

Kingdom Progression – Part 9

Welcome to Kingdom Progression, Part 9, April 16, 2008. We're in the series on Kingdom Progression and when I use words such as part 9, don't confuse that with how I use the words seven stages; because in this 12-part series on Kingdom Progression, there are seven key stages to understand the flow, if you will, of the Christian life. For us as Christians, the key stage is stage five. We explored the following stages: Stage one was Adam pre-fall. Stage two was Adam post-fall which equaled us pre-salvation. Stage three was us post-salvation, but as babes in Christ. Stage four was us post-salvation in the double-minded state where we cried out oh wretched man that I am. Having done those four stages that preceded stage five, we then went to the end and worked backwards. We went to stage seven which was us in the eternal state. We then came back to stage six which is us as Christians in pursuit of unattainable perfection.

Then we began to enter stage five, the key stage. But we did so in increments. There are three key components that make up stage five. We began with the poster that I call us in the stage of Kingdom Progression. This gave an overview of our progression while here on Earth as Christians. It began with us spiritually dead and functioning entirely in the flesh in the unsaved condition. But God began to draw us. Then He saved us. We were born again. Our dead spirit passed to a spirit which is alive to God. We received a revelation of the love of God. We began to love God because we received the revelation of His love for us. So we love because He first loved us. Then we received the revelation that when we love God in our new creation self, it's the same thing as loving ourselves; because when we love God, we have a passion to be one with God. When we love ourselves, we have a passion for ourselves to become one with God. So in a new creation sense, post salvation (when we love God), it is the same thing as loving ourselves, hence the two-headed arrow here. Then when we receive that revelation, we turn and begin to love what God loves—namely others. The love of God being shed abroad in our heart is manifest as the fruit of the Spirit which is nonverbal communication to others which begins to draw them toward God. We never save anyone, but we're part, in our role as earthen vessels, to play the role of the aroma of God to others. All of those changes are depicted in red because they are blood bought. That includes our spirit life, our revelation of the love of God, our love of God, our true love of our true self, our love for others as we love ourselves, and the fruit of the Spirit; all possible only because of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. On this first component we gave an overview so we depicted flesh and spirit in our new creation selves, but did not show any functional communication that would connect will, mind, flesh and spirit.

Then we went on to the second key component. On this component I depicted the battle of flesh versus spirit; because the flesh, recall, is hostile toward God and cannot obey the things of God. This poster does not show the overview which we just reviewed on the previous poster. But it does show the will, the mind, and the functional connections between flesh and spirit. We have spirit-given desires implanted in us in our new creation selves by God. We desire to please God. We desire to change into Christlikeness. We desire to reveal Jesus Christ to others. The question is, how is that accomplished? As babes in Christ, recall, we thought that this change into Christlikeness would occur automatically. In the stage of double-mindedness, we noted that change was not occurring. Then we resolved to make change occur. The problem was that we followed our well-worn pathway into the flesh in order to accomplish this. But self on the throne, which is the root of the flesh, can never accomplish the desires of God. In this stage the

things that we wanted to do, we didn't do. The things that we did not want to do, we did. That's why Paul cried out at the end of Romans 7, oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin? He had the desires. He had the well intentioned drive to do the things of God; but he followed his previous habits in the unsaved condition of thinking that he could accomplish this by using the power of self to bring it to pass. But now as we progress in our understanding, we receive the revelation that there are two pathways for our will to function in. The habitual pathway of turning into self on the throne did not work. We began then to turn into the spirit. In the spirit realm, Jesus is the object of our gaze and that takes us into an entirely different system. As we looked at Jesus, the desires to obey God began to be followed by obedience; but we didn't fully understand how that was occurring.

Next poster. That took us to the third and last key component of stage five. We learned that there are two systems at work—namely, law and grace. I phrase it up here as law or grace because whenever you introduce law, you nullify grace. You don't lose your salvation, but you lose access to the empowering grace of God by which we're to complete the Christian walk. The system of law is always accessed when we turn into the flesh with self on the throne to accomplish the purposes of God. The system of law is based on works. The measuring stick is our performance of those works. The power to perform those works is derived from self. Peter is an example when however well intentioned, he said I will never deny You; and before the chapter is completed he had denied Christ three times because he was turning into self on the throne to accomplish the purposes of God. And however well intentioned, it was destined to fail. The system of law will always result in defeat, failure, and death. This is the system that we functioned in as babes in Christ because we knew no better. This is the system that we function in, in the double-minded state because we knew no better. We only knew that it did not occur automatically, so we determined to make it occur. This always results in defeat, failure, and death because this is not the prescribed order of our functioning in the Christian walk. This is how we functioned before salvation and up to this point, this is how we continued to function after salvation.

Before salvation, if this system had worked, we would not have needed a Savior and we would not bear the name Christian because there would be no Christ to accomplish our salvation. After salvation, if this system worked, we would not need the Holy Spirit. This system bears witness of self and not of Jesus. This system brings glory to self and not to Jesus. When we turn into the spirit, we access an entirely different system—namely the system of grace. In this system Jesus is the source of all things. Other words could be used such as the basis of all things, the object of our gaze, and so on. He is the basis of all things and is to be the continual object upon which we gaze. When we do this, the Holy Spirit is loosed to do His work. This is because the Holy Spirit was given to us to bear witness of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was given to us to bring glory to Jesus. He begins to work in us as we gaze at Jesus, but not as we gaze upon ourselves and our ability to perform even what we think are God ordained works. The Holy Spirit then (when our source is Jesus) begins to produce fruit in us. The fruit of the Spirit begins with love, then love is manifest as the other eight fruit of the Spirit. In the double-minded stage, we tried to deny self because we didn't know that self could not deny self and self could never deny self. But now as we gaze at Jesus, fruit is produced which includes self control as a fruit of the Spirit; but not as a fruit derived from the power of self to perform the works. Self then gets denied; it does not get denied by us directly. It gets denied via self control as a fruit of the Spirit. Then we receive the

following illumination: In an ultimate sense, to deny self means to deny that we can deny self. Just like when Peter said I will never desert you, he meant that, it was well intentioned, it would have been according to the will of God that he not desert Jesus Christ; but he was trying to deny the self preservation part of himself using the power of self. And, of course, it was destined to fail.

We receive the same revelation in regard to love. We tried in the double-minded state to conjure up love and force ourselves to love our neighbor however detestable we thought him in our minds. But now as we gaze at Jesus, we begin to enter God's prescribed order. We gaze at Jesus and Him crucified. We then know love by this that Jesus delivered Himself up for us onto that cross. We then love because He first loved us. We then love God which is simultaneously to love ourselves. We then love our neighbor as we love ourselves. But all of that occurs by Romans 5:5 – the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit. To fix our gaze upon Jesus is different from fixing your physical gaze upon a birdhouse. Fixing your gaze upon Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, means to constantly dwell in full faith mindfulness of Who Jesus is, what Jesus is, what Jesus has done, what Jesus is doing, and what Jesus will do. In short form, it means to walk moment-by-moment by faith only in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It means to place no faith in anything other than Jesus and Him crucified. Now we begin to understand the system prescribed by God. Our role is to constantly use our wills to turn to focus our attention upon Jesus Christ and not on ourselves. This is to enter the spirit realm where the Holy Spirit dwells. In this system, Jesus is the source and the basis of all things. All things were purchased by Jesus Christ on His cross. If Jesus had not gone to His cross, we would not be here having this conversation. The cross is the means by which Jesus is the source of all things in the spirit realm. Apart from the cross we would all remain dead in our sin apart from God and destined for eternity in the lake of fire.

This is how Paul left Romans 7 and entered Romans 8. Paul would give us hindsight about this by some of his writings. I Corinthians 2:2 – I know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I Corinthians 1:23 – I preach nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Galatians 6:14 (paraphrased) – I boast of nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is what looses the Holy Spirit. This occurs because we have focused our attention, our gaze, and all of our hope upon that which the Holy Spirit came to bear witness of and to give glory to. The Holy Spirit did not come to bear witness of your efforts to turn yourself through your own power into the image of Jesus Christ. That brings glory to self; and why would the Holy Spirit ever bring glory to yourself and help you to accomplish that? The Holy Spirit came to help you when you put your gaze upon Jesus (which is your role) to fix your hope constantly and completely upon the grace brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And by doing this, He bears witness to Jesus and brings glory to Jesus. All glory belongs to God and for us as Christians is mediated through the Son of God, none of which is to bring glory to self. This system of grace brings about victory, deliverance, and life because only the power of God can bring about victory, deliverance, and life. This is because we've accessed in this system of grace the empowering grace of God.

Next poster. We'll build up to the empowering grace by reviewing a few simple concepts that we've reviewed before. This poster addresses the origin of choice. In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. Every thought has to begin with that verse else it will be a misguided

and misunderstood thought, word, or deed. God is. We learned then later God is love. Love is relational. Relational requires choice. If one choice is God, any other choice given to us is un-God or ungodly. This is the system of God. We're given choice because He is love.

Next poster. Then once we understand the origin of choice, we need to understand what that choice is that's given to us. We do get to choose; but that's all that happens. We do not get to not choose because when we not choose, we will default to the flesh where we habitually live. We do not get to choose the choices. For us as Christians, the choices are to walk in the flesh under the power of self with self on the throne or to walk in the spirit where the source is Jesus, the means is the cross, and the power is the Holy Spirit Who came to bear witness of Jesus. We do not get to choose the consequences of the choices. If we choose to walk in the flesh, the outcome will be defeat, failure, and death. If we choose to walk in the system of grace under the power of the Holy Spirit bringing glory to Jesus, the outcome will be victory, deliverance, and life. But we don't get to choose not to choose. We don't get to choose the choices. We don't get to choose the consequences of the choices. And we don't get to choose both simultaneously because the two are opposed to each other. The flesh is hostile to God. How can that which is hostile to God join in harmony with that which is of God? This is the system of God and we always need to remind ourselves (however silly it may seem) that this is His universe. We tend to function in Proverbs 14:12 – There is a way which seems right to a man. But the end of that verse says but its end is death. And that death for us as Christians is death by walking in the flesh and not walking in the spirit.

Next poster. So in overview form, using our flow through the Bible, presented very basically, here are the choices given to us by God. I explained that in a theologic sense ultimately the choice is God or un-God with every choice. For Adam the choice was eat or don't eat. For the Old Testament folks who lived mostly under the law, the choice was obey the law or disobey the law. For a New Testament unbeliever, the choice is accept Jesus or reject Jesus. For a New Testament believer (what is called a saint) the choices are spirit and flesh. This is the system of God prescribed for us as Christians.

Next poster. On this poster I've drawn a simple flow sheet to tie some of these concepts together. We always begin every thought with God. If we do not, it will be a man-determined foundation by which you make your analysis and decisions. We need to constantly remind ourselves to begin every thought with In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. God is love; love requires choice. If we have choice, we have to have some method of making that choice and we attach the word will to that function of making choices. So the will is our chooser. The choice that we make is what we worship. So the will could just as easily have been called our worshipper. The choice is always God or un-God. To choose un-God is to choose to be self determined. Remember this began with Adam and Eve where they self determined that they could self determine what was in their best long term interest. This produces death. It is walking according to a system with self on the throne which is the basis of what we call the flesh and will always access the system of law which will bring about defeat, failure, and death. Now with death we need to remind ourselves that there are three different aspects of death in Scripture. We all understand physical death. Then there's spirit death which is the state of every human being pre-salvation through the new birth in Jesus Christ. But even as Christians there's what I call a functional death. And that's what's talked about here for us as

Christians. The death for us as Christians is when we choose to walk according the flesh and access law and not according to grace where we access the power of the Holy Spirit to bring glory to Jesus. The death is dead works, dead testimony, and death to the abundant life, the relatively joyless Christian existence that is so widespread. To choose God is to choose to be in an ultimate sense God determined. Jeremiah 10:23 tells us that it's not in man to determine his own ways. So we cry out, oh yes it is and God says in His Word, it's not even in man to determine his own ways; I made you and I didn't put it there. So when we acknowledge that we are beginning to choose to be God determined, to reciprocate the love relationship.

Then we access life which for us as Christians is the abundant life, the life that Jesus came to give. That is in the realm only of the spirit and not in the flesh. You will never have the abundant life if you're living your Christian life under the system of law in the flesh with self on the throne even if you're trying to accomplish the purposes of God. But the system of grace that we choose by choosing God is where we draw our power. This system of grace accesses the empowering grace of God. That (and only that) is what leads to the abundant life.

The empowering grace of God on this next poster, I defined simply as the unmerited, omnipotent power of God, operating on our behalf and to His glory. It's on our behalf because it is to bring us into the fullness of relationship with God, further down the pathway of full oneness with God, accessing the abundant life for us, giving maximal accurate testimony of Jesus Christ to planet Earth which works to His glory. But it is done by His power, not by the power of self on the throne. In these latter days, God has spoken to us in His Son. Thus to choose God for us in these latter days is to choose to live according to Jesus Christ with our gaze upon Jesus and our hope fixed completely upon Jesus. Facilitating grace is the empowering presence of God to empower us to choose God, which means to choose Jesus Christ, rather than choosing un-God. We are never to think of ourselves as accomplishing anything on our own. So as a little baby just beginning to walk, the child can't walk, but he can initiate the attempt to walk, but he will fail if left to his own power. Then in the same way when we choose Jesus Christ, we cannot carry that out. But I think in simple representative terms of God holding me as I try to walk. I can't maintain balance; but I can initiate the attempt to walk. I can't complete the task; but I can turn my gaze upon Him. So there's a certain smaller part of that that is our role, but it is that small part which is our role in reciprocating this love relationship with our God.

Under the capital letter "B" I have the restraining grace of God. In our Christian walk, this is the omnipotent power of God operating on our behalf to restrain self, to deny self which is to deny un-God because un-God, self on the throne, is anti-Christ. So if you're going to be facilitated to choose Christ, that which would be anti-Christ has to simultaneously be restrained.

Under capital letter "C" I simply extend the first two over time and call it the upholding grace of God or the persevering or preserving grace of God. "C" is to persevere in choosing Jesus Christ. To persevere in denial of self by gazing full time at Christ regardless of circumstances, regardless of temptations, regardless of obstacles, regardless of delays, regardless of failures, and regardless of tribulation that occurs in the process. When we add together the facilitating grace of God, the restraining grace of God, and those two extended over time which is the upholding grace of God to persevere then we have the phrase that Jesus gave to Paul in II Corinthians 12:9 – My grace is sufficient for you. You can't do away with a thorn in the flesh. You can't do away

with a messenger of Satan that I've released to buffet you because this is not of you and if you think it is of you, you will function in pride in the system of law with self on the throne and you cannot be My apostle to the Gentiles if that's how you walk. You can only be My apostle to the Gentiles when you turn to Me, fix your gaze upon Jesus, fix your hope upon Jesus, know nothing but Jesus and Him crucified, teach nothing but Jesus and Him crucified, boast of nothing but Jesus and Him crucified, and when you do that then the Holy Spirit will be loosed to work within you to accomplish the purposes that I called you to accomplish. We need to recall that this empowering grace of God is only accessed when we access the system of grace. And we only access the system of grace in the spirit realm with our gaze upon Jesus regarding Him as the source of all and the basis of all, and His cross as the means by which He purchased all for us in the spirit realm. Any other choice does not access the system of grace; and if you don't access the system of grace, how can you tap into God's empowering grace? Any other choice does not operate to the glory of Jesus Christ. It operates to the glory of self. This is all about Jesus. Everything else is detail. It is all about Jesus, never about self.

Now we're ready to look at the final poster of the series of seven in our Kingdom Progression. This is the critical one. Don't be overwhelmed (and you shouldn't be) because all I've done is to take the three critical components and write them on one poster. It will look busy but is understandable. The next poster shows us in the Kingdom Life stage. The only thing I've added other than the previously viewed three key components is the phrase at the bottom which says so this is how change is to occur. As babes in Christ, we thought change would occur automatically. In the double-minded state we thought we would make change occur—I will never deny you. But in this stage of Kingdom Life which is the missing link in our Christian progression, we see that so change can occur and this is how change is to occur. That's the major revelation in this stage compared to others. Now however you feel about how I explain it; however you feel about my posters, I think no matter what method and no matter what graphic representation you use, we're all to land in humility in I Timothy 3:16 – Great is the mystery of godliness.

Now on this poster, I'll briefly run through it to conclude today. We start here with self on the throne which is the root of the flesh. God then draws us as part of our overview component. He then saves us. We pass from spirit death to spirit life as a blood bought change. We begin to see the love of God. We then love God because He first loved us. We have a passion to be one with God. We have a passion for ourselves to become one with God which in an ultimate sense is what love is. If I love my neighbor, it means I have a passion that my neighbor become one with God. So if I have a passion that I become one with God and I have a passion that my neighbor become one with God, I now love my neighbor as myself and we fulfill the second part of the great commandment. That love extended then is manifest as the fruit of the Spirit which is the aroma of Christ to others begins to draw them to our God and then God will elect some and not elect others. But our role as earthen vessels and living epistles is to complete this walk and leave the rest to our sovereign God. When we learn to walk in the spirit realm in the battle of flesh versus spirit, we learn to use our wills to turn into the spirit to fulfill the desires of God. When we do that the Holy Spirit is then loosed to reach back and blocks the pathway of the will to turn into the flesh with self on the throne. This is the fruit of the Spirit called self control. When we do that we then access the mind of Christ which is in us; but it's in our spirit via the blood bought change. The mind of Christ then begins to renew our minds, hence, more of mind is written in

red rather than in black. If we try to walk our Christian walk over here we access the system of law where the source of all positive outcome is works. The means by which that positive outcome is obtained is performance under the power of self. But when we turn into the spirit and give up turning to self, we fix our gaze upon Jesus, fix our hope upon Jesus, know nothing, teach nothing, and boast of nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified; because no Jesus, no cross, no cross, no grace, no relationship with God. The Holy Spirit came to bear witness of Jesus, not of ourselves. He came to bring glory to Jesus, not to bring glory to ourselves. He came to be our helper to bear witness of Jesus and to bring glory to Jesus. He didn't come to be our helper to bear witness of self and bring glory to self. If we persist as Christians to function in the flesh, under the system of law, we will end ultimately in defeat, failure, and death. For us as Christians, the death means dead works, dead testimony, dead abundant life, and dead churches. But when we function in the system of grace with all glory given to Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit is loosed; the fruit of the Spirit is released beginning with the love of God being shed abroad in our heart. The other fruit then flows out of that love; and that brings about victory, deliverance, and life. It may not bring about victory in an earthly sense because Hebrews 11 tells us some of those who were examples of walking by faith were sawn in half. Jesus Himself and some of the apostles were crucified. So it's not victory in that sense; it's victory in fulfilling your purpose for remaining on planet Earth after salvation. Your purpose is to bear witness of Jesus. Your purpose is to bring glory to Jesus; and hence, accessing the abundant life. So when we walk in the Kingdom walk life stage, functioning by the system of grace rather than the system of law, then we do the following: It's only this that brings maximal glory to God, that brings maximal pleasure to God, that brings minimal grief to God, that brings maximal accurate testimony to the world of our God, and that brings maximal abundant life to us and stores up maximal treasures in Heaven with rewards in Heaven for eternity future for us. It's this and only this. But it's all here. Apart from Jesus you can do nothing. In Him we live and move and have our being. And all of these Scriptures come together to help us understand the contrast of flesh versus spirit and the contrast of the two systems of law or grace. And it's this system and only this system that fulfills the purposes of God. Now I don't claim to understand everything and I don't claim to be able to explain everything; because I'm to land in I Timothy 3:16 in humility – Great is the mystery of godliness. But I do know if I begin to love, God is to get the glory for that, not me. I do know that if I bear witness of Jesus, God is to get the glory for that, not me. I do know that if I'm given a gift of explaining certain things that integrate Scripture, I'm to give God the glory and not me. I do know if I'm an earthen vessel that's bringing Jesus and not myself I'm to give God the glory and not me. If I'm a living epistle that tells a true story of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, I'm to give Him the glory and not me. I do know that in my flesh I can accomplish nothing because my flesh is hostile to God. So understanding all these things is the critical element of accessing Kingdom Life which is the abundant life that Jesus went to the cross to purchase for us. So having said that my time is more than up and I thank you for yours.