

Biology, eschatology, soteriology, are all wonderful studies, but the greatest study of all is theology, the study of God. It is out of God that we have all things which we study. And if we were to begin a study of God, it would have to start with His nature. The most common description in the Bible of the character of God is the Hebrew word "*hesed*." It is translated into English as **lovingkindness, or steadfast love, and also as mercy** (Lamentations 3:22 [KJV](#)).

Isaiah begins this next section of chapter 63 by contrasting the wrath of God upon the wicked with the steadfast love of the Lord. One commentator has said that the Greek word for grace (*charis*) is the most beautiful word ever penned. I would say it is this Hebrew word, *hesed*. I say that because it is out of God's steadfast, merciful love that we are offered grace. It is also because of this unfailing love that God's wrath will be poured out on the wicked. For if those who hate the goodness of God were allowed to be with those who love God, then injustice would continue. Suffering would never cease. Wrong would continue to prevail.

It is due to this supreme attribute of God that in verse 7 Isaiah moves from the wrath of God to a prayer of praise for His steadfast love toward God's own. To him there is no contradiction. *⁷ I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.* Isaiah 63:7 The Israel of God eventually responds to the love and mercy of God, but the rest of the world will not. Remember the Israel of God are those who come to God by faith, just like Abraham did ([Romans 4:16](#); [Galatians 6:15-16](#)). Isaiah has predicted several times that the Messiah is coming for the ends of the earth, to set captives free, and bring the prisoners out of darkness, to shine His light throughout the earth (Isaiah [49:6](#); [61:1](#)).

Even the coming captivity was an expression of God's steadfast love to Israel. It would be apathetic for God to let them go on in their sin of idolatry. It is love that disciplines to turn a nation or an individual back to God. Isaiah praises the Lord for His great goodness and for all He has granted them. Stop for a moment and consider all He has granted us as a nation... as individuals... How has His abundance of loving kindness blessed your life? When was the last time you counted your blessings? **To not praise God for His loving kindness is ingratitude.** To praise anything or anyone else for your blessings is to spit on the loving nail pierced hand that is stretched out to us.

Isaiah goes on to describe the expressions of God's abundant loving kindness. He graciously calls us His own and hopes for the best from us. He saves us physically *and* spiritually. He rescues us again and again, even when we are the ones who gone

Commented [PW1]: Lamentations 3:22 (KJV)
²² *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

Commented [PW2]: Romans 4:16 (ESV)
¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Commented [PW3]: Galatians 6:15-16 (ESV)
¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.
¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Commented [PW4]: Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)
⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Commented [PW5]: Isaiah 61:1 (ESV)
¹ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

astray. ⁸ For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely." And he became their Savior. Isaiah 63:8

⁹ In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. Isaiah 63:9 He even suffers with us. Please hear this, for it is one of the most wonderful expressions of His steadfast love. When you suffer, it is so helpful to have someone at your side who feels with you. It is one of the greatest expressions of love. I watch spouses often suffer even more than their loved one who has some kind of physical affliction or heartache. They so love their spouse that the pain their spouse endures hurts them even more.

Now, understand that God loves you like that. I know that is hard to accept. The reason it is so hard is that we know we don't reciprocate that kind of a love. We try to when we celebrate communion. Some of His saints have asked to share His broken heart for the lost. And surely we can bear but a tiny fraction of what His heart is burdened with, but are we even willing to ask for that? Yet, He continually feels our deepest pain (Hebrews 4:15). *We may be sure that He who permits the suffering is with us in it. It may be that we shall see Him only when the trial is passing; but we must dare to believe that He never leaves the crucible. From Streams in the Desert.*

The "angel of His presence" is Jesus (Colossians 1:15). He is the One who saved them again and again. He was the cloud that stood between them and the Egyptians (Exodus 14:24). He was the Captain of the Hosts that met with Joshua (Joshua 5:14). He went before them in Canaan and drove out the Canaanites (Exodus 33:2). He raised up judges to deliver them from oppressors (Judges 2:16). He is God with us. One Immanuel would become the Lamb of God on the altar of the cross to save the souls of everyone who places their faith in God. How many times has the "angel of His presence" saved you from an early death?

I can tell you of a few times in my own life. One experience that was clearly one of those times was when three of us teenage boys were going to ditch school to enjoy a heavy snowfall. We borrowed an older brother's 4-wheel vehicle to go to the Snowbowl. When we hit the old Slide Rock Bridge the vehicle spun sideways and was headed off that cliff into the creek. The vehicle did an amazing, instantaneous 180 degree turn and slammed into a rock wall totaling the vehicle. We had put on our seat belts thirty seconds before. When it was all over, I reached forward and grabbed the Bible I had put on the dashboard. We just sat there in silence wondering at what had just happened. The angel of His presence saved us! That's what happened. He was giving us a little wake up call. Never tried to skip school again! ☺

Commented [PW6]: Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Commented [PW7]: Colossians 1:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Commented [PW8]: Exodus 14:24 (ESV)

²⁴ And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic,

Commented [PW9]: Joshua 5:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"

Commented [PW10]: Exodus 33:2 (ESV)

² I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Commented [PW11]: Judges 2:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

The verse goes on to say it was in his love and pity that He redeemed them. He knew at the time the very next verse would be true. He knew they would rebel and grieve His Holy Spirit. But He loves us! He knows we will fail again, but His steadfast love endures forever. Like babies learning to walk, we fall down and cry, and He lifts us up and carries us like those days when He carried them out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 32:10-12). And He has done the same for us! Isaiah already spoke of that in Isaiah 40:11. I hope you have not forgotten this wonderful promise of what our Savior does for us. *He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.*

Commented [PW12]: Deuteronomy 32:10-12 (ESV)

¹⁰ “He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

¹¹ Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,

¹² the LORD alone guided him, no foreign god was with him.

We think we get through things on our own. Ha! Haven't you seen two different people face the same struggle or tragedy and come out with a completely different response (Proverbs 11:24)? One trusts in Jesus and is carried in His everlasting arms (Luke 15:5). The other tries their best and finds that isn't enough. There is a contemporary Christian song that expresses this, Just Be Held by Casting Crowns. Here is the first verse. *Hold it all together, everybody needs you strong. But life hits you out of nowhere and barely leaves you holdin' on. And when you're tired of fighting, chained by your control, There's freedom in surrender, lay it down and let it go.* And the chorus, *So when you're on your knees and answers seem so far away, You're not alone, stop holding on and just be held. Your worlds not falling apart, its falling into place. I'm on the throne, stop holding on and just be held.* That's sound advice. Just let Him carry you through it. He is more than willing if you will let Him.

Commented [PW13]: Proverbs 11:24 (ESV)

²⁴ One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

Commented [PW14]: Luke 15:5 (ESV)

⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

¹⁰ But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. Isaiah 63:10 In spite of all that love and grace, we rebel just like they did. We turn to our own ways. We seek our own pleasures instead of looking to Him to be our delight. He speaks to our hearts, and we turn away, grieving the Holy Spirit. Our rebellion forces Him to turn against us. He fights against us by lifting the protection He had placed around us. Our actions demand His justice and the consequences come. They come to turn us back from our path of self-destruction. Sadly, we sometimes respond by questioning His love, accusing Him of not caring, and all the while He is suffering with us, feeling our pain, and our grief.

¹¹ Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, ¹² who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, ¹³ who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble.

Isaiah 63:11-13 As soon as we repent, He is ready to pour out His blessings again. God remembers the way He went with Israel through the wilderness. In the midst of our deserved calamities we wonder where the God is who helped us in past times. Where is

the God who saved me from that car accident? Where is the God who sent His servant to put me back on the right road, the God who filled me with His Spirit (Luke 11:13)?

He took Israel through a wall of water on each side and drowned their enemies on that same path. He fed the multitude in the wilderness. He led every one of us through some kind of water He divided for us. He has fed us the words of life, manna from heaven in the wilderness of this fallen world (John 6:51).

¹⁴ Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name. Isaiah 63:14 Our good Shepherd has led us to green pastures and by still waters (Psalm 23:1-2). He watches over us so we can feed peacefully without fearing the enemy. We are at peace with Him watching over us. When we come to Him, He gives us rest (Matthew 11:28-30). In all these actions He is displaying His steadfast love, which is the same as making for Himself a glorious name. A name to the Hebrews meant the attributes of that person. It's the way we describe a person. The glorious name God is making for Himself is a way to describe all of His perfect attributes. He makes them known through the ways He deals with us (Psalm 76:1).

¹⁵ Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me. Isaiah 63:15 After declaring God's steadfast love in spite of the repeated rebellion of the people, Isaiah offered up a prayer for mercy. He had just had a vision of Jesus in His glory after treading the winepress of the wrath of God. It disturbed Him as it should have. God's heart is broken for all those who would never repent. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Our hearts should be broken as well.

In seeing the coming exile of Israel and the future wrath of God on the world, Isaiah feels as if the steadfast love of God had somehow failed. He just declared that in all their afflictions God was afflicted, but now he feels that God is withholding that compassion toward him. A verse from the song I mentioned fits here. *If your eyes are on the storm, you'll wonder if I love you still. But if your eyes are on the cross, you'll know I always have and I always will. And not a tear is wasted, in time you'll understand. I'm painting beauty with the ashes; your life is in My hands.*

There will be times when we feel like Isaiah did. We don't understand what has happened or why. Circumstances will stretch our faith. They cause us to be more earnest in prayer. And when we come out on the other side, we learn that God can carry us through whatever He allows to come our way (1 Corinthians 10:13).

¹⁶ For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

Commented [PW15]: Luke 11:13 (ESV)

¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Commented [PW16]: John 6:51 (ESV)

⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Commented [PW17]: Psalm 23:1-2 (ESV)

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

Commented [PW18]: Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Commented [PW19]: Psalm 76:1 (ESV)

¹ In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel.

Commented [PW20]: 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Commented [PW21]: 1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Isaiah 63:16 This is wonderfully true for all people. You don't have to be Jewish. You don't have to come from a godly family. You just need to be redeemed and God will be a Father to you, a perfect father (John 1:12). The perfect father loves, guides, protects, provides, and disciplines his children (Hebrews 12:7). He hurts when you hurt. He rejoices with your growth and victories. He wants the best for you. And He wants you to be like Him (Romans 8:29).

17 O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage.

Isaiah 63:17 Isaiah was asking why God made them to wander from Him and harden their hearts. But actually, God allows us to harden our own hearts (1 Samuel 6:6); Psalm 95:10). Pharaoh hardened his own heart before God hardened it further (See Exodus 7 – 14). The problem with a hard heart is that we have no fear of God's justice and the consequences of sin (Proverbs 16:6). That means we won't hesitate to rebel and harden if further to our own destruction.

I think many of us are praying the last half of this verse for our country. How has this nation so hardened its hearts that there is no fear of God? We pray with Isaiah, "Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage."

18 Your holy people held possession for a little while; our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary. Isaiah 63:18 Isaiah could see the future battle in which the temple would be destroyed. For the Jews it was the very place of God dwelling among them. It would be as if all hope was lost. The favor of God seemed forever removed. That is why His prayer is that God return to them. God returns to us when we return to Him (Jeremiah 15:19). While we watch the favor of God seem to lift from our own nation, we pray with Isaiah that God would return and cause our hearts to fear Him. We pray He would soften the hearts of those who hate Christianity and want it removed from the public square. We pray for boldness to stand against this spirit that would intimidate us into silence and misrepresent that for which we truly stand.

19 We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name. Isaiah 63:19 Think of the nations that have no Christian heritage. Look at the nations of Africa and the turmoil before the Gospel was proclaimed. Look at the Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic nations and see where we would have been had it not been for the light of Christ. There's a reason they all want to come here. And now our nation seems to be running headlong away from our Christian heritage. Instead of gratitude for our past, we seem to be running from all that brought God's blessings on us. Prayer: O Lord God of all creation, God of steadfast love, look down from heaven and see. Return O Lord for the sake of your servants. Hold us LORD. Our eyes are on You. Teach us to pray for our homes, our city, our nation, and the upcoming elections. Give us eyes to see You at work, ears to hear Your Spirit, and hearts longing to obey.

Commented [PW22]: John 1:12 (ESV)

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

Commented [PW23]: Hebrews 12:7 (ESV)

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Commented [PW24]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Commented [PW25]: 1 Samuel 6:6 (ESV)

⁶ Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed?

Commented [PW26]: Psalm 95:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways."

Commented [PW27]: Proverbs 16:6 (ESV)

⁶ By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.

Commented [PW28]: Jeremiah 15:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the LORD: "If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them."

Questions

- 1 What is the most commonly mentioned attribute of God?
- 2 How has God blessed America? You?
- 3 How does God feel about your pain? Why?
- 4 Has "the angel of His presence" saved you? When?
- 5 Why does He carry us?
- 6 Why does He turn against us?
- 7 Why does God allow hardship in our lives?
- 8 How can God become our Father?
- 9 What is the problem with a hard heart?
- 10 What is the difference between a nation with a Christian heritage and a pagan one?