

THE RED THREAD

THE GOSPEL PARADIGM

PASTOR JOHN PACE | Publisher

THE GIFT OF SALVATION

Acknowledge to yourself and to God that you have sinned (Romans 3:23).

In sorrow for your sins, turn from them to God and ask His forgiveness (Isaiah 55:7).

By faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, believing that He died in your place on the cross (John 3:16).

WHY & HOW

THE RED THREAD exists to be an encouragement to the men and women currently separated from family and friends in correctional institutions. It is published on the 15th of each month by **Crimson House Ministries** at **1616 North Robberson, Springfield, Missouri, 65803**. Please send all correspondence to that address. Subscription information is available online at: <http://readingroom.crimsonhouseministries.org>

INTRODUCTION

What is a paradigm? A paradigm is the generally accepted perspective of a particular discipline at any given time.

Reality: As Christians, we must function with a Gospel perspective in order to fulfill our responsibility to the lost. In other words, the gospel must be the backcloth of all that we are and do; we must be actively looking to share this 'good news' in ways it will be heard. It is so easy to get caught up in 'doing church' that we can neglect the church's true purpose.

Churches can utilize all the successful business models, vocabulary and marketing tools available and it may seem they are successful, but that is not what Jesus did.

Bob Sorge writes in his book 'In Your Face' (pages 79, 80): "Jesus never tried to capitalize upon His ministry successes. He never tried to use one success to build a larger success. Take the feeding of the five thousand, for example. Now there's something worth milking. If I had been Jesus' promotional manager, by the next week I would have had twenty thousand people out. Can't you just imagine how the ads could read? "Five thousand fed with five loaves and two fish!" "Watch the Master break bread! Free meal for all observers." "Hungry? Come to the revival meeting!" You can start a magazine with this kind of stuff, Jesus. Come on, Lord, at least launch a monthly newsletter.

"Watch what Jesus did. You can follow it in the record of John's Gospel. He used the multiplication of the bread as an object lesson to bring a new revelation of Himself, saying, 'I am the bread of life.' He went on to say, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.' At this, the circuits of the Jews began to overload and blow. They said, 'We can't deal with this, this is a hard teaching.' And so, many of His disciples stopped following Him (John 6:66). Jesus took the feeding of the five thousand, turned it around, and used it as the vehicle to cause many of His followers to fall away."

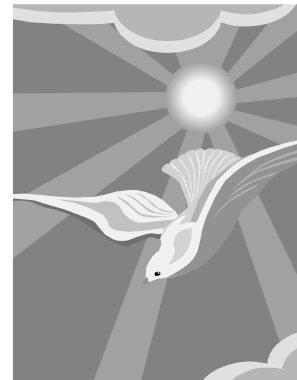
This is what we are to do:

1. Preach (herald, proclaim, publish) the gospel: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15 KJV)
2. Teach (to become a pupil—disciple) the gospel "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even

unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20 KJV).

Watchman Nee says (in 'The Spirit of the Gospel', p. 28), "There are two different approaches in the preaching of the gospel:

- 1) Tell the sinners how the work of the Lord Jesus has satisfied God's demand. The purpose of such preaching of the gospel is to make known to sinners the nature of the gospel;
- 2) Lead the sinners to the place where the Holy Spirit is able to apply the work of Christ upon them. Such preaching of the gospel is for acceptance, not for understanding."



What is the gospel?

The gospel—good news—is that we can be saved from our sins. It is the good news that we can be delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of the Father's beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (cf. Colossians 1:13-14 ESV). Theologically these are the essential points to the gospel:

- Jesus is the Son of God
- His genuine humanity
- His death for our sins
- His burial

(Continued on page 2...)

The Repentance of Faith

ANDREW MURRAY | From 'Why Do You Believe?'

"Repent ye, and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:15.

This beginning of the preaching of the Lord Jesus contains the summary of the will of God for our salvation. Repent ye and believe. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Without repentance no real faith, without faith no true repentance.

Without repentance no real faith. The entire design of God in the mission of Christ, the great aim for which the salvation of faith has been given to us, is to win the heart back from sin, and to make it free from sin. A real desire for this salvation can thus never arise in the heart that is

not also prepared to be loosed from sin, and to abandon it. Faith is a surrender of the soul to God: this is an impossibility where it still continues to give itself to sin. Faith is an appropriation and a reception into the heart of the grace of God: it is an absurdity to suppose that this should take place without a contemporaneous repentance, an abandonment and casting out of sin.

Without faith also no true repentance. Repentance is not only a turning away from sin, which of itself would tend to self-righteousness, but a turning back to God, and this can take place only through faith. Repentance is not a work of one's own power, but a consenting, a cooperation with

Lord, Create a Change in Me



Transform my mind to how it ought to be
 Take away my guilt, my sins and shame
 You are so perfect, so righteous without
 sin or blame
 Only you have the power to make me
 whole
 Improve my spirit and fill my soul
 These chains that bind make me weary
 with grief
 Worldly pleasures bring only temporary
 relief

Your grace is "sufficient for all" mankind
 Show us the way so we may find
 The glory of Heaven and your Son by your
 side
 This life is so short
 Ahead lies eternity
 If I'm going to spend it with you
 Lord, please create a change in me.

--E. Zapata, Missouri

THE GOSPEL PARADIGM

(...Continued from page 1)

- His resurrection
- His subsequent appearances
- His future coming in judgment

Simply put the Gospel is Jesus Christ, the One who came to seek and to save the lost. We must proclaim Jesus and we must teach Jesus. Anything less and we will fail in our calling and purpose.

INAUGURATION

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:1-4 ESV). Thus, according to Mark (via Simon Peter) the gospel 'began' with John the Baptist.

J.V. McGee said there are three 'beginnings' in the Scripture (chronologically) which helps us realize the great importance of the gospel: In the beginning was the Word (John 1:1); in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1); the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1).

The importance of the gospel was such that its fundamental tenet—faith—was given in the Genesis to Abraham, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8 ASV). This verse is a promise of Christ, and hence the gospel in promise before the law even existed.

Now, as Mark articulates the gospel 'begins' with the last (and greatest) Old Testament prophet, John the Baptist. His ministry was the dividing point: "The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it" (Luke 16:16 ASV). (More on this verse will be in a forthcoming article.)

What was John's message?

- National repentance
- Denunciation of religious leaders and their justification of a physical descent from Abraham
- The kingdom of heaven is near-- "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2 ESV).

Jesus responds to John's call, is baptized, (John's concern is so very real... what sins did Jesus have to confess in conjunction with His baptism?) and (from a casual view) Jesus then becomes involved in a renewal ministry similar to the Baptist's: "He began to gather disciples, and, accompanied by them, he went among the people, speaking of God and his righteousness, of sin and the necessity of repentance; both baptized the repentant and called for spiritual reformation as well as social responsibility" (Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, pages 184, 185).

But something happened that moved Jesus' ministry from the proclamation to the future anticipation of God's kingdom to its genuine arrival.

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15 KJV). It was John's imprisonment that initiated the gospel's appearance. (Remember how Jesus responded to John's question concerning His Messiah-ship? The gospel is preached to the poor... (cf. Matthew 11:5). Some things must cease for something new to begin. Or, in the words to the Hebrews, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second" (Hebrews 10:9 ESV). Here the forerunner ceased, the way had been prepared, the law and the prophets were behind bars waiting to be free in fulfillment, and the Lord was prepared to set the captives free.



Not only did Jesus identify the immediacy of the gospel of the kingdom, but that the kingdom was present in Him. On that fateful day in Nazareth when He stood and read from Isaiah's scroll: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19 KJV) and concluded with, "This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears" the gospel was there—in Him!

CONCLUSION

In T. Austin Sparks' *The School of Christ* he writes "To learn Christ we must see Christ." And we must never think we have seen all of Him and graduated from this school, regardless of our tenure, experience, or calling.

In 38-40 AD Paul pens to the Galatians, "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone" (Galatians 1:15-16 ESV). Yet, to the Philippians 23 years later he writes, "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death," (Philippians 3:10 ESV). Even after all that Paul had witnessed and ministered, there was still an understanding of the vastness that is Christ Jesus—and a desire to learn more.

That is what this series is all about: "Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14 ASV). The Gospel Paradigm is to put on Christ anew; it is to learn Christ; it is to practice Christ; it is to live Christ and proclaim Him! ▪

YOU SAID IT! *We love hearing from you and so do our readers. Please send your articles, poems, praise reports, testimonies, etc..., to The Red Thread, Crimson House Ministries, 1616 North Robberson, Springfield, MO, 65803.*

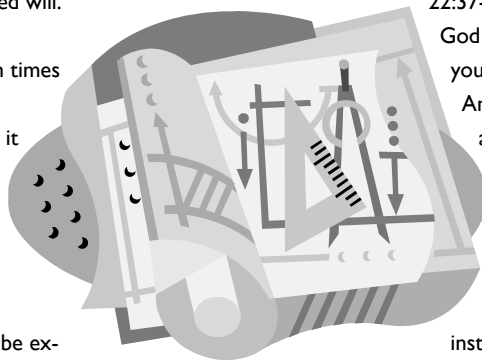
GOD'S WILL

We hear so much about God's will. We often times get into huge conversations about the will of God and the role it plays in our life. While these conversations can be very productive, they can also be unproductive and unnecessary. Let me try to explain.

First of all we need to remember that God's will breaks down into two different categories, sovereign will and commanded will.

Let us start off by looking at sovereign will. Often times people have a problem explaining why something happens or why God allowed a certain event and it is explained as being part of or one of the mysteries of God. A lot of people have a hard time understanding that but this is where His sovereign will comes in.

So what exactly is sovereign will? I guess it could be explained or defined as God's big plan. It is a plan that we have absolutely no control over. For a better understanding look at Isaiah 14:24 "The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying 'Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand.'" After looking at this passage you see that God our Father is not asking us to do anything. He already has the plan laid out and it will happen just as he wants it to. When it comes to His sovereign will, we all play a part in it but we can do nothing to change it. We know the ultimate destination but we don't know the exact route that will be taken to get there; only God knows that. Another example is the second coming of our Lord and Savior. We can see in Matthew 24:36, Jesus says "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." So I guess sovereign will



could also be considered a secret and we are not expected to know or understand it. Again, God is in complete control.

Now let us take a look at commanded will. This is more easily understood but at times maybe more overlooked. It is of course the things that God commands us to do. Here we make the choice of whether we will obey or not. This commanded will is something specific, a direct path that we should follow, allowing the Word of God to light our path as seen in Psalms 119:105. We are expected to know and understand His commanded will. I think the best illustration of this type of will is found in Matthew 22:37-39 where Jesus says "...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" All that he commands of us is good and just so that believers may have a better relationship with Him.

I feel that far too often we get bogged down in the sovereign will of God; trying to understand it instead of focusing our attention on the commanded will. Why is that? Is it because of the mystery that is hidden or is it because the less of His commanded will that we know the more freedom we will have to do our own will? Isaiah 55:8 says "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways,' says the Lord." There are some things we cannot even begin to understand. However, we do know that our final goal is to glorify our Father and to spend eternity with Him in heaven. Therefore, let us concentrate more on His commanded will and the things that we can control because the Lord God Almighty already had his sovereign will laid out and it will happen just as He has planned.

—M. Keith Benson
Texas

WHEN GOD DRAWS ME

AN EXCERPT FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...
—John 6:44

When God begins to draw me to Himself, the problem of my will comes in immediately. Will I react positively to the truth that God has revealed? Will I come to Him? To discuss or deliberate over spiritual matters when God calls is inappropriate and disrespectful to Him. When God speaks, never discuss it with anyone as if to decide what your response may be (see Galatians 1:15-16). Belief is not the result of an intellectual act, but the result of an act of my will whereby I deliberately commit myself. But will I commit, placing myself completely and absolutely on God, and be willing to act solely on what He says? If I will, I will find that I am grounded on reality as certain as God's throne.

In preaching the gospel, always focus on the matter of the will. Belief must come from the will to believe. There must be a surrender of the will, not a surrender to a persuasive or powerful argument. I must deliberately step out, placing my faith in God and in His truth. And I must place no confidence in my own works, but only in God. Trusting in my own mental under-

standing becomes a hindrance to complete trust in God. I must be willing to ignore and leave my feelings behind. I must will to believe. But this can never be accomplished without my forceful, determined effort to separate myself from my old ways of looking at things. I must surrender myself completely to God.

Everyone has been created with the ability to reach out beyond his own grasp. But it is God who draws me, and my relationship to Him in the first place is an inner, personal one, not an intellectual one. I come into the relationship through the miracle of God and through my own will to believe. Then I begin to get an intelligent appreciation and understanding of the wonder of the transformation in my life. ■





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ANDREW MURRAY | Continued from page 1

God's plan, in God's strength, a trustful surrender to the redeeming grace of God. And this can be done only through faith. Repentance is not an actual victory over sin, but the soul has to bring every sin to the feet of the Lord Jesus, the great victor over sin, that He may take it away; and this cannot find place, except by the faith which has acknowledged that He is faithful to forgive sin, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

Thus the power of repentance is faith: for the more we trust that Jesus makes us free from sin, the stronger are we to turn away from it. And the power of faith, on the other hand, is also repentance: for the more eager to become freed from sin it causes us to be, the more are we shut up to faith. "Repent ye and believe": he that observes and holds fast both shall be saved.

Nor is it only at the beginning of the way, but on to the very end that these two must accompany one another. No sooner is faith cultivated in a one-sided fashion, without a growing conscientiousness in the casting off of little sins, and the sanctification of the whole heart and walk, than it becomes a work merely of the understanding or the feeling. And as soon as continued repentance occupies itself with the furtherance of sanctification, without daily holding fast and increasing a living faith by the promise of God's grace, such a repentance will also lose its worth.

"Repent ye and believe." See here what Jesus calls us to. Every wish and endeavor after repentance, every remembrance of the sin which is in you, and of which you would be free, must be a summons to faith in that Jesus who is exalted to bestow repentance. Combat every sin, and make renunciations

of it at His feet with faith fixed on Him. And let every thought of faith on the other hand be an encouragement to fight more bravely against sin, until at length your whole soul shall be filled with the faith of which it is written: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith."

So shall repentance and faith in due time become entirely one, and the out-going of the soul to Jesus shall be a departure from sin: the enjoyment by faith of the light of His love, shall of itself drive away the darkness. Then shall believing and working no longer be considered as antagonistic, but the soul shall know that a continually renewed faith is the fruit of sanctification, for it carries it on in the strength of Jesus, and continued repentance then gives to faith courage to persevere, experience which it can plead, and the certitude of a full assurance.

Soul, why do you not believe? O, pray let it not be because you will not repent. It should not be that you are not willing to make a renunciation of sin. And let it not be that you would first repent and then later on believe. No: let both go together from this moment onwards: "Repent ye and believe."



Andrew Murray