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Living in God's Undeserved Love

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In 2019, I wrote *The Tabernacle Hessed Moon, Living in God's Undeserved Love*. The following year, I shared this more-ordered version at a conference. It always blesses me. Here are the contents:

- What is *hesed*?
- The thwarting voice
- Five truths about *hesed*
- Five freedoms we experience as we live in God's *hesed*

What is *hesed*?

Hesed is a Hebrew word for God's love. Bible translations use words such as *lovingkindness* and *mercy* to attempt to convey its meaning, but there exists no adequate single English word to encase its fullness.

Hesed is the passionate, lavish, undeserved, eternal, promised loyalty of the Sovereign Creator God for His creation. He expresses *hesed* through covenant and by faithfulness, kindness, mercy, grace, patience, gentleness, sacrifice, forgiveness, and compassion.

God fully expressed *hesed* toward us in Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah. He became flesh and blood like you and me when He came to live and teach among us. He took the penalty for our sin upon Himself at the cross. He rose from the dead, and we can now receive His living *hesed* and pour it out to others. Although our minds cannot fully grasp God's vast love, we can receive it and rest in it. His *hesed* is our eternal hope, our comfort, our message, our life, and our joy!

The thwarting voice

After we have been born again into God's family through Jesus (See John 1:12-13 and John 3:3), we hear a thwarting voice telling us we must earn God's love. We know this is the enemy's voice and that we must reject it when we hear it, but often we don't recognize the form this voice takes. We must be on guard against the enemy's lies and expose them with truth so we can live in freedom.

Five truths about *hesed*

1. We do not and we never will deserve God's *hesed*. (Romans 5:1-11)
2. We cannot earn God's *hesed*. We can only receive it. (Titus 3:4-7, John 1:12-13)
3. God delights to lavish His *hesed* on the undeserving and receptive. (Titus 3:6; Ephesians 1:1-14)
4. Obedience is not our way to heaven or to God's favor; obedience is rather our expression of gratitude to Him as we love Him in return. (Romans 12:1; Ephesians 2:4-9)
Obedience is simply yielding to Him, His words, and His guidance knowing He wants our best.
5. Living in God's *hesed* is living in true freedom.

Five freedoms we experience as we live in God's hesed

1. We will be free to let God examine our lives without fear.

We will be able to receive information from our Father about our faults and sins so that He can correct, transform, and free us in His love. When we believe that we are completely undeserving of His love, we can face our sin with hope and without fear.

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment; and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” (1 John 4:18; also see Psalm 139:23-24)

Many people **avoid** examining their lives, or **suppress** the truth about their sin, or **deny** their wrongdoing, because they are afraid of punishment or shame. But as God's children, we are free to **acknowledge** and **embrace** our sins knowing that we will be washed, renewed, healed, and freed in God's love and forgiveness. Although we grieve over our sin, we move forward, resting in the finished work of Jesus Who paid our debt and declared us right with Him by His sacrifice.

2. We will be free from depending on ourselves.

We will be free from the burden of thinking our entrance into heaven or God's favor depends on us when, the truth is, our entrance depends on what Jesus did for us on the cross. (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

Do you think a certain deed will earn God's favor? If it flows from the Holy Spirit, He is delighted, but His favor rests on what Jesus already did for you.

Do you think God cannot possibly love you because of a habit you have not overcome? It is true that God wants us to overcome and has given us everything we need to overcome, but His favor and love rest on what Jesus has already done. His love never waivers. God does not sit us in a corner so we can think about our sin for awhile; no, He encourages us and helps us to rely on Him for change.

3. We will be free to ask our Father for what we want.

We learn in the Gospel accounts that Jesus encourages us to ask. We might not ask because we know we are undeserving or we feel unworthy. Although He doesn't give us everything we ask for, He invites us to ask even though we are undeserving. We may start our prayers with, “I don't deserve to ask You for _____, so based on Your *hesed*, I am going to ask.” God does not answer prayer or give gifts because we behave, but because of His love. (John 15:7,16; 16:23-27)

4. We will be free to praise God with authentic, full, unburdened hearts.

We will overflow with praise to Him, because we will finally **get** that His love is completely free! “Let us give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His *hesed* is everlasting!” (Psalm 118:1)

5. We will be free to let Him lead as we simply abide.

I will give two verses and then expound:

John 15:16 – Jesus said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.”

1 Peter 1:3 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great *hesed* has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”

Dear friends,

He birthed you into His kingdom, **He** chose you, and **He** appointed you for **His** purposes.

The original Greek word for *appoint* is *tith'emi* meaning *to place*. In His *hesed*, He **chooses** us, **places** us, and **gives** each one of us gifts to impact this time in which He has placed us. The only way we will know our **place** and be prepared for the uncertainty that lies ahead is by **abiding in Him**, because He is the Only One Who knows how events will unfold.

If you are in a place that doesn't make sense or that doesn't seem to fit in with what you had envisioned, be sure that it will serve His purpose. (I am not saying to stay in an abusive or dangerous situation. God's purpose will be to bring you out, but He will use it for good.)

Free in His Purpose

I read a story years ago about a woman whose small boat was caught in the ocean currents off the coast of the Philippines. No matter how hard she rowed, the ocean surges, like huge underground mammoths, swelled and heaved her in their own direction, until at last some fishermen rescued her.

As I look back on my life, I see that it has moved with the vast, *hesed* ocean surges of God's loving purpose. In the beginning of my new life with Jesus 40+ years ago, I had dreams to be a missionary trekking the mountains in Nepal or to start an orphanage somewhere overseas. None of these things happened. It is not that these plans would not still happen, but I am in a very different place than my former dreams.

So, how did I end up where I am now, teaching the Bible using art? I abided in Jesus, and *He* placed me in the ocean surges of *His* purpose. I never could have imagined His appointment ahead of time. I see now that every "placement" over the years, every job (boring or fun), every boss (good or bad), working with needy children for six years, singleness until I was 45, and every other placement, whether He asked me to stay or leave, was His preparation and purpose.

"Be strong and courageous, do not tremble or be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you **wherever you go!**" (Joshua 1:9)

When Jesus walked on the water toward His disciples as they crossed the sea in the darkness, He called out to them, "It is I. Do not be afraid." The next verse says, "Therefore, they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." (John 6:20-21)

They received Him, and He guided them to their destination. Our focus is not on our destiny, but on Him. In fact, He is our Destination. How would we live our lives differently if we knew we were already Home? Cease striving and know that He is God! (Psalm 46:10a)