

Living The Christian Life Series
Lesson 21 – Developing the Biblical Techniques and the Crowns That
Accompany Them - Part 4

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Series Text: Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Applicational Texts:

I Peter 5:4

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Proverbs 4:5-9

5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. 6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. 8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. 9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Introduction:

Our current Sunday Morning Series is titled "Living The Christian Life" In our study we have focused on "Developing the Techniques and the Crowns That Accompany Them." We have pointed out the distinction between the Diadema Crown given to the Believer at salvation and the Stephanos Crowns given to Believers at the Judgment Seat. The Diadema is used to identify the Believer's role in ruling and reigning with Christ both in the Millennium and in Eternity. (Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10) The "Diadema," and our ruling with Christ, is based totally on God's Grace given unconditionally to every believer at Salvation. The Stephanos Crowns are based on the Believers development of the four basic techniques that are associated with living the Christian life:

The Technique for Living the Spirit Controlled Life: The Crown of Righteousness

The Technique for Developing Spiritual Maturity: The Crown of Glory

The Technique for Living The Faith-Rest Life: The Crown of Life

The Technique of Performing Faithful Stewardship: The Crown of Joy

We have studied The Technique for Living the Spirit Controlled Life and the accompanying Crown of Righteousness. In our study we have seen that while we are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we still retain our Sin Nature and there is a continual battle going on within each of us between the Holy Spirit and the Old Sin Nature. However, as Believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit, sin for us is now a matter of choice.

I Corinthians 10:13 says

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make the way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Romans 7:24-25 Paul tells us it is a matter of choice.

²⁴O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ²⁵I thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

We also saw that we are to deal with the sin issue when temptations come by making the right choices -resist the temptaation. And, we saw that when we do sin we have an advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ (I John 2:1), and we are to confess our sin to return the control of our behavior to the Holy Spirit (I John 1:9). However, the objective of our study is for us to graduate from repetitious confession (I John 1:9) to resistance (James 1:16).

Now, in our study today we are going to Introduce the development of the second technique associated with a stephanos crown and that is The Development of Spiritual Maturity and the accompanying crown, The Crown of Glory.

I. The Crown of Glory:

The Crown of Glory is acquired through the Development of Spiritual Maturity which is accomplished through the application of biblical principles and doctrines.

I Peter 5:4 introduces the Crown of Glory:

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The word "*glory*" is translated from the Greek word "*doxes*." It means honor resulting from a good opinion, which is based on character - the emphasis of the word glory (doxes) is always character. This character is acquired through development of a biblical framework or structure for developing spiritual maturity. We are going to need to spend some time here over the next several weeks, so let me just briefly review the concept and structure in our study this morning.

Spiritual maturity is developed through understanding and applying biblical principles to one's life. It is a growing process, but the process is aided by the identification of a structure of biblical understanding and application. So we are

going to review that structure. For sake of understanding we have likened it to a physical structure with a foundation, five floors, and a roof. The material from which this structure is constructed is Bible Doctrine.

The foundation of the believer's life is Jesus Christ and His teachings, according to I Corinthians 2:16 and 3:11. Upon that foundation we develop the biblical structure for developing spiritual maturity.

The first floor is orientation to grace and the book of Romans is the key. An orientation to grace is understanding and applying the principles of grace to your life - God's treatment of you in grace and your treatment of others in grace.

The second floor is a relaxed mental attitude and the books of Galatians and Hebrews are the key. Your development of a Relaxed Mental Attitude is related to your understanding and applying the doctrines of grace. Understanding what God has done for us in grace results in our relaxing and serving Him out of appreciation rather than obligation. Understanding and applying grace to others sets aside expectations and eliminates disappointments.

The third floor is mastery of the details of life and the book of Job is the key. With no more expectations you are no longer dependent upon circumstances for your joy - thus you are able to dominate and take control of your life. Your focus is on God providing and performing as you simply present your body a living sacrifice and accept what He sends your way.

The fourth floor is a capacity to love and the book of I John along with the 13th chapter of I Corinthians is the key. Having set aside your expectations of God, your mate, and others you are now equipped to love them with a self sacrificial love.

The fifth floor is inner-happiness and the book of Philippians is the key. You are now in a position to look at things from God view point up here in the Penthouse and as long as you look at things from His perspective you will have happiness.

The roof is made up of the more than 7,000 promises found in God's word.

We will be examining the technique for developing Spiritual Maturity over the next several weeks. But in our study today we will attempt to understand the basics needed to develop maturity in order to better relate to the Structure of Spiritual Maturity.

II. Some Important Clarifications:

This section of our series is focused on understanding the biblical technique for developing spiritual maturity, and that requires a few points of clarification lest we become confused by terminology and illustrations: the Distinction Between the Structure and Maturity, The Distinction Between Wisdom and Wisdom, and The Distinction Between Wisdom and Maturity.

The use of the word "technique" in our study indicates that we are focused on methods or mechanics - we are attempting to see HOW TO develop the Spirit Controlled life, HOW TO develop Spiritual Maturity, HOW TO develop The Faith/Rest Life, and HOW TO develop Faithful Stewardship.

The Bible is full of preaching concerning these areas of the Christian life, but if we just focus on the preaching and don't understand the "HOW TO" then all we get is a guilty conscience and a whole lot of frustration - "Been there, done that and have the tee shirt." But, the tee shirt is of little comfort compared to the KNOW HOW that is available to us in the Word of God. So, we are attempting to understand the HOW TO. But, I will raise my voice and pound the pulpit a bit to keep it from being too academic and try not to allow it to become BOREING! So, Hang On! And, let's establish some clarifications before getting into the mechanics - methods - techniques of developing Spiritual Maturity and acquiring the Crown of Glory.

A. The Distinction Between The Structure and Maturity:

One of the things we must understand is the distinction between The Structure of Spiritual Maturity and Spiritual Maturity itself.

1. The Structure of Spiritual Maturity:

When I refer to the Structure of Spiritual Maturity, I am referring to an organized Biblical Framework for spiritual growth. That is, it is understanding various stages of spiritual growth and the primary Scriptures that instruct us in the development of those stages. For sake of understanding we will illustrate this Biblical Framework as a frame building with a foundation, five floors, and a roof. That illustration is based on terminology used in scripture. Paul's terminology lends itself to our understanding how Scripture builds upon Scripture to guide us in our spiritual growth through the establishment of biblical basics, we are able to develop an Orientation to Grace, producing a Relaxed Mental Attitude, and as a result of that attitude we are able to Master the Details of Life. To the degree that we Master The Details of Life, we develop a Capacity To Love, and it is that capacity to love self-sacrificially regardless of response that provides the support for our Developing Inner Happiness, because our happiness is no longer based on circumstances or the interaction and response of others.

This structure has a foundation that is the person of Jesus Christ and His teaching, and it has a roof consisting of more than 7,000 promises God has given us to live a victorious Christian life. Unfortunately, the majority of Christians camp on the foundation and ride out the storms of life taking cover under a few promises from God.

The illustration of this structure is that of a frame building with five floors because each area of our spiritual development is dependent upon the area beneath it for support. In the study we will identify specific Scriptures that provide the information we need to develop each floor.

So when we refer to the Structure of Spiritual Maturity we are not talking about the level of maturity but the framework of doctrine which we must understand and accept in order to live a mature life.

2. Spiritual Maturity:

The use of the term Spiritual Maturity refers to the level of spiritual growth in the believer's life. Understanding the Structure and developing knowledge of the Scripture related to those areas does not make one mature. Maturity comes through the application of that biblical information into the everyday experience of one's life. It is possible to erect the structure but live outside of it - to be a hearer of the Word but not a doer of the Word.

John The Apostle identifies four levels of Spiritual growth in the Epistle of First John. (Infants, Adolescents, Young Adults, and Mature Adults)

Peter identifies a progression of spiritual growth in his Second Epistle. (Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, Self Control, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Love, Self Sacrificial Love.) Each of these is developed in the sphere of the previous one. Self-Sacrificial Love is developed in the sphere of Brotherly Love; Brotherly Love is developed in the sphere of Godliness; Godliness is developed in the sphere of Patience; Patience is developed in the sphere of Self-Control; Self-Control is developed in the sphere of Knowledge; Knowledge is developed in the sphere of Virtue; and Virtue is developed in the sphere of Faith.

Paul identifies a framework or organization of Scripture in which spiritual growth occurs.

B. The Distinction Between Wisdom and Wisdom:

Some might consider wisdom and maturity to be the same thing and it might be - but it all depends upon the Hebrew or Greek word that is translated into English by our word wisdom.

Both the Hebrew and the Greek have two different words that are translated into English by the word "*wisdom.*" The Hebrew words are **khok-maw** and **say-kil** and the Greek words are **sophia** and **phroneisis**.

Khok-maw and **sophia** are defined as - **an ability to understand the application of knowledge to experience.**

Say-kil and phroneisis are defined as - the reflexive application of knowledge to one's circumstances or experiences.

Therefore, when we see the word *wisdom* in our Bible we must understand which word is being used in order to understand if it refers to the process of maturity or the level of maturity.

The distinction may be seen in the life of Solomon. He asked for and was given **khok-maw (sophia)**. He was given the ability to understand the application of knowledge to experience. In I Chronicles 22:12 David said that his desire for Solomon was that the Lord might give him wisdom (David said,...*Only the Lord give thee wisdom...*). The word David used, *say-kil*, corresponds to the Greek word **phro-neis-is**. It is the reflexive application of knowledge to experience.

Although Solomon had **khok-maw (sophia)** and understood how to apply knowledge to his circumstances or situations, he lacked **say-kil (phro-neis-is)** - the reflexive application of that knowledge to experience. He had theoretical understanding, but did not reflexive apply the facts God had revealed to him to his experience. David's request of the Lord was that Solomon might reflexive make the application. He did not! That is why his life was such a mess.

So, **khok-maw (Sophia)** describes the process necessary for developing spiritual maturity. We must have the ability to understand the application of knowledge to experience. James tells us this ability is ours for the asking.

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

But, there is a growth process which is necessary to reflexively make that application and become Spiritually Mature.

C. The Distinction Between Wisdom and Maturity:

Now, this is interesting! According to the text in Proverbs the Crown of Glory is going to be delivered to us by wisdom. Look at the text.

Proverbs 4:5-9 *5 Get wisdom (khok-maw), get understanding (bee-naw): forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. 6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. 7 Wisdom (khok-maw) is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom (khok-maw): and with all thy getting get understanding (bee-naw). 8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. 9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.*

In this text in Proverbs, wisdom is translated from the Hebrew word **khok-maw** - it corresponds to the Greek word σοφος (**Sophos**). Remember, this word identifies the ability to understand the application of knowledge to experience. This is **not** the Hebrew word, **say-kil** which would identify maturity. This Hebrew word refers to the ability to process growth materials in order to become mature and does not speak of the level of maturity itself. You will notice that it is coupled with the word "**understanding**" (**bee-naw - knowledge**). God is saying, get the ability to understand how to apply knowledge to your experience – but by all means get knowledge.

NOTE: It is the process of developing Spiritual Maturity that is the focus of this passage in Proverbs. And, it is the process of spiritual growth that delivers to us the Crown of Glory (*...She (wisdom) shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee...*). but the passage stresses not only getting the ability to understand how to apply the knowledge - but we must get the knowledge as well.

And, by the way, wisdom is referred to as a "**she**" because the word is feminine which means wisdom is a response - understanding the application of knowledge to experience is a response. I and others are going to expose you to the material but acquiring understanding and making application will be based upon your response.

Peter's reference to the crown of Glory is specifically directed to those in places of leadership in the church (Elders), but it is based on Proverbs 4:5-9 which is applicable to all believers in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

I Peter 5:1-4 says,

¹The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: ²Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; ³Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Peter's reference is especially directed to those in places of leadership in the church (Elders), but it is based on Proverbs 4:5-9 which is applicable to all believers in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

With those clarifications, we are ready then to explore the biblical teaching on The Development of Spiritual Maturity and Its Accompanying Crown of Glory.

Conclusion: (No Maybe It's The Beginning...)

Spiritual Maturity is accomplished as we take in biblical information related to these specific areas. The better we understand God's grace the more we develop a relaxed mental attitude. The greater our relaxed mental attitude the more successful we become in mastering the details of life. The better we master the details of life the greater our capacity to love. The greater our capacity to love the more inner-happiness we have. And, all these are developed under the roof of God's promises.

Through the development of spiritual maturity our character changes and we receive glory -- that is, honor resulting from a good opinion based on character. So, the crown of glory will be awarded on the basis of our character, which is developed through spiritual maturity.

In the next couple of weeks we are going to study the process of developing Spiritual Maturity within the Structure of Spiritual Maturity. Using that structure we will investigate the " How To" of Spiritual Growth...

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: (Ephesians 4:14-15)

But it begins at Salvation:

- *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...*
- *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...*
- *With the heart man believes unto righteousness...*
- *But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...*
- *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!*

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

(Romans 12:1)