

Lesson for December 14, 2008

Old Testament Survey

The Book of Ruth

The book of Ruth covers a period of about 10 years and tells a story of a kinsman redeemer who is an obvious type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament practice of the kinsman redeemer is a perfect example of how Christ redeems us from the Law and from sin. Certain requirements had to be met in order for a person to free someone from slavery. The redeemer had to be a relative, he had to be able to redeem by meeting the purchase price and he had to be willing to redeem the person in slavery.

By His taking on humanity, Jesus Christ became a kinsman to all mankind. (John 1:1-3,14) In order to meet the purchase price, Christ had to be perfect (no sin of His own to pay for). He was born of a virgin, therefore, He had no sin nature and He lived a sinless life, which qualified Him to meet the purchase price for our sin. (Matthew 1:23, I Timothy 3:16; Romans 5:8; II Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 2:9-11, 4:15; I Peter 1:18) Christ was also willing to redeem us. He was obedient to the Father's plan for salvation and gave His life freely. Christ even restricted the use of the power of His deity (doctrine of Kenosis) and used the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish all of this for us. (Philippians 2:5-8; Romans 5:19, Luke 22:42, 23:46)

Ruth was an Israelite. She was a Moabitess (Gentile) who had married an Israelite named Mahlon. Her mother-in-law was named Naomi and along with her husband and two sons had fled to Moab to get away from a famine. Naomi's sons both married women of Moab, but both sons died shortly thereafter along with their father. This left Naomi, Ruth and the other daughter-in-law Orpah alone. When the famine had ended Naomi decided to return to the land of Israel. Orpah decided to return to Moab, but Ruth would not leave Naomi.

The love story between Ruth and her kinsman redeemer Boaz began shortly after Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem. Ruth would go to the fields to gather what the harvesters had left behind, which was a common practice in Biblical days. The field where she gathered was owned by Boaz who was a near kinsman to Naomi and by law to Ruth. Another common practice was for a near kinsman to take care of those to whom he was kin. In the case of Naomi and Ruth, Boaz voluntarily chose to redeem a parcel of land that was the inheritance of Mahlon, Ruth's late husband. This also meant that Boaz was responsible for the care of Ruth, which he was obviously more than willing to do. Boaz married Ruth when a closer kin (who was apparently already married) deferred to Boaz as kinsman redeemer. Had Boaz not become Ruth's kinsman redeemer, both she and Naomi would have been forced into servitude.

Ruth's decision to accept the God of Israel as her God and stay with Naomi resulted in God's blessing in her life. She met and married a wonderful God-fearing man who just happen to be wealthy enough to care for her and Naomi. We are also told that Boaz and Ruth had a son who would continue the line of David and eventually that of Jesus Christ.

Redemption

The Biblical definition of the word "redeemed" is "to be purchased from the slave-market of sin." There are three Greek words for redemption: "agorazo" meaning "to buy", "exagorazo" meaning "to buy out of or remove from sale" and "lutroo" meaning "to release on receipt of ransom or payment." Christ has redeemed us from the slave-market of sin and from the Mosaic Law. (Romans 7:14)

There are several definitions for sin in the Word of God: "falling short of God's righteousness" (Romans 3:23), "transgression", which is overstepping God's law (Psalm 51:1-4), "trespasses", which is deviation from God's righteousness (Ephesians 2:1), "disobedience", which is rebellion against God's law (I Timothy 1:9-10), and unbelief in Christ as Savior (the only unpardonable sin) (John 8:24). Christ redeemed us from all sin.

The believer is also redeemed from the Mosaic Law, which had been distorted into a system of "pseudo-salvation" by religious Jewish leaders. The Law was never designed to provide salvation, but rather it shows us our need for a Savior and points us to Jesus Christ.

The results of redemption are that the believer is:

- 1) Redeemed from the curse of the Law
 - a. Its penalty - Galatians 3:13
 - b. Its obligation - Galatians 3:10, 24-25; Romans 6:14; Colossians 2:14-17
- 2) Adopted into God's family - Galatians 4:4-7
- 3) Redeemed from the power of sin – Romans 6:11-14; Titus 2:14
- 4) Redeemed from the presence of sin in the eternal state - Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14; Philippians 3:21
- 5) Forgiven for all sin - Colossians 1:14
- 6) Given an eternal inheritance – Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 9:11-15
- 7) Justified (declared righteous) - Romans 3:24
- 8) Sanctified (set apart to God) - Ephesians 5:25-27
- 9) Victorious over Satan - Colossians 2:14-15; Hebrews 2:9-18
- 10) Given a Mediator with God, Jesus Christ – I Timothy 2:5-6

Practical Applications of Love

The World System implies that “love” means that we enjoy someone, admire them, that they make us happy, that they treat us nicely, etc. It is easy to love someone like this.

The challenging kind of love is unconditional love. Unconditional love is loving someone that we don’t enjoy, that we don’t admire, that does not make us happy, that does not treat us nicely, etc. Developing and learning to utilize unconditional love as a “tool” in our daily experience is of utmost importance for a victorious Christian life. This requires setting aside our emotions and instead, thinking and applying Biblical principles in order to produce right attitudes. Right attitudes will produce right behavior. Loving others unconditionally often requires adjusting and adapting to others instead of expecting others to adjust and adapt to us. This does not mean that we condone bad behavior, rather it means that we love others in spite of their behavior. After all, we don’t know what a person has gone through or is going through that is affecting their behavior (“walk a mile in his shoes”). Unconditional love is selfless love; loving without asking “what’s in it for me.”

We must learn to have a relaxed mental attitude, to “live and let live” and stop judging others and allow others the “right to be wrong.” We cannot control the behavior of others, but we can control our own. Since we are only responsible for *our* behavior, we have no pressure to try to change or control anyone. A relaxed mental attitude towards others contributes to both our health and happiness. We can possess this relaxed mental attitude only as we begin to grow up spiritually! (I Thessalonians 4:9-12; I Peter 3:8-16; James 2:1-9)

Growing up spiritually requires the use or application of what you have learned. This means we need to train ourselves, replace old bad habits with new habits consistent with our new spiritual nature. We accomplish this under the control and guidance of God the Holy Spirit. When this occurs, the Holy Spirit is able to produce the character of Jesus Christ in us. Divine love is a characteristic of Jesus Christ. (II Corinthians 5:17; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 5:14)

Jesus exhibited divine love when He was being persecuted, even when He was on the Cross paying for our sins. His unconditional love, based on His humility, caused Him to say, “Forgive them for they know not what they do.” This mental attitude of humility, seeking the best for others regardless of how they treat us, can also be reproduced in us as a fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

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God's divine love is complete, unconditional and unchanging. As His ambassadors we need to exhibit His kind of love. Only when we are abiding in (controlled by) Him can we produce God's kind of love.

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the complete satisfaction for our sins. Beloved, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another." (I John 4:10-11)