

Psalm 36:5–10

Your **steadfast love**, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD.

How precious is your **steadfast love**, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

Oh, continue your **steadfast love** to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart!

If you've ever studied German, you came to realize quickly that the German language loves compound words!

Some have been taken directly into our own language; like **Schadenfreude** (joy in other people's misfortune) and **Wanderlust** (a strong desire to travel).

Others are comical; like **Nacktschnecke** (literally: naked snail), meaning: slug.

And **Treppenwitz** (literally: the staircase joke), meaning: The witty comeback you concocted too late.

Or **Backpfeifengesicht** (literally: the slap face), meaning: A face you'd like to slap.

Kühlschrank is literally: the cool cupboard – refrigerator.

Handschuh is literally: the hand shoe – glove.

Tagedieb is literally: the day thief - a dawdler, a layabout.

Eselsbrücke is literally: the donkey bridge - a memory aide.

Mark Twain is reported to have said, ***“Some German words are so long that they have perspective.”***

Guinness Book of World Records even recognizes German compound words as a category. According to Guinness, **Rechtsschutzversicherungsgesellschaften** is the longest German word in everyday use. It means “insurance companies providing legal protection.”

Of course, English has its compound words as well — toothbrush, football, blackboard, passport, schoolhouse and grandmother, to name a few.

At 28 letters, perhaps **“antidisestablishmentarianism”** is the longest word in English. And no, **“supercalifragilisticexpialidocious”** is not a real word.

There’s another English compound word: **lovingkindness**. It appears in verses 5, 7 and 10 in today’s psalm reading.

Granted, the Hebrew **hesed** is not always translated **“lovingkindness.”** It can also be translated as **steadfast love.**

So, we have this **steadfast love or lovingkindness** three times in the text. It is clearly the theme of today’s reading, and thus, it bears scrutiny.

C.S. Lewis wrote a book about the four loves based on different words used for love in Greek.

Philia (φιλία) is love that friends have towards one another.

Éros (ἔρως) is romantic love.

Storge (στοργή) is affection or liking; for example, LOVING Bach's Brandenburg Concerti or golf.

Agápe (ἀγάπη) is the love of God towards us. It is:

- 1. Concern**
- 2. Coupled with understanding**
- 3. Moved into action**
- 4. Even at the cost of personal sacrifice.**

Many today translate **Agápe (ἀγάπη) as unconditional love.** This is not biblical and misses the point that **Agápe (ἀγάπη)** is primarily a love of the will, rather than of the emotions.

Where does **steadfast love or lovingkindness fit into that?**

The Hebrew word used in the Psalm is **חֶסֶד (hesed)** and is translated:

- kindness,
- lovingkindness,
- mercy
- steadfast love,
- loyalty,
- unfailing love.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

You could argue that all four are represented in this one word.

Consider what King David has to say about God's **steadfast love** in this Psalm.

1st, this is a love that is indescribable!

He writes that God's steadfast love **extends to the heavens** and His, **faithfulness to the skies!**

He writes that God's righteousness is **like the mighty mountains**, His judgments are **like the great deep!**

How do you adequately explain to someone how much you love them? It's not easy.

Children might say to their parents **"I love you to the sky."**

Or **"I love you to the moon and back."**

Or **"this much"** (arms wide).

Lovers may say to each other **"You are my universe."**

Husband and wife may say, **"You are the butter on my grits and the gravy on my biscuits."**

The Message paraphrases verses 5-6 like this:

"God's love is meteoric, his loyalty astronomic, his purpose titanic, his verdicts oceanic.

Yet in his largeness nothing gets lost;

Not a man, not a mouse, slips through the cracks."

We are the recipients of a love that is so great, it's beyond description.

2nd, this lovingkindness is precious!

This means:

- A. It is of great value,**
- B. it should not be wasted and**
- C. it should not be treated carelessly or casually.**

A. Great value.

Sometimes, when we make a purchase, we say that we got a great deal, or **“great value.”** That is, we were able to secure an object or service far below market value.

- We got a great deal on a car.
- We got great value on the house.
- We got a great deal on the bathroom remodel.

God’s lovingkindness is a **great value**, a great deal. It came at the astounding cost of God’s only begotten Son dying on the cross for the sins of the world. It brings forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe. **It costs us nothing.**

Can there be any greater value than that?

B. It should not be wasted.

When we get a great deal, we take care of it. We wash and maintain the car. We keep the house in good repair.

C. We treasure it. We are grateful. We feel blessed.

3rd, God’s lovingkindness has huge benefits for us.

*How precious is your **steadfast love**, O God!*

The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your house,

and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

For with you is the fountain of life;

in your light do we see light.

When our world seems to collapse around us, there is one place of safety, and that is the knowledge that God's love surrounds us. It gives us peace in the storm.

It also has the benefit of nurturing us and making us stronger for the trials and tests that come our way. Experiencing that love and mercy of God is like feasting at a banquet and having our fill. Plenty to drink, too. We are refreshed when we feed and drink on a flood of God's love.

Moreover, God's love has the benefit of illuminating our way as we navigate the uncharted and turbulent seas of life.

In your light do we see light.

Finally, God's love towards us is everlasting, never failing.

Matthew 28:20 I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Hebrews 13:5–6

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said,

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

So, we can confidently say,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

Romans 8:38–39

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Tom’s 6-year-old son, Benjamin, protested his bedtime. Frustrated by his father’s refusal to budge, Benjamin finally became so frustrated that he said,

“Daddy, I hate you!”

Tom, replied,

“I’m sorry you feel that way, Ben, but I love you.”

And then what do you think Benjamin said?

“Oh, it’s okay.” Or maybe, **“Sorry, Dad. I love you, too.”** Nope.

When Tom told his son that he loved him, Benjamin yelled back,

“Don’t say that!”

Surprised, Tom continued,

“But, Ben, but it’s true — I love you.”

“Don’t say that, Daddy.”

“But I love you, Ben.”

“Stop saying that, Daddy! Stop saying it right now!”

And then it came, Tom reported, almost completely unbidden:

“Benjamin, now listen to me: I love you ... like it or not!”

Even at 6 years old, you see, Benjamin realized that in the face of true love he was powerless. If Tom had been willing to negotiate —

“I’ll love you if you go to bed nicely” — then Benjamin would have been a player:

“Okay, this time, but I’m not eating my vegetables at dinner tomorrow.”

But once Tom refused to negotiate, affirming his **steadfastlove**, then Ben could do nothing but **receive or flee that love**.

The same is true with us.

When we come face to face with the reality of God’s **lovingkindness**, his **steadfast love**, we can reject God’s love. We can tell God to go take a hike!

Or we can bow in wonder. We can hold out our empty hands and as beggars praise him.

We are not perfect. We’re going to wander and make mistakes. But God’s love is **steadfast**.

Micah 7:18–19

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?

He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

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He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

God, you are so great!

Thank you for your lovingkindness.

Keep it coming, Lord!

**I am grateful and will do all in my power
to live in a way that acknowledges your mercy.”**