

Kingdom Progression – Part 11

Welcome to Kingdom Progression, Part 11, April 30, 2008. In this series we began with an introduction. We then looked at Adam pre-fall and post-fall. We then looked at ourselves, post-salvation as babes in Christ; then us post-salvation in the double minded state which lands in oh wretched man that I am. We then went to the end of the various stages of Christian progression and looked at eternal perfection; then backed up to look at the stage of unattainable perfection that we are to pursue while as Christians remaining on Earth. Then we began to look at the critical stage in the Christian walk, that is, stage five out of the seven stages. But we looked at it initially as three components: first, Kingdom Progression which was an overview of the whole Christian walk on planet Earth; the second, flesh versus spirit, where we looked at the flesh with self on the throne compared to the spirit where the source, basis of all things is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We then looked at how flesh versus spirit accesses two systems. The flesh accesses the system of law and the spirit accesses the system of grace. We pulled all those three components together then into the critical component, Kingdom Life. Last week we then looked at how, when we function in Kingdom Life, we're bringing maximal glory to God; because we're not only fulfilling God's plan, we're doing it His way. Today we'll move on to the next to last session in this series, called Kingdom Laws.

Next poster. In the book of Romans, within a space of five verses, Paul refers to four separate laws. This set of verses includes the last three verses of Romans 7 and the first two verses of Romans 8. This portion of Scripture covers the transition of Paul from a description of defeat in the Christian life to victory in the Christian life. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write it this way. There are two overwhelming transitions in our Kingdom Progression. The first is obvious—that is the transition from spirit death to spirit life at the moment of being born again. From that moment on we are alive spiritually. That is our position; all true believers in Jesus Christ and Him crucified have that position and have made that first transition from death to life. The second is that which is often lacking. The second is the passage, the transition, if you will, from functioning in death although being spiritually alive. And functioning in death is when the Christian functions in the flesh with self on the throne trying to accomplish the purposes of God. The second transition, the functional one, is what is described in these five key verses that mention four laws in the spirit realm. This is the transition that not all Christians access.

Paul writes in Romans 7:25 – On the one hand, I myself with my mind am serving the law of God. Now broadly viewed the law of God could be considered the will of God. We can use the moral law of God as an example of the will of God, the moral law, of course, most simply revealed in the Ten Commandments. This law of God is to be followed; Paul knows that it is to be followed. He knows that he is not to lust, not to steal, not to covet, etc. So the law of God is the first law that I'm mentioning in this session.

Romans 7:23 introduces us to two more laws. The verse states – But I see a different law in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. The law of his mind is his true desire to obey the law of God. There is a law of God. He knows the law of God. He desires to obey the law of God. He tries using his willpower to obey the law of God. He becomes despondent when he does not

obey the law of God. Thus, he is not a hypocrite, although he is in the state of oh wretched man that I am.

The problem that Paul has run into is there's another law and that law is called the law of sin. This law is what functions when we try to use self to accomplish the purposes of God. Then sin follows. This is because we're using self on the throne in order not to sin and in order to obey the law of God. The law of sin (referred to in Romans 7:23) is the abbreviated form of the law of sin and death later mentioned in Romans 8:2. So the law, meaning the spiritual principle, is the law of sin. The result of functioning according to the principle of the law of sin is always death. For a Christian, this means functional death, not loss of your salvation. We are spiritually alive, born again; but we are choosing not to function out of that life. Thus, we produce functional death. This means such things as dead works, dead testimony, and dead abundant life, and taken collectively, dead churches. Thus, the full name of the law of sin is the law of sin and death. Paul knows the law of God, has the desire to obey the law of God, applies his willpower to obey the law of God; but the things that he wants to do he doesn't do. And the things he doesn't want to do, he does. This is to be born again, alive to God, destined for Heaven, but functioning in wretchedness and failure in the Christian life. But thank God, there's one more law. Romans 8:2 – for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. The word life in this sentence does not mean physical life, although the sentence is written in Scripture for those who are physically alive on planet Earth while seeking to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

Next poster. On this poster I'm going to remind us of various usages of the meanings of the words death and life; because if we don't hold these various usages in a clearly separate way, confusion will result. Death and life have three usages flowing out of two primary frames of reference. We'll look at death first. The first frame of reference is obvious to us all and that is the physical frame of reference of death. James 2:26 explains this for us – the body without the spirit is dead, so physical death occurs when the spirit departs the body. So long as the spirit is in the body, the body is not dead. Secondly, in the spirit realm, the word death is used also with two different connotations, the first meaning the spirit is truly dead to God. This refers to the unsaved. This was the state of Adam post-fall, the state of ourselves pre-salvation, and the state of those who remain presently unsaved. They are spiritually dead. The second usage of the word death, however, relates to the saved who do have spirit life. They are born again and they are regenerated but they are not functioning in that life. It is to be spiritually alive but functioning in spiritual death. This is what is accessed when we live a Christian life based on self, trying to use the power of self, and function, therefore, according to the law of sin and death producing dead works, dead testimony, and dead abundant life.

Secondly, as we look at life, there are two frames of reference, the first being physical life and we've already answered that from Scripture. Physical life means that the spirit is still indwelling the body. The second is the realm of the spirit. This is to be spiritually alive. But to be spiritually alive, still leaves two choices: one being life and the other being death in regard to our functioning. So to be spiritually alive (that is to say saved) we are alive to God but functioning also in that life. The second option (under life) is to be saved, alive to God, but functioning in death, based on self, according to the law of sin and death, which is the application of the flesh producing dead works, dead testimony, and dead abundant life. Simply stated, this is the

Christian living life in the flesh. Now note that in my numerical system, II-B under death is the same as II-B under life and the word two there referring to the number, not the preposition. This is because the word life and the word death are both applicable to this one state. This flows out of the fact that this is the state of being spiritually alive, yet functioning in death. So the word life and the word death each apply to this state. Thus, this state has to be listed under death and listed under life.

Now in Romans 8:2, the law of the Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit since the word Spirit is capitalized. The law of the Spirit has set me free from the law of sin and death. But it's not just the law of the Spirit; it is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The word life in Romans 8:2 has two separate components that are yoked together. If you're going to function according to the law of the Spirit, you are spiritually alive (that is to say born again), but you're also living life out of being spiritually alive (that is to say in the spirit, not the flesh). The word life refers to functioning out of that spirit life with Jesus as the source and the basis of all things and the cross as the means of all things, and the Holy Spirit as the power of all things. Thus, life in the law of the Spirit of life has two meanings. It has a positional meaning, born again; we are Christians. And it has a functional meaning, meaning function according to the plan conceived by God for Christians to function in, meaning life in Christ Jesus. It means that we are alive and functioning in that life. This fullness of life is what is referred to in Acts 17:28. Speaking of Jesus, it says – for in Him we live and move and have our being. Well, as a Christian we are in Him and have our being in Him because our identity forevermore is a born again child of God. But we may choose not to live in that position. We may live life in the flesh apart from Christ, although not losing our position of being a child of God any more than the prodigal lost his position as a son of his natural father by choosing to live life apart from the natural father. Moving, of course, refers to actions. So we have our being in Christ, but we may choose not to live in Christ; and therefore, we will not move in Christ. So when you live and move and have your being, you have your position in Him and you are functioning out of that position in Him.

Likewise the phrase "in Christ Jesus" in Romans 8:2 carries both meanings. It first means in Christ Jesus positionally as a child of God referring to salvation. It also refers to in Christ Jesus functionally. Now Scripture gives us over and over an abbreviated form of this—namely, in Christ Jesus means abiding in Him. We are in Christ Jesus positionally if we are saved. However, we may or may not at any moment be in Christ Jesus functionally depending on whether we are abiding in Him or not abiding in Him at that moment. And recall I gave a functional definition of what it means to be abiding in Jesus. It means to constantly dwell in full faith mindfulness of Who Jesus is, what Jesus is, what Jesus has done, what Jesus is doing, what Jesus will do, all according to the word of God. It can't be a Jesus of your fertile imagination. It can't be a Jesus apart from the cross because in the Word of God, that Jesus went to the cross. And that's where we access every spiritual blessing. So abiding in Him means to do all those things. Now these key elements about Jesus are written in congealed form in different places. But they can be summarized by the phrase, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." I Corinthians 2:2 (Paul writes) – For I determine to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I Corinthians 1:23 – But we preach Christ crucified. Galatians 6:14 – But may it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 1:3 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Now although some places such as here speaks of only

in Christ and not Jesus Christ and Him crucified, apart from the cross of Christ, we would have no spiritual blessing; because apart from the cross of Christ, there could be no reconciliation of any man to God. Apart from the cross of Christ, we would all live eternity in the lake of fire. So when it says in Christ and yokes it with every spiritual blessing, it has to include Jesus Christ and Him crucified as being understood, not as separate from. We are to live in the light of the fact that we have every spiritual blessing in Christ, but also in the light that it was purchased for us at the cross. Thus, Jesus is the source, but the cross is the means of any spiritual blessing and that includes the Holy Spirit. No Jesus, no cross, no cross, no Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was purchased for us by Jesus Christ on His cross. Thus we can distinguish Jesus from His cross, but the Christian is never for a moment to separate Jesus from His cross. Thus Paul knew and taught and boasted only of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Now let's take these understandings and revisit the laws of God. Recall that God is sovereign. Truth is defined as how God views reality, not how man views reality. God views these as laws. These are principles. This is simply how things work. So God is telling us how things work in the life of the Christian. The law of God in Romans 7:25 is the will of God, which can be expressed as an example using the moral law. This is God's acceptable behavior. This includes His will in a global sense; but His will, remember, includes His purposes, by His plan, while displaying His character. So we can try to fulfill His purposes and totally ignore His plan and His plan is to sum up all things in Jesus Christ. So no matter what we're trying to do to fulfill the will of God, if we're not summing up all things in Jesus Christ in our methodology, then it is not according to the will of God.

The law of my mind in Romans 7:23 is my desire to fulfill the will of God. I truly want to do it. I apply my willpower to do it. But knowing the law of God and desiring to obey the law of God still leaves open the question of how to obey the law of God. Recall that God always relates to man by giving him one choice with two options. Man's only act of worship is the same thing no matter what we face in life at any moment. It is to choose the option that God desires us to, out of the two options presented. And every choice that we face is to choose to either be God determined or self determined. For us as Christians, since God has spoken to us in these latter days in His Son, the choice is phrased as Jesus determined or self determined. Each of these two options is a law in the spirit realm according to God.

The first option is the law of sin in Romans 7:23. That same law is referred to more completely as the law of sin and death in Romans 8:2. This is because something dies when sin occurs. For us as Christians, this means functional death—dead works, dead testimony, and death to the abundant life. This refers to trying to fulfill your desire to obey the law of God using only the willpower of man. This is to try to rely on self to deny self. It's to use the sin nature of self on the throne to try to deny the sin nature; and thus, to fulfill the law of God.

The last law of these four laws is the other option. It's the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This is God's prescribed order, God's prescribed way, and God's plan for the Christian life. This is to abide in Jesus. Another way of saying it is, this is to walk by faith, moment by moment in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is to walk by faith, totally, completely, absolutely, and without exception in Jesus Christ and Him crucified every moment of your life. Doing this looses the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why it's called the law of the Spirit; because the Holy

Spirit will function only according to this law. John 15:26 (Jesus says) – He (the Holy Spirit) will bear witness of Me (Jesus Christ). In John 16:14 (Jesus says) – He (the Holy Spirit) shall glorify Me (Jesus Christ). So the Holy Spirit came to bear witness of Jesus. The Holy Spirit came to bring glory to Jesus. It's only in those missions that He is our helper as He's called in John 14:26. The Holy Spirit does not help us when we are functioning, by choice, contrary to Christ, while operating by the power of self, and faith in self, which brings glory to self, albeit we do it in the name of God. Jesus told us all this in a simple phraseology in John 15:5 – Apart from Me you can do nothing. Well, why can you do nothing? Because man, on his own devices, can't do anything to please a Holy God; you gotta have a helper. But the helper, the Holy Spirit, did not come to help you display the power of self, did not come to help you bring glory to self, did not come to help you bear witness of self.

Next poster. This is the key poster, remember, in this whole series on Kingdom Progression, so I'll put it up last today. As Christians, we are saved. Our spirit is alive to God; it is the new creation; it is the new man; it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God; and all that is blood-bought. None of that occurs apart from the cross of Christ. That's why it's always Jesus Christ and Him crucified. God has His will, including, for instance, His moral law. I have knowledge of these moral laws. These represent the law of God. I desire to fulfill the law of God. This is in my mind to do so. This is the law of my mind: my desire, and using my willpower to fulfill the law of God. I am trying to do it because I want to do it because I want to bring glory to God. So did Paul in Romans chapter 7. As always, God gives me a choice. He gives me choice that it may be of love and not mechanical robotic slavery. My will is to use my will as my chooser to choose to be Jesus determined; and thus, do it His way. That's your only act of worship, is to be Jesus determined, not self determined, not only in desire of a purpose, but in the methodology by which you seek to achieve the purpose. God gave me two options, one choice, so as to keep it simple. Two options are required that it be of love. More than two options would add complexity and make me, a fallible human being, more vulnerable to making the wrong choice. That's why the life of the Christian is given only two options: flesh and spirit. Self determination puts self on the throne. Self on the throne is the sin nature and it's the basis of the flesh. Choosing this option places me under a system of law—not meaning law as a principle, but a system of law, meaning the works performed by me, using the power of self to try to bring about the fulfillment of the will of God.

All of this functions according to a law, a spiritual principle established by God. This law is the law of sin and death. It is sin to rely on the sin nature to try to bring glory to God. It's the law of sin because it's using the sin nature of self on the throne to try to perform the law of God. And according to the law of sin and death, this will obligatorily result in defeat, failure, and death; dead works, dead testimony, dead abundant life, and dead churches. Why? Because it steals the glory of God by bringing glory to self; because look at all that I am doing to the glory of God, which is bringing glory to yourself, not glory to God. This provides no victory over sin because it is relying on sin to provide victory over sin. If the sin nature could fulfill bringing glory to God, we wouldn't have needed a Savior. We want to obey the law of God. In our minds we try; but we fail to obey the law of God because we've tried to do so by the law of sin and death.

That leaves us in Romans 7:24 just as Paul was – Oh wretched man that I am. The things that I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I do. Then he continues – Who will deliver

me from this body of sin? Because this body of sin is the left side of the diagram; it is the flesh, with self on the throne as the basis, and the root of it being self determination. It accesses a system of law, which means the works to be performed to fulfill the purposes of God, but performed by self using the power of self, and God will never honor that. His preferred system is the system of grace which is accessed by the spirit, not the flesh. And in the spirit, the source of all things is Jesus; the basis of all things is Jesus; the object of my constant gaze is Jesus, the author and completer and finisher of my faith, which accesses the Holy Spirit's power, because looking upon Jesus as the source, and the means by which we have every spiritual blessing is the cross of Jesus Christ. This is when Paul moved from Romans 7 into Romans 8 because he could now see these two contrasting, competing systems; one being summing up everything in Jesus Christ, and the other summing up all things in self, while using the pretense of bringing glory to God.

So this session ends here in the law of sin and death. But thankfully, the story of our Kingdom Progression does not land here. We have one final session, which I've entitled Deliverance, as we explore the answer to Paul's question, "Who will deliver me from this body of sin?" And we'll pick it up there next time. But for today, my time is up and I thank you for yours.