The Amazing Paradoxes of Salvation and the Christian Life

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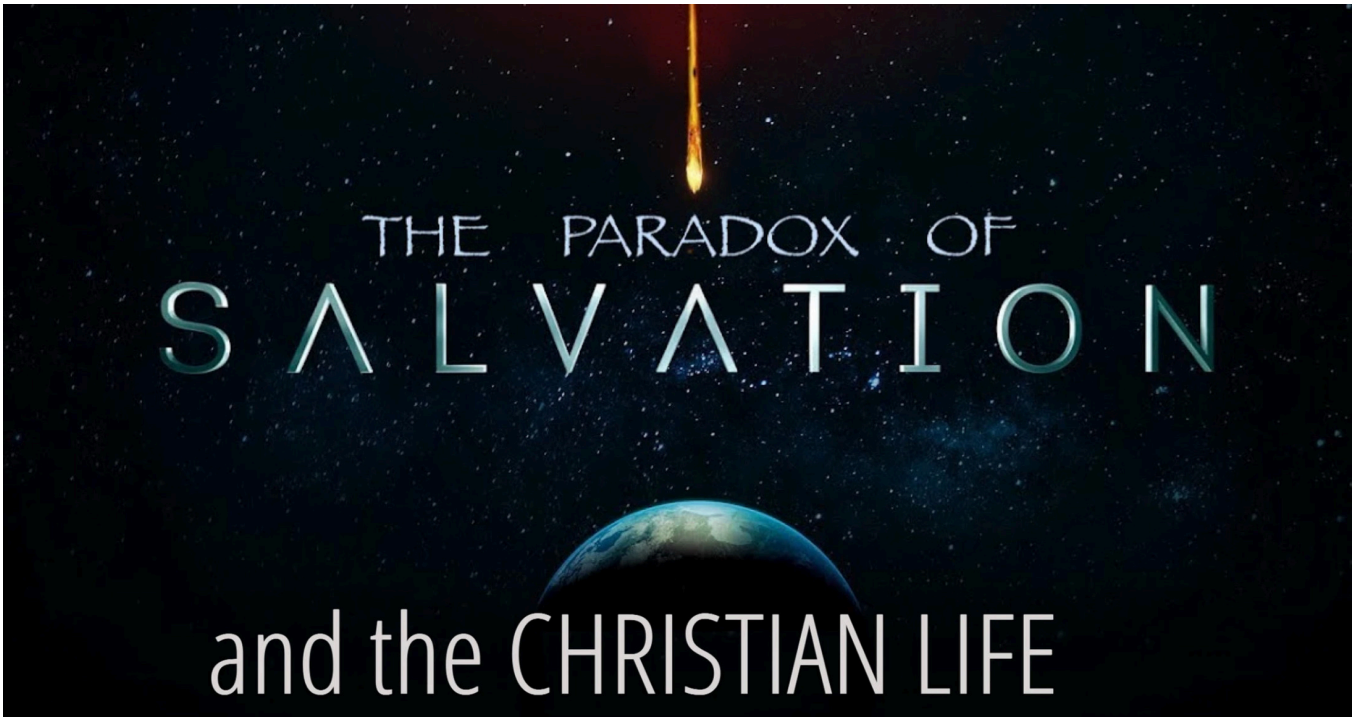

In that supernatural and superdramatic moment of the new birth, *"the day of salvation,"* in which *"a time accepted"* that Christ *"heard thee*," and "*succoured thee*" (2 Cor 6:2), that is, rescued from a life of sin, destruction, and damnation, a number of amazing *paradoxes* took place in order for the repentant faith of salvation to be true and life giving.

When we say "paradox" we certainly are not referring to the ungodly "Paradox" secular rock club operated by the heretic Mark Driscoll and his apostate and defunct Mars Hill "church" in Seattle, which hosted hundreds of rock concerts at one time at this worldly, ungodly, and evil establishment, with the objective of using worldly, sacrilegious means to "*build relationships of grace on Jesus' behalf*" says the wolf in sheep's clothing Mark Driscoll, "*rather than preaching at the kids or doing goofy things like handing out tracts.*" (*Confessions of a Reformission Rev*., pp. 126-127). The gates of hell are swung wide open in the anticipation of repugnant charlatans and ministers of Satan (2 Cor 11:12-15) such as Driscoll.

Rather, we are referring to the incredible and amazing contradictory statements (or so it seems) concerning biblical truths, especially relating to the new birth. A paradox is what we would define as an interesting anomaly. Something that appears contradictory, yet not. It is a tenet or proposition contrary to received opinion, appearing seemingly absurd or contradictory, yet true in fact. Logically it seems unacceptable or self-contradictory, but the conclusion is true indeed.

There are more, but let us consider these, both for salvation, and living the sanctified life.

1. To Win, You Must Lose. To win with the King of kings requires losing, but losing what? Losing your life, your ambitions, your dreams, your sin, yourself, your everything. And that requires surrendering and submitting to Him in order to have eternal freedom in His kingdom (Lk 14:25-34) 19:12-27). To have victory (received at salvation), requires repentance, humbling of self to complete denial. People don't like to lose. Scripture however says that you've got to lose in order to win. In other words, if you can't lose, you're not going to win. The Bible magnifies losing.

In Phil 3, Paul in reiterating his conversion, saw losing as a necessity for the ultimate and supreme gain. He wrote:

> *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."* (Phil 3:7-8)

Lose you, win Christ. And Paul was saying something that Jesus had already said, using the same verb (*zemioo*, lemma ten times in NT), in Matt 16:26, *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* in Mk 8:36, "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" and in LK 9:25, "*For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"* I think Paul knew he was using the same kind of talk, the exact word too, that Jesus used. You need to lose in order to win. If you lose your soul or life or self, you gain eternal life. You lose everything for the pearl of great price. Only someone who wants to be saved by Jesus Christ would do this. It is repenting and then believing in Jesus Christ to "*count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*" So you win everything by losing everything.

2. To Gain Everything, We Must Lose Everything; **To Save Your Life, You Must Lose Your life.** To willingly depart from everything and thus have nothing, is to gain in fact everything (Matt 19:21; Mk 10:21; Lk 18:22).

> *"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*" (Mk 10:21)

When Peter reiterates his and the other apostles salvation (which occurred for at least four of them in Lk 5:1-11 and Mk 1:14-20), in this very context post-Christ' conversation with the rich young ruler, he asks "*Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*" (Matt 19:27), to which the Lord answers: "*And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*" (Matt 19:29).

Losing everything, including family, gains everything. The apostles had forsaken their homes in many cases, for the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 10:32-39; Lk 14:25-33), and He rewarded them not only with life, and eternal life, but gave them back *"an hundredfold."* Now thats what you call a return on an investment! But that is certainly never the motive (for the truly repentant sinner), even as we note here. Peter and the apostles did not know what they would be receiving, besides that which they had sought the Lord for (i.e. salvation, surrendering to the Lord), hence the question, "*what shall we have therefore?*" There is no price tag on the new birth. Its rewards cannot be calculated. And, what is it on this earth that we have that we haven't received? Everything belongs to God, so we are in fact losing nothing. It was His to begin with. And as we walk and live the Christian life, God works in the born again believer to fulfil His will. "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Phil 2:13).

Saving faith is wrapped up in the great paradoxes of God's Word. Faith requires believing that losing everything is gaining everything. Paul saw losing as a necessity for the ultimate and supreme gain—salvation:

> "*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."* (Phil 3:7-8)

This is winning through losing. Lose you, win Christ. And Paul was only saying something that Jesus had already said (Matt 16:24-26; Mk 8:35-37; Lk 9:24-25; 17:33; Jn 12:24-25, using the same verb ("*zemioo"* — 10x in NT).

> *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."* (Mk 8:35)

> *"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."* (Jn 12:25)

> *"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."* (Lk 17:33)

3. To Have Life, requires Death. To save your life you must first lose your life, which means to die (Matt 10:39; 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24; Jn 12:24-25). You have to die first, to have life. Losing your life or dying to self, denying self, means to hate your life, dying to your own self, to your ambitions and love of this world and mammon, which then brings life and eternal life (Mk 8:34-37; Jn 12:24-25).

> "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."* (Jn 12:24-25).

Dying or losing your life occurs by denying self and taking up the cross, which means to be crucified with Christ, an event that will certainly bring death to self. "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*" (Gal 2:20a). Paul did that at salvation, just like all other saved people. "*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.*" (Mk 8:34-35). Thus to bear the cross is to wear the crown (Matt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27). *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*" (Jam 1:12).

This is the Biblical gospel, the gospel of self-abandonment, but it's been hijacked in our present world by a counterfeit version, the "gospel" of self-appeasement and self-fulfillment.

4. To be Exalted, requires Abasement. Exaltation by God requires being brought to the lowest pit and abased, humbled as a little child, and willingly so. *"God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble.*" (Jam 4:10). Jesus speaks of this critical element of salvation numerous times (Matt 11:23; 23:12; Lk 14:11; 18:14-17; etc). In Lk 18:14,17 Jesus said,

> *“Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. . . . Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein*.”

The way up requires first the way down.

5. To be Healed, requires Being Broken and Wounded. To be healed, both perfectly and permanently, requires first to be wounded unto death, broken and contrite to the utmost. The broken and contrite spirit is the healed and rejoicing spirit.

> “*Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*” (Lk 20:18)

> *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend.*" (Pr 27:6)

Lk 20:18 is a crucial understanding of the necessary transaction for salvation to occur. You want to fall on the Rock and be broken, rather than the Rock falling upon you and grinding you to powder. The latter recourse will not be pretty.

> *"Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."* (Ps 50:22)

> *"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"* (2 Th 1:8-9)

> *"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."* (Ps 2:9)

When the sinner however falls upon the Rock, this is the result:

> *"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."* (Is 42:3; Matt 12:20)

> *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*" (Ps 51:17)

> *"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."* (Ps 147:3)

> “*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”* (Ps 34:18)

> "*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*" (Is 57:15)

The word "revive" here in Is 57:15 refers to bringing someone to life from the dead. It is a salvation passage, NOT a second blessing / revivalism one. There are no second blessing or higher life or deeper life or Keswick related passages in Scripture.

Being broken with a poor contrite heart, the bruised and wounded reed, crying out to the Saviour with repentant faith, leads to complete healing of the heavy and burdened heart, of the mind and more.

1 Pet 2:24-25,

> *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."*

Matt 11:28-30,

> *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

6. To be Wise we must First Become Fools. Wisdom in Scripture is the nature of the saved, while foolish, the lost. But before we can be wise, we must understand our foolishness.

> "*If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise"* (1 Cor 3:18)

7. To be First, we Must be Last. It is one of the most mentioned phrases in the NT:

> "*So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."* (Matt 20:16; cf. Mk 10:31)

In the context of preaching the gospel to the unsaved rich young ruler and subsequently confirming the apostles salvation, the Lord Jesus spoke those exact words:

> “*But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."* (Matt 19:30)

In Lk 13:30 we read it again,

> *"And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*" (Lk 13:30)

This was in part the answer that Christ gave to a man who asked Him:

> *"Lord, are there few that be saved?"* (Lk 13:23)

Christ' answer would describe the difficulty of salvation (not from God's point, but from mans), and the reason why that is. His immediate answer was, "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*" (Lk 11:24). Many will profess, but few will possess, because they will not strive, that is to endeavour, struggle, contend for, fight for, zealously strive with all they've got to enter the narrow way, they lost the opportunity that God gave them, and then when the time comes for entrance into God's Kingdom, the door will be closed yet they will cry, "*Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:"* (Lk 13:24-25), and in spite of their arguments of supposed fidelity and servitude to God (Lk 13:26), the Lord will insist, "*I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*" (Lk 13:27) and they, the Hebrews contextually--whom are Christ' audience--shall be thrust into the furnace of fire where there shall "*be weeping and gnashing of teeth*," (Lk 13:28), while the Gentiles will come from every direction and *"shall sit down in the kingdom of God*" (Lk 13:29), for these "*are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*" (Lk 13:30).

Later Christ gives a parable that would again contrast His contemporary brethren the religious Jews to the harlots and publicans in the form of two sons who were sent to work in the vineyard (Matt 21:28-32), while the first son disobeyed but repented, the second son feigned obedience but never repented, the former portraying the "*publicans and the harlots,"* (Matt 21:32) those last in society and in the eyes of the religious hypocrites, while the latter, "*the chief priests and the elders*" (Lk 21:23). The first, the religious folks will be last, while the last, the sinners and derelicts, first. Christ summarized it with the following, directed towards the hypocritical Jewish leaders: "*For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."* (Matt 21:32). They puff up their importance into first place in this life, but they will be last in the next. Lk 15, the younger repentant son and the elder unrepentant

religious son (vv. 1-32) is yet another illustration of first and last in God's kingdom, and last does not mean they will enter in. They will not. They will be as the man who snuck into the great wedding supper without the proper wedding garments; he was not *"arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. . . . Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*" (Rev 19:7-9):

> *"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."* (Matt 22:11-14)

> "*So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."* (Matt 20:16)

These passages clearly all refer to salvation. This is the subject, the predominant subject of the four gospels.

How does this appear in the Christian life? Jesus addresses it when His apostles are arguing over being first, over who should be the greatest (Mk 9:33-35):

> "*And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."* (Mk 9:35)

It is okay to be considered last, as nothing, as irrelevant in this life. Our reward comes in eternity, in the Millennial Kingdom, in times when it actually matters. Godly humbleness and a true circumcised heart that yearns after obedience to Scripture in love for the Saviour does not get offended over trivial, earthly things, over things that Scripture says will inevitably occur, ultimately reflecting the heart of a true servant of Christ.

> *"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*" (Ps 119:165)

8. To Receive Joy, requires Sorrow. To have joy, true joy, requires first to be of godly sorrow, as Christ preached in the Beatitudes:

> *"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."* (Matt 5:4)

Mourning (over what?)

> *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”* (2 Cor 7:10)

And the sorrow is turned into joy unspeakable at the very moment of conversion, "*And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."* (Ac 13:52)

> “*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:*” (1 Pet 1:8)

The repentant soul is the victorious soul.

9. To Receive God’s Riches is to be Poor in utmost Poverty. Poor in Spirit; understanding, acknowledging and accepting your spiritual poverty. And Meekness. Meekness is your life, your power, under His control. You can't believe in Him and deny Who He is.

> “*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*” (Matt 5:3)

> *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*” (Is 57:15)

10. To Reign with Christ we must become His Servants, His Slaves. That doesn’t happen sometime during the Christian life, but at salvation (Lk 14:25-15:32).

The servant is a slave but the slave becomes a ruler, which is fascinating indeed.

> “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things*” (Matt 25:21)

Everyone is a slave, either to God, or to mammon and sin. When we are lost, we are slaves to sin, under its bondage, control and dominion, but God wants you to be a happy slave for Him. The sinner cannot stop sinning on his own. He is in bondage to it. He is a “*servant [doulos] to sin,”* (Jn 8:34) that is bondage like a slave, which is what the word *doulos* means. They can't stop sinning, which is the meaning of bondage. They continue in sin, because the seed does not remain in them (1 Jn 3). Someone who is a servant of sin, isn't just doing sinful acts out of

his will, but he is in bondage to the corruption and can't escape it except by the grace of God, which leadeth to salvation (Ti 2:11). When we got saved, we received a new Master (Matt. 6:24), and we become slaves to Him, and all saved people are overcomer's (1 Jn 2:13-14; 5:4-5). Then, during the Millennial reign of Christ, we graduate from slaves to rulers, the reward of our service.

11. The More you Give, the More you Receive. Scattering results in increasing and harbouring produces poverty (Pr 11:24-25).

> *"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."* (Pr 11:24)

The motive should never be to increase, to receive, as the false prosperity preachers pound down peoples throats, and the people gladly believe and follow it. No, our motive should be to give and never expect back.

"To get, we must give," for "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Ac 20:35). This is not the world's method for attaining prosperity, but it is the paradoxical message of God's prescription to His blessing in the Christian life.

12. The Entire Christian Life is a Paradox; Strength in Weakness. We note the ninefold paradox of the true Christian ministry in 2 Cor 6, a testimony of Paul, along with further illustrations from 2 Cor 4:

> "*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; . . . By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things . . . In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God."* (2 Cor 4:8-9; 6:8-10, 14)

Simultaneously,

- Troubled on every side, yet not distressed;
- Perplexed, but not in despair;
- Persecuted, but not forsaken;

- Cast down, but not destroyed;
- Honoured (good report) and dishonoured (evil report): as deceivers, and yet true;
- Unknown, and yet well known;
- Dying, and, behold, we live;
- Chastened, and not killed;
- Sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing;
- Poor, yet making many rich;
- Having nothing, and yet possessing all things!

The approval comes from opposite spectrums. Not only from the good but also from the evil, from honour but also dishonour, from friends and from enemies. For what purpose? The context of 2 Cor 4 sheds light on it:

> *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. . . . Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*" (2 Cor 4:7, 10)

For the glory of God, to manifest His power in our earthen vessels, that the life of Christ might be made manifest in our bodies as we "*present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service*." (Rom 12:1). God's grace is sufficient for everything (2 Cor 12:9), for when we are weak, we are actually strong (2 Cor 12:10):

> *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*" (2 Cor 12:10)

The greatest human leader that has ever lived, was also the meekest (Moses).

2 Pet 1:5-8 describes the Christian life as adding. Diligently we add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, "*For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" So if you have everything, then how can you add anything? If God is working in you, then why do you need to work? Here again we see a paradox. With everything God has done and is doing, you have to cooperate it with it. He is working in you, so you will fulfill His will and good pleasure. You've got to be diligent too. You

have faith, but you still have to exercise faith, live by the faith that you have. When you do, you experience the blessing. You have the blessing, but you don't experience it, because that occurs when you obey. We digress. The Keswick concept of quietism, where a person just lets God do everything —the *"Let go and let God"* philosophy introduced by the Keswick purveyor Charles Trumbull— is heresy. Nor does Christ live out the believers life, another Keswick-based heresy that does not represent biblical or historical sanctification. These are samples of modern iterations of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, the apostasy of 2 Pet 2 and Jude. They take away responsibility to obey the commands of the NT and fulfill the law of Christ, and turn it over to Jesus. It just isn't true. The NT doesn't teach it and it certainly doesn't teach that it's the very life of Jesus that dwells in the believer. The irony is we add to the Christian life and not God, the things mentioned in 2 Pet 1:5-8, "*work[ing] out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Phil 2:12), which means that the person has already received all of these things. When were we supplied and furnished with these things? At the moment of conversion of course. None of this is quietism. A person is strengthened in the strength God has given.

It bears importance to recognize that only saved people can manifest these great paradoxes in our behaviour, actions and life. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit and the new, circumcised and quickened heart, without a profound love for the Saviour, these things would be very difficulty, virtually impossible. An unsaved man as a general rule will not sacrifice his flesh for a cause that only goes skin deep. Counterfeits will lose heart, get offended over any form of affliction, tribulation, temptations or persecution over the Word, and direct their hearts towards the cares and pleasures of this world and life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and lusts of other things, as the parable of the sower and the seed succinctly describes (Matt 13; Mk 4; Lk 8).

To an unbelieving world, the above points would almost border insanity. This is because they cannot understand spiritual matters. None of us truly can, until we are born again and the wonderful Comforter comes to dwell in us, to teach us, lead us, help us, and grow us in God's grace, knowledge and wisdom. When that occurs, we will exhibit paradoxes in our life, because we experienced them in our salvation. When the true gospel is preached, the sinner can be converted, and herein we find another paradox, the paradox of the gospel. We are saved through the foolishness of preaching (1 Cor 1:21); the foolishness of preaching glorifies God.

These are paradoxes of scripture, which there are many.

In summary, the amazing paradox of conversion: the way down is the way up, to be humbled is to be exalted, the broken and contrite spirit is the healed and rejoicing spirit, the repentant soul is the victorious soul, to have nothing is to possess everything, to lose your life is to save your life, to give up everything is to gain everything, to wear the cross is to wear the crown, to surrender is to have freedom, finding God's light in my darkness, receiving God's joy in my

sorrow, God's grace in my sin, God's riches in my poverty, and God's life in my death. This is the Biblical gospel, the gospel of self-abandonment, the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that saves sinners.