996).

3. From Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament:

a. What is the most significant feature of this term?

One key feature that is agreed upon in all the texts is that the “cheched” is given in freedom. It must be given of the helper’s own free will. In addition, the phrase “cheched” always argues for loyalty of love (Harris, Archer, & Waltke, 1980).

b. What key terms are used as synonyms for this term?

The synonyms for cheched appear to be “lovingkindness,” “mercy,” “loyal love,” “goodness,” and “kindness.”

The synonyms for this word appear to be “lovingkindness,” “mercy,” “loyal love,” “goodness,” and “kindly.”

c. Find at least two examples of both divine and human expressions of “loyal love”.

In Exodus 34:6-7, when God showed himself to Moses, he described himself as “abounding in lovingkindness and truth.” He is slow to anger, compassionate, and gracious (Harris, Archer, & Waltke, 1980).

“Cheched” can also have a meaning of truth, loyalty, and fidelity. An example of this is the love that a husband and wife are to show each other, as is commanded by God; the truest definition of love that humans can show each other.

4. In Psalm 136:

a. What motifs (images, key words, etc) are found with God’s “loyal love”?

Psalm 136 repeats the phrase “His love endures forever” (NIV) between each expression. Along with His love being enduring, the passage also brings light to the fact that God is good (136:1), that He is all powerful (136:4-9), and that He is a protector of his people (136:10-22). The passage refers to God as a loving friend who cares about us and remembers us when everyone else has forgotten us (136:23), and He is said to be a merciful Creator (136:24-25).

- b. How do these elements fit with the information gleaned from Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament?

It is an illustration of God’s goodness and loyal love, which is evident not just through the use of the Greek word “cheched,” but also through the secondary imagery words that support His cheched. For all the things that Christ is, whether it be good, enduring, or all powerful, are rooted in His self-giving lovingkindness. The kindness and love that He gives of his own free will. He doesn’t have to love us, but he chooses to, and in that love, he protects us in all ways.

- c. What is so significant about the idea that “loyal love” endures forever?

God’s loyal love enduring forever is significant because it ties directly with His grace and mercy towards us. If His lovingkindness didn’t endure forever, none of us would ever be able to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. He wouldn’t be able to forgive our sin without a loyal love for us.

His lovingkindness is at the root of everything that He is. His power, his justice, goodness, his protection and jealousy, they’re all rooted in His love. Without Christ’s lovingkindness, the Israelites would have had no hope in fleeing Egypt, and we would have no hope of being saved from our sins.

5. Write down your findings from three commentaries on Psalm 136.

The theme of Psalm 136 follows in the path of the previous Psalm, 135: That God should be praised for all of his works, including his goodness, deliverance, judgment of enemies, creation, and providence (Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, 1871). As “The Bible Knowledge Commentary” points out, the reason for praise is interjected within every expression, and that is that “his loyal love endures forever” (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985).

The reason for praise is a reference to Exodus 34:6, when God frees Israel from captivity (Hughes & Laney, 1990). “The psalm was probably used antiphonally in temple worship, with the refrain being sung by the Levites or the congregation.”

6. Write a one paragraph descriptive definition of the word.

“Cheched” means to have a tender affection towards others, considering their best interest over your own. In addition, it implies a giving of yourself to the other person, no matter what the cost. Conversely, it can also mean to lovingly rebuke someone, or take pity on someone for a loss they have suffered.

7. How is this word used in Psalm 136?

In Psalm 136, the word is used repetitively to stress God’s loyal love for us, and it is paired with “endures forever” to stress that Christ will *never* leave us nor forsake us.

Works Cited

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