

God's Ways

The Compassion of the Lord

Isa 55:1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; & you who have no money, Come, buy & eat. Yes, come, buy wine & milk Without money & without price.

Isa 55:2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, & your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, & eat what is good, & let your soul delight itself in abundance.

Isa 55:3 Incline your ear, & come to Me. Hear, & your soul shall live; & I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David.

Isa 55:4 Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader & commander for the people.

Isa 55:5 Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, & nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, & the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you."

Isa 55:6 **Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.**

Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, & the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, & He will have mercy on him; & to our God, For **He will abundantly pardon.**

Isa 55:8 "**For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.**

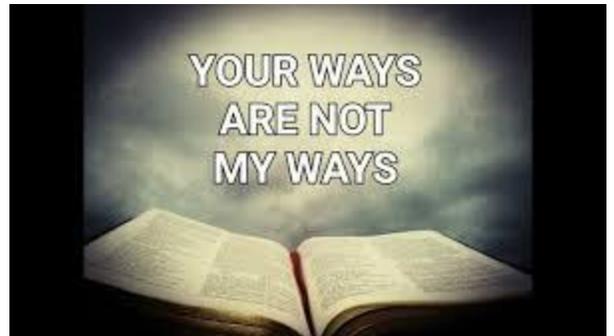
Isa 55:9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are **My ways** higher than your ways, & **My thoughts** than your thoughts.

Isa 55:10 "For as the rain comes down, & the snow from heaven, & do not return there, But water the earth, & make it bring forth & bud, That it may give seed to the sower & bread to the eater,

Isa 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, & it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Isa 55:12 "For you shall go out with joy, & be led out with peace; The mountains & the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, & all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Isa 55:13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, & instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; & it shall be to the LORD for a name, For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."



- “God’s Ways” in this passage is (in the context) connected with the subject of pardon ie the plans and purposes of God in regard to forgiveness are as far above those of people as the heavens are higher than the earth, Isa_55:9.

5 Ways on how is *God’s way* of forgiveness is different than “man’s way”?

Isaiah doesn’t say *here* ...we need to see the views presented in other parts of the Bible.

1. People find it difficult to pardon at all. They harbor malice; they seek revenge; they are slow to forgive an injury. Not so with God. He harbors no malice; he has no desire of revenge; he has no reluctance to forgive.

Mic 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. 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.

2. It may refer to the number of offences. People, if they forgive once, are slow to forgive a second time, and still more reluctant to forgive a third time, and if the offence is often repeated they refuse to forgive altogether. Not so with God. No matter how often we have violated his law, yet He can multiply forgiveness in proportion to our faults.

Luk 17:3-4 Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; if he repents, forgive him. if he sins against you seven times in a day, seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

Mat 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

3. The number of the offenders. People may pardon one or a few who injure them, but if the number is greatly increased, their compassions are closed, and they feel that the world is arrayed against them. Not so with God. No matter how numerous the offenders - though they embrace the inhabitants of the whole world - yet he can extend forgiveness to them all.

Joh 3:16-17 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His



Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Rom_5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

4. In regard to the aggravation of offences. People forgive a slight injury. However, if it is aggravated, they are slow to pardon. But not so with God. No matter how aggravated the offence, he is ready to forgive.

Eph 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Pro 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

5. God's thoughts in regard to the mode of pardon are far above ours. The plan of



forgiveness through a Redeemer - the scheme of pardon so fully illustrated in Isa_53:1-12 (the suffering servant) is awesome. God's Plan to send His Son ... was one which man could not have thought of, and which surpasses all the schemes and plans of people. In this respect, God's ways are not, our ways, and his thoughts are not our thoughts.

1Jn_4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

His ways are not our ways, & his thoughts are not ours ... in regard to his plans in the creation & government of the world. **He has plans** for accomplishing his purposes which are **different from ours**, & he secures our own welfare by schemes that cross our own. He *sometimes* disappoints our hopes; foils our expectations; crosses our designs; removes our property, or our friends; & thwarts our purposes in life. He *sometimes* leads us in a path which we had not intended: & secures our ultimate happiness in modes which are contrary to all our designs & desires.

It follows from this:

1. That we should **form our plans** with **submission** to the higher purposes of God.

1Co 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Luk 14:25-27 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be

My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

... (planning, consideration done to build a tower)...

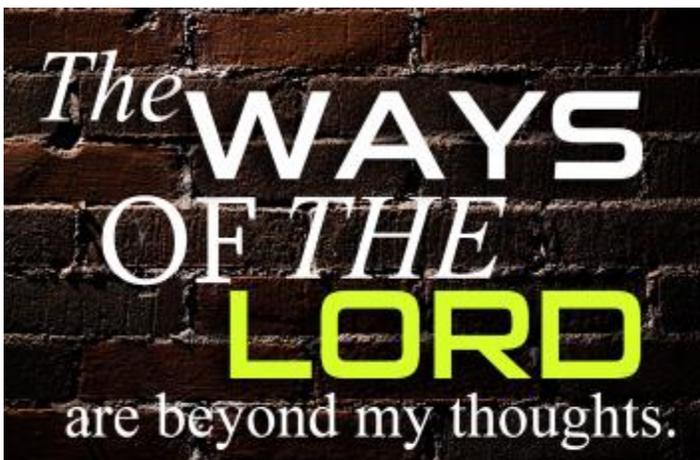
Luk 14:33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

2. We should resign ourselves to Him when he chooses to thwart our plans, and to take away our comforts.

Php 4:11-13 ... I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

That's "**one way**" (Isaiah 55 & "God's way" of forgiveness) that "His ways" are above "our ways" ... What are some other "ways of God" that might be unknown or unexpected?

- We are in God's Church... **Are "His ways" a mystery to us?** Or just to "the world" who does not know the Father ... and the Son who came to reveal Him?



Psa 103:7 He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.

Exo 33:13 Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight.

Here are 10 examples of God's ways being different from man's ways.

1. Coals of Fire

Proverbs 25:21, 22 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; & if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, & the Lord shall reward thee.

Romans 12:19-21 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

These two passages have a similar theme: helping your enemy. It is not our place to try to destroy those who have done wrong toward us. We should leave the job of revenge to the Lord. He promises He will take care of His own children. Allow Him to do so.

And what about those coals of fire? This is a figure of speech. In Bible times (and in many places still today) people carried things balanced on their heads. If the fire in your house went out you would not be able to cook or keep the house warm. You would have to get some hot coals from a friend and carry them back to your house in a pail on your head. To heap coals of fire on someone's head meant to give them the life sustaining fire they needed to survive.

2. Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

God told Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. This was the son that God had given to Abraham and Sarah after they were well beyond child-bearing years.

But Abraham trusted God. He knew that God would be victorious in the end.

Hebrews 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham had full confidence that God would raise his son from the grave. This was before Abraham understood the coming resurrection of Christ. Abraham trusted that God would do a miracle and raise his son.

Even though he did not understand God's ways, he trusted God.

3. Rejoice and Weep Appropriately

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Romans 12 is a great passage full of examples of God's teachings being different from human nature. In verse 15 Paul tells us that we should rejoice with those who are rejoicing and weep with those who are hurting. Our nature does not always want us to do that.

Maybe it is a bit easier to empathize when someone is hurting than it is to rejoice when our friend rejoices. We might set a reminder each year on the anniversary of the death of a friend's "loved one" to **reach out** to the friend in some way each year to let him know I am thinking about him and his loss that day... To grieve with him.



But what about rejoicing with a friend when something good happens to them? Or, even more difficult: how do we respond when an enemy has reason to rejoice? It is much more difficult.

Children are often good examples of human nature and how contradictory it is to God's desires. When one child wins a prize and the others do not, their reaction is sometimes comical. Or, at least it would be if it didn't so closely resemble our own reactions.

Watch children when their friend or enemy has something good or bad happen to them. See if you can notice the way that human nature differs from God's ways.

4. Battle of Jericho

Joshua 6:3-5 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

Joshua stood looking at the city of Jericho when the captain of the Lord's host stood before him with his sword drawn against Joshua. Joshua asked if this angel was on the side of the children of Israel or worked for the enemy. The angel replied that he was on neither side but that he was a messenger from God.

After bowing down before the messenger, Joshua heard a battle plan that probably did not make much sense to him at the time. They were to walk around the city of Jericho once a day for six days. Then on the seventh day they were supposed to walk around Jericho seven times. The walls would fall.

As crazy as the plan sounded, Joshua went back and reported to the Hebrew soldiers that was the way they would take the city.

They obeyed God and saw a victory over the city of Jericho.

5. Turn the Other Cheek



Matthew 5:38-42 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, & a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. & if any man will sue thee at the law, & take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. & whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, & from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught the people many things that went contrary to man's natural ways. Jesus told them that they should present themselves to their enemies in a docile manner.

Though traditional wisdom said that they should repay an eye for an eye, Jesus now says that they should go out of their way to be kind to those who were persecuting them.

Even God's Old Testament law taught "an eye for an eye." But the thing to remember was that it was the law, & those responsible for upholding the law, to dole out the punishment. This was not the role of the one who had been wronged. Yet, people had taken the law into their own hands & chose to meet out punishment in their own way.

Allow the legal system & God to give punishment as necessary. Do not take the law into your own hands. While our nature teaches us that we should, God's way says that we should trust those with authority.

6. Love Your Enemy

Matthew 5:43-47 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, & hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, & pray for them which despitefully use you, & persecute you; That ye may

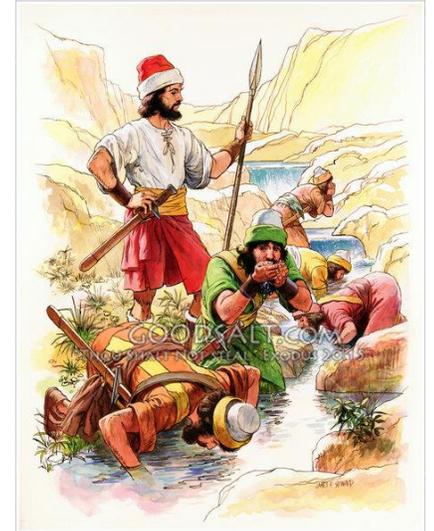
be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil & on the good, & sendeth rain on the just & on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? & if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Again Jesus is teaching something contrary to traditional wisdom. He says that we should love our enemy. It is natural to love those who are your friends. Or at least who are not out to harm you. But Jesus turns this traditional wisdom upside down & tells us that we should love those who mistreat us. God can send punishment as necessary.

7. Gideon's Army

Judges 7:7 & the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, & deliver the Midianites into thine hand: & let all the other people go every man unto his place.

God asked Gideon to go against an army of 135,000 with a band of only 300 men. Gideon started with 32,000 men which was still a small number against the enemy. Yet God asked Gideon to pare the army down to just 300 so that when the victory came it was obvious that it was the hand of God.



8. Jonah

Jonah 1:1-3 Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, & cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, & went down to Joppa; & he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, & went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah is an example of someone who did not agree with God's plan & tried to run away from God's leading. Of course, he did not get very far on his own. Though he jumped on a ship to flee from God's presence, God brought him back by way of a great fish to the land where God called him.

9. Salvation is a Gift, Not a Reward

Romans 4:2-5 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, & IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness

Abraham's salvation came through faith in God & His promised Redeemer. He was not saved by works & neither are we.

Ephesians 2:8, 9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; & that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Religion wants to **work** for salvation, but that is not what the Bible teaches. Salvation is a gift of grace from God. It is not something we earn or purchase. The purchase was done by Christ on the cross & is now offered to us freely. Some people, because of the pride of human nature, never accept this gift. They want to earn what is impossible to earn.

10. Israel says God is unfair!

Eze 18:25 "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not **My way** which is fair, and your ways which are not fair?"

Eze 18:24 "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die."

Eze 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin."

More Scriptures to Consider

- **Isaiah 55:9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **my ways** higher than your ways, & my thoughts than your thoughts.
- **Proverbs 14:12** There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.
- **Proverbs 21:2** Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts.
- **Romans 11:33** O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom & knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, & his ways past finding out!

Last Scripture God Delights in those who know His ways!

Jer 9:23 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

Jer 9:24 But let him who glories **glory in this**, That he understands & **knows Me**, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, & righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

Don't assume you know God ...

Dig into **His** word ... & learn of **His** ways!

