

Psalm 57:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

Analysis

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. This verse provides the theological basis for David's commitment to international praise—God's character is cosmically magnificent, deserving universal worship. "For" (ki, וְ) introduces the reason: because God's attributes are so transcendent, they merit proclamation among all peoples.

"Thy mercy" (chasdekhah, חֶסֶדְךָ) is the rich Hebrew word chesed, meaning covenant love, loyal love, steadfast faithfulness, lovingkindness—God's committed, unfailing love toward His covenant people. This isn't sentimental affection but robust, reliable, covenant-keeping love that endures despite human failure. Chesed is God's character—He cannot break covenant because covenant-keeping loyalty defines who He is.

"Is great unto the heavens" (gadol ad-shamayim, מִתְהַלֵּל שָׁמָיִם) uses spatial metaphor to express transcendent magnitude. God's covenant love isn't small, limited, or constrained but extends to the heavens—immeasurable, unlimited, infinite. The phrase echoes Psalm 36:5: 'Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens.' God's love transcends human comprehension; its magnitude matches creation's vastness.

"And thy truth" (va'amittkha, וְאִמְתָּךְ) refers to God's faithfulness, reliability, trustworthiness, truth. Emet means firmness, stability, truth, what is reliable and can be trusted. God's truth is His absolute faithfulness to His word, character, and

promises. Unlike humans who promise but fail, whose words prove unreliable, God's word is perfectly true and trustworthy.

"Unto the clouds" (ad-shechaqim, אֶל־שְׁכָאַקִים) parallels the previous phrase, using vertical imagery to express transcendent magnitude. Clouds, highest visible atmospheric feature in ancient perspective, represent the boundary between earthly and heavenly realms. God's truth reaches beyond earthly limitation into transcendent reality. His faithfulness isn't constrained by earthly circumstances, politics, or human failure but remains constant as the heavens.

Together, mercy and truth encapsulate God's covenant character—He loves faithfully (mercy) and keeps His word absolutely (truth). These attributes appear together throughout Scripture (Psalm 25:10, 40:11, 85:10, 89:14; John 1:14). Because God's character is so magnificent, transcending earthly limitation, He deserves worship from all nations, not just Israel.

Historical Context

The pairing of mercy (chesed) and truth (emet) is foundational to Old Testament theology. When God revealed His character to Moses after the golden calf incident, He proclaimed: 'The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth' (Exodus 34:6). This revelation became Israel's central confession of God's character, quoted throughout Scripture.

Ancient Near Eastern treaty covenants used similar language about loyalty and faithfulness, but human rulers often proved unreliable. Vassal kings swore loyalty but rebelled when convenient. Suzerains promised protection but abandoned vassals when politically expedient. Against this backdrop of human covenant-breaking, Israel's confession that Yahweh's covenant love and truth reach to the heavens was revolutionary—here is a covenant partner who never fails.

The vertical imagery (heavens, clouds) resonated in ancient cosmology where heavens represented the divine realm. By stating God's mercy and truth reach to the heavens, David asserts these attributes are divine—not limited by human failure, political circumstances, or earthly constraints. They partake of heaven's

eternal, unchanging nature.

For exilic Israel, this verse provided crucial hope. Though Jerusalem lay in ruins and covenant promises seemed failed, God's mercy and truth remained as constant as the heavens. Lamentations 3:22-23 echoes this confidence: 'It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.'

In Christ, God's mercy and truth find ultimate expression. John 1:14 declares the Word became flesh 'full of grace and truth'—the same pairing. Jesus embodies God's covenant love (grace) and absolute faithfulness (truth). Through Him, God's mercy reaches from heaven to earth, and His truth is revealed in person.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the cosmic magnitude of God's mercy and truth (reaching to heavens and clouds) affect your understanding of His love for you personally?
2. What is the relationship between God's 'mercy' (covenant love) and 'truth' (faithfulness), and why are both essential to His character and our security?
3. How does recognizing God's attributes as transcendent and unlimited (not constrained by earthly circumstances) strengthen trust during trials?
4. Why does David use vertical spatial imagery (heavens, clouds) to describe God's character, and what does this teach about the transcendent nature of divine love and faithfulness?
5. How should the magnitude of God's mercy and truth motivate believers to proclaim His character 'among the nations' (v.9)?

Interlinear Text

רַב־לְאַת־עַל־שָׁמָן־מִן־מִזְרָחַ וְעַל־נָשָׁמָן־מִן־אַמְתָּה:

H3588 **is great** H5704 **unto the heavens** H8064 **For thy mercy** H2617 **unto the clouds** H5704 H7834

אַמְתָּה:

and thy truth

H571

Additional Cross-References

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

Psalms 108:4 (Grace): For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.

Psalms 36:5 (Grace): Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

Psalms 71:19 (Parallel theme): Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

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