

**Understanding the God's Covenant:**  
*Hesed* (steadfast love) and *Emet* (true/ faithful)

Text: Psalm 103

**Introduction:**

Dr. Peter Gentry said that Psalm 117 (which contains 2 verses only) is the abstract or summary of the entire book of Psalms (*KTC* 145). The first verse is the call to praise—or call to worship. Then the second verse is the reason for worship. God's love is great or steadfast (which in Greek is *hesed*) and his faithful (which in Greek is *emet*) to all His people.

Both the *hesed* and *emet* are used entirely in the Bible when speaking of God's covenanted love to His creation—specially to His people. Indeed, *hesed* and *emet* are repeated four times in our passage today, Psalm 103:11-19, (vv. 4, 8, 11, 17).

In our passage the recipients of God's steadfast love and faithfulness are for “those who fear the Lord” (11, 13) who are—also—the ones who keep the covenant of God (17, 18). The term *hesed* and *emet* are essentially used for a covenantal context. To this we will learn more in a while.

**Main Idea:**

Speaking of keeping the covenant of God, it raises questions like why study the covenants of God, or what do we mean by God's covenant, or how can we keep this covenant? We will answer these questions in a short while.

I will answer it first in a subtle cultural context. Promises nowadays are reduced in a simple agreement or unsure statement. A no-weight guarantee or it-depends-on-my-mood if I want to meet the vow. We even have a common saying, “promises are made to be broken.”

Most importantly, let me use Dr. Thomas Schreiner's statement, “If we don't understand the covenants, we will not and cannot understand the Bible.” Indeed, the covenants are the backbone or framework of the overarching narrative of the Bible.

What covenant? Biblically, there are five major explicit covenants. These are Noah's, Abraham's, Mosaic/ Israel at Sinai, Davidic covenants, and lastly, the new covenant. To further understand, I have here a short clip that some of you have already watched recently. (*Show the Bible Project video*)

\*We saw on the video that there are four major covenants but adding to these are the Creation covenant—or covenant with Adam and Eve, and the New Covenant at the last part where we—Christians—are located.

Now in order for us to understand God's covenant, we must first understand what a covenant is.

A covenant may be defined as an “**Agreement/ partnership; relationship.**”

In a limited explanation, it is somehow when one is to be married. In marriage, you make a vow or a covenant with the person you are marrying. In short, covenant signifies relationship. But God's covenant is more than an idea of marriage because it is not a mutual or equal authority, right, and power.

In Ancient Near East, a covenant is initiated by the “stronger party,” ie. King, tribal leaders, or the head of the family. Likewise, God initiated a covenantal relationship with Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, the Israel, David, and the exiled Israelites.

Again, in this covenantal partnership—partnering with God, it does not mean that we have an equal authority or power. Rather, in this kind of covenantal relationship, God is inviting us to dance with Him in His creation. We are being led by God in this relationship as we fully submit in His will. His will becomes our will; His desires, our desire; His righteousness, our righteousness; His family, our family.

Sadly, just like a “contract or agreement,” it can be violated or not be kept by the other party. Of course, once the covenant is broken, it has a consequence. Which evidently happened to the people in the Old Testament.

That leads to my second point, a covenant can be “**Conditional or/and Unconditional (or Unilateral).**”

The main thing here, God, out of his *hesed* and *emet*, continued to be faithful with his covenant to his people. On the other side, Adam, Eve, Abraham, Noah, David, Moses, and the Israelites failed over and over again. And just like all the former covenant partners, we also fail to keep God’s covenant and commandments with us. We fall short in our loyalty and faithfulness to Him.

Unlike God, who is always faithful and steadfast in His love—*hesed* and *emet*. We, mere beings, are stubborn, incompetent, and unrighteous. As it is written in Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short in the glory of God.”

A basic structure of a covenant is when a partner obeys, kept the covenant and remained faithful to God, then the partner will receive the blessing of the covenant. Example, for Abraham, having a thousand-fold descendants; for David, an eternal throne of kingship under his lineage. All of these were violated by the covenant partners and they did not remain faithful to God. Breaking a covenant requires a sacrifice, a consequence, and justice. To this, “The Lord also requires full loyalty from believers who enter it to share unlimited blessings – even as disloyalty to His covenant brings condemnation.” (Discovery Bible)

Yet, because of God’s grace and mercy—in His steadfast love, He remained faithful to His promises even though it was broken repeatedly. Moreover, He fulfilled all the covenants—by creating another covenant called the “new covenant.” And again, out of his *hesed* and *emet*, He died as the sacrificial atonement on behalf of His people.

This brings us to our last point, “**The New Covenant.**”

Out of all the covenants, the new covenant is the climax of all the covenants fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. (read Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Saving the best for last. The climax of the story and the center of the grand narrative of the Bible is Jesus Christ. From Genesis to Revelation, they all point to Christ. Indeed, another way for interpreting the book of Psalms is through a Christological lens. Meaning, seeing Christ as the psalmist or inside the psalm. In here, focusing on verse 19, the eternal establishment of God’s kingdom, His kingship, as related to Davidic covenant is of course fulfilled in the person of Christ.

The very awaited Messianic King of the Israelites is not a military-king but a suffering-servant, who will atone for the sins of humanity, overcoming death through resurrection, and establishing an everlasting throne is fulfilled in no other person but in Christ alone.

Truly, out of Christ's *hesed* and *emet*—steadfast love—who expressed His love “as high as the heaven are above the earth” (11)—incarnation—and “as far as the East is from the West,” (11) yes on the cross, He showed His faithful love (as said in 1 John 4:7-9) for His people. As said, these people whom Christ loves are the ones who are keeping His covenant and fears Him.

\*Explain more how the covenants point to Christ.

### **Conclusion:**

We already know that being part of a covenant signifies relationship. It is the church, then, that is part of the new covenantal family. To this covenant relations, we are called to be faithful to God, yield to the Holy Spirit, and look unto Jesus. (as written in verse 18)

I know that this sermon is somewhat doctrinal in its structure. On the next sermons, as I maintain my goal to shepherd the church by equipping all of your corporately, it will be both consecrative and doctrinal.

### **Application:**

As we apply what we just learned, God—despite the shortcomings of humanity—remained faithful to His covenant. Even still now, He remains faithful to each of us. Out of His *hesed* and *emet*—steadfast love and truthfulness, He calls us to be part of His family and participate in His kingdom.

As part of our Christian walk, and being sanctified in this life, we ought to conform in this kind of covenantal love. This time, let us be serious in making promises to other people, even in the smallest form of your word. As it is written in Matthew 5:37, “*Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no.’*”

Are we clear with this one?

\*Okay, now, as a covenanted family, our church—UCBC, would like to invest and initiate in this relationship by expressing our gratitude—our *hesed* and *emet*—by giving everyone a gift. This gift is in a form of digital resources. We are launching our partnership with RightNow Media.

Today, those who had given your emails to me, you have just received an email from RightNow Media. Open that, click the link, and fill up the detail then you can start accessing 20, 000 Christian videos and resources for your spirituality. There are a lot of topics on that platform, for kids, marriage, parenting, mental health, dealing with anxieties, addiction to pornography, and even for your toxic workplace. Instead of watching Netflix—kdrama, crunchyroll, and other movies, why not listen to different Christian video topics for your own spiritual maturity.

To those who have not given their emails to me, in our bulletin, there is a QR code there that you can scan using your phones (open your camera, scan it, then there will be a popout bubble leading you to the registration). Last option is, go to our website: [ucbcnj.org](http://ucbcnj.org), and you will see it there at the very beginning. Thank you and God bless!