

THE PARADOX OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE

TEXT: (Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV)

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

INTRODUCTION

1. “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me” (John 12:24-26, NIV).

I. BY DYING YOU LIVE

A. Following Jesus

1. “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matthew 16:24-25, NIV).

B. Becoming a Living Sacrifice

1. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:1-2, NIV).
2. “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11, NIV).
3. “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14, KJV).

II. BY GIVING YOU RECEIVE

1. “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV).

A. We Reap In Proportion to What We Sow

1. “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (II Corinthians 9:6, NIV).
2. “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38, NIV).

B. Learning to Give Mercy

1. “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36, NIV).
2. “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right” (James 2:8, NIV).
3. “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:12-13, NIV)!

4. “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:37-38, NIV).

C. Learning to Offer the Gift of Forgiveness

1. “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven’ (John 20:21-23, NIV).
2. “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15, NIV).

III. THE LEAST BECOME THE GREATEST

A. An Example of Greatness

1. “He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him” (John 13:4-5, NIV).
2. “The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves” (Luke 22:26, NIV).
3. “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory” (Mark 10:37, NIV).

B. Struggling with Pride

1. “Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet” (John 13:8, KJV).
2. “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19, NIV).
3. “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.
Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’” (Matthew 16:21-22, NIV).

C. Their New Role

1. “A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men” (Proverbs 18:16, KJV).
2. “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’” (Matthew 20:25-28, NIV).

CONCLUSION

1. “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul” (Matthew 16:26, NIV)?