

Psalms 117:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

Analysis

For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD. This concluding verse provides the basis for universal praise called for in verse 1. Nations should praise Yahweh because His merciful kindness extends to all and His truth endures eternally. The psalm ends where most begin—with exuberant "Hallelujah!"

"For" (כִּי/ki) is causal conjunction providing reason for preceding command. Why should all nations praise the LORD? Not arbitrary demand but reasonable response to demonstrated divine character. The word signals: here's the evidence justifying universal worship.

"His merciful kindness" (חֶסֶד/chesed) uses the untranslatable Hebrew word chesed—covenant love, loyal love, steadfast kindness, faithful mercy. KJV's "merciful kindness" attempts capturing chesed's richness. This isn't sentimental tolerance or emotional affection but committed, covenant loyalty—God's unwavering devotion to His people despite their unfaithfulness. Chesed appears over 250 times in Old Testament, often translated "mercy," "lovingkindness," "steadfast love."

"Is great toward us" (גָּבַר עָלֵינוּ/gavar aleinu) uses gavar (be strong, prevail, be mighty). God's chesed isn't weak sentiment but mighty force prevailing over human sin, rebellion, and failure. The preposition "toward us" emphasizes direction—God's covenant love flows toward His people, directed at us, applied to us, benefiting us. The "us" likely refers to Israel but extends through gospel to all

believers (Galatians 3:29).

"And the truth of the LORD" (אֱמֶת־יְהוָה/ve'emet-Yahweh) adds second reason for praise. Emet means truth, faithfulness, reliability, trustworthiness. God's truth indicates His absolute faithfulness to promises, consistency of character, and reliability of word. What He promises, He performs; what He speaks proves true; His character never changes. This truth contrasts pagan gods' capriciousness and human leaders' unreliability.

"Endureth for ever" (לְעוֹלָם/le'olam) emphasizes eternal duration. Olam means forever, eternity, perpetuity, everlasting. God's truth doesn't fluctuate with circumstances, evolve with culture, or expire with time. It remains constant, reliable, trustworthy throughout all generations, all ages, all eternity. Psalm 119:89 declares: "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." Isaiah 40:8: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

"Praise ye the LORD" (הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה/Halelu-Yah) concludes with famous exclamation—"Hallelujah!" This compound word joins imperative "praise" with shortened divine name "Yah" (from Yahweh). It brackets Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118), appearing at multiple psalms' conclusions. This exclamation transcends language barriers, cultures, and generations—universal church's common cry of worship. Revelation employs it repeatedly in heaven's worship scenes (Revelation 19:1-6).

Historical Context

Psalm 117's two themes—chesed (merciful kindness) and emet (truth)—appear together throughout Scripture as paired attributes defining God's character. Exodus 34:6 presents God's self-revelation to Moses: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness [chesed] and truth [emet]." These attributes balance perfectly: grace without truth becomes sentimental license; truth without grace becomes harsh legalism. Together they characterize God's covenant relationship with His people.

Old Testament repeatedly testifies to God's unfailing chesed. Genesis records

cheded toward Abraham (24:27), Joseph (39:21), Israel (Exodus 15:13). Prophets proclaim chesed survives exile: "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22). Many psalms celebrate chesed: Psalm 136 repeats 26 times "for his mercy [cheded] endureth for ever."

God's truth (emet) proves equally foundational. His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob proved true. His law given at Sinai remained reliable standard. His prophecies fulfilled exactly. His covenant commitments never failed. Despite Israel's repeated rebellions, God's faithfulness remained constant. Numbers 23:19 declares: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

New Testament identifies Jesus as ultimate expression of these attributes. John's Gospel declares: "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace [cheded] and truth [emet]" (John 1:14). Jesus perfectly embodied God's merciful kindness and eternal truth. His death demonstrated both: truth requiring sin's punishment, grace providing substitute. His resurrection proved God's truth endures forever—death cannot defeat divine promises.

Early church proclaimed gospel to all nations, fulfilling Psalm 117's vision. Jerusalem church initially resisted Gentile inclusion, but Spirit's guidance and scriptural testimony convinced them God's chesed extends to all peoples. Acts 15's Jerusalem Council concluded: God "put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Paul's epistles repeatedly argue: gospel includes all nations because God's promises always intended universal salvation. Abraham's blessing reaches all families of earth (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8).

Through centuries, gospel has spread to thousands of languages, cultures, and nations. Wycliffe Bible Translators, missionary movements, indigenous churches worldwide—all fulfill Psalm 117's vision: all nations praising the LORD because His merciful kindness is great and His truth endures forever. The psalm's brevity belies its significance: shortest psalm, largest vision.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do God's merciful kindness (chesed) and truth (emet) work together, and why must both be present?
2. What does it mean that God's truth 'endureth for ever,' and how does this provide stability in changing world?
3. How does Jesus embody both grace and truth (John 1:14), and why is He the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 117's vision?
4. In what ways can contemporary church more fully realize Psalm 117's vision of all nations praising the LORD together?

Interlinear Text

יְהוָה	יְהוָה	יְהוָה	יְהוָה	יְהוָה	יְהוָה
H3588	is great	H5921	For his merciful	† toward us and the truth	of the LORD
	H1396		H2617	H571	H3068
לְעוֹלָם	לְעוֹלָם	לְעוֹלָם	לְעוֹלָם	לְעוֹלָם	לְעוֹלָם
endureth for ever	Praise	ye the LORD			
H5769	H1984	H3050			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 25:1 (Resurrection): O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

Psalms 85:10 (Grace): Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Psalms 89:1 (References Lord): I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

Psalms 103:11 (Grace): For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

John 14:6 (Truth): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

1 John 5:6 (Truth): This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

Micah 7:20 (Grace): Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

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