

AN EXPOSITION OF
RUTH



TIM JAMES

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RUTH

An Exposition of The Book of Ruth as Delivered in A
Series of Messages to The Congregation of Sequoyah Sovereign
Grace Baptist Church, Cherokee, NC.

by
TIM JAMES

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FOREWORD

It has been my privilege and good fortune to have known Tim James for almost 40 years. Although my acquaintance with him has not been one of a close personal relationship involving mutual confidence and frequent contact, it is one that I believe to be much stronger and far better. It is that of a brother in Christ. My respect for him as a minister of the gospel has grown continually since first hearing him speak in the early 80's. His message and purpose in life has been unwavering; that being the preaching of the sovereign grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ from *every* verse found in Scripture. My benefit of having heard him while visiting with his congregation at Sequoyah Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, at sovereign grace conferences, and for hours on the lawnmower hardly qualifies me for this feeble attempt to honor his request in writing this foreword, yet I am anxious to try.

It is easy to find expositions of Old Testament books such as *Esther*, *Hosea*, or *Ruth* by men who merely “improve” them to instruct people in the practical duties of living a Godly life. But there are few men who look into heavenly places to find and show us the great doctrine of Christ—the gospel, the necessity of faith, and the glory of Christ!

In the natural realm, to see the substance of a shadow as it is cast upon the ground, be it a cloud, an airplane, a bird, or a tree, one must look up. Of great importance in this exposition of *Ruth* is Tim's proof that it is no less so with the example and shadow of heavenly things (Spiritual things) cast from the story of *Ruth* and *Boaz*.

As our Lord Jesus Christ spoke in parables, so the prophets of old speaking before Him, spoke through types, shadows, and pictures—metaphors. As Tim states in his introduction, the Book of *Ruth* is not so much about *Ruth* and *Boaz* as it is about *Boaz* the Kinsman-Redeemer (Christ) and *Ruth*'s redemption as

his bride (the church). Clearly, his desire is for the reader to see Christ with the eyes of faith, high and lifted up, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Some may suppose that he sees Christ where he is not, but the Lord Jesus Christ declared Himself to be the subject of *all* the Scriptures in saying, “They are they which speak of *me*.” Whether it be *The Book of Ruth* or any other in the Old Testament, the subject is Christ and things concerning Him.

Tim’s expositions from Ruth take on the style of Christ, who after having spoken in parables to the multitudes, then revealed the sense of them to his disciples. He was plain and simple. Concerning the parable of the sower, Christ revealed to his disciples, “The seed is the Word.” On another occasion He taught emphatically, “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.” By that example, Tim runs immediately to say, Boaz is Christ—our kinsman redeemer and great Savior. Ruth is the bride of Christ—the church, the people of God, the elect.

Lest I cause your interest to wane with too many examples, here are a few questions you may expect to be answered. How could the fact that Boaz was the son of a whore (Rahab the harlot) have anything to do with things concerning Christ? What things of Christ can be learned by Ruth’s entrance into Boaz’s bedchamber to lay at his feet asking that he spread his skirt over her? What things of Christ are taught by the nearer kinsman to Ruth being unwilling to redeem her and, in his refusal, removing his shoe? “All these things happened unto them for [examples]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

What things can be gleaned from these metaphors? They are things of Christ, precious things, gracious things, comforting things, merciful things for sinners who have need of a great Savior!

Larry Brown

INTRODUCTION

The portion of this book most well-known and highly regarded is the entreaty that Ruth made to Naomi in verse 16 of chapter 1—“Intreat 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.” These words are beautifully poetic and often used in wedding vows, and they bespeak the character of Ruth in her loyalty and love for her mother-in-law.

However, these words, though beautiful and profound, are not the subject of this book. This book is about the *Lord Jesus Christ* and the *redemption of His bride*, the church. Ruth is a picture of the *church* and Boaz is a picture of *Christ* (3:9¹, the Kinsman-Redeemer).

This brief story takes place in the time of the Judges (Ruth 1:1²). Most put the time between when Ehud judged Israel, after he had slain the corpulent king Eglon by thrusting a dagger in his belly while telling him that he had a message from God, and the early days of Gideon, when the Midianites held Israel captive and stole all their cattle and produce, bringing about famine. Because there was no king in Israel at this time and the people did what was right in their own eyes, certain things were prevalent. Though the people of Israel retained their identity and the tabernacle remained at Shiloh, they were to a great extent given over to idolatry. Their association with the pagans of the

¹ **Ruth 3:9**, 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.

² **Ruth 1:1**, 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.

promised land soon turned to assimilation, and on any given day God's people might not be discernable from the surrounding idolaters. The Israelites seemed to transition easily between the worship of God and the worship of Baal. Compromise is always the path of least resistance, and every child of God is in danger of it because of the proliferation of false religion. This fact cannot be discounted in the record of the ease in which Elimelech left off trusting the Lord and moved toward the ease and wealth of the Moabites. It is true that there was famine in the land, but it is also true that the living God had caused it, and as with all trial and tribulation, faith—the existence of faith—is proved by it. Rather than trust God, Elimelech did what was right in his own eyes and quit Bethlehem-Judah and took his wife and sons to Moab, to save his life under the protection of a false god.

The characters in this book are named, and their names reveal and contribute a great deal to the story and its outcome. Elimelech means “My God is King.” This name was given him by his parents, who apparently were believers. His name should have been a comfort and stay in this time of famine, but the knowledge that God was his king did not prevent him from leaving for the land of the Moabites. It is apparent that he did not believe that God was indeed king and sovereign, and his actions made that obvious. His wife's name was Naomi, which means “sweet” and “pleasant.” They had two sons: Mahlon, which means “weakness,” and Chilion, which means “consumption.” These married two gentile, Moabite women: Orpah, which means “stiff-necked,” and Ruth, which means “companion.”

The main character of the book is Boaz, which in the Hebrew means “fleetness” and in the Greek means “in him is strength.” Boaz was the son of Rahab the Harlot. He takes Ruth, a gentile, for his wife and by that union finally begets the Christ (Matt. 1:4-5, 16¹). What a glorious picture of our Lord's

¹ **Matt. 1:4-5**, And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat

free association with sinners. He was “numbered with the transgressors” (Isa. 53:12¹) so much so that His earthly lineage contains a son of a whore married to a gentile.

This story is the story of the method of grace. It is the same theme repeated throughout the word of God: ruin, redemption, regeneration, reconciliation, and restoration. It is the story of every believer; it is our history. Though God is our King, we left the safety of His care in weakness and were consumed in the land of the lie. Like Naomi, we went out full and came back empty. Our condition was Naomi to Mara, from fullness in Adam before the fall to utter ruin in him afterward. Adam was a prince who wound up a pauper, and in Him we did the same.

After the death of Elimelech and his two sons, Naomi was left with two Moabite daughters-in-law. All three were widowed and penniless. Naomi came back to her homeland because she heard that the Lord had visited His people and given them bread.

Is this not the Gospel? Is this not how God's elect return home? “Faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). It was good news that there was bread at the Father's house.

When did she return? She returned at the time of harvest (1:22²). That is when every one of the elect return. She did not return with the thought of being restored to her former stature, but to take her place among those in poverty, a beggar at mercy's door (Luke 15:17-19³). Though Naomi had nothing, she knew

Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; **16**, And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

¹ **Isa. 53:12**, Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

² **1:22**, 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.

³ **Luke 15:17-19**, And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against

that the Law required that the reapers of harvest allow the poor to follow along behind them and freely pick up what was left behind (Lev. 19:9-19; Deut. 4:19¹). Like the Syrophenician woman, she was but a dog waiting for crumbs from the master's table (Mark 7:28²).

Also, the law allowed that a kinsman could redeem the life of a poverty-stricken relative. Naomi had taught her daughter-in-law well. We see in Ruth's behavior a hunger for redemption. She would not remain in her sad estate when there was a Balm in Gilead and a great physician there (Jer. 8:22³). She knew that Boaz could redeem Naomi and knew likewise that she might have part in the inheritance of the children of God. She was not presumptuous but came to the field of Boaz in hope and faith

heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

¹ **Lev. 19:9-19**, And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God. Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD. Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee. **Deut. 4:19**, And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

² **Mark 7:28**, And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

³ **Jer. 8:22**, Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

(Heb. 11:6; Ruth 2:1-2¹). She was going to put herself where the kinsman redeemer might see her. Likewise, if you desire to be with Christ on this Earth then you must go to where He is: in His church where His gospel is preached. She did not approach the reapers or seek help from the other poor ones; she walked in the light she had been given and gleaned from what was left. She took her place as a needy sinner and prayed that the kinsman would see her and have pity on her.

She found grace in the eyes of her redeemer. Boaz saw her. He laid his eyes on her. He had compassion on her (Ruth 2:5²). She had no idea, but she was a child of providence. Boaz, having seen her, provided for her on purpose, though she knew him not (Ruth 2:15-16; Hosea 2:8³). Ruth came home with more than she and Naomi could use (Eph. 3:20⁴).

When Naomi found out who had treated Ruth so well, she rejoiced in the Lord (Ruth 2:20⁵). She gave Ruth explicit instructions, which Ruth humbly followed. She came and laid at the master's feet, awaiting his instruction (Ruth 3:3-4⁶). She

¹ **Heb. 11:6**, But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. **Ruth 2:1-2**, 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.

² **2:5**, Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

³ **Ruth 2:15-16**, 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. **Hosea 2:8**, For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

⁴ **Eph. 3:20**, Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

⁵ **Ruth 2:20**, 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.

⁶ **Ruth 3:3-4**, Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the

risked being scandalized. She risked losing her reputation, and she had a good reputation (Ruth 3:11¹). Her need far exceeded any thought or consideration of censure from the inconsequential world. “The kingdom of God suffereth violence and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12). When Boaz awoke and found Ruth at his feet, he asked her what she desired. In short, she said, “I want you to marry me, I want to be your wife, I want you to redeem me” (Ruth 3:8-9²).

Boaz agreed to redeem her, but he was not the nearest kinsman. The nearest kinsman held prior claim on Elimelech’s household, and that was a transaction that must be settled, or else there could be no redemption (Ruth 3:12³). This nearer kinsman pictures the Law, which has the claim of death on all of us, and the elect cannot be effectually redeemed unless the just claims of the Law are fully answered (Rom. 3:24-26⁴).

Boaz, beautifully picturing the person of our blessed Redeemer, came to the man who had *prior* claim and told him that he had claim of Elimelech’s field. The man said that he would buy it. Boaz told the man that if he bought the field, he would have to *marry Ruth*. The man then told Boaz that he couldn't buy it because it would mar his inheritance, so he told Boaz to buy it. What a picture of grace this is!

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.

¹ **Ruth 3:11**, 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.

² **Ruth 3:8-9**, 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.

³ **Ruth 3:12**, And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

⁴ **Rom. 3:24-26**, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Our Lord is our elder brother, our near kinsman, who has the right to redeem. He set His affection on His bride even when she knew Him not. He provided for her. He loved her with an everlasting love. He came to redeem her but not at the expense of justice and the Law. She was in bondage to the Law because from birth she was condemned by it. Its claim upon her was death. Our Lord paid the debt, redeemed His people, and married His bride. He would not rest till He finished the thing (Ruth 3:18¹).

As we study this book we will once again be reminded of how we became heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. This is the story of Christ and the redemption of His elect, Gentile, pagan bride. This is the story of our kinsman-redeemer.

¹ **Ruth 3:18**, 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.

IT CAME TO PASS

Ruth 1:1-5

1, 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.

2, 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.

3, And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

4, 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.

5, And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

The first five words of this book are words that are generally understood to mean, “This is what happened.” However, to the believer, these words speak of eternal things—things purposed, things that are part of a grand design, a design that is precisely marked out from beginning to end. This book begins with the word “Now.” This word has many applications, but one of its definitions is, “At this point in the series of events.” This definition perfectly fits the phrase, “It came to pass.” The word “it” refers to the book of Ruth. At this point in the series of events the story in the book of Ruth came to pass. The series of events is what we know as “time” or

“human history.” This language teaches that the book of Ruth is placed in time to bring a thing purposed to its appointed fulfillment. Not only are these words often a source of great comfort to us when we undergo trials, but, because of the message of this book, we are also able to see why this specific trial needed to occur. This series of events is an illustration of Christ and His wonderful redemption of sinners. “It came to pass” might be interpreted as “it was appointed to fulfill.” It came as all things come: By the hand of the sovereign Lord, who has made history to be the servant of His glorious providence on behalf of His chosen (1 Sam. 2:7-8; Ps. 113:7-9¹). This book, with all its unique details, is also a picture that points to the singular subject of scripture: The glorification of God in the salvation of sinners by the redemption wrought by Christ.

Now it came to pass.

Since this book is about redemption, it is important to note that the subject of redemption presupposes some things. Redemption speaks of a transaction where a thing is bought and possessed. Redemption presupposes a need for the thing (or person) to be redeemed. If there is no need—if there is no price owed—then neither is there any need for its redemption. The heart of redemption is the presupposition of being in such extreme ruin or poverty that the needy one is entirely shut up to the one who has the right and the wherewithal to pay the price and possess the one redeemed.

In this particular series of events in Ruth, we find that redemption is presented in its most glorious manner: A love

¹ **1 Sam. 2:7-8;** The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. **Ps. 113:7-9.** The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

story. The loved one (the one who is redeemed) is Ruth. She is a Moabite woman. This tells us some very important things about the redemption accomplished by our Lord as our Kinsman-redeemer. The woman, Ruth, who is redeemed by Boaz, is in the direct lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that it was a Moabite that was redeemed, and that Christ was her descendent, teaches us that our Lord's work of redemption included the Gentiles. Also, the location of this redemption and the establishment of the lineage of Christ are in the very town where our Lord was born.

The first thing to notice in these events is the means by which the need for redemption is established, because it teaches us how Ruth comes to need redemption. The sad and disobedient act of Elimelech was what brought Ruth to the place of being in ruin and in need of redemption. Is this not a picture of our estate in Adam? Though we did not know Adam, and though we were not there when he made his terrible choice, it is that act that brought his wife and his children into their state of ruin (Rom. 5:12¹). In Adam all died. Before Ruth was ever found in utter poverty and need, and before she was married to Elimelech's son, Elimelech had made a disobedient decision that set this entire series of events in motion. Elimelech's act was that he disbelieved God in his perception of circumstance. There was a famine in the land, the same land that God called a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. 3:8²). The famine was directly due to the disobedience of the people to whom the Lord had given the land. They had slipped into idolatry in disobedience to the direct command of God, and the result was the chastisement of the Lord. The Lord gave the people over to the captivity of the Midianites, who spoiled the

¹ **Rom. 5:12**, Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

² **Exod. 3:8**, And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

land and robbed the people of the harvest they had planted (Judg. 6:1-6¹). The famine resulted in a circumstance that diminished Elimelech's trust in the Lord (Prov. 3:5-7²). This famine was a warning from God (Lev. 26:19-20³). The result of this decision brought about a veritable checklist of unsavory characters and reveals our Lord's association with the worst of humanity; two of our Lord's ancestors were a Moabite woman who descended from Lot's incest and a harlot named Rahab.

Elimelech's decision, in his own mind, was the right thing to do. I'm sure in his heart he thought he was providing for his own family. He did not go to Moab to set up housekeeping. It is said that he went to sojourn there (v. 1), which suggests that he meant to stay there only as long as the famine lasted and then return home. But sin has a course that is not governed by our intentions. It always ends in death. There is simply no spiritual reason to compromise on the promise of God. There is no possibility of anything but loss when human logic addresses circumstance rather than believing God in the face of dire circumstance. No good end could come of this. What perhaps started with good intentions ended up with this family taking up

¹ **Judg. 6:1-6**, And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

² **Prov. 3:5-7**, 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.

³ **Lev. 26:19-20**, And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.

residence in a pagan land. This famine came to pass and pass it did, but by the time Gideon had delivered Israel from the Midianites, Elimelech had sunk his roots deep in the land of the idolaters (v. 2). Remember that the design of the trials of the believer is to reveal faith. Be aware that the day of tribulation will bring a person to the feet of Christ, or it will drive that person headlong into the world. The believer gains nothing from this world—nothing! This record in Ruth reveals that there was no real reason for Elimelech to leave Bethlehem. He was not in poverty when he left (1:21). There is no indication that other families left. Those who stayed were gloriously delivered and were in peace for many years. Elimelech left for reasons known only to him. Like our federal head, Adam, there is no reason given why he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Perhaps he saw no harm come to Eve when she ate. Perhaps he, like his wife, saw that it was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and made one wise, and so he decided there was evidently no harm in doing so. The record simply says, “And he did eat,” and those four words were the end of innocence for all mankind. Our text succinctly records that Elimelech “went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons” (v. 1). He evidently felt that the way to deal with trouble was to run and hide in the lap of luxury. The believer cannot escape his trials. In the midst of them, he is promised that they will end at the appointed time, and thus he will be able to bear them (1 Cor. 10:13¹). Elimelech based his decision on his perception of surrounding events and decided that he would believe his eyes rather than believe God. Verse 3 declares the end of unbelief: Death and destitution.

Following the example of their father, Elimelech's sons continued in disobedience, and as is the course of sin, they went even further into rebellion. They married Moabite women. The

¹ **1 Cor. 10:13**, There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

first words of verse 4 might as well say that they went headlong into what God had strictly forbidden (Deut. 7:2-3¹). Their wretched choice was tantamount to saying that God and Baal were both true Gods. Such mixture is absolutely forbidden (2 Cor. 6:14-18²). The record is plain; they both died. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23³). I'm sure that Elimelech wanted nothing but the best for his wife. He surely meant her no harm when he "sojourned" in the world of disobedience. Yet his actions brought death and ruin to his household. Naomi perhaps found comfort in her sons when her husband died, but soon sin removed even that comfort from her. She was without hope in the world that her husband had delivered her into. Is this not the same story of the result of what happened in the garden? This story of Elimelech teaches us some important truths. Firstly, everyone dies. We all have an appointment with death. Is it not far better to die in faith than to die in the sad estate of disobedience? Secondly, we must remember that we will not prosper in disobedience. Thirdly, the comfort that the world gives is temporary and always leads to despair and emptiness. The only real asset in this world is to have a portion of that which is not of this world. What profits a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul (Mark 8:36⁴)?

Finally, this entire episode must be viewed in the light of the first 4 words, "Now it came to pass." This is a sad story

¹ **Deut. 7:2-3**, But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.

² **2 Cor. 6:14-18**, Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

³ **Rom. 6:23**, For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

⁴ **Mark 8:36**, For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

indeed. Elimelech did not do what was right in the eyes of God. He did what was right in his own eyes, and his entire family suffered because of his disobedience. Though he followed the dictates of his own sinful perception, and though he did wrong, and though he suffered the consequences of his sin and brought that pain upon his family, he nonetheless did what God had ordained to come to pass (Ps. 76:10¹). Down the line, the union of this Moabite woman and the son of Rahab the harlot would produce the King of Kings, the Lord, the Messiah, the great redeemer of His people. The famine came upon the land because God, from all eternity, had chosen this handmaid named Ruth to reveal how He saves His elect: By the incarnation and substitution of His beloved Son, the descendant of Ruth and Boaz (Rom. 8:28²). *Now, it came to pass.*

¹ **Ps. 76:10**, Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

² **Rom. 8:28**, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

PROFESSION OR POSSESSION

Ruth 1:6-18

6, 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.

7, 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.

8, 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.

9, 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.

10, And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

11, 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?

12, 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;

13, 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.

14, And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15, 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.

16, And Ruth said, Intreat 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:

17, 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.

18, When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

As we last saw, Naomi had moved to Moab with her husband Elimelech, along with their two sons Mahlon and Chilion. This move was from the land of promise to the land of the pagans. Elimelech's decision to move pictures the fall of Adam, and it resulted in Elimelech's entire family being brought down by him. This action—no matter the reason—was against the command of God and resulted in utter ruin. Elimelech died there and left Naomi a widow. Elimelech's sons followed the example of their father in disobedience by marrying pagan women, which was also against the strict prohibition of God. The two sons died, and the house of Naomi became a house of poverty occupied by three widows. These three women tell us a great deal about believers and unbelievers.

Naomi was a believer. We know this because the great trial that she endured did not drive her from God but brought her home to God. In every case, the trial of the believer will eventuate in the tried soul taking up residence at Mercy's door. There are no exceptions to this rule because the design of the

trial is to do exactly that. Trials are not punishment; they are loving corrections of course, and though painful they always produce the “peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

One might ask, “Why did Naomi go with her husband in the first place?” As a believer, she would have known that this was a wrong move. But in the East and under the Old Covenant, the wife was bound to follow her husband. Even though she was afforded more rights in the Jewish economy than among the pagans, in truth, her entire concept of self, family, and possessions was tied to her husband. Her identity was her husband. I know that in our enlightened society, such a thought is anathema. And I know that this is due in large part to the abuse of Bible teaching by zealous, cowardly men. Every manner of crime has been committed under the misuse of this Bible teaching. It is no new thing that unbelievers would take the Old Covenant and wrest the scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16¹).

Remember, however, that the Old Covenant was a picture of Christ and His bride. Naomi followed Elimelech because he was her husband, and no doubt she did it out of love for him. We follow Christ because He is our husband, and we do it because we love Him. And many times in our marital years, He will lead us to unpleasant places, but He will never leave us—will certainly never die and leave us—to fend for ourselves (Isa. 43:1-7²). We are not our own! We are bought with a price. The

¹ **2 Pet. 3:16**, As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

² **Isa. 43:1-7**, But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east,

dowry paid to our Father was His blood. The glorious fact made plain by this entire episode is the sovereign providence of God. The true story of Ruth was written for us to learn about redemption, and the elements of the story reflect that. To a great degree this is our own experience of the grace of God (Rom. 15:4¹).

Orpah, it would appear, thought very much of Naomi. At first, she was willing to quit her own country and follow Naomi back to the Promised Land. Sadly, in the end she returned to her own country and her own gods. Orpah is a picture of those who profess faith but do not persevere till the end.

Ruth, on the other hand, was a chosen vessel. She was the object of grace. Out of love for Naomi, she quit her country, forsook her gods, and went to the Promised Land with Naomi. Her actions were born of more than love for Naomi; she believed in the God of Israel, and as a believer, she left all for Him. She is a picture of the one to whom God has given faith. Such will endure till the end (Jer. 32:38-40²).

Naomi was a woman of faith (vv. 6-7). Though she had lived in Moab for some ten years, she had never planted her roots there. Her heart was never in the land of Baal worshippers. Her heart was in Bethlehem Judah. This is established in the fact that she was aware (by whatever means) of circumstances back home (v. 6). Her interest was God-ward. One might say that her situation had brought her to the place of wanting to return—and that was certainly an aspect of her desire—but

and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

¹ **Rom. 15:4**, For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

² **Jer. 32:38-40**, And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

remember who the God of circumstance is and remember how He always gets His word to His elect (John 10:3, 27¹). God will not leave His own to rot among the ruined (Deut. 6:23; 2 Pet. 2:9²).

Naomi desired to return because of what she heard. This is why I love the simplicity of the Gospel: It is not a report of what you must do or what you should do; it is a report of what God has already done, and that report addresses the elect's most basic (God-ordered) need and causes him to hunger for what he has heard about. Naomi heard while she was still in Moab "how that the Lord had visited His people and given them bread." This is the same message of the preacher. It is a declaration that God has visited His people and given them the bread of life. Who would be interested in such a message? Not Orpah, who had bread aplenty and a god for every occasion. The Gospel is an arrow shot indiscriminately by the preacher, but the language of it is a guided missile. We don't know who the elect are, but God has plowed that ground to be a furrow for faith. The preacher's job is but to scatter the seed. The Lord will make that seed find purchase and bring forth fruit unto repentance and life. For those dearly beloved elect, whom God has brought low and made poor and hungry, it is nothing but good news that the Lord has visited His people and has given them bread (Hosea 2:6-7³). Hark and listen! Everyone that is thirsty, everyone that hungers for righteousness, good news has found its way to Moab—there's bread in the Promised Land—living bread, eternal bread.

¹ **John 10:3**, To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 27, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

² **Deut. 6:23**, And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. **2 Pet. 2:9**, The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

³ **Hosea 2:6-7**, And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

The one to whom God has given faith will act upon what he believes. Notice the first word in verse 7: "Wherefore" means "based upon what has been revealed." Based upon the news that the Lord had visited His people and given them bread, "she went forth out of the place where she was." The Gospel is the proverbial line in the sand that requires a verdict. "Who is on the Lord 's side?" It confronts the heart with "how long halt ye between two opinions...choose this day whom ye will serve" (Josh. 24:15¹). It brought this confession from Joshua: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." There can be no reconciliation of Baal with the true and living God. You can't eat the Lord's bread at the hog troughs of Moab. You can't dine with the king while living on the dung heap. "Come out of her my people and be ye separate" (Rev. 18:4; 1 John 2:15²).

It is evident from Ruth and Orpah's response to Naomi that Naomi was a woman of grace and kindness. These two pagan girls were willing to leave hearth and home to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem. Without compromising the truth, Naomi had lived peaceably with these two pagans, and her demeanor had been such that they truly loved her. In this, Naomi is an example worthy of emulation (Rom. 12:17-18³). Kindness never goes out of style.

In verses 8-9 we find Naomi encouraging her daughters-in-law to return to their families. She commended their persons and kissed them good-bye, having prayed for them. Both Orpah and Ruth declared their allegiance to Naomi (v. 10). If you will notice the last phrase of verse 9, the actions recorded might well

¹ **Josh. 24:15**, And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

² **Rev. 18:4**, And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. **1 John 2:15**, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

³ **Rom. 12:17-18**, Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

be attached to what religion calls a “Holy Ghost Meeting.” Emotions were running high. If there was ever a time for an invitation to be given, it was now. Sentimentality was rampant, but feelings and emotions pass with the change of circumstance and are of no eternal consequence.

Naomi was a wise woman. Instead of seizing the opportunity to proselytize these two weeping and howling pagans or extending the right hand of fellowship, she did her best to discourage them from coming with her (vv. 11-13). Was she cold and heartless? Did she not want these two girls to leave their paganism and to worship the true God? Surely she did, but she would not have them come based on the emotions of the moment. She would not have them leave all for her sake. She would have them know that it would cost everything to serve the Lord. If they were to follow her it would have to be because they saw value in her God, not in her. Professions made in the heat of a revivalist fervor, where a river of tears flow on man-made altars, are not worth the salt in the tears brought forth. That which is born in the storm dies in the calm. Those who come to Christ do so having been informed of the cost. They learn that Christianity ain't no “pie in the sky.” It is a sword of division (Matt. 10:34-39¹), and the believer willingly gives all he has to have the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45-46²), or he will not have it at all (Luke 14:28³).

¹ **Matt. 10:34-39**, Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

² **Matt. 13:45-46**, Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

³ **Luke 14:28**, For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

Orpah caved. Though she kissed her mother-in-law, it was a kiss of departure. She ran well for a time, but like Demas (2 Tim. 4:10¹), she forsook Naomi, “having loved this present world.” Her name means “stiff-necked” and “declining.” There are many Orpahs who seem to love and embrace the Gospel for a time, but the fire of trial, the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches cause them to return to the supposed safety of their former estate. The Gospel does not promise fame and fortune, health and wealth, and a Lexus. Be warned: If you go with Naomi, the only promise is “sufficient grace.” Only faith and love will do in the service of the Lord. In this world you shall have much tribulation (2 Cor. 6:4²). You cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24³). If you come you must come worshipping God—not for gain, but because He is worthy—even if it kills you (Job 13:15⁴). Come and dine, not on the leeks and garlic of Egypt but the light bread that nature's soul hates! Orpah kissed life goodbye because the way of the cross was too hard.

Look at the last phrase of verse 14: “But Ruth clave to her.” This verb “clave” is in the perfect tense. It carries the idea of not only being a completed action but, in a sense, a finished action. The Hebrew language uses the perfect tense to describe the future as if it had already come to pass. Ruth clave to Naomi forever. She clave now and would still be holding at world’s end. Naomi could not discourage Ruth. She would not leave; she could not. She was chosen of God, and all that the father gave to Christ shall come to Christ (John 6:37⁵). Grace had destroyed

¹ **2 Tim. 4:10**, For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

² **2 Cor. 6:4**, But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses.

³ **Matt. 6:24**, No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

⁴ **Job 13:15**, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

⁵ **John 6:37**, All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

her hope in the world and had put an end to her first husband, so that she could be married to another. She did not know it yet, but providence was moving her feet, directing her path, and giving her a “clinging” heart.

Orpah saw something in Naomi, but what she saw was not worth the pain. Ruth saw everything in Naomi, and she would go with her even if it cost her everything. Many in religion see value in Christ. They rejoice in His power to perform miracles. They love the fact that He feeds them—they would make Him king to serve their bellies—but they disdain the harsh reality that to have Him is to incur the vehement hatred of the world and the real possibility (even probability) that family and friends will disown them. Believing isn’t for the faint of heart.

The believer sees inestimable value in Christ; He is precious to the believer. In Him is forgiveness of sin, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is the true Friend that sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24¹). In His face is the glory of God revealed. He has answered the Law’s demands perfectly and has put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Let old “stiff necked and declining” go her way—the believer is going stick like glue. The words of Ruth in verse 16 are the words of a heart that God has committed to Christ. Ruth was not merely changing doctrine; she was changing Gods. Rolfe Barnard use to say, “I can't introduce you to my God until I first kill your god.” Look at 2 Samuel 15:19-21² (“Ittai” means “with you”). Just as Ittai’s devotion was to David, so Ruth's commitment was to Naomi's God. She wanted

¹ **Prov. 18:24**, A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

² **2 Sam. 15:19-21**, Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee. And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.

nothing less. Her confession was much like a believer's baptism. In that blessed act, the believer is saying, "The Lord is my God; His people are my people; when He died, I died; when He was buried, I was buried; when He arose, I arose, and where He lives, I live."

THE GOSPEL

Ruth 1:6-7

6, 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.

7, 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.

It has been said (and rightly so) that the singular time and place that the God of glory is most fully revealed is on the cross of Calvary. There alone He reveals Himself in all His attributes. There alone is the Gospel most perfectly and beautifully displayed. To know God is to know Him as He is. Though He cannot be fully known (because by searching we cannot find Him out (Job 11:7¹)), the glorious report of what took place on that tree 2000 years ago is where such knowledge is found.

That blessed report is known as the Gospel: The good news. There is debate among men as to whether that report is necessary to be heard in order for the elect to be saved. I have dear friends who say that the elect can be saved without hearing the Gospel, asserting that since the Bible is the Word of God and is the Gospel from cover to cover, and therefore is the singular thing to be preached, that God can save a person by that person merely reading the Bible. I don't discount that possibility but neither do I assert that it is so. I simply do not find salvation coming to anyone—particularly in the New

¹ **Job 11:7**, Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

Testament—apart from the preaching and the hearing of the Gospel.

The preacher's credo, if you will, is that necessity has been laid upon him and that necessity is to preach the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:16¹). One of the successes of false religion has been to diminish the preaching of the cross and instead opt for pep talks and self-help lectures designed to make fallen men feel better about themselves. However, their success will be short-lived, and they will find that when all is said and done that the angels of heaven had made it their business to go about preaching the everlasting Gospel (Rev. 14:6²).

God is the God of order and, as Sovereign, He has ordained to employ certain means to bring His elect to the knowledge of what He has done for them. The means that He employs is the preaching of the Gospel. The Ethiopian Eunuch was reading the scriptures (Acts 8:28³). He was reading the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, a chapter that is full of gospel prophecy. That eunuch was one of God's elect and was a man of character and intellect. Yet, he had no idea who the prophet Isaiah was talking about in his prophecy, but he needed to know if he was to confess Christ. The Lord sent Philip to take Isaiah 53 and preach Christ to him.

The Lord has made it clear that this is the order that He has ordained. Some who disagree with this fact assert that God does not need a preacher. That is, of course, true. But “need” is not ever the issue with God. “Purpose” is the defining principle of how God operates, and scripture is replete with references to the truth that God has ordained to save His elect through the preaching of the Gospel (John 6:45; 1 Cor. 1:21; Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25⁴). There is therefore neither right nor

¹ **1 Cor. 9:16**, For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

² **Rev. 14:6**, And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

³ **Acts 8:28**, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

⁴ **John 6:45**, It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto

warrant to believe or to do otherwise. Perhaps the clearest representation of this is found in Romans 10:13-17¹. Even though other passages exist concerning the subject, it is the clearest passage regarding the way God makes His people aware of their salvation. This passage declares that it is impossible to call on Christ until you believe on Him; it is not possible to believe on Him unless you have heard the Gospel; it is impossible to hear the Gospel without a preacher; and it is impossible to preach unless God sends you. The only conclusion that could possibly be reached is that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the (preached) word of God.

Hearing the Gospel calls for a verdict and always eventuates in acting upon what is heard (v. 6; 2 Cor. 2:14-16²). The only reason given for Naomi leaving Moab was that she heard that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread. She reached a verdict because she had heard what God had done. One might say that she was given a choice to go or to stay. This

me. **1 Cor. 1:21**, For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Heb. 4:12, For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

James 1:18, Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

1 Pet. 1:23-25, Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

¹ **Rom. 10:13-17**, For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

² **2 Cor. 2:14-16**, Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

would only be true if she were not hungry. God had ordered time and circumstance to empty Naomi's stomach, and if she were to live, there was only one place where there was bread. The beatitudes declare that God has blessed some to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and God's promise is that they will be filled (Matt. 5:6¹). The only one who rejects the bread is the one who is not hungry.

Notice the simplicity and singularity of the message she heard. Likewise, the Gospel is not a theological treatise. It is not spoken in theological terminology. It is declared in the terms of the most basic of human needs. Hunger and thirst make up the theology of the Gospel. These natural and real needs are understood and felt. Our Lord uses these organic and fundamental drives to speak of the spiritual needs of the elect. Not everyone feels a hunger for Christ, but every one of the elect do. In the days of wandering the wilderness, the provision for the Israelites was bread and water. When the people wanted meat with their bread (Exod. 16), God gave it to them but sent leanness to their soul, so that when they grew tired of the bread and loathed it, the Lord sent serpents to bite and kill them (Num. 21:4-6²). Christ declared that He was the bread from heaven and the water of life. He declared that "meat" for the believer was to do the will of God (Mark 3:35³), and the works of the believer were to believe on Him whom God had sent (John 6:29⁴). On the great last day of the Feast of Tabernacles,

¹ **Matt. 5:6**, Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

² **Num. 21:4-6**, And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

³ **Mark 3:35**, For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

⁴ **John 6:29**, Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

our Lord stood up and cried aloud, “If any man thirst, come unto me and drink” (John 7:37¹). Naomi did not hear that the Lord had visited His people and had given them proper ecclesiology, eschatology, or high theology. She heard, while in a state of starvation, that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread. This was good news, and she immediately acted upon the faith that she had been given (Ps. 132:15²).

The language used in the simple phrase in verse 6 is important. It is a message of design, grace, and mercy. The Lord often visits His people’s sin with the rod of chastisement, and such a visit is always well deserved. This visitation, however, was not with a rod but with sustenance. His visits are defined by what He brings. “He hath visited His people in giving them bread.” Note well that He did not visit His people to offer them bread, to give them an option, or to make bread available if they chose to eat it. He came and He gave, and His people no longer hungered. The design of the message was that it addressed the problem in the “giving.” He would not have brought bread if they were full. He had emptied them, and he had also brought to them the bread of life.

The Gospel is also good news for the poor. Within this blessed truth resides the truth of their blessed condition. Notice also that this is a message of a finished thing. God had come to His people and had given them bread. The Gospel is likewise a report of what God has done and has freely given to His people (1 Cor. 2:9-12³). Naomi did not leave Moab with doubts about

¹ **John 7:37**, In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

² **Ps. 132:15**, I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

³ **1 Cor. 2:9-12**, But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

bread; she came to where God was and believed that He was the rewarder of them that diligently sought Him (Prov. 8:17¹). The preacher can't make you hungry. All he can do is tell you where the bread is. Salvation—from death to life, from destitution to untold riches, from pauper to prince, from hunger to bread—is “of the Lord.”

Faith is the active life of the believer. When Naomi heard the news, she left Moab (v. 7). “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). Faith's works are ordained and sure to come to pass (Eph. 2:8-10²). Faith operates in works of love (James 1:27, 2:14- 26; Gal. 5:5-6³). Faith is not demonstrated in legal, authoritarian, stern, puritanical austerity, but rather in love, mercy, kindness and grace (Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22-23⁴).

¹ **Prov. 8:17**, I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

² **Eph. 2:8-10**, For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

³ **James 1:27**, Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. **2:14-26**, What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. **Gal. 5:5-6**, For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

⁴ **Rom. 14:17**, For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Gal. 5:22-23, But the fruit

“All men have not faith” is the declaration of the scripture (2 Thess. 3:2). Faith is so individual that it is only discerned by the one who possesses it and the one who is the object of it. Nothing we do can prove that we have faith. However, we can do things that reveal that we do not have it. Ruth and Orpah are two examples of the ways that a person reveals whether they have faith. Ruth believed Naomi's God. Orpah did not. This is clearly revealed in one thing: belief. Ruth was governed by the unseen; Orpah was governed by that which was visible (2 Cor. 4:18-5:1; Heb. 11:13-16¹). Orpah was clearly “mindful of that country” (Heb. 11:15²) of Moab. Where a man's treasures are, there shall his heart be also (Matt. 6:21³). Orpah looked back and, just like Lot's wife, she lost everything. What was the difference between Ruth and Orpah? It was the same difference between every lost and saved sinner: It was the grace of God (1 Cor. 4:7⁴). Ruth was not a better woman, and there is no indication that Orpah was anything other than a loving and kind daughter-in-law. But kindness, love, affection, and tenderness have nothing to do with your salvation. Grace alone makes a sinner a saint.

of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

¹ **2 Cor. 4:18-5:1**, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **Heb. 11:13-16**, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city

² **Heb. 11:15**, And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

³ **Matt. 6:21**, For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

⁴ **1 Cor. 4:7**, For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

The same circumstances had befallen both Ruth and Orpah. Both were hungry by an act of God. Naomi had told both daughters-in-law the same thing (vv. 8-13). But God had made Ruth hunger for Bethlehem's bread, while Orpah was left to hunger for the sustenance of Moab (vv. 14-17). The Gospel is designed for those whom God has made hungry for the bread of life. The Gospel declares that the Lord has visited His people in giving them bread and has given His people faith to come and dine.

LOVE'S COMMITMENT

Ruth 1:14-17

14, And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15, 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.

16, And Ruth said, Intreat 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:

17, 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.

The word of God speaks of commitment. It generally refers to committing to the Lord something that we deem as ours (Ps. 37:5; Prov. 16:3; 2 Tim. 1:12¹). This is the truest sense in which we are committed to the Lord: We have, because of grace, cast all we are and have upon the Lord. Our desire is to be kept by Him. Because religion has diminished the word “commitment” to mean a personal, meritorious act of allegiance born of the decision of free will, the principle of “personal commitment” is often avoided by those who hold that salvation (and all its attendant mercies) is of the

¹ **Ps. 37:5**, Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. **Prov. 16:3**, Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established. **2 Tim. 1:12**, That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord. However, the believer is committed to Christ because He, in love, has committed Himself to us. Love is commitment. There is no doubt that the result of love is an act of the will. We give because we love. We guard our loved one's because we love them. We are jealous for their honor because we love them. The record of the word is that God loved us and because of that love He sent His Son to die for us (John 3:16¹). It is said of Christ repeatedly that He loved us and gave Himself for us. Love cannot be explained; it is however demonstrated in deeds (1 John 3:18²). Love is demonstrated in commitment. This is clearly revealed—and beautifully so—in the actions and words of Ruth toward Naomi. Ruth clave to Naomi (v. 14). This is the heart of love's commitment. Ruth's words were a confession of commitment. What she said to Naomi has become synonymous with a perfect confession of love and commitment. This relationship between Naomi and Ruth, and Ruth's evident love for her, is a picture of the believer's love and commitment to Christ. Her attitude and words are representative of the believer's understanding and appreciation of Christ and His Gospel.

There is much for us here.

The first thing to notice is that, though Ruth's intent was to go with Naomi, and it was clearly the desire of her heart, her words were not presumptuous. When Naomi bid her daughter-in-law to go back to her land and her family, Ruth's words did not come across as obstinate. She bowed to the will of Naomi. She did not say, "I'm going with you and that's all there is to it." She beseeched Naomi not to send her away. If we look at the miracles of our Lord, we find that almost every recipient of His mercy desired to follow Him. Likewise, everyone who came to

¹ **John 3:16**, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

² **1 John 3:18**, My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Him for mercy attributed sovereignty to Him—“Lord, if thou wilt.” Those who desire to follow Him, and have committed to do so, await His permission. If Naomi had forbidden Ruth, there is no doubt that Ruth, because of her reverence for Naomi, would have turned back. Such is the case with every believer, with few exceptions.

Some, whom the Lord delivered, were told to keep quiet about it but they could not. When Bartimaeus was told to go his way, he followed Christ. The believer is committed to following Christ, but at the same time he is committed to do what the Lord wills. What Naomi saw in Ruth was what our Lord sees in those who love Him, which is an unquenchable fire to be by His side. Note well that all that Ruth expressed had to do with one thing: Her desire to be with Naomi. Is this not the same heart of the believer? Whatever awaits the believer is not an issue. His primary—even singular—desire is that, come what may, it will be well if he can but be with the Master. “Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.”

Ruth's commitment meant that she would have new relationships: “Thy people shall be my people.” The fact is that she would be leaving friends and family because of her allegiance to Naomi. Her love for Naomi would cost her all that she knew of familial relationships. Not only this, but it also meant that she would form new relationships. Though this is not always the case, and though a believer may not lose his family or be required to leave them, he must be willing to do so (Luke 14:25-27; Ps. 45:10-11¹). Our Lord said, “Seek out godly companions.” To be near Christ and thus become a brother or

¹ **Luke 14:25-27**, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. **Ps. 45:10-11**, Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.

sister of Christ ultimately means natural family should not assume primacy (Matt. 12:49-50¹).

Ruth's commitment to Naomi also required her to leave her gods, the deities to whom she prayed and those she worshipped, "and thy God my God." This was no small thing, but if she was to be with Naomi, her gods must be abandoned and forsaken. There is no other way. This is difficult, but if we are to be with Christ and are committed to Him, we must abandon all our former religion. We can no longer worship at the altar of freewill or of works, or at the altar of a god who is incapable of ruling His creatures. If we are committed to Christ, all rivals to Him are to be disallowed and discounted. To hold on to these or to seek to form a mixture is an admission of want and a lack of love and commitment to Christ (Rev. 18:4; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1, 5:17²).

Ruth's commitment was for life. "Where thou diest, will I die." Christianity is not a "tack-on." It is not a contingency plan for escaping Hell. It is Christ to the death. Love's commitment is for life (Luke 9:62³). This passage is also a beautiful representation of the believer's understanding of the Gospel and of what took place on Calvary. Where Christ died, the believer

¹ **Matt. 12:49-50**, And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

² **Rev. 18:4**, And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. **2 Cor. 6:14-7:1**, And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. **5:17**, Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

³ **Luke 9:62**, And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

died (Gal. 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 6:11¹). It is the lifelong commitment of the believer to glory in the crucifixion of Christ because it was there Christ died, and so did the believer (Gal. 6:14²). The believer's faith is to the end (Phil. 3:13-14³).

Ruth's commitment to Naomi was such that she even wanted to be buried with her. Humanly speaking this was as far as she could go, as "there will I be buried." Ruth knew that she could stay with Naomi no longer than for both of them to end in a common grave, but her love for her would allow no other way. Ruth's allegiance to Naomi ended in a common grave plot. The believer's love for Christ began in a common grave. We confess that we were buried with Him in baptism (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12⁴). What Naomi said in verses 16-17 are the believer's confession of faith.

¹ **Gal. 2:19-20**, For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. **2 Cor. 5:14**, For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. **Rom. 6:11**, Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

² **Gal. 6:14**, But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

³ **Phil. 3:13-14**, Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

⁴ **Rom. 6:4**, Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. **Col. 2:12**, Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

HARVEST

Ruth 1:22

22, 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.

There is a wonder to the scriptures as the Lord continues to open them up to His people. There is a calm that enters the bosom when we are given faith to rest in the work of Christ, and there is an outpouring of praise and thanksgiving to God when we begin to understand that sovereign providence has been ordered for our cause. We can join with old Bunyan and rejoice that prisons are palaces when our Lord is with us there. That all things work together for good is doctrinal truth learned early in the Gospel, but experience is the teacher of Romans 8:28¹, and Scripture is a constant reminder of the wondrous governing and the manipulation of time and tide, of flora and fauna, of human and animal—of absolute sway over all genus, phylum, and kingdom for the eternal welfare of the elect.

In our text we see that Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem Judah at the time of the barley harvest. Divine providence had ordered famine in Israel so that Elimelech took Naomi and his sons to Moab. Another famine struck, but not in Israel. He who holds the breath of every creature in His hand took the breath from Elimelech and his sons and left Naomi with a famine of family. Stripped of everything, brought to poverty and destitution, Naomi's heart had been prepared for

¹ **Romans 8:28**, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

seed. When the good tidings came that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread, Naomi's response was immediate. She left the house of woe to return to the house of bread. Her return was at the time of harvest. This is when all the elect return. Paul, speaking of preachers, said we plant and water but the Lord gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:7¹). The time of the barley harvest was the time of the feast of first fruits and thus pointed to the work of Christ in the salvation of the elect.

The barley was the first grain harvested. It was not considered the best grain for making bread. It was often fed to the beasts. The bread made from it was flat bread, considered of no great value by the world, yet it was often the only sustenance of the poor. It was a piece of this flat bread that, in a dream, gave Gideon the encouragement to do battle with lamps and bowls and defeat the enemy and deliver Israel. It was barley that was the offering of the accused wife when the law of jealousies was employed. Barley was meager fare but suggested not its true value but the perceived value to the world. Barley pictures Christ as He is perceived by the world. They cannot see His value. They think Him to be the bread of the poor and ignorant. But to the poor, the wretched, the outcast, and those dying of hunger, barley flat bread is the feast of kings; Christ is the bread of heaven who feeds me till I want no more.

For the hungry, there is no waiting for the harvest of wheat. The bloom on the first barley reed is the promise of food. For the poor, the news that the barley is being harvested is the declaration that the famine has ended. The elect do not come home in the time of plowing or the time of sowing or the time of watering; they come home at the time of the barley harvest.

When the US government gave flour and salt to the tribes whom they had discarded and isolated on reservations, they felt they were giving them the bare essentials. But from that flour came the feast of kings. Fry-bread was sustenance but so much more. It became the delicacy that it is today, and in that bread is

¹ 1 Cor. 3:7, So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

the history of the people. That bread, perceived as nothing by the world, is the source and sustenance of history, and family, and fellowship. Our sweetest celebrations are those when we eat that which is counted as nothing by the world. Is this not the fellowship of the Gospel, the worship of Christ as the despised bread yet the single thing that binds us that speaks to our history, our family, and our food in this world? Naomi came home at the time of the barley harvest!

This time was the time of the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:10-11¹). If we look at the New Testament, we see that the barley harvest, which is the time of the Feast of Firstfruits, is symbolic of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18²).

This being the case, this time of harvest pictures our resurrection in Christ and new life in Him. It pictures the Gospel Age, the time of the harvest of the elect. Christ used this time of the year to declare this truth (Matt. 13:37-39; Luke 10:2; John 4:35³). As those in the Promised Land waved the first fruits with joy before the Lord, so the disciples rejoiced in the resurrection of Christ. They rejoiced to wave the “first fruits” before the Lord. They preached the Gospel, saying, “He Is

¹ **Lev. 23:10-11**, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

² **1 Cor. 15:20**, But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. **Col. 1:18**, And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

³ **Matt. 13:37-39**, He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. **Luke 10:2**, Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. **John 4:35**, Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

Risen” (Acts 4:10; 2 Tim. 2:8¹). Our new birth is our resurrection from the dead and our guarantee of our participation on the last resurrection. We are a kind of firstfruits (James 1:18; Rev. 20:6²).

This Feast of the Firstfruits was held on the first day of the week. Our Lord also rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Believers gather on that day to worship because it is called the Lord's day throughout the New Testament. The Feast of Firstfruits speaks of our justification before God (Lev. 23:11; Rom. 4:25³). The Feast of Firstfruits teaches us that there is an expectation of more to come. If there is a first, there must be a second. We were raised from the dead in regeneration, and we will be raised to eternal glory in the last resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-13, 20-23⁴).

¹ **Acts 4:10**, Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. **2 Tim. 2:8**, Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

² **James 1:18**, A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Rev. 20:6, Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

³ **Lev. 23:11**, And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. **Rom. 4:25**, Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

⁴ **1 Cor. 15:12-13**, Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 20-23, But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Finally, read 2 Samuel 21:1-9¹. This is the only other time the words “the beginning of the barley harvest” are found in Scripture (verse 9). This portion of scripture points us to the need for, and effects of, Christ’s sacrifice. Verse 1—Saul sins against God in killing the Gibeonites with whom Israel (and God by extension) had made a covenant. Judgment fell on Israel for three years in the form of a famine. Before the curse was to be removed, justice would need to be satisfied (vv. 4-9). Silver and gold would not satisfy (v. 4), which are “corruptible things” (1 Pet. 1:18-20²). Likewise, man sinned and man must die. The seven men of Saul’s family line typify a perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-9³). The sacrifice made on the “hill of the Lord” (v. 9) at the beginning of the barley harvest was the time of the Feast of

¹ **2 Samuel 21:1-9;** 1, Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. 2, And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.) 3, Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD? 4, And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you. 5, And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, 6, Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them. 7, But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD’S oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. 8, But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite: 9, And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.

² **1 Pet. 1:18-20,** Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

Firstfruits. The final picture pointing to Christ's sacrifice is that Mephibosheth was spared because of a covenant (1 Sam. 18:3¹). Justice satisfied means the curse was lifted (v. 14), and satisfied Justice means reconciliation.

And so it was that Naomi returned at time of barley harvest.

³ **Heb. 10:1-9**, For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

¹ **1 Sam. 18:3**, Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

HOME AGAIN

Ruth 1:19-21

19, 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?

20, And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

21, 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?

The ways of God are past finding out. What He is doing at any given time cannot be known. I have been convinced for some time now that it is best that we do not know what God is doing. It is enough to know that He does all things well, and that His purpose is perfect and will come to pass. We get into trouble when we, as finite beings, endeavor to analyze the infinite. What we can do is look at the record that God has given us and be sure that everything has worked out precisely as he has planned.

It should keep us in perfect peace knowing that God Himself is the first cause of everything. But that will not happen as long as we struggle with our own unbelief and guilt. Even this struggle is best for us and is working for our good, because ultimately our unbelief and guilt so utterly strip us that we find ourselves feeling for the threshold of mercy's door. I heard pastor Rolfe Barnard pray once, "Lord, do whatever it takes to

bring us and keep us at the feet of the savior.” I confess that my prayers do not often reach to a place of such honesty. Though I may not be able to pray thusly, I know, according to the word of God, that whatever it takes to bring us to Christ is precisely what God will do to and for His elect.

Naomi was not a victim of circumstance or a recipient of the dark hand of fate. She was the object of divine love and mercy, and the footsteps that she took that put her in the land of woe were but part of the pathway laid out for her from all eternity to bring her “to an expected end” (Jer. 29:11¹). Her story is in the journal of every one of the elect. From Adam unto this day, the recurring testimony of every blood-bought sinner is “the Lord has brought me home again.”

There is a great treasure trove of understanding in the words of this beloved saint. The first thing that is before us is the reaction of the people of Bethlehem upon Naomi's return. They were surprised by what just a decade had done to her. The question they asked suggests that there was visible change in Naomi's appearance. The language and the way it was asked do not suggest that they did not know that she was Naomi, but rather that her appearance was so changed that the question might more properly be rendered, “Can this be Naomi?” Proverbially, the bloom had fallen from the rose.

Trial and tribulation, though appointed by the hand of divine love and designed to bring us home again, results in changing us. Pastor Don Fortner, in his book on Ruth, quoted pastor Scott Richardson as he described life. Scott said, “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.” Trials serve to cause the blush of youth to turn to the wrinkles of experience. Our abilities to enjoy the pleasures of earth diminish and it tells on our face. The old hymn says, “Change and decay in all around I see. O Thou who changest not, abide with me.” Our forays and

¹ **Jer. 29:11**, For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

wanderings from the presence of God into the world that we think will make us full prove to be utterly empty and we are wounded, bruised, and changed by the experience (Eccles.7:29¹). The blessed chastening of the Lord always accomplishes its grand design (Heb. 12:5-11²). Naomi's testimony is, "I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty."

Naomi's testimony is full of truth. She was a believer. She knew that what had happened in her life was painful. She did not speak in terms of glassy-eyed, no-problems language. What the Lord does always results in joy and peace in the heart, but it does not always make us happy. She honestly considered her feelings. She told those in Bethlehem not to call her Naomi, which means "sweet" and "pleasant," but Mara, which means "bitter." She was not speaking of her state of mind, nor was it a reflection of her thoughts toward God. She was speaking of her present estate. She clearly laid the blame for her estate on herself. She said "I" went out full. She went where she went having full confidence in what she possessed and likewise confident of a rosy future. Like Adam in the garden, when he ate of the fruit, he expected to profit by it. He went out full and he *did* gain, but his gain was loss. The pleasant, sweet world that he thought would sustain him was soon found to be full of thorns and briars. What he gained was the bitter wail of conscience and the knowledge that everything good he once had

¹ **Eccles.7:29**, Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

² **Heb. 12:5-11**, And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

was now accompanied with the evil of sin. Call him no more “Adam;” call him “sinner.” Is this Adam, the crown of creation, made in the image of God (Rom. 5:12, 3:10-19¹)?

She likewise testified that what came her way was the just fruits of her doings. Because she had left the Land of Promise for the land of woe, the Lord had testified against her to bring her home again, dealt bitterly with her, and afflicted her. The reason we know that this is the tenor of her testimony is because of the immediate reason for her return. She came home because she was a child of God and she had heard that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. She was coming to God “believing that He is and is the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6²). She came home knowing that a relative could redeem her (2:1³). She came home at the time of the harvest, knowing that good things awaited the poor at the time of harvest (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19⁴). With such faith, she would not now speak of bitterness except in the matter of an

¹ **Rom. 5:12**, Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: **3:10-19**, As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

² **Heb. 11:6**, But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

³ **2:1**, And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

⁴ **Lev. 19:9-10**, And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God. **Deut. 24:19**, When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

honest report of what happens when you take your eyes off Christ. Her confession was not only a record of her failure. It was also a reminder that confidence in this world always leads to bitterness.

She came home. By faith she came home. She came home changed by the hand of providence. She came because the Lord brought her. Her plan was to go out full, but the Lord's plan was to bring her home empty. Notice that little conjunction “and” in verse 21. She was not speaking as if providence was anything other than a single purpose. She didn't say, “but the Lord brought me home empty.” She said, “I went out full and the Lord brought me home again empty.” The entire matter of her salvation from ruin to recovery was a matter of course—divine, predestinated course. There was a purpose awaiting Ruth in the Promised Land. There was bread aplenty there. Naomi and Ruth's portion awaited their return, and God saw to it that they were hungry and poor.

The lessons for us are sure.

1. The world will never satisfy the believer. It may seem to make them full for a time, but the world will *not* be the reward of grace. When the believer is brought home again, he will bring nothing of the world with him. The gate to eternal life is so narrow that he cannot enter with baggage. Even the world passes away (Eccles.1:2-3; 1 Sam. 2:3-5; 1 John 2:15-17¹). Christ alone is riches untold.

¹ **Eccles.1:2-3**, Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? **1 Sam. 2:3-5**, Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. **1 John 2:15-17**, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

2. Our painful experiences must be laid at the door of our own disobedience and failure, but our recovery entirely belongs to God. The beauty of the knowledge of sovereign providence is that we can properly see the hand of God operating in, afflicting, and overriding our poor decisions for our eternal good. To see the Lord's hand in our afflictions is to withstand them with grace and peace (Job 1:21; 1 Sam. 3:18; 2 Sam. 16:9-12¹). God will bring His elect home again empty, that they might be filled.

3. Remember to show grace when others suffer (Gal. 6:2²). Help them to remember God in affliction (Phil. 4:12; Rom. 8:28³).

¹ **Job 1:21**, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. **1 Sam. 3:18**, And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good. **2 Sam. 16:9-12**, Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

² **Gal. 6:2**, Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

³ **Phil. 4:12**, I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. **Rom. 8:28**, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

CHILDREN'S BREAD

Ruth 2:1-12

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.

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.

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.

4, And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

5, Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

6, 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:

7, 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.

8, 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:

9, 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.

10, 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?

11, And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed 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.

12, 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.

The best place for a us (believers) to be is at the foot of the throne of the Sovereign. It is a comfort to finally come to the place where we realize that all things are outside the purview of our control. The truest place of awe, worship, and reverence is the revelation that our God is past finding out. All events and happenings, which seem convoluted to the world, are the interdependent events and people fitting into and fulfilling their ordained purpose, so magnificently planned and ordered is the working of the universe and time. Divine, absolute predestination is the comfortable repose of the assured believer. Having said that, it is also true that every individual is accountable to the Lord for believing the Gospel. If anyone is found in God's favor, it can only be attributed to God's grace. If anyone ends up in hell, it is his own fault. Though we are responsible for the salvation of no one, we are responsible to all men to preach the Gospel, without which no

one will be saved (Rom. 10:14-15¹). If a person is saved, he must give glory to God for electing grace. If a person perishes, he cannot lay any charge to God's electing grace.

Do not try to figure this out. Act upon what you know is your responsibility, realizing that the cause and effect belongs to God. Beyond the restricted atmosphere of our little lifespan is the meticulous purpose of the absolute Sovereign. The world balks at this fact and is angered by what they cannot explain and is angered further by what they cannot control. The believer often scratches his head and breathes a sigh of relief, knowing that his doings will not alter the purpose of God because, even as he seeks to do right, he also knows that his efforts are fraught with the taint of sin and of self. What but grace—sovereign effectual grace—will do for poor, helpless sinners?

The poor know some very vital things. They know that they need help. They feel the pangs of hunger. They know that they cannot help themselves. They know if they are to be helped it will be at the hands of a gracious benefactor. They know nothing of entitlement. They know only that they are dependent. They know that if opportunity is afforded to them to have food, to be helped, and to be delivered, they will immediately take advantage of it.

The problem for preachers in false religion is that they are burdened with the task of trying to make someone feel spiritually poor when that person does not believe he has a spiritual need. The only way to do that is to force Christ upon men and to give them a sense of entitlement to the afterlife. That is accomplished by making salvation a thing that can be added to one's portfolio and will enhance what that person already has. They do this by appealing not to need but to greed. The trick is to make greed sound like need. The manner of doing

¹ Rom. 10:14-15, How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

this is simple: You apply to greed effectually by the threat of loss and the promise of gain. This is the algebra of false salvation, and it works well, as is clearly seen in its results.

The Gospel does not work for false religion because it addresses true need—spiritual need—and it does not appeal to the flesh. The poor in spirit are not looking for an enhancement to their life; they are looking for life itself. They are not looking for a leg-up; they are looking for a leg to stand on. One might ask the question, “Did not Ruth go to Bethlehem to fill her natural hunger?” The answer to that is yes and no. Yes, she was hungry for bread, but no, she did not go to Bethlehem for bread. She went to Bethlehem because she loved her mother-in-law. She went to Bethlehem because she had disowned her former existence, even her gods. Her great testimony makes no mention of bread. She spoke thusly not because her belly was empty but rather because her heart was full. Her great and memorable declaration of love was not about bread but about the source of bread. It was not that bread had been found in Bethlehem, but that God was in Bethlehem, that He had visited His children, and the result of that visit was bread. Ruth did not say, “your bread will be my bread.” She said, “your God will be my God.” Her trip to Bethlehem was a spiritual sojourn.

Unbeknownst to her, she had been sought out, chosen to salvation, and chosen to be the grandmother of her Savior. She was doing what sought-out sinners do: She was seeking the Lord. She was seeking with all her heart, and she would find him. Family, friends, hearth and home, religion and gods, were not in her thoughts. She is the very picture of a sinner who needs Christ. This is the teaching of these first twelve verses.

Ruth's hope was a singular hope. Her only hope was a kinsman redeemer, one who had the right to redeem her (v. 1). This book is called the “book of Ruth,” but the central theme of this book is Boaz, the kinsman redeemer. Like every other book in the word of God, it is about Christ. The first word of this chapter is “and,” vitally connecting us with the last verse of

chapter 1 and giving us the true gist of Naomi's interest. She came home in the time of the harvest of poor men's bread, and the next thing we find is a description of what truly awaited her and of the true nature of her need. According to the law, the one who had the right to redeem was there. His name was Boaz.

Ruth knew that she needed a redeemer (v. 2). She knew because Naomi had told her of Boaz and his power to save. She did not desire to go to the fields of Boaz thinking that no good might come of it. She knew if she went, she would find grace (v. 2b; Heb. 11:6¹). Naomi's response was born of her knowledge of Ruth's resolve. She had tried to turn Ruth back before, but it was to no avail. The best thing that you can do for a seeking sinner is to get out of their way. Naomi said, "go, my daughter." When Ruth was in Moab, she didn't know that her husband was on his way to meet her, but he was. She didn't know that she would become a member of a family and gain a mother-in-law that would win her heart, but she did. She didn't know that she would be stripped of all she had and made to love the God of Naomi, but she would. She didn't know that there was a redeemer awaiting her arrival in another land, but there was. Blessed is the person who is a victim of gracious providence. Grace chose her, grace stripped her, and grace saved her.

Providence is not done with Ruth yet (v. 3). Her "hap" was to light on the field of her redeemer. I just love the way things happen. Was this a chance encounter? Was it serendipity? Was it good karma? No, it was Biblical chance (Eccles. 9:11²). Biblical chance is providence suddenly revealed to the seeking sinner. For her it seemed a wonderful "hap," but this was no accident. In her ovaries was a single ovum that carried the

¹ **Heb. 11:6**, But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

² **Eccles. 9:11**, I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

chromosomes that would make up part of the 23 chromosomes that united deity and humanity. It's a "happening" for *sure*.

Seek the Lord and get ready for what happens. Do not despise "the day of small things" (Zech. 4:10¹). Who can tell the importance of what might be called insignificant, little occurrences? What kingdom might indeed fall for want of a nail? There is a theory called the "Chaos theory." It theorizes that everything that takes place affects everything else. These scientists are searching the universe to find a formula to prove that the butterfly flapping its wings and stirring a bit of wind in Japan affects the entire course of human history. It isn't science, and though I applaud their realization that there seems to be order in this world of chaos, unbeknownst to them, they are actually seeking to discover the formula for predestinated providence. Every believer knows the formula (Rom. 8:28²).

Ruth as a chosen vessel must meet her redeemer, and the course that her life follows to that appointed end is precisely and meticulously ordered. If you are His child, your "hap" has been the same.

Years ago, when I ran a butcher shop, my mother-in-law, "Sis," worked for me. One of my customers was a blacksmith, a black man who had a quick smile and an easy laugh. He brightened up the place when He came in. His hand was partially deformed from being wrapped around a hammer and pounding on an anvil. One day as he was leaving, he saw my mother-in-law smoking a cigarette. He said to her, "I see that you smoke cigarettes." Sis, thinking that she was probably about to receive a reprimand, tentatively (and maybe a little defensively) said, "Yes." I was listening because I was wondering what was coming next. The old man smiled, tipped his hat off his shiny bald head, and said, "Well, bless the Lord." That day,

¹ **Zech. 4:10**, For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

² **Rom. 8:28**, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

that man made an indelible impression on my heart. That day it was my “hap” to eavesdrop on a conversation that resounded with wisdom and grace. Thank God for His great providence.

REDEEMER

Ruth 2:4-12

4, And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

5, Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

6, 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:

7, 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.

8, 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:

9, 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.

10, 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?

11, And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed 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.

12, 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.

It has been the “hap” of Ruth, ordered by sovereign providence, to fall upon the fields of Boaz. What follows in these verses is the record of the redeemer and his chosen. Sometimes we forget the romance of redemption and its attendant mercies. The work of the Holy Spirit, in part, reveals Christ to the mind and heart of the chosen in such a way as to make it impossible to resist the Savior. She is so taken with Him that she is enamored with every facet of His being. She is overwhelmed with His sacrifice for her, His withholding nothing from her, His giving her far above what she can think of asking for.

Religion presses and pushes men to follow Christ. They insert a hook in the mouths of men and women and persuade them to follow Christ by threat of punishment or promise of reward. The bride of Christ needs no such dark influence; she is in love, and her singular interest is spending the rest of her life with the One she loves. I remember well the sad days of the turmoil of trying to be a Christian without Christ. I remember the upbraiding of my conscience and the continual assault of the law and how what ought to have been wonderful was instead a constant state of anguish. All that changed when I heard the Gospel, when the Holy Spirit revealed Christ to me. That sweet liberty removed the burden of religion and gave me the peace of pure rest. Having tasted the savor of the peace, nothing could make me seek to return to my former bondage.

Ruth had left all, seeking the grace of the One who is able and has the right to redeem. The Lord had created in her a need and a hunger for the true God. Now she is in the place where all

that is ordained for her comes to fruition. She is where mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other.

In verses 4-7 we see Boaz speaking to his reapers and his reapers to him. The subject of their conversation is Ruth. If you look at verse 8 when Boaz speaks to Ruth there is a pretty good indication that the conversation between him and the reapers was spoken in earshot of Ruth. She was intended to hear the conversation. It was intended for her to know the intentions of Boaz. Is this not the task of the ministers of the Gospel, to tell the prospective bride of the intentions of the Savior towards her? The Gospel is not about the bride; it is about the groom and is designed to cause the bride to know of the benefits of a relationship with him. In these 4 verses several things are evident.

1. Verse 4 indicates that Boaz and his reapers were of one mind and one heart. They were one. This is the case with every believer and His Lord (Matt. 10:40; 1 Cor. 2:16¹).

2. Verse 3 reveals the heart of the awakened elect. Ruth followed the reapers. She needed bread, which means she had to find grain, and the only place to get it was in the field.

When providence brings the sinner to hunger for Christ, the Spirit brings the sinner to where the bread is. The church, where the Gospel is preached is the house of bread and when the elect “hap” upon it they follow the reapers.

3. Verse 4 is the revelation of what takes place when the elect are brought under the Gospel. “Now, behold, Boaz came.” This is all the design of that blessed providence The elect follow the reapers and the Lord comes to them. It is in the field of the Lord—under the sound of His word—that the chosen of God meet the Savior.

4. In verses 6-7 we see the reapers telling Boaz about Ruth, who she is, where she came from, and what she has done. This

¹ **Matt. 10:40**, He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. **1 Cor. 2:16**, He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

pictures the ministers of the Gospel, the pastors speaking to the Lord about those to whom they minister. We live in an age where it seems that people find it easy to run down folks. I've heard pastors speak ill of those to whom they minister. But those who have been called by God always come to Christ in prayer with a good report concerning the people. They likewise speak well of those to whom they minister.

Notice the directions that Boaz gave his reapers concerning Ruth (Ruth 2:15-17¹). This is what the Gospel preacher does. He sets the table. He puts before the elect the feast of fat things, wine on the lees and well refined. The Gospel is "handfuls on purpose." Preaching the Gospel is not telling sinners to do something or telling them that God wants to do something; it's telling them that the field is full of wheat on purpose and no harm will come to them as they take what God has fully given them.

The next thing we see is a personal encounter. Boaz spoke directly to Ruth. He assured her of His personal intentions toward her. He told her that she was where she belonged, that she was safe, and that all her needs were met. He even courted her, drawing her to Him (v. 14). How gracious is our savior to bring us to Himself. He overwhelms His elect with the proof of His love (Ps. 65:4, 110:3²).

Ruth's response is the response of every believer (v. 10). Regenerated sinners are overwhelmed by the goodness of the Savior. Ruth could not believe her happy estate, knowing her own unworthiness. The believer never graduates from this place.

¹ **Ruth 2:15-17**, 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. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

² **Ps. 65:4**, Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. **110:3**, Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

When we see our Lord we bow to the ground (Isa. 6:1-5¹). “What is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that should visit him” (Ps. 8:4)? Why was Ruth chosen? Why are we chosen? We are chosen because God is gracious to whom he will be gracious (Exod. 33:19²). Grace never ceases to be astonishing to the believer (1 John 3:1³). We who know that we are unlovable are continually amazed that God would love us (Jer. 31:3⁴).

The Lord always assures us of His interest in us (vv. 11-12). Ruth has been brought to trust God, and faith assures us of God's faithfulness. The result of faith is always the same. “So she gleaned” (Ruth 2:17a).

¹ **Isa. 6:1-5**, In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

² **Exod. 33:19**, And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

³ **1 John 3:1**, Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

⁴ **Jer. 31:3**, The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

A PLACE IN THE CHURCH

Ruth 2:4-9

4, And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

5, Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

6, 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:

7, 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.

8, 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:

9, 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.

In these verses we see Ruth brought to the house of the man who will redeem her, supply all her needs, and love her all the days of her life. She is brought to glean with the house-owner's maidens. She is, in truth, adopted into his family. This is a picture of a redeemed sinner being placed in the church. As I thought of what Ruth had underwent to get here, I was reminded of the passage in 1 Kings 6 where the Lord set the requirements for building the temple. In verse 7 the Lord

declares that every stone put in the building was chiseled, carved, and cut to precise specifications before it was delivered and placed in the building. This assured a perfect fit, and it also assured that no stone was missing and none were left over.

The way the temple was built is an illustration showing that the church is a product of precise and particular redemption. Its makeup had been formed in the quarry of eternal election and predestination before the first lively stone was put in its preordained place. The reason for this precise manner of the building of the church is there would be no hammer, axe, or any iron heard in the house while it was being built. For all practical purposes, this house was not constructed with onsite workers. No sound of labor was heard. One stone was laid upon another without the noise and reverberation of human labor. It was a house whose construction was for God's glory.

And so it was with Ruth. From eternity, Ruth was chosen for salvation. Her time and place of birth were ordained. In the quarry of Moab, divine providence—the quarry master—chiseled and cut this precious gem, stripped away all that she had confidence in, and made her hunger and thirst for righteousness. The God of all grace created a need in her; and when it was time to place her in the house, no sound of human work could be heard. Her “hap” was to be placed in the field owned by the redeemer. We preach the Gospel to every creature, but we save no one and we place no one in the church. It is in the invisible silent world of the Holy Spirit that the elect, having been prepared by providence in the quarry of grace, are placed in the house of the redeemer. All that can be said of such a wonder is, “To God be the glory” (Acts 2:46-47¹).

In this passage in the book of Ruth, we see many things about Christ and His church. The first thing that is evident is that Ruth made use of the means available to her to get bread.

¹ Acts 2:46-47, And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

She did this because she obeyed the word of God. She believed the promise of God. God had promised (by command) that the gleaners of the field were to leave what falls to the ground for the poor so that they could freely eat. They were not employees of the master of the field. They were recipients of grace from the Lord of the master of the field, and what bounty awaited the poor was theirs to take, and that by sovereign edict. Ruth walked in the light that God gave her. Her faith in God caused her to act upon the promise, and she gathered more than she could imagine in her bag, even handfuls left on purpose. If you employ the word of God as a lamp to your feet and a light unto you path (Ps. 119:105¹), that path will lead you to Christ and His abundant harvest.

The next thing we see is what we don't see. Sometimes a thing omitted presents a powerful truth. The head of the reapers spoke Naomi's name. Boaz spoke Ruth's name. But only one name is prominent in this house. Even the head servant is not named, because he is just a servant. This is the house and field of Boaz, and his is the preeminent name in this place. There is but one name that is the subject and substance of conversation in the house of God. The name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9²) is the song, the melody, the lyric, the rhyme, and the reason for all utterance in the church of the living God. We preach Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2³). We do not recognize his servants—Apollos and Paul. By their own admission, they are nothing; but Christ is all. In this house only one bears the title of “holy and reverend.” In this house only one is worthy of the title “Master.”

Thirdly, when one of the elect is saved he is brought home to the flock (Luke 15:4-6; John 10:15-16⁴). Sheep are social

¹ **Ps. 119:105**, Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

² **Phil. 2:9**, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name

³ **1 Cor. 2:2**, For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

⁴ **Luke 15:4-6**, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders,

creatures. They need the flock. If a sheep is found alone it is because it is sick or wounded. Ruth wanted the flock. She said to Naomi, "thy people shall be my people." Believers need the church. I am suspicious of folk who talk about joining a church because they feel like they can help it out. The church is a *hospital* for sinners. It is a *well* for the thirsty. It is a breadbox for the hungry. It is sought out, entered, and resided in because of *need*. Believers don't attend to help, they come to get help. If providence has made you hungry, providence will guide you to the place where the bread is. What of those who believe grace but cannot seem to be part of an assembly? I have no answer, but I've never known one who has the joy of true and lasting fellowship who is not in the house of God, with the people of God worshipping the true and living God. There is where the sheep gather in one fold with one shepherd. The church is not an organization; it is an organism. It is not a business; it is a family. It is not a building; it is a body. Nothing is more detrimental to the heart and spirit of a believer than neglect of God's house (Hag. 1:4-6¹). Two things are found to be true concerning the members of the churches of God: Every member is a believer, and every member has confessed Christ in baptism.

In this passage we also see the church's responsibility to the stranger, the newly placed one. The church ought to be like the house of Boaz. It ought to be attractive in spiritual things. When Ruth found herself in the house of Boaz, she found it to be a friendly, gracious, and generous place. We preach the grace of God. It is the constant reminder of God's best bestowed on the worst of humanity.

rejoicing. **John 10:15-16**, As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

¹ **Hag. 1:4-6**, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

It is the sweet benefaction of our benevolent Lord that gives joy, comfort, and peace in the world of woe. That same graciousness ought to be exhibited to all who enter the doors of this place. The poor in spirit who enter this place ought to feel that they can freely glean in the field of the Lord; that they can buy without money and without price (Isa. 55:1¹); that when they are thirsty they can freely slake their thirst at the spring of living waters (John 7:38²). They ought to know that here they are safe from reprisal or prejudice (vv. 9, 15). Here gracious words of benediction come from the Redeemer: "The Lord be with you." And words of praise are returned: "The Lord bless thee." Here the Redeemer condescends to notice the newly placed one. Boaz asked the reapers, "Who is this young woman?" The reapers had the answer because they represent the pastors of the church whose business is to know about those who are added to the church.

We see also that it is the Redeemer that makes the stranger feel welcome. He does so with sure promises. Boaz personally took upon himself the welfare of Ruth. He spoke directly to her and assured her that his being the master meant that all would be well.

We also see that his words were spoken as a near kinsman (a close relative). He addresses her as his daughter. With this title he put her on a sure and high footing in his house. She was instantly a member of the family, this glad estate for which she had done nothing to build. All who come to God by Christ, in faith, are instantly received as members of the family. There is no trial period. There is no "watch care." There is no probation period whereby the newcomer is spied out to see if she meets the legal requirement of church membership. These are inventions of men designed to produce what they deem to be a worthy

¹ **Isa. 55:1**, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

² **John 7:38**, He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

membership. When the elect find that they have hopped upon the field of the redeemer, the first words they hear are those of a full familial nature; “my daughter.” They are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6¹) and embraced by the church as part of the family, a member in good standing because their standing is perfect righteousness.

Finally, the newly placed convert is shown that all she will ever need is found in the house of the Master. She need never to depart to find some necessary spiritual blessing. Boaz told Ruth, “Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.” Here is bread aplenty, bread of heaven. Here is a well that never runs dry: The water of life. Here no weapon formed against you shall prosper (Isa. 54:17²). You will be hedged about, and nothing can touch you save that which will do you good (Job 1:10³). Here in *this* place we bear one another's burdens, weep with those who weep, laugh with those who laugh. Here, as a family, we rejoice in our Lord. Let us all remain conscious of the truth that this place is the field of the Lord, and the poor in spirit—those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, those lively stones hewn in the quarry of grace and placed in the temple—are welcome, loved, forgiven, encouraged, cherished, and protected. Here the new convert will hear of the adventures, skill, purposes, deeds, and accomplishments of the kinsman-redeemer: The Lord Jesus Christ. Here, in this field, the family of God freely gleans what God has commanded to be theirs by law, and they get handfuls on purpose by the grace of the Master.

¹ **Eph. 1:6**, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

² **Isa. 54:17**, No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

³ **Job 1:10**, Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

TRUE GRACE, TRUE RESPONSE

Ruth 2:8-11

8, 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:

9, 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.

10, 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?

11, And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed 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 grace of God, like many terms and themes in the word of God, has suffered the neglect of worldly religion. The truths of redemption, justification, sanctification, mercy, and righteousness have been placed squarely in the realm of human ability, power, and inclination. They have been made to be things that God desires to do and wants to give, but He waits on the affirmative action of the will of man. False religion's "god" is hamstrung. He (or she, according to who you speak to and their political persuasion) is nothing more than a prop for man's efforts to deify himself.

What God freely and sovereignly grants, gives, or bestows is seen as (and reported as) common commodities on the shelves of salvation's supermarket. They are made to be "offers:" Proffers and incentives geared to the enhancement of humanity's Adamic existence. These blessed truths have been sacrificed on the altar of personal commitment, emotionalism, sentimentality, will, personal righteousness, and supposed obedience. Religion has made men to believe that grace is as easily disregarded as a simple decision. The Bible knows nothing of this human idea of grace. When grace is bestowed, grace saves. Where grace is shown, grace saves.

This passage in Ruth is an accurate, definitive portrayal of the grace of God and the precise response of those who have been the object of the unstoppable power of that sovereign, immutable, and effectual grace. This grace arrives and brings everything needful with it. The gift of faith is by the act of grace. When grace comes, it comes to address faith. The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God from faith to faith. The response of Ruth in verse 10 is born of the grace revealed in verses 8-9. Grace comes with the declaration of what the recipient already possesses. Grace is the admonition to rest in the security of a perfect provision.

The Gospel does not say "leave and serve;" it says "stay and eat" (v. 8). The Gospel is the declaration that everything you need or ever will need is found where you are. False religion lives and thrives on movement. The Christian life, according that religion, is a constant struggle to get to a higher plane, or a deeper understanding of self, or finding a purpose, a calling, a place of importance in the world. The Gospel says *stand still* and see the salvation of the Lord (Exod. 14:13¹). The works of the believer are foreordained, and at the appointed time they will be accomplished. The believer lives his life in a state of rest and

¹ **Exod. 14:13**, And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

peace doing what people do: Gleaning and eating and feeding others. For the most part it is a calm and uneventful life, not unlike the rest of the world, with one profound exception: The believer knows in his very soul that the entire universe is controlled by his Redeemer, that nothing can molest him save by divine appointment, and that whatever he needs is continually at his disposal. He knows that he makes nothing for himself but is, by connection to the vine, fully supplied with life and all that attends it. He can say—and mean it from the heart—that he is what he is by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10¹).

How do the elect of God respond to the grace of God? Do they become pious and holy and seek to judge men? Do they set themselves up as the moral compass of society? In verse 10 we see the immediate reaction of the sinner to the grace of God. Ruth has received grace. Her present is secure, her future is glorious, and her past is forgotten. There is but one response that should follow upon such grace—wonder, thanksgiving, and praise. Those who have tasted the grace of God and have heard and believed the good news are filled with a wonder that they never outgrow. Ruth was overwhelmed by the lovingkindness of Boaz.

His gracious benevolence did not make her arrogant or presumptuous. Neither did his grace cause her to begin to bargain within her soul about how she might balance his goodness by being somehow deserving of his grace. When the elect of God are graced by the Lord (their Redeemer), they ask, “Why? Why would I receive such favor (v. 10)?” She was not looking within herself for some modicum of goodness or spark of worthiness. She looked to the redeemer—the one who possessed all, the one who held her life in his hands—and wondered why he would condescend to show her grace. She had no thought of her worthiness but rather of the wonder of his

¹ **1 Cor. 15:10**, But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

goodness. “What is man that thou should be mindful of him” (Ps. 8:4)?

The response to grace is to take up headquarters in the dust. Ruth did not fall to the earth because she feared the wrath of Boaz; she took her place in the dust at His feet because she was overwhelmed by his goodness (Rom. 2:4; Zech.12:10¹). This is not planned or feigned posture. This is the heart touched by grace. The response is the same whether for the king or the pauper (2 Sam. 7:18; 9:8²). The recipients of grace never get over it (1 John 3:1³). The answer to this humble query is found only in the source of the grace. Considering ourselves as strangers to the promises and aliens for the commonwealth of Israel, why we were chosen and the reason we were called must remain in the Chooser and Caller (Exod. 33:19; Rom. 9:15⁴). Grace is not an offer. It is an astonishing wonder (Jer. 29:11; 31:3⁵).

Finally, when grace comes to the sinner, it comes with assurance (vv. 11-12). First is the assurance that you are known

¹ **Rom. 2:4**, Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? **Zech. 12:10**, And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

² **2 Sam. 7:18**, Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O LORD God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? **9:8**, And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

³ **1 John 3:1**, Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

⁴ **Exod. 33:19**, And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. **Rom. 9:15**, For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

⁵ **Jer. 29:11**, For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. **31:3**, Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

of God. “The Lord knoweth them that are His” (2 Tim. 2:19⁶). The graced sinner is made aware that the God of all glory is aware of him and has invested an interest in him. If God knows you in grace, He has always known you in this way and will always know you this way. He does not change; therefore (though you are utterly unworthy) you will never be consumed (Malachi 3:6). One man said that God has invested too much in you for Him to ever lose you or let you go.

Also, a wonder of grace is that God honors the faith that He alone gives. This has always been astonishing to me. How many times have we seen the Lord praise the faith of someone to whom He gave faith (“great is thy faith”; “thy faith hath saved thee”)? God gave Ruth faith. God honored and rewarded the faith that He gave her. Salvation is all of grace (Eph. 2:8-9).

⁶ **2 Tim. 2:19**, Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

FAITH'S REWARD

Ruth 2:12

12, 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.

The words of Boaz refer to the reward that is given to Ruth because she has been made to trust in the Lord. Because of the abuse of the principle of rewards in this day, one must be careful to clarify precisely what the reward of faith is. In the man-centered faith of this day, rewards are for the most part temporal things such as health and wealth and material gain. Those things, according to the word of our Lord, are not even to be considered or sought after because they are what the world seeks after and are merely things that inhibit a believer from seeking God. Those things are promised to the child of God, not in the sense of reward, but of care and maintenance provided by God so that the believer can seek what is truly worthwhile (Matt. 6:33¹). Ruth had sought what was truly worthwhile. She had come to rest under the wings of the Almighty, and that faith was rewarded.

The story of Ruth's faith is the same story of the salvation of the elect. It begins on a sad note. Elimelech, the head of the family, took his family to the place of ruin. He was like Adam. He was living in the Promised Land but left it for what he

¹ **Matt. 6:31-33**, Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

thought were greener pastures. He left God and the worship of God for the land of idolatry. His act plunged his family into ruin. He and his two sons died. They left his wife and the wives of his two sons widows, poverty stricken and in a state of desolation. Naomi and Ruth returned to the Promised Land in faith, following the word of the Lord. They came home because there was a kinsman redeemer who could save them. Following the story, we have found the great providence of God setting all things in order for the purpose of glorifying His name and the name and work of His Son, our Kinsman Redeemer. All things are of God (2 Cor. 5:18; Rom. 11:36¹).

Elimelech, whatever his personal reasons might have been, went to Moab by divine appointment. There was a Moabitish woman there—one of His elect—an object of God's love who must meet the redeemer. She was an heir “according to promise” (Gal. 3:29²) and was part of the genealogy of Christ. Naomi came back home bitter, but in a short time her testimony would be very different (Ruth 4:14-15³). Ruth's “hap” to light upon the field of Boaz was the “hap” of divine predestination by the God of order (Eph. 1:11⁴). There was an expected and appointed end for Ruth, an end that would glorify Christ and save his people (Col. 1:18; Rom. 8:29-30⁵). This book is about redemption. It is

¹ **2 Cor. 5:18**, And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. **Rom. 11:36**, For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

² **Gal. 3:29**, And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

³ **Ruth 4:14-15**, And the women said unto Naomi, 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, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

⁴ **Eph. 1:11**, In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

⁵ **Col. 1:18**, And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. **Rom. 8:29-30**, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be

about the Redeemer, and since He is the Redeemer it is also about the redeemed.

Boaz pictured the Redeemer in many ways. He was a near kinsman and therefore qualified to redeem. He was a mighty man (Heb. 7:25¹). He was a rich man, having the wherewithal to do what he intended (Eph. 3:8²). He was a relative of Naomi and Ruth (Heb. 2:16-18³). And as a figure of Him who was to come, Boaz honored the Law in the redemption of Ruth.

First, the law said that a near kinsman had the right to redeem the inheritance of his brother (Lev. 25:25⁴).

Secondly, the relative, according to law, was to marry the widow of his brother to keep the name of his brother alive (Deut. 25:5-10⁵). He who has redeemed the inheritance that our

conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

¹ **Heb. 7:25**, Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

² **Eph. 3:8**, Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

³ **Heb. 2:16-18**, For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted

⁴ **Lev. 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.

⁵ **Deut. 25:5-10**, If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The

father Adam lost is also the Husband of the church (Ruth 4:9-10¹).

There is also another aspect of the law represented and revealed in divine providence: Ruth was free to marry Boaz because her husband had died. Paul uses this very principle to show the believer's relationship with the law (Rom. 7:1-4²). All of this is a revelation of how Ruth was a believer, and in our text Boaz declares that God will reward that faith.

In this passage we see that faith is not idle; it works. Faith is the absence of work and of labor for our justification (Rom. 4:1-5³). Faith is "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8-9). Faith is accomplished in us by "the working of his mighty power" (Eph. 1:19). Faith is the operation of God in our hearts (Col. 2:12⁴). But that does not mean that faith is static. It is the living principle of grace in our new life. It works by love (Gal. 5:6⁵). Love operates in the interest of the loved one, acting and

house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

¹ **Ruth 4:9-10**, And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 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.

² **Rom. 7:1-4**, Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

³ **Rom. 4:1-5**, What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

⁴ **Col. 2:12**, In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

reacting to need, always on behalf of the loved one. Faith is active (Read James 2:14-26). God declares that He will not forget our work of faith and labor of love (1 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 6:10¹). Ruth was a believer and acted as one. Because she had taken up refuge under the wings of her sovereign, she did what Orpah could not do.

In our text Boaz says to Ruth, “The Lord repay your work and give you a full reward for your faith.” What was her reward? Was it a little cabin in the corner of Glory? Was it a mansion on Gold Street in heaven? Her reward is the same as yours. She got a *new husband* who *redeemed* her and *loved* her and put her in the lineage of Christ (Eph. 5:25-30²). *Christ* is our reward (Gen. 15:1³). The believer has forgiveness of all his sin because he has Christ (Isa. 43:25⁴). Your conscience is free from accusation because Christ is your reward (Heb. 9:12-14⁵). God has made

⁵ **Gal. 5:6**, For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

¹ **1 Thess. 1:3**, Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. **Heb. 6:10**, For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

² **Eph. 5:25-30**, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

³ **Gen. 15:1**, After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

⁴ **Isa. 43:25**, After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

⁵ **Heb. 9:12-14**, Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

you worthy because Christ is your reward (Col. 1:12; Ps. 84:11⁶).

“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.”

⁶ **Col. 1:12**, Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. **Ps. 84:11**, For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

FELLOWSHIP

Ruth 2:14

14, 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.

In Brother Don Fortner's study on the book of Ruth, he drew several correlations between the book of Ruth and the Epistle to the Ephesians. These comparisons are worthy of our attention.

Firstly, in this book we have seen the wonder of the providential grace of God on behalf of His elect (Eph. 1:11¹). In the redemption and salvation of the chosen, God providentially controls time, tide, and humanity for the good of His people and the glory of His name.

Secondly, as Ruth immediately entered the fields of Boaz upon her arrival in Bethlehem. those saved by grace are immediately laborers in the field of the Lord (Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:11- 15²).

¹ **Eph. 1:11**, In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

² **Eph. 2:8-10**, For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. **Titus 2:11- 15**, For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Thirdly, the calling of Ruth the Moabitess pictures the calling of the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-13, 19¹).

Fourthly, the affection and love of Boaz toward Ruth is a reflection of Christ's love for His elect (Eph. 3:18-19; 5:25-27²).

Fifthly, Boaz's purchase and redemption pictures Christ purchase and redemption of us (Eph. 1:6; 5:25³).

Sixthly, just as Ruth was continually overwhelmed by the grace and love the Boaz showed her (v. 10⁴), so the elect of God never get over the wonder of Christ's love (Eph. 3:8-11; 19-21⁵).

¹ **Eph. 2:11-13**, Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. **19**, Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

² **Eph. 3:18-19**, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. **5:25-27**, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

³ **Eph. 1:6**, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. **5:25**, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

⁴ **v. 10**, 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?

⁵ **Eph. 3:8-11**, Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: **19-21**, And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Seventhly, the marriage of Boaz and Ruth was a loving, lasting, and fruitful union. Likewise and more so our union with Christ is eternal and fruitful (Eph. 5:30, 32; 4:21-25¹). As we continue in the study of this book, we should always seek to see Christ and His relationship to us.

In the passage before us we see Ruth taking a meal with Boaz and his laborers. Mealtimes in the word of God and in life are often seen as a time of fellowship. When our Lord knocked on the door of the Church at Laodicea, He declared that he would come in and sup (or fellowship) with them when they left off their self-reliance and conceit and opened the door (Rev. 3:20²). A look at Scripture reveals that the worship of God in the hearing of the Gospel is compared to feasting. The Word is our feast (Isa. 25:6³) and faith is pictured as eating and drinking (Luke 14:15-24⁴). In the days of Boaz. at the time of the barley

¹ Eph. 5:30, For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 32, This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 4:21-25, If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

² Rev. 3:20, Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

³ Isa. 25:6, And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

⁴ Luke 14:15-24, And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into

harvest, it was customary to set up a pavilion in the middle of the field and take a meal in the afternoon. To this meal Ruth was bidden to come and partake of the food with the fellow-laborers in the field. This pictures our mealtime with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

There are three things that are immediately evident here.

First, our God has given men to feed His people. The men that God has raised up to preach the Gospel are His gift to His people that they may be fed in this world (Jer. 3:15; John 21:15-17¹). The Lord is the One who supplies the feast; the preachers distribute the food (Isa. 40:11²). The food distributed by the preachers is knowledge and understanding. This knowledge and understanding is singular and realized only in Christ (1 John 5:20; 1 Pet. 1:23-25³).

Second, all those who hunger will be found at the table when mealtime arrives. Useless religion spends a great part of its time trying to convince self-satisfied people that they are

the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

¹ **Jer. 3:15**, This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. **John 21:15-17**, So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

² **Isa. 40:11**, He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

³ **1 John 5:20**, And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. **1 Pet. 1:23-25**, Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

hungry. The preacher of the Gospel does not coerce or pressure people to come to worship. A well-rigged false profession is still false. The minister of the Gospel sets the table and does so knowing that the hungry and the thirsty will come and dine. Those who are content in themselves—who are satisfied with the beggarly morsels on the world's table—have no interest in and do not savor the value of the bread of heaven. It is useless to try to persuade them to come, and it cheapens the Gospel to try to shove it down their throats. The table is set, and the hungry will come and feast and the thirsty will come and drink. Their need is what compels them.

Third, God has ordered certain mealtimes for His household. We know that throughout any given day we often find ourselves coming to the fountain of life. We often meditate upon the Word and find ourselves in private worship. This is well and good. But the Lord has ordained the gathering of His people to dine together in public worship. In this day many disdain and despise any notion of ordered and set times for worship. The Lord declares that His people are to gather together at appointed times to worship Him. God has established the preaching of the Gospel and partaking of the ordinances for the good of His people (Eph. 4:8- 16; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 2:2¹). Mephibosheth sat at the King's table (2 Sam.

¹ **Eph. 4:8- 16**, Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. **Heb. 10:25**, Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,

9:11¹). The prodigal returned to his father's house to feast on the fatted calf (Luke 15:22-23²). The believer comes to the Gospel table to feast on His Savior through the preached word. The Lord has prepared the table (Ps. 23:5³). Naomi returned to the promised land with Ruth because she heard that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread.

The words of this text teach us of the graciousness of our Lord. The word of Boaz to Ruth, by virtue of his lordship, could rightly be viewed as a command. However, it seems more to be a gracious invitation and welcome. He did not say, "go and dine with my reapers," but rather, "come and dine with my reapers and me." When she was bidden, she was bidden to eat with the master. This was a generous and benevolent welcome. The gospel is a command, but the elect hear it as a sweet invitation (Isa. 1:18-20; Matt. 11:28-30; 22:9; Rev. 22:17⁴). Boaz bid Ruth to dip her bread in the vinegar. This is not vinegar like we know it. We would know this as sop or savory gravy. This pictures not only the grace of the welcome but also the access into the grace

but a body hast thou prepared me. **1 Pet. 2:2**, Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

¹ **2 Sam. 9:11**, Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

² **Luke 15:22-23**, But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.

³ **Ps. 23:5**, Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁴ **Isa. 1:18-20**, Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. **Matt. 11:28-30**, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. **22:9**, Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. **Rev. 22:17**, And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

wherein we stand. We have been redeemed and we are bidden, through the Gospel, to continually dip into the savory source of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. We have been saved and we continue to take the cup of salvation (Ps. 116:13; Isa. 12:2-3¹). Notice also that Boaz personally fed Ruth. What wondrous grace has brought this sinner to the feast of grace? What a privilege to sit with the reapers at the Master's table. But what can compare, what words can express what it is for the Master to "reach us parched corn." What bountiful condescension is this that the master would hand-feed his beloved! The result would be—must be—utter satisfaction (Ps. 22:26, 36:8, 63:5, 65:4²).

¹ **Ps. 116:13**, I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. **Isa. 12:2-3**, Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

² **Ps. 22:26**, The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. **36:8**, They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. **63:5**, My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips. **65:4**, Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

HANDFULS OF PURPOSE

Ruth 2:15-16

15, 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:

16, And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

As we have seen before, this matter of the poor gleaning freely in the fields was according to the Law of Moses. The owners of the field were not allowed to harvest the corners of the field or to pick up the grain that fell to the ground during the harvest. These portions were for the poor and needy, and they were to be freely allowed to glean these morsels for themselves. By decree the corners, and that which fell to the ground, belonged to the poor, as God had given them right to it. The poor and needy, the widows and the fatherless, were designated throughout scripture as objects of mercy (James 1:27¹). This sets forth the glory of God as sovereign in His mercy and His grace, and it assures us that the spiritually poor and needy will be most certainly provided their needs by God.

In this passage Boaz pictures Christ as the sole proprietor of the field. He is Lord and everything is His field. He has sovereign right to do what He will with His own (John 17:2). Ruth represents all sinners saved by grace. Her life and the surrounding circumstances are representative of the sovereign manipulation of providence that ultimately brings all the elect to

¹ **James 1:27**, Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

their appointed end. These divine orchestrations have made Ruth a picture of a “seeking sinner.” The field represents the word of God: The Gospel of sweet, successful sovereign grace. The young men (the reapers) picture the preachers of the Gospel.

In this passage we see Boaz commanding his young men to leave handfuls on purpose for Ruth, just as the Lord Jesus commands His preachers to drop truth on purpose for His chosen race. These two verses teach us what the seeking sinner and the preacher of the Gospel are to do in this life.

Ruth pictures a “seeking sinner.” Though this is not necessarily a theological term, it is certain and is an evidenced fact in the word of God. Almost all the miracles that our Lord performed for people in the New Testament were performed for those who sought His help or for those in whom He saw a great need. Their physical impairments represented some aspect of their spiritual poverty.

Bartimaeus' blindness pictured the spiritual blindness of humanity.

The man at the pool of Bethesda represented the impotence of the sinner and the inability of the law to help him.

The Syrophenician woman pictures the inability of humanity to spiritually help another.

The lame man and the man with the withered hand picture the spiritual state of utter ruin and its pitiable condition.

The lepers represented the dead and the outcast.

The deaf and the dead picture sinners who are unaware of their condition, who are both shut up to the voice of Christ.

Ruth pictures the sensible, seeking sinner who out of great need and true hunger come to the house of bread. When she came to the field she came as poor and wretched and utterly dependent upon the kindness and grace of the master of the field. She came as a gleaner, seeking bread (2:2-3¹).

¹ 2:2-3, 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

Her state gives us a sense of who and what the seeking sinner is. First, she was a Moabitess. She was a member of a natural race that was under the curse of God. She had no rights, save those that were accounted her as one who has no rights. She was a recipient of the privilege afforded to those in abject poverty. The rights she was afforded had nothing to do with her heritage, her character, or her conduct. She had a right to glean because God had freely left some stuff for the poor. This is our state: We are born into the “veil of tears” (Ps. 84:6¹, “Valley of Baca”). We are members of a cursed race (Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:11-12²). The elect, by birth, have the same nature as those who will perish in hell (Eph. 2:3³).

The only right we have is to what God has left in this world for sinners. The Gospel is preached to all, and needy sinners are allowed to glean in that field. Election and predestination prevent no one from gleaning in this field, but they assure that some will come and some will seek, and when they come *with nothing* they will be freely allowed to take what is freely provided for them.

Ruth represents that seeking sinner because she had been brought to a state of great need. She was a lump of Adamic clay that, in the hands of the Potter, had been molded to be a vessel of mercy (Rom. 9:23⁴). She was not here by her decision. She

the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

¹ **Ps. 84:6**, Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

² **Rom. 5:12**; Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. **Eph. 2:11-12**, Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

³ **Eph. 2:3**, Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

⁴ **Rom. 9:23**, And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

was in the field because God had decided upon her. She had once been wealthy, married to privilege, married to Mahlon. She was the daughter-in-law of Elimelech. In this she represented every son and daughter of Adam. We were created originally as masters of the Earth, but we fell into utter ruin. God hath made man upright but he has sought out many inventions (Eccles.7:29¹). Ruth was *not* here by original choice but rather by divine appointment. She chose this field as the only choice of the desperate.

She did not have a number of delightful options before her that she could languidly make her decision. This was life or death, and the command was (and is for present believers) to “choose life.” It is not a command that falls on deaf ears. It is a command that falls on ears that need to hear it. Ruth took the place afforded her. For her to partake as a gleaner she needed to assume the place of the poverty-stricken.

Every gift that God has is for the poor and the needy. The poor and the needy have a resolve. They will go where the bread is; they will glean alongside the ruined. They claim no place among the elite, the rich, or the privileged. They gather with those who are in the same circumstance as an army of woe, gladly taking what the Master has left for them. Ruth's resolve—as it is with every ruined sinner—was to resolve to seek the Lord (1:16-17²). The Lord has visited His people in giving them bread, and he has left some for the poor. I'm going there, because my need drives my resolve.

¹ **Eccles.7:29**, Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

² **1:16-17**, And Ruth said, Intreat 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 admired the maidservants of Boaz (2:13¹). She knew she was not one of them, but she wanted to be. I can remember my poverty in religion. I can remember wanting to be among those who spoke so freely of forgiveness acceptance before God. The world wants nothing of the children of God, but those who have been providentially graced, sovereignly manipulated to be utterly destitute and made aware of their despicable sin, long with all their heart to be like those who have been set free by grace and mercy. If it means that reputation, dignity, and “self” must die, it is but a small price to pay for the eternal benefits to be gained.

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.

—Jones, Edmund. *“Come, Humble Sinner.”*

In this passage we also see the preachers of the Gospel. They are compared to reapers. Through preaching the Gospel, they reap the wheat and bind the tares of this world (Matt. 13:30, 16:19; 2 Cor. 2:14-17).²The Gospel declared by a called

¹ 2:13, Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

² **Matt. 13:30**, Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. **16:19**, Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? **2 Cor. 2:14-17**, Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge

preacher is the instrument of salvation as well as the instrument of condemnation. As reapers, they glean the bread of knowledge and understanding and set the table for the people of God (Nehemiah. 8:8; Jer. 3:15¹). It is the responsibility and privilege of those whom God has called to feed the sheep of God (Titus 1:5-9²).

Finally, the instruction and commandment that Boaz gives to his reapers concerning Ruth mirror the commandments that Christ gives to His preachers concerning His children—His church.

First, he tells them to “Let her glean among the sheaves.” The preacher of the Gospel is not appointed to guard the word of God or to determine how much of it or to whom it is to be given. Every word of God is true and pure. Every doctrine is a treasure, not a secret treasure to be meted out at the preacher's discretion. No doctrine is to be deemed too controversial or confusing to be uttered (2 Tim. 3:16-17³). Set the table and let the needy sinners glean all they want. All it can do is nourish them.

by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

¹ **Nehemiah. 8:8**, So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. **Jer. 3:15**, Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

² **Titus 1:5-9**, For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

³ **2 Tim. 3:16-17**, All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Second, the command was, “Do not reproach her” (v. 15). This means, “Do not shame her.” It is not the Gospel preacher's business to convict or chastise the people of God. That belongs to God the Holy Spirit. The preacher's job is to preach the Gospel. It is to *comfort* the people of God with “glad tidings of good things” (Isa. 40:1-2, 52:7¹). The preacher is not responsible for the application or the effect that the Gospel produces. The Holy Spirit takes the Gospel and comforts and convicts, chastens and consoles with one fell swoop.

Third, the command was, “Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her.” First, I think this means that the pastor is to be keenly aware of his congregation. He is to watch for them and seek to give them the word in season that will meet their particular and individual needs. The pastor is involved with the spiritual welfare of his people and is to know them so that he can see when something is amiss or when life is good. For a particular need he is to let fall some handfuls of purpose. Second, this means that the Gospel he preaches is about purpose. It is about the purpose of God in the salvation of sinners. The God he preaches is the God who does everything on purpose. He does not speak of possibilities, of probabilities, of chance or luck. He speaks the Gospel of predestination, election, of particular and purposeful redemption. On purpose, by divine edict, the preacher of the Gospel lets fall handfuls of divine doctrine, glorious truths of sovereign purpose that will meet the need of seeking sinners.

Fourth, a command was repeated but in a more forceful manner and a stronger fashion: “Rebuke her not.” The people of God are just that: They are God's people! They do not belong to the church, or the pastor, or the teachers, the elders, or the

¹ Isa. 40:1-2, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. 52:7, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

visiting evangelists. They belong to God, and *He* will rebuke, if rebuking is necessary. Though pastors must sometimes rebuke and reprove, they are to exercise all longsuffering and patience, and they are commanded to do it with a sure consequence (Titus 2:15¹). There is but one way that rebuke and reproof can be administered with such a result. That one way is the declaration of the Gospel, lest it seem that it is the preacher's words and personal convictions and not God's word. The preacher isn't the hammer (Jer. 23:28-29²). The preacher is not to personally rebuke. He is to speak the truth to the children as the objects God's love. They are to be treated with love and affection, to be cared for and protected with handfuls on purpose. The result of the declaration of the Gospel is that the believer—the seeking sinner, the needy sinner—will glean! “So she gleaned” (v. 17).

¹ Titus 2:15, These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

² Jer. 23:28-29, The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

QUALIFIED

Ruth 2:20

20, 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.

Throughout the New Testament, our Lord is shown to be imminently qualified for the mission that He undertook. This is not only an exaltation of His character and purpose but also a declaration that the requirements that God had established for one to have the right to redeem were fully and precisely met by Christ. If these were not met, then no redemption could occur. When Naomi spoke these words concerning Boaz, she was declaring that Boaz (and by type, Christ) met every qualification to be the redeemer. If the redeemer meets these qualifications, then the redemption accomplished is true and real. This truth is essential to the remainder of the story of Ruth.

These things have little value in today's new-age approach to religion. Oprah Winfrey, beginning January 1, 2008, offered a year-long course on her daily radio program on the "New Age Christ," in 365 daily lessons from *A Course in Miracles* workbook. Listeners will be encouraged to buy *A Course in Miracles* for the year-long course, and an audio version, recited by Richard Thomas, a.k.a. "John Boy" Walton, will be available on compact disc. Those who finish the Course will have a wholly redefined spiritual mindset, a "New Age" worldview that includes the beliefs that there is no sin, no evil, and no devil. *A Course in Miracles* teaches its students to rethink everything they

believe about God and life. It bluntly states: "This is a course in mind training" and is dedicated to "thought reversal." In reality, *A Course in Miracles* is the truth of the Bible turned upside down. Oprah told her television audience that Williamson's book was one of her favorite books, and that she had already bought a thousand copies and would be handing them out to everyone in her studio audience. Oprah's endorsement caused Williamson's book to skyrocket to the top of the New York Times bestseller list.

A Course in Miracles is allegedly a "new revelation" from "Jesus" to help humanity work through these troubled times. This "Jesus," who bears no doctrinal resemblance to the Bible's Jesus Christ, began delivering channeled teachings in 1965 to a Columbia University Professor of Medical Psychology named Helen Schucman. One day, Schucman heard an "inner voice" stating, "This is a course in miracles. Please take notes." For seven years she diligently took spiritual dictation from this voice that described himself as "Jesus." Here are some quotes from the "Jesus" voice of *A Course in Miracles*: "There is no sin;" "A slain Christ has no meaning;" "The journey to the cross should be the last useless journey;" "Do not make the pathetic error of 'clinging to the old, rugged cross;'" "The Name of Jesus Christ as such is but a symbol...It is a symbol that is safely used as a replacement for the many names of all the gods to which you pray;" "The recognition of God is the recognition of yourself;" "The Atonement is the final lesson he [man] need learn, for it teaches him that, never having sinned, he has no need of salvation."

As of this week Oprah has begun an online class to teach from a new book that seeks to find true purpose. Numerous preachers no longer speak of sin and God's requirement of holiness but have reduced the Bible to one of many books in the self-help library.

The Bible, however, has withstood the attacks of every imaginable psychology and neurosis, and it remains the Word of

God—infallible and inerrant. Redemption is one of the cardinal tenets of Scripture, and the qualifications of the redeemer are ordered from the God of justice and righteousness. If Christ does not meet every qualification, then there is *no* redemption, and all that is left is to invent new ways to make Adam a more socially acceptable sinner. If Christ does meet these qualifications, then there *is* redemption.

What are the qualifications? See Leviticus 25:25-28 ¹and 47-48², which deal with the redemption of property and persons. The right to redeem follows three basic requirements.

1. Kinship.
2. Ability or wherewithal.
3. Willingness to redeem.

Christ *is our kinsman* by His incarnation. He is *able to redeem* because He is the God man. He is a *willing redeemer* (Heb. 12:1-2³). The meaning of the word “redeem” is to buy back or buy again. Redemption requires the eviction and dissolution of all rights of the former possessor and requires that

¹ **Lev. 25:25-28**, 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 jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.

² **47-48**, 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.

³ **Heb. 12:1-2**, Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

the redeemer take full, personal possession of that which is redeemed.

Redemption presupposes a specific need: A sad and desperate condition. This condition is utter helplessness, poverty, and impotence to change one's circumstance. It presupposes that any relief of the condition be accomplished entirely outside of the one in need. Naomi's circumstance precisely pictures this condition. These things also picture the woeful spiritual condition of every elect son of Adam (Ps. 49:6-9¹). Only Christ could meet the requirement necessary to redeem such ruined sinners (Rom. 3:24-26; Gal. 3:13; Eph 1:7, 14²). Boaz pictures Christ in this blessed book of Ruth (Ruth 4:1-10³).

¹ **Ps. 49:6-9**, They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.

² **Rom. 3:24-26**, For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. **Gal. 3:13**, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. **Eph 1:7**, In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. **14**, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

³ **Ruth 4:1-10**, 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. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: 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

Several things reveal Christ to be the perfect redeemer.

1. The redeemer must be a close relative and that by divine appointment. Only one appointed by God has the right to redeem. Christ is that Redeemer (John 10:16-18; Heb. 10:5-14¹).

2. The one who is to redeem must be a close relative (Heb. 2:10-13²).

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. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 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.

¹ **John 10:16-18**, And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. **Heb. 10:5-14**, Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

² **Heb. 2:10-13**, For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

3. The kinsman redeemer must himself be entirely free of debt [sin] (Heb. 7:26-27¹).

4. The rightful redeemer must be able to redeem. He must have the price required of law and justice (1 Pet. 1:18-20²).

5. The rightful redeemer must be willing to redeem (Phil. 2:5-9; Isa. 50:5-7, 53:7, 9³).

6. The rightful kinsman redeemer must execute a particular, effectual redemption. It is designed only for his kinsman. Boaz redeemed no one but the relatives of Elimelech. There can be no universal application of redemption unless all who are in the universe are redeemed. If one for whom the redemption price is paid should end up not in the possession of the redeemer, then that is not redemption at all, and the redeemer is not worthy to bear that title. Christ, our kinsman redeemer, has restored what

¹ **Heb. 7:26-27**, For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

² **1 Pet. 1:18-20**, Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

³ **Phil. 2:5-9**, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. **Isa. 50:5-7**, The LORD God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the LORD God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. **53:7**, He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. **9**, And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

He did not take away (Ps. 69:4¹). Christ has redeemed His people (Rev. 7:9²).

7. Finally, the one who is the rightful redeemer must raise up a seed. Christ has raised up a seed (Isa. 53:10-12³). They are His chosen seed (Ps. 22:30-31⁴). Christ is our rightful kinsman redeemer because he has met every requirement.

¹ **Ps. 69:4**, They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.

² **Rev. 7:9**, After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

³ **Isa. 53:10-12**, Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors

⁴ **Ps. 22:30-31**, A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

AT THE REDEEMER'S FEET

Ruth 3:1-18

1, 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?

2, And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

3, Wash thyself 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.

4, 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.

5, And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

6, And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

7, 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.

8, And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9, 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.

10, And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11, 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.

12, And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

13, 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.

14, 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.

15, Also he said, Bring the vail 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.

16, 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.

17, And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.

18, 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.

What we have seen from this blessed book is the story of our salvation. The theme of this book is twofold. This is the story of the redeemer, the one who has the right to redeem: The “near kinsman.” This is also the revelation of the unseen and gloriously effectual sovereign providence of God that, through loving manipulation of people, time, and tide, brings the poor sinner to the feet of the Savior. This is the story of the fall of a family as the result of a man (whose name means “God is my King”) leaving the promised land for the dregs of paganism. When Elimelech made this sad choice, he did not go alone. He took all his family with him (Rom. 5:12¹). Naomi and Ruth picture Adam and his offspring who went out full but came back empty. Naomi and Ruth came back to Bethlehem (which means “the house of bread) because in their state of poverty they heard good news, “glad tidings of good things” (Isa. 52:7). They heard that back home in the promised land the Lord had “visited his people in giving them bread.” Providence had ordered events to bring them to hunger and to send someone to tell them that there was bread aplenty in the place that they had left.

Naomi and Ruth's need was not only for bread. Naomi, because of the actions of Elimelech, had lost everything, and if she was to be recovered from her ruin, she (according to the Law) needed a redeemer, a near kinsmen who could justly and rightly buy back all that she had lost. Ruth, according to the law, needed a husband to raise up seed in the name of her deceased spouse. When Naomi and Ruth returned, Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz, her near kinsmen, and was graciously bestowed handfuls on purpose. The fields of Boaz picture the word of God where the child of God gleans food for his soul. Boaz's actions toward Ruth picture our Lord's care for His elect. He took

¹ **Rom. 5:12**, Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

notice of her (John 15:16¹), issued orders that she was not to be molested (Isa. 54:17; Rom. 8:28²), set up his men to watch out for her, and made sure that she had more than she could think or ask. In the end of the story, he marries Ruth, and from their line comes the Lord Jesus Christ. This all was according to God's great plan of redemption (Eph. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 1:9³). Our salvation is "ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5; John 17:2⁴).

In this chapter of the story of redeeming love, we see Ruth coming to Boaz in the manner *prescribed by Naomi*. This is as pure a definition of how a sinner is to approach Christ as is seen anywhere in Scripture. Here Naomi represents the motherly aspect of the church. She gave wise counsel to Ruth and her counsel extols the grace of Christ (vv. 1-4).

The first thing to notice is the counsel that was given was for the welfare and rest of Ruth. The church's interest in sinners is

¹ **John 15:16**, Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

² **Isa. 54:17**, No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD. **Rom. 8:28**, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

³ **Eph. 1:3-7**, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; **2 Tim. 1:9**, Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

⁴ **2 Sam. 23:5**, Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. **John 17:2**, As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

not another name on the roll. Her interest is spiritual, and she desires sinners to know the Savior.

Secondly, the language employed by Naomi strongly suggests that she had confidence in the redeemer and was sure what the redeemer would do. We preach the Gospel, fully confident that the Savior will cast out none that come to Him. The language also assures us that Naomi knew that she could not presume upon Boaz. Her instructions were for Ruth to lay at the redeemer's feet and that he would tell her what to do. Every seeking sinner comes to Christ believing that He is the "rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6¹). The sinner also knows that this is not some sort of entitlement. "Salvation belongeth to the Lord" (Ps. 3:8; Rev. 7:10²). He will be gracious to who he will be gracious and show mercy to whom He will show mercy (Exod. 33:19³). The sinner is ready to fall at the feet of Christ and to wait for Him to speak peace as He is so inclined. For a sinner to die at the feet of Christ seeking mercy is to die as a sinner never died (Jones, Edmund. *Come, Humble Sinner*).

Thirdly, Ruth was told to go where the Boaz could be found, the threshing floor. The threshing floor is a metaphor for where the Gospel is preached: The assembly of the saints, the church (Luke 3:17; 2 Cor. 2:14-17⁴). If a sinner is to hear the

¹ **Heb. 11:6**, But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

² **Ps. 3:8**, Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. **Rev. 7:10**, And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

³ **Exod. 33:19**, And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

⁴ **Luke 3:17**, Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. **2 Cor. 2:14-17**, Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we

voice of the Savior, he will have to be where His voice is heard: In the Gospel, in the midst of His gathered people (Matt. 18:20; Eph. 3:14-20¹).

Here, in the actions of Ruth, we see the willingness of an awakened, needy sinner to do whatever it takes to be found in the favor of the Master (vv. 5-7). Ruth's simple obedience required bowing to the will of the redeemer. Like the harlot who washed the feet of Christ and anointed Him for His burial, the record of inspiration declares that "she did what she could." Ruth's action was to venture all that she was—her future, everything—on the goodness of Boaz. Perhaps as you have read this you have thought that the actions of Ruth seem somewhat inappropriate. Here we have a woman coming in under the cover of darkness, having washed and perfumed herself, quietly and stealthily lying down at a stranger's feet with the intent and desire that he would marry her. What this teaches us is that the seeking sinner disregards reputation, accepts the fact that ridicule might well ensue, and does not care that all is laid bare for the sake of the Master's regard. Sinners willingly suffer humiliation to be found in the Master's favor.

In verses 8-9 we see the sinner's confession. When Boaz was startled by what Ruth did, he said, "Who are you?" Her reply was bold and courageous, as it says in Matthew 11:12, "the kingdom of God suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." She said, "I am Ruth." She knew that he knew her name because, just as "the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim.

are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

¹ **Matt. 18:20**, For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. **Eph. 3:14-20**, For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

2:19). The woman at his feet had sought his favor before (2:13¹). The woman at his feet had found grace in his sight. The woman at his feet had received his kindness and his protection and handfuls of sustenance on purpose.

Ruth had come to him in darkness and in the position of a slave. She had *not* come as one who felt that former kindnesses entitled her to present blessing. She came as a *maidservant*, a word that can mean “female slave” or even “concubine.” She came and asked him to cover her with his garment. She came because Naomi had told her to come, but Naomi was not with her now. It is always one-on-one in the matter of salvation. When she asked to be covered, she declared, “I am yours, do what you will” (Ezekiel 16:8²). She came believing that he alone was able to remedy her awful state (Matt. 8:2³). She knew that he was the one who had the right to redeem as her “near kinsman.”

The response that Boaz gives is from lips dripping with grace (Ps. 45:2⁴). To the Moabite woman, whose race was cursed by God, the redeemer said (paraphrasing), “Be it unto thee as thou wilt. You are a kind, generous, and virtuous woman. You did not chase others whether they were rich or poor.” Boaz loved Ruth, and his words of proposal were words of intent: Stay with me and tomorrow I will do what you have asked.

Boaz was a willing redeemer, but there was something more important that must be settled before he could redeem Ruth and take her for his wife. here was a kinsman that had the first right

¹ **2:13**, Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

² **Ezekiel 16:8**, Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the LORD God, and thou becomest mine.

³ **Matt. 8:2**, And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

⁴ **Ps. 45:2**, Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

on her redemption, and that issue must be settled before he could justly redeem her. The Lord Jesus Christ could not redeem us unless the Law and the justice of God were satisfied. No one is redeemed whose sin has not been punished. God must be honored in the salvation of the sinner. He cannot forgo His wrath and justice to save a sinner. If I'm to be redeemed, God must be just to redeem me (Prov. 16:6; Rom. 3:24-26¹). Grace and mercy fly on the wings of satisfied justice.

Ruth was a believer. She believed in Boaz and she received faith's reward. When she heard Naomi tell her what to do, she said, "I will." When Boaz heard her desire, he said "I will."

There are two "rests" revealed here. Naomi's desire was for Ruth to find rest. She found the *rest of faith*, the rest attained in belief. She lay down at the master's feet and slept there all night.

There is another rest. Boaz would not rest until he had *justly redeemed* Ruth.

Boaz met her every need. He gave her his heart. He gave her his name. He gave her grain that he had threshed, pure grain without chaff. She had him, and he had her (Song of Sol. 6:3²). When Ruth returned home, Naomi assured her of Boaz's faithfulness (v. 18; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24³). This wonderfully pictures what our Lord has done for us in grace and mercy.

¹ **Prov. 16:6**, By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

Rom. 3:24-26, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

² **Song of Sol. 6:3**, I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

³ **Phil. 1:6**; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. **1 Thess. 5:24**, But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

THE SHOE

Ruth 4:1-8

1, 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.

2, And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

3, And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:

4, 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.

5, 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.

6, 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.

7, 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.

8, Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

Read also Deuteronomy 25:4-12

4, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

5, If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

6, And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

7, And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.

8, Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her;

9, Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.

10, And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

11, When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets:

12, Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her.

Notice again Ruth 4:5: “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.”

The *seed* in Scripture is of paramount importance. It speaks to the person of Christ—the Messiah—throughout the Old and New Testaments. The preservation of the natural lineage of Christ addresses the spiritual lineage of Christ and all who are born of His travail. The Bible is replete with references to the importance of the seed. From the protoevangelium [“first” “good news” or “Gospel”] in Genesis 3:15 where Christ is the “seed of woman” who will bruise the serpents head; to Abraham believing God concerning the *seed* and it being counted to him for righteousness in Genesis 15:6¹; to Tamar playing the harlot to Judah and being counted more righteous than him because she had respect for the seed; to the suffering substitute seeing His seed in Isaiah 53; to the seed of woman being born into the world in Bethlehem—born of a woman, born under the Law to redeem them that are under the law; to the Gospel and the preaching of it in 1 Peter and James 1, the scripture is one long and beautiful treatise on the *seed*. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor. 1:20).

In Deuteronomy 25:4-12, it is declared that the seed must be *preserved* and *continued*. When a woman is married to a man and he dies before the birth of the firstborn (representing Christ), then the brother (or next kinsman) of the woman's dead husband is to take the woman as his wife and the firstborn of that union will bear the name of the former husband. Though it is not clearly set forth in this passage, it was commonly understood that this scenario was followed until a firstborn son could bear the first husband's name. So if the second, third,

¹ **Genesis 15:6**, And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

fourth, and so-on husband died, the process continued until the seed was honored and the lineage of the firstborn was established. At the time our Lord walked the earth, the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, tried to use this law to trip up Christ concerning the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-33¹). Their interest was not in the seed but in proving that what they believed discounted the resurrection.

With God, this matter of preserving the seed is of absolute importance, and the refusal to honor the principle declared here can result in dire consequences (Gen. 38:7-10²). The “seed” is finally and fully realized in the person and work of Christ as is revealed in the preaching of the Gospel (Rom. 8:29; James 1:18³).

In our text there is not only the doctrine of the preservation of the seed but also the punishment and shame that is involved for the next kinsman who refuses to do as the Lord commands

¹ **Matt. 22:23-33**, The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

² **Gen. 38:7-10**, And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.

³ **Rom. 8:29**, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. **James 1:18**, Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

(vv. 7-10). If the nearest kinsman refused to marry the widow, then he was brought before the elders of his city and was made to confess and own the fact that he refused to do his duty (v. 8). After this confession of refusal occurred, the widow of his brother then publicly removed the shoe of the unwilling kinsman and spit in his face to publicly humiliate him and cause his name and his family's name to be a name of scorn and embarrassment the remainder of his days (v. 10). This action of the widow revealed the nature of men in their disobedience to God (Isa. 1:5-6¹).

The understanding of this principle comes to light in the book of Ruth as Boaz (the near kinsman) confronts the nearer kinsman concerning the redemption of the name of Mahlon, the son of Elimelech. Mahlon had died and left Ruth a widow, and in order for his name and seed to remain the near kinsman must marry her. Boaz was a near kinsman but not the next in line, and this must be remedied before Boaz can marry Ruth (4:4-8).

We know that Boaz is a type and picture of Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer. As we compare this passage with what we have read in Deuteronomy, several things differ that reveal the difference of law and grace. In our text in Deuteronomy, the kinsman who refuses to marry the widow and to continue the name of his brother will be shamed and disgraced. In the story of Ruth, the nearer kinsman does not refuse to marry Ruth but rather declares his inability to redeem because it would “mar his inheritance.” However, in the reason given—the marring of the inheritance—there is the element of refusal. In Deuteronomy, the *widow* takes the shoe from the kinsman, but in Ruth *the kinsman removes* the shoe *voluntarily*. In Deuteronomy, the kinsman's shoe is removed *before the widow*, but in Ruth the shoe is removed *before the redeemer*. In Deuteronomy, the widow

¹ **Isa. 1:5-6**, Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

must personally deal with the kinsman. In Ruth, the transaction is between the nearer kinsman and the kinsman redeemer.

What does this teach us concerning our redemption?

First, the nearer kinsman is the Law, which cannot redeem us but also asserts that it is not willing to. The Law, by design, was never given to redeem or buy back anyone. Its function is to reveal guilt, and because it is holy and just (Rom. 7:12¹), the Law cannot take a sinner to itself. It must ever stand on the outside having no possibility of intimacy; rather, it accuses and assigns blame with incontrovertible evidence showing that no one is worthy to stand in its presence. If the Law, being holy, were to embrace the sinner, then the Law would be *marred* and its justice diminished. The Law can only exact punishment. Though the Law is presented as our former husband in Romans 7, that only applies to the matter of dominion and about the dominion being removed when the law dies. In our text, the widow deals with the Law *personally*. For everyone who is *under* the Law, this applies absolutely. If *you* will deal with the Law, you are on your own, and the results will never be good (Rom. 3:19, Gal. 5:1-4²). For the *redeemed*, the *kinsman redeemer* deals with the Law, and the results are always good (Rom. 8:1-4³). When the redeemer deals with the Law, the Law *voluntarily* takes off the shoe and *receives no spittle* in the face. The Law is

¹ **Rom. 7:12**, Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

² **Rom. 3:19**, What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. **Gal. 5:1-4**, Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

³ **Rom. 8:1-4**, There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

not humiliated but is rather *honored* and *fulfilled* by the kinsman redeemer, and the redeemer himself takes the shame for himself in His substitution.

Secondly, the significance of the shoe is very interesting. The reason for the shoe being removed, as opposed to something else, is not clearly defined. Why the shoe? We know that its significance is somehow related to the seed—to the preservation of the seed. To take off the shoe or to have it removed has to do with the refusal or inability to carry on the seed. The carrying on of the seed in the New Testament refers to the preaching of the Gospel. It is by and through the preaching of the Gospel that the seed of Christ is born into His kingdom. The preaching of the Gospel is the declaration of Christ as the Kinsman Redeemer who satisfied the law and, by His blood and death, bought back the elect to God. The result of that preaching is that the elect are born from above into the kingdom and family of Christ. It is interesting to note that Paul, in defending the matter of supporting the preacher of the Gospel, uses Deuteronomy 25:4 to do so (1 Cor. 9:9-14¹). So, before the words concerning the *preservation* of the seed are declared, what it *involves* is declared. This is about the preaching of the Gospel in carrying on the name of Christ by the birth of His seed. This is why we preach *the* Gospel and *only* the Gospel (1 Pet. 1:23-25; James 1:18²). To refuse to do so would be like taking off the

¹ **1 Cor. 9:9-14**, For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

² **1 Pet. 1:23-25**, Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is

shoe, thus revealing an unwillingness to preach the truth or an inability to do so (Eph. 6:14-15¹). The believer is neither unwilling nor unable to preach the Gospel. The believer is set for the defense of the gospel, and it is all that he is interested in preaching (1 Cor. 9:16²). The believer will never take off the shoe.

Finally, there is a word here concerning the priority of this matter. In verses 11-12 the interpretation is plain. Even our closest relations are never to be defended at the expense of preserving the seed. May the Lord give us this blessed priority our entire lives: To defend the Seed, the Christ of God, and the Gospel by which the elect are *born* into the family of God.

the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. **James 1:18**, Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

¹ **Eph. 6:14-15**, Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

² **1 Cor. 9:16**, For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

THE GREAT TRANSACTION

Ruth 4:1-22

1, 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.

2, And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

3, And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:

4, 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.

5, 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.

6, 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.

7, 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.

8, Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

9, And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

10, 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.

11, And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem:

12, And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman.

13, So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

14, And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

15, And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

16, And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17, And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

- 18, Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron,
19, And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,
20, And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,
21, And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,
22, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

We have come to the place that is the destination of this entire book. Everything that has led to this place and everything that follows hangs totally on what happens here. This is a picture of the great transaction, the redemption that our Lord accomplished on Calvary's tree. An old hymn by Phillip Doddridge ("O happy day that fixed my choice") that praises Christ for His great work says, "'Tis done! The great transaction's done! I am the Lord's, and He is mine."

From the first verse of the 4th chapter, we see that Boaz is the initiator of the action. He goes up to the gate, and we know that his purpose is to intercede for Ruth. He immediately calls for the *nearer* kinsman because the issue of *redemption* is at hand. Redemption is the single thought on the mind of Boaz. How beautifully this pictures our Lord's work on behalf of His elect. He "set [his] face like a flint" toward Calvary (Isa. 50:7). His singular aim was the redemption of His people for the glory of God. He often spoke of His hour, His defining moment that would determine history.

Boaz knew what was at stake, and failure was not an option. So it was with Christ; but with Him, failure was not a possibility. The outcome was never in doubt (Isa. 42:4; Matt. 1:21¹). Boaz immediately calls for the nearer kinsman because his claim on her must be adjudicated. Our Lord, before He

¹ **Isa. 42:4**, He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. **Matt. 1:21**, And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

could redeem us, must settle the Law's claim of death on us. Redemption is not possible unless it is a completely *just* redemption. No debt may turn up at some later date whereby the transaction is made null and void (v. 4). The Law condemns but cannot redeem. "The letter killeth but only the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6).

In this transaction, Boaz buys it all. He buys back what Elimelech lost in his ill-fated effort to save his life from famine. He bought back the inheritance for Naomi, and he bought Ruth the Moabitess for his wife. Christ in his great redemption purchased the *entire* field (*all* that Adam lost) for the treasure within: His church, His beloved. He has been given authority over all flesh to "give eternal life to as many as [God has] given him" (John 17:2).

When the transaction was done, the singular nature of the redemption is revealed. He had bought Ruth for his wife to raise up seed in Mahlon's name, to ensure the coming of the Messiah. All of that transpired because Boaz loved Ruth (Eph. 5:25-27¹). Christ came into this world to redeem His people.

There are several things here that depict and picture our Lord's redemption of his people.

1. This redemption was a proper redemption. For it to be so, every "i" must be dotted and every "t" must be crossed. The Law, in all its claims, must be fulfilled and satisfied in every jot and tittle. Nothing can ever be brought up that can call into question the success and honor of this transaction. Deliverance without *satisfaction* would be nothing more than an illegal escape. The Lord's people are not on the lam. Christ alone meets every requirement (Ps. 24:3-6; Heb. 10:1-5; Isa. 45:21²).

¹ **Eph. 5:25-27**, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish

² **Ps. 24:3-6**, Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the

2. This redemption was a pleasure to the redeemer. Though the cost was great, and the sacrifice that was made to obtain the object was great, the motivation made it a pleasurable experience. Boaz got his prize. He got Ruth for his wife. Our Lord gave all: Gave Himself, *gave* His back to the smiters and His face to them that pull off the hair, and He hid not his face from spitting—He *gave* up the ghost for the redemption of His people. The cost was great, but through it all, the Lord was doing all his pleasure (Heb. 12:2; Isa. 53:10-12¹).

3. This redemption was precious (Ps. 49:8²). It was of great honor and value and the result of it was that the redeemer is precious in the eyes of the redeemed (vv. 11-14; 2 Cor. 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:18-20³). He, and everything He did, is precious in the

LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah. **Heb. 10:1-5**, For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: **Isa. 45:21**, Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

¹ **Heb. 12:2**, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Isa. 53:10-12**, Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

² **Ps. 49:8**, For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.

³ **2 Cor. 9:15**, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. **1 Pet. 1:18-20**, Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

sight of His elect (His love, His condescension, His sacrifice, His satisfaction, His honoring God's holiness as well as all His other attributes, Him being made our righteousness, His wisdom, His sanctification and redemption, taking us for His bride)—"To you who believe, He is precious" (1 Pet. 2:7).

4. This redemption was not hid in a corner (Acts 26:6¹). It was open, transparent, and public (vv. 1-2). Witnesses to this redemption were manifold. Heaven rejoiced, Hell trembled, and the earth saw this Man, they heard this sacrifice cry with a loud voice, "It is finished." After our Lord was buried, He arose and was seen by upwards of 500 witnesses.

5. This redemption was on purpose (v. 10). Boaz did not do this in hopes that someone would accept it. He did not call this assembly to make redemption possible or to offer redemption to anyone, not even Ruth and Naomi. He meant to redeem, and nothing short of that would do. He is not buying slaves; He is a man in love, securing a bride and ensuring a seed (Ps. 22:30; Isa. 53:10; Titus 2:14²).

6. This redemption, being on purpose, was therefore a particular redemption (v. 10). "Ruth the Moabitess . . . I have purchased." Let men dally in the anesthetizing ether of their notions of free will and universal redemption. Scripture is void of even a hint of universal redemption. Christ's death was a purchase price of the elect, and the elect were fully and completely purchased. The bride was the intended, and she was

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

¹ **Acts 26:6**, And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.

² **Ps. 22:30**, A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. **Isa. 53:10**, Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. **Titus 2:14**, Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

bought with the price. Christ died for His sheep (Isa. 53:8; Acts 20:28; Gal. 3:13; Rev. 5:9-10¹).

7. This redemption produced the intended result. Boaz purchased his bride and raised up seed. From that union came David the king of Israel, and David's son and David's Lord: The Messiah, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 2:7; Matt. 1:5²).

8. Boaz accomplished a perfect redemption (v. 13). Everything went precisely according to plan. So, too, was our Lord's redemption perfect (John 19:28-30; Heb. 10:14³).

9. This redemption is worthy of praise for the redeemer and him alone (v. 11). "Praise the Savior, ye who know Him" (Thomas Kelly). He is worthy.

¹ **Isa. 53:8**, He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. **Acts 20:28**, Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. **Gal. 3:13**, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. **Rev. 5:9-10**, And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

² **Ps. 2:7**, I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. **Matt. 1:5**, And Salmon begat [Boaz] of Rachab; and [Boaz] begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

³ **John 19:28-30**, After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. **Heb. 10:14**, For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

REDEMPTION'S PURPOSE

Ruth 4:4-8

4, 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.

5, 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.

6, 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.

7, 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.

8, Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

9, And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

In these few verses we see the culmination of all that has transpired, and the glorious end of it all is the redemption that is accomplished. In these five verses the word *redeem*

or *buy* is used nine times. There can be no doubt that this is the subject of the passage. We have seen that Boaz's intention to redeem was an honorable intention. Though willing to redeem, he was not about to do it unless the transaction honored God and was done according to the strict requirements of the Law. Unless this took place, there was no possibility of Boaz redeeming Ruth. We see this taking place as Boaz deals with the nearer kinsman. There is no coercion or trickery. This is not a tradeoff or some slight-of-hand misdirection. The laws of redemption set forth in Deuteronomy and Leviticus are clearly defined. They declare that redemption must follow a specific set of rules.

Redemption is a legal matter. Part of that transaction (and the object and purpose of redemption) is that the seed of the redeemed be continued. The redeemer must marry the widow of the dead and raise up seed in his name. If the redeemer is unable or unwilling to do this, no redemption can occur. The Law required three basic things for redemption to occur.

First, redemption required the restoration of the inheritance of the impoverished relative.

Second, redemption required that the brother who had been enslaved through poverty be completely freed and set at liberty.

Third, redemption required that the redeemer marry his dead relative's widow and raise up a lineage in his name.

Boaz accomplished these things for Ruth, and that is a picture of what Christ did in the redemption of the elect. Our Lord redeemed the inheritance we lost in Adam. He set us free from our bondage (Gal. 5:1¹). He has raised up seed in the name of the dead by marriage.

Because redemption is a matter of law, it must also be a matter of public record. Every facet involved in redemption must be publicly done before witnesses so that, once

¹ **Gal. 5:1**, Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

accomplished, it can never be questioned or nullified. The fourth chapter of Ruth makes these things very clear.

First, this matter of redemption is very important, and is understood to be so by the actions of Boaz and the response of the people. Boaz calls for the nearer kinsman and the elders, and immediately a crowd begins to assemble. These are no mere gawkers. One of their own is about to be redeemed, and that stirs the hearts and minds of the citizenry of Bethlehem. This transaction is of great importance because the glory of God is at stake. Matters of strict law are at the forefront of this dealing. The intensity of the gathering is palpable. The thrust of false religion is to speak of redemption in terms of *assisted self-help*. Redemption, according to false religion today, was a great effort that accomplished nothing, but rather only made redemption possible. This definition of redemption thus loses all its gravity and importance and becomes just another aspect of salvation that is subject to the will of man to make it viable and genuine. Let some poor believer declare the truth of redemption—the absolute legal necessity of its efficacy, the fact that it is intentional, purposeful, particular, limited in scope and the glory of God is tied up with its complete success—and the crowds will gather. Suddenly, redemption becomes a matter of life and death that the one redeemed has no part in. Biblical redemption (successful redemption) is of great importance. If Christ did not redeem those He intended to redeem, then God is not glorified, the Law is not honored, and redemption did not take place. Sadly, this *is* the doctrine of false religion. It says that Christ intended to redeem everyone but no one in particular, yet all are not redeemed and, therefore, He is a failure. God's Law is not honored, redemption is not accomplished, and therefore He is not glorified. Thank God that His word utterly dispels that lie (Rom. 3:24-31, 8:28; 2 Cor. 5:21¹).

¹ **Rom. 3:24-31**, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: 144

Secondly, this transaction is *conspicuously* public. Boaz goes up to the gate of the city and sits there for all to see. Our Lord accomplished His redemption openly and in the view of all (Acts 2:22-23, 26:26-27¹). God darkened the sun, quaked the earth, opened graves, rent rocks in twain, and rent the veil from top to bottom when this great redemption was accomplished (Matt. 27:51-52²). These things occurring simultaneously made this transaction *conspicuously* public.

Thirdly, redemption is a legal matter. Understanding this is paramount in grasping what redemption is. This transaction is done according to the Law. I'm always amazed that false religion is so caught up with the Ten Commandments but do not even consider the necessity of the fulfillment of the Law in the matter of redemption. This scene in our text tells us of the legality of what took place. When our Lord made His redemptive transaction, it was necessary that the Law be fulfilled. No question could ever arise as to the legality of that transaction. The Law must declare that every requirement has been met. The Law must say that it has no charge to lay against the redeemed, no ground upon which any accusation can be laid.

that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. **8:28**, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. **2 Cor. 5:21**, For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

¹ **Acts 2:22-23**, Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: **26:26-27**, Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

² Matt. 27:51-52, And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

After the transaction is made, the Law must walk away completely satisfied, legally *kept* and *honored*, or there could be no redemption. 'Tis done! (Rom. 10:4¹).

Also in this text, we see that the Law is *impotent* in the matter of *redemption*. The failure of the closer relative (nearer kinsman) to redeem reveals the inability of the Law to save. By taking off his shoe, the closer relative admits that he not only is unwilling but also unable to redeem because such a transaction (especially marriage and raising up seed) would mar his inheritance. Though the full meaning of this is not given, it is obvious that his inability is because he would be diminished or dishonored in the transaction. The Law of God is holy, just, and good. For it to embrace a sinner for the purpose of salvation—especially to raise up a seed by that union—would mar its justice. The Law can only *identify*, *define*, and *expose* sin. It must see to it that the sentence and judgment be executed according to the strictest requirements of its supreme holiness. It *cannot* save, for it is not equipped with mercy or grace. It requires a price but does not have the price. It cannot do otherwise (Rom. 3:19-20, 7:9, 8:3²). Any who would presume to come to the Law for justification, redemption, sanctification, or as a “rule of life” will find the Law to pluck off the shoe, and in doing so declare that it is unwilling and unable to save but is clearly and rightfully ready to condemn any and all of your supposed merit as utterly sinfully, and the verdict will be condemnation. The Law enslaves, but redemption frees. But what the Law could not

¹ **Rom. 10:4**, For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

² **Rom. 3:19-20**, Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. **7:9**, For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. **8:3**, For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

redeem, Boaz—and our heavenly Boaz—gladly redeems (Rom. 8:1-4¹).

Redemption ultimately has to do with relationship and intimate connection. The Law is written on a stone, and unless your affection is inordinate and you are certifiable, you cannot have a relationship with a stone (Pet Rocks excluded). The Law is holy, and men are sinful—there can be no relationship. But the *redeemer* by nature must have a relationship to the *redeemed*. There must be marriage, because the purpose of the redemption is to raise up seed to the dead. As Boaz accomplished this for Ruth, so our Lord redeemed us to raise up seed from among the fallen sons and daughters of our father Adam. As surety, our Lord assumed the debt of His elect before the world began (1 Pet. 1:20²). Christ has been given “authority over all flesh” to “give eternal life to as many as [God has] given Him” (John 17:2). Christ has bought them all legally, redeemed them, and presents them faultless before God's throne (Jude 1:24³). Christ's intercessory work assured the salvation of the elect. Because the Law and justice of God was satisfied, the righteousness of God demanded that everyone for whom Christ paid the price of redemption must be saved. God's immutability demands it. No one for whom Christ shed His redeeming blood shall ever suffer the judgment of justice. As Augustus Toplady said, “Payment God cannot twice demand, first at my bleeding Surety's hand and then again at mine.” The proof that false religion does not understand the holy legality of redemption and refuses the fact of its success is that they have some for whom

¹ **Rom. 8:1-4**, There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

² **1 Pet. 1:20**, Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

³ **Jude 1:24**, Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Christ died suffering the judgment of God at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11¹). No, a thousand times no—everyone for whom Christ died is fully, finally, and forever redeemed. “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11).

¹ **Rev. 20:11**, And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Your Notes

