

The Kinsman-Redeemer



Victory Over Death (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to follow through the Scriptures the unfolding of our theme for this week, "Victory over Death."

Yesterday I pointed out that if we trace both life and death back to their ultimate source in the unseen spiritual world, we come face-to-face with two persons: Jesus, the Life-Giver; and Satan, the Life-Taker.

Today I'm going to speak about Jesus as our kinsman-redeemer, applying one of the most vivid and beautiful pictures of Him found in the Old Testament. First we're going to look, once more, at the purpose for which Jesus came. This time, as its stated in 1 John 3:8:

> "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (NAS)

That's very clear, isn't it? What were the works of the devil? We saw yesterday the devil comes to steal, to kill, to destroy. The Son of God came to undo everything that the devil came to do against us. So we need always to focus our eyes upon these two persons: Jesus, the Life-Giver; Satan, the Life-Taker.

Now, in order to fulfill His purpose for which He came, Jesus had to identify Himself with us, with the human race. One of His favorite titles that He used of Himself almost more than any other in the gospels was "Son of Man," "Son of Adam," "a descendant of Adam," a member of the human race. In Hebrews 2:14 and following, the writer says this:

> "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too [that is Jesus] shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death [that is, the devil]..." (NIV)

Notice again, the clear the delineation of persons and responsibilities. The one who holds the power of death is the devil. Jesus came to destroy him, to defeat him, to break his

power. And it goes on:

> "and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." (NIV)

As long as people are afraid of dying, they're in slavery because the threat of death can compel them to do things they would never otherwise do. It's the ultimate form of slavery, the fear of death. Jesus came to set us free from that slavery, the fear of death. Jesus came to set us free from that slavery which is the fear of death but since we, in our human nature, partake of flesh and blood, He shared our humanity. Then it says in verse 17 of that same second chapter of Hebrews:

> "For this very reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way..." (NIV)

So Jesus became like us in every way. Without ceasing to be divine, He became human, He became a member of the human race, the Son of Man. In this way He was qualified to be what the Bible calls "our kinsman-redeemer." Now this is a very important concept introduced in the Old Testament but carried on in the New.

I need to explain it to you a little because in most of the English versions, the Hebrew word is translated differently in different contexts. The Hebrew word is gaal. It's translated variously, as follows: avenger or revenger of blood, redeemer, next or near kinsman. Let me say those again: avenger or revenger of blood, redeemer, and next or near kinsman. As redeemer, this Hebrew word gaal is applied to God Himself almost twenty times in the Old Testament. Now under the law of Moses and in the culture of Israel in the Old Testament, the kinsman-redeemer, the gaal, had two main responsibilities. The first was to avenge a near kinsman if he was murdered. The second was to marry the widow of a near kinsman if he died and thus keep the inheritance within the family. This first responsibility is stated in Numbers 35:19:

> "The avenger of blood [the gaal] shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death." (NIV)

That was his first responsibility. The second responsibility of the gaal or the kinsman-redeemer is illustrated in the story of Ruth. Ruth the Moabitess, came back to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law Naomi, and Naomi told her that she had a near kinsman whose name was Boaz, a wealthy and influential man. Ruth went to glean in the fields of Boaz and a relationship was established between them which ended in marriage. However, there were certain steps that had to be taken before Boaz could marry Ruth. I'll just read a portion from the 3rd chapter of the book of Ruth:

> "When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet. 'Who are you?' he asked. 'I am your servant Ruth,' she said. 'Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer [that is, a gaal].'" (NIV)

So she was claiming that he would fulfill his responsibility as her kinsman-redeemer. However, there was one relative nearer than Boaz, but he was reminded that if he wanted to redeem the property, he would also have to marry Ruth. We read this in the 4th chapter of Ruth, beginning at verse 3. Boaz said to the kinsman-redeemer:

> "...'Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.' 'I will redeem it,' he said. Then Boaz said, 'On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.' At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, 'Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.'" (NIV)

You see, the kinsman-redeemer not merely had to buy back the property of the dead man, but he had to marry the dead man's widow in order to raise up his name that it might not be blotted out in Israel.

So those are the two responsibilities of the gaal, the kinsman-redeemer. First, to avenge the murderer who killed his kinsman; secondly, to buy back his kinsman's inheritance and marry his kinsman's widow and raise up descendants who would carry on the name of his kinsman.

I've said that Jesus came as our gaal, our kinsman-redeemer. How did He fulfill His responsibilities in that capacity? First of

all, He went against the murderer, Satan, and put an end to his power over us. So He was the avenger of our blood, the avenger against the one who was responsible for our death. Secondly, He took the church to Himself as His bride, just as Boaz married Ruth, and thus He restored to us our lost inheritance. This part of the picture is illustrated in Romans 7:4-6, where Paul says this:

> "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another [that is, in marriage], to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter." (NAS)

Let's apply this now to the picture of Jesus as our kinsman-redeemer. Paul says that in a certain sense, we were married to the Law, but through the death of Jesus on the cross, we were set free from that obligation to the Law. And so we were free then to be married to another, to Jesus, the one who rose from the dead, to our kinsman-redeemer. However, just as in the case of Ruth and Boaz, there was one other who also had the legal right to be the redeemer: our fleshly nature, our carnal nature. But our carnal nature, the flesh, was unwilling and unable to help. So, like Ruth, we had to turn to our heavenly Boaz. (Incidentally, the name Boaz means "in him is strength.")

And so Christ took us to Himself as His bride. He did for us what Boaz did for Ruth. And through our union with Him, our inheritance is restores to us and we bring forth fruit pleasing to God. So in that Old Testament custom or order of the kinsman-redeemer, we see illuminated through the Holy Spirit the beautiful picture of Jesus as our kinsman-redeemer, the One who came to avenge our death at the hand of Satan. And this He did by taking our death upon Himself, by paying our penalty and then, in this way, He set us free from the fear of death. And taking us to Himself as His bride, He restored us to our inheritance.

You remember that Satan was the thief who came to steal. But Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life and have it to the full." So Jesus gave us back our inheritance. He took us to Himself as His bride. We are delivered from the bondage of the law. We are delivered from the fear of death. We are no longer kept in slavery because of the continual threat of death. The fear of death has been taken from us and instead we have a new inheritance, and eternal inheritance in Jesus Christ. We are related to Him as the bridegroom of our soul and in that relationship, instead of the sinful acts that were produced by our fleshly nature under the law, we bring forth the fruits of righteousness, we become pleasing and acceptable to God. Condemnation is gone. Fear is gone. As John said, "The darkness is passing, the true light now shineth." Our kinsman-redeemer has come and taken us to Himself, avenged the murderer and restored to us our rightful inheritance. Meditate on this picture until it becomes real to you. It's so beautiful.

Well, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll trace the work of Jesus on our behalf one step further. I'll speak about the atonement, the work that He accomplished through His death on our behalf.

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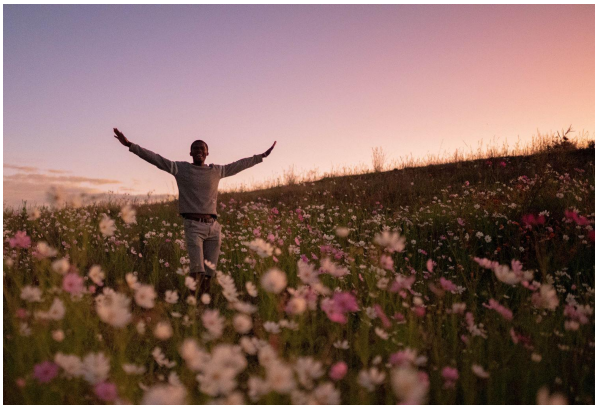

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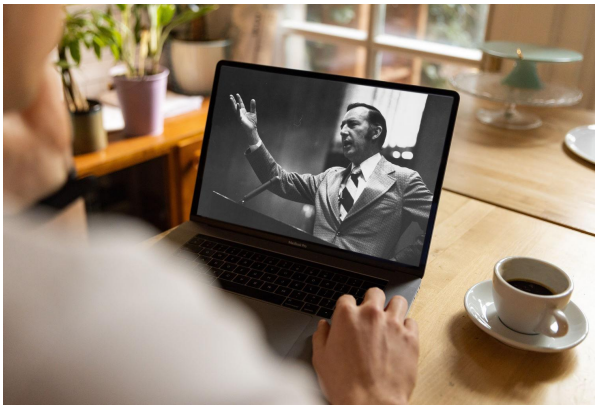

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