

- Today, we come to the end of our 9-week journey through the Book of Ruth called “Hope as a Way of Life”, and along the way we have been exploring how Christian hope brings change to many areas of our lives and today, as we come to a close and read the final paragraph of this book, we want to ask “How does Christian hope bring a change to my perspective on life?”
- Now, what we are about to read is a genealogy, a bunch of names. And you might say “What’s there to learn from this list of names? And I would like to say “More than you think!

Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him.¹⁷ The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ This, then, is the family line of Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab,

²⁰ Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz,

Boaz the father of Obed,

**²² Obed the father of Jesse,
and Jesse the father of David.**

- In 1986, The Guardian won an award for its commercial called “perspective.” It opens with a short but effective scene. A young hooligan charges down a busy city sidewalk towards a well-dressed businessman and appears to wrestle a briefcase from his hands violently. At first glance, it looks like he’s being robbed.
- However, the commercial goes back in time and same scene is then shown from a *different* angle, a wide shot. And when it does, we see that the young hooligan who runs towards the businessman is not actually trying to steal the briefcase, he is pulling the businessman away from the falling bricks of a construction site above.
- With the narrow perspective, the businessman looks like he’s being **robbed**. But with the wide shot, we learn that he’s actually being **rescued**. To understand this, you need the bigger picture.
- In many ways it’s the same with this story of two widows in the book of Ruth. When it begins, the older widow Naomi is bereaved, poor and ashamed. Based on her limited perspective in the moment, she accuses God of being against her! But God used Ruth to bring change
- But here at the end, we are given the wide shot, the bigger picture. She has gone from being empty to full, from disgraced to honoured, from ruin to restoration. Like the first scene in the advertisement, Naomi was only looking at God and life with limited perspective. But here the camera goes wide, and we see that God was not *robbing* her life, he was *restoring* her life.
 - What about you? Do you look at your life and believe that God has neglected you? Or abandoned you? Or perhaps even in just particular situations and relationships?
- Much of our discouragement, despair, disinterest... has come because we are not seeing things rightly.
- In fact, the Bible tells us that this is precisely what sin does: distorts our view of God and ourselves. What we need is perspective.

- I can't overstate how important perspective is. Wrong perspective can lead to wrong attitudes, actions. On the other hand, right and full perspective can lead to right attitudes and right actions.
- What we need is the bigger picture, the wide angle of God's Word that changes our perspective.
- As we come to the end of the book of Ruth, we end with a genealogy. Which may just look like a random list, but there is nothing random about it. In fact, it's an essential part of the book. The storyteller's intention in writing the book is to show that this unlikely romance in Bethlehem produces a family line that leads to the great King David which in turn leads to the King of kings, Jesus
- Their family line would not die, it would continue! But its important because it shows that God's promise to the whole world would come to pass! The bible is about how God would bring a saviour through his people Israel for the whole world. And the line through which this savior would come, would be through Ruth! That is why she is included in the genealogy of Jesus in New Testament.
- This short story of redemption is a signpost pointing towards the bigger story of our redemption in Jesus Christ. So, what perspective changes in this story point to the perspective changes that the gospel brings into our lives? Well, I see three deeply personal and important areas where perspective is so needed. The gospel gives us a new perspective on our *failings*, our *sufferings* and our *blessings*.

1. A New Perspective on Our Failings

- a. See, Naomi was the backslider. She was raised among God's people, and yet turned away and left her people. And when she came back to the land, it would see, that she thought there was no chance that she could be right with God.
- b. Though Naomi did wrong, and though we have all done wrong, there is still a way back for us. You are not accepted on the basis of what you have done. Nor what you have failed to do!

- c. There is no one so *bad* who *cannot* be saved, and no one so *good* who doesn't need to be saved!
- d. You have a new position and status: child of God.
- e. Look at the genealogy, who is included in this line? Who is included in this list? It includes the poor, the broken, the outsider, the damaged goods. Why? Well, because that's what happened in history. But there is a deeper reason. These are the types of people that God has come to save and include in his family. Sinners who are saved. Failures who are forgiven, backsliders who are brought in.
- f. This gives us all a new perspective on our failures. When I fail, I can be completely honest about it. But I am also not crushed by it, because I have a redeemer who forgives me and accepts me.
- g. See, you know how you view your identity by the story you tell yourself on a daily basis.
- h. When you fail, what is the story you tell yourself?
 - i. Without the gospel, your perspective is limited to your own effort. With a narrow angle shot, we act as if our acceptance is based on how well we live up to the standards. But when we don't, we live in failure.
 - ii. But with the perspective of the gospel, I can acknowledge my sin, backsliding and failure for what it really is, but at the same exact time, know that Jesus died for that sin!

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

- i. The gospel places your identity within the bigger story of God's love and grace: whether you fail or succeed, you are a child of God. When you need correction, it is as a child of God. When you need encouragement, it is as a child of God. But it goes further. With the gospel, we are given:

2. A New Perspective on Our Sufferings

- a. When Naomi returned to the land of Israel, she described herself as bitter and empty, because of her suffering. Behind

this, she saw a God who was against her. From her perspective, her suffering was the final chapter of her life, the last word.

- i. Indeed, it is the same for many of us. “Well, this is it!”
- b. But through this miraculous turn of events, Naomi not only sees practical provision, but she also sees God’s restoration! She can now look back on her suffering which, though difficult, was not the end of her story.
- c. With new perspective, she realized that God was actually at work in the midst of her suffering! So, friends, listen:
 - d. For the believer, suffering becomes an important chapter**
 - e. If you push God out of the picture, then suffering doesn’t become easier, it becomes harder! You have no reason to be upset! It’s all accidental, no higher law than nature!
 - f. But, if God is real, and involved, and is good, then that means that even our suffering can have purpose.
 - i. Though we do not like this idea, that suffering can actually play an important role in our lives, it’s really important for us to understand. It’s what Naomi needed to remember. And it seemed that Ruth knew these lessons! Let me give you two quick examples
 - g. Suffering can push us outward!**
 - i. Though I hate to admit it, suffering makes us far more useful to others than we would be without
 - ii. Before, when others suffered, you may have wondered what the fuss was about.
 - iii. Suffering is a challenge which, if met in a right way, can bring great good, growth, wisdom, and even sweetness!
 - iv. When faced rightly, you can become compassionate towards others, able to help them in their time of need, point them in the right direction! It did so for Ruth!
 - 1. Who do you want to be around?
 - v. When handled rightly, the sufferer becomes a comforter!
 - h. Suffering can push you upward!**

- i. Ruth's pain caused her to look up and call to God!
- ii. Even Naomi, in her bitterness, still acknowledged Him!
- i. C.S. Lewis was right when he said that God whispers to us in our pleasure, speaks in our conscience but shouts in our pain. Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world! Or Paul says:

2 Cor. 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

- j. At the very centre of the Bible's story is that God's son came into our world, and when he did, he did not go **around** suffering but **through** suffering to accomplish his purpose.
- k. For the believer, suffering is an important chapter of your story, but is never the last chapter.**
- l. How Would Naomi think if she went forward in time and saw what God would do in her life and through her life!?? This genealogy is a testament to the fact that our suffering and adversity, no matter how great, will not be the last chapter.
 - i. We need eternal perspective! (Riff!)
- m. He does not lead you **to** sorrow, but **through** sorrow to glory!
- n. And the Life of Jesus does not end with a cross, it continues with an empty tomb! He is alive and will renew all things.
- o. We learn to rely on Jesus in ways that we would not without adversity! I don't like this, but it's true! (desperation – dependence – deeper experience of his deliverance!)
- p. So, what's the story you tell yourself when you suffer? "it's all over!" or "This is hard, but I know God is with me!"
- q. Look, we all wrestle with suffering and ask why? But when we look to the cross, we KNOW the answer cannot be that God does not love us! Because He suffered! And... he ROSE.
- r. Knowing how the story ends changes the way you act along the journey! Changes your perspective!

3. A New Perspective on Our Blessings

- a. The narrator of this story wants us to know that the birth of the son to Ruth and Boaz is the work of God. He brought this about! And there are 2 simple perspective shifts this teaches:

b. All my blessings come from God

- i. Often times, we assume that every great blessing is a result of our good behaviour. The idea that every good thing in your life is a result of a good deed from your life. But this is not always the case! And especially not when it comes to the greatest blessings of all!
- ii. In fact, our greatest good could never be earned!
- iii. Notice, here at the end of the story, the focus is not on the merit of the family, but the goodness of God!
- iv. Even when I walk in God's ways and experience the natural blessings that flow from following his ways, it is not based on my merit, it is based on his grace!

c. All my blessings have a purpose beyond themselves

- i. The name Obed means servant! Even this incredible gift of a son is not solely for the purpose of their own joy, but for the joy and blessing of others!
- ii. And he would continue the family line that leads to Jesus. He is the servant redeemer!
- iii. He used all that he had for the good of others. For our good! We are called to follow in his footsteps.
- iv. The greatest way you can enjoy your blessings is by sharing with others
- v. Many of us are more concerned with *receiving* a blessing than *becoming* a blessing! We need a perspective shift!
- vi. When you understand the gospel, then you view all the blessings in your life with right perspective. Not idols!
- vii. Because no *material* or *relational* blessing in this life can replace the greatest blessing of knowing God.
- viii. Is this your perspective? Are you looking for God to fit in to your picture? Or are you looking for your place in His?

- d. *Single?* The ultimate event is not your becoming married... OR remaining single. You begin to view it in light of God's kingdom!
 - i. If you are to remain single OR get married, it is for the mission and purposes of God!
- e. *Married?* - The ultimate turning point for you was not getting married! You need the big picture!
 - i. Your marriage is for your transformation! and is to be a picture of Christ and the church!
- f. *Children?* - Children are not given so that we can find our identity in them! They are a gift from God, meaning that we are to be good stewards of them, pointing them to their greatest purpose which is finding their identity in Christ
 - i. Investing in children is investing in the future!
- g. *Your work and education?* - It's for a much bigger purpose!
 - i. Which gives you new motives for working! You are a servant! Christ came and served me!
- h. Are you living without the perspective of the gospel?
 - i. Think about the big picture! And as you do, you find peace!
 - j. Put your failures into perspective by remembering that Jesus has accepted you! Your success didn't earn it, and your failure can take it away!
 - k. Put your sufferings into perspective by remembering Christ's trouble on your behalf!
 - l. And Put your blessings into perspective by remembering that every good gift comes from Christ and because of his grace.
 - m. You may feel a failure, but you are accepted by grace!
 - n. You may feel burdened by troubles, but you will be carried!
 - o. You may feel blessed, but you can be free of pride and fear
 - p. And now, we respond in worship to the one who brings this about. And here is my final question as we end this story of the Book of Ruth. It's also a question that we could ask Naomi.
- q. *How would you worship now if you knew redemption was on its way? Thanks to Jesus, we can know that this is true.*