

Discovering Christ in RUTH

CHRIST OUR KINSMAN REDEEMER

by
Don Fortner

© Don Fortner 2007. All rights reserved. My desire is not to restrict, but to further the use of the materials in this book. Any part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, with prior permission.

Don Fortner
2734 Old Stanford Road
Danville, KY 40422

To
Shelby

My beloved wife, loving companion, and faithful helpmate, who has honored me with her devotion for thirty years.

CONTENTS

1. Christ Our Kinsman Redeemer
2. A Very Costly Move
3. Three Women
4. Good News Heard In Moab
5. Ruth's Choice
6. "The Beginning Of Barley Harvest"
7. The Resolute Consecration Of True Faith
8. "Change And Decay All Around Me I See"
9. "Seek And Ye Shall Find"
10. The Congregation Of The Lord
11. Ruth's Reward
12. Mealtime With Boaz
13. "Handfuls Of Purpose"
14. One Who Has Right To Redeem
15. Ruth Comes To Boaz
16. Three Nearer Kinsmen, But Only One Redeemer
17. "To Raise Up The Name Of The Dead"
18. Boaz Redeems Ruth
19. Lessons From The Book Of Ruth

Chapter 1

Christ Our Kinsman Redeemer

"And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman."

Ruth 3:9

We will begin our study in the Book of Ruth at chapter three, verse nine, where Boaz said to Ruth, *"Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman."* This Book, like all the Old Testament Scriptures speaks of Christ our Redeemer. The subject of this Book is redemption. The whole book is a picture of our redemption by Christ, our kinsman Redeemer. The key word, used repeatedly in these four chapters is "kinsman" (2:1, 20; 3:9, 12; 4:6, 14). The kinsman is the one who has the right to redeem.

The law of the kinsman Redeemer was given in Leviticus 25:25. *"If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold."* That prophetic law was given to be a picture of Christ and was fulfilled by him. Our father Adam sold us into bondage and sin; but Christ, our kinsman Redeemer, bought us and brought us into liberty, righteousness, and life (Rom. 5:19).

The Book of Ruth is a beautiful picture of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ as our kinsman Redeemer. It shows us both our need of a kinsman Redeemer and the way we may obtain the blessings of redemption.

There are some people names in these four chapters, who are the primary characters in the book. Their names are meaningful and important. There was a certain man of Israel called **Elimelech** of Bethlehem-Judah in the days of the Judges. Elimelech means “God is King”. Yet, when famine came to Israel, Elimelech took his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, and went down into Moab, a heathen country where God was neither known nor worshipped. **Naomi** means “sweet and pleasant.” **Mahlon** means “weakness.” **Chilion** means “consumption.” **Orpah** means “stiff-necked and declining.” **Ruth** means “companion.”

Elimelech left Israel in weakness and was consumed in Moab. He died in Moab and left his wife and two sons. His two sons married Moabite women, lived with them for ten years, and then they died. Now poor and brokenhearted, Naomi determined to go back to Bethlehem. She told her daughters-in-law to remain with their own people. Orpah did just that. She went back to her people and her gods; but not Ruth. She was “*steadfastly minded to go with*” Naomi (Read Ruth 1:16-17). So Naomi and Ruth returned to the land of Israel and to the people of God at the beginning of the harvest season.

A PICTURE OF OUR RUIN BY THE FALL OF ADAM.

Read Ruth 1:19-21. When Naomi came back to Bethlehem, everyone gathered around her, looked at her with astonishment, and said, “*Is this Naomi?*” To that she replied, “*Don’t call me Naomi (sweet and pleasant); but call me Mara (bitter) because God hath dealt bitterly with me!*” She went out young, happy, beautiful, and full; but she came back old, bitter, worn, weary, poor, and empty. That’s us!

Looking at our fallen human race, we might ask of fallen man, “Is this Adam?” Can these poor, dying, corrupt creatures called men be the sons of Adam, who was created in the

image of God? (Rom. 5:12; 3:10-19). Man was created a prince, but now he is a pauper. He who was created a king in the garden, is now just a beggar. Man, who was created in pleasantness, has fallen into bitterness. Adam was given fulness; but his sons are emptiness. In the beginning, the race was blessed; but now Adam's fallen race is cursed.

A PICTURE OF CHRIST'S FREE LOVE TO SINNERS

Read Ruth 2:1-5, 9, 16. Naomi and Ruth came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the harvest season. They were poor. Their allotted inheritance in Israel was gone. They had no one to support them and take care of them. But it was required by God's law in Israel that the poor people be allowed to follow the reapers through the fields and glean, or pick up what the reapers left behind (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19).

Ruth knew that there was a kinsman who could redeem her (v. 1). Boaz was a kinsman. He was a mighty man. And he was a man of great wealth. She went out into the fields to glean with the poor, hoping she might find grace in the eyes of her kinsman (v. 2). If it were possible for her to have her inheritance with God's people redeemed, Ruth was not willing to perish in poverty. She went to the place where she was most likely to meet her kinsman, with the hope that he might be gracious to her. As Ruth went to the harvest fields, where she had the greatest prospect of meeting Boaz, so sinners in need of mercy are wise to meet with God's people in the house of worship. There Christ walks with and reveals himself to his chosen (Matt. 18:20; Rev. 2:1).

Boaz spotted Ruth and had compassion on her (v. 5). There were many poor widows gleaning in the fields. But Boaz set his eyes upon Ruth, took notice of Ruth, and had compassion on Ruth before she even knew who he was. Even so, the Lord Jesus Christ took notice of us, loved us, and chose us before

the world was made. He loved us freely from eternity. Let men talk as they may about *universal benevolence*, God's love for his elect is a special, sovereign, distinguishing love (Isa. 43:3-4).

A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF GOD'S SPECIAL PROVIDENCE

Read Ruth 2:1, 9, 16. As the fields of Bethlehem belonged to Boaz, so this world belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is his by design, by decree, and by death (Col. 1:16-17; John 3:35; 17:2; Rom. 14:9). As Ruth's "*hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz;*" God graciously brings each of his elect to the place where he will be gracious to them. As Boaz commanded his young men not to touch Ruth, so the Lord Jesus Christ has given commandment to all creation, saying, "*touch not mine anointed!*" As Boaz commanded his men to let fall "*handfuls of purpose*" for Ruth, so our Savior takes care to provide for his elect, even throughout the days of their rebellion and unbelief (Hos. 2:8). Indeed, his angels were created to be ministering spirits to those whom he has chosen to be heirs of his salvation (Heb. 1:14).

Now read Ruth 2:18-20. According to the law of God given to Israel (Lev. 25:25), if a man sold his inheritance and he had a near kinsman, who was willing and able to do so, the kinsman could buy back his brother's lost inheritance. Boaz had given Naomi and Ruth a reason to hope that he might be willing to redeem them. In chapter 3, Naomi tells Ruth what she must do. She told her to go to the threshing floor where Boaz, the near kinsman, would be. She told her to humble herself, lay down at his feet, and spend the night there - "*And he will tell thee what thou shalt do.*" And Ruth did what Naomi told her to do. Read Ruth 3:1-11. In these verses we see...

A PICTURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE!

Ruth marked the place where Boaz would be and went there (v. 4). She came in softly and laid herself at his feet (v. 7). The sinner who needs mercy will always be found at the feet of his Lord (Matt. 8:1-2; 15:21-28; Luke 7:37-38; 10:39). Many are too proud to bow as broken, humbled beggars at the feet of Christ. But this woman risked being scandalized. She risked losing the only thing she had left, her name, that she might obtain Boaz's favor.

Ruth plainly told Boaz what she wanted (v. 9). In essence, she said, "Take me. I am your handmaid. Take me for your wife." Boaz said, "*I will do all that thou requirest!*" "But," he said, "there is a kinsman nearer than I. He must be dealt with first." Even so, Christ will be merciful. Christ will save. But he could never save anyone until first he had dealt with the law and justice of God. God must be just, even in (especially in) justifying sinners (Rom. 3:24-26). That brings us to chapter 4. Here is the last, great picture of this book - Boaz is set before us here as...

A PICTURE OF CHRIST OUR KINSMAN REDEEMER

Read Ruth 3:11 and 4:1-13. Boaz went up to the gate of the city where men transacted business and met Ruth's nearer kinsman. He said, "You have first claim upon Elimelech's field. If you want it buy it." So the man said, "*I'll buy it!*" Then Boaz said, "If you buy the field, you must also marry Ruth, his daughter-in-law." Then the man said to Boaz, "*I cannot do that, lest I mar my own inheritance. You redeem her.*" So Boaz bought the field and married Ruth (vv. 9, 10, 13).

The Lord Jesus Christ is our kinsman Redeemer. He is our kinsman by his incarnation (2 Cor. 8:9). He is a great and mighty kinsman, for he is himself God (Col. 2:9). He is a kinsman of great wealth. All things are his. All the fulness of

grace and glory is in him. As Boaz loved Ruth, so Christ Jesus loved us without a cause, freely. *"We love him, because he first loved us!"* He says, *"I have loved thee, with an everlasting love...I have drawn thee with the cords of love."* As Boaz promised to redeem Ruth, so the Son of God promised to redeem us in the covenant of grace before the world began (Heb. 7:22). But, as with Ruth, there was one who had first claim upon us. The law of God held us as its captors (Job 9:2; 25:4-6). But the law of God says, "I cannot redeem the fallen one, lest I mar my righteousness." The law has claim upon us, but not the ability to redeem us. The law is our kinsman condemner, but could never be our deliverer (Rom. 3:19-20). So the Lord Jesus willingly paid the price of our redemption, the price demanded by the justice of God. By his life of obedience, he magnified the law and made it honorable, and brought in everlasting righteousness for his people. By his sin-atoning death, he fully satisfied the wrath and justice of God as our Substitute.

As Boaz took Ruth to be his wife, so the Lord Jesus has taken chosen sinners to be his bride (vv. 13-15). Thank God, he has not left us without a kinsman. Christ is the Restorer of our lives. He is the Nourisher of our old age. Like Boaz, our Lord Jesus will not rest until he has *"finished the thing."* *"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."* *"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it."* *"He is able to keep you from falling;"* and he will. Christ will, at last, present you who are his holy, unblameable, and unproveable before the presence of his glory.

O love surpassing knowledge, O grace so full and free!
I know that Jesus loves me, And that's enough for me!

O wonderful salvation, from sin Christ set me free!
I feel the sweet assurance, And that's enough for me!

O blood of Christ so precious, Poured out at Calvary,
I feel its cleansing power, And that's enough for me!

Ruth, the pagan Moabitess, became the wife of Boaz, heir to all his vast estate, great-grandmother of king David, and was placed in the direct lineage of Christ. Even so, all who trust him are married to Christ, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and are made to be the sons and daughters of God almighty - All by grace! All through Christ our kinsman Redeemer!

Chapter 2

A Very Costly Move

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband."

Ruth 1:1-5

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil" (Prov. 3:5-7). If Elimelech of Bethlehem-Judah had been blessed with the wisdom that God gave Solomon the history of his family would not be the sad story recorded in the opening verses of the book of Ruth. I do not think I ever read a sadder family history than the one recorded in these five verses. It is a story of famine, death, bereavement, widowhood, and constant sorrow. The cause of all this sorrow can be traced to one thing - Elimelech was wise in his own eyes. Rather than trusting the Lord in the time of

famine, he leaned unto his own understanding and moved to Moab. That proved to be a very costly move.

The book of Ruth is a very short history of the domestic affairs of one family during the days of the Judges. It is the story of affliction and comfort, abasement and conversion, great loss and great redemption. The purpose of the book is twofold. *First*, the book of Ruth teaches us to adore the providence of God. The minute, as well as the great, the private, as well as the public affairs of our lives are arranged and determined by God's wise and good providence. We ought always to acknowledge and submit to the dispositions of divine providence (1 Sam. 2:7-8; Psa. 113:7-9). *Second*, the design of God the Holy Spirit in the book of Ruth is to lead us to Christ of whom the book speaks. As we have already seen, Boaz was a type and picture of Christ our Kinsman Redeemer. But the book also points us to Christ in other ways.

Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ is a direct descendant of Ruth and Boaz. Part of the genealogy given by Matthew comes directly from this book.

The conversion of Ruth is symbolic of the calling of the Gentiles. It was always God's intention to save Gentiles as well as Jews. Our Lord Jesus sprang from Jews and Gentiles and is the Savior of both, the Savior of the world. As Matthew Henry wrote, "In the conversion of Ruth the Moabitess, and the bringing of her into the pedigree of the Messiah, we have a type of the calling of the Gentiles in due time into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord."

The whole scene takes place in Bethlehem, the place where our Redeemer was to be born (Micah 5:2).

In these opening verses of the book, Elimelech stands before us as a beacon to warn us of the danger and the costs

of unbelief and disobedience. As I read here about Elimelech and his family, I cannot help thinking about Lot and his family. Both men brought great trouble upon their households by the choices they made.

THE TIME OF THIS TRIAL (v. 1).

“Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled.” This is all the information we are given about the date of this trial. But when we read that *“it came to pass,”* we understand that *“it came to pass”* because God brought it to pass. There are no accidents in this world; famine as well as feasting, trials as well as triumphs are brought to pass by the hand of God, according to the will of God (Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:11). This trial took place during the times of the judges, during one of the brightest times of Israel’s history. This trial did not come in those disorderly times when there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. God was King. He ruled Israel by appointed judges. Our greatest trials usually come when they are least expected. The events recorded in the book of Ruth probably took place during the days of Gideon, when *“the Midianites prevailed”* and destroyed *“the increase of the earth”* (Judg. 6:1-6). I say that, because no other time of famine is mentioned during the time when the judges ruled. Also, it must have been near the beginning of this era, because Boaz, who married Ruth, was the son of Rahab the harlot (Matt. 1:5), who received the spies who came into spy out the land. We must not fail to observe the fact that even in the book of Ruth, our Lord Jesus Christ identifies himself with sinners who were the very offscouring of the earth. Two of his great-grandmothers are here identified as Ruth a Moabitess, the great-grandchild of Lot’s incest, Rahab the harlot. The arms of grace are stretched out to and embrace sinners. Christ is the Friend of sinners! He saves sinners. The Lord Jesus Christ came into

the world to save sinners; and even in his family tree he shows his mercy toward the ungodly.

THE TRIAL ELIMELECH FACED (v. 1).

“There was a famine in the land.” There was a famine in the land of Canaan, the land *“flowing with milk and honey”*, the land which once yielded clusters of grapes so big that they had to be carried on a pole between two men (Num. 13:23). Even in Bethlehem which signifies “House of Bread”, there was a famine. This was one of the judgments which God threatened to bring upon Israel if she sinned against him (Lev. 26:19-20). The Lord God still exercises judgment among men and nations for their disobedience to him. The hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, famines, and diseases, which ravage the earth are not acts of nature, but acts of God. When those judgments of God fall upon a land, the righteous suffer with the wicked. Just as the wicked benefit by living near the righteous when God sends the sunshine and rain for his elect, the righteous suffer with the wicked when God pours out his wrath upon the wicked. In the midst of God’s providential judgments our only course of action is obedience and faith. Simple as it may sound, it is true - “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey!”

ELIMELECH AND HIS FAMILY (vv. 1-2).

This is the story of a man, his wife, and his children. There may have been many others like him; but the Lord here gives us a very personal look at this one man and his family. It is a story of grace; but it is a story of grace preceded by disobedience, sorrow, death, bereavement, and emptiness. Apparently Elimelech’s parents were believers. His name means “my God is King.” His very name should have given him comfort in his time of trouble. That which his name taught him should have sustained him. It implied a personal interest in the living God - “My God.” And his name declared the

sovereign reign of his God over all things - "My God is King." His wife's name, Naomi, means "amiable, sweet, and pleasant. Indeed, Naomi was such a woman. Elimelech was greatly blessed of the Lord. God gave him an amiable, sweet, pleasant Naomi to be his wife. The names Elimelech gave to his two sons should have warned him of the danger of taking things into his own hands. Mahlon means "sickness," "weakness." Chilion means "consumption." Perhaps Elimelech gave these boys their names, because they were sickly children. But their names attest to the fact that the products of our flesh and the most cherished, most pleasant things of this world are weak, corrupt, fading, and dying.

ELEMELECH'S DECISION (vv. 1-2).

There was a famine in Bethlehem. Elimelech, looking upon his situation, judging everything by carnal reason, decided to move his family from Bethlehem to Moab. No doubt, he hoped to protect his family's wealth and keep his family from the hardships God's people were facing in Bethlehem. Apparently, there was an abundance of food and opportunity in Moab. But Moab was a land of idolaters.

Those who are strangers to God often enjoy much more of this world's goods than those who know, love, and worship him. As Jeremiah puts it, "*Moab hath been at ease from his youth.*" Israel is "*emptied from vessel to vessel*" (Jer. 48:11), not because God loves Moab, but because this is "*the portion of their cup.*" None should envy Moab, or covet what Moab has (Psa. 92:7). Who would envy the stalled ox being fattened for the slaughter?

We are told that Elimelech "*went to sojourn in the country of Moab.*" He did not go, intending to dwell there, but just to sojourn there. So he took Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilion, and came to Moab. But once they got to Moab, they settled down and "*continued there!*"

Elimelech's care to provide for his family is to be commended. Nothing is more detestable than a man who will not provide for his own family (1 Tim. 4:8). Over the years I have seen a good many men who tried to use spiritual things to excuse laziness. It doesn't work. True spirituality makes people industrious. A man who will not work does not know God. So we must commend Elimelech for taking care to provide for his family in time of famine. Still, his decision to move to Moab can never be justified. Solomon wrote, "*In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other*" (Eccles. 7:14). The day of adversity will either draw us to our God or drive us to the world. If faith does not cling to Christ, the flesh will drag us from him. Did ever a child of God gain anything by going to Egypt for help? What did Lot gain in Sodom? What did David gain at Ziklag? What did Elimelech gain in Moab?

There was no reason for Elimelech to leave Bethlehem. If by some dire necessity he had been forced to sell his property and was brought into poverty, God's law required his kinsman to relieve him (Lev. 25:25, 35). But this was not his condition. He went out full (v. 21). Though there was a famine in the land, it was not so severe that people perished by it. Elimelech's neighbors who stayed in Bethlehem, many with much larger families than he had, managed to keep body and soul together. But Elimelech was not content just to live in Bethlehem; he wanted to live in luxury, even if it meant moving to Moab! Rather than lose his riches, rather than be *reduced* to depending on God to supply his daily bread, Elimelech was willing to disobey and dishonor his God, lead his family away from God, and turn his back on the kingdom of God! Suppose everyone had done what he did. Canaan would soon have been empty. Rather than dealing with trouble, Elimelech tried to run from it. This man, who claimed to be a child of God, whose very name said, "My God is King",

moved to Moab. He took himself, his wife, and his family away from the worship of God. He took his family away from and forsook the people of God. He led his wife and his sons into the land of Moab and thus to the gods of Moab! Elimelech's decision was based entirely upon his own understanding, or perception of things, motivated by a completely carnal consideration. There was a famine in the land. Therefore, he gave no consideration to the promise of God, the honor of God, his own soul, or the souls of his family. What a very costly decision he made. What a costly move was this move to Moab. Yet, in his own mind he was fully justified.

THE DISOBEDIENCE OF ELIMELECH'S SONS (v. 4).

Mahlon and Chilion took wives from the women of Moab. The opening line of verse four might be accurately paraphrased, "*They transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord in taking strange wives.*" What they did was in direct violation of God's law. He expressly forbade mixed marriages between the children of Israel and the heathen, just as he forbids the mixed marriages of believers with unbelievers (Deut. 7:2-3; 2 Cor. 6:14). Yet, their father must be blamed. He taught them by example the way of disobedience. Parents who raise your children in the lap of the world should not be surprised to see them married to the world. Those who disregard the Word of God, particularly in this matter marrying an unbeliever, court disaster. Those believers who choose to marry a man or a woman who has no regard for God, marry a life of trouble (Deut. 7:3; 23:3; Ezek. 9:1-2; Neh. 13:23; 2 Cor. 6:14).

NAOMI'S DESOLATION (v. 5).

Naomi was reduced to a very pitiful condition. "*The woman was left!*" What a pathetic condition she was left in. She was now alone and poor, in a strange land, with no one to care for her, and no one with whom she could join in the

worship of God. We ought to learn three things from Elimelech.

We cannot out-run death. At our appointed time, we will die. We must never expect to prosper by disobedience. *“He that will save his life shall lose it!”*
All earthly pleasure and comforts are temporary.

When Naomi lost her husband, she took comfort in her sons. When she lost her sons, she was left alone. True, eternal pleasure and comfort is found only in Christ our God.

THE GRACIOUS, OVERRULING PROVIDENCE OF GOD
(Psa. 76:10).

Elimelech did wrong. His family suffered for it. But God’s will was done perfectly. Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ must be born out of the union of a Moabitess woman and the son of Rahab. And so *“it came to pass!”* The famine was sent by God, because he chose Ruth. Elimelech was allowed to do the evil he did, because God was determined to save Ruth. All this came to pass, because God purposed to save his elect by the incarnation of his Son, by the life and death of his Son, who was the Son of Boaz and Ruth (Rom. 8:28-32).

Chapter 3

Three Women

"Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people,

and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Ruth 1:6-18

The study of Bible characters is one of the most profitable and instructive aspects of Bible study. I like to study people as they are set before us in the Scriptures, because the Word of God always gives us an honest representation of them and they set before us the varied circumstances and conditions of the believer's life in this world. Seeing the hand of God in the lives of others, it is easier for me to understand the Lord's dealings with me.

Naomi had moved to Moab with her husband, Elimelech, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. They left Bethlehem in a time of famine. But Elimelech had brought his family down to Moab, a pagan, idolatrous land. It proved to be a very costly move. Elimelech died in Moab. His widow, Naomi continued to live there for some time. Her sons both married Moabite women, in direct violation of God's express command (Deut. 7:2-3; 2 Cor. 6:14). And they both died childless. Naomi was left in Moab, a widow with two daughter-in-laws, three widows in one household, poor, destitute, and alone. That is where we take up their story. Read Ruth 1:6-18.

Here three women are set before us by God the Holy Spirit. They are set before us upon the pages of Holy

Scripture for our learning and admonition (Rom. 15:40. Naomi - was a woman who believed God and, after a time of great trial, returned to the people of God and the place of blessing. Orpah was very much impressed with Naomi and started with her back to Bethlehem; but at last returned to her people and her gods. Orpah represents those who profess faith in Christ, but do not persevere in faith. Ruth was chosen of God, the object of special grace. Her decision to return to Bethlehem with Naomi was more than an act of love to Naomi. It was an act of faith in Naomi's God, the Lord God of Israel. Ruth is set before us here as a picture of a true believer. True faith endures trials and temptations and perseveres unto the end. True faith cannot be destroyed. These three women, Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth are examples both of what we should and what we should not be and do.

NAOMI'S DECISION

Naomi was a woman of remarkable faith. We do not know much about her husband, or her sons, but Naomi was a believer. She left Bethlehem with her husband. And she stayed in Moab after Elimelech died. Yet, her heart was never in Moab. As Lot's wife looked back to Sodom with regret, so Elimelech's wife looked back to Bethlehem with regret. It appears that, by one means or another, all the time she was in Moab she kept up with what was going on in Bethlehem (v. 6). She maintained correspondence with Bethlehem.

Here is a work of providence. The providence of God was at work for Naomi. The Lord God always deals with his children a wise and loving father (Heb. 12:5-12). Because he loved Naomi, the Lord would not allow Naomi to stay in Moab. He would not permit her to continue there, away from Bethlehem, away from his people, away from his worship. But to get her back he had to deal with her in a very trying way. First, the Lord killed her husband. Then, he killed both of her sons. He

made Moab bitter to her. Thank God for those painful, bitter thorn hedges that force us to return to him when we would forsake him (Hos. 2:6-7).

Here is a work of the word. The Lord caused this chosen one to hear the good report of his grace toward his people. Naomi *“heard in Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread”* (v. 6). When Naomi heard what God had done for his people, she believed the message and arose to return to Bethlehem. *“Faith cometh by hearing!”* By some means or another God Got the good news to Naomi that he had visited his people and given them bread. This is the way God saves sinners. He sends a preacher to proclaim the good news of his rich, free, abundant grace. The Lord has visited and redeemed his people. The Bread of Life has come down from heaven. Whenever God brings deliverance to his chosen, he causes them to hear the good news of his accomplishments of grace (Rom. 10:17). He never by passes the use of means, the means he has ordained for the salvation of his people.

Here is a believer’s work of faith (v. 7). *“Wherefore she went forth out of the place!”* There can never be a reconciliation with God without a separation from the world. Those who eat at the Father’s table have to leave the hog troughs of the world. You cannot serve God and mammon. A choice must be made. *“Choose you this day whom ye will serve!”* Naomi had made her choice, and so must we (2 Cor. 6:17; 1 John 2:15). She was determined to leave Moab and return to Israel. She was willing to leave her dearest and nearest relatives. Naomi was a true believer. She knew from whence she had fallen. She knew what she had lost. She remembered how blessed things had been in Bethlehem. And she was determined to return. She counted no cost too great.

ORPAH AND RUTH’S PROFESSION

Orpah and Ruth both *‘went on the way to return’* with Naomi to the land of Judah. Naomi was an exceptional woman. Though she was a stranger in Moab, both her daughters-in-law preferred living with her to returning to their parent’s homes. Not only that, they were ready enough to leave their families to return with Naomi to Bethlehem.

Even though Orpah and Ruth were pagan idolaters, Naomi was kind to them. Without compromising either the glory of God or the truth of God, she lived peaceably in the same house with them. She honored God and won their affection by her kindness. We could all learn from Naomi (Rom. 12:18). Kindness is always right!

Naomi urged her daughters-in-law to go back to their own families. She commended their behavior (v. 8). She prayed for them (v. 9). Then she kissed them good-bye (v. 9). But both Orpah and Ruth professed a determination to adhere to their mother-in-law. *“They said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people”* (v. 10). Their emotions were high. They were all boo-hooing and sobbing. And they made an emotional pact. But it did not last. Decisions based upon sentiment and emotion rather than upon sound judgment do not usually last very long.

Then Naomi persuaded both Orpah and Ruth, with strong reasons, to go back to their own families (vv. 11-13). Why did she discourage them? What was her purpose? Did she not want to save them from idolatry? Did she not want them to worship God? Without question, Naomi wanted both Orpah and Ruth to accompany her to Bethlehem. But if they returned with her, she wanted them to return, not for her sake, but because they wanted to.

Those who take up a profession of faith in Christ in order to satisfy someone else, or in the heat of an emotional experience, prove in time to be useless converts. An old deacon and dear friend who is now with the Lord, Bro. Darrell McClung, used to say, "Anything born in the storm will die in the calm." If Orpah and Ruth did come with her to Bethlehem-Judah, Naomi would have them make a deliberate, informed choice. She was not a good "soul winner" by today's standards. She was honest. She said, "If you go with me, it will cost you" (Matt. 8:19-22; Lk. 14:28; 18:18-23).

Orpah was easily persuaded to go back to Moab, to go back to her family, and to go back to her gods (vv. 14-15). Orpah's kiss showed that she had affection for Naomi; but she had greater affection for Moab and for all that Moab offered. Like Orpah, many today see great value in Christ and have an affection for him, but cannot and will not follow him, because they simply cannot find it in their hearts to forsake the world. Many Orpahs, because of adversity and excitement, run well for a season. But after a while, like Demas, because they love the world, go back. Frequently, they forsake Christ with a pretended kiss of friendship and love!

The motives of every professed believer must be tested. Naomi said, "*Why will you go with me?*" (v. 11). No earthly inducements were offered. No worldly gain was to be obtained. Nothing but faith in, gratitude to, and love for the Lord Jesus Christ can induce men to follow him through thick and thin.

RUTH'S RESOLUTION

Though Orpah forsook Naomi, and in forsaking Naomi forsook the Lord God, Ruth could not be persuaded to go back - "*Ruth clave unto her*" (vv. 15-18). Grace had chosen her. Providence arranged all things necessary for her soul's

eternal good. And at the appointed time, grace fetched her to the throne of God. Ruth, with complete resolution, walked through the door of commitment and closed it behind her. In this, she is a pattern to all who follow Christ.

As she saw in Naomi what Orpah could not, believing sinners see the beauty and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ as he is revealed in us by the grace and power of his Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:6). We are made to see who he is - the God-man our Savior. We are made to see what he has done for sinners, that he has both brought in an everlasting righteousness for us by his obedience and fully satisfied the law and justice of God for our sins by the sacrifice of himself. And God the Spirit has convinced us of the fulness and perfection of Christ as our Mediator.

John Gill informs us that the Chaldean paraphrase of Ruth's statement suggests that her commitment was more than a commitment to Naomi. It was a commitment to her God, his worship, his will, and his people. As such, it represents the declaration made by believing sinners in the waters of baptism. By that symbolic ordinance (Rom. 6:4-6), being buried with Christ in the watery grave, believers assert publicly to God, before all the world, "I take the Lord God to be my God. I take his people to be my people. I am resolved that nothing shall separate me from him.. Thus we have bound our souls to him with an oath, vowing to walk with Christ our God forever in the newness of life. Like Jephthah of old, we have lifted our hands unto the Lord. We cannot go back. Let us each, like Ruth, be "*steadfastly minded*" to follow Christ all the days of our lives.

Chapter 4

Good News Heard In Moab

“Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.”

Ruth 1:6

The Scriptures tell us plainly that when God is pleased to save a sinner, he causes that sinner to hear the gospel. Ruth 1:6 gives us an illustration of that fact. There is, by divine arrangement, a blessed necessity for gospel preaching. Sinners are regenerated, born again, given faith in Christ, and converted by the Word of God through the preaching of the gospel. This is the doctrine of Holy Scripture. All that is needed to convince us of this is a casual reading of the Word of God itself (Rom. 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:21; Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Let people argue and debate all they want to about this issue. This fact is plainly revealed in Holy Scriptures. God does not save his elect apart from the preaching of the gospel, any more than he saves them without repentance and faith. God does not save chosen, redeemed sinners by the light of nature, “sincere” idolatry, a false , man-centered gospel, freewill, works religion, or even the bare reading of Holy Scripture. If sinners are saved by the reading of the Bible, the best missionary work in the world would be to hire a plane and drop pages from the Bible all over the world. It is not the reading of the Word that saves, but the exposition of the Word in the preaching of the gospel (1 Pet. 1:25). Let any

who question this fact simply read the story of Philip and the Eunuch (Acts 8:30-31).

In his exposition of Romans 10:14-17, Martin Luther was exactly right in declaring that Paul asserts in that passage that four things are impossible. It is absolutely impossible for anyone to (1) call upon Christ until he believes on Christ, (2) believe on Christ until he hears the gospel of Christ, (3) hear the gospel of Christ without a preacher, or (4) preach the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit until he is sent of God.

Whenever men and women realize the necessity and the value of the preaching of the gospel three things are certain: (1.) They will honor God's servants (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15; 1 Thess. 5:12-13). (2.) They will attend the ministry of the Word. (3.) They will involve themselves in the preaching of the gospel. They will bring people to hear the gospel. They will support the work of the ministry, the preaching of the gospel, at home and around the world. And they will themselves endeavor to tell out the good news of redemption accomplished by Christ by personal witnessing, distributing tracts, gospel literature, tapes, etc.

It was when Naomi heard in Moab how that the Lord had visited his people that she left Moab and returned with Ruth to Bethlehem. The turning point in the family of Naomi, that which forever changed the lives of Naomi and Ruth, was what they heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had done for his people.

What a beautiful picture this is of the gospel, the good news that proclaims to sinners what the Lord God has done for his people by the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as their Substitute. Naomi *"had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread."* Someone told her what God had

done for his people. She believed the report (Isa. 53:1). *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). She acted upon her faith. Believing God, Naomi abandoned Moab (2 Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4) and returned to Bethlehem. There are seven distinct parallels between the Word which Naomi heard in Moab and the hearing of faith.

1. THE MESSAGE NAOMI HEARD IN MOAB WAS A VERY SIMPLE MESSAGE - *“The Lord had visited his people.”* Like Zacharias’ prophecy many years later (Lk. 1:78-79), the report Naomi heard was of a divine visitation. That is what happened when Christ came into this world. When God visits his people in mercy, salvation is accomplished. The way of peace was opened up by the death of Christ. The light for them that sit in darkness is the gospel.

The gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ is simplicity itself (2 Cor. 11:3). It reveals the most profound mysteries of the universe as simple statements of undeniable truth. Here is a simple fact - We have broken God’s law (Rom. 3:19-23). Here is a simple requirement - Justice demands satisfaction (Ezek. 18:0). Here is a simple declaration - Christ has visited and redeemed his people (Gal. 3:13). Here is a simple command - *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Heb. 11:6; 1 John 3:23). Here is a simple promise - *“Thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:30).

Those who are responsible to preach the gospel must do so with clarity and simplicity (1 Cor. 2:1-5, 13). True preachers studiously avoid the words of man’s wisdom. The power of the gospel is not in the eloquence of the preacher but in the message we preach (1 Cor. 15:1-3) - *“H -O-W that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.”* Here are four words that describe the death of Christ. These four words tell us how the Lord visited his people: sovereignty, substitution, satisfaction, and success. The Lord Jesus Christ

died at Calvary according to his own sovereign will and purpose, according to the terms agreed upon when he became our Surety in the covenant of grace before the world began (John 10:16-18; Heb. 10:1-10).

2. THE MESSAGE NAOMI HEARD IN MOAB WAS A MESSAGE OF LIFE - *“The Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.”* Bread was the one thing needed, just as Christ, the Bread of Life, is the one thing needful (Luke 10:42). Bread is a common figure and emblem of life, ever illustrative of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:32, 33, 48).

3. NAOMI’S DESTITUTE FAMILY HEARD A MESSAGE OF GRACE DOWN IN MOAB. They did not hear how that the Lord visited his people in providing a means for them to get bread, in making bread possible, in offering them bread, or in giving them a plan by which to get bread, but in *“giving them bread!”* Eternal life and all that pertains to it is the free-gift of God’s unconditional, unqualified grace in Christ (Rom. 6:23).

Satan is a great deceiver. He knows the deceitfulness of the human heart. And he has stocked the world with numerous religions that appeal to the proud heart of man. All satanic religions have one thing in common. They all make salvation to be, in some way, at some point, to some degree dependent upon and ultimately determined by man. The religion of the Bible is the religion of grace, free, sovereign, irresistible grace (Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Cor. 4:7). From election and predestination to resurrection and glorification there is no part of salvation that is determined by either the will, works, or worth of man. *“Salvation is of the Lord!”* It is, in its totality, the work of God’s grace in Christ.

4. NAOMI’S FAITH IN THE WORD SHE HEARD IN MOAB WAS SHOWN BY HER WORKS (vv. 6-7). All who

truly believe God show their faith by their works (James 2:17). God's children do nothing to get saved, but do much because they are saved (Eph. 2:10). We show our faith by coming to Christ (Heb. 11:6). We show our faith by works of love (James 1:27; 2:14-26). It is not legal austerity that demonstrates true faith in Christ, but mercy, love, and grace (Rom. 14:17).

5. THE HISTORY OF NAOMI'S FAMILY SHOWS US THAT FAITH IN CHRIST AND SALVATION BY HIM IS A PERSONAL, INDIVIDUAL MATTER. Naomi had faith, and Ruth had faith. God graciously gave them that gift which no man can have, but by the gift of his grace (Eph. 2:8). Orpah only had a profession of faith. Multitudes there are like her. Philip Mauro¹ wrote, "God is a 'God of truth,' that is to say, of reality; and he will have reality. A mere profession of Christianity...may deceive men. But God knoweth the hearts."

6. THOSE WHO TRULY BELIEVE THE GOSPEL OF GOD ARE CONTROLLED IN THEIR LIVES BY THINGS NOT SEEN (2 Cor. 4:18-5:1; Heb. 11:13-16). Orpah went back to Moab, because she was "*mindful of that country.*" Her mind was full of Moab. Like Lot's wife (Gen. 19:15-26), she started out, but her heart was still in Moab. Ruth had the same opportunity to go back, but her mind was full of another country. Therefore, she persevered.

7. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORPAH AND RUTH, THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SAVED SINNERS AND LOST SINNERS, IS THE DIFFERENCE MADE BY THE GRACE OF GOD (1 Cor. 4:7). Ruth was not a better woman than Orpah. Both were kind, affectionate, caring, and tender daughters to Naomi (vv. 8-9). But Orpah was lost and Ruth was saved. A sweet, lovable disposition, a

¹ Mauro, Phillip, *Ruth The Satisfied Stranger*, (Fleming H. Revel, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1920), pp 63-64

tender, affectionate heart, and faithfulness in responsibilities and relationships, though they are commendable traits of character, will never take us to heaven. The one thing needful is faith in Christ. If that one thing needful is lacking, like the rich young ruler, we are yet without hope before God (John 3:15-18).

Naomi dealt fairly and truthfully with both Orpah and Ruth. She made no appeals to their flesh. She offered no carnal inducements to get them to go back to Bethlehem with her. She simply told them...

- What she had left. She told them of her fall, her departure from the house of bread.
- What God had done. How he visited his people.
- What was to be found at Bethlehem. Bread, life, deliverance, and restoration if a kinsman were pleased to undertake their cause.

Orpah chose to stay in Moab. She counted the cost and went back. Ruth came to Bethlehem with Naomi, believing the report of good news and grace she heard from the lips of her mother-in-law. Once she met and married Boaz, she found with him a better life than she had ever known before.

Chapter 5

Ruth's Choice

"Ruth clave unto her."

Ruth 1:14

Great issues are often determined by choices that appear to be insignificant. The choice or decision of one person often affects many. Indeed, there have been a few people in history who made choices and decisions by which God, in his providence, has directed the history of the world. Ceasar's decision to cross the Rubican forever changed the history of the world. Columbus' decision to continue his western voyage for just one more day was a decision that has affected everyone of us. But by comparison the decisions of those men were insignificant when weighed against the decision made by Ruth the Moabitess in the plains of Moab over 3000 years ago. *"Ruth clave unto Naomi."* The decision of that Moabitess stranger forever fixed the course of human history in the direction of God's eternal, redemptive purpose!

If we learned nothing else from Ruth's choice, we ought to be made to realize the importance of making, even seemingly insignificant decisions, with wisdom and care. We must always consider the consequences of our decisions. Do not make hasty, rash, spur of the moment decisions. They are almost always costly and regretted. Elimelech made a decision which resulted in the ruin of his family. Ruth made a decision that was costly to herself, but was right, and resulted in the salvation, the everlasting salvation of untold millions. Yet, it was a decision, a choice made in a lonely dessert, which no one knew about but Ruth, Orpah, Naomi and God.

Ruth's cChoice involved the complete commitment of herself to Naomi, her people, and her God. It is a beautiful

and instructive picture of every believing sinner's consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

Ruth 1:14-17

Ruth said to Naomi, "**WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO.**" In the course of our lives we cross many paths. At each cross road we come to, we all like to reserve to ourselves the freedom to choose which direction we will take. Ruth had no way of knowing what cross roads she might come to. But here she deliberately and decidedly renounced all freedom of choice in the affairs of her life. She committed herself to a path, not knowing where it might take her, only that it would end in Bethlehem. She committed herself to a course of life that would be entirely determined by someone else.

That is exactly what sinners do when they come to Christ. We commit ourselves to him. Taking his yoke upon ourselves willingly, bowing to his will and his dominion as our Lord. We become his voluntary bond slave (Matt. 11:28-30; Ex. 21:1-5). This is what we publicly declared to our Lord, to his people, and to all the world in our baptism. Is it not? Buried in the watery grave and rising with Christ to walk in the newness of life, we publicly avowed that we would, from that day forward, walk with him in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4-6).

We have been turned from our way to his way. To walk in his way is to walk in the King's highway by faith (Isa. 35:8). That is the highway of holiness, the low way of humility, the narrow way of faith, the rough way of trial, the old way of truth, the safe way of security and the good way of grace. This is the way of the cross that leads us home. What could be more blessed than to have our path ordered by the Good Shepherd, who goes before his sheep in the way in which he leads them.

“AND WHERE THOU LODGEST, I WILL LODGE.”

Ruth made no stipulations as to where the lodging place should be, or what kind. The one desire that filled her breast was to be with Naomi, her beloved mother-in-law. She had many friends; but she dwelt with Naomi (2:23). Even when she married Boaz, *“Ruth clave unto Naomi”* (4:15).

This is a picture of every believer's great ambition and blessed prospect - To dwell with Christ (Psa. 27:4; 23:6; Isa. 57:15; John 14:23). It matters not where my path takes me, if Christ is there. It matters not where I live, if Christ is there. It matters not where I worship, if Christ is there. It matters not what, or where heaven is, if Christ is there. This is the blessedness of the New Jerusalem - *“The Lord is there!”* (John 14:3).

“THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.” Ruth's choice involved a painful separation. She left her people and took Naomi's people. The very first thing God calls for is an affirmation of love by a separation, an alienation of affection from all natural, earthly relationships. If we would follow Christ, Christ alone must be considered (Lk. 14:25-27). Just as the Lord God passed by Esau, giving him no consideration, to save Jacob (Rom. 9:13), so we must allow no consideration to stand between us and Christ. When God called Abraham, he commanded him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. But Abraham would not let go of his father

Terah. So God killed Terah (Gen. 11:31-32). Then, he brought Abraham into Canaan (Gen. 12:1-4; Acts 7:1-4). If **we would** follow Christ, there is a very real sense in which we must forsake our own people (Psa. 45:10-11). You can only worship and serve one person. Commitment to Christ not only involves the severance of old relationships; it involves loving, loyal commitment to all is family - Behold, my family (Matt. 12:49).

Then, Ruth said, ***“THY GOD (SHALL BE) MY GOD!”*** Without question, this was the most difficult part of Ruth’s decision. The natural man clings with the utmost tenacity to his religion and to his gods. It matters not how degrading the religion is, or how useless the god is, the fact that it is his religion and his god gives it value in his eyes. He resents any reflection upon it. He will fight for his religion. He will die in the defense of his god.

Yet, if we would follow Christ, we must abandon the gods of our fathers. It is absolutely impossible for anyone to follow Christ without forsaking the religion of Babylon and the gods of Babylon (Rev. 18:4; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). We cannot worship at the altar of free-will and the altar of free-grace. We must choose , as Ruth did, between the gods of our fathers and the true and living God, the God revealed in this Book, the God revealed in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who is the true and living God is both sovereign and gracious, just and merciful. He is the God of eternal electing love, effectual blood atonement, and sovereign irresistible grace.

Then Ruth said to Naomi - ***“WHERE THOU DIEST, WILL I DIE!”*** At the very outset, Ruth said to Naomi, “I have made my decision. It is a life-long commitment. It will not be reversed. Not one step will be retraced.” I will be with you to the end!” (Lk. 9:62). This, too, is a picture of faith in Christ.

The believer comes to Christ recognizing that in his death as the sinner's Substitute, we died (Gal. 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 6:11). We glory in the cross of Christ, because we died there with him (Gal. 6:14). And the believer's commitment to Christ is a resolute, permanent, persevering commitment (Phil. 3:13-14). With the true believer, faith in and commitment to Christ is not spasmodic thing, but a deliberately chosen way of life.

“AND THERE WILL I BE BURIED.” Ruth's life was so interwoven with Naomi's that she wanted to be buried with her. She could follow her no further than to the grave. But she followed her that far. Ruth's allegiance to Naomi ended in a common grave, but the believer's union with and allegiance to Christ begins in a common grave - We are buried with him in baptism (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). Yet, our burial with Christ looks far beyond the grave to the resurrection and on to the endless ages of eternity. If we died with him, we shall be raised by him. When we are raised by him, we shall live together with him forever - We shall *“ever be with the Lord!”*

I hold before you the City of God and this world, Bethlehem and Moab. I hold before you the Lord Jesus Christ and this world. I bid you now to follow Christ, to consecrate yourselves to him in exactly the same way that Ruth consecrated herself to Naomi. I cannot tell you what you may meet with in the way. But I can tell you that this path is the path of life and ends in life, eternal life. Let us each make Ruth's choice our choice? *“Whither thou goest...there will I be buried!”*

Chapter 6

“The Beginning Of Barley Harvest”

"So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest."

Ruth 1:22

It was no accident that Naomi and Ruth came to Bethlehem *"in the beginning of barley harvest."* They came at this time by the arrangement of God's good providence; and this is here recorded by divine inspiration for our instruction (Rom. 15:4). We read in verse 19 - *"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem."* We are not told how long their journey took, or what obstacles they met with along the way, only that they came to Bethlehem, the House of Bread. Nothing else is really important. They came to that place where all their needs were met, Bethlehem, the House of Bread! They had come to the right place.

When they came to Bethlehem, they caused a great stir. *"All the city was moved about them."* Why? Why did the arrival of these two poverty-stricken, travel-weary, ragged and hungry women cause such a stir in Bethlehem? No one would profit by their arrival. In fact, those two women were just two more mouths to feed, bodies to clothe, and citizens to protect and provide for from the stores of the city. When I read this 19th verse, I am reminded that there is a commotion in heaven over one sinner who repents (Lk. 15:10). There is a party in heaven every time a prodigal comes home.

Ruth and Naomi came to the right place. They received a warm welcome. And they came at a good time - *"In the beginning of barley harvest."* The beginning of barley harvest

was in late April, in the early springtime. Barley is the first grain that ripens in the spring. It is then that the firstfruits of the earth are brought forth, upon which the Scriptures place such great significance. "*The beginning of barley harvest*" was a time of great joy and of great spiritual significance, because it anticipated the redemptive work of Christ, his resurrection glory, and the believer's eternal life in him.

There were three feasts held by the Jews every year. These three feasts were established by the law of God and are full of typical instruction. We read about them in Leviticus 23.

1st - The Feast of Passover (vv. 4-8) - Actually, this feast originated in Egypt (Ex. 12:1-13). When the judgment of God fell upon the Egyptians, every household in Israel sacrificed a paschal lamb. The blood of the lamb was put upon the door of every house. When judgment fell, God looked on the blood and passed over the house where blood was found. That slain paschal lamb represented Christ our Passover, who was sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7), by whose blood we are saved.

Our Lord Jesus Christ kept the Passover feast with his disciples just before he was crucified as our Substitute. It was then that he instituted the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:17-30). The feast of the Passover intimated that the immediate result of Christ's death would be a body of people, a family, a nation, a church, sharing together the benefits of his sacrifice in blessed communion (1 Cor. 10:16).

2nd - The Feast of Firstfruits (vv. 9-11) - On Sunday after the Passover, Israel brought a handful of the firstfruits of their harvest and waved it before the Lord. This signified that every product of the soil, every result of man's labor and toil is of the Lord and belongs to the Lord. It was on this day that our

Lord Jesus Christ arose from the grave and became the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23). All the results of Christ's work on the cross, our redemption and our resurrection, are the works of our great God. And all who were ransomed by the sacrifice of Christ our Passover belong to God as his distinctly redeemed people.

3rd - The Feast of Pentecost (vv. 15-21). This was held seven weeks after the Passover. Pentecost was a time of renewal. The Jews renewed their vows and consecrated themselves anew to the Lord God on the day of Pentecost. This feast foreshadowed the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh after the resurrection and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was on this day that the Holy Spirit was given in Acts 2.

It is the second of these great, typical feasts (The Feast of Firstfruits) which corresponds to the beginning of barley harvest. (Read Leviticus 23:10-11). Ruth and Naomi came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. What spiritual and typical significance is to be seen in this fact?

THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS AND THE BEGINNING OF BARLEY HARVEST DEFINITELY FORESHADOWED THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD (1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18). When we realize that the beginning of barley harvest, the time when Ruth came to Bethlehem, refers to the resurrection of Christ, it takes on very special meaning. Typically and spiritually, this is an event bursting with gospel truth.

The beginning of barley harvest, the feast of firstfruits, was a time of new life, after the long death of winter. In the winter time everything dies. The flowers fade, the grass withers. The trees shed their leaves. But in the

spring time new life rises out of the earth. So it is in things spiritual.

This present gospel age began with the resurrection of Christ from the grave. Our Lord compares this age to a great field ripe with the harvest (Matt. 13:37-39; Lk. 10:2; John 4:35). The field is the world. The seed is the Word of God. The harvest is the end of the world. Just as the beginning of harvest was marked in Palestine by the waving of the first ripe fruit before the Lord, so the beginning of this gospel age was marked by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This was a time of great joy to our Lord's disciples, and would be to us, if we understood its full meaning (Lk. 24:50-53). Chosen sinners, redeemed by the blood of Christ, are at God's appointed time born again by virtue of Christ's death and resurrection as their Substitute. Every time a sinner is born again he becomes a kind of firstfruit unto God (James 1:18). The new birth is the first resurrection which guarantees we shall have part in the second (Rev. 20:6).

This feast was held on the first day of the week - *"On the morrow after the Sabbath."* Our Savior rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Though we have no laws requiring it, and though we do not observe any sabbath day, other than the sabbath of faith, the first day of the week is peculiarly the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10; Psa. 118:23-24; 1 Cor. 16:2).

The feast of firstfruits was a time of great joy. It symbolized our complete justification by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The words, *"to be accepted for you"* (Lev. 23:11) describe what the resurrection of Christ is to God's elect (Rom. 4:25). His righteousness is "accepted for you." His blood is "accepted for you." He is "accepted for you."

The very word “firstfruits” means “There is more to come.” The sheaf of firstfruits waved before the Lord signified two things: It was an acknowledgment that God alone brought the grain out of the earth. Life comes from Him. It was also a pledge of much more to come. So it is with the resurrection of Christ. It manifests the exceeding greatness of God’s power and grace to all who believe (Eph. 1:19-20); and it is the pledge of our own resurrection at God’s appointed time (1 Cor. 15:13, 23).

Though this gospel age has already lasted for nearly two thousand years, it is still “the beginning of barley harvest.” From the moment of Christ’s resurrection, God has, as it were, stopped the clock of time. There are no times and seasons counted in this age. There are no signs to be fulfilled before Christ comes. When you read the Old Testament prophets, they saw no interval between *“the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow”* (1 Pet. 1:11). We are to look upon the coming of our Lord with imminent expectancy. God has stopped the clock, in longsuffering patience, for the salvation of his elect (2 Pet. 3:9, 15). This is still the beginning of barley harvest *Philip Mauro* wrote...

“The application of this to all who hear and believe the gospel is apparent. The glad message of pardoning love, with the gracious invitation, *‘Come, for all things are ready,’* is sent to every part of the world, and is intended even for those who are at the lowest levels of human degradation and need. The words that save (Acts 11:14) can penetrate everywhere; and even those who are cursed by the law, as were the people of Moab, may, through the gospel, become partakers of the unsearchable riches of Christ. For He, by his death, has taken away *‘the middle wall of partition,’* the law of commandments in ordinances,

which shut Gentiles out from those privileges the law conferred on the people of Israel (Eph. 2:12-16); and now, 'by means of the gospel,' all that Christ is in the resurrection is shared equally by believing sinners, whether from among the Jews or from among the Gentiles (Eph. 3:6-9). So we may say that every believing sinner comes to Bethlehem, to the House of Bread, to share the 'true Bread from heaven,' and that he comes at *'the beginning of barley harvest'*, for he comes to CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD!"²

The gospel we are sent into this world to proclaim is the gospel of the risen Christ. The tendency of most in our day is to make little of the resurrection of Christ, except for the rituals of Easter Sunday. In the New Testament, the resurrection of Christ was the burden of Apostolic preaching (2 Tim. 2:8). Christ on the cross cannot save you. Christ on the throne does (John 17:2). Christ in the tomb has no saving power. Christ on the throne does. The gospel proclaims Christ alive and reigning! Thank God he died. He died to save his people from the penalty of sin. But he did not stay dead. He lives to save his people from the power and dominion of sin.

YET, THE CHRIST WHO IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD IS THE VERY CHRIST WHO WAS CRUCIFIED FOR SINNERS, AS OUR SUBSTITUTE. The feast of firstfruits and the beginning of barley harvest looked back to the slaying of the paschal lamb; and the resurrection of Christ looks back to the death of Christ, the Lamb of God, and has meaning for us, because he made atonement for us by shedding his precious blood in our place on the cross.

² Mauro, Phillip, *Ruth The Satisfied Stranger*, (Fleming H. Revel, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1920), p.88

The only other place in the Bible where these words, *“the beginning of barley harvest,”* are used certainly portrays the death of our Lord Jesus Christ and our glorious redemption by the shedding of his blood (2 Sam. 21:9). A brief survey of 2 Samuel 21 gives a very clear picture of the redemptive work of Christ, which was most truly *“the beginning of barley harvest.”* The story should be familiar.

Saul had sinned against the Lord by breaking a covenant made in the name of God. He slew the Gibeonites with whom Israel had made a covenant (v. 1). Judgment fell upon Israel, because of this sin. God sent three years of famine in Israel. Before God would take away the curse, justice had to be satisfied. The Gibeonites required a just atonement (vv. 9). Atonement could not be made by silver and gold (v. 4; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). Atonement could only be made by blood (v. 6). It must be a complete, perfect, entire atonement, represented by the number of men slain. Seven is the number of fulness, completion, and finality (v. 6). The atonement could be made by none but men of Saul’s house. Even so, atonement for man’s sin could not be made except by the Son of God becoming a man (Heb. 10:1-9). Man sinned and man must die. The atonement was made *“in the hill before the Lord”* (v. 9). And the day of atonement was *“the beginning of barley harvest.”* Though justice demanded a complete sacrifice for sin, mercy spared Mephibosheth, because of a covenant (v. 7). Once the atonement was made, *“God was intreated for the land,”* and the curse was removed. Reconciliation was accomplished upon the grounds of justice satisfied (v. 14).

“The beginning of Barley Harvest”...

- Looks back to the death of Christ - Faith.
- Symbolized the resurrection of Christ - Justification.

- Illustrates the beginning of life in Christ - The New Birth.

Chapter 7

The Resolute Consecration Of True Faith

"And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her."

Ruth 1:16-18

Be sure you understand these two things: (1.) Good works are not, in any way, a cause or condition of salvation. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9). Yet, (2.) good works are the fruit, consequence, and evidence of true, saving faith (Eph. 2:8-10). No one is born of God who does not bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). If Christ is in a person, that person's life will bear a distinct resemblance to Christ. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creature in him (2 Cor. 5:17).

God the Holy Spirit holds Ruth before us as an example of true faith. This woman's decision to worship and serve the Lord God was followed and evidenced by her determination to go with Naomi to Bethlehem and identify herself with the people of God.

If there is anything plainly taught in Holy Scripture it is this - Wherever there is true faith in God, true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a voluntary, determined consecration of heart and life to him (Read Matt. 5-7, Rom. 6, 1 Cor. 6, 2 Cor.

6, Eph. 4, Phil. 2, Col. 3, Heb. 6, James 2, 1 Pet. 2, 2 Pet. 3 and 1 John 3 and 4).

RUTH'S CONVERSION

Ruth was converted by the grace of God through the godly testimony and influence of her mother-in-law, Naomi. Without question, she was converted by God's grace. All true Christians understand that "*Salvation is of the Lord!*" It is God's work alone. Yet, our God condescends to use human instruments to accomplish his work. And the instrument God used to save Ruth was Naomi's testimony and faithful witness.

Every child of God ought to long for the privilege of being an instrument in his hands for the saving of his elect. We ought, as instruments in God's hands, to zealously seek the salvation of chosen, redeemed sinners. It is written in the Scriptures, "*He that winneth souls is wise*" (Prov. 11:30). Like those four men in Luke's gospel (Luke 5:17-20), let us bring needy souls to the Savior. We must never use the sovereignty of God and the doctrines of grace as an excuse for indifference to the souls of men or the neglect of our own duties and responsibilities.

Ruth's conversion gave Naomi a reason to rejoice and give thanks to God. Naomi was so melancholy, so dejected that she hardly seems to take notice of what the Lord did for Ruth. But she should have rejoiced. True, her afflictions were sharp. She had suffered great losses. Her husband, her sons, her home, her wealth, all were gone. She thought the Lord had dealt bitterly with her. Naomi failed, as we often do, to realize that the Lord always deals graciously with his own, especially when he appears to deal bitterly with them (Rom. 8:28).

Consider what she had gained. True, she had lost everything earthly and material; but she had gained the soul of her daughter-in-law. She should have been rejoicing (Lk. 15:10). We are all too much like Naomi! We are often so concerned about ourselves and about the cares of this world that we fail to care for and minister to the souls of men, and fail to observe the works and blessings of God's grace.

It appears to have been Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem which influenced Ruth to trust her God. What a lesson there is here for every believer. One great reason why many have so little influence upon their children, their relatives, and their friends is the fact that they do not live consistently with their profession.

G. G. Letters, a preacher who lived a long time ago, said that he was converted at a prayer meeting one Sunday evening. That same night, as his mother sat with her children by the fire, she told them how delighted and thankful she would be if they, as one family, were traveling together on the King's highway. When she said that, young George stood to his feet and said, with a calm, resolute voice, "I, for one, have decided for Christ."

Thank God, he does use the influences of the godly to save his people. But it takes more than godly influences to save a sinner. Those godly influences must be accompanied by the power and grace of God the Holy Spirit (John 6:63). Not even the preaching of the gospel can bring forth the fruit of faith in the hearts of men without the quickening power and grace of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5).

Let every mother and father learn from Elimelech and Naomi the importance of obedience and consecration to Christ. Elimelech led his sons away from God to Moab, and they died there. Naomi taught Ruth about God and led her to

the Lord God by her renewed devotion. Let us learn from Ruth the necessity of consecration to Christ. Let us, like Ruth, renounce all for God, *“count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.”*

RUTH’S CONFLICT

Ruth’s consecration to the Lord was tested, and ours will be as well. Like Ruth, all who trust Christ, consecrating themselves to the Lord God, will have their faith tested. Their resolution will be tempted. Their consecration will be tried.

One great trial of faith, particularly the faith of young believers, is observing the sorrows and trials of other believers. Naomi worshipped God. She was a true believer. Yet, she was a poor, penniless, homeless widow. She had lost everything dear to her in this world. It was not an easy trial she had to bear. As we have seen, the Lord took her husband, her sons, her home, and all earthly comforts, that he might have her heart. He would not leave her; and he would not let her leave him (Jer. 32:38-40). But her trial was a great trial for Ruth’s faith to endure.

Ruth’s faith was tested in that she was required to stop and count the cost of following her Lord (vv. 11-13). If she would walk with God, she had to leave Moab; so will we. If she would live by faith, she had to forsake family and friend; so must we. If she would be numbered among God’s elect, she had to share the lot of God’s despised and afflicted people; so must we (Heb. 11:24-26). Like Samuel Rutherford, all who count the cost and follow Christ acknowledge that *“his sackcloth and ashes are better than the fool’s laughter!”*

Ruth’s faith was also tested by Orpah’s apostasy. Orpah followed Naomi for a while. She made a good start for Bethlehem. However, when she realized what it would cost to

be numbered among the people of God, she kissed Naomi and went back to Moab. Like the rich young ruler, she decided against God. Like him, she departed reluctantly; but she departed forever (Matt. 19:20-22). The Pliables of this world are a grief and disappointment to Christians. Yet, as Bunyan taught us, believers must not be influenced by the falls of those Pliables.

Ruth's faith was certainly tried by the humiliation she had to endure (2:2). She had to glean in the fields of Boaz as a pauper, as a stranger, depending entirely on his charity. Even so, you and I must humble ourselves as empty-handed beggars before the throne of Christ.

Her faith was greatly tried, I am sure, by Naomi's apparent coldness. "*Ruth clave unto Naomi;*" but Naomi was a wise woman. She did not want Ruth to come with her because of pity, but because of conviction. To Ruth, it must have appeared that Naomi did not care for her; but Naomi was more interested in her soul than in her approval. Ruth was not a mere statistic to Naomi, but an immortal, eternity bound soul.

Ruth's faith must have been greatly tried by Naomi's sorrow and bitterness, too (vv. 20-21). If only Naomi had been able to look into the future, she would have seen that she had greater reason to rejoice now than ever. She was about to be brought into the family from whom the Lord Jesus Christ would be descended! Let us learn to trust God's providence (Rom. 8:28). When our hearts are overcome with sorrow, for the sake of others we might influence, we ought to take care that we speak no disheartening word (Psa. 73:15). In spite of all these trials, Ruth "*was steadfastly minded,*" and

RUTH'S CONSECRATION

She devoted herself to the Lord God of Israel. When she said, *“Thy God shall be my God,”* Ruth declared her allegiance to God. When she said, *“Entreat me not to leave thee,”* she was declaring her thoughtful, resolution and determination in this matter. Like Jephthah, she had lifted her hand to the Lord and could not go back (Judg. 11:35).

The essence of all true faith is a confident consecration of heart and life to the one true and living God, the God revealed in Holy Scripture, the God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ruth said to Naomi, *“Thy God,”* not another god, not Chemosh or Moloch, but Jehovah - *“Thy God shall be my God!”* Most people religious people today have no idea who God is. The imaginary god of their devisings is no God at all. They shudder at the mention of the God of the Bible, whose justice is such that he once destroyed the world in his wrath, burned Sodom and Gomorrah in his fury, drowned Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, swallowed up Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their followers into hell, and saves sinners only by the blood of his own dear Son!

This God, the one true and living God, the God of mercy and truth, grace and justice, fury and goodness, severity and love, the Lord God of heaven and earth, is the peculiar, distinguishing possession of every believer. *“Thy God shall be my God.”*

This is every believer's great article of faith - “I believe in God!” We believe his Word, trust his Son, and bow to his rule. God himself is our Ruler and Lawgiver (Psa. 119:35-38). The Lord God is our Instructor (Psa. 27:11; 86:11). He is our Trust (Ruth 2:12). Our faith is in God, that God who is revealed and known in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust him alone for grace, salvation and eternal life. *“This God is our God, forever and ever, he will be our Guide even unto death”* (Psa. 48:14).

RUTH'S COMPANIONS

Being consecrated to God, Ruth was consecrated to his people. She said to Naomi, *“Thy people shall be my people.”* The fact is, those who love Christ love his people (1 John 3:14). It is impossible to be devoted to Christ without being devoted to his people. When Ruth said, *“Thy people shall be my people,”* she knew that they were a despised people, but that they were God’s people. She knew they were a people with many faults, but that they were his people. She knew they were a people from whom she was not likely to gain much, but she knew they were God’s people. Therefore she chose to be identified with them, and counted it her honor to be numbered among them.

Being a Moabitess, Ruth might well have expected ill-treatment from the Jews. But, because Jehovah was their God, Ruth made Naomi’s people her people. The only hope of redemption was in Bethlehem. There was no kinsman redeemer for her anywhere else. Boaz was in Bethlehem. The hope of redemption more than made up for any deficiencies she may have seen in her kinsman redeemer’s people. So it is with the church of God today. Christ’s presence with his people more than makes up for their deficiencies.

Chapter 8

“Change And Decay All Around ME I see”

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest."
Ruth 1:19-22

“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day, Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around (me) I see - Thou who changest not, abide with me!”

I once heard Bro. Scott Richardson say, “Life in this world ain’t much. It begins with a slap on the bottom and ends with a shovel full of dirt in your face, and there ain’t much in between except bumps and bruises.” Certainly, Naomi would agree with Bro. Scott. (Read Ruth 1:19-22).

Naomi was a true believer, once highly esteemed in Bethlehem, a woman of wealth and influence. But during a time of famine, she left her country with her husband and her two sons. When Elimilech and Naomi might have used their riches to relieve great need, they chose to hang on to their

money and leave their people. But things changed in a hurry. After ten years' absence, Naomi returned from Moab bereaved and destitute. She had lost her husband and her two sons, her money and her property. She came back to Bethlehem with nothing but the ragged clothes on her back and a daughter-in-law who was as poor and destitute as she was. How quickly things change! When Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, as she walked down the streets, broken, weary, ragged, and worn with age and trouble, the whole town was astonished by what they saw. They said to one another, "*Is this Naomi?*" The withered rose is so much unlike the blooming flower that the one bears only a faint resemblance to the other; and Naomi was so unlike the woman who left Bethlehem ten years earlier that her friends could hardly believe it was her - "*Is this Naomi?*"

The afflictive hand of divine providence makes great changes, sometimes shocking changes, in a short time. When God chastens, he means to correct; and his chastening rod always has its intended effect (Heb. 12:5-12). Naomi correctly attributed all her troubles to the hand of her God. She learned that everything she had experienced was brought to pass by the hand of her heavenly Father and that it had all been for her soul's good.

A PICTURE OF THE FALL

Certainly, Naomi stands before us in this text as a picture of the fall of the human race in our father Adam (vv. 20-21). If we could get some idea of Adam's condition and circumstances in the garden of Eden, as God made him, we would look in the mirror every morning and say, "*Is this Adam? God made us full, but now we are empty!*" (Eccles. 7:29).

God made man in his own image and after his own likeness (Gen. 1:27). In the beginning, Adam was full. He was perfectly

righteous. He was incredibly brilliant. He was spiritual, strong, and in complete peace and harmony with both God and his creation. Then, Adam sinned, and we sinned in him. Oh, how great was the fall of man! (Rom. 5:12).

Because of that terrible fall, we all bear greater resemblance, by nature, to the devil than to God (Matt. 15:19). We are spiritually empty, void of righteousness and full of sin. Man is no longer spiritual but carnal, no longer wise but foolish, no longer strong but weak. Fallen man is without peace, without God, and without hope in his natural condition.

The only remedy for this lost, ruined condition is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:14-16). When Naomi had lost everything, she returned to Bethlehem, she returned to her God and his people. Even so, sinners who have lost everything in Adam must return to the Lord God by faith in Christ Jesus. When Naomi returned to Bethlehem, she came home to God.

Bethlehem means "House of Bread." In the house of God there is always *"bread enough and to spare."* And there is always a warm welcome in the Father's heart for returning prodigals. The word Judah means praise - Bethlehem-Judah was the Place of Praise. Naomi and Ruth came out of the place of sorrow and suffering, out of the place of death and despair into the place of praise. The mercy-seat is the place of praise. There God meets with sinners and declares that they are forgiven. That Mercy-Seat is Christ (Heb. 9; 1 John 2:2). Bethlehem-Judah was the place of God, the place of his presence, his power, his protection, his promise, his provision. That is what Christ is to all who trust him. He is our divine refuge (Prov. 18:10).

GREAT CHANGES

In this text, Naomi also represents the changing circumstances of life in this world. What changes occur in this world! Every day something new happens that either elevates or depresses our spirits.

We rejoice in favorable changes. Naomi had been through some hard times. But things were about to get much better. Even in this vale of tears there are some joys that must not be overlooked or taken for granted. What great joy we have when our children become mature, responsible adults, when God is pleased to save them, when they bring grandchildren into the family. When friends prosper, our hearts rejoice with them. When someone we love recovers from sickness or their family's troubles seem to be over, we find joy in change. But our text is not talking about favorable changes.

The changes Naomi had experienced were afflictive, trying changes, changes which are hard to endure. Though her friends appear to have been terribly disturbed by Naomi's great losses, she was composed. She resigned herself to the will of God. She spoke honestly, but not scornfully of the Lord's dealings with her (vv. 20-21).

Naomi had endured a very sorrowful trial. She went out full. At least, she thought she was full. After all, she had everything the world could offer. Her husband was wealthy and highly respected. Her sons were in good health. Her family enjoyed social rank and prestige. But, when she came home, things were different. She came home empty.

Let us learn and ever remember that the fulness of this world is soon gone (Eccles. 1:2-3; 1 Sam. 2:3-5). There is a fulness that can never be taken away in Christ (Lk. 10:42). To be in Christ, to have Christ is to be rich in our souls, rich toward God, rich forever.

Painful as her troubles were, and though they must be blamed upon disobedience and unbelief as their cause, Naomi properly acknowledged the hand of God in them all. She said, *“The Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me.”* *“The Lord hath brought me home again empty!”* (See 1 Sam. 2:6-8).

The fact is, nothing will give our souls peace and satisfaction in the times of trouble and great sorrow like the acknowledgment of God’s hand in our troubles. This is were Job found solace for his soul (Job 1:21). When God took Eli’s sons and told him it was because of his sin, Eli comforted his heart in the acknowledgement of God’s providence (1 Sam. 3:18). When David’s son was killed because of David’s sin, he took comfort in the fact that God loved him, in the fact that he is always wise, gracious and just, and he always does what is right and good (2 Sam. 12:20-24). When Shimei publicly cursed David out before his servants, the man after God’s own heart took refuge in the purpose, providence, and promise of God (2 Sam. 16:9-12). The One by whose hand Naomi had been afflicted and by whose hand she had been brought home was, *“The Lord, the Almighty!”* El-Shaddai! God all-sufficient, God almighty, the God of covenant faithfulness is the God she had learned to trust and worship (Gen. 17:1)

Naomi acknowledged the pain she had felt and still felt by reason of her long trial. She said, *“The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.”* The cup of affliction is a bitter cup. Though it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness in the end, it is not joyous, but grievous in the experience (Heb. 12:11; Job 13:24-26; Lam. 3:15-17). Naomi also acknowledged that the Lord God had dealt with her sharply, because she had given him reason to do so. She said, *“The Lord hath testified against me.”* *“He doth not afflict willingly”* (Lam. 3:33). God had a controversy with her, so he laid the rod to her back that he might retrieve her heart (Job 5:17-18).

This afflicted believer, this corrected child, humbly submitted to and acquiesced in the will of God. She said to her friends, *“Call me not Naomi (Sweetness), call me Mara (Bitter): for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me!”*

God will do what ever must be done to correct his erring children and turn their hearts to him again. How many illustrations we have in the Scriptures. Naomi is but one. Naomi lived in Moab for ten years. Lot lived in Sodom a long, long time. Samson did not lose his hair the first time he laid his head in Delilah’s lap. David spent a full year without communion with his God. All of them suffered much because of their sinful behavior. But the Lord God will never lose one of his own. He says, *“Give me thine heart;”* and if we are his, he will see to it that we give him our hearts.

THE BELIEVER’S ATTITUDE

What should our attitude be when we see great changes like this in the lives of our friends or experience them ourselves in God’s good providence? May God the Holy Spirit seal to our hearts this portion of his Word by making it beneficial to our souls and by making us useful to one another.

When we see one of God’s people suffering great adversity, let us be kind, gracious, and sympathetic, even when we know they have brought the trouble upon themselves (Eph. 4:32; Gal. 6:2). Let us relieve them if we are able, and love them if we cannot relieve them. When they return, when the Lord has recovered them, we should always receive them into our hearts with open arms. How often? Our Lord says, until seventy times seven. In other words, let there be no limit to our forgiveness of one another, just as there is no limit to our heavenly Father’s forgiveness of us.

When the Lord God fills our cup with bitterness, let us seek by his grace to be content, even when we are made to suffer adversity (Phil. 4:12). As Naomi was bettered by her bitterness in life and Job was advanced by his adversity (Job 42:10-16), so shall we be at God's appointed time (Rom. 8:28-30). Let us, therefore, set our hearts upon the world to come (2 Cor. 4:17-5:1). Though we are unworthy of the least of God's mercies, the Lord God has done great things for us. All things are ours now. Eternal glory and eternal happiness await us. The Lord knows exactly what he is doing.

"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs And works His sovereign
will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, The clouds ye so much
dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break With blessings on your
head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His
grace;
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err And scan His work in vain;
God is His own Interpreter And He will make it plain."

Chapter 9

“Seek and Ye Shall Find”

"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

Ruth 2:1-12

Here are three facts revealed in Holy Scripture that need to be written upon our hearts by the finger of God. Our puny brains may not be able to sort out the details. We may not be able to see the consistency of these facts. They may even appear to be contradictory. Yet, these three facts are plainly revealed in the Word of God. Faith bows to the Word and receives these things for what they are, the very truth of God.

1. **God almighty saves whom he will** (Rom. 9:15, 16, 18). He chose some and passed by others. He sent his Son to redeem some, but not others. Christ makes intercession for some, but not others. He sends his word to some, but not others. The Holy Spirit regenerates and calls some, but not others. All whom the Father chose, the Son redeemed, and the Spirit calls shall be saved, all of them and no one else, no matter what. *"Salvation is of the Lord!"* Yet, our great, sovereign God has ordained the use of certain means, and will not save any sinner apart from the means he has appointed. God will not alter his purpose at all. If Nineveh is to

be saved, Jonah (and no one else) must go to Nineveh, because God has determined to save Nineveh through the preaching of Jonah. God knows how to take care of the details. Ask Jonah.

2. **You and I are responsible for those immortal souls placed by God under our influence** (Ezek. 33:7-9). Men and women are saved or lost as a direct result of our actions (Ezek. 3:17-19; 1 Tim. 4:16). God's purpose can never be altered or frustrated. What he has purposed he will do. Neither Lucifer, nor you, nor I can overrule him (Isa. 14:24, 26, 27). Yet, as Satan is responsible for the angels he led to destruction, though not one elect angel fell, so we are responsible for those who are under our influence, though none of God's elect shall by any possibility perish.

3. **Every person is responsible for his own soul.** If you seek the Lord, you will find him. He promises you will (Jer. 29:12-13). If you refuse to seek him, you will perish forever in hell. If you trust Christ, you shall be saved. If you believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be damned. Your faith will not add to the number of God's elect. Neither will your unbelief alter the purpose of the Almighty (Rom. 3:3-4). If you are saved, it will be because God chose you, redeemed you, and called you. If you die in your sins, it will be because you refused to walk in the light God gave you, you refused to hearken to the Word of God, you refused to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Your willful unbelief, not the purpose of God, shall be the cause of your everlasting condemnation (John 3:36; Pro. 1:23-33).

In Ruth 2:1-12, Ruth is set before us as a picture of a sinner seeking the Lord. This is the promise of God to sinners. "*Seek and ye shall find.*" I know that no one will ever seek the Lord who is not first sought out by the Lord. Our seeking him is the proof that we are sought of him. Yet, it is everyone's

responsibility to seek him. As Ruth sought barley in the fields of Boaz, so needy sinners seek the Bread of Life in the Book of God and in the House of God.

RUTH'S ONLY HOPE WAS A NEAR KINSMAN.

Verse 1 *"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz."* Everything in the Book of Ruth is about the kinsman. He is really the center of attention. The commentaries, for the most part, miss the point of the book. They talk about Ruth. But Ruth talked about this kinsman. Her kinsman, Boaz, is a type and picture of our great kinsman, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The kinsman, according to God's Holy Law, had the right to redeem (Lev. 25:25). He was kinsman. He was, as is seen this and the next chapters, willing to redeem. And Boaz, Ruth's near kinsman was able to redeem her. This man, Boaz, as we have seen, was a beautiful type and picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, our kinsman Redeemer. He was a man; and the Son of God became a man that he might redeem and save his people (Gal. 4:4-6; Heb. 2:10-18). He was a man of great wealth; and Christ our Savior has all that is needed to redeem and save his people. He is of great wealth, indeed (Col. 2:10). He has perfect righteousness and complete, perfect, blood atonement; and they are of infinite worth and merit before God. This man's name also points to Christ. Boaz means "Strength." The Son of God, our Kinsman Redeemer, not only has all that is necessary to ransom our souls, he has the power to save (John 17:2; Heb. 7:25).

BEING HUMBLLED BY THE HAND OF GOD, RUTH KNEW HER NEED OF GRACE.

Verse 2 *"And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter."* Before God saves he slays. Before he exalts he abases. Before he heals he wounds. He never lifts sinners up until he brings them down. Ruth had resolved that she would be found among the children of God. She would not go back to Moab. But if she lived in Bethlehem, she would have to do so as a poor beggar living upon the grace of another. This she was willing to do (Psa. 110:3). Grace chose her. Grace created a need. Grace met her need. That is always God's method of grace.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE BROUGHT RUTH TO THE PLACE WHERE SHE WOULD MEET BOAZ.

Verse 3 *"And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech."* Though it made no difference to Ruth which field she gleaned in, *"her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz."*

She had not planned it. In so far as she was concerned, this was purely accidental. But *"her hap"* was by the arrangement of providence. *"Her hap"* determined her marriage to Boaz, her wealth, her everlasting happiness, and her position in the genealogy of Christ. *"Her hap"* also brought about the incarnation of her Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ! The Son of God must come into the world as a descendent of Boaz and Ruth. God purposed it from eternity. Yet, Boaz and Ruth would never have wed had she not gleaned in his field. This was no accident. *"Her hap"* was God's purpose. Let us ever adore our heavenly Father's wise providence. Let us regard nothing as insignificant. Let us look for and follow the direction

of God in the daily affairs of your life, trusting his will and bowing to it in all things (Pro. 3:5-6).

BOAZ SPOKE ABOUT RUTH AND FOR RUTH IN HER HEARING BEFORE HE SPOKE TO HER.

Verses 4-7 *"And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house."*

In these verses, the conversation is all about Ruth. It appears not to be so much for Boaz to get information about her as for her to get information about him. We get a hint of this in verse 8, where Boaz says to Ruth, *"Hearest thou not, my daughter,"* implying that all he had said was for her benefit. Even so, the Lord Jesus often speaks about and for his elect through the preaching of the gospel before he speaks directly to them by the effectual call of his Spirit. Several things here are highly significant.

Boaz and his reapers appear to be one (v. 4), as our Lord Jesus says he and his reapers are one (Matt. 10:40). Those who serve him have his authority.

2. Ruth wisely followed the reapers through the field (v. 3). There was no other way for her to get the bread she needed. God's servants are his angels, sent into his field to gather his wheat into his barn (Matt. 13:30). They are his reapers. They search the field of Holy Scripture and gather from the Word of Life bread for his children.

Boaz appeared in his field - *"Behold, Boaz came!"* What a blessing for Ruth! When a seeking sinner earnestly follows his reapers through the field of Holy Scripture, the Master is sure to meet him and bless him with that grace which fills his heart and flows through his lips.

Boaz and his workers talked to one another about Ruth. The Lord God and his servants talk to one another about his people, too. The reapers talked to Boaz about Ruth. They told him who she was - A Moabitess, where she came from - Moab, and what she had done (v. 7). That is the way faithful, gospel preachers talk to God about the people for whom they labor.

Then Boaz told his servants what to do for Ruth. He told them to do nothing which might harm her, or hinder her (v. 9) and to provide for her need (v. 16). He commanded them to leave *"handfuls of purpose for her."* Even so, the Lord God commands his servants, in preaching the gospel, to give out his Word like handfuls of purpose for his elect (Isa. 40:10-11). Gospel preachers are to drop handfuls of gospel promises, gospel doctrines, and of grace, handfuls of the person and work of Christ (Eph. 1:1-14, 15-23; 2:1-10; 3:8). Preaching the gospel is not telling sinners what they must do, or what God wants to do. To preach the gospel is to tell people what God has done for sinners in Christ.

BOAZ SPOKE DIRECTLY TO RUTH ABOUT WHAT HE HAD SAID AND DONE.

Verses 8-9 *"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."*

Boaz assured the Moabitess of his gracious intentions., telling her to look to him for everything, telling her to simply trust him. He told her she had come to the right place and not to go anywhere else, and gave her license to drink freely at his fountain, to drink of the water drawn by his servants (Rev. 22:16-17). He assured her of his protection, telling her that none of the men would touch her, rebuke her, reproach her, or shame her (vv. 9, 15, 16). He even courted her. Singling her out, Boaz drew Ruth's heart to him and let her know that his heart was toward her (v. 14). What a blessed picture this is of the way the Lord Jesus Christ deals with chosen, redeemed sinners, when he sends forth his Spirit at the appointed time of love to call them by his grace and make them willing in the day of his power (Ps. 65:4; 110:3)

RUTH WAS ASTONISHED AND UTTERLY OVERWHELMED BY BOAZ'S GOODNESS.

Boaz's goodness did not make Ruth arrogant and presumptuous. It had just the opposite effect. It humbled her. Look at verse 10. ***"She fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground."*** Ruth was completely overwhelmed by a sense of Boaz's goodness and her own unworthiness of that goodness. Even so, when a weary, sinful, heavy-laden soul sees the exceeding riches of God's grace in Christ, self bows to the ground (Isa. 6:1-5; Acts 9:1-9). It is not the wrath of God that leads to repentance, but the goodness of God (Rom. 2:4). The hammer of the law breaks up the icy, hard, fallow ground of our hearts;. but it is the grace of God that melts our hearts before him! (Zech. 12:10).

Bowing in utter humiliation before this great kinsman's goodness, Ruth said, ***"Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?"*** She knew she was a stranger, a Gentile,

without any covenant promise, without any rights, without any merit, without anything to plead before him except her need and his greatness. That is the way needy sinners respond to the exceeding richness and fulness of God's grace in Christ. The first response of the renewed heart to the grace of God is to ask, "Why me?" (2 Sam. 7:18; 9:8). Gracious souls are always astonished by grace (1 John 3:1). There is but one answer to the question - Why? Why was I chosen? Why was I redeemed? Why was I called? God answers plainly. *"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious!"* He says, *"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."*

BOAZ ASSURED RUTH OF HIS INTEREST IN HER.

Verses 11-12 *"And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."*

Ruth sure enough was interested in Boaz; but that gave her no comfort. She needed to know if this man was interested in her. It is one thing for me to be interested in Christ, but is Christ interested in me? That is the matter of real concern. Boaz assured Ruth of two things. In verse 11, he assured her of his knowledge of and interest in her. In verse 12, he assured her of God's faithfulness to sinners who trust him.

Notice the wording of that clause in verse 12 describing Ruth's faith - *"Under whose wings thou art come to trust."* This is an allusion here to the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat? In other words, whether Boaz

intended it to be so or not, the Holy Spirit is here telling us that faith in God is trusting that One whose blood atonement was represented in the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat. It is there and only there, in Christ the Lamb of God, that God meets with sinners in mercy (Ex. 25:22).

“So *she gleaned*” (v. 17). She got bread, mercy, grace and life. Then she got a husband. Then she got an inheritance - His inheritance. Then she got great honor - His honor. So shall it be for all who take refuge in Christ, for all who come to trust under the wings of the Almighty (Heb. 4:16).

Chapter 10

The Congregation Of The Lord

"And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

Ruth 2:4-9

In these verses we follow Ruth, the Moabite stranger, from the field of Boaz into his house. There are many instructive lessons to be learned from the reception that was given her. In this study, I want to show you some of the privileges and responsibilities of being a part of God's house as they are illustrated by Ruth's coming into the house of Boaz.

RUTH FOUND HER PLACE IN BOAZ'S HOUSE AS THE RESULT OF HUMBLE OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD.

You will remember that she had humbly taken her place as a gleaner in the fields, because that is what God in his law prescribed as a means of the poor continuing to provide for themselves. Being obedient to the Word of God, she was guided by the hand of divine providence to the field of Boaz and then to the house of Boaz.

That is always the case with God's saints. If a person walks in the light God has given him, God will give him more light. If you take the Word of God to be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path, if you follow the Book of God, it will guide you in paths of righteousness and lead you to the place of blessedness (Psa. 19:7-11; Psa. 119:9).

IN THE HOUSE OF BOAZ THE ONLY PROMINENT PERSON WAS BOAZ HIMSELF.

No prominence, honor, or distinction was given to anyone but Boaz. Even the servant who was "*set over the reapers*" is left nameless in the Scriptures, because he is really not important. He is only a servant.

So it is in the house of God. Only one person is exalted in the Church of God. Only one person is recognized as pre-eminent in the house of God. Only one name is honored in the household of faith. Honor, recognition and pre-eminence is given to no man but the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. We call no man "holy," or "reverend," because no man is. That name belongs only to our God (Psa. 111:9). We call no man "master," or "doctor," or "father," because we are all simply brethren (Matt. 23:6-12).

WHEN A SINNER IS SAVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST, HE SHOULD IMMEDIATELY SEEK HIS PLACE IN THE CONGREGATION OF THE LORD.

Sheep are social creatures. The only time you find a sheep alone is when he is sick or wounded. God's sheep are social creatures too. Believers need one another. As soon as a person is saved he should, like Saul of Tarsus, join himself with the disciples (Acts 9:27). Every saved sinner ought to be committed to one of "*the churches of God*", one of the "*churches of the saints*" (1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33).

Some things happen to people immediately when they are saved. As soon as a person is united to Christ by faith, as soon as you trust the Son of God, you are, or you have been immediately...

Forgiven of all sin by His grace (1 John 1:9).

Justified from all things by Christ's righteousness and shed blood (Acts 13:39).

Born again and made a new creature in Christ (1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 5:1).

Given the place of a son in the house of God (1 John 3:1; Eph. 2:19).

Sinners are born into the family of God, not by natural birth, but by the grace and power of God the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-7). You are born into the church universal, the mystical, spiritual body of Christ. You do not join it.

However, every saved person ought to seek his or her place in a local church, which is the house of God, the congregation of the Lord, the pillar and ground of the truth. Nothing is more important in the life of a believer than the worship of God in his house (Heb. 10:24-26). Nothing is more detrimental to the

lives of men and women who bear the name of Christ than the neglect of God's house (Hag. 1:4-6; Zech. 8:9-15).

Two things, and only two things, are required for membership in the House of God. Throughout the New Testament, we see sinners brought into the fellowship of God's church, seeking and being admitted into that fellowship only if they possessed these two things.

Those who are received as brothers and sisters in the house of God must be believers, they must possess, by their own profession, the gift of faith in Christ. Nowhere in the New Testament were people received into the fellowship of the saints, or recognized as brethren who did not personally profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everywhere in the New Testament, believer's baptism was also required for admission into the fellowship of the saints.

I am aware that most people think these are insignificant, controversial matters, about which we dare not be very dogmatic. That simply is not that case. These are matters of plain, clear revelation, about which we must not compromise. It takes only a casual reading of the book of Acts to see them plainly set before us (Acts 2:41-47; 8:37; 9:18; 10:48; 16:31-33) All who trust Christ are to confess their faith in him by believer's baptism. And all who come into the house of God professing faith in Christ are to be received without "*doubtful disputations*" (Rom. 14:1; 15:6-7). The house of God is to be a place where the Lord's "*newborn babes*" may receive the love, care, protection, guidance, oversight, instruction and companionship they need.

The house of God, the Church of God, ought to be like the house of Boaz, an attractive, pleasing haven for weary strangers. When Ruth came to the house of Boaz, she found

it to be a household of generous, kind, gracious people. She was attracted to the house, not because of its greatness, grandeur and gold, but because of the grace displayed in the people who dwelt there. We preach grace - The free gift of God's best to those who deserve his worst. Let us make certain that we practice grace. If the grace that we proclaim with our lips is not practiced in our lives, it is not likely that we will see much result from our preaching. Love one another. Forgive one another. Bear one another's burdens. Be kind to one another. Rejoice with one another. Put away envy, jealousy, and peevishness. In other words, "*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*" (Eph. 4:30). The church of God is not here to entertain sinners on their way to hell; but we are here to serve the souls of eternity bound sinners for the glory of God. We offer no attractions to the flesh. But we do offer two attractions to weary strangers: a message of grace and a fellowship of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE PERSON WHO GETS THE MOST ATTENTION IN THE HOUSE OF GOD SHOULD ALWAYS BE THE ONE WHO NEEDS THE MOST ATTENTION.

When Boaz came to Bethlehem to greet his reapers and to sit with them in his house, two things stand out. *First*, Very gracious salutations were given by Boaz to his servants and by the servants to Boaz (v. 4). The words, "*The Lord be with you*" and "*The Lord bless thee,*" contain all that could be desired by us. Boaz (the type of Christ) pronounced all the blessings of grace upon his servants (typical of God's saints in this world). Then, those servants so blessed of God as to be his servants blessed Boaz, wishing him alone to be exalted.

Second, a very gracious condescension was made (v. 5 - Boaz condescended to look upon Ruth and ask, "*Whose damsel is this?*" There were many, many maidens in the fields; but Ruth was the newcomer. Ruth was the stranger.

Ruth was the one who needed attention. And she got it. This question was put to *“his servant that was set over the reapers.”* He represents the pastor, the gospel preacher, whose responsibility it is to know the people to whom he preaches, to know what they need, and to give account of them to God (Heb. 13:17; Jer. 3:15).

BOAZ TOOK GREAT CARE TO PUT RUTH AT EASE IN HIS HOUSE.

He seems to have gone out of his way to make her feel welcome, at home, and comfortable. Knowing she was a stranger, knowing she probably felt very uncomfortable, he took care to make her comfortable - *“Hearest thou not, my daughter?”* As we have seen, he spoke to his young men about her in her presence; and he spoke directly to her for her comfort. So it is with our Lord (Isa. 40:1-2). In his house, he speaks about chosen sinners in their presence. Then he speaks directly to them by the power and grace of his Spirit, applying the Word effectually to his own; and he does it for the everlasting comfort of their souls..

THE TITLE WHICH BOAZ GAVE TO RUTH IS VERY SIGNIFICANT.

“My Daughter” - This title placed her upon the footing of the highest privilege and greatest blessedness in the household. Even so, all who come to God by faith in Jesus Christ are the children of God (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:4-6 Gal. 3:26 4:6; 1 John 3:1). All the rights and privileges, all the possessions and prospects of the house of God belong as fully to the youngest and weakest member of the family as to the oldest and strongest. This title, *“daughter”*, also indicates a permanent relationship. When we talk about the family of God, we are talking about a family circle that will never be broken. God will

never disown his own. He will not let us leave them. No enemy can ever carry them away, not even one of them!

BOAZ'S FIRST WORDS TO RUTH INDICATE THAT WHICH OUR GOD REQUIRES AND EXPECTS, AND DESERVES FROM ALL HIS CHILDREN (vv. 8-9).

The house of Boaz was something separate and distinct from all the other houses of the land, and he was determined to keep it that way. He told Ruth what her service and occupation was to be. He said, Glean in my fields and drink at my wells - *"Go not to another field."* He even told her who her companions were to be. - *"Abide by my maidens!"* It mattered not whether they pleased her. They pleased him. It was her duty to love them, to serve them, and to serve Boaz with them. The lessons for us should be obvious. -We who are born of God are to separate ourselves from the people of this world, particularly from their ways and their religion, and devote ourselves to the people of God (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 John 4:21; 5:1). As she gleaned in his fields, drank at his wells, and followed after his maidens, Boaz promised Ruth all the protection of his wealth and power in his house (Heb. 3:6).

If we have been given the privilege of a rightful place in the house of our God, let us carefully fulfill our own place in the house. Let us make our companions these people. We must endeavor not to drop your part of the load. Let us seek to serve, not to be served. And let us always take care to give special attention to those who need special attention.

Chapter 11

Ruth's Reward

*“The Lord recompense thy work,
and a full reward be given thee of
the Lord God of Israel, under
whose wings thou art come to
trust.”*

Ruth 2:12

The Book of Ruth is full of instruction to the believing heart. It sets before us the romance of redemption and beautifully portrays the grace of God toward fallen, depraved sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ, our Boaz, our Kinsman Redeemer. There are several lessons which are continually brought before us as we go through this brief, instructive book of inspiration.

THE DANGER OF WORLDLINESS

The Book of Ruth opens with a sad, sad picture. Elimelech, a wealthy man, took his money and his family and fled from Bethlehem down to Moab when famine struck the land of Bethlehem-Judah. When he died, he left his family, without a trace of good influence, in the idolatrous land of Moab.

Perhaps Elimelech was a believer. We are not told. His parents apparently were, for in the days when there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes, Elimelech's parents named him Elimelech, which means - "My God is King." But Elimelech did not live up to his name. He fled when he should have been faithful. He left the

people of God, the Word of God, and the worship of God for the sake of temporal, earthly interests (Matt. 13:22; Lk. 12:15).

Let no believer settle in any place where he would not want to leave his family without his influence. I am sure he had no intention of doing so; but Elimelech died in Moab. There he left his family to fend for themselves among pagans, far away from the people of God, the worship of God, and the influence of the congregation of the Lord. Some things are more important than financial security. Read and learn what our Lord teaches us about the love of this world (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

THE MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE

The Book of Ruth illustrates the fact that *“all things are of God”* (2 Cor. 5:18). *“For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever!”* (Rom. 11:36). God overruled Elimelech’s failure to fetch Ruth out of Moab, because he had chosen Ruth both to be an heir of grace and to be in the genealogy of Christ. When Naomi came back to Bethlehem, she was full of bitterness. Yet, within a few weeks she was called the happiest of women (Ruth 4:14-15).

We read that Ruth’s *“hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz.”* As far as she was concerned, it was altogether accidental. But as one of the many links in the chain of God’s purpose, it was ordained and brought to pass by God. What God does in this world he does on purpose (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:28). And the purpose of God in all things providential is twofold: (1.) The glory of Christ (Col. 1:18) and (2.) The saving of his people (Rom. 8:28-29).

THE WONDERS OF REDEMPTION

The primary subject of this little book is redemption, redemption by a near kinsman (2:1). As we have seen, Boaz was a picture of Christ in many ways. He was a mighty man (Heb. 7:25), a wealthy man (Eph. 3:8), and a near kinsman (Heb. 2:9-18). Two things were required in the law of Moses for the express purpose of foreshadowing our redemption by Christ: (1.) The nearest kinsman had the right to redeem the inheritance his brother had lost (Lev. 25:25). (2.) The kinsman was to marry the widow of his brother to preserve alive the seed of Israel (Deut. 25:5-10). Boaz did both (Ruth 4:9-10). So did the Lord Jesus Christ as our near kinsman. He who is our Redeemer is also our Husband.

THE SUPER-ABOUNDING GRACE OF GOD

Redemption and grace always go hand in hand. Wherever you find one, you find the other. As with Boaz, those who are redeemed by Christ shall be wed to Christ. All whom he redeemed, he saves. All whom he redeemed, he forgives. All whom he redeemed, he blesses with all the exceeding riches of his abundant grace. The Book of Ruth is a book about grace, the super-abounding grace of God. It shows us a beautiful illustration of God's prevenient grace, by which he prepares the way for his saving grace. Ruth's redemption by and marriage to Boaz portrays our Lord's undeserved grace to us. Ruth was a Moabite, the cursed child of a cursed race. Yet, Boaz loved her, redeemed her, and married her. That is a picture of grace, the free, unmerited grace of God to sinners in Christ.

Ruth 2:12 sets before us a picture of the superabundance of God's grace to us. As Boaz invoked upon Ruth "*a full reward*" from God for what she had done, so the Lord Jesus Christ invokes upon every believer a full reward from the Lord God.

A WORK OF FAITH

The first thing seen in this twelfth verse is Ruth's work of faith. Boaz said to her, *"The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."*

We understand that faith is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Faith is wrought in us by the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power in saving grace (Eph. 1:19). Faith is the work of the operation of God in our hearts (Col. 2:12). If I believe God, it is because of his grace. Yet, faith, being produced in us by the power of God the Holy Spirit, is not a passive experience. Faith is a living principle, a grace that works (Gal. 5:6). Faith does something (James 2:14-26). And God will not forget your work of faith and labor of love (1 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 6:10).

Remember, as you read the Book of Ruth, Ruth represents us, sinners saved by grace, God's elect, all who are converted by the power and grace of God. This woman had come to trust God. Naomi had taught both Ruth and Orpah the things of God. No doubt, Orpah believed Naomi's words and was prepared to go with her to Bethlehem, until she realized what it would cost her. When she realized that, she went back to Moab. She believed Naomi; but she did not trust the Lord. But Ruth had come to trust the Lord God of Israel himself. She believed God. She had come to *"trust under his wings."*

The metaphor used by Boaz to describe Ruth's faith refers either to the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat; or to the wings of a mother hen. In either case, it speaks of a place of great strength, complete safety, personal care, and great comfort. Christ is that hiding place for sinners. In him, we take refuge under the wings of the Almighty.

Because she believed God, Ruth did what Orpah could not do (v. 11). She forsook her own relations. She abandoned all earthly comfort and benefit. She resolved to worship and serve the Lord God of Israel, whom she had learned to trust through Naomi's faithful witness. She had come to trust the covenant-keeping God, of whom her mother-in-law gave faithful witness, who is faithful and true, sovereign and omnipotent, merciful and gracious. Ruth learned to worship and trust the Lord God by Naomi's witness. Naomi told Ruth who God is, what he had done, and where he was to be found. And Ruth believed. She believed Naomi's word; but more, she trusted Naomi's God.

THE REWARD OF GRACE

As this text speaks of a work of faith, it also speaks of the great reward of God's great grace. *"The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."* Here is the super-abundance of God's grace. He rewards our works of faith (faith which he has given) with the full reward of grace (1 Sam. 2:30). This is beautifully demonstrated in Ruth.

She found what she never expected or looked for - a husband. She who was barren, bare a son through whom untold millions have been born of God, for her son was the man through whom the human lineage of Christ was directly traced. Like Ruth, we have found in Christ more than a Redeemer and a Savior. We have found in him a husband (Eph. 5:25-30).

Being married to Boaz, Ruth obtained an inheritance to which she had no natural claim. Even so, in Christ, God's elect have obtained an inheritance to which we have no natural claim. Our reward from God is a heritage of grace given to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord God gives chosen

sinner's free forgiveness of all sin (Isa. 43:25). He gives every believer the blessedness of a peaceful conscience (Heb. 9:12-14), quietness "*from fear of evil*" (Prov. 1:33), the blessed assurance of all good (Psa. 23; Rom. 8:32), the confidence of merciful, divinely ordered providence (Rom. 8:28), communion with himself and all the fulness of eternal glory (Rom. 8:17). In the last day, our God shall grant us the full reward of grace which is the fulness of heavenly glory. "*The Lord will give grace and glory!*"

Yes, God will reward his own elect, like all others, according to their works, in strict accordance with absolute justice. He will reward us for the perfect righteousness of Christ. Just as he rewarded our Substitute in strict justice for our sins which were imputed to him, so he will reward every believing sinner in strict justice with heavenly glory, because of the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us (2 Cor. 5:21; Rev. 20:12-15; 21:27; Rev. 22:14).

God's saints will possess all the fulness of heavenly glory, because in Christ they are worthy of it (Col. 1:12; 3:23-24). Are you worthy of heaven? If you are in Christ you are. As Boaz invoked a full reward for Ruth, the Lord Jesus Christ has earned and purchased a full reward for his people; and he gives it to all who trust him (John 17:5, 22; Rom. 6:23).

Chapter 12

Mealtime With Boaz

"And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left."

--Ruth 2:14

Ruth was a Moabitess, a stranger in the land of Judah. This Moabite stranger found satisfaction when she was wed to Boaz. The courtship that led up to that wedding began in Boaz's barley field where Boaz invited her into his house at mealtime. As Ruth found in Boaz everything she needed; so every believing sinner finds in Christ, the Bread of Life, everything he needs. In our Savior's house there is bread enough and to spare.

There is a distinct correlation between the things recorded in the Book of Ruth and the things that are taught in the Book of Ephesians. They are worthy of detailed study.

1. The minute detail of divine providence in accomplishing the purpose of God is evident (Eph. 1:11).
2. Once Ruth was in Bethlehem she went out into the fields to serve. Indeed, all who are brought into the family and kingdom of God are born to serve (Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 2:11-15).
3. The calling of Ruth the Moabitess prefigured the calling of the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-13, 19).

4. The love of Boaz for Ruth was a picture of the love of Christ to us (Eph. 3:18-19; 5:25-27).
5. Boaz's purchase and redemption of Ruth portrayed Christ's redemption and purchase of God's elect (Eph. 5:25; 1:6).
6. As Boaz's love to her was a matter of unceasing wonder to Ruth ("*Why have I found grace in thine eyes?*"), so Christ's love to us, his great grace to us is an unceasing, wondrous mystery to the believing heart (Eph. 3:8-11, 19-21).
7. As Ruth's wedding to Boaz was a lasting, fruitful union, so our union with Christ is an everlasting union and a fruitful one (Eph. 5:30, 32; 4:21-25).

As we read the Word of God, we should always look for Christ and pictures of God's rich, abundant grace in him. If we look for pictures of our own souls' experiences, we are sure to find them. Such pictures are everywhere in the Book of Ruth. The text now before us suggests several spirituals truths.

GOD'S PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD HAVE THEIR MEALTIMES.

In the Scriptures, the hearing of the Word of God is often compared to a great feast and faith in Christ is compared to eating and drinking (Lk. 14:15-24). During the barley harvest, it was common in Boaz's day for men to set up temporary quarters in their fields. There, in the middle of the day, all the workers would be fed and any gleaners who were invited to join them. That is the picture we have before us. Let me use it to show you three things from the Word of God in this regard.

God's servants, those who preach the gospel of Christ, are God's gifts to his church by whom the souls of men are fed (Jer. 3:15).

The one who does the feeding is our Lord himself. His servants simply distribute the loaves and the fishes. They feed the Lord's sheep with knowledge of God, his Word, his ways, and his works. And they feed them with understanding. Men who are called and gifted of God to preach the gospel understand the needs of their hearers. Understanding their needs, God's servants feed his people with bread which is suitable for them, the bread of free grace in Christ, the sinners' Substitute. They understand that Christ crucified is all the counsel of God (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

All who are hungry will be found at the table when mealtime comes.

It is senseless for preachers to try to force, or coerce religious people, hypocritical professors of faith, to come to church, when they have no appetite for the things of God. If people are hungry, no one has to beg them to come and eat. Hungry souls gladly eat, no matter who the cook is, no matter what the plate looks like. Give them the bread and water of covenant mercy, the oil and wine of free grace, and God's people will come and dine. Sheep love sheep food. Goats are more happy with the weeds of works, intellectualism, and legality.

God has ordained certain mealtimes for his own.

Many these days despise all order, set times of worship, and the discipline of faithfulness. But God has ordained both private and public worship for the feeding of our souls. We neglect these matters to our own peril. Particularly, the public ministry of the Word, the preaching of the gospel, and ordinances of divine worship have been established by our God for the good of our souls (Eph. 4:8-16; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 2:2).

As Mephibosheth was found sitting at the king's table, let us ever be found at the table of divine worship. As the returned prodigal fed upon the fatted calf, let us ever feed upon our crucified Redeemer.

Our God spreads a table before us in this wilderness. It is written, "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*" Often we have an unexpected mealtime, during the routine of the day, the Lord visits us often with special tokens of grace, dropping sweet morsels into our souls. In the heat of the day, he refreshes our souls. When we are about to face some great trial, though we are unaware of it, he gives us just the food needed to see us through. After heavy, painful, heart-wrenching trouble, when we are most faint, he graciously visits us and feeds us with his Word in such ways as the world can never understand.

THE LORD JESUS AFFECTIONATELY INVITES POOR, NEEDY SINNERS TO HIS BANQUETING TABLE.

Boaz did not command Ruth to come. He did not order her to come, though well he might. Rather, "*Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither and eat.*" Those are the tender words of a gracious suitor. Yes, it is true, the Lord Jesus commands all men to repent. He commands all to believe the gospel. And all are responsible to obey his command. Yet, he graciously condescends to our low estate. Like a tender Suitor who would win our hearts, he invites poor, needy sinners to come to him. I do not debate for a moment the fact that the gospel is a command; but the command of the gospel sounds like a tender, gracious invitation to me (Isa. 1:18-20; Matt; 11:28-30; 22:9; Rev. 22:17).

The poor, needy gleaner in our text was invited by Boaz himself to "*Come*". And the Son of God invites hungry sinners to come to him. Someone suggested that good witnessing is

one beggar telling another beggar where he can get a good meal. Ruth was invited to “*eat of the bread.*” Even so, sinners are invited to eat of Christ, the bread of life, and live forever.

Yet, there is more. Boaz invited Ruth to “*dip her morsel in the vinegar.*” The vinegar here was not vinegar as we know it, but a relish, a sauce, a gravy to give a rich, delicious taste to the bread. So the Lord Jesus bids us dip our morsel of bread in the gravy of his grace. Election is the bread. - Personal election is the gravy. Redemption is the bread. - Personal redemption is the gravy. Calling is the bread. - Personal calling is the gravy. Perseverance is the bread. - Preservation is the gravy. Some like the bread, but not the gravy. Some like the gravy, but not the bread. Believers want both.

Boaz invited Ruth to come to him at mealtime for two obvious reasons: he loved her; and he intended to marry her. So, too, when the Lord Jesus speaks to sinners by his Spirit, it is because of his eternal intentions of love and grace toward them.

**AS BOAZ REACHED RUTH THE PARCHED CORN,
SO OUR SAVIOR GIVES THE BREAD OF LIFE TO
CHOSEN SINNERS.**

It takes more than an invitation to save a sinner. It takes more than an offer of grace. It takes an almighty work of irresistible grace (Psa. 65:4; 110:3). While Ruth sat beside the reapers, he reached her the parched corn. How thankful believing sinners are that our God would not take “No” for an answer from us. He invited; but we were reluctant. He said, “Come, eat, dip your morsel in the gravy;” but we would not obey his voice. So he put the bread of life into our mouths. Like the good Samaritan portrayed in Luke’s gospel, God our Savior came to where we were, picked us up, and poured in his

grace. He shed abroad his love in our hearts. He gave us repentance.

**AS RUTH WAS SATISFIED AT BOAZ'S TABLE,
EVERY BELIEVER FINDS IN CHRIST THAT WHICH
SATISFIES HIS SOUL.**

Ruth ate all she wanted. She was fully satisfied. When she left, she left much more than she ate, and carried enough home to Naomi to satisfy her as well (v. 18). There is bread enough in our Father's house and plenty to spare. Some preachers and some churches seem to think they are to be spiritual protectionists, conservationists of the worst kind. They seem to be afraid that if they share the bread of God's house they will run out of bread. Let us preach the gospel freely to all men, bidding poor, needy, hungry sinners "*Come and dine*".

Chapter 13

“Handfuls Of Purpose”

“And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.”

Ruth 2:15-16

In the Old Testament, under the Mosaic law, gleaning was one of the rights of the people. The farmer was forbidden of God to reap the corners of his fields. If he, by some oversight, mistakenly left a bundle of wheat in his field, he was not allowed to go back and pick it up. It was to be left for the widows, the fatherless, and the poor in the land. The same thing was true of their orchards and vineyards.

In this second chapter of Ruth, we see this law of gleaning being fulfilled. The things recorded in this chapter are written for our learning and for our admonition. Indeed, all that is written in the Book of Ruth is intended by God the Holy Spirit to show us the goodness, grace, and glory of Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer.

As we have seen in this Book, *Ruth* represents all who are saved by the grace of God. *Boaz* represents the Lord Jesus Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer. He is the owner of all things. All the fields of this world belong to him. He is the Master of all things. As Boaz was master in his house, so Christ is Master in his house, the Church. Everything is subject to him. And he is the Master of the universe. We obey him willingly; but all things obey him absolutely (John 17:2).

The *field* in which Ruth gleaned represents the Word of God. The *young men*, the reapers, represent those who preach the gospel of Christ.

As Boaz commanded his young men to let fall some handfuls of purpose for Ruth. Even so, the Lord Jesus Christ commands his servants, those who preach the gospel,, to let fall some handfuls of purpose for chosen sinners. In these two verses, we have instruction by example for both sinners who are seeking the Lord and preachers who are serving him. In our text...

SEEKING SINNERS

Seeking sinners are like gleaners in a field. The old writers and preachers used to talk about sinners, sensible sinners, seeking sinners, and saved sinners. I do not care much for those distinctions, as a general rule. Sinners are sinners. But the distinctions do serve a useful purpose.

A sinner is a person under the wrath of God, lost and ruined in his sin, but utterly unaware of his sinful condition (Rom. 5:12). A sensible sinner is a sinner awakened to know his lost condition, a sinner under conviction, a sinner who knows that he is lost and needs Christ. A seeking sinner is one who knows he needs Christ and is seeking him.

He feels his need of Christ, seeks him earnestly in his Word, in his house, by prayer and supplication, and will find him (Jer. 29:11-14). Like the four lepers of Elisha's day, they have resolved not to perish if life can be had (2 Kings 7:3-4). Like the Syrophenician woman, such needy souls will not cease seeking the Lord God in Christ and the mercy they need from him until they have found him and obtained mercy (Mark 7:24-30).

A saved sinner is one who has come to Christ, one who trusts Christ as Lord and Savior, one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Ruth came into Boaz's field, she came as a gleaner seeking bread (vv. 2-3). As such, she is a picture of a sinner seeking the Lord in the house of bread.

She was a Moabite. She was the cursed offspring of a cursed race; and she knew it. She had no rights, except the rights of a stranger to glean in the fields. That is exactly our condition by nature. We are the cursed offspring of a cursed race (Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1-4). We have no rights, but the right to pick up what God has left for sinners, the right to glean in his field.

She had been reduced to a very low and poor condition (2:10). She was once very wealthy, married to Mahlon, daughter-in-law to Elimelech. Like her, all Adam's sons and daughters were once very wealthy. *"God created man upright!"* Before the fall, our father Adam possessed all God's creation and ruled over it. God gave man everything, even a righteous nature. But, like Ruth, fallen man is reduced to abject poverty (Eph. 2:11-12). Because she was poor, hungry, and in desperate need of help, she humbly took her place among the poor. Though she was a poor Moabitess, Ruth had resolved to seek and to follow the Lord God of Israel (1:16-17).

Blessed is that sinner who has been taught by the grace of God something of the abject poverty of his soul before God. Poor, hungry, and in desperate need of help, he will humbly take his place in the dust before the throne of grace, seeking mercy (Heb. 4:16).

I can but perish if I go, I am resolved to try;

For if I stay away I know I must forever die!

Perhaps He will admit my plea, Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray And perish only there!

Notice also that Ruth had a very high opinion of Boaz's handmaids (2:13). She knew she was not like his handmaidens, but she wanted to be. And those who seek Christ have a very high opinion of God's people. They know they are not like the children of God, but they want to be. They want forgiveness, righteousness, and acceptance with God. They want to be found in Christ, accepted, at peace with God, possessing eternal life.

GOSPEL PREACHERS

Gospel preachers may be compared to reapers. Christ himself shall come as a Reaper (Rev. 14:14-19); and he uses his servants as such. Preachers are reapers in two ways: They reap the wheat and bind the tares of this world (Matt. 13:30; 2 Cor. 2:14-17). The preaching of the gospel is God's ordained instrument both for salvation and condemnation.

They gather the wheat, the bread of God's Word, prepare it for his people, and feed them with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15).

Every gospel preacher is responsible to feed the Lord's sheep. Those men who are called of God to do this great work are uniquely gifted and qualified by God for the work to which they are called (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).

"HANDFULS OF PURPOSE"

In keeping with the story before us, the preaching of the gospel is the scattering of handfuls of purpose, the purposeful

distribution of the bread gathered from the Word of God. Notice that Boaz gave his young men four strict commandments regarding Ruth. I take these to be four strict commandments from Christ to every man who preaches the gospel.

First, he says, ***“Let her glean, even among the sheaves.”*** Gospel preachers are not appointed by God to guard and protect the Word of God, giving it out in bits and pieces, as they see fit. Everything in the Book of God is profitable to his elect (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Let needy sinners glean anything they want *“even among the sheaves.”*

Second, Boaz said, ***“Reproach her not,”*** or “shame her not.” How sad that any preacher should need to be told that, but many do. It is not the business of gospel preachers to chastise the Lord’s children, but to comfort them (Isa. 40:1-2). As the man of God proclaims the gospel of God, when it is applied by the Spirit of God, it convicts, corrects, chastens, and comforts the people of God.

Third, Boaz said, ***“And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her!”*** I take that to mean that gospel preaching is to be plain and simple. *“Handfuls of purpose”* are purposefully left for specific people, with specific needs. They are left, not by the preacher’s whims, but by the Spirit’s direction. True preaching is personal, purposeful, and passionate. God can make stones preach, but he uses men to preach to men. Only men feel what men feel. We are to scatter the Bread of Life with purpose, but by the handfuls! - Handfuls of Promises. -Handfuls of Doctrine! - Handfuls of Grace!

Then Boaz repeated his first command using stronger word - ***“Rebuke her not.”*** God’s people do not belong to their pastors, teachers, elders, or visiting evangelists. They belong

to God. It is not my place or yours to chastise his children. Yes, sometimes the faithful pastors and teachers must reprove and rebuke; but they must do it with all longsuffering and patience. Boaz's reapers understood that they were responsible to care for, protect, and provide handfuls of purpose for Ruth. They understood that she was distinctly the object of his love; and they treated her accordingly. "So *she gleaned!*"

Chapter 14

One Who Has Right To Redeem

“And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.”

--Ruth 2:20

The words, *“one of our next kinsmen”* might be better translated, *“one who has right to redeem.”* Boaz was the one who had the right to redeem Ruth; and Christ is the One who has the right to redeem his people.

It is impossible to understand what is written in Ruth chapters 3 and 4 unless we understand what is written in the law of God concerning redemption and the kinsman-redeemer. It will be profitable, therefore, to carefully consider the scriptures which deal with this subject.

Leviticus 25:25-28 gives us God's law regarding the redemption of property which had been sold. *“If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession. But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.”*

Leviticus 25:47-48 records the law of God relating to the redemption of people who had sold themselves into bondage. *"And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him."*

While we have no such specific laws in our modern culture, we do have similar ones with which we are familiar. An item that has been pawned, usually because of poverty, may be redeemed at the lawfully prescribed value by either the original owner or his lawful representative.

The word "mortgage" is derived from two words meaning "death" and "pledge." A mortgage is "a death pledge." That which is mortgaged becomes dead, or entirely lost by the original owner's failure to pay.

As Jeremiah bought his cousin's field to set forth the certainty of God's promised deliverance (Jer. 32:6-12), so the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed his elect. By the price of his infinitely meritorious blood, he has obtained eternal redemption for all his people (Heb. 9:12). His obtaining redemption for his people is the pledge of their certain deliverance from all sin and all its consequences by the grace of God.

Remember, the right of redemption was always dependent upon three things: (1) Kinship, (2) ability, and (3) willingness to redeem. The Son of God became our kinsman by his incarnation. He is able to redeem, because he is himself both God and man. And he is a willing Redeemer (Heb. 12:1-2).

The word “redeem” means “to buy again,” or “buy back,” and “to take possession of.” The one who redeems evicts and dispossesses all those who have held his purchased property during the time of its bondage. He takes personal possession of that which has been bought back.

Redemption presupposes a dreadful calamity. It presupposes the sin and fall of all the human race in our father, Adam (Rom. 5:12). Redemption by a near kinsman also presupposes personal inability. The Israelite who was incapable of redeeming himself, who had to be redeemed by another, portrayed the fact no sinner can redeem himself from the hands of divine justice (Psa. 49:6-9). Only the Son of God in human flesh could ransom us from the curse of the law. None but Christ could give infinitely meritorious satisfaction to the justice of God by the sacrifice of himself (Rom. 3:24-26).

That is what the Holy Spirit tells us Christ has done for every saved sinner. “*Christ hath redeemed us*” (Gal. 3:13). He bought us with his blood. Then, at the appointed time of love, he binds the strong man, casts him out of his redeemed house (the ransomed soul), and takes possession of the house himself. Soon, those possessed by his grace, to whom he has given the earnest of the Spirit, shall be personally possessed by the Son of God (Eph. 1:7, 14; Rom. 3:24-25; 8:23).

The Lord Jesus has redeemed all God’s elect from the penalty of sin by his sin-atoning blood shed at Calvary (1 Pet. 1:18-20). He redeems each one from the reigning power and dominion of sin by his Spirit’s irresistible grace in regeneration (Rom. 6:17-18). And he shall redeem them from the very being and all the evil consequences of sin in resurrection glory (Eph. 5:25-27).

In the Book of Ruth, Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer, typifies and beautifully portrays the Lord Jesus Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer. Here are seven characteristics of our Kinsman-Redeemer, seven characteristics of the One who has right to redeem.

Redemption by a kinsman is a matter of divine appointment. The kinsman-redeemer must be a divinely appointed redeemer. Only one who is appointed by God has the right to redeem. (John 10:16-18; Heb. 10:5-14).

The one that has right to redeem must be a near kinsman (Heb. 2:10-13).

The kinsman-redeemer must be himself entirely free of the debt (Heb. 7:26).

The one who has right to redeem must be able to redeem. He must be able to fully satisfy all the demands of God's law and justice for the kinfolk he represents.

The one who has right to redeem must be willing to redeem. No one could be forced to redeem. The Lord Jesus Christ was Jehovah's willing bond slave, because of his love for us (Ex. 21:5; Isa. 50:5-7).

The redemption made was always a particular and effectual redemption. There was nothing general, or universal about it. The redemption was made for specific people, and obtained a specific inheritance. The kinsman redeemer restored that which he took not away (Ps. 69:4). Our Lord Jesus Christ, by his glorious work of redemption, secured for a vast, innumerable multitude of sinners all the riches of eternal, heavenly glory (Rev. 7:9).

The one who has the right to redeem must raise up a seed. Even so, the Son of God, our kinsman Redeemer will raise up a seed. There are some people in this world, being chosen of God in eternal election and redeemed by special redemption, who must and shall be saved by God's omnipotent grace (Isa. 53:10-12; Psa. 22:30-31; Ruth 4:5-6).

Chapter 15

Ruth Comes To Boaz

Ruth 3:1-18

The Word of God is a declaration of redemption and grace in Christ. Not only does the Bible declare and explain God's great purpose and mighty operations of grace, it gives us numerous types, pictures, and examples of it to which believers can relate.

David And Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1-13)

Ezekiel's Deserted Infant (Ezek. 16:1-8)

The Valley Of Dry Bones (Ezek. 37:1-14)

Hosea And Gomer (Hosea 1-3)

Lazarus' Resurrection (John 11:1-46)

Zachaeus' Conversion (Luke 19:1-10)

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24)

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:23-37)

Onesimus' Conversion (Philemon 1)

Certainly, one of the most detailed and most beautifully instructive pictures of redemption and grace is the love story of Boaz and Ruth. Everyone likes a love story with a happy ending. The story begins with the declaration revealed in Elimelech's name - *"My God is King!"* This story has two great themes, one hidden, the other revealed. The hidden theme is divine providence. The revealed theme is redemption (The Kinsman Redeemer). This story of redemption and grace is a story about a great fall. Naomi went out full and came back empty (1:19-21). Her circumstances give a sad, sad portrait of the sin and fall of all the human race in our father Adam (Rom. 5:12). Ruth and Naomi came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest, which was (as we have seen) a picture of

this present gospel age. Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz, portraying the way sinners find bread for their souls in the Word of God, through the ministry of the Word in God's house, the church.

Boaz took special notice of Ruth, just as the Lord Jesus Christ took special notice of chosen sinners before the world began. As Boaz commanded his young men not to touch Ruth, so Christ has command all things to touch not his chosen. God's elect are under his special protection (Hos. 2:18; Rom. 8:28). As Boaz provided handfuls on purpose, specifically for Ruth, so the Lord Jesus rules and commands all things specifically for his chosen (John 17:2). Boaz was Ruth's near kinsman, the one who had the right to redeem. As such, he portrays our great, incarnate God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:9-18).

Here is a delightful point in this story of love, grace and redemption which is often overlooked. Boaz knew what his intentions were toward Ruth, just as Christ knew his intentions of love toward his people from eternity. He knew what he could and would do for Ruth, just as the Son of God knew what he could and would do for his church before the world began (Eph. 1:3-7; 5:25-27; 2 Tim. 1:9). Naomi also knew what Boaz could do if he would. The only one in the dark was Ruth; but she had seen Boaz. He had gotten her attention.

In this third chapter, we see Ruth coming to Boaz. Here we have a beautiful, instructive picture of the way sinners come to Christ to obtain mercy and grace. Yet, the story is as much for the benefit of those who have long been wed to Christ as it is for those who have just begun to seek him. All who follow Ruth's example shall find everlasting blessedness for their souls in Christ. *"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."*

NAOMI'S WISE COUNSEL (vv. 1-4)

In verses 1-4, Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, typically represents the church of God. The motherly characteristics of God's church are set before us throughout the Scriptures. She is a mother to all who are born of God. (Isa. 49). Like a good mother, Naomi gave wise and godly counsel to Ruth. Do not fail to see that her counsel was indeed both wise, godly counsel. It was exactly according to the Word of God. It was designed of God to be a picture of grace.

"Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshingfloor. Wash thy self therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do."

Naomi sought Ruth's welfare, just as God's church in this world seeks the welfare of chosen sinners (v. 1). She knew their Kinsman-Redeemer and had great confidence in him (vv. 2, 18). Naomi knew who Boaz was, where he was, and what he was able to do. These are the things she told Ruth. That is good witnessing! A good witness simply tells from personal experience and the testimony of Holy Scripture, who Christ is, where he is to be found, and what he is able to do for needy sinners.

Next, Naomi told Ruth exactly what she must do (vv. 3-4). If Ruth would be wed to Boaz, that was altogether up to Boaz;

but she must let him know that she was interested. She must use every means at her disposal to obtain his favor. She must seek him. Yet, she must seek him as one unworthy of his notice, as one totally dependent upon him. Naomi told Ruth to wash herself, go down to the threshing floor, mark the place where Boaz would lie, and lay herself at his feet. Those who seek the Lord must seek him earnestly, with all their hearts (Jer. 29:11-13). As Ruth washed herself, so we must come to Christ in repentance, separating ourselves unto him. If we would find Christ, we must put ourselves in the place where he is to be found, in the house of God (the public assembly of his saints), under the preaching of the gospel (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 1:21).

Marking the place where he shall lie, marking the promises of God in the gospel to believing sinners, let us come to Christ, putting God in remembrance of them, as he commands us to do (Isa. 43:25-26). Like Ruth, we must lay ourselves down at the feet of our great Boaz, if we would obtain that mercy and grace which only he can give. This is the place of humility, worship, reverence, faith, and hope; and this is the place of blessing (Luke 7:36-50; 10:38-42). Just wait there! - *"Make not thyself known unto the man." "He will tell thee what thou shalt do!"*

RUTH'S CHILDLIKE OBEDIENCE (vv. 5-7).

"And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down."

Remember, Ruth was a grown woman. She had already been married once. She was probably between 20-30 years old.

Yet, she responded to godly instruction like a little child. *“All that thou sayest unto me, I will do!”* She did not know Boaz or the law of God, but Naomi did; so she listened to Naomi. She wanted Boaz. So she came to Boaz, softly. She ventured everything on his goodness. Imagine what could have happened to her. She came to him in the darkest hour of the night, at midnight.

RUTH’S HUMBLE, BUT BOLD REQUEST (vv. 8-9).

“And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.”

Ruth had before offered a request to Boaz - *“I pray you, let me glean”* (2:7). Here she offers herself. She made a plain confession of herself, her need, and her utter dependence upon him. She said, *“I am Ruth,”* a stranger, without claim or merit before you. I am *“Thy Handmaid,”* your servant, at your disposal.

Then, Ruth made a humble request. She said, *“Spread thy skirt over thine handmaid.”* That is to say, take me to be yours. This was a private, personal matter, between Ruth and Boaz alone. Not even Naomi could be involved in this. Faith in Christ is an intimate, personal thing.

Having spread herself, her condition, and her needs before Boaz, Ruth then made one claim upon him. She said, *“Thou art a near kinsman.”* With that claim, she was saying, You have the right and the power to redeem me. With the claim, came the plea of her soul - Will you redeem me? This is the way sinners in need of mercy come to the Savior; and all who come to him obtain the mercy they seek (Matt. 8:2-3).

BOAZ'S GRACIOUS PROMISE (vv. 10-13).

"And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning."

There was no reluctance at all on Boaz's part to perform the part of a kinsman. He commended the wisdom of Ruth's choice. He promised to do all that she wanted. And he declares her to be a virtuous woman. She was not such by nature. She was by nature exactly the same as her sister-in-law, Orpah, a Moabite. But grace had wrought a wonderful change in her. It always does (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Boaz was a willing redeemer; but something was more important to him than Ruth. Boaz would not act the redeemer's part, if he could not do so in a way that honored God. Redemption must honor God's holy law and righteous character (Rom 3:24-26). Grace is never exercised at the expense of righteousness, justice, and truth (Pro. 16:6).

RUTH'S CONFIDENCE IN BOAZ (vv. 14-18).

"And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor. Also he said, Bring

the veil that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city. And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

Notice the two *I wills* in this chapter. Ruth said to Naomi, concerning Boaz, "*I will do all that you say*" (v. 5). She was willing to follow the instruction of one who knew what was best for her soul. Then, Boaz said to Ruth, "*I will do all that you say.*" (v. 11). What a blessing! The Son of God is willing to grant believing sinners everything we need as a matter of free grace, and always does.

There are also two "rests" in the chapter, two blessed portrayals of true sabbath keeping.. There was a rest for Ruth (v. 1). This is the rest of faith. Sinners coming to Christ cease from their own works and rest in him (Matt. 11:28-29). There is also a rest for Boaz (v. 18). The Lord Jesus Christ, once he finished the work of redemption for us, entered into his rest; and his rest is glorious (Heb. 4:10; Isa. 11:10).

Ruth stayed at Boaz's feet all night. Boaz took great care to protect her. And he provided her with all she needed. She had his heart. She got his name. She had his corn. And she had him! When Ruth returned home she told Naomi all about Boaz. And Naomi assured Ruth of Boaz's faithfulness (v. 18; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24).

The Lord Jesus Christ is to his people all that Boaz was to Ruth. He has done for us all that was pictured in Boaz's works of redemption for Ruth. We have obtained in him spiritually all

that Ruth obtained in Boaz. Let us therefore give ourselves to him, as Ruth gave herself to Boaz, and live altogether for the honor of him who is our kinsman Redeemer (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Tit. 2:10).

Chapter 16

Three Nearer Kinsmen,

But Only One Redeemer

"And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning."

Ruth 3:12-13

Tragedies alone never convert sinners (Rev. 9:20; 16:9-11). The old proverb is true - "Any refuge built in the storm will die in the calm." Acts of providential judgment do not produce repentance. A good scare will make a man seek a refuge; but it will not change his heart. Though these things are used of God to convert his elect, it is only when they are accompanied by the grace of God and only a saving revelation of Christ in the heart that they change the heart and produce repentance (Zech. 12:10). *"The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"* (Rom. 2:4).

However, God does use providential tragedies, judgments, and dangers to bring chosen sinners to Christ (Psa. 107:1-43). As we have seen, this fact is beautifully and clearly illustrated in the case of Ruth. Ruth, the chosen object of mercy, a Moabitess, must be saved. Therefore, God sent famine to Bethlehem-Judah. Elimelech went down to Moab. Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth were all widowed. All this was done to bring Ruth, the chosen object of mercy, to the place appointed of God for her to obtain mercy.

In the saving of chosen sinners, God always utilizes the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:10-17; 1 Cor. 1:21; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). This fact is beautifully illustrated in Ruth 1:6. Almighty God never gets in a bind. He never needs to change his mind, or alter his purpose. At the appointed time, by one means or another, God will send someone to his elect with the good news of his free grace in Christ.

However, there is one thing absolutely essential to the salvation of God's elect, one thing without which no sinner could ever be saved, one thing without which God himself could never have saved anyone, is blood redemption. "*Without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Heb. 9:22). God could save with or without earthly tragedies. Had he chosen to do so, certainly God could save without the ministry of the Word, had that been his purpose. But God cannot save apart from blood redemption. The whole purpose of the Book of Ruth is to teach us about redemption, more specifically, to teach us about Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer.

Boaz had spotted Ruth in his fields. He took care of Ruth and provided for her. Ruth came to Boaz on the threshing floor and asked him to take her for his wife. He wanted her and was determined to have her; but the law of God had to be honored. Ruth had a nearer kinsman. Boaz knew the this nearer kinsman. He knew that if Ruth looked to that self-serving scoundrel for redemption she would never be redeemed at all. Yet, he had to be dealt with, according to the law.

Boaz was ready, at any price, to perform the part of a kinsman to Ruth, the stranger from Moab. By nature, being a Moabitess, she was an aversion to him. Still, he loved her. He wanted her. But there was a kinsman nearer than he to Elimelech's fallen family. So it is with the sons and daughters

of Adam. Though there are many nearer to us by nature, there is none who could and would redeem us, but the Lord Jesus Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer.

THE ANGELS OF GOD

Some commentators suggest that the nearer kinsman represents the angels of God. Without question the angels are nearer kin to us than the Son of God in the natural order of creation. They are creatures like us. Christ is not a creature, but the Creator. The angels are the “*sons of God*” by creation (Job 1:6). Christ is the eternal Son, one with and co-eternal with the eternal Father. Like us, angels were created to be the servants of God. The Lord Jesus became the Father’s servant willingly (Isa. 50:5-7).

But redemption is a work no angel could ever perform. They might be able to assume human nature. They are holy creatures.

But they are only finite creatures. They could never suffer the wrath of God to the full satisfaction of justice. They could never bring in everlasting righteousness. Besides, the angels of God were created to be ministering spirits to God’s elect (Heb. 1:14). So far from being able to redeem, the angels of God look to redeemed sinners to learn about redemption (Eph. 3:10-11). What folly it is for blind idolaters to talk about praying to the angels. They have no power or ability to redeem and save. This is the work of God alone. Therefore, our prayers go out to God alone.

THE OLD MAN

Some are of the opinion that this nearer kinsman represents the old man Adam, that is our fallen nature. Both Philip

Mauro³ and Ferrell Griswold⁴ gave this interpretation to the passage. The law of God certainly made allowance for the man in bondage to redeem himself, if he were able (Lev. 25:26). But that is a mighty big “if!” If you are going to save yourself, if you hope to redeem yourself, you only have to do three things:

Perfectly Obey God’s Holy Law (Gal. 3:10).

Make Complete Atonement For All Your Sin (Ex. 13:13).

Give Yourself A New Heart (See Isa. 1:16-18).

Self-salvation is an utter impossibility! As both Mauro and Griswold pointed out, it is permissible; but it is not possible. No mere man can obey God’s law. No mortal can atone for sin and satisfy the infinite justice of the holy Lord God. And no man can make himself a new creature! Only the infinite God himself can do these things.

Not only is self-salvation impossible, it is also impossible for any man to redeem another man (Psa. 49:7-9). We are but finite creatures of the dust. Redemption requires an infinite Savior, with infinite righteousness, infinitely meritorious blood, and infinite power. That is just the kind of Redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ is (Heb. 10:5-14).

THE LAW OF GOD

A third nearer kinsman to us is the law of God. The law of God is holy, just, and good. It was made for man, for the benefit of man. The law, in its entirety, with all its rigors, commands, carnal ordinances, sacrifices, and legal ceremonies, was

³ Mauro, Phillip, *Ruth The Satisfied Stranger*, (Fleming H. Revel, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1920), p. 205

⁴ Griswold, Ferrell, *Ruth* (Series of sermons delivered to the First Baptist Church of Minor Heights), Birmingham, Alabama

designed by God to bring us to and to shut us up to Christ as our only Savior (Gal. 3:24). But the law of God could never redeem and save fallen man (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 3:21; 4:5-6; Heb. 10:1-4).

The law curses, but never cures. The law provides punishment, but not propitiation. The law bruises, but never blesses. The law gives terror, but never peace. As John Berridge wrote...

“The law demands a weighty debt,
And not a single mite will bate;
The gospel sings of Jesus’ blood,
And says it made the payment good.

The law provokes men oft to ill,
And churlish hearts makes harder still;
The gospel acts the kinder part
And melts the hard and stubborn heart.

‘Run, run, and work,’ the law commands,
Yet finds me neither feet nor hands;
But sweeter news the gospel brings;
It bids me fly, and gives me wings!

(Such needful wings, O Lord, impart,
To brace my feet and brace my heart;
Good wings of faith and wings of love
Will make the cripple spritely move.)

With these my lumpish soul may fly,
And soar aloft, and reach the sky;
Nor faint, nor falter in the race,
But cheerfully work and sing of grace.”

As Ruth's nearer kinsman was unable and thus unwilling to redeem her, so these three nearer kinsman of ours are incapable of redeeming our souls. But, blessed be God, there is one who has made himself a nearer kinsman than any others, and he is both able and willing to redeem!

CHRIST ALONE

The Lord Jesus Christ is our one and only kinsman Redeemer. The Son of God has made himself our kinsman that he might be our Redeemer (2 Cor. 8:9; Heb. 2:10-18). He took our human nature into union with his divine nature, so that he might redeem us from the curse of the law by the sacrifice of himself. Someone once said, "God could not suffer and man could not satisfy; but the God man has both suffered and satisfied." The Lord Jesus Christ, our kinsman Redeemer, has willingly done the kinsman's part for us. Christ is a willing Savior. He willingly became Jehovah's servant, because he loved us (Ex. 21:1-5).

He is an able Savior, too. (Heb. 7:25). He has done everything for us that the law of God required a kinsman to do. He paid our debt. He redeemed us from bondage. He married the desolate. He raised up children to the dead, a seed to serve him forever. The love of Christ for us far exceeds the love of any on this earth. "*We love him because he first loved us*" (1 John 4:19). As his love for us exceeds all earthly loves, let our love for him exceed all earthly loves as well.

Chapter 17

Boaz Redeems Ruth

Ruth 4:1-22

We come now to the climax of the Book of Ruth. The things recorded in chapter 4 are the things to which everything up to this point has been leading. Read Ruth 4:1-22 carefully. Everything in this chapter is designed by God the Holy Spirit to direct our hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus Christ and his great work of redemption.

“Then went Boaz up to the gate and sat down there” (v. 1). Why? To intercede for Ruth. This is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ who has gone up to heaven for us, and sat down there to intercede for us. Boaz went up to the city to do his work - Christ has gone up to heaven because his work is done (Heb. 10:11-14; 1:1-3). Just as everything Boaz did as he sat at the gate of the city was for Ruth, so everything Christ does is for his people. Failure was not even considered. Boaz was resolved to take Ruth home with him that night. With our great Savior, failure is an impossibility (Isa. 42:4). *“He shall save his people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21).

Boaz said to his kinsman, ***“If thou wilt redeem, redeem: but if thou wilt not redeem, tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem beside thee; and I am after thee”*** (v. 4). This near kinsman, more than anything else represents the law. But the law cannot redeem, it cannot save without marring itself and the very character of God. The law identifies sin, but cannot forgive it. The law condemns us all, but changes none. The law slays, but can never save (Rom. 3:19-20, 28; 8:3-4; Gal. 3:10, 13).

Next, Boaz said, ***“What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess.”*** Ruth, as we have seen throughout this study, is a type of the church. The world is a great field. The church of God is a treasure hid in the field (Matt. 13:44). Our heavenly Boaz, the Lord Jesus Christ, sold all that he had and bought the field so that he might get the treasure.

As a man, as the God-man Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ purchased all things. All things are his. He rules and disposes of all things for the saving of his people, whom he redeemed with his own blood. As Boaz bought all that was Elimelech's, so Christ bought all that was Adam's. As God the Son, it was his before. But not it is his by right of redemption as our Mediator (Ps. 2:8; John 17:2; Rom. 14:9).

“And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought... Ruth the Moabitess...to be my wife” (vv. 9-10). Boaz bought all that was Elimelech's, but the object of his love and the purpose of his work was Ruth. As Boaz purchased Ruth to be his wife, so the Lord Jesus Christ purchased the church of God's elect to be his wife (Eph. 5:25-27). The object of his love, the purpose of his work was the salvation of his people. Here are nine things about Boaz's redemption of Ruth which are also true concerning Christ's redemption of God's elect. It was...

A PROPER REDEMPTION.

None but Boaz could redeem Ruth. He alone was both able and willing to redeem. Redemption, if it is proper, must be legal. And our redemption by Christ is a proper redemption. Deliverance without satisfaction is a violation of the law; and satisfaction without deliverance is a violation of justice. Christ alone is able to redeem us (Ps. 24:3-6). He alone is willing to redeem us at the price demanded by divine

justice (Heb. 10:1-5. Christ alone is a just and legal Redeemer for sinners (Isa. 45:20).

A PLEASURABLE REDEMPTION.

Boaz went through great pains, trouble, and cost to himself in order to redeem Ruth; but he did so with great pleasure. He did it all with the sweet prospect of having Ruth for himself. Even so, our Lord Jesus found great pleasure and satisfaction in the midst of his sorrows, as he anticipated having his elect with him forever (Heb. 12:2; Isa. 53:10-12).

Our dear Savior did not hesitate to pay the price required for our ransom. He willingly took our sins upon himself. He willingly took for us the cup of wrath. He willingly gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law.

Here's the compassion of our God –
That when Christ, our Savior, knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew!

A PRECIOUS REDEMPTION.

Naomi, Ruth, and all who understood what he did esteemed Boaz's condescending work of redeeming her a matter of great grace, a precious deed on the part of one who made himself precious in their eyes (Ruth 2:20; 4:11-4). Even so, all who have tasted the free grace of God in Christ count him, his blood, and his redemption precious (2 Cor. 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; 2:7). It is precious because the redemption of the soul is precious (Ps. 49:8). The redemption of our souls is precious because the price of our ransom was Christ's precious blood.

Our redemption by Christ is a precious thing, because it was a great act of infinitely great and condescending grace. Boaz was not ashamed of Ruth, the poor Moabite stranger. She could not redeem herself; but this wealthy Prince stooped to lift her up and exalt her. What a great type of the Lord Jesus Boaz is. The Son of God stooped low (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-8), that he might lift us high. This great Prince, the Prince of Heaven, calls to himself the poor, the wretched, the miserable, the halt, the lame, and the blind. And he is never ashamed to identify himself with them and to own them as his own brethren (Heb. 2:9-11). As the great Boaz redeemed and married the lowly Ruth, --as the great King David took the poor, crippled son of Johnathan, Mephibosheth into his house and caused him to sit at his table as one of the king's own sons, --as Hosea redeemed the wretched Gomer and took her to be his wife after she had defiled herself so horribly, so the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed and married us (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

A PUBLIC REDEMPTION.

"Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down." (vv. 1-2)

There were many witnesses to this great transaction. This thing was not done in a corner. When Boaz purchased Ruth everyone in Bethlehem knew it. So, too, There were many witnesses to the redemption of God's elect by Christ. As the angels of God observed the great work., when God the Father, forsook his darling Son, who was made to be sin for us, the sun was darkened, the earth quaked, the stones split open, the graves were opened, and the veil in the temple was

ripped apart, from the top to the bottom. The law of God being satisfied, the veil was ripped apart, showing that there is now open access for sinners to come to the holy Lord God by the blood of Christ. As Satan and the demons of hell observed the dying triumph of the God-man, all hell must have trembled!

Then, three days later, our great Emancipator rose from the grave! As Boaz pulled off his shoe as a token of the transaction being complete (v. 8), so the Lord Jesus Christ took off his grave clothes and ascended up to heaven, *“having obtained eternal redemption for us!”* (Heb. 9:12; Rom. 4:25).

A PURPOSEFUL REDEMPTION.

“Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.” (v. 10)

Boaz redeemed Ruth *“that the name of the dead be not cut off.”* And the Lord Jesus redeemed unto himself a people to be his seed, his peculiar people, to live forever (Psa. 22:30; Isa. 53:10; Tit. 2:14). Boaz redeemed Ruth to be his wife, not his slave, but his wife. So, too, the Son of God redeemed us to be his wife. What a great boon of grace it would have been for such as we are to have been purchased as his slaves! But here is God’s super abounding grace to sinners – Christ has purchased a people unfit to be his slaves to be his holy bride forever!

A PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

“Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased!” (v. 10). Let unbelieving religious men argue and debate as they will, the blood of Christ was shed for and

redeemed a particular people. There is not even a hint of universal redemption to be found in Holy Scripture. Everywhere in the Bible, when redemption is typified, prophesied, and explained, it is set forth as being the particular, effectual redemption of a specifically chosen people called "the elect" (Isa. 53:8; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 5:25-27; Heb. 9:12; Rev. 5:9).

A PRODUCTIVE REDEMPTION.

Boaz got Ruth. That was his purpose; and it was accomplished. Be assured, the Lord Jesus Christ will also accomplish his purpose. He will get his Moabite bride. As a direct result of this great transaction God brought his king to his holy hill of Zion (v. 17). So, too, the Lord Jesus Christ, David's great son and his Lord, was brought into his kingdom and made to sit upon his throne by means of the redemption he accomplished at Calvary (Acts 2:22-36). As a result of this redemption, the Son of God was brought into this world (Matt. 1:5). And as the result of that redemption accomplished in the death of Christ all God's elect shall be brought into heavenly glory (Gal. 3:13-14). A redemption which accomplishes nothing is a useless redemption. Such redemption is not found in the Bible.

A PERFECT REDEMPTION.

"Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife" (v. 13). So too, our heavenly Boaz will finish this thing when the day is over. He will come again to take his Bride unto himself (Rev. 19:1-9). What a day that will be!

A PRAISEWORTHY REDEMPTION.

There is no praise in this whole affair for Ruth, the redeemed. All praise goes to Boaz, the redeemer. The work of

redemption was all his. Therefore, he was praised for it (v. 11) Boaz was made famous in Israel. His house was filled. Why? Because he deserved it. Even so, our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ has been made great. He alone is famous in God's Israel. His house shall be filled. Why? Because he deserves it!

Let us adore and publish the name of our dear Redeemer. Make him famous where you live for his sovereign purpose of grace, for his electing love, for his adorable providence, for his immaculate mercy, and for his great, effectual redemption of our souls by his precious blood. Do not allow the care of this world to destroy you, as it did Elimelech. Cling to Christ, as Ruth did to Naomi. Cast yourself upon his mercy continually, as she cast herself upon the goodness and mercy of Boaz.

"Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life."

Chapter 18

“To Raise Up The Name Of The Dead”

"And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe."

Ruth 4:4-8

In the fourth chapter of Ruth, we are told how Boaz cleared away all obstacles to his redemption of and union with Ruth. Remember, the purpose of his heart was settled. He had made up his mind to redeem Ruth and to marry her. But he was an honorable man. He would not redeem her, he would not marry her, he would not have her unless he could do so in a way that would completely honor God and his holy law. So the nearer kinsman had to be dealt with before Boaz

could take Ruth for himself. Therefore, he came to the gate of the city, called together the elders of the city, and spoke publicly to Ruth's nearer kinsman, the man who was her nearer kinsman by virtue of her marriage to Mahlon. The conversation is recorded for us in verses four through eight.

Clearly, the prominent subject of this passage is redemption. The word "redeem" is used nine times in these five verses. The purpose, or object of redemption is plainly stated in verse five. It is "to raise up the name of the dead." The object of redemption, both typical and real, is to raise up the seed of a man who has died for the honor of that man.

According to the law of God, (the law of God which was given to portray and point us to the Lord Jesus Christ), "the kinsman's part," the duty of the kinsman redeemer involved three things. The kinsman redeemer was obligated by the law of God to do three things. If he failed to do these three things he must bear public reproach for his failure (Deut. 25:5-10; Lev. 25:25-26). The kinsman redeemer must...

Restore the inheritance of his impoverished relative.

Procure the liberty of his brother who through poverty had been brought into slavery.

Marry his dead relative's wife and "raise up the name of the dead."

As Boaz did these things for Ruth, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done all this for God's elect. He has redeemed the inheritance we lost in Adam. He restored that which he took not away. He procured our liberty. By his blood he freed us from the curse of the law. And by the power of his grace he has broken the iron fetters that held us in slavery to Satan and to sin. By the power of his grace, by his omnipotent Spirit, our Kinsman Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, is raising up the name of the dead in this world.

A MATTER OF PUBLIC RECORD

Redemption was always a matter of indisputable, public record. God arranged his law in such a way that throughout the history of Israel in the Old Testament, every transaction involving redemption was done in public, attested to by numerous witnesses, and recorded as a matter of public record, so that the transaction could never be nullified or disputed. As we read this fourth chapter of Ruth, several things stand out as matters of obvious significance.

First, the matter dealt with here is a matter of great importance. Boaz came to the gate of the city, called the elders together, and a large crowd immediately assembled. They knew that something of great importance was about to take place. Something more was involved in this business than Ruth and Mahlon, Naomi and her daughter-in-law. That which was about to take place, that which was being discussed had something to do with the glory of God, the purpose of God, and the people of God. Redemption is a subject of immense importance. This is more than a doctrinal statement. It is the revelation of God's glory (Rom. 3:24-26), the declaration of his purpose (Rom. 8:28), and the hope of his people (2 Cor. 5:21).

Second, this business was transacted in a conspicuous, public place. "*Then went Boaz up to the gate and sat down there.*" Not only is the work of Christ in redemption a matter of vital importance, it has been accomplished in a public manner (Acts 22:26-27, 22-23). The law and the prophets all pointed to this as the climatic event for which God created all things. The apostles all speak of Christ's work of redemption as the crucial issue of the gospel. As we saw in the previous study, the darkened sun, the earthquake, the opened graves, and the rent veil all attested

to the fact that the man who died at Calvary was, as the centurion said, *“the Son of God.”*

Third, redemption was a legal matter. It was a legal transaction. It was done according to the law; and it honored the law. There is an impressive scene before us (v. 2). Boaz took ten men of the city, ten elders in Israel, to be witnesses to this thing. I cannot help thinking that these ten men are suggestive of God’s holy law, summarized in the ten commandments. Our Lord Jesus fulfilled both the law and the prophets when he died as our Substitute and redeemed us. He fulfilled the righteousness required by the law’s commandments in his life (Jer. 23:6). He fulfilled the penalty required by the law’s justice (Gal. 3:13). He fulfilled the prophets, suffering to the last detail *“all that was written of him”* (Acts 13:29; John 19:28; Lk. 24:44-46). Thus, it is written, *“Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth”* (Rom. 10:4).

THE IMPOTENCE OF THE LAW

The failure of the nearer kinsman to redeem Ruth demonstrates the inability of the law to save man. We are not told what his motives were. Whatever they may have been, the nearer kinsman preferred to suffer public shame and disgrace rather than redeem Ruth and thus mar his own inheritance. As we have seen, this nearer kinsman, more than anything else, stands out in the Book of Ruth as a picture of God’s holy law.

The law of God is holy, just, and good; but it cannot forgive sin or extend mercy without marring its justice. The law always identifies and exposes sin. It condemns the sinner, without regard to or giving any consideration to age, environment, education, gender, parentage, or extenuating circumstances. - *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die!”* The law

takes only one thing into consideration - justice, strict, absolute, unbending justice. It identifies sin, exposes sin, and condemns sin. It has no other purpose and no other ability (Rom. 3:19-20; 7:9; 8:3).

All who attempt salvation by the law, all who attempt to get to God on their own merits, shall, like this nearer kinsman, bear the reproach publicly forever. What the nearer kinsman could not and would not do for Ruth, Boaz gladly did. And what the law could not and would not do for us, the Lord Jesus Christ gladly did. As Boaz was delighted to redeem Ruth, Christ was delighted to redeem his people, because of his great love for us (Rom 8:1-4).

The nearer kinsman pulled off his shoe - a sign of disgrace, slavery, and disavowed ownership; and Boaz stepped into his shoes. Moses (the law) put off his shoes as a servant before God's manifest presence. Believers, as the sons of God, have had the shoes of liberty and sonship put on our feet in the Father's house (Lk. 15:22). The legalist (that person who attempts to gain God's favor by his own works) is a slave, cursed by the very thing that makes him so proud (Gal. 3:10). We are the sons of God, accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6; 1 John 3:1).

“TO RAISE UP THE NAME OF THE DEAD”

As Boaz assumed and discharged every duty of a kinsman for Ruth, so the Lord Jesus Christ assumed and fully discharged the whole work of redemption for us. Not only did Boaz buy the inheritance that Mahlon had lost, he bought it for Ruth particularly. He bought the field and bought Ruth for this purpose - *“to raise up the name of the dead.”* Soon Obed was born to Ruth and Boaz.

Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us to raise up the name of the dead, to raise up a seed from among the fallen sons and daughters of Adam to serve him; and it shall be done! *“A seed shall serve him.” “He shall not fail!”*

As Judah assumed all responsibility for Benjamin as his voluntary surety, the Lord Jesus Christ assumed all responsibility for God’s elect in the covenant of grace before the world began (Gen. 43:9; Heb. 7:22). The Son of God came into this world, lived, died, and rose again to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). God the Father has given his Son, our Savior, the power to give eternal life to all his chosen seed (John 17:2). Therefore, we are assured that all who were given to Christ in the covenant of grace before the world began, all who were redeemed by his blood, all for whom he came into this world, he will present faultless before the presence of the divine glory at last (John 6:37-40; 10:16; 1 Cor. 15:28; Heb. 2:13). The immutability of God’s love demands it (Mal. 3:6). The steadfastness of God’s purpose demands it (Tit. 1:2). The justice of God’s character demands it. Augustus Toplady said it well --

“Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine!”

The intercession of Christ demands the salvation of those for whom he lived, died, and rose again (John 17:24). Indeed, the honor of Boaz, the honor of Christ, demands it. If he should fail to save those whom he came to save, if he should fail to fully, effectually, and everlastingly redeem even one whom he came to redeem, he must bear the shame forever; and that cannot be. Our Kinsman Redeemer shall, at last, see of the travail of his soul with complete satisfaction.

“Blessed be the Lord which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel!”

Chapter 19

Seven Lessons From The Book Of Ruth

Ruth 1:1 - 4:22

The story of Ruth and her kinsman redeemer has special appeal to believers, because we see in Ruth and Boaz an outline of our own spiritual history and of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer, of whom Boaz was but a type. I have not attempted to give a thorough exposition of this blessed little history. I leave that to others who are more capable. It has been my purpose simply to show forth the grace and glory of God in Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer, as he is portrayed in these four chapters. In this final study, we will take an overview of the entire book. We will begin in chapter one, verse one, and pick up seven of the golden nuggets scattered through these four chapters.

In these four chapters, the Holy Spirit clearly sets before us seven specific lessons regarding the grace of God, redemption by Christ, and our relationship to him by faith.

The *first* lesson is a very sad and regrettable one, but one we all must learn. It is set before us in the very first verse of the first chapter. Here we are taught **THE COST OF UNBELIEF AND DISOBEDIENCE**. *"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons."*

In a time of famine, Elimelech, whose name means, "My God is King," took what he determined was a prudent step. He moved to Moab. But his move was a very costly one. The move was instigated and made by selfishness and

unbelief, and ended in tragedy. Elimelech died in Moab and left his family in a godless, pagan land, far away from the people of God, the house of God, and the Word of God. Elimelech's disobedience led his sons into disobedience. They both married Moabite women. The move to Moab cost Elimelech dearly. There he died in poverty. Both his sons died in poverty and disobedience to God. His wife was reduced to a bitter existence (1:20-21). Elimelech reminds me a great deal of Bro. Lot. Let all who are wise learn from Elimelech's error.

1. It is always less costly to obey God.
2. All disobedience is manifest unbelief.
3. Bad decisions made early in life will have bad consequences in years to come.
4. Our example is at least as important as our words, and probably much more important.
5. Do not, for any reason, move your family anywhere you would not want to die and leave them.

The *second* thing clearly taught in this Book is **GOD'S SOVEREIGN, UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION**. *"Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread"* (1:6). Ruth was a Moabite, the daughter of a cursed race. She was a stranger. Some suggest that her name means "Satisfied Stranger." Ruth was a stranger to God by nature; but she found satisfaction in the Lord God by grace. Ruth was chosen of God to be an heir of eternal salvation in Christ. Let us ever rejoice in and give thanks to our God for his free, electing love in Christ (Psa. 65:4; John 15:16; Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Thess. 5:9). God's election is an eternal, unconditional, immutable act of love and grace to sinners in Christ, by which all the blessings of grace are secured to the objects of his love.

Third, the Book of Ruth beautifully unfolds **THE WONDROUS MYSTERY OF GOD'S WISE AND ADORABLE PROVIDENCE**. Providence is the unfolding and accomplishment of God's everlasting purpose, which is the salvation of his elect (Rom. 8:28-30). Once we get to the end of the story, especially reading it with hindsight and in the light of the completed Volume of Inspiration, we can see God's providence in everything that took place in this story.

Providence brought **the famine in Bethlehem and gave bounty in Moab. Elimelech's move was an act of great wickedness on his part, for which he alone was entirely responsible; but even that was totally ruled by God's sovereign providence and according to his eternal purpose of grace.**(Psa. 76:10). Let no one imagine that the family bloodline of our Savior was left to chance! The Lord God had chosen Ruth as an heir of his grace and to be the ancestral grandmother of our Lord's earthly family (Matt. 1:5). Therefore, Elimelech came to Moab. Then, at God's appointed time, Naomi heard good news in Moab, good news of God visiting his people in mercy.(1:6). By the arrangement of special providence, Ruth came to the field of Boaz (2:3). There, Boaz (the type of our sovereign Lord and Redeemer) commanded his young men to protect her, give her handfuls of purpose, and let her drink at his fountains. Will we ever learn to trust God's providence?

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will!"

Fourth, this little Book is most precious, because it sets before us in a beautiful, typical picture **THE BLESSEDNESS OF REDEMPTION BY CHRIST**. *"And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen"* (2:20). What a beautiful picture of Christ Boaz is!

He was a kinsman redeemer. - Christ assumed our nature. *"The Word was made flesh."*

He was a mighty redeemer. - Our blessed Savior is mighty indeed. His name is *"The Mighty God!"*

Boaz was a wealthy redeemer. - Christ is filled with infinite, inexhaustible treasures of grace for sinners.

He was a willing redeemer. - Christ willingly laid down his life for us.

He was a lawful redeemer, such a redeemer as the law required. - So, too, is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Boaz was an effectual redeemer. He got Ruth, the object of his love. - The Son of God, our effectual Redeemer, shall get the people of his choice.

Boaz was a complete redeemer, too. When Ruth got Boaz; she got him and everything in him. - And it is written, concerning all God's elect, *"Ye are complete in him"* (Col. 2:10).

I am not straining inspiration at all when I tell you that the *fifth* lesson set before us in the Book of Ruth is **THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE WORD IN CONVERSION**. *"Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread"* (1:6). God has ordained the salvation of his people; and he has ordained the means by which he will save them. When the appointed time of love comes, when

God is pleased to call the sinner he has chosen to life and faith in Christ, he will do so by sending someone to the chosen sinner with the gospel of his grace. To many, this teaching seems inconsistent with the message of God's sovereign grace; but man's inability to comprehend the consistency of Scripture does not alter the plain statements of Holy Scripture. And the Scriptures plainly declare that God saves sinners only by the instrumentality of the gospel. "*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 1:13; Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Sixth, the Book of Ruth shows us **THE CHARACTER OF TRUE FAITH**. True faith is commitment to Christ. "*And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God :Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her*" (1:16-18).

The difference between Ruth and Orpah was commitment. True faith acknowledges personal unworthiness (2:10) and humbly takes its place at the feet of Christ (3:4-8). This is the place where Mary was found, hearing the Savior's words. The leper fell at the Master's feet, when he came seeking mercy. When John saw Christ in his glory and heard his voice, he fell at his feet. Let us ever be found "*at his feet.*" This is the place of humility, reverence, faith, worship, rest, love, and honor. We serve Christ best, when we serve at his feet, leaning upon his Word, trusting his grace, seeking his glory.

Seventh, this precious little Book gives a hint regarding **THE REWARD OF FAITH**. "*The LORD recompense thy work, and*

a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust" (2:12). Faith is taking shelter under the wings of the Almighty, fleeing to Christ our Refuge. Faith, above all else, honors God. And faith obtains the reward of grace. Our faith in Christ is not the cause of God's grace to us. Indeed, our faith in him is the gift and operation of his grace (Eph. 1:19; 2:8-9; Col. 2:12). Yet, it is by faith that we obtain the enjoyment and blessedness of all the blessings of God's grace in Christ. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, all that he is is ours. All grace is ours. All things in time are ours. All things in eternity are ours. If Christ is ours, all is ours!

The Lord Jesus Christ is our great Boaz. In him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings, from everlasting to everlasting. *"Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel."*

AMEN.