

1.

*“ Therefore be imitators of God as dear children..., ”* ( Ephesians 5:1 NKJV )

I say it every time but it really is such a privilege and blessing to be able to contribute in some way .

*“the working in measure of every part”*, scripture says. (Ephesians 4:16 NKJV)

Anyway I pray that this will be something tasty from the Lord and that He will bless us with His Word.

Scripture tells us that The Lord works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, doesn't it? He puts in us the desire to do the things that please Him .... which is what was on my heart to share.

And the body of Christ is His great passion..., to the end that everything is about encouraging and building one another up in love, with all the gifts and the ministries given for that very purpose.

I'll read that part of Paul's letter to the Ephesians where he speaks of The Lord's love for His church, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word..., that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, (so not immature or old but perfect in every way) but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

*So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord [does] the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.* ( Ephesians 5:25-30 NKJV)

And the wonderful thing is that He puts in us that desire to be part of what He's doing..., those things that please Him. And not out of duty but because it gives us pleasure as well, a real joy inside to be led of The Spirit and be used in some way by The Lord, wouldn't you agree ?

When I was praying for something to share that would be a blessing, what eventually settled in my mind was this..., to look at the things that our Father delights in.

That as His children, it's only right that we should know His ways and understand what pleases Him.

Not in the sense of having a list of do's and don'ts ... but to know His character, the nature of our Father.

You know, you think of John and James his brother, who in their early days, said..., *“ Lord do you want us to call down fire and consume them as Elijah did ?”*, in regards to the inhabitants of a Samaritan village, who had collectively snubbed the Lord by refusing to allow Jesus to stay there on his way to Jerusalem.

And The Lord's response to the two brothers was this...,

*“But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of .*

*For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village”.*

( Luke 9: 54 -56 NKJV)

And the world for instance, doesn't know Him ... and if they do think of Him at all, generally imagine a God who is either far away and doesn't care, or is constantly out to find fault or condemn, which we know couldn't be further from the truth.

For sure he hates Sin in all it's many forms, just like one hates sickness or disease in a loved one ...but we know that His love for man and for the world, has never changed. So much so, that even though all mankind had gone it's own way, He gave His beloved Son to become a curse and to die in our place as our substitute, in order to satisfy His righteous judgment for all our sin.

That barrier that had existed between us, He removed forever, through The blood of Jesus. And all to the end that we might receive eternal life and enjoy eternity in the presence of God our Father. Which is what He had planned and purposed from before time even began, scripture tells us.

It's something that so pleases Him..., *“... according to the good pleasure of His will”*, it says.

That's in Ephesians chapter 1...,

*“having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”*

( Ephesians 1:5 NKJV )

## 2.

And then in the next chapter Paul writes ...,

*"... that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in [His] kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."* ( Ephesians 2:7 NKJV )

Praise His wonderful name..., through that one act of obedience and love, when Jesus, who was without sin, gave His life in our place..., in effect, payment for the sin of the world was nailed to that cross ... and He made a way for all who believe, to be saved and receive everlasting life.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life ...."* (John 3:16 NKJV)

And I know we looked at this last time if you remember... but I think it's worth another mention because clearly this was spoken deliberately by The Lord and was recorded for our benefit and comfort. Starting at verse 14..., John 3:14-17 (NKJV)

*"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

*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.* (John 3:14-17 NKJV)

A slight difference in the wording but that's just down to the translators, who obviously felt it read better if it wasn't repeated exactly. Although in the Greek it's identical... but however we look at it, God's Covenant is repeated twice by The Lord there, and sandwiched between the promise is The Gospel message of God's great love for us in Christ. This is such a strong affirmation of God's love and promise to us and He wants us to know it.

We sing Amazing Grace.... And it really is. We deserved nothing but in love God gave us everything.

Isaiah, one of the major prophets of The Old Testament said...,

*"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD and He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts".* ( Isaiah 55:7-9 NKJV )

And this is the thing, our Father's ways which all stem from love and from righteousness, never cease to amaze.

One thinks of Jonah who was sent to Nineveh, a huge city at that time of over a 120,000 souls, the site is in modern day Iraq... so large that it would take 3 days to walk through....and Jonah was sent to tell them that judgment was coming, imminent.... because of their wickedness.

And he refused..., his actions seem so extreme but clearly in his eyes he probably thought they deserved everything they had coming to them. We all know the story how he got in a ship that went in the opposite direction ... was put overboard, swallowed by a large fish and later deposited on the shore.

Emaciated and in tatters, he must have been a terrifying sight as he reluctantly obeyed God's word and went through the city warning of the impending judgment. Consequently, from the King downwards, they all repented and God in His mercy forgave them and negated the judgment that had been so close.

And in the narrative that follows it's so clear that Jonah is so put out ...,

### 3.

*“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the LORD, and said, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You [are] a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.” (Jonah 4:1-2 NKJV)*

Paraphrased, he was saying....,

*“I knew it! I just knew it! Right from the start I just knew this would happen! And why I refused to go. I knew if this wicked load of sinners repented, you would forgive them ... and look, I was right. These wicked, violent, idolatrous people.... and now look, they’ve repented and you’ve gone and put away the judgment due to them !”*

*Then the LORD said, “[Is it] right for you to be angry?”*

*So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. (Jonah 4:4-5, NKJV)*

*And in verse 11 The Lord says, “... should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left--and much livestock?” (Jonah 4:11 NKJV)*

In our flesh we can be so judgmental and we need to see things through His eyes.

We’re told that The Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked .....,

*“.....As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.....” (Ezekiel 33:11 NKJV)*

And Peter wrote, *“The Lord is not slack concerning [His] promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”.* (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV)

There’s provision for all in Christ...., The Lord Jesus being the Saviour of all men, as Paul told Timothy. But he also made it very clear that it pleases God that it should be through the foolishness of preaching, through the good news of Christ...., that we’re to be saved, through faith. (1 Corinthians 1:21 NKJV)

Not all choose to receive God’s gift of life but the parable of the sower that Jesus gave, tells us that it’s The Word of God in our heart, that is the issue. That Gospel message is so precious.

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Now I know I’m getting ahead of myself here... but in psalm 103 we see a rich example of the things that bring our Father pleasure .

*v1-6 “ ....Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul and forget not all His benefits: (=that which He bestows)*

*Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.*

*v7-8... He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.*

*The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy .....*

So all of these things reveal His ways...and they all stem from love.... and why there’s a reference here, of God making His ways known to Moses...., which if you remember, was in response to his request, *“...please show me now your ways, that I may know you....”* (Exodus 33:13 **ESV**).

#### 4.

And then..., "please show me your glory." And He(God) said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ...". ( Exodus 33:18-19 ESV )

"I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name...., .

God's character, or nature, was revealed to him and now he had an understanding of God and His ways. In contrast to the children of Israel whose opinion of God was totally skewed, not knowing Him .

*For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and **they do not know my ways.*** (Psalm 95:10 NKJV)

And then going back to psalm 103 verse 8, in the last line that we read there, it reminds us of that nature. "The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy .....", which remember in the Old Covenant was only a partial view .

Whereas now, in the New Covenant we are told to come boldly into His presence through the blood of Jesus... and encouraged to daily behold the Glory of The Lord, to keep our eyes on Him.

And Psalm 103 continues...,

v 9-13... *He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.*

*He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

*As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him.* (Psalm 103:9-13 NKJV )

And incidentally, that phrase " as a father pities his children"..., the word 'pity' (*racham* ) means to love deeply, to have compassion ... and the picture is of a parent cuddling and comforting one's child.

But all of these things reveal the love and goodness of God.

You know, in psalm 23:6 where it says, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life", the word 'follow' there, is '*radaph*' and it means to pursue, like a hunter chases down his quarry.

That's the way God loves us, his goodness towards us is not passive but constantly working for our good.

The auto suggestion on the lap top keeps altering the Hebrew words I write, I wrote '*radaph*' and it changed it to *radish*. It's a good job I spotted that one or I would never have been able to read that psalm again without picturing a big radish chasing after us! Laughter's good eh ? Like a medicine, scripture says.

So of course it's not that God has gone soft on Sin , the fiery judgement that fell on Jesus who died in our place on the cross is testimony of that. All that He suffered on our behalf. But it was there at the cross, that God's Love, Righteousness and Judgment was satisfied where we are concerned.

In Jeremiah 9:23-24 it says this,

*" Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory(boast) in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;*

*But let him who glories, glory in this, (in effect if you want to boast, this is something worth boasting about) that he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness (hesed), judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD".* ( Jeremiah 9:23-24 NKJV )

All these elements were there at the cross when The Lord Jesus died in our place.

And now it's this issue of The Lord wanting to be all things to us, our strength, our healer, our comforter, our companion, the lifter of our head, that we are constantly being reminded of and learning to appreciate.

## 5.

And the fact that Jesus willingly went to the cross and bore all the bad stuff in our place, in order for The Father to be able to lavish all His goodness upon us must surely tell us something about the depth of love wherewith we're loved.

*"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.* (1 John 3:1 NKJV)

Having been born of His Spirit through the gospel and therefore now heirs of God, we're reminded here of that special bond and love between a father and his children and to live every day in the light of this.

And as God's sons we're called to be Priests and Kings, so our upbringing will be special..., with everything, all our experiences, the whole lot, working together for good as The Holy Spirit prepares and equips us to live out all that our Father has called us to be in Christ.

And when The Lord Jesus washed the disciples feet at the last supper, it's such an insight into our Father's heart and ways, that's revealed there in His beloved Son.

*"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands..., and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe [them] with the towel with which He was girded".* (John 13:3-5 NKJV)

The Holy Spirit points out .... *"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands..."*.

So as Lord of all, He was demonstrating to the disciples the true qualities of a King and Priest, which is to be the servant of all, caring for and seeking the benefit and well being of all those in His care, out of love.

Which points us right back to the church and all the gifts and ministries having been given for us to function in this way.

..... v14 *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*

*For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.* (John 13:14-15 NKJV)

..... v17 *"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.* (John 13:17 NKJV)

Sonship and reigning in life being so much more than a position of authority and power ... but as a son having the same passion and desires as our Father. Knowing what pleases Him and discovering that true satisfaction comes from doing the things that please him. Which for the most part is to believe on The Lord Jesus and to love one another. Learning to be led of The Spirit.

*"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children..."*, Paul says, *"and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* (Ephesians 5:1-2 NKJV)

And that's heart of the issue..., walking in love. Which happens as a consequence of knowing our place in Christ is secure and that we are greatly loved.

If we could look at a scripture in Proverbs..., it's Proverbs 23:26 NKJV. In fact, this was where I intended to start but all the rest somehow managed to sneak in first.

Many translations have it as, *"My son..., give me your heart and let your eyes observe my ways,"*

And of course, for anyone in Christ, "my son" is a generic term and applies to all those, male or female, who believe on Jesus and have put their trust in Him.

But it's this last part..., *"let your eyes observe my ways"...* which because of the way it's been translated, tends to read a bit like a command, doesn't it? In the sense of, 'keep' my ways..., not a great deal of warmth to it.

## 6.

Which as I say quite a few translations have opted for.

The thing is though, we can observe something because we have to ... but it doesn't necessarily mean that you're too happy about it eh? So I'd like to read the same verse but this time from the NIV

*"My son...,give me your heart and let your eyes delight in my ways,"* (Proverbs 23:26 **NIV** )

You could faithfully paraphrase it...,

*"my son, give me your heart and you'll see that my ways are so pleasing."*

The Hebrew word used, according to Strongs, is 'ratzah' and it means "to be pleased"... , it's the verb, 'to be pleased'. Also translated in the sense of something " being acceptable", " being favourably received" .

It's a pleasurable reaction to something.

Which is why the NIV has translated it as 'delight'. "... let your eyes delight in my ways,"

And we're the ones in this instance, that receive the pleasurable reaction, as we discover just how wonderful The Lord is . All His ways stemming from love and from righteousness . So that in all his dealings with us, our old nature is completely at a loss really..., unable to understand what He sees in us....and how He has invested everything in us and our eternal future with Him .

In fact it takes The Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our understanding to be able to appreciate the great love and character of our Father.

We see from the examples earlier, of John and of Jonah and our own hearts even, how His ways are not our ways. We give up on people but He never will and His Spirit within will cause that to be our experience too.

Strongs Concordance has translated this verse as , "...and let your eyes delight in my ways". And again many translations present it this way as well, from the word 'ratzah'.... 'to be pleased.., to delight'

Whereas in Young's Concordance, you'll see that he has translated this as deriving from the Hebrew word 'natsar', to keep, to guard...and similarly, many translations have presented it this way too.

So there's a definite difference of opinion on this, either 'ratzah' or 'natsar'.

It's not a mistake or anything but I don't want to go into that here particularly, just to say that both words are there in The Hebrew text and translators plump for one or the other.

And that said..., I'd like to focus on Strongs Concordance which presents this word primarily as 'ratzah', "...and let your eyes delight in my ways". And again many translations present it this way as well.

It's strange, all the English translations tend to lean towards Young's who was Scottish and the American translations to Strong's, who was an American theology professor.

But we're looking at what pleases our Father and the thing is, by His Spirit within, He's working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure isn't He ?

And when you look at this word 'ratzah', which is a verb..., both the verb and the noun carry this meaning of being pleased..., of approval. In the New Testament I suppose the equivalent would be where The Father says "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased".('eudokeo') (pronounced 'yoo-dok-ayo') (Mathew 3:17 NKJV)

But it was this verse in Proverbs 23:26 (**NIV**) that I felt to focus on in particular....,

*"My son...,give me your heart and let your eyes delight in my ways,"*

So while 'ratzah', used here, is **the verb** and means 'to be pleased' ,

'ratzohn' is **the noun** from this word. Translated often as, 'delight'., 'favour'., 'acceptance'.

7.

And we can see how it appears as a noun in this next verse, which again is from Proverbs...,  
“Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, And obtains favour(ratzohn) from the LORD; (Proverbs 8:34-35 NKJV )

Which is a great verse, that shows The Lord’s pleasure and approval when we put His Word first...,  
‘the one needful thing’, was how Jesus described this ... when he left Martha in no doubt, that Mary her sister, who sat at His feet to listen to His words, had really chosen well as far as He was concerned....because His words are life... and this is what he wants for us . It pleases us and it pleases Him. ( Luke 10:38- 42 NKJV )

I always picture someone with such an appetite for God’s living Word that every day they’re there at The Lord’s door, waiting for something fresh from Him.

And when you read ‘favour’ there, straightaway you think of grace ... but that would be the word ‘*chen*’.  
(The ch pronounced as in loch)

Whereas this is “*ratzohn*” and like I say, it’s a pleasurable reaction to something..., akin to what we find in Hebrews 11 where it says that God bore witness to all those who had faith, that He was pleased with them.

“By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, and was not found, because God had taken him, for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.  
But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:5-6 NKJV )

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So here are a few examples of the word ‘*ratzah*’ the verb..... and ‘*ratzohn*’ the noun.  
As a verb it appears 57 times... and 56 times as a noun ... and in this manner as Strong’s defines it,  
( ‘to be pleased with’..., ‘to receive favourably’. )

**The 1st mention** is when Jacob in obedience to God returns to Canaan and finally meets Esau. After fearing for his life on hearing that Esau was coming to meet him accompanied with a band of 400 men, he sends ahead wave after wave of gifts in the form of sheep, oxen, camels, donkeys .... But Esau is just delighted to see his brother once more and they are reconciled. And the gifts, at first refused, saying “I have enough...,”  
“... Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favour (*‘chen’* /grace) in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased (*ratzah*) with me. (Genesis 33:10 NKJV )

**The 2nd mention** is in Leviticus, chapter 1 verse 4,  
‘Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted(*ratzah*) on his behalf to make atonement for him”. (Leviticus 1:4 NKJV)

And when you look a little bit further on in verse 5, it says that the blood is to be sprinkled around the altar and at the entrance to the tabernacle ....and then in verse 9, you see that this burnt offering which speaks of His beloved Son Jesus, when offered, is a sweet aroma to The Lord.

Do you see the context of it being pleasurable?

v9 ...“but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. ( Leviticus 1:9 NKJV )

Which reminds us of that scripture we just looked at ....

“and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” (Ephesians 5:1-2 NKJV )

## 8.

The thing I hope that comes across, is the extra special delight that our Father has in his children as we present ourselves to Him to be used in whatever way He chooses. It not only gives Him pleasure but this is where we will find our pleasure too.

And these are just a few more examples...., so that the meaning of this word 'ratzah', is really clear. Psalm 147 is a good one, I'll read the first 11 verses if you stay with it ..., we're almost finished now.

v1-4 *Praise the LORD! For it's good to sing praises to our God; For It is pleasant and praise is beautiful. The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.*

v5-6 *Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground.*

v7-9 *Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God, Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains. He gives to the beast its food and to the young ravens that cry.*

v10-11 *He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no **pleasure**(ratzah) in the legs of a man. The LORD takes **pleasure**(ratzah)in those who fear Him, In those who hope in His mercy. (Psalm 147:1-11 NKJV)*

The legs of man denoting man's strength and ability.... but it's our heart, our trust and love that he desires. And again, the word mercy could give the sense of someone cringing in fear but the word 'mercy' is "hesed", which Hebrew scholars, who have translated The New Testament into Hebrew for Jewish believers, have used "hesed" for the word 'grace'.

Our hope and confidence being in His Grace, not in our ability and this pleases Him.

Psalm 149:4 (NKJV)

*"For the LORD takes **pleasure** (ratzah) in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation".*

Proverbs 3:12 (NKJV)

*"For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he **delights**. (ratzah)."*

Proverbs 15:8 (NKJV) *"..... the prayer of the upright is His **delight** (ratzon ).*

Proverbs 16:7(NKJV)

*"When a man's ways **please** (ratzah) the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

Proverbs 23:26 (NIV)

*"My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes **delight** (ratzah) my ways".*

Clearly there's a real warmth to this verse, that of a Father to His son..., " my son, give me your heart...". In the Hebrew it literally reads, "Give my son, your heart to me..." it's lovely eh? Which is all that He asks of us, isn't it ? Having done everything for us out of love , He asks only that we believe and place our trust in Him. Which is what the Gospel is all about.

He presents us with His finished work for us to receive and walk in by faith.

And scripture makes this very clear, that no flesh will glory in His presence because this is all of Him, the result of His love and grace alone.



9.

Our whole outlook regarding The Lord, others and ourselves even, is turned on it's head, when we really understand our Father's ways and see that love is the one characteristic that truly defines Him.

*"...and let your eyes delight in my ways"*

A continual revelation of just how wonderful The Lord really is.

And for me, it sits equally alongside that scripture, *"... we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord"*. (2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV)

*"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children..."*, Paul says, *"and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* (Ephesians 5:1-2 NKJV)

Anyway I'd better stop there. Praise His wonderful name.  
Love to you all, bye for now .