

Kingdom Perspectives – Part 9

Welcome to Kingdom Perspectives, Part 9, November 5, 2008. Last time we looked at various considerations related to the afterlife. Today we're going to speak about your afterlife. And I'm going to use that term with a little poetic license to mean not the eternal state, but the time that you're on planet Earth after salvation before physical death. The most foundational revelation of Christianity is that it is all by grace. I think most Christians consider ourselves not needing to be reminded of that. But as Paul and Peter would say in different places in Scripture, I do not hesitate to remind you; because I think we do need to be constantly reminded of that. To begin with we're going to go through a short mental exercise examining the total number of people who consider themselves Christians. And then we're going to subtract out various categories. The purpose of doing that is to see after this brief exercise how many are left who are actually living out of the Biblical explanation of grace.

Next poster. Let us begin by looking at grace related to salvation. This poster is to remind us that salvation is all by faith in Jesus Christ provided through the grace of God. That includes faith (not just in Jesus) but in the Jesus of the Bible. That includes Jesus being the Son of God, the Son of man, and the Lamb of God Who shed His blood on the cross to pay the price for our sins. Then that Jesus of the Bible came out of the tomb and ascended into Heaven. Faith in any other Jesus does not provide salvation. So it's not sufficient to believe in Jesus, you have to believe in the Jesus of the Bible. Furthermore if you add any work of man, then it provides no salvation; because if you add a work of man, God does not get the glory and God will share His glory with no one. So how many Christians have faith in a Jesus that is not the Jesus of the Bible? How many Christians add a work of man for salvation?

Now look at those that are left and these are Christians who are truly Christians. They have faith in the Jesus of the Bible and they add no work of man for salvation. The first group to look at is those who cheapen grace. They acknowledge that their salvation is all by grace, then they live as though they are not impacted by that grace thus bringing no additional glory to God. I once read a book that gave a vivid example of that. It related to a group of people who were living overtly in massive sin. A visitor observed this sin and asked his host how can anybody live that way? His host answered this way. That's an easy question to answer. They live that way because they're saved. They believe that God forgives all sins since Jesus paid for all sin; therefore they can live any way that they want. Well that's what we call greasy grace. That approach to grace brings no further glory to God and misunderstands how the Christian is to respond to saving grace in order to walk in sanctifying grace.

Now look at the remainder of Christians after those are sorted out. There's a subset of Christians who do believe in the Jesus of the Bible and add no work of their own for salvation. However, after salvation they immediately begin to live by works and not by faith trying to accomplish in the flesh that which was begun by the Spirit. That's Romans Ch. 7 in which one cries out oh wretched man that I am in defeat, failure, and condemnation. If not wretched, those who are living by works are functioning in pride. They're not wretched because they're proud of their many good works and are proud of their excellent church service. So how many Christians are we left with after subtracting those groups who understand both saving grace and sanctifying grace? I remind you...it is only those left over after you start with those who called themselves

Christian and subtract out those who believe in Jesus, but not the Jesus of the Bible. Subtract out those who add works to accomplish their salvation. Subtract out those who believe in the Jesus of the Bible and add no works, but who live in greasy grace untouched by saving grace. Subtract out those saved by grace who live by works in wretchedness in defeat, failure, and death. Subtract out those saved by grace who are not wretched, but live in pride in their works. Then ask the question again. Should we ever cease to talk about the grace of God?

Next poster. This poster is to remind us of the many dimensions of grace all of which we've covered at one time or another during this series. I'm not going to review them in detail today. I'm presenting this poster, and the continuation of this poster on the next poster, because of our tendency to contemplate these items one at a time and lose sight of the big picture that it is all by grace. You've heard me phrase the origin of choice as being between God and ungod that it may be of love, and that choice is provided by grace, that God may display that it is of love. Revealing grace to make God evident; because we're told in Romans Ch. 1 that just by looking at creation, it is evident because God made it evident of His existence and His divine nature. Then the common grace that is poured out, whether we choose God or ungod, poured out to all men as it rains on the just and unjust. And then the long suffering grace of God which tolerates the choice of ungod by men. That includes patience and slowness to anger. It includes forbearance which is the withholding of wrath which is deserved. Then the empowering grace to empower a man who's dead in sin to choose God. Restraining grace which operates in man to hold back his choice of ungod.

Next poster. The next is atoning grace—to pay for the choice of all ungod; because He died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. And then saving grace which gives spirit life to some to access the atoning grace of Jesus Christ on His cross. Then sanctifying grace which is to transform us from glory to glory into the image of the Son of God. And then eternal grace to be with Jesus Christ and the Father God forever in Heaven. Is it any wonder that Ephesians 1:6 states to the praise of the glory of His grace. And that Isaiah 6:3 speaks of the whole Earth being full of His glory and it's the glory of His grace. We are saved by grace and we're to walk by grace. I do not hesitate to remind us because we need to be reminded.

Next poster. Now I'm going to introduce a few pitfalls that keep us from walking by grace. The first (and the root of all) is when we continue to think naturally. This is when a natural man uses his natural mind to study natural events by natural methods. That man will always conclude, so naturally this must follow. That could not occur, this could occur, this did occur, and this occurred in this way. The problem with living that way is that it excludes the work of a sovereign God. The simple illustration that I use is the wedding feast at Cana where Jesus turned the water into wine. If a man drank the wine and thought naturally, he would obviously conclude that a certain set of chemicals had to exist, and that certain conditions of pressure and time had to occur, to produce certain chemical reactions to bring about the result of having this tasty wine. He would be naturally understandable and totally wrong; because you cannot interpret a sovereign God by relying on the natural mind. Unfortunately many Christians still do that.

Next poster. This poster addresses the continuing tendency for even Christians to remain in the position of judging God. The basis of choice—the origin of choice is God's love and since God

is love and love is relational and relational requires choice, if one choice is God, every other choice is ungod. So we're given choice to display the love of God. Now let's examine man's response to choice and it's one of two types. First, if God restrains our choosing, we say how can a God of love make us robots? Secondly, if God does not restrain our choosing, we say how can a God of love allow evil and suffering? The result is that man judges God no matter what God does.

Next poster. When we continue to think naturally or continue to judge God, we'll judge the first coming of Jesus, the second coming of Jesus, and judge how we are to experience the Christian life. In the first coming Jesus came as the Lamb of God. Our first coming can be thought of as the salvation experience where as a result of Jesus' coming as the Lamb of God, then we come into Jesus Christ. The second coming, Jesus will come to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. We will come with Him to rule on planet Earth at that time. The problem is this. He wants our first coming to be like His first coming. We want our first coming to be like His second coming; because we want to rule and reign in our unbothered lives of health and wealth and prosperity and so on. He says I'm sending you out as sheep among wolves. They're going to kill you and think they're doing God a favor. They aren't rejecting you; they're rejecting Me. So He wants our first coming to be as lambs of God to display the grace of God. But we want to rule and reign on planet Earth as kings. That time will come; but it will come at His second coming. Solution to the problem? The slave is not above his master.

Next poster. This poster addresses the tendency of many people (including Christians) to live in the flesh; and thus, to walk by faith in their own god of their own design. The left side of the graph—namely the vertical axis relates to the size of My god. Notice that My is capitalized to represent relative importance since I am the creator of My designer god. Notice that god is not capitalized; thus representing that this may be your god; but it is not the God of the Bible in which case it would be capitalized. The bottom line (horizontal line) represents time with the passage of time indicated by the arrow to the right. Now notice the two horizontal stippled lines. The lower most stippled line represents the threshold of the size of My god required to decrease my anxiety. The uppermost stippled line represents the size of My god that is required for me to relinquish self worship. The variable solid line is the size of My god over time. If My god gets too small and falls below the threshold to decrease my anxiety, then I'm stimulated to increase the size of My god to make him big enough to settle my nerves. For a time I have no anxiety because I made him big enough for a time. Then I pay less attention to My designer god and his size dwindles downward. Once again he becomes too small to settle my nerves and decrease my anxiety in the next given set of circumstances. Then I repeat the cycle. Notice that My god never comes close to being near the threshold that would require me to give up self worship. That allows me to believe in god while continuing self worship. This tendency in people led Lenin (one of the fathers of communism) to state that religion is the opiate of the masses. He concluded that by observation. The fact is that Christians tend to behave in the same way without even knowing it. We should be convicted by the awareness that an atheist understands how we commonly behave even better than we do.

Next poster. So what are we to do? Well the first thing is to ensure that we're always functioning in the spirit realm. God is spirit; and in the beginning God (Who is spirit) created the heavens and the Earth. Therefore the spiritual preceded the physical, the spiritual created the

physical, the spiritual upholds the physical, the spiritual transcends the physical, the spiritual outlasts the physical, and without the spiritual the physical is meaningless. So let me think. Which one should I walk by? Duh! The spiritual is not seen and is eternal. Faith is the certainty of things not seen; and we walk by faith, not by sight.

Next poster. Once focused on the spirit realm, then our spiritual focus in the spirit realm is to always be on Jesus. We are to always sum up all things in Jesus. We are always to abide in Jesus. We're to capture every thought in obedience to Jesus. We're to fix our gaze upon Jesus. I created this simple mnemonic to help me do so. It is simply a meditative tool. Notice that all of the words in this list begin with the letter "M" and that all relate to Jesus Christ. So the heading on this poster is not a typo. I separated the "M" from the rest of the word. So my simple mnemonic represents meditation on Jesus Christ but it is "M editation" to help me recall these things to bring me into the spirit realm where my gaze is fixed upon Jesus. Jesus is my maker. Apart from Him nothing which has been created has been created. He is the messenger of God, the incarnate Word of God, and God has spoken to us in these latter days through His Son. This is My beloved Son, listen to Him. He is the Messiah, the Christ we call Him, the anointed one of God, the one Who fulfilled over 100 OT prophecies about the first coming of the Messiah...foreknown, foretold, for faith. And the Messianic prophecies all fulfilled by Jesus Christ related to His first coming. He is my mediator. He is the one mediator between God and man. One cannot be reconciled to God apart from Jesus Christ. He is the means, the means being the cross; because it's by the means of the cross that my mediator purchased for me every spiritual blessing. That's why Paul would know, teach, and boast only of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He is my model. Remember the model has two meanings; He's not just what I am to be, He's truthful so I'm to be truthful. That's a true statement. But He also is the method. He showed us how to do it. He looked only at the Father, listened only to the Father, spoke only what He heard the Father speak, did only what He saw the Father do. All things for Jesus were summed up in the Father. And when He functioned by that method, the Father loosed the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon Jesus, lead Jesus, and to empower Jesus, and so on. We're to do the same thing by that method except our gaze is fixed upon Jesus. When our gaze is fixed upon Jesus, as Jesus' gaze was fixed upon the Father, the Holy Spirit is loosed to bear witness of Jesus, loosed to bring glory to Jesus. He gives gifts, illumination, and power to transform me into the image of Jesus Christ and produce the fruit of the Spirit thereby. He is my master. Why do you call Me Lord, Lord and not do what I say? No greater oxymoron in the human language than to say no, Lord; because if He's Lord, you should never tell Him no. If He's not Lord, why are you calling Him Lord? So a self contradictory statement is obviously to say no, Lord to a command of Jesus Christ. He is my motive which is to bring Him the fullness of glory and pleasure in all things. He is my mission which is to tell the world about Him both verbally through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and transformationally as I become the image of Jesus Christ. When I "M-editate" on Jesus Christ with all of these, then I am magnifying Him, bringing Him glory to the fullest. So I don't simply meditate. It's easy to bounce around in a meditative existence and never have any congealing truth to produce power in your life. So our gaze is fixed upon Jesus and I'm not making this Scriptural and insisting that you use "M editate"; I'm saying it is a simple meditative tool that helps my gaze stay focused on Jesus Christ.

Next poster. If we do these things, then we live in the presence of God. And this relates to His communion presence. Recall that the presence of God can be thought of in three dimensions.

He is omnipresent. All human beings, saved or unsaved, alive or dead, are dwelling in the omnipresence of God. But communion presence is a different level. This means that His communion with Him is available to all saved human beings whether alive now as we are or dead, because communion with Jesus Christ for the saved doesn't stop when they die. That's when we see Him face to face and have fullness of communion. His manifest presence, though, is for all saved human beings in Heaven after physical death. The arrows indicate progression. He is everywhere in His omnipresence. He is available for communion in His communion presence after salvation; although we may not avail ourselves of that which is available. We are in Him positionally and He is in us positionally. But Jesus addressed His communion presence availability in Revelation 4:20 – Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door I will come into him and dine with him and he with Me. Then when we get to Heaven after physical death we'll see His manifest presence. So we begin by the poster entitled "Duh" to focus on the spirit realm. We continue by some technique and I use my "M-education" on Jesus in order to keep me summing up all things in Jesus Christ in a practical way. Then we land in the poster entitled the Presence of God by which we press into the communion presence, and if we do these things then we'll fulfill the next poster which is addressing our mission statement.

Part of our mission is directed to God. Part of our mission is directed to others and part of my mission is directed (believe it or not) to me. Our mission is to bring maximal glory to God, maximal pleasure to God, and minimal grief to God. To others we're to bring maximal valid testimony of God and that includes verbal and nonverbal testimony. To myself I bring maximal abundant life and store up maximal eternal rewards in Heaven. Fulfilling our mission statement to others and to myself is never done when those are primarily pursued. They are fulfilled only as corollaries that overflow from our fixation on fulfilling our mission statement oriented toward God. This mission statement is a paraphrase of Matthew 22:37-39. That tells us to love God, to love others as we love ourselves; because only love will fulfill this mission statement. All else fails, but love doesn't fail. Recall that this entire series in part flowed out of my pursuit of an answer to a question in my early Christian years. I prayed to God and asked why do I not experience the abundant life that You referred to in the NT? So what is the answer? The answer is that I do not experience the abundant life because I am seeking and asking for the abundant life. To even ask the question that way is to remain self focused on my rewards and in the flesh instead of seeking to bring glory to God. That question that should be asked is what is my reason for being here on planet Earth after salvation until the time of physical death? I Corinthians 10:31 says whatever you do, do all the glory of God. It doesn't say whatever you do, do all to maximally access the abundant life, regardless of how you do it.

Next poster. The glory of God can be thought of as His intrinsic, infinite, eternal perfections. God possesses intrinsic glory. God simply is His glory. God created extrinsic things to reveal His intrinsic glory. I am an extrinsic thing. God created me as an extrinsic thing to reveal His intrinsic glory. I do that by maximally giving extrinsic glory to God; extrinsic glory being that which God receives, not that which God is. I do that by being transformed into the image of His Son Who according to Hebrews 1:3 is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact representation of the nature of God. I'm to fulfill II Corinthians 3:18 by beholding the glory of the Lord. I do that as a Christian by beholding Jesus Christ. Then I am transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Holy Spirit of God Who came to bring glory to Jesus

Christ. The key is that I become what I behold. By asking for the abundant life in isolation, I was beholding self and not Jesus. The abundant life never occurs by asking for it or seeking it as a primary goal. The abundant life occurs only by beholding Jesus Christ, beholding His glory, which is the glory of the Father. And when viewed that way I received a simple revelation that is so obvious, but it escaped me during my early Christian years. One of the first verses I learned was Hebrews 11:6 – He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. My emphasis was on: He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. I was seeking the reward of the abundant life. Now I know that reward comes not to those who seek the reward, but to those who seek Him. And if I'm not seeking Him, I'm not beholding Him. I'm beholding His reward. So I did get my answer and it was simple as are all things in the spirit realm. So now I try to do two things. I aim to constantly behold Jesus in some aspect of His being and observe His glory. I've learned how to rest, secondly, in unanswered questions in what used to trouble my natural mind, which continued with the troubling in some degree after salvation.

Next poster. So I had to learn to rest in God; and not only to rest in God, but specifically to rest in the holiness of God. My natural mind would say how can God have always been? How could God speak the universe into existence? How can God be one, yet be three persons? How can Jesus be fully God and yet fully man? How could Jesus pay for all sin for all time on the cross? How can God elect, yet man choose? These are obvious troubling questions to the natural mind. But you always land in the same landing zone. The answer to any unanswered question is He is Holy. He is other than. He transcends your natural mind. He transcends your human logic. And we walk by faith, not by sight. And our trust is in the Lord, not resting in our own understanding. Now you see why I insisted on beginning this whole series with Genesis 1:1; because that's where God told us to begin. And Genesis 1:1 is the beginning of seeing God as holy; because we're told in the NT to rest in God. But if we're not resting in a Holy God, we will never rest. We'll always be troubled. Except you live in the light of His holiness, you will not behold Him. You will not cease self worship because you'll continue to design your own god. You'll bring Him no additional glory and you will never enter His rest. Thus you'll negate your reason for having been created and having been saved. And as Paul would say, may it never be. They sing holy, holy, holy in Heaven; but it's not a work of the flesh. They sing holy, holy, holy in Heaven because they're beholding their Holy God and they see Him as He is and not through a glass dimly. So if we want His kingdom to come on Earth as it is in Heaven, it has to start by having us see His holiness albeit dimly and start to respond to that holiness, and ultimately to rest in His holiness.

Next poster. Don't try to digest this all at once or you'll miss what I'm going to say for the next two minutes as you try to do so. This poster relates to creatures and glory. "Creatures" relates to created beings. God is not a creature because He's not a created being. We need to recall that we are the only creatures, the only created beings, who were created to give testimonial extrinsic glory back to God for the greatness of the saving grace of God and the greatness of the transforming grace of God that transforms us into the image of God. The first category of creature to begin to understand the flow of this poster is to look at Jesus as the Son of man. Jesus came as a man. He was born. He grew. He increased in knowledge. He ate. He drank. He slept. He suffered. He bled and He died. Those aren't things God needs to do; those are things that men do. But He never sinned. He never chose to be self determined. He also had the divine nature since Jesus is also the Son of God. Thus Jesus always remained God determined. He

provided salvation as the Lamb of God. He was crucified, forsaken by the Father, died, resurrected, and ascended into Heaven, all of which addressed the character glory of God and the sovereignty glory of God. And so in one way or another, Jesus displays all of the glory of God including character glory and sovereignty glory.

The second category of creature to examine is that of unelected human beings. They are self determined. They are not, and never were, God determined. They have no divine nature. Therefore, the rejected arrows under salvation go up and down. The up and down arrows indicate that God rejects them and they reject God. They have no salvation. So they will display the justice of God for eternity to come.

The third category relates to us as the elect. The elect began as self determined just like the unelect. They began as not being God determined. But for the elect God provided salvation through His Son as the sinless Lamb of God. We began without the divine nature. But then by being born again by the Spirit of God, we are now indwelled by the Holy Spirit of God. Do you not know that you're the temple of the Holy Spirit? Thus we have received the divine nature. Salvation is God determined since it's all by grace. But after salvation, the elect are still allowed to function to one degree or another in self determination and not God determination. However, the goal for the elect after salvation is for them to progressively become God determined by becoming partakers of the divine Spirit which is within us in a progressive fashion. Thus the elect are to give glory to God, not only to give testimony to His salvation and the saving grace of God, but to give testimony to the indwelling God Who transforms us through His grace into the image of His Son. So we are, during our time on planet Earth, to grow progressively to being more and more God determined, to progressively more and more partake of the divine nature that is within us, and to testify of the salvation of God and the transforming grace of God. That's our role.

The fourth category is that of the fallen angels. They followed the leadership of Lucifer by choosing self determination. They rejected being God determined. They have no divine nature. Salvation is not provided for the fallen angels, and they display the justice aspect of the glory of God for eternity to come in the lake of fire.

The fifth category is the unfallen angels. They never ceased to be God determined. They never chose to be self determined. Thus, salvation is not needed because they are sinless. My next few comments about this last category are conjectural and not Scriptural. But I make the comments to help us explore how the unfallen angels could possibly fit into revealing the sovereignty glory of God. Note from the chart that all the creatures who were given choice and who did not have the divine nature ended up choosing to be self determined. That's true for all men and that's true for the fallen angels. Jesus as the Son of man was given choice. We know that because He was tempted as we are, yet God cannot be tempted. So Jesus as the Son of man was given choice; however Jesus as the Son of man never chose to be self determined and always remained God determined. However, Jesus as the Son of man had the divine nature because He was also the Son of God.

So in the light of those truths, let's go back and reexamine the unfallen angels. It would appear to represent one of two possibilities. The first possibility is that they were not given choice, but

functioned only in a robotic manner. God could express His sovereignty in that way if He chose. The second possibility, drawing from all of the above, is that they were indwelt or had access in some way to the divine nature that functioned like Jesus in that they were given choice, but God never permitted them to choose to be self determined. But in either case, they expressed the sovereignty aspect of the glory of God. That's true because either God in His sovereignty could elect to never give them choice or God in His sovereignty could elect to give them choice but never allow them through His restraining grace to exercise the wrong choice. But either way God would express His sovereignty glory through the unfallen angels.

So let me conclude this talk by reaffirming the key point from this whole chart as it relates to the elect who are still on Earth after salvation before physical death. We are the only creatures who are positioned by God to give testimonial glory to God for His saving grace and His transforming grace. So the point is this. Of all of God's creatures, if we don't do it, nobody will. Nobody else will because nobody else can. This is a calling that we should take seriously. This is our kingdom perspective about our kingdom afterlife meaning post salvation and prior to physical death. We are to become that for which man was originally created—namely to be the image bearer of God to display God to the rest of creation. In particular we are to give testimonial glory to God for the greatness of the glory of His saving grace and the greatness of the glory of His transforming grace; because that's the thing into which angels long to look; because when angels look at angels they can't see it because it's not there whether fallen or unfallen. But the thing into which angels long to look, and can't see except they look at us, is the saving grace of God poured out to children of wrath and the transforming grace of God to take that child of wrath and transform him into an image of the Son of God. And that's something that only we have the calling to do to the rest of creation.

So why do I not get depressed? I favor capitalism; but what if capitalism fails? Oh I'm still in my mission of declaring the grace of God for the ages to come. Well what if I believe in democracy and democracy ceases to exist? Oh my calling hasn't changed. I'm still to bear witness of the greatness of the glory of God. Oh what if my political party loses? What if my wealth disappears? What if no one comes to this class? What if those who come don't listen? Oh my mission hasn't changed. I'm to bear witness of the greatness of the glory of the saving and transforming grace of God. What if my beloved precedes me in death? My mission hasn't changed. I know that she's in Heaven seeing face to face and not through a glass dimly bearing witness of the saving and transforming greatness of the glory of the grace of God. What am I to do after she departs? Oh I'll miss her, but my primary mission hasn't changed because I can see what is not seen and I can see her singing holy, holy, holy in the presence of God, and my mission remains to bear witness and bring glory to God by testifying of the greatness of the glory of the saving and transforming grace of God because if I don't do it, no other category of creature can.

So my time is up and I thank you for yours.