

# God's people - Separated, Prosperous, Resigned

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Preacher: Rev Roddy Morrison

[ 0 : 00 ] For a few moments, let us turn back to the book of Ruth, chapter 1, verses 16-17.

The truth said, The Lord do so to me and more also.

If anything, but death parts us from each other, parts us, you and me. We get a picture here of what the people of God are really like in every age.

We see that they are, first of all, a separated people. They are a prosperous people.

And they are a resigned people. These three things mark them out in the world.

[ 1 : 33 ] First of all, they are separated people. We see this truth so clearly when we consider Orpah and Ruth in the story that we know so well.

There is a great difference between the two of them. And it's the difference that is between the state of grace and the state of nature.

From the story we understand that Orpah was a loving and a devoted daughter-in-law just like Ruth. She was good to her mother-in-law and she was good to her husband, Kilian.

She had this testimony among her own people as well as from the lips of Naomi, her mother-in-law. Naomi said in verse 8, The Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

That was a great testimony to have.

[ 2 : 46 ] Her love for Naomi was indeed great. And she was ready to leave the land of Moab and go with her to the land of Judah.

Any daughter-in-law would be only too glad to see her mother-in-law's going away from her.

But this was not the case with Orpah. Orpah was not like that. She joined in with Ruth and she said, verse 10, And surely we will return with you to your people.

And again in verse 14, We see how warm-hearted she was, for she weeps and she kisses her mother-in-law.

Then they lifted up their voices and wept again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. Isn't it sad and isn't it solemn to think that somebody so loving and so kind as Orpah could end up lost after receiving the exact same blessings and privileges as Ruth received?

[ 4 : 10 ] But that is what's going to happen. That's what's going to happen to every single person who dies with their faith in Jesus Christ as their saviour.

No matter how good we are and how nice we are as people and how good we are in looking after those who need our help, if we don't have Christ on our deathbed when we leave this world, we are going to be eternally lost.

Revelation chapter 21 verse 27 says that nobody is going to enter through the gates of heaven who are unconverted and unsaved.

It says, but there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles or causes abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

So it must be plain to you and plain to me that the most important thing in the world for us is that our names be written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

[ 5 : 33 ] And when you hear something like that, surely you want to say in your heart, Lord, remember me among those whose names are written there.

Put my name down along with the rest in that Book of Life. Ruth was also a loving, devoted wife to Marlon, and she was kind to her mother-in-law as well.

But there was one thing that marked out Ruth as different from Orpah, and that is that the Holy Spirit of God was in her heart, and the grace of God was at work in her life.

She had come to see and to believe that the whole human race was in a lost state because of the fall of Adam and Eve, but that God had purpose to save a people for himself out of the mass of humankind, to be his own people.

sure that Naomi spoke to her about these things on many occasions. And she came to believe that God was going to send a saviour into the world to save people from their sins.

[ 7 : 05 ] She believed that what Naomi had told her about the sacrifices, for example, that the Jews were offering, how they were different from the heathen sacrifices that were offered to the gods in Moab.

She would say to her, she would say to her, when we sacrifice among the Jews, a lamb on the altar, we are not putting our trust and our faith in that lamb to save us from being lost.

It's only a symbol of the true sacrifice that is going to take place when God wills and when God wants to come in salvation to us.

And she saw that also God was to forgive people their sins when they looked forward in faith to that future sacrifice.

So that when the time of parting with Naomi arrived, we read Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. But Ruth clung to her.

[ 8 : 21 ] Ruth refused to leave. She refused to turn her back on her mother-in-law and leave her to go ahead on her own to Israel.

She turned her back on Moab instead, upon her parents, upon her friends there, and upon anyone who would perhaps in due time become a husband to her.

She was putting God before her in everything. She was still young in years and she could easily have turned back to Moab to get a husband.

But she said to herself, these things are not important. I'm turning my back on my friends and my former way of life and my parents and the land of Moab.

I'm not going back there anymore. And this is what the grace of God does to us. It's as simple as that. You can see it so clearly.

[ 9 : 35 ] It separates us from the sinful way of life we once had in this world. And the sinful things that we enjoyed at one time.

So instead of living selfishly for ourselves, we begin to live for God and for him. We put him first in our hearts and in our lives.

No matter what family or friends may say. We leave the worldly companions who were once with us if they're not willing to follow Jesus Christ along with ourselves.

God's people in every age are to be separated people. And because this is what Jesus said when he was teaching the people in his own day, Matthew 10, 34.

Do not think that I am come to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. And this does not mean that we don't love our families anymore.

[ 10 : 51 ] Or our friends, we love them as we did in the years gone by. But we put Jesus first in our lives. And his claims on us are the first claims.

We seek to obey Christ before anyone else. When I became a Christian over 50 years ago, the boys in the hostel that we used to live in the people who tried their best to take me back to be with them.

Going to the concerts and the dancers and the pubs and all the other places we used to frequent. And I had a fight on my hand.

Some of them coming up to me and offering me a drink that would normally not look my way. They became awfully friendly and generous all of a sudden.

But I stuck my heels in and I said, No, thank you. I'm a new person now and a new life stretches out before me.

[ 12 : 04 ] So there are separated people, the people of God in every generation. You've got to be separated from the world. Or the world will surely take you back again to where you were before.

And you will get hold in your love for Jesus. And you'll end up worse than ever. There are prosperous people as well from this story.

Prosperous not in the things of this world. Not because they will have an awful lot of money once they begin to follow Jesus.

Not that at all. They are very poor, some who follow Jesus by these standards. But they are prosperous in the spiritual and the eternal sense of the word.

The psalmist saw this when he wrote and said in Psalm 16, verse 5, Oh Lord, you are the portion of my inheritance and my cup.

[ 13 : 13 ] And contrast that now with what Paul's description of the unbeliever is. He says in Ephesians 2, verse 12, that the unbeliever is having no hope and without God in the world.

What has the unbeliever got? He's got nothing but what will be taken from him at the time of death. Nothing that really lasts. He may have pressure from the sinful things of this world. He may have popularity.

He may have friends. He may have riches. But when the day of his death comes, he loses everything. Nothing is left but emptiness.

On the other hand, think of the riches that the believer has. That money cannot buy. I'll only mention one or two of them.

[ 14 : 20 ] The first thing that's so important and so precious is, He has forgiveness for all his sin. Forgiveness for all he has done wrong.

When you come to God in prayer as a broken hearted repentant sinner, you hear God saying to you, I am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake.

And I will not remember your sins. It's an amazing thing to be able to say to yourself, All the things I ever did wrong has all been washed away, has all been forgiven until the day I die.

Do you know what it is to have all the things you did wrong forgiven? Do you know what it is to have your sins washed away? To have everything that you said, everything that you thought of in your mind, everything that you did by your actions that were wrong.

To be blotted out forever. Well, I tell you this, that is worth more than all this world, and a million worlds as well, of wealth.

[ 15 : 48 ] The hymn writer was saying, Iain, that he'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold. And it's so true.

The believer wouldn't exchange places with the richest man in the whole world today. And the believer also has something else.

He has his sins forgiven, but he has a friend in Jesus Christ. A friend who will stay with him and be absolutely faithful and dependable all the days of his life.

He has a friend who will stay with us. We hear God saying in Isaiah 46 verse 4, Even to your old age, I am he, and even to grey hairs will I carry you.

And that's a great promise. And with promises like these, what are we to fear about the future? Whatever happens in the future, we have a friend who will never leave us.

[ 16 : 57 ] The path may be hard and steep at times, but in Jesus Christ we have a friend who will not give up on us. It's good to have friends in the world, but there are times when our friends let us down.

While this friend will never let you down. Although the way be hard and steep at times, Jesus Christ will be by your side.

And he will never leave you until he takes you right home to be with himself in heaven. For once he saves the sinner, he will not let that sinner slip back to destruction.

He said about the disciples, I have lost none of them, except the sinner perdition. The one that was earmarked from all eternity for that work that he was to do.

The permanent earth shall pass away before the weakest of those who trust in Jesus will be lost.

Now you may be saying today, well I'm so weak, really my grip of Jesus Christ is weak and I'm afraid.

[ 18 : 22 ] Well the devil will come to you and attack you with doubts and unbelief and say one of these days you're going to lose your grip and you'll be a way lost.

But Jesus keeps his grip on us and will never slacken it forever and ever. Forever and ever. He will permit us to go through times of tempting and testing.

But he'll be there with us each step of the way with his grace to uphold us. So that we come out of the times of testing, haven't learned valuable lessons.

Lessons that we would not have learned anywhere else if we had not been tested. And having been also tested we will be sanctified through these experiences.

This has been the testimony of God's people in every age. That he would give strength out with themselves in order to cope.

[ 19 : 30 ] Isaiah 41, 17 reminds us of that. For when the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, their tongues fail for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them.

I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. No wonder then that the last hymn we have in this service this morning is what a friend we have in Jesus.

We are never tired of singing about that. What would we have done without him all the years since we have come to know him? How would we have coped?

Well, Naomi had very little by way of goods as she made her way to Bethlehem. She had no money. She had no friends, no family, no home, no inheritance.

She had no trust that she had no trust that she had no trust, that she had no trust. And all these things put together. She had the God of Israel as her God.

[ 20 : 42 ] And she had an eternal inheritance that death could not take from her grasp. It was because of that and all that she stood for that Ruth said, Your people are going to be my people.

And your God is going to be my God. Not the gods of Moab any longer. And therefore you see God's people are rich in the best sense of the word.

For they have been forgiven of their sins and they have a friend who will be with them on life's journey. And many, many other blessings that we haven't got time to recite just now.

They have an eternal inheritance awaiting them when they leave this world. Think of what David said in Psalm 45.

They shall be brought with gladness great and mirth on every side into the palace of the king and there they shall abide.

[ 21 : 57 ] They are a prosperous people. They are also resigned people. They are resigned to the will of God and to all that God has planned for them in this world.

You see this submission coming through in the words of Ruth when she said, And your God shall be my God. She said, in other words, that the God of Israel, the God of Naomi was going to have full control of her life from now on.

For now she had listened to others. She had listened to what people told her. She listened to herself and she did what she wanted. She had been ruled by the idols of Moab most of her life.

And dominated by the customs of the people there. She had lived her life to please these gods of Moab.

And to please parents and friends. But now things have changed. And the chief place in her heart and in her life was given to God.

[ 23 : 22 ] She was now listening to him first and foremost. Instead of listening to anybody else. And that's what happens when a person is converted.

It's a picture of conversion. He doesn't listen to the palace anymore. He listens to what God tells him to do. The things that once filled her heart and were dear to her have been given a lower place. Or thrown out altogether. And that's how it was with each one of us. We loved the worldly round of dance halls and concert halls and everything like that.

We loved meeting the boys in the pub. But that's all behind us now. We don't think anything of them anymore.

We don't think anything of them anymore. We don't think anything of them anymore. We don't think anything of them anymore. This is what Dr. Chalmers of the Free Church in 1843 when they split from an established church.

[ 24 : 33 ] He calls it the expulsive power of a new affection. And that is so true. That our new affection now. We love Jesus.

We love God. And the power of that love helps us to reject anything that does not bring glory and honour to his name.

It's not that we are living with a big stick over our head in case we do something wrong. We don't want to do things that are not pleasing to God.

But if we do, we can go and ask forgiveness right away. And we are forgiven and healed and restored to fellowship with himself once again.

What is true of Ruth is true of every genuine believer in every way, in every age.

[ 25 : 37 ] But when God comes to touch the life of the sinner by saving grace, there is a change for the better there. That person's will is renewed.

So that he begins to desire the things that at one time he had no place for. He begins to lose interest in things that at one time was important to him.

There is now in his heart an increasing desire to do God's will and to live to please God.

That's what he wants to do more than anything else, to please God. When we see God as our Lord and Master now and ourselves as his servants.

David said in Psalm 143 it is at verse 10, Teach me to do your will for you are my God.

[ 26 : 49 ] And that is what was also true about Ruth. She was saying to Naomi, your God is going to be my God from now on.

She also meant that from now on God was going to be her teacher. She realised that she had a lot to learn about him.

Having come from a pagan background she had a lot to learn. Even with the advantage of a good Christian upbringing. The best of us have so much to learn when we start off on the Christian life. We are like little babies spiritually. We are to grow. And how are we going to grow? We are going to grow by feeding upon the word of God.

Like newborn babes, said Peter, desire the sincere milk of the word. And it is to feed upon the word of God daily that we need to do.

[ 27 : 57 ] And grow strong in the Lord and the power of his mind. It is a time of growing. And we need to be guarded from the evil one in those early years.

And that's how it's so good when a person is converted. That he comes out and be part of the prayer meeting that goes on every week.

He will be there surrounded by people who love the Lord. And who's been through all this already themselves. And how much we benefit from being in the company of God's people.

I can say that I learnt more about prayer in the meetings we used to hold on a Friday night. I learnt in elders' houses here and there throughout Glasgow.

Listening to the old elders praying. And then after a cup of tea or along with a cup of tea, ask questions and they answer from their own experience.

[ 29 : 11 ] I learnt more there than I learnt in the college while I was attending. There was nothing of that being taught in the college or anything near it.

It's of utmost importance that we nurture within our hearts. A teachable spirit. We don't know everything. And we shouldn't think that we know everything at the beginning.

We are to grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The majority of people in our society today, the teachings of the Bible are too old fashioned and out of date.

And I believe with all my heart, the old preachers came back today, like John Owen and Jonathan Edwards and Spurgeon and Wesley and Whitfield.

They would not get a welcome in our courbets. We don't want to hear that kind of teaching. That's old fashioned. It's because of that we're here today. We would never have left otherwise the established church or the Church of Scotland.

[ 30 : 33 ] But the day came when they said, Don't listen to the Bible. That's out of date. We need to be mothering and moving with the times. But the Bible is still the standard of the yardstick by which we are able to know whether a thing is right or wrong.

And when Ruth declared that Naomi's God was to be her God too, she was saying she was ready to be taught by him. And this is one of the marks of those that are true believers in every age.

They are subservient to the word of God. And what the Bible says is what we need to do. She meant also by these words, Your God shall be my God.

That she was willing to be led by him to whatever lay ahead of her. She didn't know what was ahead of her. In Bethlehem she had never been there.

She didn't know a thing about the people there. Only that Naomi was from there. But supposing it meant death for her.

[ 31 : 55 ] Her desire was to die with God's people around her. Where you die, I will die. And there will I be buried.

She faced the future with her hope in Israel's God. And death itself lost its terror for her. Lost its sting.

And the grave lost its victory. Because she knew that God would lead her into the darkest valley. Even the valley of death.

And safely take her through. For years she had heard many discouraging reports about the people of God. And the people of Israel.

Remember when Israel wanted to cross the land of Moab. The king of Moab said, no you're not. You'll find some other way. And there was enmity and hatred there against God's people.

[ 33 : 02 ] There were different, there were bitter relationships between them in the past. But she forgot all that. She wasn't going to remember these things.

The free grace of God touched her. And the prejudices she had vanished away. Perhaps there are hidden prejudices in your heart.

That need to be taken away. Perhaps growing up and among your pals and your friends. They would be saying to you, don't bother. What does the church offer anyway?

Anyway. Just boring sermons and things like that. Don't go near it. Run as far away from it as you can. But the grace of God can deal with these things and enable you to see that with all their faults and all their feelings there can be no greater honour that could be bestowed on you and for you to be counted, numbered among the people of God and be part of the church of God.

It's the greatest honour in the world. There was plenty of things wrong with the temple in the days of Jesus. But he went there, the sinless Son of God, and worshipped his God there.

[ 34 : 34 ] And we need to keep our eyes on Jesus and not to be put off by what faults we see in professing Christians.

We all have our faults, every one of us. We're not ready yet for heaven. And that is how it is with the Christians as well.

Like you see some buildings being refurbished, maybe a bank or a place like that, and there's a whole lot of scaffolding up and workers are working away, sanding and whatever else they do. And you look at the building and that's an awful looking building, that. The building is not finished yet. And when the scaffolding comes down and the stonework is washed, then you'll see the beauty that was behind the scaffolding all these months as people went by.

But Ruth was an example to us, submitting to all that God had in store for her. Whatever the future has in store, it's best that we leave it in the hands of God than make plans ourselves.

[ 36 : 03 ] Don't leave him out of your planning. Whatever you do, and let nothing keep you back from being all you can be for God.

A separated people, a prosperous people, and a people that is resigned to whatever God has in store for them.

May God bless to us these few thoughts on his own holy word, with namely the glory. Just a wee prayer before we sing to God's praise.

Lord, we are surprised to be here today. Surprised to be worshipping in this building. We would never have thought of it beforehand.

But your ways are not their ways. And Ruth never dreamed that one day she would be there with her own family.

[ 37 : 07 ] In Judah, in Israel. And that she would be woven into the fabric of which came the Saviour of the world.

The Saviour that Naomi spoke to her about. That she would be herself in that line. By grace.

Lord, it's amazing where you lead. It's amazing what you can do with that person who gives his heart and his life totally, unreservedly to Jesus.

Hear us in our prayers now as we close. In Jesus name. Amen. Lord, thank you are reading. In Jesus name, He was writing and man.

Okay, love you, saved. Lord, thank you. To the coming of God of God. Do that. Lord we are staying with us from others who I believe is. Ask him for on his behalf. I'll ask you to ask me how they want issues in his heart. I will ask him for it.

[ 38 : 12 ] Please keep us asking. No, don't ask him for awhile at all of my time. It's very, very close in. Keep me up with me. Please keep with me if you lift up peassoas. Not doing me wonderful things and have day■ till of all of them for you.