

# Surrender: Our Image to His

## Genesis 1:24-2:3; John 8:37-47; Romans 8:18-31

Society sounds few personal responsibility claims, but cries of individual rights constantly bombard us with messages to take charge of our lives. Brad Paisley says he can't wait to make it big, "'cause when you're a celebrity it's adios reality. You can act just like a fool, and people think you're cool just 'cause you're on TV."<sup>1</sup> It would seem to be the new American Dream: "my desires are my rights! The world should conform to my will."



Genesis tells us that we were created for a different track. In detailing the myriad elements that God created, there is a pause to reflect on the creation of humanity. The narrative sets apart the creation of humanity as special and endowed with a special purpose. Much has been made over the phrase, but the context of the passage and the responsibilities detailed for humanity highlight that in creating humanity God gave us a special function and responsibility.

"Let us fashion humanity in our own image and according to our likeness and having dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the face of the earth." God created humanity, male and female, to represent God upon the earth, serving as steward of all creation with dominion and responsibility over the earth. We were created in God's image, to represent and serve God's interests upon the earth. The problem is that we have never liked the idea of serving God. Rather than surrendering to His image, we strive to take advantage of power and position to serve ourselves.

The Jews have always looked back upon Abraham as their father, claiming the promise and blessings of God given to Abraham. Jesus called them to task on their claims in His day. They were laying claim to their position as Abraham's descendents, but were ignoring their responsibilities to live up to the character. They wanted the freedom to live according to their own desires and yet lay claim to the position and rights afforded by their heritage. They wanted to determine their own lives and ignore the reality of personal responsibility.

In claiming their Abrahamic lineage, they were ignoring what made it special. They ignored the fact that Abraham had surrendered his life to accepting the responsibilities and direction that God had for him. He had accepted God's plan for his life and surrendered self, ambition, and personal desires to following God's direction. He was not perfect, but he surrendered to the picture of life that God had for him. He lived in accordance with his position as God's servant and representative before others. His life called others to surrender their lives in faithfulness and service to *Yahweh*.

In His letter to the Romans, Paul recognizes that there is a difference between what creation was created to become and the reality that has developed. Paul writes that creation itself groans and aches for redemption. We were created to conform to the image of Christ Jesus, but we have not

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<sup>1</sup> Brad Paisley, "Bein' a Celebrity".

attained that goal. Humanity was designed to serve God and represent God upon the earth even as Jesus fulfilled that purpose. As we have not fulfilled the reason for our existence, not we alone, but all of creation suffers at our hands.

Amid the turmoil, there is hope. Hope of redemption. There is redemption for our lives and redemption for our distress. There is hope, for God is yet at work among us, creating life among the wreckage of our crafting. Paul says that God works all things for the good of those who are called according to His purpose. No matter the disasters of life in our midst, God can create good out of them.

Notice, Paul does not say that all things are good. He does not claim that everything that happens to those who love God is good. He claims that God is redemptive and will bring good out of the hopelessness in which we enmesh ourselves.

We were created for more that we have accepted to become. We have thwarted God's plan to fashion us into the image of Christ—servants surrendered wholeheartedly to God. And yet, in the midst of the chaos that we make of life, God intervenes to grant redemption in love. We are still called to become more than we have become. We are still offered redemption from our recklessness and self-centered ways. We are called to become true children of Abraham. We are called to conform to the image of God, as portrayed in the surrender of Christ Jesus.

That surrender is redemption. That surrender is to accept the greatest blessings that life can afford—the blessings of God's love and care. After all, if we are willing to surrender all of who we are to God, what do we have to lose? It is for surrender that we were created. It is for service to God that we were given life and breath. This same God who created us for service also gives Himself for us in love.

What can separate us from the love of God for us in Christ Jesus? He who gave Himself for us that we might live, granting us life not once, but twice? Nothing can separate us from God's love, except our own lack of surrender. When it gets down to it, we must answer whether we will live a life seeking to please ourselves and serve ourselves or whether we will surrender to what God has called us to become. Nothing else can separate us from God's love—only our own selfishness.

—*Christopher B. Harbin*