



I N T H I S I S

LOVE

1 JOHN 4:10

In this is love [noun ἀγάπη *agape*], not that we loved [verb ἀγαπάω *agapao*] God, but that He loved [verb ἀγαπάω *agapao*] us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10



What is “agape” love?

- ἀγάπη (agape) is the Greek noun normally translated into English as “love” or “charity”
- Unconditional, benevolent love; a Heavenly Father’s (parental) love; God’s mercy toward man
- Benevolent, unconditional, pure love; seeks the highest and best for the other
- This is the type of love that says: “I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.”



How is God's love described in the Old Testament/Tanakh?

- What is the Hebrew synonym for *agape* love?
- חֶסֶד *hesed*
- Definitions: lovingkindness, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, loyal loves, steadfast love
- חֶסֶד *hesed* appears 246 times in the Old Testament



Hebrew Understanding of Love

Hesed is not a romantic, infatuation kind of love. It is a faithful, reliable love. *Hesed* is faithful. It is loyal.

***Hesed* is love put to action.**

Hesed is the unfailing love God has for YOU.

Hesed is one of the most fundamental characteristics of God, consistent with what we know about His covenantal nature.

Hesed is “wrapping up in itself all the positive attributes of God: love, covenant faithfulness, mercy, grace, kindness, loyalty—in short, acts of devotion and lovingkindness that go beyond the requirements of duty.” (Darrell Bock)

- Avital Snow



For You, Lord, are good, and ready to
forgive, and **abundant** in lovingkindness
[חֶסֶד *hesed*] to all who call upon You.

Psalms 86:5



How can I believe in God's love
when I live in a world full of evil?



● LIVE UPDATES

Texas mall shooting updates: 9 dead, including alleged gunman, 7 hospitalized

Witnesses of Texas mall shooting that killed 8 and wounded at least 7 describe the chaotic and horrifying scene

Texas shooting: Eight killed by gunman in Allen mall

At least eight people killed by gunman at Texas mall, shooter killed by police

At Least 9 Dead, Including Gunman, in Shooting at Texas Mall

Gunman kills 8, wounds 7 at Allen Premium Outlets before being killed by officer



- This horrible attack happened 13 miles from our church, so we are understandably shaken
- People in our local cities are hurting and desperately need the *hesed* of God
- We may have felt like we like we were immune to this kind of evil in our “bubble”
- Evil is not something “out there,” it exists even here
- Our friends in Israel have sadly experienced violence and evil all too frequently
- People everywhere need the *hesed* of God



Book of Jonah



The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” Jonah 1:1-2

- Jonah was from Gath Hepher (2 Kings 14:25), a town in the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:10, 13). Jonah lived when Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom was king (793-753 BC) (2 Kings 14:23-25).
- Nineveh was located on the east bank of the Tigris River, about 550 miles from Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom. It was near the location of modern-day Mosul, Iraq. Genesis 10:9-12 says that Nineveh was established by Nimrod.



But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3





The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.” Jonah 1:4-6



Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”

Jonah 1:7-9



Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, “How could you do this?” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. So they said to him, “What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?”—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.”

Jonah 1:10-12



However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. Then they called on the Lord and said, “We earnestly pray, O Lord, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O Lord, have done as You have pleased.” Jonah 1:13-14



So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord appointed a great fish [גָּדַג dag] to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah 1:15-17



Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish, and he said, “I called out of my distress to the Lord, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice.” Jonah 2:1-2



“For You had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me. So I said, ‘I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.’ Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head.” Jonah 2:3-5



Jonah prayed... “I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple.” Jonah 2:6-7



Jonah prayed...

“Those who regard vain [worthless] idols
forsake their **faithfulness** [חֶסֶד *hesed*],”

Jonah 2:8

*When people devote their lives to vain idols (evil,
violence, greed, selfishness, hatred) they forsake/forfeit
the *hesed* of God

*A life which disregards God's love is lonely and painful



Jonah prayed...

“but I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving [תּוֹדָה *todah*]. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation [יְשׁוּעָה *yâshuw‘ah*] is from the Lord.” Jonah 2:9

*Can I still be thankful in the midst of tragedy?

*Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ) is the Hebrew name for Jesus



Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land. Jonah 2:10

- God gave Jonah another chance
- God's plan did not change with Jonah's disobedience
- Jonah had to be changed in order to make him obedient
- Jonah's circumstances changed (left belly of the fish) when his attitude changed (repentance of sin)
- God may be offering you another chance today



Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.” So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days’ walk. Jonah 3:1-3

*God’s character and love do not change





Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.'"

Jonah 3:4

*How do people respond when they finally understand that sin has consequences and that a loving God offers salvation?

*Who is proclaiming the gift of salvation to our generation?



What happened when a believer obeyed God and proclaimed repentance and salvation to his culture?

Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

Jonah 3:5



When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." Jonah 3:6-9



Who were the People of Nineveh?

Nineveh was a “city of bloodshed” (Nahum 3:1), for the Assyrians engage in many wars of conquest and used extremely brutal methods in killing their captured warriors.

Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies and pillage; her prey never departs. Nahum 3:1

Jonah's calling... Our calling

Jonah was called to go out and explain the *hesed* of God to the violent people of Nineveh who lived in an evil culture and thought murder was the acceptable norm.

The very reason Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh and tell the story of repentance is the reason God called him to go to Nineveh and tell the story of repentance.

In the middle of evil, God's love is most needed.



When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented [נָחַם *nacham* – to have compassion] concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

Jonah 3:10

*The love of God changes hearts



Then the people of Nineveh believed in God;
and they called a fast and put on sackcloth
from the greatest to the least of them.

Jonah 3:5

But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became
angry. Jonah 4:1

*Why was Jonah angry?



He prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness [חֶסֶד *hesed*], and one who relents concerning calamity. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.” Jonah 4:2-3

*Jonah wanted the Lord to punish the people of Nineveh, not forgive and save them



The Lord said [to Jonah], “Do you have good reason to be angry?” Jonah 4:4

*How would we react if God changed the hearts of those in our generation who are hateful and evil?

*Would we be joyful or would we be bitter?



Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city. So the Lord God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. Jonah 4:5-6

*How can believers get so caught up in possessions while ignoring the spiritual needs of others?



But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered. When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life." Jonah 4:7-8

*What are our priorities?



Then God said to Jonah, “Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “I have good reason to be angry, even to death.” Then the Lord said, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”

Jonah 4:9-11



As the book concludes, Jonah was angry, depressed, hot, and faint. And he was left to contemplate God's words about his own lack of compassion [חֶסֶד *hesed*] and God's depth of compassion.

How can I believe in God's love
when I live in a world full of evil?



What can overcome a culture of death?

- Not laws
- Not police officers
- Not more firepower
- Hearts that are changed by the power of salvation
- Lives that are renewed through repentance
- Comfort and grace given to the hurting





Shortly after a gunman opened fire at the Allen Premium Outlets Saturday afternoon, Steven Spainhouer jumped into action. **Spainhouer rushed desperately to aid those wounded and dying** after shots rang out a little after 3:30 p.m. May 6. He said the victims had such horrific injuries that they had to be loaded into police cars because ambulances would not have gotten them to nearby trauma facilities fast enough. When asked if he thought he saved any lives, Spainhouer said he's not sure, but knows he lost three people. He said he raced to the shopping center when his son called to say there had been shots fired outside H&M—the store where he worked. "When the multiple shots happened, my heart just dropped," he said. "I was on the phone with 911 and I was telling them we have a mass casualty incident." Spainhouer said he got there before any first responders and while a handful of people around him recorded videos of the bodies on the ground, he tried to save lives. "I never imagined in 100 years I would be thrust into the position of being the first responder on the site to take care of people," he shared.



After the shooting in Allen...

“We will never know how many lives were saved by the swift action of our first responders. What we do know is that we owe a debt of gratitude to the **first responders that ran toward the gunfire** and acted swiftly to neutralize the threat.”

– U.S. Congressman Keith Self

To see evil defeated, to protect innocent lives, to see hearts changed, followers of Jesus must **run toward** our neighbors and coworkers and schoolmates with the *hesed* of God.



Run From or Run Toward?

- Our natural reaction is to Run From evil
- When faced with cruelty and death, it is understandable that the people of God want to hide and protect themselves
- When the possibility of death is real, even believers in Jesus want to find shelter
- With God's help,
 - Like the police officers in Allen, we can RUN TOWARD those who would do evil
 - Like the civilian helpers in Allen, we can RUN TOWARD those who have been hurt



What Next?

- For those who are hurting today, the *hesed* of God is available
- For those who think that sinful hearts can never been changed, the *hesed* of God is available
- For those like Jonah who want to reject and ignore the evil around us, the *hesed* of God is available
- For those desperate to see our culture transformed, the *hesed* of God is available
- For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness [חֶסֶד *hesed*] to all who call upon You. Psalm 86:5
- Which way will you run today?

