

Study in Ruth 5

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- [0 : 0 0] It is now turned back to the book of Ruth and we want to look particularly at the final passage of that book that begins in chapter 4 and at verse 13.
- And I think you may find it helpful just to keep your Bible open in front of you. I want us to ask just for one last time, just to refresh our memories.
- Why have we turned to this book of Ruth and why have we been looking at this book particularly in these Sunday mornings? And I hope you will remember that one of the main reasons why we've turned here is that we have found that it is a book that shows us that God is always at work in this world.
- Even when the days are difficult, even when the church may seem to be very weak and even confused. God is at work. He has a plan and he is always working to plan.
- But not only have we seen that, but we have seen that no matter the day, as God is working to plan, he can reveal that plan to individuals.
- [1 : 2 5] He can show them where they fit into that plan. And he can show that his saving purposes, his plan of salvation is for ordinary people like you and me.
- And so, of course, what we have been trying to learn particularly is for our encouragement and hopefully for our salvation. That whoever we are on these Sunday mornings, however ordinary and insignificant, like Ruth, God can come to us.
- And God can speak to us and reveal to us what he is doing and catch us up also into his saving plan.
- And so, as we use that broad framework for our studies, and this is our last one this morning, we want to ask one final question.
- And we want to ask, what is at the heart of God's plan and purpose for this world? What's at the centre of this plan?
- [2 : 4 8] If God is working out his purposes in our lives, for instance, ordinary lives like Ruth, what will he be doing?
- What will be at the heart of that plan and purpose? And I think God makes this very clear in the final part of the book of Ruth.
- At the centre of God's plan and purpose for this world is to point people to his son, Christ Jesus.
- If we are really saved, if we really know God's plan and purpose for ourselves and know that it is a good plan, we will have learnt the importance of being pointed towards Jesus.
- And then we ourselves, with the lives we live, will want not to point to ourselves, not to say how wonderful I am, but we will want to say how wonderful Jesus is.
- [4 : 0 5] That's a lesson that we could have learnt, was it just last Sunday evening from John the Baptist, as we've been studying the Gospel of Luke. John the Baptist's most wonderful testimony was, as he looked towards Jesus, who was beginning his ministry in this world, John the Baptist said, I must decrease, that he must increase.

And that's what every true Christian wants to see. And that's what every true Christian is convinced that he must do in this world.

He must point to the Son of God, Christ Jesus, as the only saviour of sinners. And that's exactly what the book of Ruth finally does.

That's where it leads us to. That's where we see, that's what we see God was finally doing. That was the goal that he was reaching, in taking Ruth out of Moab, and making her a Christian, and blessing her with so many blessings, as she followed God's law in the Christian life.

Where does it all lead? It leads to a pointing to Jesus Christ, as God's only son and only saviour, for sinners like Ruth, and like Naomi, and like you, and like me.

[5 : 45] Did you notice the final picture that we have in the book of Ruth? It's a picture of Naomi. Old Naomi, an old woman now, cradling a baby.

And her friends, her women folks, who welcomed her back after her years in Moab, they're there for the birth of this first grandchild for Naomi.

And as she cradles the baby, they speak about it as a sign of God's redemption. Verse 14, And the woman said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who hath not left you this day without a kinsman.

And we know that the particular word that is used is the word kinsman, redeemer. He has not left you without redemption. You cradling this baby, it's the final picture of God's redemption.

Now that's a great Bible word, the word redemption, but it may be that we're not all that sure what it means. In general terms, it really means deliverer.

[7 : 02] One who comes to deliver from great difficulty, and from great problems. And that's what God does. Finally, through Jesus, his son, he makes him his redeemer.

And here's a picture you see in Old Testament times pointing to the great deliverer who's going to come. And who's going to come one day.

And he also is going to be cradled in arms by women. And indeed by old women. As we expect, he was cradled in the arms of Anna, the prophetess, when she came into the temple.

When Simeon was prophesying that God's deliverer, God's redeemer, had finally come. And we read of Anna, she coming on that instant, gave thanks unto the Lord, and spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel.

Who looked for a kinsman redeemer. Here's a picture of it in Naomi cradling the child. And it's pointing, you see, further on to the great deliverer.

[8 : 19] To the sure deliverer. The son of God who would also come as a baby. And then, of course, unless we would be in any doubt, the writer of the book of Ruth ends the book in what to us might seem a very strange ending.

He ends it with a genealogy, with a list of ancestors, telling us of some of the grandparents and great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents of this child that Naomi is cradling.

And also telling us of some of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren of this child. And he finishes with David, the king.

And we know very well from the rest of the Bible that David was one of the greatest ancestors of the man, Christ Jesus, the king of kings.

And so finally, you see, the writer is saying, whether you look back from this child that Naomi is cradling, or whether you look forward, you can see that from beginning to end, God in heaven has been working to plan until the day when he will bring his own son from heaven to become a child that he might become the deliverer of sinners like you and me.

[10 : 00] And in that way, the book of Ruth, you see, is a perfect postscript to the book of Judges. Perhaps we don't read the book of Judges sufficiently.

But the book of Judges is a book that is full of deliverers. The book of Judges also, you see, is pointing forward to Jesus. Every book of the Old Testament points in some way or another to Jesus.

He's so important. He is all important in God's plan. And the whole Bible, be it looking forward or looking back, that's what keeps it together as one book, God's book.

Jesus is the kingpin of God's word. It all points to him. And the book of Judges has deliverer after deliverer. And each deliverer does a great work.

And the people, no matter what sort of sin they get into in these dark days, God sends a deliverer. And they come back for a while.

[11 : 13] And then they fall back and they fall away and they fall away again. But only in the book of Ruth have we this connection between the deliverer as Boaz was a deliverer and the line of Jesus.

And so God is finally saying, all these deliverers, although they were my deliverers, they weren't quite perfect. But I want you to look forward to the deliverer who's going to come.

And he'll be the perfect deliverer because he'll be my son from heaven. And when he delivers you, there will be no going back.

There will be no failure. Because any place where he begins a good work of delivering, he always completes it.

And that's what the book of Ruth is about. And what the book of Ruth finally helps us to do as it points us to Jesus, the deliverer, is to see just what sort of deliverer he is.

[12 : 34] There are one or two things. Let's deal with them as quickly as we can. first of all, Jesus is a kinsman redeemer.

Old fashioned terminology, but it's the terminology that we've been using and I think slowly we've come to understand it. Naomi is cradling this child in her arms only because they had lived according to God's law in these recent days.

and according to the provision of God's law. And we have seen that the provision that was made was the provision of a kinsman redeemer.

spoke of Jesus, the kinsman redeemer. The redeemer who comes alongside because he is a relative.

That was the reason, finally, why Boaz married Ruth. He was following out the commands of God's word, the provisions that God had made in his law for his Old Testament people.

[13 : 50] So that widows were not abandoned to poverty and to difficulty. The line of property always going through the male line. But they were provided for by a near relative who must take on the responsibility under the law of providing for the widows in the family line.

And this is what was happening. And this is the reason why Ruth was finally married to Boaz. And this is the reason why Obed, in the line that's pointing to Jesus, was finally born.

And we have a picture, not only of the deliverer that Jesus is, but the sort of deliverer he is. He's a kinsman deliverer.

he's one who becomes a deliverer by becoming like us. By becoming near us.

And that's one of the great reasons why the Son of God, the eternal Son in heaven, became man. That he might be like us.

[15 : 05] And that he might truly be our deliverer. The epistle to the Hebrews talks about it. Can I quote you from Hebrews chapter 2? In all things, he had to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to sustain those who are being tempted. Now, there's a lot in that, but just look at what it says, that he became like his brethren in order that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.

in order that as our redeemer, our deliverer, he might be merciful and faithful, he became a kinsman redeemer.

He became one who became related to us, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, for two reasons. Because he needed to be a faithful deliverer.

That is faithful to God. He needed to be able to carry out all God's demands for us.

[16 : 27] He needed to take our place completely. We had broken God's law. He needed to keep God's law for us. He became man so that he could live under God's law and restore God's law for us that we had broken.

we had come under the just punishment of God because we had broken his law and gone our own way.

Jesus, the man Christ Jesus was faithful and today the eternal son of God became man that he might die in our place.

That he might in his body suffer the eternal wrath of God for us. He's a kinsman redeemer who is faithful.

Everything that God required, he has done it and he has done it completely. He's the only one who could do it.

[17 : 39] he's the only one who could bear that wrath and curse. He has done it and that's why he says, come unto me, trust in me, shelter under my wings and you will be safe and secure from the wrath of God forever.

I'm a faithful deliverer. but he's also a merciful deliverer. He came, you see, and became the kinsman redeemer, the one who took bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, that he could be tempted in every way that we are tempted.

In every way. if there's some temptation in your life that you would hate your nearest and dearest to know about, Jesus knows about it.

He was tempted in that way. You can tell him about it and he'll understand. and he was tempted without sinning.

Not only can he understand and be sympathetic that he has power to deliver you from that temptation and from falling into the temptation.

[19 : 19] Oh, the folly of anyone here this morning thinking that you can finally be delivered from the temptations of this life by your own strength.

You need a kinsman redeemer who will come alongside and help you. And oh, if our lives have to point to Christ, how positive we have to be, how understanding we have to be when others fall into sin, how understanding we have to be when we see people outside the church and we see their lives getting into more and more of a mess and we are inclined to be like the people who passed by on the other side in the parable of the good Samaritan.

We need to get involved with these people. We need to come to know them, to understand them, an individual here, an individual there, that we feel we're so different from because our lives have never gone into the gutter as their lives have gone.

Does that make us intrinsically better than them? No, it does not. Because what the Bible wants us to know is first and foremost about ourselves that we're sinners and that's the fellow feeling that we have with them.

And if we go to them as Christians we should finally be able to tell them that we have one who understands their plight, who has been tempted with every temptation that they've been tempted with.

[21 : 15] But unlike us, he is without sin. And we can introduce him to them. And we can tell them that he understands and that he doesn't at this stage stand in final judgment on them.

But he still comes to them as one who is a saviour, who is ready to save to the uttermost whoever will come to God through him, no matter how low they have gone because of their sin.

And we have to go to them, not from a position as if we were above them, but from a position of being beside them.

And introducing them to Christ, who although of course he is above them, is also beside them, at the very same level as them, because he's a kinsman redeemer.

And then Christ is a redeemer of the nations. The child in the arms of Naomi, the final picture of redemption, of deliverance, pointing to Jesus.

[22 : 41] This child was not a pure Jew. This child in his blood ancestry was not a pure son of Abraham, indeed very impure, because the generations of the Jews to this day goes not through the father, but through the mother.

You need to have a Jewish mother to be a true Jew. The child Obed was not.

He had a Moabitish mother, but he also was in the line, was in the ancestry that pointed to Jesus.

God had this happened by chance? Well, of course, we know that nothing in God's planning happens by chance. We know that it was always God's purposes that his deliverer would not be for the Jew only, but for Jew and Gentile, for all the nations of the world.

God's purpose is that at the end of the day there will be representatives in his people from every tribe and nation. And he's pointing to it already.

[24 : 08] He's pointing to the sort of deliverer that Jesus will be. Simeon, the aged Simeon, who along with Anna that we saw earlier also cradled the baby Jesus in his arms, said, this is the light that's to give light to the Gentiles.

To you and me who are here, this morning, oh, if Jesus was only a saviour for a certain sort of people, would we have any hope today that he's a saviour who's sufficient for any sort of person?

Whoever you are today, Jesus can save you. Jesus can deliver you. Jesus can change you.

However hard your heart is, Jesus can do it. However long you've been refusing him, Jesus can do it. However, you may have got yourself into a corner in believing that there's something about you that just makes it too difficult for Jesus.

us. It's just not true. It is just not true. He can save any sort. He can change you.

[25 : 35] He can deliver you from your slavery to sin. And he can make you one of his own. We have to believe this.

We have to believe this if we're going to be pointing people to this Jesus. We have to believe it to the point of doing it.

One of the helpful things that was said at a rally last night that was held in our own church hall, and there were many helpful things that were said, was that we find it perhaps quite easy to pray for people.

At least we do it and we go through the motions and we pray and we pray for revival and we pray for people to be converted. But when it comes to actually doing it, actually being God's instruments, God's servants, and going to unconverted people and seeking with God's help to influence them for the gospel, we're quaking at the knees and we don't do anything.

And we quake at the knees because our faith is so weak. And we don't really believe that Jesus is the saviour of the nations.

[26 : 54] And no matter the bondage that someone may be into, some sin or other, or some addiction or other, Jesus can save them. And we must believe it so much that we will point these people to Jesus the best we can.

that's the faith and the obedience that we need in these days. Christ is a kinsman redeemer.

Christ is a redeemer of the nations. And Christ is a redeemer with amazing grace.

grace. It may seem strange that a book that is called the book of Ruth should end with Naomi cradling the baby.

And Ruth almost goes into the background in the final verses of this book. It may seem strange but then did the story not begin with Naomi?

[28 : 08] Naomi. And did the story not begin with Naomi knowing so much of the truth and yet backsliding and going away into a far country taking the law into her own hands with her husband?

We mustn't of course be too hard on Naomi. And Naomi had come to the point where her faith was so weak and she saw very little prospect for her and she certainly saw no prospect of ever becoming a grandmother if she went back to Israel and that was the very reason why she tried to encourage her daughters in law to stay in Moab with their own people.

You can read it again in chapter 1 and verse 11. But here she is back in Israel with her very own grandchild.

world. You see the grace of God always goes far and beyond what we could ever ask or ever think.

And that's the grace that belongs to every believer here this morning. Do we understand that that's the nature of the grace that we have?

[29 : 29] You see the very definition of grace and sometimes we use these words and yet we're not all that sure what they mean. Well the first thing about grace is that we haven't earned it.

God has given it to us. It's a word that speaks of God giving his salvation his blessing to those who don't deserve it and never will deserve it.

It's not just that we get God's grace when we begin to be Christians because we didn't deserve it to begin with but then we don't need so much of God's grace because we're Christians and we're doing a little bit for God and so we deserve something from God.

Never. We'll be in heaven for all eternity because of God's grace. And the other thing about God's grace is that it's God's power.

We speak in our tradition although it's probably a term that the world outside would never understand and so we've got to be very careful about these terms when we use them but we speak about enabling grace.

[30 : 42] And it's a good phrase if it wasn't an old fashioned phrase so don't let us take the truth out of the phrase. It's just telling us that when God comes with this saving blessing he comes with power.

Grace is power. It's God's power now in our lives. It's the same sort of thing that the Bible is talking about when it tells us that God's Holy Spirit comes to live in us.

He's the guarantee that God's power, the power of grace, power that we never ever deserved and ever will deserve, it is now in our lives.

And so that's what Paul is saying when he says by the grace of God I am what I am. We might think that Paul is being just a little bit cocky there but Paul was recognising that he was able to do great things for God now but he couldn't take any of the what word am I looking for I've lost it.

He couldn't take any of he couldn't you know what I mean but I can't get the word. He couldn't it's the opposite of blame but you know what I mean. It was God's work. God alone had done it by the grace of God I am what I am.

[32 : 13] And then just to add one final ingredient before we finish. Paul says in the epistle to the Romans reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

If you have received God's grace if you have received the Holy Spirit into your life because of God's grace you have God's power and its power over sin.

It's power to go on more and more living a life that is dead to sin. That can turn from sin more and more and be alive and live the way that God wants us to live.

Paul puts it another way when he says live by the Spirit. That is live according to the power of the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

or Paul puts it yet another way when he tells us the old man is crucified is dead and you are now alive to God.

[33 : 23] You are new creatures in Christ. Reckon yourselves then to be alive. But so often that's not our way as believers.

We think only about how sinful we are and I don't want you to stop thinking about how sinful you are. But we think about how weak we are and how poor we are and how needy we are.

Our preacher last night was using a phrase that I don't think I will ever forget. We're great for our pity parties. When we get together and we talk about how difficult it is to be a Christian and how poor and needy we are and what poor souls we are.

But if we are Christians we are filled with the grace of God that gives us power to live for God and to fight successfully against sin.

Sin of course that is still there. But we've to overcome it and we've to go on. I'll try and finish with an illustration.

[34 : 36] It's an illustration that's got to come from America. But certainly for me it made the point. I just heard it from someone this week. It was about a lady in America who was married for a good number of years and had a very happy marriage and was very happy with her husband but her husband finally died.

And she wondered how she could ever do without her husband. So she had him embalmed and sat on a seat and put in a glass case and he was there in the front hall.

And she went about her daily life. And every time she came into her home she acknowledged her husband, her late husband as she passed.

And it helped her to just feel a little bit good. She was sad. She was still mourning for him. But it helped a little to get on with life. Then after about a year or two she went off on a European trip.

She met an American man there about her own age and he swept her off her feet. And they got married in Europe. And they extended their honeymoon for quite some time. them. And they came back.

[36 : 00] And the man decided that he would do the honourable thing and lift her across the threshold. And of course the first thing he saw when he came in the door was this embalmed man in the case.

I'm glad that some of you find it amusing because you may remember it because it's a very important point. Who's that? Oh that's my old man.

And of course that man was quickly buried because there was now a new man in the lady's life. And he would be the one who would call the tune.

And he would be the one who would change her life. When the grace of God comes to us our lives point to Jesus and to his power.

We have a new man in our lives. A man who has all power over sin. Who has power over the weak flesh that still clings to us.

[37 : 18] And day by day as he calls the tune, as we remember the amazing grace and power of our God that is now in our hearts and lives by his spirit.

We can go on. We can make progress. We can go on rejoicing in Christ. Yes, facing battles, facing difficulties, facing inner struggles, but with joy others who are still in bondage to the deliverer, our redeemer, Christ Jesus.

Amen. Amen.