

'PROGRESSIVE BREAKTHROUGH' – AN OXYMORON?

By John Gagliardi

Have you ever had someone prophesy “**BREAKTHROUGH!**” over you, or felt in your spirit that God was about to bring you into something new and bigger, a whole new level? It may be a breakthrough in finance and business, health, marriage and relationships, or in any other number of areas of your life.

I have – in fact it has happened to me this year. And being the kind of person who thinks that next week is “long term planning”, I have woken up each day expecting the “breakthrough” to – well – break through! But here it is March and so far, as of writing, it hasn't.

Have I given up? Not at all – I absolutely understand that patience is a fruit of the Spirit, and I am working hard to get that particular fruit growing in my spirit. But a few days ago, something interesting happened.

I was praying early one morning, and I sensed God drop two words into my mind – “progressive breakthrough”. At first I wasn't sure how to react – and as the logical grammarian I try to be, I immediately realized that the concept of a “breakthrough” being “progressive” seemed somewhat oxymoronic (an oxymoron is the putting together of two contradictory words, such as “deafening silence”, “same difference”, “tight slacks”, and somewhat more humorously - and cynically - “government organization” and “business ethics”).

It seemed to me that, definitionally, a breakthrough by its very nature happens suddenly and all at once, as in the Scripture in 2 Samuel 5: 20, where David defeated some Philistines and declared: “The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like the **breakthrough** of waters” (NASB). My dictionary defined a “breakthrough” as “any significant or sudden advance ... an act or instance of removing or surpassing an obstruction or restriction...”.

But can a “breakthrough” be “progressive”? According to my Thesaurus, “progressive” has a similar meaning to “increasing, growing, intensifying, accelerating, escalating, developing, cumulative”. Can a “breakthrough” grow and intensify and accelerate, and can it be cumulative?

As I was pondering I suddenly remembered the old story of the little Dutch boy who saw a small hole in a dyke, and seawater trickling through the hole. According to the story, the boy sticks his finger in the hole, cutting off the flow of water, and thus saving the dyke and his whole city. If he hadn't stopped the flow, the trickle would have soon become a stream, and the stream a torrent, and the torrent a flood taking all before it.

The “breaking through of waters” starts with a trickle, and soon increases and intensifies and accumulates – in other words, a breakthrough can indeed start small, and progressively grow and increase and accelerate until it sweeps all before it! Your “breakthrough” can indeed be – and I suspect even most often is – “progressive”.

So when people ask me how I am going, instead of saying, "I am waiting for my breakthrough", I have started saying, "I am in the early stages of a **progressive breakthrough**". I must admit I have received some odd looks, but most people very quickly understand what I am saying, and can often relate to the concept.

Some years ago I wrote an article, "God's 3 R's", dealing with the pattern God often seems to use when dealing with His people. The "3 R's" are:

- Revelation, when God gives us a dream or a vision and we start out full of excitement and enthusiasm, only to come up against:
- Reversal, when the vision seems to fall apart, the heavens seem like brass, and the promises and dreams seem to have turned to ash; until the:
- Restoration, when in His own time and way, God restores the vision, and you move into a time of great achievement and success.

I referred in the article to some of the great heroes of faith, who underwent the "3-R" pattern: Abraham and Joseph in the Old Testament, and Paul and even Jesus Himself in the New Testament. I wrote: "But look at your own life ... do you see the same pattern at work? Have you had great revelations from God, great dreams and promises, soaring visions, only to find everything falling apart, the dream not fulfilled, and God seemingly further away than ever..."

"Are you going through the process of reversal now? Has your great dream evaporated? Has the vision God gave you for your life been somehow sidetracked? Are you in a season of depression, frustration and disappointment? Is it painful?"

"Well, here's the good news – there's always a 'third R' on the way! God's third R – His Restoration – is coming!"

God needs to put us through an "R-2" time to test us and try us, just as He did with Abraham. God gave Abraham the vision of having many children as the "sand of the sea", and after many years, the seemingly impossible did happen. Sarah gave birth to the "son of promise", Isaac. So what did God do? Told Abraham to take Isaac up a mountain and sacrifice him! Talk about an "R-2".

But as we know from the Bible story, at the last possible moment God brought Abraham's "R-3" and Isaac lived to become part of the lineage that eventually gave birth to the Messiah, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. What a restoration of the vision! What an R-3!

It seems to be that our "breakthrough" is often like that – we receive what we think is a breakthrough, but what we actually receive is the "revelation" of a breakthrough. God will often then test us and try us and refine us, seemingly putting us into a "reverse move", while divine patterns and Godly perspectives are moved into place around us, unseen and unheard and unfelt by us.

The water is trickling – almost imperceptibly – but we do not see any significant changes or advances. As the flow through the dyke increases, we start to sense an acceleration of events, as we move through our "R-2" – reversal – period, until finally, crash! The dyke falls and the water bursts through, like "a breakthrough of waters".

We have our breakthrough! The “Lord of the Breakthroughs” – Baal-Perazim (2 Samuel 5: 20) – has come through for us, in spite of all our doubts and fears and misgivings. We learn yet again that God is always faithful, and always keeps His promises.

If He gives us a promise – a dream, a vision – He will fulfill it. The Bible tells us that His Word always does what it sets out to accomplish, and never returns to Him empty or “void” (Isaiah 55: 11). He is not a man, that He would lie or change His mind (1 Samuel 15: 9), and all God’s promises are “Yes and Amen” (2 Corinthians 1: 20).

So if your breakthrough seems a while coming – remember, we will reap “*in due season*” if we do not give up (Galatians 6: 9) – take heart! Your “R-2” will end, and the restoration of your vision will come as surely as light casts out darkness. Your breakthrough is on its way – it is accelerating, it is growing, and it is cumulative. Be patient and wait in faith for your “progressive breakthrough”, for it will surely come.

And then God answered: “Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. This vision-message is a witness pointing to what’s coming.

“It aches for the coming – it can hardly wait! And it doesn’t lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait! It’s on its way. It will come right on time (Habakkuk 2: 3).