

## Kingdom Progression – Part 6

Lest we forget, overall, we've taken a journey to the cross of Christ passing through the holiness of God, the sin of man and the judgment of God. We then came through the cross of Christ into the Kingdom of God where we explored various subtopics. So see if you can figure out the common theme of those subtopics. Salvation through Jesus Christ, walking by faith in Jesus Christ, abiding in Jesus Christ, your cross which is that which comes your way as you abide in Jesus Christ taking up Jesus Christ and Him crucified, grace as revealed and expressed through Jesus Christ, summing up in Jesus Christ, the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, freedom in Christ Jesus, and unity in Christ Jesus. So in the Kingdom of God, I think all of you can see the common theme that it is all summed up in Jesus.

We then began a series called Kingdom Progression. This is a series based on seven stages that I'm giving in twelve sessions. So don't confuse the term stages with sessions. We looked at the first four stages, namely Adam pre-fall, Adam post-fall (which equals us pre-salvation), then us in our initial post-salvation experience in which we're babes in Christ, and then us as we progressively mature beyond babes in Christ; but come into the double-minded state of Romans 7 whereby we cry out who will save me from this oh body of sin, oh wretched man that I am?

Then we went, in our last session, to the other end. We had done four stages; we went to stage seven, the last one and looked at us in the eternal state—the state of eternal perfection. Then we came back to number six stage, the state of unattainable perfection here on Earth. The next seven sessions, including today, will be to explore the final stage which is stage five. Last week when we looked at the eternal state, we saw that everything about us in the eternal state is blood bought—hence the color red. Everything is flowing from the spirit; that is to say there is no sin nature. It is gone forever. We are perfected. There's nothing in us that's hostile to God. Nothing in us in the eternal state that is rebellious against God; there is no self determination because we're looking at the face of God saying holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. And there's nothing in us then that would desire to resist the will of God.

The next poster is just to remind us of coming back one stage to the unattainable perfection that we aim for as Christians here on Earth. And this is simply two things drawn side-by-side. On the right is the spirit, the immaterial man which has been created in righteousness and true holiness in the image of God. On the left is the sin nature; that is to say self on the throne. Self on the throne is the flesh in Biblical terms. It is the sin nature. So this is the eternal state of the perfected spirit plus the sin nature which is still indwelling us here on planet Earth. But you notice there's no cross talk, no communion, no channel between the two. This would be total self control as a fruit of the Spirit with the sin nature never manifesting itself for a single moment in our thought life here on planet Earth. Well, of course, we never reach that state of eternal perfection. The man who says he has no sin deceives himself. So this is the mark, however, that we're to press toward even as we acknowledge we will never achieve perfection in the Christian life here on planet Earth. The point being that if we don't press toward it; we're going to settle in for lukewarmness and mediocrity and let self on the throne declare how much of ourselves we should give and with which God must be satisfied. So we will remain in self worship if we don't do what Paul did, forget what is behind, self on the throne. Press forward toward the mark which

is unattainable perfection; because if we aim for unattainable perfection, we will go further than we would ever have gone in Christian maturity had we not aimed for unattainable perfection.

Next poster. So we're going to begin today to address the last stage of the stage of seven. But I'll remind you we're going to take seven sessions to go through the last stage. So we're going after the subject of the missing link in our Christian walks, the fifth stage in gradations. This fifth stage is the one that I call the missing link. I believe that's true in the lives of most Christians; I believe it's been true in my own life. Recall the testimonial aspect of this series. Ten years ago when I asked the Lord, in prayer, why is it that I do not experience the abundant life that You came to give? This entire teaching series has flowed out of that question. I don't believe that I've added to the Bible; but I believe that certain illumination has been given to me to articulate it in certain ways that seems uncommon. And I'm sure that would be true if you were up here and I were seated out there. You would be giving it in a way which would seem unique and uncommon although it is the same Biblical truth. The poster that fully depicts the final stage is too complicated to thrust in front of you all at once. However, the basic components can be given in three sessions. I'm going to show individual aspects of the three basic components beginning today and for the next two sessions as we build up to seeing the fifth stage in its entirety and how it plays out in the Christian walk. Thus at that time when we view the final stage in its entirety, it will not seem complicated nor overwhelming.

This poster is meant to give a simple-minded overview of the entirety of our Christian walk while here on Earth. This is so that we don't lose sight of the big picture even as we address certain specifics along the way. Unsaved man, remember, is operating entirely in the flesh. This is to operate in self determination with self on the throne which is the sin nature. Man, alone, cannot escape from this prison. Man doesn't even know that he is in prison. God tells us that He didn't put it in man to determine his own ways. But man, beginning with Adam, looked at the situation and said, oh yes I can. I can determine what is in my ultimate best interest better than I can turn to God and let God declare what is in my ultimate best interest. That is the root of self on the throne. That's what Adam was (post-fall) and that what all of us were (pre-salvation). But thank God our God did not leave us alone. He was not offended. I John 4:8 tells us God is love. Well what is love? A passion for oneness; we could not earn God's love. He simply did with us what He did with the children of Israel. In Deuteronomy 7:7 it tells us – He set His love upon them. They did not reach a threshold of acceptable behavior. He set His love upon them. God sets His love upon the unlovely, including us when we were unsaved men here. There was none who sought God. There was not one who did good. But God! That's why the love of God is always expressed as unmerited favor. The love of God is always expressed as grace because there's no other way by which a Holy God can interact with unholy men.

All of that is captured in my favorite Scripture, Ephesians 2:1-10 where the first three verses basically remind us that we were dead in sin. And borrowing from other Scriptures to fit into that context, we were conceived in sin, brought forth in sin, dead in sin, slaves to sin, servants of Satan. But God! That's why verse 4 of Ephesians 2 is my favorite verse. That little phrase, but God! In other words, there was nothing good in us. There was nothing that merited the attention of God. Who is man that You're mindful of him? His ways are so much higher than our ways. He is holy; He is other than and we are not. Men did continually evil and only evil in his heart; because everything in man was functioning in self determination, stating that he was his own

god. We were functioning like Cain that I will decide if there is a God and if there is a God, I'll decide with what sacrifice He should be appeased. I'll declare if He is. I'll declare what He is. And I'll declare what He must be satisfied with; which is nothing more than self worship. And that is all men in the unsaved condition no matter how they portray it and call it good. There is nothing good in the heart of unsaved man. Man is more in attention in appearing to look good and declaring even what good is and what acceptable level of goodness God must be pleased with all of which are simply expressions of self worship.

But God! God reached down to us in our deadness in sin. Why? Because He is love and love is a passion for oneness. Now that reaching down of the God Who is love that's portrayed by the black arrow coming down to us when we're unsaved and there's nothing good in us. Then man responds. Not because of the wisdom of unsaved man, not because of unsaved man reaching to God; but because God Who is love draws him to Himself. As Jesus told us in John 6:44 – No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him. Man being drawn by God is depicted by this black arrow going up to respond to the drawing of God coming down to man. Thus, unsaved man undergoes a radical, overwhelming, total and complete, divine transformation. There is no part of the transformation which is about to occur in unsaved man for which man can take credit. The spirit of unsaved man is dead. That's why I drew it as small and black and dark; dark meaning dead and dark meaning devoid of truth. But God reached down to unsaved man in his despicable, unholy condition and drew that man to Himself, and then the divine exchange. The spirit of man being dead now is given the gift of spirit life. Man begins to respond to the love of God as God reached down. Can you get any deader than what I've drawn as that black box right there? It is small; it is irrelevant; because man in the unsaved condition was driven entirely by self determination. The God, Who in the beginning created the Heavens and the Earth, because of His mercy, allowed the audacity of a created being to function in self determination. And say I can decide what is in my best long term interest better than You, my creator can decide. Can you imagine that? What other than unconditional love would provoke that God to reach down to a man who rebelled to that degree?

But God! Now imparts the gift of faith in Jesus Christ to unsaved man. That's given by the gift of spirit life. How? By grace through faith; and you see that the spirit is now drawn as an entirely different thing. Small and dark? No. Small and dark means dead and devoid of God. This one is drawn as large; it's drawn as light; it is drawn as red because it is blood bought. This is the new man. This is the new creation. This is the new self. This is indwelled by the Holy Spirit. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in you. Do you not know that you're the temple of God? Do you not know that the Holy Spirit dwells within you? If that's not a divine transformation, I don't know what is. Now all of these blessings were purchased by Jesus Christ on His cross. That's why you can never speak in the past of Jesus Christ and Him crucified; because every spiritual blessing that has been granted to me and is in me as a child of God is purchased by Jesus Christ and His cross. That's why I show them in red as representative of the fact that they are all blood bought changes. By the impartation of spirit life, man now begins to respond to God, and in particular to respond to the love of God. So man in his deadness is drawn toward God; but then when spirit life is given and the blood bought changes begin to be implemented, we come over to this line.

Man now begins to see the love of God as revealed by the cross of Christ. Why the cross? I John 3:16 – We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us. Except you get a revelation of the holiness of God, which includes the Son of God, to see what it took, the love that it took for that holy God, not to excuse the audacity of man, but to come down and pay the price for the audacity of man; because He said I would rather pay the price for your sins for you by going through Hell for you than I would to spend eternity without you. I love you that much. So the cross is itself of what God did in spite of who we were and what we had done is the revelation of the love of God. So the person who says if God will do this, then I will know He loves me is simply ignoring the revelation that this holy God has given to man that the Son of God Himself displayed that love in a way that no other example can ever display. As we begin to see the love of God for us as revealed through the cross of Christ, when we respond to that love, we begin to love God. I John 4:19 – we love because He first loved us. See, man cannot conjure up love. The only true love that can come into the heart of man is provoked by seeing the love of God. And that's what's depicted by the red arrow going up from our new creation self up toward the God Who is love.

Now I'm going to remind you of a very basic point that we covered when I went through the abiding love of God. Recall that love is a passion for oneness. When I love God, I have a passion to be one with God. God loves me. He has a passion to be one with me. He would not even let my sin stand in the way of my becoming one with Him. He loved me that much. Now look at my love for someone else. What does it mean when I say I love another person? In a spiritual sense, here's what it means. It's not something vague like the greater good. It's not like vague like wanting the best for them. If you can't articulate what the best is, you're just substituting one vague statement for another. But when you understand love as a passion for oneness, and you say you love someone else, that means you have a passion for the greater good. And what's that? That that person becomes one with God through Jesus Christ. So when you love someone else, what you're saying is I have a passion that that person become one with their creator God through Jesus Christ. When you get that revelation, then you come to the following simple revelation. When I say that I love God, what I'm simultaneously saying is I love myself. My love of God and my love of self are the same love. I love myself in a spiritual sense when I have a passion that I become one with God. Well what does it mean when I say I love God? I have a passion that I become one with God. What does it mean when I say that I love myself? I have a passion that I become one with God.

So the love of God and the love of this self is the same love. These two loves are actually one love. My love of God is love of my new creation self in a spiritual sense. That's why that one love is shown by a two-headed arrow. The arrowhead at the top end is displaying my love for God. The arrowhead at the bottom is displaying my love for myself; because I have a passion that myself be one with God. So it's actually the same love; but can be displayed graphically with an arrowhead at each end of the arrow. Thus, this one love, which is actually two loves in one, is depicted by one arrow with two heads—one head pointing toward God. I love God. And one arrow pointing toward myself—I love myself. Well how can I not love that which is filled with the Holy Spirit of God? How can I not love that which has been created in righteousness and true holiness in the image of God? Can I love God and not love this when this has been created in the image of God? A simple concept but worth being reminded of.

The spirit of saved man is depicted as red because it is blood bought. It's shown as open because it is alive and full of truth. It is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Notice that the flesh of man remains present. It's present in saved man. It's not only present, it is also unchanged. That's the folly of buying self-help books because this thing is to be repudiated and this thing is to be loved. This thing is perfect. This thing cannot be improved. So how are you going to improve self? The sin nature which is the sin factory with self on the throne is present and unchanged and rotten to the core because it remains in self worship. The sin nature is self on the throne, functioning in self determination. That does not disappear in saved man. It is to be controlled in saved man. That is why the fruit of the Spirit is self control. That's why Paul would write in Romans 7:18 – for I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh.

Now notice the black box up to the right on the poster. That represents other people who are unsaved. And thus, the box representing others is still drawn in black, not red. But notice the red arrow coming up from my new creation self up toward others. That depicts my love of others. I now have a passion not only that I am one with God; I have a passion that others become one with their creator God through Jesus Christ. That's the root of all evangelistic drive. I am an earthen vessel left here after salvation by God to have this treasure within me (the Gospel of Jesus Christ) to reveal to others. That's my sole purpose for remaining here on planet Earth. If that were not true, then we could just die and go on to Heaven immediately after salvation; but we have work to do because God wants us to do it.

I love God which is to love myself. Now I love others as I love myself. This is necessary for the following reason. If I do not have a passion for myself to become one with God, I will have no passion for others to become one with God. Thus my love for others can never exceed my love of self. This self, not this self. This self is loved, this self is denied. That's why we're told in Matthew 19:19 the following – we're told to love your neighbor as yourself. We're not told to love your neighbor greater than yourself; because your love for your neighbor can never be greater than your love of yourself. If you have no passion for yourself to be one with God through Jesus Christ, how will you ever have a passion for someone else to be one with God in Jesus Christ? So it's a subtlety, but it's why the Word of God tells us to love your neighbor as yourself; not love your neighbor instead of yourself, not love your neighbor greater than yourself, but your love of your neighbor is limited by your love of self; and your love of self is a passion to be one with your creator God through Jesus Christ.

And notice that such love can only flow from our spirit. Love is a fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit indwells our spirit. Love is not a fruit of the Spirit in our flesh. Love is good. Why? Because God is love and God is good. Ergo, love is good. Now listen carefully. Since nothing good dwells in my flesh, and since love is good, love does not dwell in my flesh. The flesh has self on the throne and can never love. Self on the throne can never have a passion to be one with God; because that would mean self would have to reject self. Self loves functioning in self determination and that means rebellion against God. That's why the flesh is hostile to God. The flesh cannot make peace with God. The flesh cannot improve in godliness. The flesh cannot love. The flesh cannot manifest the fruit of the Spirit, and so on. Notice that fruit also reaches up toward others. Love is the foundational ultimate fruit because I Corinthians 13 tells us that everything apart from love is nothing. Then love of God, love of self, and love of others is expressed progressively as the other fruits of the Spirit—namely joy, peace, goodness, kindness,

gentleness, patience, faithfulness, and self control as listed in Galatians 5: 22-23. Now notice I've depicted this as representing unattainable perfection on Earth. There's no communion here the way I've drawn it between flesh and spirit. But of course, that's not the reality that we function in, in our Christian walk. When we're expressing the fruit of the Spirit toward others, others will notice. Then they'll be provoked to ask would you explain to me how you do that? How is it you got persecuted and you don't respond with anger? How is it people do you wrong and forgiveness doesn't even seem to be an issue with you? What I see you doing is unnatural. Then we can tell them of the God Who is love, how that God sets His love upon us unconditionally, how God loves me, how God has made me a new creation, and assured my eternity future with Him, and how God loves them the same way and I am here in contact with them for one purpose only. And that's to display the love of God to them. Then I become part of the drawing of others toward God. So over here when I showed God drawing man to Himself, He does that through His earthen vessels. He can do it independently; but He loves to work through His earthen vessels or He wouldn't have left me here to do it.

So He can use me to draw others toward God. Their box is still black because they're still unsaved even as they're beginning to be drawn toward God, they are still unsaved. Now notice I didn't draw this line all the way to God. It's not drawn to God in order to depict that I never save anyone. Only God can save because they're all blood bought changes and I didn't die on the cross for anybody. That's why I prefer to use the expression that God may use me to draw someone toward Him, but not to Him; because I can never lead someone to God. Only the new birth can do that and only God can cause the new birth.

So on this poster I've greatly simplified things by drawing saved man as having two totally separate components—namely flesh and spirit. The spirit is drawn in red because all these changes are blood bought. That's the new creation. Ephesians 4:24 (This is what you are, so get used to it) – Put on the new creation which has been created in righteousness and true holiness in the image of God. The diagram is simple because in this session I'm giving the overview of the whole Christian walk so we don't lose sight of it. But I've drawn no openings or pathways connecting the two boxes of flesh and spirit. It's simple also because I've omitted the mind and the will of man in order to display the simplicity of the overview. So the pathways between flesh and spirit and the integration of the will and the mind of man were not critical for today's session. But except we understand the overview of the Christian walk, then the specifics of the steps involved in the Christian walk will be meaningless to us. So the lesson today was to review for us the overview from unsaved man, through God reaching down, drawing man, bringing about the new creation, the new creation self which has been perfected, that responds to seeing the love of God, by loving God which is to love self, which is to then love others as I love myself with the fruit of the Spirit in full bloom, to draw others toward God but not to God because I can't bring someone to God because you have to be reborn to do that and I can't rebirth anybody.

What we discussed today, remember, is one of three critical components in the last stage which I call kingdom life. The next time we come together, a week from today, I'm going to take the second critical component of the kingdom life stage as we keep pressing toward the mark over today in the subsequent sessions to understand in totality the fifth critical stage, the missing link, in the Christian walk for myself and I think many others. So my time is up and I hope you join me next week. Thank you.