

God's Ways

Isaiah 55:8-9



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FOCAL Read Responsively Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. {9} **For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

As I lay down in the bed trying to rest one particularly annoying fly began to irritate me. Every time I closed my eyes this fly would buzz overhead and land on my nose, on my face, on my arms, anywhere it could. I wouldn't have minded it if the fly walked on the blanket, the wall, or the bed, but for some reason that fly decided it was its life mission to get me out of bed. I got out of bed, found the fly swatter, found the fly – and the two became one. No more fly! As I lay back down to sleep a thought came to mind: God is as high above me as I was above that fly. When I killed the fly I felt relief, but no remorse. This thing was irritating me so I disposed of it, just as I disposed of fire ants, cockroaches, and other unwanted critters. I feel no remorse when I eat beef, chicken, or fish, knowing that these things are killed for my consumption pleasure. My conscience is not bothered with what I, a superior being, do to these things.

Why would God care for me?

God is higher than I can ever hope to reach. As I said before, I am sure that there are many times when I (and you) have irritated the Almighty. Though I now avoid doing it, there was a time when I used God's Name in curses. God's Name is holy, and He has warned us:

Exodus 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold

him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

When we do this, are we not irritating God? Why doesn't He squash us like flies for mocking Him so? There are many who call themselves "Christian", attaching the Name of God to their lives, and yet they live nothing like Christ. God told His Old Testament priests – the Levites – to avoid **profaning His holy Name in the things that they did (Leviticus 22:32)**. God's people represent the God Who saved them. When God's Israel mocked God He did not destroy those people, though He chastised the nation through Babylon, Macedonia, and Rome. God did not squash Israel like a fly, but

Isaiah 45:17 ... Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation ...

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways His ways. God is

2 Peter 3:9 ... longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

He does not destroy out of hand because of irritation, nor does He lightly send anyone to hell. When and if man choose to go to eternal damnation that person goes there fighting God all the way, for it pleases God to save fallen man.

Who else but the Lord would have thought of the Atonement? Who else would have thought of giving

His own perfect and holy life in place of our sinful lives?

Who but the Lord would have thought of raising up a slave boy to lead Israel out of Egypt. **Moses** rightly said to the Lord **"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh"** (**Exodus 3:11**), to which God replied **"You are the one that I chose! Go!"** Who but God would take a lowly shepherd boy and make him the King of Israel? **David** asked God **"Who am I, O Lord, that You would bring me here?"** (**2 Samuel 7:18**). David was the one that God chose, and that was enough.

Though I am as high above the fly as God is above me there is a difference between man and fly that does not exist between God and man. The Bible tells us that mankind was **created in the image of God:**

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

We who are humans are *not animals* – we are in His image. Animals do not have this distinction. Animals do not worship God, and will never have the capacity to do so. Humans are supposed to worship God. It is **God Who made us, and not we ourselves (Psalm 100:3)**. God made us to commune with Him, to walk with Him, to worship with Him. Listen Beloved, when we cease to consider God in our thoughts, when we cease to heed His Word, we become in action much like the animals. Animals do not reason with God. God never said to the

animals:

Isaiah 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Though animals are corrupted by Adam's sin – for they die just as we die – animals do not reason with God. They do not recognize sin, but operate on a thing we call *instinct*.

If an animal is having difficulty finding food during a harsh season that animal, driven by instinct, may eat its own young. The animal feels no remorse at this, no guilt, for it only seeks to feed its desire. African lions will often stalk a herd of antelope, looking for weaknesses. When the lions spot stragglers – sickly, aged, or very young antelope – they will run the herd. They feel no remorse at tearing the throat of the baby antelope. They are feeding their desires, and that's all that matters. I have heard of beloved house pets turning on their owners. I read in the news of a child who was mauled because she stuck her face in the dog's feeding dish. The much loved pet was protecting its territory, and felt no guilt or pang of conscience in doing what it did. Animals – even pets (as much as we love them) are not created in the image of God. They have no conscience, have no guilt, and certainly worship no Creator.

Dear friends, if that which makes us in God's image is our ability to commune with and worship God, then we

need to take care that we feed on His Word on a regular basis. Our children need to hear what God thinks, and need to be taught “God Thoughts” from the Word of God. Unless we and our children develop Biblical worldviews we will see America fall deeper and deeper into violent crime. You need look no further than your local newspaper to see that truth.

On May 31st, 2008 CNN News reported something that should shock you all. Nine third graders from Center Elementary School in Waycross, Georgia, were caught in a conspiracy to hurt or kill their teacher. What did the teacher do that was bad enough to make these 8 to 10 year old kids want to do this? She scolded one of the children for standing in her school chair when she should have been paying attention in class. These children went home, plotted, and came back to school like an organized wolf pack. Each child had a job. One child was supposed to cover the windows so no one could see. Another child was to clean up after the attack. The kids – armed with a steak knife, steel handcuffs, duct tape, electrical and transparent tape, ribbons, and a paperweight – were only prevented from following through with their plan because one of the other students told a teacher that a girl had brought a weapon to school. What was Center's Principal Angie Coleman response? She said: **"This is an isolated incident, an aberration. ... We have good kids"**¹.

Beloved, we must return to the knowledge that we – as humans – are not animals, nor are we God.

¹ Article online at <http://www.cnn.com/2008/CRIME/04/01/kids.plot.ap/>

When we fail to teach our children the things of God then their conscience is not developed. When we allow liberal Hollywood to set the standard or right and wrong in the national conscience we all become more like animals and less like Him. There is but One God, and He loves us so. Everything that He tells us in His Word is put there *because* He loves us. He wants us to know Him, He wants us to be saved by faith in Him, He wants us to have overcoming lives and not to be overcome of sin. He is Higher than we are, but He calls – not as Dictator but as loving Father – to a lost and dying world. Will you not **come unto Jesus, all ye that labor, and He will give you rest (Matthew 11:28)**. Will you not **bring the little children to Jesus before the evil one gets his hands on them (Matthew 19:14)**. Will you not **come unto Jesus, you thirsty ones, and drink deeply of eternal life (John 7:37)**. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, but He calls us to Him in the Name of Love.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

1. It Is God's Will To Draw Us To A Higher Place

FOCAL Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

God is not bragging in this text, but He is making a statement of fact. There is but one God, and this God knows best!

People, we will not get any better while we're trying to be God. You cannot be the physician and the patient – nor can you be the God and the disciple. You must determine Who you will serve.

Elijah, standing before the wayward children of Israel, said:

1 Kings 18:21 ... How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

When the children of Israel fell into idolatry, worshipping a golden calf, the Prophet Moses cried out:

Exodus 32:26 ... Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me

and the Levites – the Priests of Israel – came and stood by Moses. Beloved, if you're a Christian then you are called to **stand with God**. If you want to live in this life victorious and powerful then you must learn to **submit to His thoughts**. The Scripture tells us:

Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he ...

What you think is what you will do. Thought always precedes action. You think it, then you do it. God told Israel **My thoughts are not your thoughts**, for God's thoughts are much higher than ours. How do we get

God's thoughts? Well, look at the context:

Isaiah 55:1-2 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. {2} Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Look at what God said. He said “**Everyone that thirsts, come to the waters**”. It is God's desire to share His knowledge and His blessings with us. Do we need to pay Him for what He offers. Absolutely not! God tells us “**he that hath no money, come ye and buy wine and milk without money and without price**”.

There is no charge for what God offers, and what He offers satisfies.

God indicts us. He says “**why do you labor for that which satisfies not?**”. This is a perfect picture of America today. We labor, we rush to and fro trying to make money, and where has it got us? Are we happier with our two car garage? Are we happier now that we have these great Wii game systems? Do we go to sleep contented that we have computers, cable television, food in the refrigerator, carpeted floors, and nice soft beds? Or are we *unsatisfied still*?

Dear friends, no matter how hard you labor, you will

never find fulfillment in this life apart from a growing relationship with God our Creator. Here is the solution to our problems:

Isaiah 55:2 ... hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

God's Word satisfies! As we feed on His Word we find satisfaction for our souls. As His Word is consumed we find in it eternal life and living waters that **make our souls fat**. What does God tell us?

Isaiah 55:3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Listen to Me, saith the Lord, and your soul shall live! There is no life apart from God. Jesus told the Pharisees – people who had departed from the Living God:

John 5:39-40 Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. {40} And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

“**You will not come unto Me that you might have life**”. So many people, both Christian and non-Christian, will not come unto Jesus. They will not submit their lives unto God and His Holy Word.

Too many hear the teaching, just as they heard Jesus teach, and respond with “**Yes, But**”. Dear friends, I do not mean to be callous or crude, but we *must* cease sitting on our BUTS.

You who are not Christians must come to Jesus for life. You must stop debating with God **Who's Thoughts are not your thoughts** and believe in Him.

John 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

This is His promise, His eternal covenant to you. Forsake you way and your thoughts and follow Him Who is the **Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6)**. Stop debating with God and *do what He says*. Turn from your current way of life and to Jesus Christ. **Whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13)**.

2. How Can A Christian Live On The Mount With God?

Isaiah 55:6-8 **Seek** ye the LORD while he may be found, **call** ye upon him while he is near: {7} Let the wicked **forsake** his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him **return** unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. {8} For **my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways**, saith the LORD.

Look at the action verbs that God gives us in this text: **seek, call, forsake, return**. Look at each of these commands.

Seek the Lord while He may be found: Make yourselves available to God. Seek Him in your lives. Ask Him what He would have you to do. Seek Him in His Word, and obey that which He has told you.

Call ye upon Him while He is near. The unbeliever has no relationship with God. He does not know God as his Savior, but this is not the case with you. Call upon God as Father. Pray as Jesus taught us to pray, saying **Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name**. Hallow His Name, do His will.

Let the wicked forsake his way. Stop doing things MY way and begin to do things GOD'S way. When we follow our own path we are like the foolish man lost in the jungle. God loves each and every one of His children. Trust Him, trust His Word, and do as He says whether it makes sense to you or not. Remember **His thoughts are not our thoughts**. Our God knows the end from the beginning: trust Him and obey Him.

ILLUSTRATE The famous evangelist **Dwight L. Moody** was preaching the Gospel of salvation in Brockton, Massachusetts, when he asked a young man to stand up and give his testimony. The man stood to speak and, as he spoke, it became clear that he, a young convert, was not well educated in the Bible. He finished his testimony by saying “I'm not quite sure – but I'm going to trust and I'm going to obey”. A musician by the

name of **Daniel Towner** was at the meeting, and he quickly jotted down these words, sharing them with his friend **John H. Sammis**. Together they wrote that wonderful song *Trust and Obey*:

**When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.**

**Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.²**

Christians above all others should be walking in what God's Word teaches. In order to walk in it, we must first have it in our hearts.

You will never be strong for Christ while you hear His Word and refuse to obey it. You will never be mighty in faith until you develop the Christian habit of daily feeding on the Word of God. We **Forsake evil, and return unto the Lord** Who will bless us. **Charles Stanley** writes:

“Surrender {to God} is not a sign of weakness. In fact, it positions you to be used by God in an awesome way. He not only saves you and gives you eternal life, He also sends His Holy Spirit to live within you. And it is the role of the Spirit to teach, guide, and

² Words: John H. Sammis, in *Hymns Old and New* (Chicago, Illinois: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1887). Music: Daniel B. Towner

empower you to live the Christian life.”³

Look at your text one more time:

Isaiah 55:9-11 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. {10} For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: {11} So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

How shall a person know the mind of God? **As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and God's thoughts higher than our thoughts.** So what solution do we have for our dilemma? *God must rain down His truth on us.* When we make ourselves available to God **sends the rain and the snow.** He sends that which is Heavenly to earth. If you belong to God, if you have been saved by faith in Him, then God dwells in you just as Jesus Christ promised. He told us:

John 16:7, 13 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. ... {13} Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all

³ In Touch Magazine, May 2008, page 9

truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

Jesus Christ promised to give us the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit does not come to us *just* to be coming to us. He Who is the **Spirit of Truth comes to us so that He can guide us into all truth.** The Spirit of Truth is God come to be with you. Go back to the analogy of the rain in our Isaiah passage.

How do you get wet in the rain? You make yourselves available to the rain. You go where the rain is. You stand in the rain, not under an umbrella. How do you begin to receive **the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:6)**? You make yourselves available to God. You go where God is. You stand in God, not under the umbrella of humanism and self righteousness.

We who are saved must come to God- believing His Word every bit as much as we did the day that we were saved. We need to be Biblical Literalists. We need to read and heed the Word of God. We must believe that the Bible's Truth is absolute truth, and teach that truth to our loved ones. What God says is true, what man says is true only when what he says matches what God has said.

We must live according to the Book. The Apostle told the Philippians:

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brethren, whatsoever

things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. {9} Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Dear ones, **those things which you have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do through Christ Who strengthens us!** Follow Him Who loved you and gave Himself for you. Herein is life, and life more abundantly.

And remember that when you fail God, God will never fail you.

You who are Christians are *works in progress*. Stay in His Word, for He has promised:

Isaiah 55:11-12 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. {12} For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

God's Word in you will do what God wants it to do. Yieldedness to God and what He has said will bring joy

in your lives. May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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