

Ruth Devotionals

Devotional Illustrations from Our Daily Bread, F B Meyer, G Campbell Morgan, C H Spurgeon, Today in the Word, and multiple other sources

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Christ in Ruth A M Hodgkin

Out from the darkness we have been studying, “in the days when the judges ruled,” there shines forth the sweet story of Ruth. In the midst of war and lawlessness and idolatry there were still those, both rich and poor, who feared God and lived virtuous and simple lives to His praise.

The family of Elimelech were evidently among these, though they took the backsliding step of going down into the Land of Moab for succor. The name Elimelech means “My God is King”; and if his faith had been strong enough to depend upon his King, much trouble might have been spared. “There was a famine in the land,” even in Bethlehem, “the House of Bread,” and they went to Moab in search of food, and, as often happens, “they continued there.” Trouble upon trouble followed this downward step. Elimelech died, his two sons married Moabitish women, and then the sons died also.

After about ten years Naomi heard “that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread,” and she arose to return to her own land, And then follows the memorable choice of Ruth to cleave unto her mother-in-law in following her to an unknown land, and to what seemed a life of privation and toil. When Naomi saw that she was “steadfastly minded” to go with her, she left speaking to her.

There must have been something very beautiful in Naomi’s life thus to win the devotion and love of Ruth, first to herself and then to her God; and it has been well to keep her name, which means “Pleasant,” instead of substituting her suggestion of Mara.

They arrived at Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest, and proved it to be the House of Bread once more. The calm poetry of those harvest fields of Bethlehem, the eager gleaner among the maidens, the reapers, the lord of the harvest,— have all lived in golden sunshine in our imagination from our childhood.

“Her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz.” Behind our lives there is a guiding Hand which causes even insignificant things to be fraught with mighty issues.

In Boaz, the kinsman of Elimelech, “a mighty man of wealth,” we have another beautiful character. The simplicity of his life, the courtesy of his behavior to all with whom he came in contact, his generosity, his regard for the Law, above all his constant reference of every event to God, stand out in striking contrast against the dark background of his time.

The Goel. It was to this man that Naomi bade Ruth appeal to fulfill the kinsman’s part. The word used is Goël, the redeemer, the one whose right and duty it was according to the Law to redeem the inheritance of the deceased relative, and marry his widow (see Leviticus 25:25–31, 47–55; Deuteronomy 25:5–10). As these rights belonged to the next of kin, Goël came to mean the nearest kinsman. To fulfill these rights was his bounden duty according to the Law of God, and it was the fulfillment of this law that Naomi sought to bring about.

The reply of Boaz was: “It is true that I am a goël (redeemer), but there is also a goël nearer of kin than I. If he will redeem thee, well, let him redeem thee; but if he is not willing to redeem thee, then will I redeem thee, as the Lord liveth.”

Then follows the quiet rest of faith on the part of Naomi and her daughter, and the dignified carrying out of the Law in the presence of the elders in the gate of the city, on the part of Boaz.

The next of kin was willing to purchase the land that belonged to Naomi, but he was not willing for what that purchase involved, to take Ruth to be his wife, lest he should mar his own inheritance. This left Boaz free to carry out his gracious purpose; and he bought

the inheritance of Elimelech, and he purchased Ruth the Moabitess to be his wife, “to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.”

The Royal Line. “So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and she bare a son. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 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.”

This story shows how unselfish devotion to God and to duty is rewarded. Orpah, who was content with the outward profession of affection, and returned to her people and her gods, forfeited her place in Israel. The kinsman who failed to fulfill his duty because of his own interests has not even his name recorded in God’s Book. Ruth, on the other hand, who gave up all to follow Naomi and Naomi’s God, and Boaz, who unhesitatingly fulfilled the kinsman’s part, have their names handed down to all time as worthy of praise, and as the ancestors, not only of David, but of David’s greater Son.

The Precision of Prophecy. One of the most marvellous proofs of the truth of the Bible is to be found in the prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah. Every time prophecy predicts a fresh branch of the family as being the chosen one, a fresh risk, humanly speaking, is involved. But because God inspired the prophecies, the choice is made with unerring precision. Of Noah’s sons, Shem is chosen; of Abraham’s sons, Isaac; of Jacob’s twelve sons, Judah is selected; and the promise is renewed to David. Again, Messiah must have a birthplace. Of three known continents Asia is chosen, and of its many countries the Land of Promise. Of its three districts, Judaea; and of its thousands of villages, Bethlehem is selected. “The prophet puts his finger on one obscure village on the map of the world; but he speaks infallibly, for the Omniscient God was behind his utterance” (Dr. Pierson).

The Kinsman Redeemer. But the Key-note of the book of Ruth is The Kinsman Redeemer. In him we see Christ, who has purchased the Church to be His Bride. “Thirty times in this short book the word ‘kinsman’ is found, or ‘redeemer,’ ‘near kinsman,’ ‘next of kin,’ ‘kindred,’—like words, all having reference to like things... How plainly this book is intended to teach the doctrine concerning Redemption will be seen by examining Ruth 4:4–10. Here the word ‘redemption’ occurs five times in three verses; and in Ruth 4:10, Boaz declares that in redeeming the property he also purchases the widow of Mahlon to be his own wife. Nothing can explain the extreme minuteness of detail here except a typical design on the part of the inspiring Spirit... Our Lord Jesus had to become one with man in order to have the right to redeem. He is therefore our fellow-man; but if He had been involved in man’s fall and identified with man’s sin, He could not have acted as Redeemer. No sinner can redeem himself, much less can he redeem his brother (Psalms 49:7). He is therefore, as the God-man, our Boaz (‘Ability’); by that kinship and strength or ability, “He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him” (Pierson). “The Church which He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). “Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

The Christian Life. For the individual believer the book is full of teaching. First, the definite choice has to be made, the trust placed under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. Then the diligent gleaning in the field, the beating out of the corn and the feeding upon it, which represents the diligent feeding of our souls upon the Word. The soul thus fed has food to pass on to others (Ruth 2:18). The work in the harvest field is also a picture of the wider service of the ingathering of souls in God’s great harvest field of the world, and we may well ask ourselves evening by evening, “Where hast thou gleaned today?”

Union with Christ. Though the union of Ruth with Boaz is typical of the Church as a whole, yet there is for the individual believer the blessed experience of union with Christ set forth under so many figures, such as the abiding of the branch in the Vine. If there has been in our lives any of the failure Israel experienced in Judges, a turning unto our own way, the remedy for us is to seek a closer union with Christ. Lest we be discouraged, God has placed the Book of Joshua and the Book of Ruth on each side of the Book of Judges, as if to show us that the Victory of Faith and the Rest of Faith is the experience we are to look for as followers of an Almighty Savior.

Ruth 1

Devotionals from Selwyn Hughes

- [Ruth 1](#)

Ruth 1-2

Bodie Thoene, coauthor of bestselling Christian fiction Zion Chronicles, once worked for John Wayne as a scriptwriter. In Today’s

Christian Woman Thoene tells how that opportunity came about. "I was commuting to Los Angeles and doing feature articles on different stunt men and other film personalities for magazines. An article I co-wrote with John Wayne's stuntman won the attention of the Duke himself. One day he called and invited [my husband] Brock, and me to come to his house. He talked to us as if we were friends, showing keen interest in us as individuals. From that day on, I began writing for his film company, Batjac Productions. We were awestruck. Here was this man who had been in film for fifty years and he takes a young couple with small children under his wing! Once I asked him, 'Why are you doing this? You're so good to us.' He replied, 'Because somebody did it for me.' " It appears that John Wayne had something in common with Boaz from the book of Ruth--both understood that goodness doesn't originate in us. We receive and then we give. God is good to us, that's why we are able to be good to others. Today's reading illustrates the implementation of God's "welfare program": (Today in the Word)

Ruth 1 Always For Us

January 4, 2004 — by Herbert Vander Lugt

If God is for us, who can be against us? —Romans 8:31

Naomi, her husband, and their two sons left Israel and moved to Moab because of a famine (Ruth 1:1-2). One son married Ruth, the other married Orpah. Eventually Naomi's husband and sons died (vv.3,5), so she decided to return to Israel. But she felt that her daughters-in-law would be better off staying in Moab (vv.6-13). She tried to dissuade them from going with her by saying, "No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!" (v.13).

Was Naomi right in her thinking about God? Perhaps the family had displayed a lack of faith by moving to pagan Moab, but God certainly was not against her. He proved this by wonderfully providing for her and Ruth after they returned to Israel. (Read the rest of the book—it's short.)

You may be unemployed, terminally ill, have a disabled child, or care for a loved one with Alzheimer's. God hasn't promised to keep us from such problems. But He has proven that He is always "for us" as Christians by what He did through Jesus (Romans 5:8-9). Nothing, not even death, can separate us from His love (8:35-39).

The Lord is never "against us," not even when He chastens us (Hebrews 12:5-6). He is always for us!

Our God is always there for us—

Receiving every prayer,

Delighting in our words of praise,

Responding with His care. —Sper

The One who died to save you will never be against you.

Ruth 1 - Where Is God? Ruth 1:1-2

When our son Nathan was barely two, he'd squeeze his eyes shut and say, "I can't see, I can't see!" He thought that if he couldn't see me, then I couldn't see him either. Playing hide-and-seek was a breeze. I never had to run and hide; I'd simply whisper, "Close your eyes, Nathan, and count to ten," and I was hidden as far as he was concerned! There are times as an adult when I've made a similar mistaken assumption about my heavenly Father. If I don't "see" God, perhaps He can't see me or my inappropriate behavior. What about you? Have you ever thought that since God is invisible, maybe your actions were too? The reality is that God in His providence sees everything, even before it happens. You can run, but you can never hide from His view. The word providence comes from two Latin words: pro meaning "before" and video translated "I see." Scripture says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth" (2 Chronicles 16:9). Have no doubt—though you may not see Him in your darkest night, He can always see you! Throughout the book of Ruth we see God's providential care. It was a dark time for the nation of Israel, and tough circumstances had obscured the people's view of God. In the midst of foreign oppression and famine one family asked, "Where is God?" Instead of opening their spiritual eyes to see Him, they went their own way and ran to the land of Moab.

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going." That's how Elimelech chose to live his life. People often imagine that somewhere else the grass will be greener and mistakenly think that they can run away from their problems. The reality is, their problems usually follow them because they are the problem. A change of scenery doesn't change the heart but turning to God can. Moses had taught the children of Israel that famine was a form of divine discipline, but repentance of their sin would restore God's blessing. Turning a famine into a feast was just a prayer away. I've discovered that when the going gets tough, the tough should stay put. When I was a little girl and misbehaved, my dad would spank my bottom with a wooden spoon. Wiggling away from the spoon seemed like the smart thing to do. Then one day I figured out that the closer you were to Dad the less the spanking hurt because there was less

momentum. And if I crawled onto his lap and apologized for my behavior, the spanking never happened. Running away from your problems or from your heavenly Father will only make things worse. Instead of running, try my philosophy: When the going gets tough, the tough get closer to God, because forgiveness is just a prayer away.

Most people spend more time and energy going around problems than in trying to solve them. Henry Ford (Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

DOWN AND OUT Ruth 1:3-7

Fidel Castro's oppressive dictatorship has forced thousands of Cubans to seek asylum in the United States. Castro has crushed his people's rights to free speech, freedom of the press, and the pursuit of economic prosperity, leaving them helpless, hopeless, and hungry. Impoverished Cuban refugees risk their lives sailing aboard unsafe boats over treacherous waters to reach the shores of America. The Cuban residents are down, and they want out.

Elian Gonzalez, a five-year-old Cuban boy, was found on November 25, 1999, clinging to an inner tube off the coast of Florida. He and several other Cuban refugees had boarded an overloaded powerboat that sank on its way to the U.S. His mother and ten others died on the tragic journey. After his rescue, the boy became the subject of a custody battle between his father in Cuba and relatives in Miami, which ended with a dramatic predawn raid during which the boy was taken at gunpoint. For Elian's mother, getting out of Cuba resulted in death. For Elian, getting out resulted in a tug-of-war between families and nations.

It would have taken the wisdom of Solomon to determine the best for this little boy. It takes God's wisdom to know what is best for you when you are in difficult circumstances. When you feel down and think you want out, stop and ask yourself two questions: What am I running from? and Where am I running to? Running to human solutions will leave you down and out. Running to God's answers will take you up and away.

On a foggy night, William Cowper ordered his coachman to take him to the London Bridge. Suffering from deep depression, he planned on jumping into the Thames River. However, his driver got lost and drove aimlessly for hours. Cowper left his carriage to walk to the London Bridge himself. After a short distance, he found himself back home! The coachman had driven in circles. Cowper realized that God's providential hand was guiding his way. He discovered that the way out of despair was to look to God, not jump into the river. In gratitude, he cast his cares on the Savior and experienced great peace. With renewed hope he wrote these words to the famous hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way / His wonders to perform; / He plants His footsteps in the sea, / And rides upon the storm. / Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; / The clouds ye so much dread / Are big with mercy, and shall break / With blessing on your head."

Hard times and bad choices brought Elimelech's family so far down that it put out the light of God's truth in their hearts. However, God's faithfulness broke through the shadow of death with the promise of new life if Naomi would return home. Scripture promises us that God's faithfulness will always outshine the darkness of our doubts too. "If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13, NLT). If you are on the dark road of depression or doubt or death, God will faithfully lead you home.

God is with us in darkness just as surely as he is with us in the light. Croft Pentz (Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

FORK IN THE ROAD Ruth 1:8-14

With her head held high (and just a glimpse of a tear in her eye), a young girl kissed her mom and dad good-bye and climbed aboard a train for the first time. She was traveling alone to visit her grandmother. Along the way the train needed to cross several rivers. As they neared the first river, the girl looked out the window and saw a wide, flowing body of water. She didn't understand how the train could cross the river and imagined the train plunging into the fast-moving current and quickly sinking. Desperately she thought, Maybe I should jump off! As the train drew closer to the river, she spotted the bridge that would provide safe crossing. After several rivers and several bridges the young lady breathed a sigh of relief, "Someone has put bridges all the way!" Life's journey often seems treacherous and full of hazards. There are times when we can't see the way out and just know we're going to crash! Then we see the bridge and know that God has provided safe passage. There comes a time when we reach a fork in the road concerning faith too. We must decide: Will we stay on the train and trust God to build the bridges, or will we jump off and try to make our own way?

Hotel Street is the red-light district in Honolulu, Hawaii. After dusk the streets light up with neon signs promoting adult bookstores and seedy bars. The sidewalks are filled with prostitutes, transvestites, pimps, and pushers. In June of 1980 I was working on Hotel Street in a Christian coffeehouse run by Youth With A Mission.

One night I bumped into someone more glamorous than Cher in a Bob Mackie costume. "Michelle" accepted my invitation to the coffee shop, where I heard the sad story. When "Michelle" was a little boy, his father had molested him. After years of resentment and confusion little Michael had transformed himself into Michelle the transvestite, selling himself to unwitting sailors on furlough. Throughout that summer Michael would stop in to talk and cry, "I'm so miserable and empty inside." But after months of loving encouragement he refused to leave his destructive lifestyle for forgiveness and a new start. I have no doubt that Michael was suffering, but his tears did not lead him to the only One who could comfort him. Michael, like Orpah, shed tears of regret but not repentance. He felt sorry for himself, blaming his situation on his earthly father and his bitter past. As far as I know, when he came to

a fork in the road, he chose to stay on the road leading to a dead end, refusing to believe that the Father in heaven had a better future in store for him.

When something goes wrong, it is more important to decide who is going to fix it than who is to blame. Anonymous (Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED Ruth 1:15-18

Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" depicts a traveler encountering a fork in the road: "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / And sorry I could not travel both. . . ." The traveler is left to decide which path to choose. Life is full of little choices that can lead to great consequences. A choice repeated becomes a habit; a habit unchecked develops a character; and character determines your destiny. Like Frost's traveler, you can't have it both ways. You must choose which direction you'll take on life's journey. During college I was traveling through a forest of life decisions: relationships, vocation, and relocation. In the summer of 1978 God's providence led me to a fork in the road. My highly successful, atheistic father became a Christian and beckoned me to follow the narrow path—the road less traveled. That summer, with reckless abandon, I packed my bags for a spiritual journey that would take me through awakening, repentance, baptism, and new life. I've never looked back—that choice determined my destiny as a follower of Jesus Christ. In Frost's words, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

Indiana Jones, the handsome adventurer of the silver screen, searched the globe to find the Holy Grail, the sacred cup of Christ, believed to give eternal life to the one who drank from it. But the quest was filled with pitfalls, leading Indy and the enemy Nazis to Jordan. In a dark cave an old Crusader knight guarded an array of chalices. Anyone entering was forced to choose which cup he would drink from. Only one goblet would give life, all others would bring excruciating death. The Nazi grasped the most ornate goblet of gold and greedily guzzled the drink. As he died a gruesome death, the knight said, "He chose poorly." Indiana Jones chose the plainest cup, one of simple clay, meekly filled it with water, and slowly drank. As Indy's strength was restored, the solemn Crusader proclaimed, "You have chosen wisely." While the mythical grail does not offer eternal life, it does represent the crucial choice we must all make. Will we drink from the cup of blessing offered by God or the cup of sorrow offered by the world? Orpah chose poorly—she decided to accept what the world had to offer. Ruth chose wisely and followed the path to life everlasting.

Progress is impossible without change; and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything. George Bernard Shaw (Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME Ruth 1:19-22

Naomi had a bitter, pessimistic outlook on life. She had fallen into the pit of despair. It reminds me of the story about a man who fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out. A self-pitying person wandered by and said, "That ain't nothin'. You should see my pit."

A Christian Scientist happened by and encouraged him, "You only think you're in a pit."

Confucius murmured, "If you had only listened to me, you would not be in that pit."

Buddha explained, "Your pit is only a state of mind."

A psychologist stated, "Falling into the pit is your mother's fault."

An evolutionist said, "You're a rejected mutant destined to be removed from the evolutionary cycle. It's survival of the fittest and you aren't fit—that's why you're in the pit!"

An optimist saw him and said, "Things could be worse."

The pessimist came by and predicted, "Things will get worse!"

Then Jesus walked by. When He saw the man, He took him by the hand and pulled him out of the pit.

If you've dug a pit of bitterness that you can't seem to get out of, hold out your hands to the Savior—He's ready, willing, and able to lift you up. You'll be able to say, like the psalmist, "He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along" (Psalm 40:2, NLT).

It is not the experience of today that drives men mad—it is remorse or bitterness for something which happened yesterday and the dread of what will happen tomorrow. Unknown (Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

Ruth 1:1-22

Bible teachers have used many favorable adjectives to describe Ruth, the faithful young woman from Moab who became the great-grandmother of David. This fact alone is enough to show why Ruth needs to be included as we discuss God's preservation of His righteous line. One writer comments that meeting Ruth is like finding a rose growing in the middle of a garbage dump. Another says Ruth "gleams like a beautiful pearl against a jet-black background." The reason for these and other comparisons becomes clear when we compare Judges 21:25 to Ruth 1:1. The era of Israel's judges was a time of spiritual unfaithfulness and foreign domination interrupted only by a few brief victories. It was also a lawless time of Israel's disobedience to the law of God. The last verse of Judges sums up the situation: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. (Today in the Word)

Ruth 1:1-18

TODAY IN THE WORD We've all been in a sort of "nice conflict" in which two or more people profess their desire to do the nice thing. It can be anything from back-and-forth exchanges of "after you" at a doorway to a mild argument over who will get the honor of paying the check at a restaurant. At some point, most of these kindhearted disputes end with someone saying, "I insist."

Ruth insisted. Naomi did her best to persuade both her daughters-in-law to stay in their native land of Moab, but Ruth refused. She pledged to remain with Naomi for the rest of both their lives. Ruth didn't even give a reason for her insistence, she was simply adamant that she would go no matter what. As we shift gears from some of the Bible's more negative examples of love stories to a book that epitomizes godly love, it's interesting to note that the word love appears only once in the entire book—in today's verse, which describes Ruth's love for Naomi. Perhaps the secret of Ruth's love was that there was no reason. It was unconditional love in its purest form. That love eventually bore fruit in a man after God's own heart, King David, Ruth's great-grandson.

The road to Ruth's decision wasn't paved with happiness. The circumstances leading up to her pledge of undying commitment were excruciating, especially for Naomi. She lost both of her sons and her husband within the course of ten years. She held out no hope for remarriage, and she carried no illusions about her ability to provide for Ruth. Naomi made a compelling argument that Ruth had nothing to gain from being connected to her. But Ruth was not interested in meeting her own desires.

Ruth's argument was even more convincing. She essentially claimed the role of being Naomi's shadow for the rest of time. Having lost a husband herself, Ruth showed no ill will to the God of Israel. Quite the opposite, she pledged her allegiance to Him and called on His name to punish her if she ever wavered from her commitment.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Love like Ruth's is rare and desirable. Typical emotional love is often fickle and fraught with selfishness, but Ruth's was selfless and willful. There are times when loving certain people comes easily. Other times, we need to decide to love in spite of our feelings. Make the decision today to love someone who is not always lovable. Love that is rooted in determination of the will and commitment to the Lord can weather any storm. If there is anyone who has shown you that kind of love, thank them for that priceless gift.

Ruth 1:1-18; 2:1-9; 3:1-11; 4:1-12

A book recently tackled one of life's minor puzzles--how do homing pigeons find their way home? The answer seems to be: we're not sure. One theory is that young pigeons develop an "odor map" by smelling odors that are carried to their homes on the winds from various directions. Another theory is that the birds use the earth's magnetic field to determine course and position. Whatever technique homing pigeons use, their instincts are uncanny. They always finish their journeys in the right place... The Bible is filled with stories of people who did and of those who did not finish well. They have much to teach us... The story of Ruth gets us off to a great start. This young woman from Moab definitely finished well. She became the great-grandmother of David. Ruth's name is on a short list of women singled out for special mention in the genealogy of Jesus. She was part of the Savior's royal bloodline and is therefore a background figure in the Christmas story. All of this is an amazing turn of events for a widow from a "mixed marriage" between an Israelite and a Gentile. There is no hint in the early verses of chapter 1 that Ruth had become a devoted follower of the God of Israel.

But evidently she had, as demonstrated by her dramatic statement of belief and loyalty in verse 16. Her faith guided her decision to return to Bethlehem with Naomi, even though she apparently had no prospects awaiting her in Israel.

Once Ruth left Moab and identified herself with the true God, her story unfolds as a wonderful narrative of God's guiding hand in the ordinary affairs of life. Ruth's decision to follow the Lord saw her loneliness replaced with companionship, her poverty with plenty, and her obscurity with spiritual fame.

APPLY THE WORD By the time December arrives, most people are starting to focus on the new year and what it will hold. But we have a whole month still ahead of us this year, thirty-one days which will call for many large and small decisions in many areas of our lives. (Today in the Word)

I Went Out Full Ruth 1:21

An irresistible desire forced Naomi from the heathen Moab, to which she had been driven by hunger years ago with her husband and her two sons, to the beautiful Bethlehem, where she had spent the years of her youth, so that there were countless lovely memories tied to it for this lonely woman. She had to leave behind in that strange country three graves, one of her husband, one of her Mahlon, and one of her Chilion. Besides this, Orpah, one of her daughters-in-law, had left her at the borders of Moab, and she returned only with the faithful Ruth. No wonder that the passers-by, who barely recognised the loveable Naomi in that bent-down

posture, asked whisperingly: "Is this Naomi?" and that she urged them to rather call her Mara, that is bitterness, because the Almighty One had dealt very bitterly with her; yes she complained: "I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty!"

Countless times has this word been repeated in a tone, not of murmuring complaint, but of quiet melancholy, at the reflection upon a path that had almost ended. Naomi is not the only one whose way was marked with graves, and whose home had been made empty by the hand of the Almighty One, but many exchange their name with that of Mara, because they have been robbed of that which brought light and joy in their lives. It is paramount for all tried ones whether there is an acknowledgement of the hand of the Lord in their bereavements. It is absolutely no mercy in itself to belong to the broken hearted and the abandoned ones, but it reveals itself in the respectful confession that it was the Lord who dealt bitterly with us!

I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty,—behold, it is really the motto of all who have reached a high age, even if they were spared from the loss of their dear ones. I went out full,—this applies to the years of youth, when we enter life with a brave and joyful heart to conquer a place in it and believe in no disappointment. A heart full of ideals and high-strung expectations. A head full of dreams of a happy future. A soul full of hope that we shall continue in a plain path. When these ideals have paled with the greying of the hairs by raw reality, these expectations have gone up in smoke, and these dreams have been followed by rude awakenings, it is a returning empty, be it in another sense; yet it is also in this way good for us, because the Lord has made us to ripen spiritually for His Kingdom by this emptying! (Loins Girded)

Ruth 1:14 "Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her."

Both of them had an affection for Naomi, and therefore set out with her upon her return to the land of Judah. But the hour of test came; Naomi most unselfishly set before each of them the trials which awaited them, and bade them if they cared for ease and comfort to return to their Moabitish friends. At first both of them declared that they would cast in their lot with the Lord's people; but upon still further consideration Orpah with much grief and a respectful kiss left her mother in law, and her people, and her God, and went back to her idolatrous friends, while Ruth with all her heart gave herself up to the God of her mother in law. It is one thing to love the ways of the Lord when all is fair, and quite another to cleave to them under all discouragements and difficulties. The kiss of outward profession is very cheap and easy, but the practical cleaving to the Lord, which must show itself in holy decision for truth and holiness, is not so small a matter. How stands the case with us, is our heart fixed upon Jesus, is the sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar? Have we counted the cost, and are we solemnly ready to suffer all worldly loss for the Master's sake? The after gain will be an abundant recompense, for Egypt's treasures are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed. Orpah is heard of no more; in glorious ease and idolatrous pleasure her life melts into the gloom of death; but Ruth lives in history and in heaven, for grace has placed her in the noble line whence sprung the King of kings. Blessed among women shall those be who for Christ's sake can renounce all; but forgotten and worse than forgotten shall those be who in the hour of temptation do violence to conscience and turn back unto the world. O that this morning we may not be content with the form of devotion, which may be no better than Orpah's kiss, but may the Holy Spirit work in us a cleaving of our whole heart to our Lord Jesus. (Spurgeon, C. H. Morning and evening) (See also Surgeon's sermon on [Ruth 1:16: Deciding for God](#))

Ruth 1:14a

THE first girl I ever kissed in public was named Ruth. Several hundred people watched as the Zeeland High School junior play reached the romantic moment between the leading man and woman. After the performance this comment filtered back to me from someone in the audience:

"That was rather a cool kiss."

The biblical book of Ruth, however, is anything but cool. The love and loyalty Ruth displayed for her mother-in-law, Naomi, bathes the story with warmth and tenderness. And the beauty of this Old Testament narrative is all the more striking set against the background of the time of the judges when moral debris cluttered the landscape of Israel's early life in Canaan.

Ruth's love for her mother-in-law is only part of this love story, however. Boaz, Naomi's relative, exercises his right as kinsman-redeemer and takes Ruth to be his wife (chapters 3-4). He brings into focus our Redeemer, Jesus, who purchases us with His blood, takes us into His family, and surrounds us with His unfailing love.

As objects of Christ's redeeming love, we sinners should never be reserved about expressing our love to Him. May it never be said of us in our relationship to Jesus that our love is cold and mechanical.- D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Ruth 1:15-22 Managing The Mess

February 24, 2009 — by Joe Stowell

Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me? —Ruth 1:21

When we meet Naomi in the Scriptures, her life is a mess. She and her husband had gone to Moab searching for food during a famine. While in that land, their two sons married Moabite women, and life was good—until her husband and sons died and she was stuck, widowed in a foreign land.

Though honest about her pain, Naomi obviously had a sense of who was in control: “The Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me” (Ruth 1:21).

The Hebrew word for “Almighty” (Shaddai) indicates God’s sufficiency for any situation. The word “Lord” (Yahweh) refers to His faithfulness as the loving covenant-keeping God. I love how Naomi put these two names together. In the midst of her complaint, she never lost sight of the fact that her God was a capable and faithful God. And, sure enough, He proved His capability to deliver her and His faithfulness to care for her to the very end.

If there seems to be no way out of your despair, remember that Naomi’s God is your God as well. And He specializes in managing our messes to good and glorious outcomes. Thankfully, He is both capable and faithful. So, when your life is a mess, remember who your God is!

Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake

To guide the future as He has the past.

Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;

All now mysterious shall be bright at last. —von Schlegel

Stand back and watch the Lord manage your mess into a glorious outcome.

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Ruth 1:16-17 - Poisoned Well

One of the most beautiful concessions of love in all of literature is the one Ruth made to Naomi. In vowing to return to Israel with her, Ruth pledged, “Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried” (Ruth 1:16, 17-note). But suppose Naomi had said to herself, “Ruth’s just a gold digger. What she really wants is to get into Israel to marry a wealthy Hebrew. I’m just her passport in.”

If Naomi had doubted Ruth’s good intentions, and rejected her kindness, she would have lost out on blessings she never could have imagined.

But that’s exactly what we do when we fail to trust God’s goodness. We stop believing He will do what is best for us. And as the saying goes, once the well is poisoned, all the water is contaminated.

James 1:16, 17 (notes) states, “Do not be deceived ... Every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father.” Once we doubt God’s goodness, some of His best gifts-- like trials that help us to mature-- will seem like bad ones.

Don’t doubt God’s goodness and poison the wellspring of blessing He has for you. - Haddon W. Robinson [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

***Drink deep of God’s goodness, His faithfulness too,
Leave no room for doubting and fear;
His Word is the Water of Life pure and true,
Refreshing and cooling and clear.- Hess***

Thought for the Day: We poison the well when we don’t think well of God’s goodness.

Determination

Read: Ruth 1:6,11-18

Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. —Ruth 1:16

During a television news report on the plight of refugees displaced from a war-torn country, I was struck by the words of a 10-year-

old girl. Despite there being little possibility of returning to their home, she showed a resilient spirit: "When we go back, I'm going to visit my neighbors; I'm going to play with my friends," she said with quiet determination. "My father says we don't have a house. And I said we are going to fix it."

There is a place for tenacity in life, especially when it is rooted in our faith in God and love for others. The book of Ruth begins with three women bound together by tragedy. After Naomi's husband and two sons died, she decided to return to her home in Bethlehem and urged her widowed daughters-in-law to stay in their country of Moab. Orpah remained but Ruth vowed to go with Naomi, saying, "Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16). When Naomi saw that Ruth "was determined to go with her" (v.18), they began their journey together.

Stubbornness is sometimes rooted in pride, but commitment grows from love. When Jesus went to the cross, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). From His determination to die for us, we find the resolve to live for Him.

My life, my love, I give to Thee,
Thou Lamb of God who died for me;
Oh, may I ever faithful be,
My Savior and my God! —Hudson

Love calls for commitment.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Ruth 1:1-13 Always For Us

Naomi, her husband, and their two sons left Israel and moved to Moab because of a famine (Ruth 1:1, 2). One son married Ruth, the other married Orpah. Eventually Naomi's husband and sons died (Ru 1:3,5), so she decided to return to Israel. But she felt that her daughters-in-law would be better off staying in Moab (Ru 1:6-13). She tried to dissuade them from going with her by saying, "No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!" (Ru 1:13).

Was Naomi right in her thinking about God? Perhaps the family had displayed a lack of faith by moving to pagan Moab, but God certainly was not against her. He proved this by wonderfully providing for her and Ruth after they returned to Israel. (**Read the rest of the book—it's short.**)

You may be unemployed, terminally ill, have a disabled child, or care for a loved one with Alzheimer's. God hasn't promised to keep us from such problems. But He has proven that He is always "for us" as Christians by what He did through Jesus (Ro 5:8, 9 - see **notes** Ro 5:8; 9). Nothing, not even death, can separate us from His love (Ro 8:35-see **notes** Ro 8:35; 8:36; 37; 38; 39).

The Lord is never "against us," not even when He chastens us (Hebrews 12:5, 6-note). He is always for us! —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our God is always there for us—
Receiving every prayer,
Delighting in our words of praise,
Responding with His care. —Sper

The One who died to save you will never be against you.

Ruth 1:1-22

TODAY IN THE WORD Bible teachers have used many favorable adjectives to describe Ruth, the faithful young woman from Moab who became the great-grandmother of David. This fact alone is enough to show why Ruth needs to be included as we discuss God's preservation of His righteous line. One writer comments that meeting Ruth is like finding a rose growing in the middle of a garbage dump. Another says Ruth "gleams like a beautiful pearl against a jet-black background."

The reason for these and other comparisons becomes clear when we compare Judges 21:25 to Ruth 1:1. The era of Israel's judges was a time of spiritual unfaithfulness and foreign domination interrupted only by a few brief victories. It was also a lawless time of Israel's disobedience to the law of God. The last verse of Judges sums up the situation: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."

But then came Ruth, who lived "in the days when the judges ruled" (v. 1). Typical of the times, this great story of faithfulness to God

began with an act that expressed little faith. A man named Elimelech from Bethlehem left home with his family to escape a famine. He chose to go to Moab, about fifty miles east, on the opposite side of the Dead Sea.

By doing this, Elimelech abandoned the place of God's blessing (v. 6) to live among the descendants of Lot's immoral union with his oldest daughter (Gen. 19:36-37). The child was named Moab, and his people were often hostile to Israel. Later, the prophet Amos pronounced judgment on Moab (Amos 2:1).

What was meant to be a brief time in Moab for Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons turned into ten years (1:1-5), during which time all three men died. Naomi was left alone with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.

APPLY THE WORD One value of our lessons this month is to remind ourselves that we also come from a spiritual line, people in our past and present who have helped bring us to Christ.

Ruth 1:1-22

Your people will be my people and your God my God. - Ruth 1:16

TODAY IN THE WORD

The conversion of Nicky Cruz was dramatized in the movie *The Cross and the Switchblade*. But he had a past even darker than leading a brutal gang. His parents practiced Satanic worship, tormenting and terrifying their young son. He was friendless, since other children were afraid of his family. Despite the overwhelming darkness, Cruz looks back now and sees how God was working: "I do believe that loneliness is the force that drove me into the arms of somebody that I used to hate, and I never knew him. It drove me into the arms of God and Jesus Christ and that was a good pay off."

We've journeyed through the book of Judges, seeing increasing darkness as Israel rejected God. But as we turn now to study the book of Ruth—which takes place during the time of Judges—we see how God continued to work out the salvation of His people.

This beautiful love story has no parallel with other literature from its time period. There are other short stories from the ancient Near East, but there, unlike the book of Ruth, we have no examples of women as the main characters. In fact, the book is not only named for a woman but a foreign woman! This fact alone should grab our attention—God has included the story of a young, poor, foreign widow in His Word to teach us something remarkable about how He works.

As the story opens, we see that Naomi and her family have chosen to leave Israel and go to Moab. Not only do they leave their land, but the sons marry foreign women, a direct violation of God's covenant with His people (see Deut. 7:3). Then tragedy strikes as Naomi loses her husband and both sons. She decides to return to Judah, but she feels empty and bitter toward God (v. 20).

In contrast to Naomi (and most of the book of Judges!), Ruth models faithfulness by choosing God and His people. This Moabite woman, who was free to stay with her people and idols, chose to accompany her bitter mother-in-law and worship the God of Israel.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

One key theme in the book of Ruth is redemption. God takes tragedy and redeems it into beauty, love, restoration, and salvation. As we study this book, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on your own life. What choices and experiences has God redeemed for you? How have you seen His hand working through darkness? How has He brought restoration and salvation into your life? You may want to record these as a testament to God's faithfulness and an encouragement to praise Him

Ruth 1:1-2:23

You are a woman of noble character. - Ruth 3:11

TODAY IN THE WORD In 2004, almost 55 percent of all paperback books sold were romance novels, and the romance category accounted for 39 percent of all fiction sold that year. This broad genre includes classics like *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen as well as the pulpy Harlequin novels. The Bible includes the book of Ruth, a beautiful story of romance, love, and faithfulness. While the man and woman meet, fall in love, and get married, Ruth has an even deeper love story. We see the loving-kindness of God lived out in ordinary people. Ruth is set during the period of the judges (Ru 1:1). Circumstances for Elimelech's family changed dramatically in one decade (Ru 1:5). Widowed and without means of social or economic stability, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem after hearing that God was providing food for His people. Understanding the hopeless situation for her daughters-in-law, she urged them to return to their families in Moab. Ruth did the unexpected and extraordinary—she wholeheartedly committed herself to Naomi until death, declaring that in everything she would fully identify with her mother-in-law.

Chapter 2 showcases Ruth's extravagant loving-kindness. Even before the harvest ended, Ruth determined to glean in order to provide food for Naomi and herself (2:2; cf. Deut. 24:19). The field owner was Boaz, the relative of Elimelech. Verse 11 reveals that he responded with astonishing generosity in response to what he had heard about Ruth's sacrifice for Naomi. Her loving-kindness inspired his loving-kindness, and Naomi recognized this when Ruth arrived home with so much food (2:20). In fact, Boaz was so impressed by Ruth that he wasted no time in securing his ability to marry her! (see Ruth 3-4).

Ruth's loyal loving-kindness caused her to go above and beyond expectations. This kind of love and commitment only comes from God Himself. The Lord blessed the faithfulness of Ruth and remained faithful to His covenant promise (Gen. 15:1-7) by continuing the line of Abraham's descendents leading to David (Ruth 4:13-22).

APPLY THE WORD Ruth made a lasting impression on God's redemptive story not because she gave eloquent lectures about the meaning of His loyal loving-kindness, but because she was an extraordinary embodiment of His great love. What would it look like if God's people all over the world exploded with this love above and beyond the expectations of family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors? People expect courtesy and commitment with qualifications. They do not expect to see the sacrificial and devoted love of Christ.

Ruth 1:1-22; Ruth 4:13-17

TODAY IN THE WORD Literary scholars define comedy as a narrative that begins with things going well before the characters encounter obstacles of some sort. The story resolves with a reversal of bad fortune and ensuing happiness for the characters. Sometimes described as the U-shaped narrative, it contrasts with tragedy, in which the obstacles prove too difficult to overcome.

Both secular literary scholars and biblical commentators have described the book of Ruth as an example of comedy. For the last few days of this month, we'll examine comedies of redemption in Scripture, beginning with this lovely little book.

The early days of happiness are briefly alluded to in the beginning of the book; Naomi had a husband and two sons and a life in Bethlehem, but famine struck and the family moved to Moab. There, Naomi's life fell apart, as first her husband and then both her sons died. Left with two daughters-in-law, Naomi decided to return to her hometown. Upon her return she declared, "Don't call me Naomi... Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty" (1:20).

Chapters 2 and 3 contain a romantic comedy, in which Boaz and Ruth met, expressed interest in each other, and then had to overcome the hurdle that the nearest relative posed for their relationship. Once Boaz had been approved to exercise the rights and privileges of the kinsman-redeemer, he married Ruth.

This book is more than just a romantic comedy or a story with a happy ending. In addition to its theological themes about God's lovingkindness and care for His people, Ruth also serves as comedy of redemption. Notice the language at the end of the book. Naomi, who thought she had lost everything, heard this from her friends: "Praise to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer... He will renew your life" (vv. 14-15). Redemption is more than a feel-good tale—it means restoring hope from despair and bringing life from death.

APPLY THE WORD Have you experienced redemption? The world tells us to pursue romance and happiness, but God offers so much more—forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and a transformation from spiritual death to eternal life. This redemption is available to all who trust in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. He died as the punishment for our sin and was raised from the dead as the firstfruit of our own resurrection. If you want to be reconciled to God and receive redemption, call 1-800-NEED HIM, or talk with a trusted Christian friend.

THERE IS SCARCELY A MORE ATTRACTIVE figure in all of Scripture than Ruth.

She is a Moabite (Ruth 1:4). She lives in troubled times, and faces her own terrible grief. She and another Moabite, Orpah, marry two recent immigrants called Mahlon and Kilion. These two men and their parents had arrived in Moabite territory to escape famine back home in Bethlehem. Some years pass, and the men's father—Elimelech—dies. Then both Mahlon and Kilion die. That leaves the three women: the Moabite's mother-in-law Naomi, and the two Moabites themselves, Orpah and Ruth.

When Naomi hears that the famine back home is over, which was the original reason for their migration to Moab, she decides to go home. Families often worked in extended clan relationships. She would be looked after, and the pain of her loneliness would be mitigated. Wisely, she encourages her two daughters-in-law to stay in their own land, with their own people, language, and culture. Who knows? In time they might even find new mates. Certainly they cannot reasonably expect Naomi to produce them!

So Orpah accepts the counsel, stays home in Moab, and nothing more is heard of her again. But Ruth clings to Naomi: "Don't urge

me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried" (1:16–17). She even puts herself under the threat of a curse: "May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me" (1:17).

Ruth does not mean this to sound heroic. She is simply speaking out of her heart. Had she come to a genuine and consistent faith in the Lord God during her ten-year marriage? What kind of solid and subtle links had been forged between Ruth and the Israelite members of this extended family, and in particular between Ruth and Naomi?

Our culture makes all kinds of snide remarks about mothers-in-law. But many a mother-in-law is remarkably unselfish, and establishes relationships with her daughters-in-law that are as godly and as deep as the best of those between mothers and daughters. So, apparently, here. Ruth is prepared to abandon her own people, culture, land, and even religion, provided she can stay with Naomi and help her.

She could not have known that in making that choice she would soon find herself married again. She could not have known that that marriage would make her an ancestor not only of the imposing Davidic dynasty, but of the supreme King who centuries later would spring from it. (For the Love of God - D A Carson)

Ruth 1:16 Committed To Serve

Wherever you go, I will go; ... your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. —Ruth 1:16

The best-known words of Ruth are most often heard at weddings, even though they were spoken by a grieving young widow to her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth said, "Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (see **note** Ruth 1:16).

Ruth had no legal or cultural responsibility to Naomi, who also was a widow and had no means of support. No one would have blamed Ruth for staying with her own people in Moab where the chances of remarriage were greater.

Naomi even urged Ruth to stay, but Ruth was determined to go with her to Judah, and to follow her God. Ruth's unselfish devotion was considered worthy of praise. Boaz, Ruth's future husband, told her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband ... The Lord repay your work" (Ruth 2:11, 12).

Promises spoken at a wedding are full of hope and meaning, but Ruth's words have survived the centuries because of her unwavering commitment to God and a person in need. She points us to the value of loving sacrifice for the Lord, and to His rich blessing on all who give themselves unselfishly to others. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Searching to know life's true meaning?
You'll find it in only one way:
Serving the Lord with commitment
And living for others each day. —Branon

A life filled with love for the Lord and for others is a fulfilling life.

Choices - A friend once told me: "Joe, I've come to realize that my life is not made by the dreams that I dream but by the choices that I make."

Count on it: You will have plenty of choices in life. And usually they boil down to a choice between "What do I want?" and "What's best for others?"

After their husbands died, Ruth and Orpah were faced with a strategic choice (Ru 1:11). Their mother-in-law Naomi told them they should go home. She didn't want them to feel any obligation to her, in spite of the fact that her loss was far greater. She had lost her own husband and both of her sons.

Orpah and Ruth could either go home and start a new life, or stay with Naomi to help her in a time of great need. They knew very well that the latter choice would probably mean living in a foreign land as widows for the rest of their lives, since few Jewish men would want to marry a foreign woman.

Ruth chose to serve the needs of Naomi rather than to serve herself. Orpah chose to leave Naomi for what she thought would be a

better life. Ruth went on to play a significant role in Jewish history and became an ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1:5).

Make the best choice. Choose to serve others. — Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When we're involved in serving
And meeting others' needs,
We're imitating Jesus
In thoughts and words and deeds. —Fitzhugh

Serve God by serving others.

Johnstown Flood - On May 31, 1889, a massive rainstorm filled Lake Conemaugh in Pennsylvania until its dam finally gave way. A wall of water 40 feet high traveling at 40 mph rushed down the valley toward the town of Johnstown. The torrent picked up buildings, animals, and human beings and sent them crashing down the spillway. When the lake had emptied itself, debris covered 30 acres, and 2,209 people were dead.

At first, stunned by the loss of property and loved ones, survivors felt hopeless. But later, community leaders gave speeches about how local industry and homes could be rebuilt. This acted like a healing balm, and the survivors energetically got to work. Johnstown was rebuilt and today is a thriving town with a population of approximately 28,000.

The Bible tells us that when Naomi despaired over the loss of her husband and sons, her daughter-in-law Ruth refused to leave her. Instead, Ruth focused on God, her relationships, and the future. God rewarded her faith by providing for them and making Ruth an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16).

After a tragic loss, we should look at the resources and relationships that remain and trust God to use them. This can inspire the hope of rebuilding a new life. — Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Beyond the losses of this life
That cause us to despair
New hope is born within our heart
Because our God is there. —D. De Haan

No one is hopeless whose hope is in God.

Ruth 1:1–22 CLOUDS WITH A SILVER LINING

THE CHAPTER before us falls into three distinct sections.

1. The Departure and Why, Ruth 1:1–2. In view of the times, this famine must have been one of divine discipline, God using natural causes or enemy oppression to bring it about; cf. Deut. 8:8–9. Elimelech (= my God is King), whose name belies his actions, decides to leave Bethlehem, the “house of bread”. Himself an Ephrathite, or Ephraimite, “fruitful”, he appears to be seeking the physical salvation of two ailing sons—Mahlon, “sick” or “sickly”, and Chilion, “pining” or “weak”. It would seem Naomi had no choice but to comply. Her name (= pleasant) might imply she was spiritually fragrant. Of all places, he goes to Moab; see Num. 22–25; Deut. 23:3–6. Why turn from a God who controls to a people who curse?

2. The Sojourn and What, Ruth 1:3–5. A stay of about ten years suggests divine testing. The result is a threefold tragedy, not salvation. Elimelech, the would-be deliverer, himself dies, Ruth 1:3; his sons add spiritual disaster to physical distress, Ruth 1:4, and then they succumb! The innocent party is spared, but how denuded, “left”, Ruth 1:5. Our faithlessnesses endanger others.

3. The Return and Who, Ruth 1:6–22. Five verses are enough to record the departure and its cost, whereas seventeen are used to describe the return! It is easy to backslide; restoration can be a difficult process. But Naomi’s heart is right, for she responds immediately; note the “Then” in verse 6. Had her heart ever left Bethlehem? Do Ruth 1:8–13 suggest Naomi remembered Deuteronomy 23:3–6? Orpah turns back—and forever vanishes, Ruth 1:14f. Ruth cleaves! Her heart was true, undoubtedly stirred by Naomi’s example, and her lips confessed it in the sublimest of words, Ruth 1:16–17. Confession confirms conversion, Rom. 10:10. Ruth’s mind is made up, Ruth 1:16a, her determination is expressed, Ruth 1:16b, her identification with the people and God of Naomi is deeply registered, Ruth 1:16c, and its duration measured, Ruth 1:17a. With solemn vow she endorses it, Ruth 1:17b. So

Naomi returns with a precious reward, though departure always leaves its mark, Ruth 1:20–21. In returning, it must always be to the point from which we departed, Ruth 1:22.

Lesson. When the soul returns home, the harvest of plenty always immediately begins, Ruth 1:22. (Day by Day Through the OT - Cyril Hocking)

Ruth 1:16a Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

The Book of Ruth stands in striking contrast to the Book of Judges, and especially to the last five chapters thereof. The story which it tells illustrates the truth that God has never left Himself without witness. It is an idyll of faith-fulness amid infidelity. It has, moreover, the value of being a link in the chain of history, showing how God moved forward to the central things of His redeeming purpose through faithful souls. The choice of Ruth, here recorded, in its devotion and in the very manner in which she expressed it, has become enshrined in the heart of humanity. With constant recurrence her language has been employed to express the fidelity of love. The younger woman found her heart closely knit to the older one, and she declined to be severed from her in the pathway that lay before her, choosing to share whatever the future might have in store for the one upon whom her love was set. While all this is true, it does not touch the deepest note. It is patent that Ruth's love for Naomi was created by the new faith which she had learned from her. The deepest note in her expression of devotion was: "Thy God, my God." It is a beautiful illustration of how a quiet, strong fidelity to God produces faith in Him on the part of others. Happy indeed are we, if our life is such as to compel some soul to say, "Thy God shall be my God." This is what Naomi had done for Ruth. This result is never obtained by the witness of the lips, save as that is vindicated and reinforced by the witness of life. ([Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#) by Morgan, G. Campbell)

Ruth 1:15-22

One of the most delightful and endearing stories in the last decade is Driving Miss Daisy. It's the story of a friendship that develops over a twenty-to thirty-year period between a man and a woman. What makes the story so touching is that this is a totally improbable relationship! Hoke Colburn is a chauffeur; Daisy Werthan is a woman who does not want a chauffeur. He is black; she is white. He is poor; she is wealthy. He is a Christian; she is Jewish. He is illiterate; she is educated and well-read. He is warm and friendly; she is cold and crotchety. He is "the hired help"; she is "the boss." And yet by the end of the story, Miss Daisy says, "Hoke, you're my best friend." We may be tempted to dismiss such an unlikely friendship as mere fantasy; yet the Scriptures show us that such relationships are possible. Consider the Old Testament book of Ruth. Despite cultural, religious and generational differences, despite economic hardship, tragedy, and the age-old "in-law" factor, these two women--Ruth and Naomi--developed a close relationship marked by genuine concern. A number of factors contribute to their closeness.

First, they spent a lot of time together (Ru 1:4). Good relationships always take time to develop. Second, their relationship was marked by a vital spirituality (Ru 1:6, 8, 9, 13, 16,17, 20,21; 2:20). It is even possible that Naomi led Ruth to faith in Yahweh! Third, the women treated each other unselfishly (Ru 1:7-14; 2:18) and with genuine kindness (Ru 1:8, 19-21; 2:11; 3:1). Fourth, and finally, they were fiercely committed to each other (Ru 1:14, 16-18). So magnificent was Ruth's statement of her commitment to Naomi that it has been repeated in marriage ceremonies even to this day.

Undoubtedly others watch how we live, especially those in our household. A Christian once asked a Jewish rabbi friend: "When are you Jews going to become Christians?" The rabbi replied, "When all you Christians become Christians." (Today in the Word)

Ruth 1:20 Call me not Naomi, all me Mara.

So she spoke, as many have spoken since, not knowing that God's ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths peace, when they are not isolated from the plan of our life, but considered as parts of the whole. We cannot pronounce on any part of God's dealing with us until the entire plan has been allowed to work itself out. How grieved God's Spirit must be, who is lovingly doing his best, when He hears these words of murmuring and complaint! Let us lift the veil, and notice the pleasant things in Naomi's life.

True, her husband and sons were dead; but their deaths in a foreign land had left her free to come back to her people and her God; to nestle again under the wings of Jehovah; and to share the advantages of the Tabernacle.

True, Orpah had gone back. Mahlon and Chilion were both buried in Moab; but she had Ruth, who was better to her than seven sons.

True, she had no male child to perpetuate her name; but the little Obed would, within a few months, be nestling in her aged arms, and laughing into her withered face.

True, she was very poor; but it was through her poverty that Ruth was brought first into contact with that good man, Boaz; and,

besides, there was yet a little patrimony which pertained to her.

Yes, Naomi, like thousands more, thou must take back thy words. Thou didst deal bitterly with thine own happiness in leaving the Land of Promise for Moab; but God dealt pleasantly with thee in thy return and latter end. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in his mercy." (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

Ruth 1: Exposition by C H Spurgeon

Verse 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 Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn, in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

That was a bad move on their part; Better poverty with the people of God, than plenty outside of the covenanted land.

2. And the name of the man was Elimelech,—

"Elimelech? means, "my God is King." A man with such a name as that ought not to have left the kingdom where his God was King; but some people are not worthy of the names they bear.

2. And the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

That is generally what happens; those who go into the country of Moab continue there. If Christians go away from their separated life, they are very apt to continue in that condition. It may be easy to say, "I will step aside from the Christian path for just a little while;" but it is not so easy to return to it. Usually something or other hampers; the birdlime catches the birds of Paradise, and holds them fast.

3, 4. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

Which was about ten years too long. Probably they did not intend to remain so long when they went there, they only meant to be in Moab for a little while, just as Christian people, when they fall into worldly conformity, only purpose to do it once, "just for the sake of the girls, to bring them out a little." But it happens to them as it is written here: "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.

That seemed to be her great grief—that she was left. She would have been content to go with them, but she was left to mourn their loss.

6. Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab

It is often the case that, when our idols are broken, we turn back to our God. It is frequently the case that the loss of earthly good leads us to return to our first Husband, for we feel that then it was better with us than it is now. Naomi had also another inducement to return:—

6. For she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

Have any of you professors gone a long way off from God? I wish you knew what plenty there is in the Great Father's house, and what a blessed feast there is for these who live with him. There is no famine in that land; there is plenty of gladness, plenty of comfort, plenty of everything that is joyful, to be found there. You need not go to Moab, and to her false goes, to find pleasure and satisfaction.

7–9. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them: and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

Separation was painful to them, for they loved their mother-in-law, a most unselfish person who, even though it was a comfort to her to enjoy their company, thought it would be for their good, in a temporal sense, that they should abide in their own country.

10–14. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn

again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

What a difference there often is between two persons who are under religious impressions at the same time! The one would like to follow Jesus, but the price is too much to pay; so there is a kiss somewhat like that of Judas, and Orpah goes back to her people, and to her idols. But how different was the other case! Ruth was, as it were, glued to Naomi; she “clave unto her,” stuck to her, and could not be made to go back with her sister,

15–17. *And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, 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.*

That was bravely spoken, and she meant it, too.

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

That is a striking expression, “When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her.” O you dear young friends who want to be Christians, how glad we are when we see that you are steadfastly minded to go with the people of God! There are so many who are quickly hot and quickly cold,—soon excited towards good things, and almost as speedily their ardor cools, and they go back into the world. Do ask the Lord to make you steadfastly minded. This is one of the best frames of mind for any of us to be in.

19. *So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, When they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?*

They seemed all to turn out of doors to have a look at these two strangers, and especially at Naomi, for she was so different from what she had been when she went away. “And they said, Is this Naomi? Some said, “Is this Naomi?” questioning. Others said it with surprise as a thing incredible, “This Naomi! How can she be the same woman?” It was very rude of them to turn out, just like people, without sympathy, do on Ramsgate pier, to see the sick passengers land. Nobody seems to have said, “Come into our house to lodge,” but all questioned, “Is this Naomi?”

20. *And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi,—*

“Call me not pleasant.”

20. *Call me Mara:* That is, “bitter.”

20. *For the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.*

It was a pity for Naomi to say that; yet I fear that many of us have done the same; We have not borne such sweet testimony to the Lord as we might have done, but have sorrowfully moaned, as this poor woman did:—

21. *I went out full,—*

Why, then, did you go out?

21. *And the LORD hath brought me home again empty:*

Ah! but he has brought you home again. Oh, if she would but have noticed the mercy there was in it all, she might still have spoken like Naomi; but now she speaks like Mara,—bitterness. Her husband and her two boys—all her heart’s delight—were with her when she went out; and now that they are gone, she says:—

21. *Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

Yet it is a sweet thing to be able to trace the hand of God in our affliction, for nothing can come from that hand towards one of his children but that which is good and right. If you will think of those hands of which the Lord says, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands,” you may rest assured that nothing can come from

those hands but what infinite wisdom directs, and infinite love has ordained.

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 Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

That is, at the time of the passover; let us hope that they received a blessing in observing the ordinances of that time, and that they were thus helped to get back to the only right and happy state of heart. (Spurgeon, C. H)

Spurgeon - When a Christian man so lives that others see something about him which they do not perceive in themselves, that is one way in which they are often attracted towards the Christian life. - Ruth Deciding For God

Ruth 1:1–22 THE ALMIGHTY

When God appeared to Abram in Gen. 17:1, He revealed Himself for the first time as El Shaddai, the Almighty God. In the previous context, Hagar had described Him as El Roi, the God who sees, and the combination of these two characteristics should be an encouragement to His people. The God who said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people', had the power to 'come down to deliver them', Exod. 3:7–8. The One who 'saw them toiling in rowing', had the power to come to them, 'walking upon the sea', Mark 6:48. El Roi is El Shaddai.

The Almighty's 'eternal power' was evidenced in the work of creation, Rom. 1:20. The 'exceeding greatness of his power' has been expressed 'to us-ward who believe' in effecting our spiritual quickening, that power being equal to the power that raised Christ up from the dead, Eph. 1:19–20! We are 'kept' by the same divine power pending our ultimate blessing, 1 Pet. 1:5. At the last, it will be apparent to all that 'the Lord God omnipotent reigneth', Rev. 19:6.

Naomi's experience teaches us that the power of the Almighty can be expressed in the chastening of His people. The book of Ruth is a sparkling jewel wedged between the dismal history of Judges and the early part of 1 Samuel. Sadly, the first chapter makes sorry reading. Naomi was the only survivor of a tragic defection to Moab, and, after a ten-year absence, the Lord brought her back to Bethlehem. In His character as Jehovah, the covenant keeping God, He had brought her home, v. 21. He does want His people to enjoy their inheritance! In His character as the Almighty, He exercised His power to effect that purpose, circumstances that Naomi found to be bitter, v. 20. The Almighty can 'break bones', Ps. 51:8, and bring low, Ps. 116:6, in order to achieve His desire for His people. 'Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty', Job 5:17.

On a happier note, the believer's security and shelter is in abiding 'under the shadow of the Almighty', Ps. 91:1. The word 'abide' is translated lodge in Ruth 1:16. Naomi again lodged under the shadow of the Almighty, and Ruth too found her refuge under His wings, Ruth 2:12. (Day by Day: Divine Titles - John Bennett)

SPURGEON ON RUTH

Where spiritual life is weak, it should be nurtured with affectionate care. We desire to cherish, not to censure. If the lambs are to grow, they must be shepherded. If Ruth is to be happy in the land of Israel, a Boaz must look after her and be her true friend.

Ruth 1:1 "A man left Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons to stay in the territory of Moab for a while." That was a bad move on their part—better poverty with the people of God than plenty outside the covenanted land.

Ruth 1:2 "The man's name was Elimelech." "Elimelech" means "my God is king." A man with such a name as that ought not to have left the kingdom where his God was king. But some people are not worthy of the names they bear.

Ruth 1:2 "They entered the fields of Moab and settled there." [ED: "Settled there" implies that they planned to be there a long while. The KJV says, "They continued there."] That is generally what happens. Those who go into the country of Moab continue there. If Christians go away from their separated life, they are apt to continue in that condition. It may be easy to say, "I will step aside from the Christian path for just a little while," but it is not so easy to return to it. Usually something or other hampers; the snare catches the birds of paradise and holds them fast.

Ruth 1:4 "They lived in Moab about ten years." That was about ten years too long. Probably they did not intend to remain so long when they went there. They only meant to be in Moab for a little while, just as Christian people, when they fall into worldly conformity, only purpose to do it once, perhaps "for the sake of the girls, to bring them out a little." But it happens to them as it is written here.

Ruth 1:6 "She had heard in Moab that the LORD had paid attention to his people's need by providing them food." Some who profess Christ have gone a long way off from God. I wish they knew what abundance there is in the great Father's house and what a blessed feast there is for those who live with him. There is no famine in that land. There is plenty of gladness, plenty of comfort, plenty of

everything that is joyful to be found there. We need not go to Moab and to her false gods to find pleasure and satisfaction.

Ruth 1:16 "Wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." I am glad to see candidates for membership in a church make a profession of faith before the congregation. It does the man, woman, boy, or girl—whoever it is—so much good for once, at least, to say right straight out, "I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am not ashamed of it." When people have once confessed Christ before men, they are apt to do it again somewhere else. And they thus acquire a kind of boldness and outspokenness in religious matters—and a holy courage as followers of Christ—which more than make up for any self-denial and trembling that the effort may have cost them. I think Naomi was right to drive Ruth, as it were, to take this brave stand in which it became an absolute necessity for her to express her commitment. What is there for any of us to be ashamed of in acknowledging that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Ruth 1:21 "The Almighty has afflicted me." It is a sweet thing to be able to trace the hand of God in our affliction, for nothing can come to one of his children from that hand except what is good and right. Those are the hands of which the Lord says, "I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands" (Is 49:16). So we may rest assured that nothing can come from those hands but what infinite wisdom directs and infinite love has ordained. (Spurgeon Study Bible)

Ruth and Naomi Ruth 1 J R Miller

The Book of Ruth is one of the most delightful pastorals ever written. It is full of charm and beauty.

It is related, whether on indisputable authority or not, cannot be positively stated, that on one occasion when Benjamin Franklin was living in Paris as American Minister to France, this pleasant incident occurred: One evening, so the story runs, there was a great gathering of distinguished literary people, at which Franklin was present. He was asked to contribute in some way to the enjoyment of the company. Drawing from his pocket a little roll of manuscript he explained that in a very old book he came upon a beautiful story, one which had greatly interested him. He said he would like to read this story to the company, if they were willing, as his contribution to the exercises of the evening. He then read the little story of Ruth. There was not one of those present to whom it was familiar, and no one had any thought of the source from which it had come. All were loud in their praise of the story, agreeing that it was the most charming pastoral ever they had heard, and all were eager to know the name of the book in which it had been found. When Franklin told them that the story was from an old book called the Bible, they were amazed that a volume so despised should contain any piece of literature so delightful.

Some time during the period when the judges ruled, there was a great famine in Canaan. A man of Bethlehem, by name Elimelech, took Naomi, his wife, and his two sons and went to the country of Moab to escape the famine. Soon sorrow entered the home—Elimelech died. Comfort came again in due time. The two sons married. There, may have been an element of bitterness in these marriages for the mother, for the wives were Moabite girls, and the Israelite law forbade marriages with foreigners. Evidently, however, the mother quietly accepted the disappointment. Ten years of happy life followed, and then again sorrow came. Both the young men died. It was a sad home in which the three bereft and lonely women dwelt.

Then Naomi, hearing that the famine was over in Canaan, resolved to return to Bethlehem. Her heart still clung to the old home land, and now that none of her own loved ones were left to her—she felt the loneliness in the land of Moab very keenly, and longed to go back to the scenes of her earlier days. Both Orpah and Ruth expressed their desire to return with Naomi. This speaks well for Naomi. She must have been a good woman to win her daughters-in-law to herself in such devotion.

The chatter of parlors and social circles, is full of jibes about mothers-in-law. The newspaper writer likes to write bright and cruel things on the same subject. A great deal of injustice is done to mothers-in-law by these flippant words. The impression is made that a true, sweet friendship between son-in-law and mother-in-law is impossible. The impression is most unjust and untrue. This relation is oftentimes one of sweet and tender affection. There are daughters-in-law who have no more faithful or unselfish friends than their husbands' mothers.

This story of Ruth and Naomi shows that there may be such holy friendship. It may be said that these were exceptional women. Naomi must certainly have been an ideal mother-in-law to win the heart of the young and beautiful Ruth as she did, and to hold her to herself so indissolubly. She must have been most discreet and self-restrained. We may be sure that in the sacred wedded life of her son and his wife, she never intruded with her advice nor intermeddled with her suggestions. This is one relation in life, into which even the gentlest and best beloved mother may not press her claim for confidence nor interpose her counsel. We are quite sure that Naomi was a most wise and unselfish mother-in-law.

Ruth, too, must have been an ideal daughter-in-law. She must have honored and loved Naomi. She must have pitied her sorrow and brought to her in her lonely widowhood, all that her sweet young life could bring of sympathy, of cheer, of patient thought and tender care, and of helpful kindness. She must have taken the unfilled place of an own daughter in Naomi's life, in all honor, affection, humility, confidence and dutifulness, bringing to her in her grief and broken-heartedness, truest strength and comfort.

So warm a place had the Israelitish mother won in the hearts of her daughters-in-law, that they could not bear to have her go away from them, and were willing to break all their own home ties and to go back with Naomi to her old home.

At first both the young women set out to go with Naomi. They all went some distance together. Perhaps at first their thought was only to go with her a little way to see her off, as friends often do with one who is departing. But when the time came for them to return, they both declared they could not part from Naomi—but would go back with her to her own country. She told them what sacrifices they would have to make if they accompanied her. They must give up whatever there was beautiful, hopeful and joyous in their own home and country, and would have only poverty, desolateness and sorrow for their portion in the land of Israel, since Naomi had nothing to promise them. She was very honest with the two women. She would not have them return with her—thinking they would find wealth, ease and joy there.

Orpah hesitated. She had warm affection for Naomi and did not want to tear herself away from her. The memories of her dead husband also bound her to the noble mother-in-law. But as she stood there on the border and looked forward and back, her courage wavered. Behind her were country, home, hope, friends; before her were poverty, toil, sorrow in a strange land. She hesitated, she wept, she decided, she kissed the mother-in-law she had learned to love, and said farewell to her, turning back towards the old home.

"Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth clung to her." Ruth 1:14. We may take some lessons from Orpah while we watch her walking sadly back towards her own country. She illustrates much human friendship. It is devoted—up to a certain point. So long as loyalty costs little—it cleaves with fondness and tenderness. But it is not ready to give up pleasure or profit, so it turns back. You can get plenty of people who will be your friends—while you have favors to dispense, and while attachment to you makes no draft on their money or their ease, nor breaks into their selfish enjoyment. But when friendship means forgetfulness of self, when it will cost something to cleave to you—they have only tears and regrets, and turn away and leave you.

Orpah also illustrates a class of professed friends of Christ. We see some of them in the story in the Gospels. There is one, for instance, a rich young ruler, who came running, who was very eager and earnest in his desire to follow Jesus—but who did just as Orpah did. He was told that he must give up all, sell all he had and distribute among the poor, and then go empty-handed into a path of hardship, self-sacrifice and service with Jesus. He heard the conditions, he weighed the two alternatives: staying at home and keeping his money, his position—or going with Jesus and giving up all. The struggle was hard, for he loved the Master and wanted to go with Him—but he loved himself and his money still more. He stood hesitating, looking both ways, and then made his choice, and with tears said farewell to Jesus.

There are many such followers in every age. They want to be Christians. They have some conception of a better life. They have some love for Christ, and while no severe and costly self-denial is necessary, they follow Him. But when they come to the borders of the old natural life, where they must give up everything and go out with their new Master on paths of toil, cross-bearing and personal sacrifice, like Orpah, with sorrow they go back to their gods and their possessions, while Jesus is left to go on alone.

The story of Ruth, however, is altogether different. She saw all that Orpah saw of the cost of going with Naomi to the country of Israel. She heard all that Naomi said about the sadness of her future—that she had nothing to promise her daughters if they went with her. Ruth knew well that she was leaving all, and so far as human eye could see was choosing only a life of sacrifice and sorrow. Yet she never wavered for a moment. She saw Orpah turn homewards—but her own resolution weakened not. She clung to Naomi.

Ruth illustrates true human friendship. Her strong and faithful love for Naomi caused her to cleave to her with an unwavering and unalterable attachment. She did not stop to count the cost of constancy and fidelity. She did not look forward to ask where her devotion to Naomi would lead her—into what sacrifice or loss. Her love for Naomi was such that she would cleave to her, though it would lead her to death.

All love is measured by what it will do or give or suffer or sacrifice. Ruth's love stood the sorest test. Ruth illustrates true friendship for Christ. Orpah loved, wept—and went back. Ruth loved, wept—and clung. Christ's true followers cling to Him, though He leads them into paths of poverty, trial and cross-bearing. They do not stop to consider the cost of faithfulness. They make choice of Christ without conditions, and where He goes—they follow Him. Christian history is resplendent with the names and stories of countless friends of Christ who have followed Him at the cost of all their personal comfort, pleasure and profit.

Ruth's words of devotion are very beautiful. "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

This is a noble formula of faith, for every friend of Christ. Wherever Christ goes we should go. We are to attach ourselves to Him so closely, so faithfully, so unalterably, that we shall never ask into what experiences He is taking us, whether it will be pleasant or not,

whether it will be easy or hard. We must simply cleave to Him and follow wherever He leads.

We make choice, also, of Christ's people when we choose Him. We cut ourselves off from our old ties if they are not Christly, our old friendships if they are still in the old life, and we take Christ's people as ours henceforward. We enter a new family, with a new name, a new hope, a new home. If we follow Christ, we must identify ourselves with His Church and friends, separating ourselves from the world. We must take God to be ours, giving up our idols and yielding our hearts fully to the Lord.

Naomi had many sorrows. When the people welcomed her back to Bethlehem, their words were like mockeries on her ears. "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara," she said, referring to the bitter things she had endured. The belief in those days, was that when people had peculiar sorrows the Lord was punishing them for peculiar sins. "The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me!" she said. Christ brought better comfort than Naomi found. He assures us of God's love in our sorrows and teaches us not to be troubled. Those who have Christ for their friend may learn to rejoice even in their sorrows, finding blessing and good—in loss and trial.

Alexander Whyte says: "The women are so delightful in this delightful little book that there is no room left for the men. The men fall into the background and are clean forgotten." Yet Whyte extols Boaz as a man who ought not to be forgotten and the lessons from whose life ought to be impressed and remembered. Boaz is one of the truest gentlemen who ever lived. He is courteous to his people and his servants. He is kind to the poor. He is as chivalrous as any knight. He is hospitable and kind. There is not the slightest blemish on his name.

When we read the story through to the close, we have a revealing of the blessing and comfort which God brought to Naomi and to Ruth after all their sorrow. Ruth never was sorry for the choice she made, and for her sacrifice in giving up her own country for Canaan. Choosing Naomi's people and Naomi's God, she found human friends, a home, an honored place in the nation, and she herself became a link in the ancestry of Jesus Christ. Those who choose Christ are exalted to high honor in the family of God—in this world and also in heaven.

DIVINE DISCIPLINE

I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty. RUTH 1:21

THREE WIDOWS STANDING WEEPING AROUND open graves, but Naomi's sorrow was deepest, husband and sons had gone and she was bereft; she "went out full," but she is now desolate, broken, empty! "Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab; for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread, wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was."

A very decided step, for she not only arose that she might return, but she went forth. We must notice that it was for the Lord's bread, and not for the Lord, so she had no influence over one daughter-in-law. When a point in the road was reached, her entreaties were listened to by Orpah but set aside by Ruth. Naomi's was an influence for evil - "Go, return," she said. How could she recommend the Lord she had forsaken? Her conduct had estranged her from Him. He changed not, as we shall see, and yet she sought to make out that He would be found in Moab, the land of idols. Oh, the subtlety of a backsliding heart! "The Lord deal kindly with you," she said, and later on she speaks of Orpah as having gone back to her people and her gods, thus contradicting her own words. How this brings out the awful hindrance a backslider becomes, and shows us that such conduct is the great cause of infidelity, and a stumbling-block to thousands.

The people of Sodom listened not to the voice of Lot. "But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." (Gen 19:14). How could he seem anything else? His life was inconsistent, and thus his preaching was a mockery. SPENCER WALTON

Ruth 2

Devotionals from Selwyn Hughes

- [Ruth 2](#)

Ruth 2:1-13; 4:1-21

When Mark and Jan adopted two-year-old Kwan, they celebrated with a special dedication service at their church. As Mark said during the service, they felt a renewed understanding of God's love for us as His children after going through the experience of adopting Kwan into their family. Adoption is a remarkable picture of God's redemptive love. In fact, the New Testament teaches us

that as believers we have been adopted as God's children (Eph. 1:5-note). In many ways, the story of Ruth is like an adoption, because we see a foreign woman becoming part of the people of God. In fact, the Old Testament has many similar examples, such as the Egyptians who left during the Exodus, Jethro, and Rahab

Recall that Ruth married into a Jewish family who had moved to Moab during a famine. Eventually Ruth returned to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, Naomi. As it turned out, this Moabitess demonstrated more clearly than some Israelites what it meant to love God with all one's heart and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Deut. 6:5).

In Ruth 2, we find Ruth gleaning in the fields according to the laws that we read about earlier. More important, Ruth is in a field that belongs to Boaz, who is Naomi's relative. Boaz's godly character is evident from the way he greets his workers (2:4), and is further revealed in his kindness toward Ruth. Recognizing the vulnerability of a foreign woman, Boaz gives Ruth both protection and provision. Behind Boaz's actions, we clearly see the hand of God.

As we jump forward in the story, we find out that Ruth was essential to God's plans. The son born to Ruth and Boaz would become the grandfather of David. So without Ruth, there would not have been David. And God promised to David an everlasting family, which eventually led to Jesus Christ (see Matt. 1:5-6). So in the story of God's care for one foreign woman, Ruth, we see His providential care for the nation Israel, and eventually, all the nations of the earth.

APPLY THE WORD Israel was called to be holy rather than to go forth, and in the Old Testament we find numerous examples of individuals, such as Ruth, coming to Israel and believing in Israel's God. After Christ's atoning sacrifice and the coming of the Holy Spirit the church is commanded to go forth. But we are still called to live holy lives as well. Can others see Christ in your life? Our holy lives of obedience should be radiant examples that attract others to the faith we profess in Christ. (Today in the Word)

RUTH 2:12 The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.

The Lord did repay Ruth's work, but she could never have worked at all had she not first put her faith in the Lord, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). Her testimony in Ruth 1:16-17 is one of the greatest in Scripture and her life one of the purest and sweetest. Because she trusted him, the Lord repaid her by bringing about some wonderful changes in her life.

The outsider came in. "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD" (Deut. 23:3), but Ruth abandoned her idols and accepted the Lord, and as a Jewish proselyte was part of the nation. But even more, spiritually speaking she moved into the holy of holies in the tabernacle, under the wings of the cherubim that guarded the Ark of the Covenant (Ps. 36:7-8; 61:4; 91:1-4). I had a similar experience when I trusted Christ. "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

The mourner found peace. The opening chapter of the book of Ruth is drenched in tears of farewell as Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons left Bethlehem, and then as Naomi's husband and sons died leaving three widows behind. Widows and lepers were at the bottom of the social scale in those days. Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem and Ruth insisted on accompanying her. When they arrived, Naomi told her friends, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara," which in Hebrew means bitter (Ruth 1:20). But Ruth had God's peace in her heart and immediately began to minister to her mother-in-law. Ruth's sister-in-law back in Moab may have remarried and found rest (Ru 1:9), but the rest Ruth experienced in Bethlehem was far greater.

The laborer experienced satisfaction. Ruth learned that the Hebrew law permitted the poor to glean among the sheaves during the harvest, and she wanted to care for Naomi the best she could. Here we see the providence of God, for she "just happened" to pick the fields of Boaz, one of Naomi's relatives, and Boaz "just happened" to arrive while she was working. It was "love at first sight," and he told her to work only in his fields. He commanded his workers to protect her and provide for her by purposely dropping some sheaves for her to pick up. Boaz made sure she rested and had something to eat and drink, and yet she was a stranger! She had found favor (grace) in his eyes (Ru 2:2, 10, 13), which is the way salvation always begins.

The "nobody" was highly honored. Ruth not only became a believer and a member of the Jewish community, but she married Boaz and gave birth to King David's grandfather! Even more, her name is found in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5). Ruth began as a poor widow (chap. 1) who lived on leftovers (chap. 2). She received gifts from Boaz (chap. 3) and then ended up marrying Boaz and sharing all his wealth (chap. 4). This is the grace of God! These were God's "repayments" until one day she arrived in heaven and received her "full reward."

Repayments down here and a full reward in heaven—what a gracious Master we serve! Let's be sure we are servants who deserve rewards.

Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. 2 John 8 (OT Words for Today - Warren Wiersbe)

Ruth 2 THE NARRATOR HAS ALREADY TOLD US that when Naomi and Ruth arrive back in Bethlehem it was the time of barley harvest (Ruth 1:22). Now (Ruth 2) the significance of that bit of information is played out.

It was long-standing tradition, stemming from Mosaic Law, that landowners would not be too scrupulous about picking up every bit of produce from their land. That left something for the poor to forage (cf. Deut. 24:19–22; see meditation for June 19). So Ruth goes out and works behind the proper reapers in a field not too far from Jerusalem. She could not know that this field belonged to a wealthy landowner called Boaz—a distant relative of Naomi's and Ruth's future husband.

The story is touching, with decent people acting decently on all fronts. On the one hand, Ruth proves to be a hard worker, barely stopping for rest (2:7). She is painfully aware of her alien status (2:10), but treats the locals with respect and courtesy. When she brings her hoard back to Naomi and relates all that has happened, another small aside reminds us that for a single woman to engage in such work at this point in Israel's history was almost to invite molestation (2:22)—which attests her courage and stamina.

Naomi sees the hand of God. From a merely pragmatic perspective of gaining enough to eat, she is grateful, but when she hears the name of the man who owns the field, she not only recognizes the safety that this will provide for Ruth, but she realizes that Boaz is one of their "kinsman-redeemers" (2:20)—that is, one of those who under so-called levirate law could marry Ruth, with the result that their first son would carry on the legitimate rights and property entitlements of her original husband.

But it is Boaz who is, perhaps, seen in the best light. Without a trace of romance at this stage, he shows himself to be not only concerned for the poor, but a man who is touched by the calamities of others, and who quietly wants to help. He has heard of Naomi's return and of the persistent faithfulness of this young Moabitess. He instructs his own workers to provide for her needs, to ensure her safety, and even leave behind some extra bits of grain so that Ruth's labor will be well rewarded. Above all, he is a man of faith as well as of integrity, a point we hear in his first conversation with the woman who would one day be his bride: "May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge" (2:12). Well said—for the Lord is no one's debtor. (For the Love of God - D A Carson)

Spurgeon on Ruth -

Ruth 2:3 "And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field."

I have now to invite you to other fields than these. I would bring you to the field of gospel truth. My Master is the Boaz. See here, in this precious Book is a field of truthful promises, of blessings rich and ripe. The Master stands at the gate and affords us welcome. Strong men full of faith, like reapers, reap their sheaves and gather in their armfuls. O that you were all reapers, for the harvest truly is plenteous! But if not reapers, may you be as the maidens of Boaz. I see some servants who do not so much reap themselves as partake of that which others have reaped.

Ruth 2:12 "May the LORD reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." This was the language of Boaz, a man of substance in Bethlehem, to a poor stranger who had left her people and the idols of her nation to become a worshiper of the living and true God. He acted nobly when he cheered her and instructed her to have courage now that she was casting in her lot with Naomi and the chosen nation. Such a greeting of tender encouragement is precisely what all elder Christians should do to those who are Ruth's counterparts. We should make a point of looking out for the young converts and speaking kind and comforting words to them. As God commanded Moses to encourage Joshua (Dt 1:38), we should encourage those newly aspiring to holiness. Where spiritual life is weak, it should be nurtured with affectionate care. We desire to cherish, not to censure. If the lambs are to grow, they must be shepherded. If Ruth is to be happy in the land of Israel, a Boaz must look after her and be her true friend.

Ruth 2:17 "So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening." [ED: Spurgeon compares the labor of gleaning to the spiritual work of prayer, meditation, the ordinances, and Bible study.] The gleaner gathers her portion ear by ear; her gains are little by little. So I must be content to search for single truths, if they come just one at a time. Every ear helps to make a bundle, and every gospel lesson assists in making us wise for salvation. The gleaner stoops for all she finds, and I must do the same. Proud minds criticize and object, but humble minds glean and receive benefit. A humble heart is the key to profitably hearing the gospel. The soul-saving Word is not received except with meekness. A stiff back makes for a bad gleaner. What the gleaner gathers, she keeps. If she dropped one ear to find another, the result of her day's work would be but meager; she is as careful to retain as to obtain. How often do I forget all that I hear; the second truth pushes the first out of my head, and so my reading and hearing end in much ado about nothing. Do I understand the importance of storing up the truth? Hunger helps make the gleaner wise; if she has no corn in her hand, there will be no bread on her table. My need is even greater, Lord; help me feel it, that it may urge me onward to glean in fields that yield to diligence a plenteous reward.

Why Me?

Read: Ruth 2:1-11

Why have I found such favor in your eyes? Ruth 2:10

Ruth was a foreigner. She was a widow. She was poor. In many parts of the world today she would be considered a nobody—someone whose future doesn't hold any hope.

However, Ruth found favor in the eyes of a relative of her deceased husband, a rich man and the owner of the fields where she chose to ask for permission to glean grain. In response to his kindness, Ruth asked, "What have I done to deserve such kindness? . . . I am only a foreigner" (Ruth 2:10 nlt).

When we come to Him in salvation, we are under His protective wings.

Boaz, the good man who showed Ruth such compassion, answered her truthfully. He had heard about her good deeds toward her mother-in-law, Naomi, and how she chose to leave her country and follow Naomi's God. Boaz prayed that God, "under whose wings" she had come for refuge, would bless her (1:16; 2:11-12; see Ps. 91:4). As her kinsman redeemer (Ruth 3:9), when Boaz married Ruth he became her protector and part of the answer to his prayer.

Like Ruth, we were foreigners and far from God. We may wonder why God would choose to love us when we are so undeserving. The answer is not in us, but in Him. "God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners" (Rom. 5:8 nlt). Christ has become our Redeemer. When we come to Him in salvation, we are under His protective wings.

Dear Lord, I don't know why You love me, but I don't doubt Your love. I thank You and worship You!

Gratefulness is the heart's response to God's undeserved love. By Keila Ochoa ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries. Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

INSIGHT The book of Ruth demonstrates the redemptive nature of God's commandments. While many Old Testament laws may sound strange to modern ears, adherence to these laws provided food for the hungry, protection for the foreigner, and hope for the childless widow.

Ruth 2:1-12 A Mere Happening?

December 10, 2009 — by Albert Lee

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. —Proverbs 3:6

Huang, a nonbeliever, was a visiting scientist at the University of Minnesota in 1994. While there, he met some Christians and enjoyed their fellowship. So when they learned he would be returning to Beijing, they gave him the name of a Christian to contact who was also moving there.

On the flight back to Beijing, the plane encountered engine trouble and stopped in Seattle overnight. The airline placed Huang in the same room with the very person he was to contact! Once they arrived in Beijing, the two began meeting weekly for a Bible study, and a year later Huang gave his life to Christ. This was not just a mere happening; it was by God's arrangement.

In Ruth 2, we read that Ruth came "to the part of the field belonging to Boaz" (v.3). Boaz asked his servants who she was (v.5), which prompted his special consideration toward her. When Ruth asked him the reason for such kindness, Boaz replied, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law ... The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you" (vv.11-12).

Did the events in the lives of Ruth and Huang just happen? ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries. Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I know who holds the future,
And I know who holds my hand;
With God things don't just happen—
Everything by Him is planned.
—Smith

A "mere happening" may be God's design.

There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz. So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." Ruth 2:1-2

There is a charm about the inspired Hebrew idyl, the book of Ruth, that cannot but appeal to every one of literary taste, whether its divine inspiration be recognized or not. But when we receive and believe it as part of the God-breathed Word, we see added beauties which the natural mind cannot discern. It is, emphatically, an unfolding of the story of redemption. Through Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer (Leviticus 25:25), Ruth, the stranger, is brought into the family of God and recognized as one of the covenant people. The great-grandmother of King David, she has her place in the ancestral line of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5-6). By natural birth the Moabite was barred from the congregation of the Lord unto the tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:3). By grace Ruth found an honored place among the mothers of Israel.

Jehovah had made special provision for "the poor and the stranger" (Leviticus 19:9, 10). By humbling herself in order to avail herself of that provision, Ruth attracted the notice of Boaz, and so this lovely Bible romance came to a happy conclusion. (H A Ironside - The Continual Burnt Offering)

Grace, 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear,
Heaven with the echo shall resound
And all the earth shall hear.

O let Thy grace inspire
My soul with strength divine;
May all my powers to Thee aspire
And all my days be Thine.

GLEANNING GOD'S RICHES. Ruth 2:2

Troubled and depressed Christian, come and glean this morning in the broad field of promise. Here are abundant and precious promises to meet your exact needs.

Take this one. "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench" (Is. 42:3). Does this meet your need? Here is a reed that is weaker than weakness itself, yet He will not break it. Perhaps you are like the smoking flax, from which no light or warmth can come, still He will not quench you. He will blow with His sweet breath of mercy until He fans you into a flame.

Would you glean another ear? "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). What soft words! Your heart is tender, and the Master knows it. He speaks gently to you. Will you obey and come to Him now?

Take another ear of corn. " 'I will help you,' says the LORD and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Is. 41:14). How can you be afraid when you have this wonderful assurance?

You may gather ten thousand golden ears like these! "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud your sin" (Is. 44:22). Or this, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Is. 1:18). Or this, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

Our Master's field is full and rich. The precious promises lie in front of you. Gather them. Make them your own. Grasp these sweet promises. Thresh them by meditation. Feed on them with joy. (C H Spurgeon)

Ruth 2:1-12 Safety Zone

May 8, 2010 — by Dennis Fisher

A full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge. —Ruth 2:12

When the horrors of war visited the civilians of Nanjing, China, women were not spared in the mounting violence and many were assaulted and killed. In this threatening environment, Minnie Vautrin took heroic measures to protect Chinese women from harm. Serving as a missionary teacher at Ginling College in Nanjing, Minnie cooperated with Chinese nationals, missionaries, surgeons, and business people and turned the college into a "safety zone," a place of refuge for thousands of women and girls.

In the Bible, we learn that Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, were in need of some protection too. To survive as widows, they had

to glean what they could from the harvested fields. As was the custom, Ruth sought a “kinsman redeemer.” This was a next of kin or close relative to her deceased husband who would marry her to continue the family line. Boaz was just such a man. He was touched by Ruth’s sacrificial care for Naomi and her desire to look for refuge in the Lord (Ruth 2:12). Boaz worked honorably to “redeem” Ruth and to make her his wife. He then provided for her and Naomi.

Our ultimate refuge is in the Lord Himself (Ps. 46:1). Yet He wants to use us as instruments to provide a “safety zone” for others.

Thinking It Over

In what ways can you meet the needs of others? Check with community ministries or a local church to see how they’re reaching out, and join in.

They truly love who show their love. —Shakespeare

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Ruth 2:1-13a Do We Truly Care?

Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner? —Ruth 2:10

When I first became a Christian, my friends and I had a way of helping each other memorize portions of the Bible. We would greet one another by asking the other person to quote a verse. Knowing of my poor memory, one friend used to humorously say to me, “Quote John 11:35!” He knew that it would be easy for me to remember this two-word verse.

Although it was a game, we didn’t do this just for fun. These greetings reflected our desire to be people of God’s Word.

In the book of Ruth, we read that Boaz greeted his workers by saying, “The Lord be with you!” and they responded, “The Lord bless you!” (Ro 2:4). It is clear from what we know about Boaz that he was not a harsh landowner, but a man who genuinely cared for others. The response of his workers revealed their goodwill toward him and their desire for God’s blessing to be upon him as well.

As we think about our relationship with Christ and the people God has placed around us, we would do well to consider the importance of our greetings. Are “good morning” and “God bless you” just empty, insincere phrases? Or do our words show that we truly care for those whom we are addressing? —Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Over - What is the difference between an empty greeting and a meaningful one? When you talk to someone, how can you communicate genuine love, interest, and concern?

A heartfelt greeting can energize the weary and encourage the lonely

Ruth 2:1-16

If the LORD delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm. - Psalm 37:23

Rental centers have been popular for a long time. Many people who cannot afford to buy merchandise, or who choose not to buy it, rent items such as furniture, appliances, and electronic equipment. Now, some centers even rent engagement rings just the thing for people who aren’t sure of their commitment. (Today it seems that) “Commitment” is something a person makes until he or she finds something better. Boaz of Bethlehem offers a refreshing contrast to the shallowness of many modern day commitments. In Ruth 2 he also reveals himself to be a person of integrity and generosity, taking a protective stance toward Ruth and making sure she was provided for in the gleaning and at mealtime. It’s also obvious that Boaz had the spiritual sensitivity to realize and appreciate what Ruth had done in leaving her homeland. He praised her, not just for remaining loyal to Naomi, but also for her commitment to the God of Israel (Ruth 2:11,12).as loyal and faithful as Ruth, a worthy partner for this woman of noble character (Ruth 3:11). Made aware of his responsibility to act as kinsman-redeemer for his deceased relative Elimelech, Boaz wasted no time in pursuing the right course. and there was nothing wrong with that. But, Boaz also had a higher motive, that of securing the property of his late relatives and providing for their widows. this other man had accepted the responsibility, Boaz would have been content (Ruth 3:12-13). along with her, he became a part of the Messianic line, helping to preserve the thread of ’s promise. Would we be willing to pursue an issue to a right and fair resolution, even if it meant personal disappointment for us? Boaz’s favor without his having to resort to manipulation or deal-making. We don’t always know what the pay-off will be for doing the right thing. But we can be sure that God will honor us when He is free to take delight in our way, as today’s verse promises. This is a good verse to memorize today and to live by every day. (Today in the Word)

Ruth 2:1-23

A 1980s British sitcom called *To the Manor Born* told the story of a woman living on an estate that had been in her family for generations. The problem was that the lady of the manor was basically penniless, although her financial condition wasn't widely known. Many of the show's episodes dealt with the woman's attempts to keep the manor running and to hold on to her estate on a shoestring budget. This could have been Naomi's story upon her return to Bethlehem with Ruth. Naomi was penniless, although apparently she was able to move back onto the family property in Bethlehem. That may have included a house and some land, but judging from the women's financial condition, they had no way to make a real living. That's where the comparison between the TV show and the Bible story ends. There was one very important difference in Naomi's situation: God looked upon her and Ruth with favor and arranged circumstances to provide them with a secure future. And in the process, Ruth was introduced into the godly line from which King David and Jesus Christ, the Redeemer-King, would come.

The story begins to unfold quickly once Boaz enters the drama. He was a descendant of Judah (Ruth 4:18-21), which qualified him to be in God's righteous line. Boaz was a righteous man in his own right, someone who along with Ruth deserves mention as a shining exception to the corruption and spiritual decline of that era. Boaz not only helped accomplish God's will in his own generation, but he also served as a type or example of the future Redeemer by fulfilling the duties of a "kinsman-redeemer" in his family (v. 20). This included redeeming property that had been sold due to poverty and marrying the childless widow of a dead relative. Many Bible teachers believe this ancient provision was a picture of Jesus, the Kinsman-Redeemer of Israel.

APPLY THE WORD It's great to read about the amazing ways God provided for His people in biblical times. (Today in the Word)

Ruth 2:1-23

The Lord bless him! ... He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead. - Ruth 2:20

TODAY IN THE WORD

Booker T. Washington was born into slavery, and as a child after emancipation, he worked in coal and salt mines to support his destitute family. Yet he always believed that former slaves and their children and grandchildren were capable of succeeding in education, science, and business, and he went on to found the Tuskegee Institute. He left a legacy of hard work, initiative, and opportunities that has inspired millions of people.

Today we will see another theme in the book of Ruth: initiative. Ruth arrived in Bethlehem having made the choice to leave the comfort of food and family and home. While Naomi proclaimed her bitterness, Ruth showed initiative and got right to work (v. 2).

An interesting little phrase sits in the middle of verse 3; the niv translates it, "As it turned out." It's almost a little wink from the writer, as if to alert us that something that seemed so random, so coincidental, was really a demonstration of God's direction. When Ruth took the initiative to glean in the fields, she had no idea what would follow. But God blessed that step by leading her to the fields of Boaz.

Boaz models faithfulness in our passage today through his extraordinary kindness to a stranger, a foreign-born widow with a lower social rank than even servants (v. 13). To appreciate fully Boaz's generosity, remember the examples we have just read in Judges. What a contrast to the men of Gibeah who offered no hospitality, generosity, or protection to the visitors in their city! The text also indicates that not all field owners were so kind as Boaz; others might embarrass or even mistreat the women who gleaned (v. 22).

In the dramatic arc of this short story, verse 20 is the turning point. Upon hearing that Boaz is the man showing such kindness to Ruth, Naomi roused from her gloominess. She seemed to recall that indeed, the Lord was good and had not abandoned her. Perhaps her emptiness would not be the end of her story.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Boaz might have felt justified in removing Ruth from his fields. He could have instructed his workers to harass her. He lived in the time of Judges—he could have just fit in with the culture around him and sought to maximize his own gain. But Boaz chose faithfulness, kindness, and generosity instead. We may be surrounded by a culture that promotes greed, self-absorption, and rudeness, but we can still choose to live differently. We can still choose to reflect God's character to those around us.

Ruth 2:1-13; 4:1-21

Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. - Isaiah 60:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

When Mark and Jan adopted two-year-old Kwan, they celebrated with a special dedication service at their church. As Mark said during the service, they felt a renewed understanding of God's love for us as His children after going through the experience of adopting Kwan into their family. Adoption is a remarkable picture of God's redemptive love. In fact, the New Testament teaches us that as believers we have been adopted as God's children (Eph. 1:5+).

In many ways, the story of Ruth is like an adoption, because we see a foreign woman becoming part of the people of God. In fact, the Old Testament has many similar examples, such as the Egyptians who left during the Exodus, Jethro, and Rahab.

Recall that Ruth married into a Jewish family who had moved to Moab during a famine. Eventually Ruth returned to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, Naomi. As it turned out, this Moabitess demonstrated more clearly than some Israelites what it meant to love God with all one's heart and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Deut. 6:5+).

In Ruth 2, we find Ruth gleaning in the fields according to the laws that we read about earlier (see Dec. 10). More important, Ruth is in a field that belongs to Boaz, who is Naomi's relative. Boaz's godly character is evident from the way he greets his workers (2:4), and is further revealed in his kindness toward Ruth. Recognizing the vulnerability of a foreign woman, Boaz gives Ruth both protection and provision. Behind Boaz's actions, we clearly see the hand of God.

As we jump forward in the story, we find out that Ruth was essential to God's plans. The son born to Ruth and Boaz would become the grandfather of David. So without Ruth, there would not have been David. And God promised to David an everlasting family, which eventually led to Jesus Christ (see Matt. 1:5-6+). So in the story of God's care for one foreign woman, Ruth, we see His providential care for the nation Israel, and eventually, all the nations of the earth.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Israel was called to be holy rather than to go forth, and in the Old Testament we find numerous examples of individuals, such as Ruth, coming to Israel and believing in Israel's God.

After Christ's atoning sacrifice and the coming of the Holy Spirit the church is commanded to go forth. But we are still called to live holy lives as well. Can others see Christ in your life?"Our holy lives of obedience should be radiant examples that attract others to the faith we profess in Christ.

Ruth 2:2 "Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn."

Downcast and troubled Christian, come and glean to-day in the broad field of promise. Here are abundance of precious promises, which exactly meet thy wants. Take this one: "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Doth not that suit thy case? A reed, helpless, insignificant, and weak, a bruised reed, out of which no music can come; weaker than weakness itself; a reed, and that reed bruised, yet, he will not break thee; but on the contrary, will restore and strengthen thee. Thou art like the smoking flax: no light, no warmth, can come from thee; but he will not quench thee; he will blow with his sweet breath of mercy till he fans thee to a flame. Wouldst thou glean another ear? "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What soft words! Thy heart is tender, and the Master knows it, and therefore he speaketh so gently to thee. Wilt thou not obey him, and come to him even now? Take another ear of corn: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." How canst thou fear with such a wonderful assurance as this? Thou mayest gather ten thousand such golden ears as these! "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions." Or this, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Or this, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." Our Master's field is very rich; behold the handfuls. See, there they lie before thee, poor timid believer! Gather them up, make them thine own, for Jesus bids thee take them. Be not afraid, only believe! Grasp these sweet promises, thresh them out by meditation and feed on them with joy. (Spurgeon, C. H. Morning and evening)

Ruth 2:3 - Her hap was to light on the portion of the field belonging unto Boaz.

The home-coming of Naomi and Ruth was to poverty, and they were faced by very practical problems. These were rendered more difficult by the fact that Ruth was a Moabitess. Yet, she it was who faced the fight, and went forth as a leaner to gather what would suffice for immediate sustenance. The human side of things is expressed in these words. But the statement is by no means a pagan one. The Hebrew word rendered "hap" does not necessarily mean that the thing that occurred was accidental, although often used in that way. It literally means, that which she met with, and the statement is that it was that portion of the field which belonged to Boaz. All the issues reveal the Divine overruling. That which she met with, was that to which she was guided by God—if all unconsciously, yet none the less definitely. God led this woman, who had given up everything on the principle of faith, to a man, completely actuated by the same faith. The lines of his portrait are few, but they are strong, and a man of the finest quality is revealed. It is a radiant illustration of the truth that God does guide those who confide in Him and in the most definite way. Some experience is often so simple that we are tempted to say it happened, and to mean that it was a sort of accident. Yet the long issues

make it certain that it was no accident, but part of a covenant, ordered in all things and sure. When in loyalty we make the venture of faith in God, we are ever choosing the path that is safe and sure. There are no accidents in the life of faith. In its music, the accidentals perfect the harmony. ([Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#) by Morgan, G. Campbell).

Ruth 2:3a "And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field." (C H Spurgeon)

I have now to invite you to other fields than these. I would bring you to the field of gospel truth. My Master is the Boaz. See here, in this precious Book is a field of truthful promises, of blessings rich and ripe. The Master stands at the gate and affords us welcome. Strong men full of faith, like reapers, reap their sheaves and gather in their armfuls. O that you were all reapers, for the harvest truly is plenteous! But if not reapers, may you be as the maidens of Boaz. I see some servants who do not so much reap themselves as partake of that which others have reaped.

Ruth 2:3 "She 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."

Her hap was. Yes, it seemed nothing but an accident, but how divinely was it overruled! Ruth had gone forth with her mother's blessing, under the care of her mother's God, to humble but honourable toil, and the providence of God was guiding her every step. Little did she know that amid the sheaves she would find a husband, that he should make her the joint owner of all those broad acres, and that she a poor foreigner should become one of the progenitors of the great Messiah. God is very good to those who trust in him, and often surprises them with unlooked for blessings. Little do we know what may happen to us to-morrow, but this sweet fact may cheer us, that no good thing shall be withheld. Chance is banished from the faith of Christians, for they see the hand of God in everything. The trivial events of to-day or to-morrow may involve consequences of the highest importance. O Lord, deal as graciously with thy servants as thou didst with Ruth.

How blessed would it be, if, in wandering in the field of meditation to-night, our hap should be to light upon the place where our next Kinsman will reveal himself to us! O Spirit of God, guide us to him. We would sooner glean in his field than bear away the whole harvest from any other. O for the footsteps of his flock, which may conduct us to the green pastures where he dwells! This is a weary world when Jesus is away—we could better do without sun and moon than without him—but how divinely fair all things become in the glory of his presence! Our souls know the virtue which dwells in Jesus, and can never be content without him. We will wait in prayer this night until our hap shall be to light on a part of the field belonging to Jesus wherein he will manifest himself to us. (**Spurgeon, C. H. Morning and evening**)

RUTH 2:3 She happened to come. Yes, it seemed nothing but an accident, but it was divinely ruled over! Ruth had gone out with her mother-in-law's blessing, under the care of her mother-in-law's God, to humble but honorable work, and the providence of God was guiding her every step. Little did she know that among the sheaves she would find a husband, that he would make her the joint owner of all those broad acres, and that she, a poor foreigner, would become one of the ancestors of the great Messiah. God is very good to those who trust in Him and often surprises them with unexpected blessings. Little do we know what may happen to us tomorrow, but this sweet fact may cheer us—that no good thing will be withheld. Chance is banished from the faith of Christians, for they see the hand of God in everything. The trivial events of today or tomorrow may involve consequences of the highest importance. O Lord, deal as graciously with Your servants now as You did with Ruth.

How blessed would it be if, in wandering in the field of meditation tonight, we should happen to find ourselves in the place where the Lord Jesus will reveal Himself to us! O Spirit of God, guide us to Him. We would rather glean in His field than carry home the whole harvest from any other place. We would follow the footsteps of His flock, which would guide us to the green pastures where He dwells! This is a weary world when Jesus is away—we would survive easier without sun and moon than without Him—but how divinely fair all things become in the glory of His presence! Our souls know the virtue that lives in Jesus and can never be content without Him. We will wait in prayer tonight until we "happen" to come to a part of the field belonging to Jesus in which He will reveal Himself to us.

Batter in the Bowl

Read: Ruth 2:1-12

Please let me glean . . . after the reapers among the sheaves. Ruth 2:7

My daughter and I consider brownies to be one of the seven wonders of the culinary world. One day, as we were mixing the ingredients of our favorite chocolate treat, my daughter asked if I would leave some batter in the bowl after pouring most of it into the baking pan. She wanted to enjoy what was left over. I smiled and agreed. Then, I told her, "That's called gleaning, you know, and it

didn't start with brownies."

As we enjoyed the remnants of our baking project, I explained that Ruth had gathered leftover grain in order to feed herself and her mother-in-law Naomi (Ruth 2:2-3). Because both of their husbands had died, the women had returned to Naomi's homeland. There Ruth met a wealthy landowner named Boaz. She asked him, "Please let me glean . . . after the reapers among the sheaves" (v. 7). He willingly consented and instructed his workers to purposely let grain fall for her (v. 16).

Every good gift we receive comes from God.

Like Boaz, who provided for Ruth from the bounty of his fields, God provides for us out of His abundance. His resources are infinite, and He lets blessings fall for our benefit. He willingly provides us with physical and spiritual nourishment. Every good gift we receive comes from Him.

Dear God, thank You for the blessings I enjoy! You minister to Your children out of Your limitless abundance. I worship You as my provider.

Our greatest needs cannot exceed God's great resources. By Jennifer Benson Schuldt

INSIGHT God commanded His people to be generous and to allow the poor to gather food from their lands at harvest time (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-22). God is the defender, protector, and provider of the poor, the helpless, and the oppressed (Deut. 10:17-19; Ps. 9:9-10; 146:5-9). Sim Kay Tee

Ruth 2:11-23 Unexpected Blessing

June 21, 2011 —

Your daughter-in-law, who loves you, ... is better to you than seven sons. —Ruth 4:15

Bible in a Year:

Esther 3-5; Acts 5:22-42

Naomi and Ruth came together in less-than-ideal circumstances. To escape a famine in Israel, Naomi's family moved to Moab. While living there, her two sons married Moabite women: Orpah and Ruth. Then Naomi's husband and sons died. In that culture, women were dependent on men, which left the three widows in a predicament.

Word came to Naomi that the famine in Israel had ended, so she decided to make the long trek home. Orpah and Ruth started to go with her, but Naomi urged them to return home, saying, "The hand of the Lord has gone out against me!" (1:13).

Orpah went home, but Ruth continued, affirming her belief in Naomi's God despite Naomi's own fragile faith (1:15-18).

The story started in desperately unpleasant circumstances: famine, death, and despair (1:1-5). It changed direction due to undeserved kindnesses: Ruth to Naomi (1:16-17; 2:11-12) and Boaz to Ruth (2:13-14).

It involved unlikely people: two widows (an aging Jew and a young Gentile) and Boaz, the son of a prostitute (Josh. 2:1; Matt. 1:5).

It depended on unexplainable intervention: Ruth just so "happened" to glean in the field of Boaz (2:3).

And it ended in unimaginable blessing: a baby who would be in the lineage of the Messiah (4:16-17).

God makes miracles out of what seems insignificant: fragile faith, a little kindness, and ordinary people. by Julie Ackerman Link [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

In all the setbacks of your life as a believer, God is plotting for your joy. —John Piper

Random Acts of Kindness

Read: Ruth 2:8–13

"Why have I found such favor [grace] in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" Ruth 2:10

Some say that the American writer Anne Herbert scribbled the phrase "Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty" on a placemat at a restaurant in 1982. The sentiment has since been popularized through film and literature and has become a part of our vocabulary.

The question is "Why?" Why should we show kindness? For those who follow Jesus, the answer is clear: To show the tender mercy and kindness of God.

Lord, what do You want me to do for another today? Lead me.

There's an Old Testament example of that principle in the story of Ruth, the emigrant from Moab. She was a foreigner, living in a strange land whose language and culture she did not understand. Furthermore, she was desperately poor, utterly dependent on the charity of a people who took little notice of her.

There was one Israelite, however, who showed Ruth grace and spoke to her heart (Ruth 2:13). He allowed her to glean in his fields, but more than simple charity, he showed her by his compassion the tender mercy of God, the One under whose wings she could take refuge. She became Boaz's bride, part of the family of God, and one in a line of ancestors that led to Jesus, who brought salvation to the world (see Matt. 1:1–16).

We never know what one act of kindness, done in Jesus's name, will do.

Lord, what do You want me to do for another today? Lead me. And may that person see a glimmer of You.

Share your ideas of how you can show kindness in the name of Jesus today at [Facebook.com/ourdailybread](https://www.facebook.com/ourdailybread).

It's never too soon to be kind. By David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

INSIGHT The command to be kind to others is embedded in the Law that God gave to the Jews fresh out of Egypt. God told them, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18). Today, Christ-followers are to "be kind and compassionate to one another" (Eph. 4:32). And the reasons we are to show kindness have not changed: It is because of who God is and what He has done for us. We are to "follow God's example, . . . and walk in the way of love" (Eph 5:1–2).

Ruth 2:12 - Under whose wings thou art come to trust.

In after-days this was a favorite image with David in his wanderings and escapes among those same hills. Perhaps he had received it as a fragrant legacy from the life of his good ancestor, Boaz. At least on one occasion Jesus employed it in saying that He had wished to gather Jerusalem as a hen her chicks.

How warm, cozy, and safe, the chickens are when they have gathered under the wings of the brooding hen! It must be a very heaven for them. The storm may roll through the sky, the heavy raindrops fall, the hawk may hover above, poisoning itself on its wings; but the body of the parent-bird is interposed between them and all that threatens. What wonder that the Psalmist said that he would hide under the shadow of God's wings till all his calamities were overpast!

Are you sheltering there? Have you come out of the storm and tempest to hide there? Can you say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust"? If so, remain in happy confidence. God is between you and all evil or alarm. Be still; yea, be still.

If you have not come to trust under the outspread wings of the Cherubim, do as Ruth did. Leave the land of your nativity, the far country of Moab; leave your people and your gods; tear yourself away even from some twin-soul, dear as Orpah; come across the border-line, and glean in the fields of the Gospel. There you will meet with the true Boaz, who will show kindness unto you, and you will become affianced to Him, and live at home for evermore in the house of bread, where you will be blessed indeed. (**Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**) (See also C H Spurgeon's sermon on [Ruth 2:12: Reward or Cheer for Converts](#))

Two Sides of Work - Ruth was facing serious problems. Her husband had died, and she had come to a foreign land with her widowed mother-in-law.

Many women find themselves in similar situations today. For various reasons, they must care for a family without the assistance of a husband.

So what did Ruth do? She went to work. It wasn't glamorous or easy. She walked the barley fields, picking up grain the reapers left behind. And she met the landowner, Boaz, who would become her husband.

Of course, not all stories of hard-working people turn out as well. Yet what happened with Ruth points out two important principles. First, God wants us to be compassionate. The needs of Ruth and Naomi were met because landowners followed God's instructions

to leave excess grain in the fields for the poor and the widows (Dt 24:19, 20, 21, 22).

Second, the Lord rewards those who work (Ge 1:28, 29, 30; 2:15; Pr 22:29; 2Th. 3:10, 11, 12). In this case, Ruth received a special blessing from the Lord (Ruth 2:12).

Both laborers and those who are in positions of authority have obligations to each other and to the Lord. No matter what our situation is, we need to follow godly principles. Any other approach to labor doesn't work. — Dave Branon

Man's work can make of him a slave
And lead him to an early grave;
But if it's done as to the Lord,
His work will bring him great reward.
--DJD

Life works better when we do.

Ruth 2:14 “And she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.”

Whenever we are privileged to eat of the bread which Jesus gives, we are, like Ruth, satisfied with the full and sweet repast. When Jesus is the host no guest goes empty from the table. Our head is satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; our heart is content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; our hope is satisfied, for whom have we in heaven but Jesus? and our desire is satiated, for what can we wish for more than “to know Christ and to be found in him?” Jesus fills our conscience till it is at perfect peace; our judgment with persuasion of the certainty of his teachings; our memory with recollections of what he has done, and our imagination with the prospects of what he is yet to do. As Ruth was “sufficed, and left,” so is it with us. We have had deep draughts; we have thought that we could take in all of Christ; but when we have done our best we have had to leave a vast remainder. We have sat at the table of the Lord's love, and said, “Nothing but the infinite can ever satisfy me; I am such a great sinner that I must have infinite merit to wash my sin away;” but we have had our sin removed, and found that there was merit to spare; we have had our hunger relieved at the feast of sacred love, and found that there was a redundancy of spiritual meat remaining. There are certain sweet things in the Word of God which we have not enjoyed yet, and which we are obliged to leave for awhile; for we are like the disciples to whom Jesus said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” Yes, there are graces to which we have not attained; places of fellowship nearer to Christ which we have not reached; and heights of communion which our feet have not climbed. At every banquet of love there are many baskets of fragments left. Let us magnify the liberality of our glorious Boaz. (**Spurgeon, C. H. Morning and evening**) (See also Spurgeon's sermon on [Ruth 2:14: Mealtime in the Cornfields](#) and [Ruth 2:15 Spiritual Gleaning](#))

A sermon for gleaners = ‘Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.’ Ruth 2:15–16

We are too apt to think that we are independent of the operations of the country, that our trade, our commerce, our manufactures, are sufficient to support us; forgetting all the while that in vain is yonder forest of masts unless the earth shall yield her fruit; in vain the emporium, the exchange, and the place of merchandise, unless the land be ploughed and harrowed, and at last yield to the husbandman his reward. I would that I could recall to your memories, you dwellers in the city, how much you depend upon the Lord God of the earth for your daily bread. Does your food fall like manna from the skies? Do you create it at the forge, or fashion it in the loom or on the wheel? Does it not come from the earth, and is it not the Lord who gives to the fertile womb of earth the power to yield its harvests? Does not the dew come from heaven, and the sunshine from above, and do these not bring to us our bread as well as to those who abide in the midst of the fields? Let us not forget this time of the harvest, nor be unthankful for the bounty of the wheatsheaf; let us not forget to plead with God that he would be pleased to give us suitable weather for the ingathering of the precious grain, and when it shall be ingathered, let us not sullenly keep silence, but with the toiling labourers who, well-pleased, behold the waving yellow crop, let us lift up the shout of harvest home, and thank the God who covers the valleys with corn, and crowns the year with his goodness. (**Spurgeon - Sermon No. 464**)

Ruth 2:17 “So she gleaned in the field until even.”

Let me learn from Ruth, the gleaner. As she went out to gather the ears of corn, so must I go forth into the fields of prayer, meditation, the ordinances, and hearing the word to gather spiritual food. The gleaner gathers her portion ear by ear; her gains are little by little: so must I be content to search for single truths, if there be no greater plenty of them. Every ear helps to make a bundle,

and every gospel lesson assists in making us wise unto salvation. The gleaner keeps her eyes open: if she stumbled among the stubble in a dream, she would have no load to carry home rejoicingly at eventide. I must be watchful in religious exercises lest they become unprofitable to me; I fear I have lost much already—O that I may rightly estimate my opportunities, and glean with greater diligence. The gleaner stoops for all she finds, and so must I. High spirits criticize and object, but lowly minds glean and receive benefit. A humble heart is a great help towards profitably hearing the gospel. The engrafted soul-saving word is not received except with meekness. A stiff back makes a bad gleaner; down, master pride, thou art a vile robber, not to be endured for a moment. What the gleaner gathers she holds: if she dropped one ear to find another, the result of her day's work would be but scant; she is as careful to retain as to obtain, and so at last her gains are great. How often do I forget all that I hear; the second truth pushes the first out of my head, and so my reading and hearing end in much ado about nothing! Do I feel duly the importance of storing up the truth? A hungry belly makes the gleaner wise; if there be no corn in her hand, there will be no bread on her table; she labours under the sense of necessity, and hence her tread is nimble and her grasp is firm; I have even a greater necessity, Lord, help me to feel it, that it may urge me onward to glean in fields which yield so plenteous a reward to diligence. (**Spurgeon, C. H. Morning and evening**)

Ruth 2:17-23 Surprised By God

January 10, 2012 — by David C. McCasland

The Lord ... has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead! —Ruth 2:20

If Naomi had dreamed about returning to her former home prosperous and successful, entering Bethlehem would have been a nightmare. While living in a foreign land, she had lost her husband and two sons and returned with only her daughter-in-law Ruth and a heart full of sorrow. "Do not call me Naomi [pleasant]; call me Mara [bitter]," she told her former neighbors, "for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20).

But this wasn't the end of the story. When the discouraged Naomi saw God's hand in Ruth's life, she said, "The Lord ... has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" (2:20). What appeared to be a dead-end had become a doorway for these two women who had lost so much.

The Old Testament book of Ruth is a wonderful story. The brief narrative is infused with an amazing sweetness and grace as "the Lord" is mentioned time after time.

Through Naomi and Ruth, we are reminded that God works in surprising ways to make His love known and to accomplish His purposes—even during difficult times.

God's surprises continue so we can take heart. He has not stopped showing His kindness to you and me.

He whose heart is kind beyond all measure
Gives unto each day what He deems best—
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,
Mingling toil with peace and rest. —Berg

What we see of God's provisions teaches us to trust Him for what we cannot see of His purposes.

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Take Notice

Read: Ruth 2:13-20

Blessed be the one who took notice of you. —Ruth 2:19

While standing in a checkout line, I was estimating my bill and trying to keep my son from wandering away. I barely noticed when the woman ahead of me shuffled toward the exit, leaving all of her items behind. The clerk confided that the woman didn't have enough money to pay her bill. I felt terrible; if only I had been aware of her situation earlier, I would have helped her.

In the book of Ruth, Boaz became aware of Ruth's plight when he saw her gleaning in his fields (2:5). He learned that she was recently widowed and was the breadwinner for herself and her mother-in-law. Boaz saw her need for protection, and warned his harvesters to leave her alone (v.9). He supplied her with extra food by instructing his workers to let grain fall purposely (v.16). Boaz even addressed Ruth's emotional needs by comforting her (vv.11-12). When Naomi heard about this, she said, "Blessed be the one who took notice of you" (v.19).

Are you aware of the needs of the people around you—in your church, neighborhood, or under your own roof? Today, consider how

you might help bear someone's burden. Then you will be fulfilling God's plan for you (Gal. 6:2; Eph. 2:10). By Jennifer Benson Schultdt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Help me Lord, to notice
The hurting, sick, and lost;
Guide me as I help them
Regardless of the cost.
—Schultdt

God works through us to meet the needs of those around us.

Ruth 2:20

The Giving Kind - At one end of the truck terminal where H. H. Lee worked years ago was a coal company. Nearby was a railroad, and each day several freight trains passed by. Lee often noticed that the owner of the company, who was a Christian, threw chunks of coal over the fence at various places along the track. One day he asked the man why he did this.

The man replied, "An elderly woman lives across the street, and I know that her pension is inadequate to buy enough coal. After the trains go by, she walks along and picks up the pieces she thinks have fallen from the coal car behind the engine. She doesn't realize that diesels have replaced steam locomotives. I don't want to disappoint her, so I just throw some pieces over the fence."

That's Christianity in action! The book of Ruth vividly portrays this principle of giving. When Boaz saw Ruth gathering grain behind the reapers in his field, he commanded them to leave some handfuls of grain for her. To her, this was a blessing from the Lord.

In the same way, the people whose lives we touch need to experience God's love through our compassion and generosity. That's why we should ask God to make us aware of opportunities to show kindness. — Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Do a deed of simple kindness;
Though its end you may not see,
It will reach like widening ripples
Down a long eternity. —Anon.

Kindness is the oil that takes the friction out of life.

Ruth 2:1–23 A NEW LIFE AND A NEW PURPOSE

IF SOVEREIGNTY is despised in Ruth 1, it is demonstrated here. Ruth 2:1 is a fact apparently unknown to Ruth at the time. Compare "Let me now go", Ruth 2:2, "her hap", Ruth 2:3, and "behold, Boaz came", Ruth 2:4. How God's hand begins to move purposefully for us when we come to Him. Elimelech might have known such had he waited! This chapter plots the progress of a soul who has "turned to God". We saw Ruth's Expressed Devotion, ch. 1, now we see her.

1. Exercised Desire, Ruth 2:2. Ruth unfolded her proposal for approval by the elder Naomi; always a wise step. She desired to work, however humbly, reminding us again of those who "turned ... to serve", 1 Thess. 1:9. She wanted to glean "after him in whose sight I shall find grace". How suggestive!

2. Earnest Dutifulness. Ruth was concerned to provide for her mother-in-law, whom she knew had returned "empty", and was "too old", Ruth 1:12. She truly was an imitator of God, Deut. 10:18, and anticipates the as yet unwritten maxim of James 1:27! With what satisfaction Naomi and Ruth enjoy the result of her labours, Ruth 2:18, 19, the prepared parched corn, which remained of Boaz' liberal provision for Ruth's meal; cf. Ruth 2:14 and Ruth 2:18c R.V.

3. Engaging Diligence. She becomes a model for all who would serve the Lord and others. Her labour was strenuous. You bend to glean! It was steadfast, Ruth 2:7b. It was with sedulity, even "until even", and it was sufficient, for she "beat (it) out". Are our tasks always so completed?

As newborn souls, what do we know about gleaning in the field of our greater than Boaz, and not in any other?, Ruth 2:8. Truth is not reaped, but gleaned grain by grain, which yet mounts up to a goodly supply, Ruth 2:17. Such diligent and patient gleaning in the field of God's Word will conduct us, like Ruth, into an increasing knowledge of our Boaz, Ruth 2:11–13, into a deepening fellowship with Him at His table, Ruth 2:14, assure us of His protection and further provision, vv. 15–16, and give us His needed directive for our pathway, Ruth 2: 21, 23. God's provisions are to be discovered through the Word of God.

Lesson. How often am I diligently gleaning, and beating out the barley and wheat of God's Word? (Day by Day Through the OT - Cyril Hocking)

Leaving a Trail - Ruth 2:1-3

In God's providence everything that comes your way can be used for your good and His glory. There are no dead ends in the will of God—only detours designed to lead you to a more fruitful place. There was once a boy who was intrigued by cameras and photographs. He ordered a book on photography from a magazine but was mistakenly sent a book about ventriloquism instead. So he began practicing the art of throwing his voice. Eventually millions of people listened to Edgar Bergen and his wooden dummy, Charlie McCarthy, on Sunday evening radio and television shows. Edgar Bergen allowed a "mistake" to become a fabulous career.

James Whistler, another renowned artist, also experienced an unwanted detour on his path. He wanted more than anything to be a soldier, so he joined West Point Academy. But he failed a chemistry examination. Later he joked about the one wrong answer that changed his life, "If silicon had been a gas, I would have been a major general instead of an artist." Who knows what blessing awaits you at the end of your detour?

The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of man. Benjamin Franklin (Ed: Sadly Franklin remained a [Deist](#) and not a Disciple of Jesus!) (Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

DIVINE ENCOUNTERS Ruth 2:4-7

A thirty-eight-year-old scrubwoman went to the movies and sighed, "If only I had her looks." She listened to a singer and moaned, "If only I had her voice." Then one day she stopped crying about what she didn't have and started concentrating on what she did have. She remembered that in high school she had had a reputation for being the funniest girl around. She turned her liabilities into assets and at the height of her career, Phyllis Diller made over one million dollars in one year. She wasn't good-looking and she had a scratchy voice, but she could make people laugh.

Ruth didn't have many assets either, but she was strong and unafraid of hard work. When she went to work, God went into action on her behalf. Many people sit idly by, waiting for providence to happen. However, providence is a two-sided equation: you plus God. Pastor Chuck Smith says, "It's easier to guide a rolling stone than it is to get a stationary one moving." You shouldn't wait for opportunity to knock. Sometimes you must knock on a few doors to see what opportunities Providence opens for you. King Solomon described the unique blend between you and God's providence like this, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6, NLT, emphasis added). It's simple; when you do, God directs.

FINDING FAVOR Ruth 2:8-13

For a Christian there's no such thing as luck. Believing that luck has dealt you a good or bad hand denies God's hand of providence in your life. Luck is impersonal; a matter of chance bringing about fortune or adversity. I do not trust my life into the hands of fate. Instead, I trust a loving God to orchestrate circumstances that are favorable or unfavorable, according to His will for me. When unfavorable situations arise, I ponder, Am I in the will of God? Have I been obedient to His Word? or Is He trying to redirect my path? When favorable circumstances come my way, I count them as God's blessings—His affirmation that I'm on the right track. Yet I know that whether good or bad things happen, God will work all things together for my good.

Paul described the process of receiving good for good or bad for bad, not as karma, but as reaping what you have sown. "Do not be deceived, . . . for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7-8). God will reward you according to your deeds.

Ruth had been sowing seeds of goodness toward Naomi, diligence in labor, and humility toward others. Now she is about to reap the bounty of blessing from the Lord. She will find favor from the God of Israel instead of confusion from the twisted hand of fate.

A haughty lawyer once asked an old farmer, "Why don't you hold up your head in the world like I do? I don't let anyone push me around; I won't bow before God or man."

"See that field of grain yonder?" replied the farmer. "Only the heads that are empty stand up. Those that are well filled always bow low." The strange paradox revealed by this story is that what appears to be strong is really weak.

A paradox is a seemingly contradictory or absurd statement that is, in fact, true. Here are just a few of the paradoxical truths found in the Bible: those who are poor in spirit are truly rich; those who know they are weak are really the strongest; those who die to themselves will live forever; those who are humble will be exalted.

Ruth's life is a perfect example of God's paradoxical truths in action. Because she was filled with humility and willingly bowed down, God "lifted her up" in Boaz's sight. God has honored her throughout eternity by recording her story in the most precious of all books, the Bible. Truly Ruth understood this spiritual truth: "When you bow down before the Lord . . . , he will lift you up and give you honor" (James 4:10, NLT).

Be humble or you'll stumble.

TAKING NOTICE Ruth 2:18-23

A husband and wife were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. After attending a big party given in their honor, they returned home and decided to have a snack of tea with bread and butter. The husband opened up a new loaf of bread and handed the heel to his wife. She unexpectedly exploded saying, "For fifty years you have been dumping the heel of the bread on me. I won't take your lack of concern for me and what I like!" The husband was wounded by her cutting words and said quietly, "But it's my favorite piece."

By sacrificing his own needs and wants, this man had been showing his wife how much he loved her. But for most of their marriage she had read his message all wrong. He had faithfully left her a trail of bread crumbs that led to his heart, but she had not even noticed. Similarly, Boaz left a trail of love for Ruth. He revealed his deep affection for her through verbal affirmation and meeting her needs with his gifts. As Naomi realized what was happening, she didn't want Ruth to miss the message. She pointed to the trail left by Boaz and made sure that Ruth took notice. (Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

Ruth 3

Devotionals from Selwyn Hughes

- [Ruth 3](#)

Ruth 3:1-18

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. - Psalm 145:8

In her book *Flowers by the Wayside*, Beverly Parkin describes a flower that reminds us of Ruth. Parkin says the regal yellow iris "grows in damp places, untroubled by storms and violent winds. There is great strength in its broad, spear-shaped leaves and the flowers bloom regardless of the weather... The iris has great character." That's a good illustration of the spiritual strength and character Ruth displayed. Her proposal to Boaz that he become a kinsman-redeemer to Naomi and her was perfectly appropriate in the society of the day. God used the same concept to describe His relationship to Israel (Ezekiel 16:8). This was also an act of faith on Ruth's part, because she was putting herself totally at the mercy of God and the kindness and generosity of Boaz.

She was in good hands! The psalmist reminds us that we serve a "gracious and compassionate" God who is rich in love and mercy. God had been at work for Ruth's good--and the blessing of others through her--since she first came into Naomi's family. And since Boaz was also a person of spiritual integrity, he realized what he needed to do and took the appropriate steps. But why the sudden inclusion of the nearer relative in the story (Ru 3:12)? The drama increases because of this complication. We're not told how Ruth felt about the possibility of becoming someone else's wife. It could be that God was giving Ruth and Naomi a test of faith--they had to wait at home for the outcome. Boaz knew Ruth was an exceptional woman who had gained a good reputation in Bethlehem--and she wasn't even Jewish. Her presence and godly character served as an example to God's people of what He expected from them. At various times in Israel's history, God used righteous Gentiles to call attention to Israel's lack of faith. (Today in the Word)

Sit still, my daughter.

I will take heed, and be quiet; I will not fear or be fainthearted. I will be still, and know that You are God. Lord, did You not say to me that if I would believe I would see Your glory? The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; You alone, Lord God, will be exalted in that day.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. Mary chose that good part, which will not be taken away from her. In returning and rest I shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be my strength. So I will meditate within my heart on my bed, and be still.

I rest in You, Lord, and wait patiently for You; I do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

I will not be afraid of evil tidings; my heart is steadfast, trusting in You, Lord. My heart is established.

Whoever believes will not act hastily.

Sitting still, Lord God, is so countercultural and so against my nature. Help me to sit still and wait on You to speak and to guide. (See [Life-Changing Moments with God: Praying Scripture Every Day](#))

RUTH 3:18; ISAIAH 7:4; PSALM 46:10; JOHN 11:40; ISAIAH 2:17; LUKE 10:39, 42; ISAIAH 30:15; PSALM 4:4; PSALM 37:7; PSALM 112:7-8; ISAIAH 28:16

Ruth 3:1-18

All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character. - Ruth 3:11

TODAY IN THE WORD

Comedians love to make jokes about intrusive and assertive mothers-in-law. But in our reading today, Naomi demonstrates initiative and action that would have won her a “Mother-in-Law of the Year” award.

We might guess that the prospect of rich provider had motivated Naomi to urge Ruth to immediately pursue Boaz. Actually, the text tells us that quite a bit of time went by between Ruth's first meeting with Boaz until the events in this chapter (see 1:22; 2:23). Ruth and Naomi had ample opportunity to see the character of Boaz and his treatment of Ruth.

Next, we observe commendable action on the part of all three main characters. The last time that Naomi and her family faced a crisis, they pulled up stakes and left Israel. On this occasion, though, Naomi acted on the principle of the kinsman-redeemer that God had set up (see Lev. 25). Naomi's idea was consistent with the Lord's provision for preserving the property and family inheritance of those who had suffered hardship. And finally Naomi acted as though she had some hope in God's ability to provide.

Ruth's obedience and action was in line with what we have seen since chapter 1. Her time in Bethlehem had been long enough to establish a reputation, and her noble character was universally acknowledged (v. 11).

Boaz reacts to the situation in an interesting way. From what the writer tells us, it seems clear that he was attracted to Ruth from the first time they met. And he certainly had paid attention to what sort of woman she was. He even knew about their family relationship. So why had he not acted on the kinsman-redeemer possibility earlier? Given their age difference, it seems that Boaz was uncertain about whether Ruth would want to be married to him (v. 10).

Now that Ruth had, in effect, asked him to marry her through fulfilling the role of the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz expressed his great joy.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY God has provided directions for many of the challenges that we face in life—but like Naomi, we have to know His Word in order to discover His leading. Reading through long passages of Scripture at a time (entire books if possible) gives us context. Digging deep in studying smaller chunks of God's Word gives us greater understanding of particular stories or arguments. And memorizing verses or chapters allows the Word to penetrate deeply into our being where the Holy Spirit will use it to shape and direct us.

Ruth 3:1-11 The Romance

“There is a [grandson] born to Naomi.” And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. —Ruth 4:17

Widows in biblical times often faced a life of poverty. That's the situation Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, were in after each woman lost her husband. But God had a plan to provide security for them while involving Ruth as an integral part of a much bigger plan.

Boaz, a wealthy landowner, knew of and admired Ruth (Ruth 2:5-12), but he was surprised when he awoke one night to see her lying at his feet (3:8). She asked him to “spread the corner” of his garment over her to indicate that as a close relative he was willing to be her “kinsman-redeemer” (v.9 NIV). This was more than a request for protection; she was requesting marriage. Boaz agreed to marry her (vv.11-13; 4:13).

Not exactly your typical romantic tale. But Ruth's choice to follow Naomi's instructions (3:3-6) set up a series of events that placed her in God's plan of redemption! From Ruth's marriage to Boaz came a son (Obed), the eventual grandfather of King David (4:17). Generations later, Joseph was born to the family, and he became the “legal father” of Mary's child (Matt. 1:16-17; Luke 2:4-5)—our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus.

Ruth trusted God and followed Naomi's instructions even though the ending was uncertain. We too can count on God to provide for us when life is unsure. by Cindy Hess Kasper

Lord, give us humility and sensitivity to listen to advice from loved ones who know You well. Show us the right thing to do in our uncertain times and to trust You for the results. Amen.

Fear hinders faith, but trust kindles confidence

Ruth 3:1–18; 4:10–13, 17 ANOTHER LINK IN MESSIAH'S CHAIN

THE DELICACY and modesty of Ruth must be patent to all, and not least to the watchful Naomi and the benevolent Boaz. She takes nothing for granted, yet everything with gratitude, e.g., Ruth 2:13. Are her spirit, conduct, 2:11; 3:10, and need winning Boaz' heart? Time is passing, and Naomi, concerned for her, determines to seek her "rest". There was a law of redemption concerning property in Israel, Lev. 25:25, and also a law designed to preserve the name of such as Ruth's deceased husband, Deut. 25:5. Strictly, this would be the responsibility of the deceased's brother, but he, too, was dead. Naomi knows that kind and wealthy Boaz is a kinsman, Ruth 2:1, 20, and he has already shown interest. Has this not been observed by Ruth through his many advances? So Naomi, as now the responsible "parent" of Ruth, proposes, Ruth 3:1–4.

1. The Scene, Ruth 3:3–7. Read this again, carefully and prayerfully. Naomi is not pressing this innocent girl into indecency, nor is Ruth acting immodestly. Do not bring a modern, and western mind to bear on this. The spirit of the Levitical and Deuteronomic laws were undoubtedly influencing all parties. For once, the glorious end of this "rest-seeking" is to justify the means, Ruth 4:17; Matt. 1:5–6. With suited preparation and means, Ruth 3:3, others obviously being present, she does what was custom in Israel, for one claiming protection and redemption. What modest submission, v. 7.

2. The Success, Ruth 3:8–18. Observe the divine hand in the awaking, Ruth 3:8; cf. Esth. 6:1–9, the sense of tremor in her request, Ruth 3:9, the ready acquiescence, Ruth 3:10–13, inferring an already prepared heart, the modest leave taking, Ruth 3:14, and the gift at departure, almost an "earnest", Ruth 3:15.

3. The Seed, Ruth 4:10–13, 17. Boaz acts expeditiously, indicating both hearts are one, cf. Ruth 3:18, yet wisely, regarding the nearer kinsman, and acting before witnesses that the union might become ratified in law. Later, Obed is born, Naomi is blessed, Ruth 4:14–16, and lo! the way for David, and thence the Christ, is established. What a message for the heart today. His blessings are great, but the Redeemer Himself is greater.—

Lesson. Do I know real union with Christ, and am I bringing Him nearer to others? (Day by Day Through the OT - Cyril Hocking)

Ruth 3:1 Samuel Cox wrote the following on Ruth 3...

Two words in the chapter call for detailed explanation. The first [is] *menuchah*. Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home [or place of rest, safety] for you, where you will be well provided for?"

The position of an unmarried woman in the ancient world was both perilous and unhappy. Only in the house of a husband was a woman sure of safety, respect, honor. And consequently the Hebrews spoke of the husband's home as the woman's *menuchah*, or place of rest, her secure haven from servitude, neglect, and license.

In like manner, they regarded a hereditary possession of land as the *menuchah*, or rest, of a nation. Thus Moses said to the children of Israel, "You have not yet reached the resting place [*menuchah*] and the inheritance the Lord your God is giving you" (Deut. 12:9); they had no haven of repose and freedom, no settled and well-defended inheritance.

King Solomon was the first Hebrew chieftain who could bless God for the gift of complete "rest" to his people. He could thankfully acknowledge that the land had become the secure inheritance of the Hebrew race. And hence, at the opening of the temple, he said, "Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest [*menuchah*] to his people Israel just as he promised" (1 Kings 8:56).

The prophets rose to a still higher conception of and use of the word. For them, God was the true rest, or *menuchah*, of humankind. And hence they predicted that when God came, in the person of the Messiah, Paradise would return and the whole world would enter into its true *menuchah*, its final and glorious "rest." When the Messiah came, he invited the weary and burdened to come to him, on the express ground that he was their rest, that in and with him they would find such a haven of freedom and honorable repose as the Hebrew wife found in her husband's home, such a rest as the Hebrew race found in the Promised Land when it was wholly their own—no, such a rest as the prophets had taught them to look and hope for only in God.

Naomi sets herself, with courage and hope, to find a *menuchah*, a haven of rest and honor, for the daughter who had clung to her with a love so rare.

The second of the two notable words in this chapter is goel. Like the word menuchah, it has a history in the Hebrew conception of the Messiah. According to its derivation, goel means “one who unlooses”—unlooses that which has been bound and restores it to its original position. Boaz was among the goelim of Naomi and Ruth.

We learn from the Pentateuch that there were three tragic contingencies in which the legal redeemer and avenger was bound to interpose—each of which was of much more frequent occurrence than the case recorded in the book of Ruth.

The Forfeited Inheritance. If an Israelite had sold his estate or any part of it, any of his near kin who was able to do so was commanded to purchase it, but when the trumpets announced the year of Jubilee, it reverted to its original owner.

Of whom can the Israelite alienated from his original inheritance be the type but of fallen humanity? All things were ours, but by our sin, we put them all into the hands of the Adversary, so that through our sin, the whole creation has been brought under the shadows of decay. And who can the Goel be but that divine Kinsman—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—who has redeemed and restored the inheritance we had forfeited? All things are made ours by his grace—if we are his—and when the trumpet will sound Jubilee, even the creation will be delivered from imperfection, out of “bondage to decay... into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Ro 8:21-note).

The Forfeited Liberty. To discharge a debt or to save himself from the last extremities of want, a Hebrew might sell himself either to a stranger or another Israelite. If he sold himself to an Israelite, he was treated not as a slave but as a hired servant and became free [in] the year of Jubilee. But if he sold himself to a foreigner, he became a slave, and in that case any of his kinsmen was permitted to interpose and to pay the price of his redemption.

The human race was sold under sin, led captive at the will of an alien and adverse spirit. Our freedom was gone; we were in bondage. And Christ has proved himself our Goel by giving himself a ransom for all, by redeeming us with his own precious blood.

The Forfeited Life. The avenger of blood is the goel who, in virtue of his kinship, becomes an avenger of wrongs.

Even in him who was “gentle and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29), we may find the avenging function of the Hebrew goel. Christ came to destroy as well as to redeem, to destroy that he might redeem. He, of whom the Hebrew avenger of blood was a type, pursued that great enemy of our souls. To avenge the world for all that it had suffered at the hands of evil, to redeem it from enslavement, he disarmed the powers of evil.

One feature of the goel comes out markedly, whatever [his] function—whether redeeming an alienated inheritance, restoring liberty to a captive, or hunting down a homicide. He is one of the nearest kin. Kinship with the redeemed, in short, is an unvarying law and condition of redemption. And this law holds of the divine Goel. No stranger could interpose for us, only one who is our nearest Kinsman. Hence the Son of God became the Son of Man.

In thus speaking of the redemption wrought by our divine Kinsman, it must not be supposed that we are playing with mere figures of speech. Under this image, we have presented to us the truths that have most profoundly entered our spiritual experience. No Hebrew who had been compelled to part with the fields he inherited from his fathers suffered a loss comparable with ours, when, by sin, we had lost the righteousness in which we were originally placed by the Father of our spirits. No Hebrew selling himself for a slave ever endured a bondage half so bitter and shameful as that into which we fell when, sold under sin, we sank into bondage to our own lusts. No deliverance wrought by a Hebrew goel is worthy to be compared to that by which Christ made it possible for us to possess a righteousness more stable and more perfect than that which we had cast away.

With a fervor and a triumph infinitely transcending that of Naomi, we may exclaim, “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left us without a Kinsman-Redeemer.” —Samuel Cox

Ruth 3:13 - Then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee

In these words the nobility and faithfulness of Boaz are manifested. It is hardly possible to read the story without seeing that he loved Ruth, and that therefore he was perfectly ready to take the responsibility of the next-of-kin. There was, how-ever another who had a prior right, and in loyalty to the law of his people, he gave that one his opportunity. The action of Naomi in this matter can hardly be characterized as other than doubtful, and on the basis of faith alone, it is difficult to justify it. Nevertheless, the expedient to which she resorted must be judged in the light of her own age. We must recognize that at the lowest it was an error of judgment, rather than a willful disobedience; and the overruling love of God carried it to a beneficent issue. One element, and perhaps the strongest, in her action, was that of her confidence in Boaz. Her appeal should have been made to the next-of-kin, but the whole attitude of Boaz toward Ruth had made it natural for her to look to him. He, however, fulfilled his first obligation to the law, as he gave the first opportunity to the true kinsman. This next-of-kin had a perfect right lawfully to abandon his claim, seeing that another was ready to assume it. Thus again the Divine, overruling to highest ends is seen in the case of those who walk by faith, and in

strict obedience to the known law of God ([Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#) by Morgan, G. Campbell).

Ruth 3:18a The Secret of a Quiet Heart (F B Meyer)

"Sit still, my daughter, for the man will not rest, until he have finished the thing this day."-- Ruth 3:18

"Be still, and know that I am God."-- Ps 46:10

PARADISE HAS vanished from our world, as the picture of a landscape vanishes when swept by storm. And our race stands in much the same plight as did Naomi and Ruth in this old-world story. We have lost our inheritance, and the one barrier which stands between us and despair is the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, thank God, we need have no doubt as to the sequel. For as Boaz claimed back the estate for Ruth, so may we be confident that Jesus Christ will never be at rest till this sin-stained and distracted world is restored to her primitive order and beauty, as when the morning-stars sang for joy.

Jesus is our near Kinsman by His assumption of our nature He is the nearest and dearest Friend of our race, who stooped to die for our redemption. And the fact that He carried our nature in Himself to heaven, and wears it there, is an indissoluble bond between us. Sit still! do not fret! He will never fail, as He will certainly never forsake!

Let us seek the quiet heart in our prayers Prayer must arise within us as a fountain from unknown depths. But we must leave it to God to answer in His own wisest way. We are so impatient, and think that God does not answer. A child asked God for fine weather on her birthday, and it rained! Some one said, "God didn't answer your prayer." "Oh yes," she replied, "He did, God always answers, but He said No!" God always answers! He never fails! Be still! If we abide in Him, and He abides in us, we ask what we will, and it is done. As a sound may dislodge an avalanche, so the prayer of faith sets in motion the power of God.

In times of difficulty--be still! Thine enemies are plotting thine overthrow! They laugh at thy strong confidence! But hast thou not heard His voice saying: "This is the way, walk ye in it"? Then leave Him to deal with thy foes from whatever quarter they come. He is thy Rock, and rocks do not shake. He is thy High Tower, and a high tower cannot be flooded. Thou needest mercy, and to Him belongeth mercy. Do not run hither and thither in panic! Just quietly wait, hushing thy soul, as He did the fears of His friends on the eve of Gethsemane and Calvary. "Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him." "Be still, for He will not rest, until He hath finished the thing this day."

PRAYER - If this day I should get lost amid the perplexities of life and the rush of many duties, do Thou search me out, gracious Lord, and bring me back into the quiet of Thy presence. AMEN. (F B Meyer. **Our Daily Walk**)

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH AND TRUST

The Holy Spirit gives us strength when we release all our needs into God's hands and trust in His might.

Ruth is an example of this kind of trust. After her husband died, Ruth lived with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi was concerned about Ruth's welfare and future, so she advised Ruth to lie down at the feet of the wealthy Boaz and ask him to fulfill his obligation to her as her "kinsman."

That evening, after the day's winnowing was finished, Boaz lay down "at the end of the heap of grain" (Ruth 3:7) and pulled a blanket up over him. The next morning, he awoke startled, finding a woman lying at his feet. (There was nothing immoral about Ruth's presence; this was a common custom of the day.)

Ruth said to him, "Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative" (Ru 3:9). She was saying, in essence, "Will you take on the obligation of a relative for me? Will you provide for me?" She actually was asking, "Will you marry me?"

This was no manipulative scheme. Ruth and Naomi had done everything in divine order. We can be sure of this because Christ's lineage came through Ruth. When Ruth returned home, Naomi asked her, "Is that you, my daughter?" (Ru 3:16). She was asking, in other words, "Shall I call you 'engaged Ruth'? Or are you still 'widowed Ruth'?"

Naomi had prayed about the matter, seeking God's direction, and the Lord had given her counsel. He had reminded her of the law of the kinsman-redeemer (which was a type and foreshadowing of Christ). Naomi was confident that she and Ruth had done their part, so now it was time to sit still and trust God to perform what He had promised. These two faithful women relaxed, sang and praised the Lord—and they saw His promise fulfilled.

Have you prayed? Have you trusted? Are you ready to sit still and "see the salvation of the Lord"? (David Wilkerson)

Ruth 3:18 The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

Boaz had many good traits — his religious demeanor and speech, his courtesy in greeting his servants, his refusal to take advantage of Ruth's trust; but none are more satisfactory as an index of a noble character than this well-known and acknowledged promptness of action, when he had once taken in hand the cause of the needy. From of old, Naomi had recognized this quality in her kinsman, and knew that he was a man of his word, who would assiduously complete what he had undertaken to perform.

It is a characteristic that we should do well to cultivate. Let us not arouse hopes, and finally disappoint them; let us not make promises to forget them. Our words should be yea, yea. Those who commit their cause to us should feel perfectly at rest about our executing what we have promised.

How true this is of Jesus! If we have put our matters into his hands, we have no further need of worry or fear, but may sit still in assured trust. For Zion's sake He does not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He will not rest. He has undertaken the cause of the Church, albeit that it is so largely composed of Gentiles, and He will not be in rest until the marriage-feast is celebrated. He has made Himself responsible for thee and me; and He will not rest until He has played the part of a Jail to the furthest limit, and accomplished our redemption. When we have fully yielded ourselves to Him, and have tasted the joys of complete rest, we may assuredly say with the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (**Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**)

DEVOTIONAL The Right Choice (Ruth 2–3)

"It scared me," Carrie told the counselor. "I realized the guys I was dating were just like my first husband, who drank too much and beat me."

Counselors recognize the problem. Both guys and girls find themselves attracted to unhealthy relationships. They don't stop to analyze what they really want in marriage, or why they find the wrong kind of person so attractive. Yet there is probably no more significant choice any person can make than that of a mate. And there may be no more helpful book on choosing a spouse than Ruth.

Ruth's first impression of Boaz was his kindness. Even a cursory reading of Ruth 2 shows that Boaz was kind in word and action. He was generous, godly, and sensitive to Ruth's feelings (cf. vv. 15–16). While Naomi was impressed by Boaz's ability to provide a home and security, undoubtedly Boaz's personal qualities appealed to Ruth.

Boaz blessed Ruth for her interest in him, even though he was older than she. Ruth showed family loyalty in seeking out a kinsman-redeemer, and family loyalty was greatly valued in Israel. Boaz also knew Ruth was "a woman of noble character." The word "noble" here is a strong one, suggesting more than good character. Ruth was viewed as an ideal woman by the whole community, which had been impressed with her many qualities. So Ruth was attractive to Boaz not only for her youth and beauty but for the kind of person she was.

In this case both persons chose wisely—and the wisdom of their choice is reflected in the character of their great-grandson, David. How much we Christians today need to pattern our choice of a mate on criterion like those used by Ruth and Boaz. The superficial things emphasized in modern romance—looks, style, wealth, and social skills—are no foundation for the lifelong commitment of marriage.

Personal Application We need to be careful in establishing any long-term relationship.

Quotable "There can be no true and faithful learning of Christ when we are not ready to unlearn. By heredity, by education, by tradition, we have established thoughts about life which are often great hindrances to living the truth. To learn of Christ requires a willingness to subject every value we hold to His inspection for criticism and correction."—Andrew Murray (365 Day Devotional - Larry Richards)

Ruth 3–4 SCHOLARS DISAGREE SOMEWHAT over the social significance of each action taken in Ruth 3–4, but the general line is clear enough. Almost certainly the levirate laws, which allowed or mandated men to marry widowed in-laws under certain circumstances to keep the family name alive, were not followed very consistently. Following Naomi's instruction, Ruth takes a little initiative: she lies down at Boaz's feet in a "men only" sleeping area. When he wakes up, she says, "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer" (3:9). This was an invitation, but not a cheap one. It signaled her willingness to become his wife, if Boaz will discharge his duties as a kinsman-redeemer. Boaz takes this as a compliment: apparently there is enough difference between their ages (3:10, plus his habit of referring to Ruth as "my daughter") that he is touched by her willingness to marry him instead of one of the young men.

The story plays out with romantic integrity. Hollywood would hate it: there is no blistering sex, certainly not of the premarital variety. But there is a seductive charm to the account, allied with a wholesome respect for tradition and procedure, and a knowing grasp of human nature. Hence, Naomi confidently predicts that Boaz "will not rest until the matter is settled today" (3:18).

She is right, of course. The town gate is the place for public agreements, and there Boaz marshals ten elders as witnesses and gently demands that the one person who is a closer relative to Naomi (and therefore with the right of "first refusal") discharge the obligations of kinsman-redeemer or legally abandon the claim (4:1-4). Apparently at this point the marriage rights are tied to ownership of the land of the deceased husband. This particular kinsman-redeemer would love to obtain the land, but does not want to marry Ruth. Her firstborn son in such a union would maintain the property and family heritage of the deceased husband; later sons would inherit from the natural father. But the situation is messy. Suppose Ruth bore only one son?

So Boaz marries Ruth, and in due course she gives birth to a son, whom they call Obed. Naomi is provided not only with a grandson, but with a family eager and able to look after her.

At one level, this is a simple story of God's faithfulness in the little things of life, at a time of social malaise, religious declension, political confusion, and frequent anarchy. God still has his people—working hard, acting honorably, marrying, bearing children, looking after the elderly. They could not know that Obed's was the line that would sire King David—and, according to the flesh, King Jesus. (For the Love of God - D A Carson)

Matchmaker, Matchmaker Ruth 3:1-4

From the time Skip picked me up for our first date, my father was confident that Skip was the man I would marry. "There's something special about Skip," he said, "God's going to use him." The problem was that after we had dated for a year, ministry pulled us in different directions: Skip to Israel to live on a kibbutz, me to Hawaii to join Youth With A Mission. Providentially, Skip and I bumped into one another a year later and had dinner. We both regretted moving past our relationship, but we left our thoughts unspoken.

Dad knew I was at the point of making some crucial life decisions, and like Naomi, he decided to play matchmaker. Without my knowledge he called Skip and boldly said, "Lenya has some difficult decisions to make. If she could have her dream come true, you would be her knight in shining armor. Let her know if you're interested or not, so she can move on." Skip sent me twelve beautiful roses to show his intentions. God had a plan for Skip and me, and He used my dad to bring us together.

Naomi had seen Boaz's favorable response to Ruth. She remembered the law that a kinsman should marry the widow of a near relative to preserve the family name and reclaim the family property. Without Ruth's knowledge, Naomi played matchmaker to bring Ruth and Boaz together. Behind the scenes, however, we know that God inspired her plans and prepared two hearts for romance.

"Do you have a minute? I want to tell you something I've never told anyone else." Eleanor, a vivacious senior citizen, had my undivided attention. She began her story nervously, "My husband loves me, but he doesn't always like me to come to church. So I've made my bedroom a sanctuary to the Lord. Whenever I can't go to worship services, I get on my knees at the foot of my bed and worship the Lord at home." Such devotion in the midst of opposition made me admire Eleanor. She went on, "Sometimes when I'm praying, the room becomes filled with the most wonderful scent. It's so sweet and distinctive, like nothing I've ever smelled before. Do you think I'm crazy?"

I told her that I couldn't be sure what the origin of the scent was, but the Bible teaches that the name of Jesus is as fragrant ointment poured forth. The psalmist said of the Messiah, "God . . . has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else. Your robes are perfumed with myrrh, aloes, and cassia" (Psalm 45:7-8, NLT). I think the aroma my friend enjoyed during her devotions was the fragrance of Jesus. She wasn't crazy. She was incredibly blessed!

Eleanor had a choice: she could whine when she didn't get her way, or she could worship God. When things didn't go Ruth and Naomi's way, they didn't wallow in self-pity either. They trusted God and were anointed with the oil of joy.

The crushed rose gives off the sweetest fragrance. ([Pathway to God's Plan](#) Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

RISK TAKER Ruth 3:5-9

A survey was taken of people over the age of ninety-five, asking, "If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently?" The top three answers were: (1) Reflect more; (2) Risk more; (3) Do more things that had a lasting reward. God rewards risk takers. Noah risked his reputation to build an ark and was rescued by God. Moses risked losing the riches of Egypt and received intimacy with God. The apostle Paul risked imprisonment to preach the gospel, and God used him to revolutionize the church.

What was true for the people of the Bible is still true for believers in the twenty-first century. My times of greatest blessing have always been preceded by risk taking. I risked leaving college and a career in Michigan to pursue my faith in Christ in California. There I heard the call of God to full-time ministry and risked leaving my secure job and Christian community to join Youth With A Mission. There I obtained a passion for the lost that compels me to this day. My greatest leap of faith was to leave that established ministry to marry Skip and together build a new church in New Mexico. God has greatly rewarded our risks. Our church, Calvary of

Albuquerque, currently ministers to close to twelve thousand people weekly.

What about you? Do you want to end your life with regrets or rewards? Ruth risked her past to reach for a future in the Promised Land. Perhaps it's time for you to take some risks.

Ruth was a risk taker who took a step of faith by asking Boaz to take her under his wing of protection. Today we also must take the risk of faith to come under God's wing for safekeeping. We risk embarrassment from the world; we may risk the loss of our reputation or the loss of a job. Some people risk physical harm by coming to Christ. However, the benefits of belonging to Christ far outweigh the risks. Under God's protective wing was the best place for Ruth, and it is the best place for you and me.

Man is God's risk. Philip Yancey ([Pathway to God's Plan](#) - Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

PROMISE MAKER Ruth 3:10-13

On a romantic cruise from Mexico to Hawaii, lawyer John Peckham and his wife placed a note in a bottle and tossed it into the Pacific Ocean. Three years and nine thousand miles later, Vietnamese refugee Nguyen Van Hoa reached down from a tiny, crowded boat and plucked the bottle from the South China Sea. He found a name and address, a dollar for postage, and the promise of a reward. "It gave me hope," said Hoa, who had escaped from a prison camp in Vietnam. Safe in a refugee camp in Thailand, Hoa wrote the surprised Peckhams. For two years they corresponded. During that time Hoa married and had a son. Recently the Peckhams sponsored the emigration of Hoa and his family. They arrived for an emotional meeting with the Peckhams and a new life from an old bottle.

At Naomi's instruction, Ruth had plucked grain from the fields of Boaz. Then Naomi showed Ruth how to pluck a promise from the law that provided redemption through a near kinsman. Ruth and Naomi found hope in God's promise and anxiously waited to see if Boaz would become their promise maker too.

Before founding the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, William Penn made friends with the Native Americans in that area. One day they offered to give him as much of their land as he could stake out on foot in a single day. Early the next morning he started out and walked until late at night. When he went to claim his gift, the Native Americans were completely surprised that he had taken them seriously. But they kept their promise and gave him a large area of land, which became part of the city of Philadelphia. William Penn simply believed the promise his friends made to him.

Ruth believed God's promise to care for helpless widows, so she walked the long road to the threshing floor to claim a promise from Boaz. Although he was completely surprised at her request, he vowed to fulfill his duty to her. If the Native Americans were true to their word, and Boaz was faithful to keep his promise, how much more will your heavenly Father do what He says? "If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him" (Matthew 7:11, NLT). ([Pathway to God's Plan](#) Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

GIFT GIVER Ruth 3:14-17

"What NOT to Buy Your Wife" is a great article on gift giving written by Herb Frost. He says, "Although the only person a man usually shops for is his wife, the whole experience is a stressful one. Many a man has felt extreme frigid temperatures for a long period based on a poor present decision. As a veteran of these wars, I'm still not sure what to buy my wife, but I'll pass on what not to buy her.

1. Don't buy anything that plugs in. Anything that requires electricity is seen as utilitarian.
2. Don't buy clothing that involves sizes. The chances are one in seven thousand that you will get her size right, and your wife will be offended the other 6,999 times.
3. Don't buy jewelry. The jewelry your wife wants, you can't afford. And the jewelry you can afford, she doesn't want.
4. Don't buy anything that involves weight loss or self-improvement. She'll perceive a six-month membership to a diet center as a suggestion that she's overweight.
5. Do not fall into the traditional trap of buying her frilly underwear. Your idea of the kind your wife should wear and what she actually will wear are light-years apart."

Perhaps Boaz could have used some advice in choosing the perfect gift for his future wife. But as a man of his times, he presented an unusual gift to Ruth as a sign of his love and devotion—a bundle of grain.

In a low-rent district of New York City, a boy in hand-me-down clothes was playing with a broken mirror. Lifting it high in the air, he tilted it slowly back and forth to catch the light of the sun and reflect the beam on passersby. At last he reflected a ray of light into a window two stories above him. Just then a man grabbed him saying, "What are you doing? You're up to some sort of mischief, aren't

you?" The startled boy looked up into the gruff face of his captor and said, "See that window up there? That's my little brother's room. He can't come out in the sunshine and play because he's handicapped. The only sunlight he ever sees is what I shine up to him with my mirror."

Appearances can be deceiving, from boys at play to a couple on a midnight rendezvous on a threshing floor. It's possible that others may misinterpret your gifts and acts of kindness. But that should never stop you from taking the risk of reaching out and offering hope to others. A mirror in a boy's hand offered the gift of light to the dark corner of a brother's room. A handful of grain from Boaz gave Ruth hope for a bright future. Gift givers light up the face and help lighten the load. ([Pathway to God's Plan](#) Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

PROMISE KEEPER Ruth 3:17-18

Hunting enthusiast Scott Harrison tells in a Guidepost article about his best bird dog, Sam. Sam found birds with contagious enthusiasm. If his point said a bird was hiding in a clump of bushes, it was there. He was more than just a bird dog though. Often they would share lazy lunches together in an abandoned apple orchard and then snooze afterwards. Late one afternoon Sam and Scott became separated. Scott called and whistled. No sign of Sam. He had to get back to town for an important appointment, but how could he leave Sam? Then he remembered an old trick a dog trainer had passed on. Scott unbuttoned his jacket, removed his shirt and laid it on the ground under the branches of a small bush, and then left. When Scott returned the next morning, there was Sam, curled up with his nose under the sleeve of Scott's shirt. He looked up and wagged his tail as if to say, "I've been waiting for you all night. But I knew you'd come back."

Scott left Sam a promise—his shirt as a safe place to curl up. Sam could rest throughout the night because he knew his friend would not rest until he found him. Boaz gave Ruth and Naomi a promise they could rest in—six ephahs of barley. The grain gave them a message: Boaz would not rest until he kept his promise and returned with good news.

Ruth learned valuable lessons in waiting. For most of us waiting is hard. The most difficult waiting I've experienced was in childbearing. After five years of marriage Skip and I finally conceived. We announced the news on Sunday, but by the next week I had miscarried. God provided a gift in my time of disappointment—two ladies who promised to pray weekly for God's blessing in my womb. Within three months I was pregnant again. Our son, Nathan, whose name means "a gift," was given to us.

Soon we began trying for another child. Again my friends arrived to pray and wait. After three years no pregnancy had occurred. God prompted Skip and me to go through the painful road of artificial insemination. After six months of treatment we conceived again. After we saw our baby's flickering heartbeat on an ultrasound, we told everyone a baby was on the way. A month later the tiny heart stopped, and I needed surgery.

Years have passed, and I continue to wait on the promise God gave me during my time of loss, "A kernel of wheat must be planted in the soil. Unless it dies it will be alone—a single seed. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives" (John 12:24, NLT). God comforts me with the knowledge that although I won't see fruit from my physical womb again, He will make sure that my spiritual womb is bountiful. I live today in the hope and joy of seeing new lives birthed into the kingdom of God.

Second only to suffering, waiting may be the greatest teacher and trainer in godliness, maturity, and genuine spirituality most of us ever encounter. Richard Hendrix ([Pathway to God's Plan](#) Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

Ruth 4

Devotionals from Selwyn Hughes

- [Ruth 4](#)

Ruth 4:1-22

Every great story has a great ending, and Ruth's story has one of the best. The writer doesn't reveal the "punch line" until the last few verses, where we read that God blessed the romance and marriage of Ruth and Boaz by placing them in the line of the Messiah. Their son Obed was the grandfather of David. But to reach this point, one more dramatic scene was necessary. Boaz had to find out whether his other kinsman was willing to give up his right to assume responsibility for the property of Ruth's late husband and his right to marry her. At a solemn meeting in the town gate, where such business was usually conducted, the other relative passed the right of redemption on to Boaz. Now it was time for wedding bells. The elders of the city pronounced a blessing on Boaz and Ruth. From this anointed union, Obed was born. Naomi was overjoyed, and may have sensed something special about her new

grandson. Although David was still two generations away, God's favor was on this family. Because the writer of Ruth took the time to record a brief genealogy of this portion of the godly line, let's take a look at it. What we discover is the grace of God at work again, using all kinds of people in various situations to accomplish His will. We need to begin with the last part of the blessing the elders gave to Boaz. "May your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah" (Ru 4:12).

We have already met Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah (see the July 11 study). Perez was one of the sons born to Tamar after her affair with Judah. God did not overlook Judah's sin, but he did bless the family line. Ruth 4:21 says Salmon was Boaz's father. Matthew 1:5, in the genealogy of Jesus, reveals that Salmon's wife, and Boaz's mother, was Rahab. She was the Canaanite prostitute who hid the Israelite spies in Jericho (Joshua 2:1ff).

APPLY THE WORD We can't get away from the reality of God's grace this month. The fact is that the story of the Savior's line is saturated with examples of God's grace. (Today in the Word)

Ruth 4:1-22

TODAY IN THE WORD One popular dramatic technique for creating a sense of romantic tension involves placing two characters in a social or religious system of rules that prohibit them from being together. You can undoubtedly see it employed by more than a few television shows and movies available for viewing on this day that is considered a celebration of romance. By defying the oppressive system that threatens to keep the two apart, the love intensifies as the rules are shattered.

By that standard, Ruth and Boaz's love story is a bit ho-hum. Ruth and Boaz each followed the rules of the culture explicitly. They offended no one. They deceived no one. They broke no social codes. Theirs was a nice story, and despite the lack of scandal, it's possibly the most enthralling love story in the Bible.

Today's passage begins with Boaz doing due diligence in extending the responsibilities and opportunities of kinsman-redeemer to the nearest eligible relative. Boaz loved Ruth and wanted to marry her as kinsman-redeemer. But rather than hide the matter, he dealt with it immediately and directly. Boaz presented the kinsman-redeemer, unnamed in the story, with the option of purchasing Naomi's land and acquiring Ruth's hand in marriage, and the man balked at the prospect of including Ruth in the acquisition.

With that, Boaz had the right to pursue marriage to Ruth. Boaz retained his integrity and his allegiance to God. Had the couple skirted the rules and put their own interests ahead of their responsibility to honor God, they would have cheapened their love. Instead, they preserved it with honor and glory to God.

Boaz and Ruth's love for each other affected generations in both directions—Naomi received honor beyond measure with a new grandson and a restoration of family. The generations to come received a king in David, and the world was given the King of Kings in his descendant, Jesus Christ. In those days when everyone did as they saw fit (Ruth 1:1; Jdg. 21:25), at least one family loved and obeyed faithfully.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Not everything done "in the name of love" is automatically justifiable, even on Valentine's Day. If you want to show meaningful love to someone today, do so within God's guidelines. You could show love to a superior in the form of respect and compliant service. You could show love to coworkers by refraining from inappropriate flirtation. You could love someone who is suffering by praying for them and writing a note of encouragement. It might not be the stuff greeting cards are made of, but obedience honors God!

Ruth 4:9-10 Boaz Claims Ruth- Redemption

During the American Revolution, the British Crown offered General Joseph Reed a bribe. He replied at an August 11, 1778, meeting of the Continental Congress by saying,

"I am not worth purchasing, but such as I am, the King of Great Britain is not rich enough to do it."

Boaz was rich enough to take Ruth as his wife. As a close relative of Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, Boaz paid the price out of duty, but apparently he also loved Ruth. The Old Testament redeemer had to be a near relative, be willing, and be able to pay the price. Although love for the redeemed was not a requirement, it sometimes motivated the redeemer. More important, God Himself redeemed Israel because He loved the people.

Roman law added an obligation to the rules of redemption: The redeemed had to repay the ransom price. Redeemed people were in debt to their redeemer until they cleared the liability. Like Joseph Reed, we were not worthy of being purchased, but God loved us so deeply that He bought us with His Son's life. And we can only repay the Redeemer by offering our own lives in return. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Ruth 4:10 Ruth have I purchased to be my wife.

So this exquisite idyll, which began with three deaths and famine, ends with marriage rejoicings. Shall not all God's idylls end thus? Shall it be left to the dream of the novelist only to make happy for ever after? God has eternity at his disposal, as well as time. Only trust Him; "thy darkest night shall end in brightest day."

It is impossible not to read between these lines and see the foreshadowing of another marriage, when the purchase of the Church shall issue in her everlasting union with the Son, in the presence of God the Father. Let us, however, apply these words to ourselves as individuals.

The Lord Jesus has purchased us to be his own, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his precious blood. He has also won back our patrimony; this earth is his; and shall be yet rid of all intruding evil, to shine as the brightest jewel in his crown.

He has received the shoe, the symbol of dominion and authority. He is not only our lover, but our Lord.

He waits to take us to Himself, in a love that shall not cease, and compared to which all the love we have ever known is as moonlight compared with sunshine. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

Ruth 4:1-22

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. - Matthew 1:5-6

TODAY IN THE WORD

On their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1992, Thomas and Ann Johnson recalled how they met and married. "I'd had my eye on Ann for about a year but I was nervous to ask her out. When I heard I'd be shipped out to the war, I found Ann in the library and just asked her to marry me! Turns out she liked me, we got married a week later, and here we are after fifty happy years!"

Boaz would have understood; once he found out that Ruth was willing to marry him, he wasted no time. As in all good stories, an obstacle emerged—another man who was actually a closer relative had the first opportunity to buy the land ... and to marry Ruth. The dramatic tension builds in verses 4-6: now that Boaz and Ruth want to be together, will another relative stand in the way?

To understand the extent to which Boaz modeled faithfulness it's helpful to note that no one was obligated to take the role of kinsman-redeemer. In Leviticus 25, the provision is simply that a relative may do this. In Ruth, the nearest relative preferred not to be inconvenienced, but Boaz accepted the responsibility.

As we conclude our study, let's look at the larger picture. First, Naomi had come full circle. Through the selfless acts of loyal love by Ruth and Boaz, she was restored to fullness. Second, even in the dark days of Judges, God was working to provide Israel with what they needed—godly leadership. The child born to Ruth and Boaz became the grandfather of King David, a man after God's own heart.

Finally, God's salvation extends beyond the borders of Israel. Ruth, a Moabite, is part of the royal line. And a descendant of David reigns forever, Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer. He paid the price to redeem us from sin, and God has exalted Him above every principality and power (see Phil. 2:6-11). He is our Lord, our gracious Judge and Deliverer.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Praise is an appropriate way to end our study this month. To begin, you could focus on praising Jesus as Judge, Deliverer, and Kinsman-Redeemer. You could praise God for His acts of faithfulness, provision, and mercy. You could do this in an extended prayer time, through singing, or even in focusing your thoughts and heart on what God has revealed about Himself in our study this month. As Psalm 92:1 says, "It is good to praise the Lord."

Ruth 4:13-22 Compete Or Converge

[Ruth] bore a son... They called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. —Ruth 4:13,17

Walking through campus one day, a seminary professor came upon a custodian reading the Bible during lunch hour. The professor asked what he was reading. "Revelation," the custodian said. "I'm sure you don't understand what it means," said the professor condescendingly. "Actually, I do," he replied. "It means Jesus wins."

In the face of life's challenges, it's important to remember that ultimately God always wins! And since His plans are always in the

victory lane, it's infinitely wiser to converge with His will rather than compete with it.

In the story of Ruth, God providentially set the stage for Boaz to rescue Ruth and Naomi from a life of poverty and the shame of not having an heir. Ruth could have been bitter about her status as a young widow, and Boaz might have thought that as a foreigner Ruth was not worth his time. But they recognized the hand of God in their circumstances and converged with His plan to provide for her needs. The best part is that their story doesn't end there. Salvation for the world was yet to come through their descendants—first David and then Jesus (Matt. 1:5-16).

We can compete with God's plan and pursue our own agenda. Or we can converge with God's plan and join the winning side. The choice is ours. by Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Choose not a path that God can't bless,
For it will end in sure defeat;
But choose God's path of victory
And with His plans you won't compete.
—D. De Haan

God's plans always lead to victory.

Second Chances

Read: Ruth 4:13–17

He has not stopped showing his kindness. Ruth 2:20

“How can you be so kind if you don't even know me!”

By making some wrong decisions, Linda had ended up in jail in a country not her own. For six years she remained in prison, and when she was set free she didn't have anywhere to go. She thought her life was over! While her family gathered money to buy her ticket home, a kind couple offered her lodging, food, and a helping hand. Linda was so touched by their kindness that she willingly listened as they told her the good news of a God who loves her and wants to give her a second chance.

Dear Lord, thank You that You let us begin again and again.

Linda reminds me of Naomi, a widow in the Bible who lost her husband and two sons in a foreign land and thought her life was over (Ruth 1). However, the Lord hadn't forgotten Naomi, and through the love of her daughter-in-law and the compassion of a godly man named Boaz, Naomi saw God's love and was given a second chance (4:13–17).

The same God cares for us today. Through the love of others we can be reminded of His presence. We can see God's grace in the helping hand of people we may not even know well. But above all, God is willing to give us a fresh start. We just need, like Linda and Naomi, to see God's hand in our everyday lives and realize He never stops showing us His kindness.

Dear Lord, thank You that You let us begin again and again.

God gives us second chances. By Keila Ochoa ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

INSIGHT Placed in the same time period as the book of Judges, the book of Ruth complements the bleak tone of Judges with a hopeful focus on God's unconditional faithfulness. The most central character in this book is Naomi, who receives renewed hope after her own resources are gone. The concept of “redemption” in Ruth refers to the practice of a “guardian-redeemer.” The redeemer restores losses due to tragedy for a close relative. The guardian-redeemer's role might involve some self-sacrifice, for restoring the relative's inheritance or family line meant the possibility of not creating his own family line. In the book of Ruth, after the death of Naomi's husband and sons, Boaz chooses to restore Elimelek and Naomi's family line through marrying Ruth and considering her child as Naomi's. But “redemption” also had a deeper meaning for Israel, pointing them to their hope of God restoring them (often portrayed as redemption; see, for example, Ex. 6:6–8; Isa. 43:1). Ultimately, it was God, not Boaz, who restored Naomi (Ruth 4:14). And from Ruth's family came David (v. 22) and eventually Jesus, who restores all believers into relationship with God. When have you, like Naomi, experienced God's restoration despite feelings of despair? Monica Brands ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative —Ruth 4:14

A wise person once told me, “Never be quick to judge whether something is a blessing or a curse.” The story of Naomi reminds me of this.

The name Naomi means “my delight.” But when bad things happened to her, Naomi wanted to change her name to match her circumstances. After her husband and sons died, Naomi concluded, “The hand of the Lord has gone out against me!” (Ruth 1:13-note). When people greeted her, she said, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (Ru 1:20-note).

Rather than judge her circumstances in light of her identity as a follower of the one true God who had proclaimed unfailing love for His people, Naomi did what most of us tend to do: She judged God in light of her circumstances. And she judged wrongly. The hand of the Lord had not gone out against her. In fact, Naomi had a God-given treasure she had not yet discovered. Although Naomi lost her husband and two sons, she was given something totally unexpected—a devoted daughter-in-law and a grandchild who would be in the lineage of the Messiah.

As Naomi’s life shows us, sometimes the worst thing that happens to us can open the door for the best that God has to give us. — Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Loving Father, help me not to judge Your love for me
on the basis of whether today brings good news
or bad. Help me remember that You desire to use
my circumstances to make me more like Jesus. Amen.

God’s purpose for today’s events may not be seen till tomorrow.

Ruth 4:14a

LIFE ON LEVEL ONE - In an ancient form of Chinese drama, plays were often performed on a two-level stage. On the first level, the drama would unfold in the natural sequence of the script, while on the second level the last act of the play would be acted out simultaneously. This gave the audience a distinct advantage—they knew how the story would end. In fact, it was not uncommon for the audience to yell to the actors on level one, warning them that their attitudes or actions were threatening the good outcomes of the final act of the play.

Life is a lot like living on “level one.” When life on level one is in the dumper, it’s easy to forget that the unseen hand of God is already at work to bring the last act to His glory and our good.

It was like that for Ruth and Naomi. Their “level one” was not a pretty picture. After the unexpected death of her husband and two sons, Naomi was left with her two daughters-in-law as a marginalized immigrant in Moab. In an age when men were the sole providers for their families and sons were a badge of honor to a woman, this was no small problem. The level-one cry of this destitute widow is understandable. “The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me” (Ru 1:21-note).

In Naomi’s excruciating pain, God was at work. Through Boaz’s noble response to Naomi’s destitute need for a kinsman-redeemer, God was in the process of designing a powerful picture of the rescuing work of Jesus to redeem our lives from hopelessness. It was also in God’s providence to place a Moabite woman in the line of Christ to prove that all, regardless of race or background, could be included in His saving grace (Matthew 1:5). How did He get a Moabite woman to Bethlehem where she could marry into the line of Christ? He sent Naomi to Moab to bring one back! Without her knowing it, God was positioning Naomi to be greatly used of God.

So here’s the lesson. When level one is not a pretty picture, remember that God is the manager of all that plays out in our lives. We are not left to the winds of fate. I love the fact that He never wastes our sorrows and that His hidden hand is working to turn our sorrows into significance. Romans 8:28 assures us: “In all things God works for the good of those who love him.” So, chin up! The God who works on level two guarantees a good and glorious ending.

YOUR JOURNEY...Read Ro 8:28 (notes); Ro 8:29 (notes). According to verse 29, what is God’s purpose for my life? How does that affect my view of what is “good” for me? What challenges am I facing on level one right now? How does it help to know that God already knows what level two will bring? If my life were divided into acts like a play, what act would I be in right now? What act has been played out with an outcome that proved to be good for me? Adapted from an article originally written for the Our Journey devotional guide. (Our Daily Homily)

Ruth 4:17 - They called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David

The story ends with poetic simplicity and beauty. "Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife." Naomi at last was comforted indeed. The women of her own people spoke words of cheer to her which unquestionably were full of comfort, as they set forth the praises of the one who had chosen to share her affliction, and had become the medium of her succour. There is a stately simplicity in this story of the issue. It constitutes a record of the Divine movement in the history of the chosen people, for thus the kingly line is ordained, in the midst of infidelity, through faithful souls. All the period of the Judges was characterized by the failure of the people to realize the great ideal of the Theocracy. They had no king because they were disobedient to the One King. Presently we shall hear them clamouring for a king "like the nations," and one will be appointed by whose reign of forty years they will learn the difference between earthly rule and the direct government of God. Then the man after God's own heart will succeed him; and that man will be David, descended from these souls who, in dark and difficult days, realized in their own lives the Divine ideal, as they walked humbly with God. But this Book flings its light much further on. After centuries had run their course, there sprang from this union of Boaz and Ruth in faith and love the Man of Nazareth, Jesus, the One and only King of men, because He was not only a Child born to Mary, descended from these, but also the Son of God in all the fulness of that title. God, in love and might, ever moves on through human failure, in co-operation with human faith. ([Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#) by Morgan, G. Campbell).

Happily Ever After Ruth 4:1-6

Are you a hopeless romantic? Do you love stories that end with a passionate kiss and the words "And they lived happily ever after"? One of the most romantic movies is *The Princess Bride* because it follows the classic fairy-tale formula. Beautiful Buttercup, the damsel in distress, is kidnapped by evil Prince Humperdink, the rival for her affections. She is rescued by Westley, her true love and hero. After a swashbuckling sword fight, they escape, good triumphing over evil. The princess and her dashing savior are seen galloping through a lush field on a pair of pure white steeds. The music crescendos as the narrator says, "They rode to freedom. As dawn arose Westley and Buttercup knew they were safe. A wave of love swept over them and as they reached for each other. . . . Since the invention of the kiss there have been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind." The viewers sigh with complete satisfaction because they know Buttercup and Westley lived happily ever after.

Over the past few weeks the biblical narrator has told us the romantic story of Ruth and Boaz, which is better than a fairy tale because it's true. In this section the hero, Boaz, completes his rescue of the damsel in distress, Ruth, from shame and poverty. Their happily-ever-after ending once again shows God's love and providence at work in situations that seem hopeless.

For Ruth, being turned down by the nearer kinsman turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to her. Because of his rejection she was able to marry the man of her dreams. As Christians, we suffer rejection and persecution from the world, and that's a blessing—it means we're accepted in the Beloved. We have a Savior who completely accepts us, because He knows what it means to be rejected. Jesus was not always accepted: He was not well liked. In fact, after one of His sermons, all of His followers deserted Him except for the twelve apostles.

Did He have political power? No. He was a political failure. All levels of government rejected Him, then conspired to kill Him.

Did He have lots of friends? No. His friends hurt Him, abandoned Him, and denied Him. One of them betrayed Him to death.

Was He respected by His peers? No. His professional peers (the Pharisees and Sadducees) rejected His work.

Despite His rejection by the world, Jesus has changed the lives of millions of men and women across the centuries who have accepted Him into their hearts. How about you? Have you accepted your Kinsman-Redeemer? He's waiting to welcome you into the family.

You are not accepted by God because you deserve to be or because you have worked hard for him, but because Jesus died for you. Colin Urquhart

THE DUEL Ruth 4:7-10

Every good story includes an antagonist (bad guy) and a protagonist (good guy). Books and movies are filled with the classic conflict between good and evil, whether it's Dudley Do-Right of the Canadian Mounties foiling the plans of Snidely Whiplash, cowboys dressed in white hats shooting it out with villains in black hats, or the Star Trek Federation fighting intergalactic battles with the dreaded Klingons.

To become a hero you've got to vanquish a villain or two. Good guys without bad guys are just plain old guys. Think about it. Luke Skywalker would be an annoying adolescent if it weren't for Darth Vader. Superman could hang up the phone (and his cape for that matter) if Lex Luthor stopped threatening the world. And Robin Hood would be just another merry man in green tights if the Sheriff of

Nottingham quit oppressing the poor.

Today we see an ordinary man, Boaz, become a great man when he goes toe-to-toe with his rival. In their duel for the fair Ruth, one walked away a winner and the other a loser.

The emotional pain of rejection stings as surely as a physical slap on the face. It's human nature to want to strike back. Boaz emulated the nature of God in letting the insult to his bride go and letting God take care of the rest. God uses people and circumstances to teach us His ways. We've learned from Boaz to turn the other cheek as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Sir Walter Scott had difficulty with the idea of "turning the other cheek." But Jesus' words took on special meaning one day when Scott threw a rock at a stray dog to chase it away. His aim was straighter and his delivery stronger than he had intended, for he hit the animal and broke its leg. Instead of running off, the dog limped over to him and licked his hand. Sir Walter never forgot that touching response. He said, "That dog preached the Sermon on the Mount to me as few ministers have ever presented it." Scott said he had not found human beings so ready to forgive their enemies.

If sticks, stones or name-calling have hurt you, maybe it's time you learned how to turn the other cheek. [Pathway to God's Plan](#) Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it.

--Mark Twain

THE BLESSING Ruth 4:11-12

"God bless you" we often respond after someone sneezes. This tradition began in the Middle Ages when Gregory the Great instigated a short prayer, or blessing, to be said by someone sneezing. During that superstitious era it was believed that people who sneezed violently were in danger of expelling their souls and that a proper prayer could prevent this danger.

Scripture does not support superstition. In the Bible the "blessing" is a very special gift. It is the act of announcing or predicting God's favor upon another. A blessing was not only kind words of encouragement; it was also prophetic, possessing the power to bring those words spoken to pass. Usually an influential person offered a blessing to someone of less importance. Toward the end of their lives, the patriarchs would give prophetic blessings that pronounced benefits upon their children. Leaders frequently blessed their people before departing. Priests blessed their congregations in the name of the Lord in the form of a benediction.

The townspeople in Bethlehem had observed the budding romance between Ruth and Boaz and witnessed the legal transaction between the kinsmen. As a special wedding gift to the couple, the crowd rejoiced and proclaimed words of blessing. Their words were prophetic and powerful, just as a blessing ought to be.

Bad times are rarely seen as a blessing. Yet for Ruth, the death of her husband resulted in her devotion to God, which changed her destiny forever. Hard work led her to handfuls of grain, which was God's provision. Rejection was turned into redemption.

People in the southern town of Enterprise, Alabama, know something about bad times turning into blessings. There the citizens have erected a monument to an insect—the Mexican boll weevil. In 1895 the boll weevil began to destroy the cotton, the county's major crop. In desperation the farmers decided to plant something not appealing to the weevil—peanuts. By 1919 the county's peanut crop was many times more plentiful than cotton had ever been. In that year of prosperity a fountain and monument were built. The inscription reads: "In profound appreciation of the boll weevil and what it has done as the herald of prosperity this monument was erected by the citizens of Enterprise, Coffee County, Alabama." As with Ruth's experience, growth and success came from struggle and crisis. Adversity can be transformed into blessing. ([Pathway to God's Plan](#) Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

Reflect upon your present blessings of which every man has many;
not on your past misfortunes of which all men have some.

-- Charles Dickens

THE SEQUEL Ruth 4:18-22

Hollywood producers love sequels. They make movies using familiar characters and reworked plots to lure moviegoers back to the theater with films such as Back to the Future 2 or Rocky 3. But sequels usually aren't as good as the original movie because they're not—well—original. Did anyone see Scarlett, the sequel to Gone with the Wind? It was a desperate attempt to recapture the movie magic of Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler's love story. But the on-screen chemistry fizzled, and the movie was a dud.

God in His providence supplied the sequel to Ruth and Boaz's love story before time began. He used the story of Ruth and Boaz as a prequel—a preview of coming attractions. God's sequel to the story of the kinsman-redeemer and his bride is the story of Jesus, the true Kinsman-Redeemer, who came to save the world and redeem His bride, the church. This story has captured the hearts and

minds of millions of people worldwide. This is one sequel worth seeing!

What do people today consider the greatest source of pleasure in their lives? According to a 1989 study reported in USA Today, an overwhelming 63 percent of respondents answered "family." Family is a great source of pleasure to God, too, and the story of Ruth and Boaz shows us how important one family can be. Their descendants were the heirs to the throne of Israel, and they paved the way for our Kinsman-Redeemer and King, Jesus Christ.

God wants to include your story in His genealogy. We can be His daughters and heirs. "But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because you Gentiles have become his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father. Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you" (Galatians 4:4-7, NLT). God has written a happily-ever-after ending for your life story by adopting you into His family and making you one of His heirs. It's a fairy tale come true.

The Son of God became man to enable men to become the sons of God.

-- C. S. Lewis

([Pathway to God's Plan](#) Women's Bible Journal - Heitzig, L and Rose, P R)

Back to the Bible Devotionals Woodrow Kroll

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Ruth 1

Ruth 1:1

Ruth 1:1 Desperate Times by Woodrow Kroll

Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

Desperate Times

Desperation can drive us to many extremes. Comedian Woody Allen characterized our times when he said, "We stand at a crossroads. Down one road is despondency and despair, and down the other is total annihilation. Let us pray that we choose the right road." This kind of desperation sometimes even plagues God's people and causes them to make poor choices.

Elimelech was facing desperate times, and he needed to make some difficult choices. He was struggling to feed his family. A wife and two growing boys needed nourishment, but a famine gripped the land. Famines were often God's way of bringing His people to the point of submission. They were not simply to punish Israel, but to get them to turn from their sins. Yet without clear guidance from God, Elimelech chose to run away. Instead of facing the Lord's judgment on the land and trusting God to provide, he moved his family to a pagan land and raised his children in a society that did not know the God of Israel. He even broke God's law by allowing his sons to marry pagan wives (Deut. 7:3-4). It is very tempting to look for the easy way out of our problems. But any choice that takes us away from God is, in the long run, the wrong way. Elimelech's choice ultimately brought death to himself and his two sons. No matter how desperate the situation, it is always better to face what God has allowed and trust Him than it is to run from our circumstances and go it alone.

If you are experiencing difficult times, make your choices based on clear direction from God. Don't allow a feeling of desperation to steer you in the wrong direction.

Desperate choices are seldom the best choices.

Ruth 1:2-4

Transient or Tenant? by Woodrow Kroll

The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion? Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.

Transient or Tenant?

Time has a way of slipping by quickly. Perhaps you've heard of the fellow who said, "You know, I'm 56. I'm middle-aged!" His wife brought him back to reality when she replied, "How many men do you know who are 112?"

Time slipped by for the family of Elimelech as well. Ruth 1:1 indicates that Elimelech moved his family to Moab with the intent to "sojourn" there. The word sojourn carries the idea of a temporary stay. Elimelech hadn't intended to remain in the land?only to visit a short time until the famine was over. But verse 4 reveals that before they knew it, they had been in the land for ten years. The sons who had gone there as young men had grown up, married local women and eventually passed away, as had their father (v. 5).

Sometimes we intend for situations to be only temporary. We think, Just as soon as the kids are through college, we'll start tithing again. Or perhaps you reason, As soon as I get through this busy period at work, I'll get back to having a daily quiet time. But days turn into weeks, weeks into months and before you know it, circumstances that were only going to be temporary have become a way of life.

Have you allowed something that was intended as transient to become a permanent fixture in your life? Have you been waiting for a more convenient time to do what you know you should be doing now? If time has slipped away for you, don't linger another day "in a distant land." If you're not where you should be, this is the day to do something about it. Don't expect time to stand still just because you do.

Ruth 1:3, 5

Never Alone by Woodrow Kroll

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

Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

Never Alone

A man took his elderly mother out to the cemetery to decorate graves for Memorial Day. After placing a bouquet of flowers on her husband's grave, she wandered among the other gravestones marking the resting places of other family members who had gone to be with the Lord. Finally she stopped, looked her son in the eye and with a wistful smile asked, "What have I done to deserve all this overtime?"

Perhaps Naomi felt the same way. She had left Israel with a husband and two sons; now only she was left?alone, and yet not alone. God had brought into her life two compassionate daughters-in-law, one of whom would follow her all the way back to Israel. Even though Naomi intensely felt the loss of her loved ones, God had not deserted her. He provided, even in a foreign land, those who would love and care for a forlorn widow.

God never really leaves us alone. When He removes those whom we expect to love and support us, He always provides another way for this need to be met. While you may experience the pain of separation, you never need to feel totally abandoned. Sometimes God grants you an unmistakable sense of His company. Other times He uses people around you to be the instruments of His love and comfort. In either case, His compassion never fails and His presence never falters.

Perhaps you have lost the one dearest to you. Maybe you have moved far away from family and friends. Let God fill your life with His presence in whatever way He chooses, and rejoice that He never forgets nor forsakes. Be assured that even though there may be an empty place in your home, there can be a fullness in your heart.

You may feel lonely, but you need never feel alone.

Ruth 1:6

Heading Home by Woodrow Kroll

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

that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread.

Heading Home

A Christian man took his eyes off God and committed a crime. He was arrested and served a seven-year sentence in a penal institution. Through an encounter with a Barnabas-like pastor, however, this man was led to know the restorative power of the blood of Jesus Christ. On the flyleaf of his Bible he wrote, "The soul that comes to Jesus through failure, shame, or pain, by His wondrous love and mercy may soar as high again."

The famine that God sent on Israel had brought a great deal of pain. It had been the primary motivation for Elimelech and his family to migrate to Moab. But for those who remained in the land, this tribulation apparently accomplished its purpose. The people repented of their sins and turned to God. For His part, God graciously restored their food supply. As the reports of Israel's recovery reached Moab, Naomi's desire was turned back toward her homeland. Although God still had work to do in her heart, this decision was the first step in her restoration to Him.

When we have sinned and turned our backs on God, the Lord often sends chastening events into our lives. As our hearts are brought to the breaking point, we sometimes wonder if God will receive us back. Is it possible for someone who has dwelt in a distant land for many years to come home again? The answer is always yes. Even though our sins are like scarlet, they can be washed white as snow (Isa. 1:18).

Have you wandered away from God? Have you been away too long? Do you fear what His response will be if you return to Him? Take heart. Jesus said, "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). Confess your sins, place them under the blood of Christ, and turn yourself toward home.

Repentant sinners always find God has the welcome mat out.

Ruth 1:8

Thy Lovingkindness by Woodrow Kroll

And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me."

Thy Lovingkindness

The great American novelist Henry James, in saying good-bye to his nephew, Willie, said something the boy never forgot. As they parted, he put his hand on the young man's shoulders and remarked, "Willie, there are three things that are important in human life. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. The third is to be kind."

Naomi's daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, apparently had learned that lesson well. As she prepared to part from them, Naomi praised them both for their kindness. They had been kind to her sons, their husbands. And even after they were widowed and no longer had family obligations to their mother-in-law, they continued to show kindness to her. In the midst of a pagan land that practiced a cruel form of worship?even sacrificing little children?God had so moved on the hearts of these two women that their spirit of kindness set them apart from their fellow Moabites.

Kindness should be one of the distinguishing marks of a Christian as well. Frederick W. Faber observed, "Kind words are the music of the world. They have a power that seems to be beyond natural causes, as if they were some angel's song that had lost its way and come to earth. It seems as if they could almost do what in reality God alone can do?soften the hard and angry hearts of men. No one was ever corrected by a sarcasm?crushed, perhaps, if the sarcasm was clever enough, but drawn nearer to God, never." We must never forget that more people have been won to Christ through kindness than fiery sermons or learned arguments.

Who needs to feel the warmth of your kindness today? Do you know someone who has a special need that you can meet? Let your life be set apart by your deeds of kindness. Identify a need. Picture a face. And show your kindness to that person today.

Kindness is love in work clothes.

Ruth 1:11

So Right, Yet So Wrong by Woodrow Kroll

But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

So Right, Yet So Wrong

When Egypt first conquered a land called Nubia, a regiment of soldiers was sent across the desert with an Arab guide. The men suffered extreme thirst. Suddenly, they saw a lake in the distance. It seemed logical to head right for the lake. Although their guide assured them the lake was not real, the soldiers were convinced that it was. It had to be; they could see it. The soldiers decided to kill the guide and then set out to reach the lake. But to their dismay, the water turned out to be only a mirage. Every soldier perished.

What seems logical isn't necessarily right. Naomi presented a very logical argument. It was not possible for her to bear sons to replace Mahlon and Chilion; and even if she could, Orpah and Ruth would not want to wait until these boys were old enough to marry. The obvious conclusion was that her daughters-in-law should return to their Moabite families. That sounded reasonable, so Orpah did. As a result, though, she eventually perished without knowing the God of Israel. Ruth, on the other hand, rejected the logical argument and ultimately found herself drawn into the family of God.

God often doesn't follow the dictates of human logic. That doesn't mean He's illogical, but that His logic transcends ours. The way God does things is not always the way we do things (Isa. 55:8-9). While we are limited in knowledge and power, God is omniscient and omnipotent. While we are trapped in time and space, God is eternal and omnipresent. Our logic reflects our limitations; God's logic reflects His unlimited ability.

Take care when following human reasoning?it may seem right at the time, but "its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12). Always trust God's logic; it's the way of life. To know God's logic you must know His will, and to know God's will you must read His Word. That's where you must begin today.

Logic is only as good as its source.

Ruth 1:14

Super-glued by Woodrow Kroll

Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

Super-glued

A number of years ago a new glue, characterized by an unusually strong holding power, was introduced on the market and sold under a variety of names. Advertisements for this product showed such unusual feats as a car being lifted with a crane while attached only by means of this glue. On another occasion, a full-grown elephant was lifted into the air after having its harness glued to a hoist. The message came through clearly: this super glue bonds in an extraordinary way.

That's the way Ruth bonded to Naomi. Certainly her old life had a pull on Ruth's heart. She was not insensitive to her old customs, her familiar haunts or her Moabite family. But the glue that bound her spirit to Naomi was even stronger. It simply would not let go. She "clung" to her mother-in-law with the tenacity of a super glue. Ruth was committed to a whole new life, not just a change of jobs or a change of scenery. Turning back and separating herself from Naomi was not an option.

This same bonding takes place when we receive Christ as our Savior. The Bible says that there is One who "sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). The apostle Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Rom 8:35). He answers his question a few verses later: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).

If you are feeling abandoned today, at loose ends with everything around you, rest in the assurance that Jesus sticks with you. Christ will cling to you with a tenacity that would put even a super glue to shame. He will never let you go.

When you're glued to Christ, you're glued for good.

Ruth 1:15

Follow Me by Woodrow Kroll

And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

Follow Me

Husbands are notorious for not asking directions. One wife said that her husband and she left a wedding to go to the reception. Not knowing how to find the reception hall, her husband chose to follow one of the other wedding guests rather than ask directions. After numerous twists and turns, the car ahead of them finally pulled into the driveway of their own home. As it turned out, these guests had not planned to attend the reception.

Where a person is going should influence whether or not we want to follow him. Naomi urged her daughter-in-law Ruth to follow the way Orpha, her sister-in-law, had taken. But Orpha was headed in the wrong direction. She was going back to her people and her gods. Orpha had been exposed to the God of Israel while she was a part of Elimelech's family, but when the final decision had to be made, she chose to return to her old way of life. Fortunately, Ruth chose not to accompany her.

Many people are seeking others to follow them, but they're headed in the wrong direction. When we cut through all their assurances and promises, we discover that what they're really offering is to lead us back to enslavement to the world. The apostle Paul urged the Corinthians, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). The same applies to us today. Choose to follow only those who have chosen to follow Christ.

Be careful whom you allow to be your leader. Take time today to make sure you're following someone who honors the Lord. Anyone who is not headed in the same direction as Christ is not headed in a direction you want to go.

Before you follow, know where you're being led.

Ruth 1:16-17

Important Choices by Woodrow Kroll

But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

Important Choices

A sign on the door of a classroom in a junior high school in Kansas declares, "We are not born losers, we are born choosers." How very true. Each day we are faced with choices, some of which have the potential of changing our lives forever.

Ruth faced such choices. She had to choose whether to return to her people with her sister-in-law, Orpha, or to follow Naomi, her mother-in-law. She chose her mother-in-law. She had to choose whether to identify herself as a pagan Moabite or throw her lot in with the people of Israel. She chose the people of Israel. She had to choose to worship the idol Chemosh, which involved the sacrifice of children, or to put her trust in the living God, who gives life instead of taking it. She chose Jehovah. These were important choices, and she made them with a determination that changed her life.

Like Ruth, we are all born outside of God's family. But God graciously gives us the opportunity to make choices that can give us eternal life. Instead of continuing in Satan's kingdom of darkness, you can choose to change your allegiance to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13). You can choose to continue in the deeds of darkness or walk in the light (Eph. 5:7-10). You can choose to search for fulfillment in the world or place your trust in Jesus, who has promised to meet your every need (Phil. 4:19). Like Ruth's, these are crucial decisions and, when made with determination, can change your life.

What decisions have you made? Choose rightly. Choose life. Choose Jesus Christ as your Savior. This is the most important decision of your life.

You always choose best when you choose God.

Ruth 1:20-21

Angry at God by Woodrow Kroll

So she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

Angry at God

A growing problem in the United States is "road rage." Between January 1, 1990, and September 1, 1996, the American Automobile Association counted at least 10,037 incidents of road rage resulting in 218 deaths. An additional 12,610 people were injured. This is

a terrible price to pay for foolishly venting one's anger. Yet it's far more foolish when we become angry at God.

When Naomi returned to her homeland, it was obvious she was angry with God for the losses in her life. When her friends called her Naomi (which means "sweetness" or "pleasantness"), she instructed them instead to call her Mara (which means "bitterness"), because "the Almighty has afflicted me." She lamented that she left Bethlehem with a husband and two sons, but returned "empty." She was angry at God because of what He had allowed.

In God's plan, however, Naomi was actually at the beginning of the most fulfilling time of her life. Soon Ruth would meet and marry Boaz and bear his child. That baby, Obed, would become the grandfather to Israel's greatest king, David, who would establish the lineage of the Messiah, Jesus. What God had allowed to be taken away from Naomi would be replaced with blessings beyond her wildest imagination.

When you experience the grief of losing a loved one—a husband, a wife, a child—it's easy to become bitter and lash out at God. You think it's all His fault. He allowed it to happen. Yet the God who loves you is also the God who sees the end from the beginning. He knows what He is doing. Trust Him. What has begun as a heartache for you will ultimately result in overwhelming blessings.

Sorrow is the garden in which God grows our blessings.

Ruth 1:22

Just in Time by Woodrow Kroll

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Just in Time

According to Business Week, time technicians at the National Institute of Standards & Technology recently switched to an atomic clock based on the vibrations of cesium atoms. It will take 300,000 years to gain or lose a single second. But NIST scientists are working on an even better model: a single mercury ion will be trapped in a vacuum by laser beams and cooled to its lowest possible energy level. The atom's oscillations will then be so stable that the new timepiece should be accurate to within one second in ten billion years.

Yet God's timing is even more accurate than that. He brought Naomi and Ruth back from Moab just as the barley harvest was beginning. This had a twofold significance. By God's good timing, they returned at a season when food would be available for a destitute widow and her daughter-in-law. The law of gleaning (Lev. 19:9; 23:22) allowed the poor to follow the harvesters and gather any stray stalks of grain. In fact, the corners of the field were to be left deliberately unharvested so the less fortunate would be provided for. But it was also perfect timing because, most likely, it was only during the harvest season that Boaz regularly visited his fields. This provided an occasion for Ruth and Boaz to meet and develop a relationship.

God's timing is never off. We may get in a hurry or lag behind, but God is the Master of time. His plans always take place in the "fullness of the time" (Gal. 4:4). Never a moment too soon or a second too late, but at the appropriate time He brings about His perfect will.

Trust your time to God. He is a billion times better than an atomic clock. At the right time, He will open the way for you.

God is never in a hurry because He is in control of time.

Ruth 2

Ruth 2:1

Real Riches by Woodrow Kroll

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech; his name was Boaz.

Real Riches

John Jacob Astor, one of the world's richest men, was a passenger on the ill-fated maiden voyage of the Titanic. When the ship hit the iceberg and it turned out that there was a shortage of lifeboats, the multimillionaire gave up his chance for safety and went down

with the ship. His body was eventually found dressed in a blue suit, with \$2,500 in his pocket. But on that fateful night, as he faced eternity, it mattered little what he possessed.

God provided a rich relative for Ruth who had more than possessions; Boaz had honor as well. The word translated "wealth" in Ruth 2:1 is often translated "might" or "valor" in the Bible. It reflects Boaz's strength of character as much as his financial portfolio. He not only had land and houses, but he also was a man of spiritual valor, a mighty man of integrity, an upright man who had placed his trust in God.

God wants all His children to be rich?but not necessarily in material possessions. When the apostle Paul reached the end of his life, all he owned was an extra cloak and some books (2 Tim. 4:13). Barnabas sold his land and gave the money to the needy (Acts 4:34-37). But these men weren't really paupers. In their poverty, they had a richness of peace and joy that many who are wealthy only dream about.

What keeps you up at night? Worry over your stocks and bonds, or agonizing over the souls of those who are lost? What are you striving for? Material wealth that will one day be left behind, or a spiritual wealth that will last for eternity? Make the right choice and then set the right priorities.

If all you have is money, then you have nothing at all.

Ruth 2:2

Finding Favor by Woodrow Kroll

So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

Finding Favor

Sometimes we try to buy people's favor?and even God's favor. We're like the little girl who won five dollars for her memory work in Sunday school. Later when the pastor's wife congratulated her, the girl proudly announced, "And I put it all in the morning's offering!" "My, how wonderful!" the pastor's wife exclaimed. "I'm sure God will be pleased." "Yes," the child replied, "now maybe He will let me do some of the things I want to do!" This little girl was looking for the wrong kind of favor in the wrong place.

Ruth was also looking for favor?but not the kind you buy with money or flattery. She wanted to come by her favor honestly. She trusted God to bring her to someone's field who would accept her as she was. Even though she wasn't an Israelite, she hoped someone would allow her to glean what was left in the fields. The favor she sought would be the result of the gleaner's grace, not Ruth's glory.

This is the kind of favor God offers. Nothing we possess or do can influence Him to look with favor on us. We cannot buy His favor or manipulate Him by our behavior. His favor comes because He loves us, even while we are yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). Through His Son, Jesus Christ, God has made it possible for our sins to be forgiven (Eph. 1:7). God's favor is given because of who He is, not because of who we are.

Have you found favor in God's sight? You can, right now, right where you are, by confessing that you are a sinner and asking Jesus Christ to be your Savior.

God's favor can be neither bought nor sold, but it can be enjoyed.

Ruth 2:5-6

Not by Chance by Woodrow Kroll

Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab."

Not by Chance

Nothing happens by chance. Take, for example, the blue whale. Longer than three dump trucks, heavier than 110 Honda Civics and with a heart the size of a Volkswagen Beetle, this magnificent creature requires four tons of krill a day (that's three million calories) for its sustenance. Even a baby blue whale can put away 100 gallons of milk every 24 hours. When a blue whale surfaces, it takes in the largest breath of air of any living thing on the planet. Its spray shoots higher into the air than the height of a telephone pole. How did such a creature come into existence? Not by chance, you can be sure, but by a sovereign Creator's plan.

Neither did Boaz by chance come to his fields just in time to meet Ruth. He certainly didn't come with any intentions of finding a wife, but that was God's plan. Ruth, too, was simply doing what she needed to do for survival. In fact, until she spoke with Naomi, she wasn't even aware of Boaz's relationship with the family she had married into (2:19-20). But in God's plans nothing happens by chance.

Sometimes our circumstances seem to come about by chance. We think, If I had made this decision instead of that decision, my life would be different. Or, If I'd been here instead of there, this wouldn't have happened. While we cannot use this as an excuse for making poor decisions, we can have the confidence that nothing happens by chance. Take care of your responsibilities in a way that honors God, and He will work out His plan through you.

If you are struggling with the "what ifs" of life, put them aside. Be assured that God is working out His plan for you, and it won't be by chance.

Since God is in charge, nothing is by chance.

Ruth 2:7

No Free Lunches by Woodrow Kroll

"And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."

No Free Lunches

There's a delightful story about a king, many years ago, who called his wise men together and gave them this commission: "I want you to compile for me the wisdom of the ages and put it in book form so we can leave it to posterity." The men left the king and worked hard. Sometime later they returned with 12 volumes. The king looked at the imposing volumes and said, "It's too long and I fear people will not read it. Condense it!" Still later the wise men returned with only one volume. Again the king said, "Condense it." They then reduced the volume to a chapter, then to a page, then to a paragraph and finally to a sentence. When the king saw the sentence, elatedly he announced. "Gentlemen, this is truly the wisdom of the ages." The sentence simply said, "There are no free lunches."

Ruth recognized that sage truth as well. She did not wait for someone to come along with a handout; instead, she worked from "morning until now." She was diligent in her labors and made a very favorable impression on the other harvesters.

God expects those who bear the name of Christ to honor Him through their work. Paul taught that "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). He also reminded the Christians at Thessalonica, "Nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you" (v. 8). A slacker is not only a disgrace to himself, but he brings shame upon the Lord as well.

Consider your job a blessing, not a burden. No matter how menial it might seem, see your work as an outlet to honor the Lord. Approach it every day with enthusiasm and dedication. After all, even the ability to work for a living is a gift from God (Eccl. 5:18-19).

Work can be worship when you do it for God.

Ruth 2:8

Bite by Bite by Woodrow Kroll

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women."

Bite by Bite

Nebraska, where I live, has a lot of cattle ranches, and every once in a while a cow wanders off and gets lost. If you were to ask a rancher how a cow gets lost, chances are he would reply, "Well, the cow starts nibbling on a tuft of green grass, and when it finishes, it looks ahead to the next tuft of green grass. After it finishes that one, it looks ahead and starts nibbling on the next one, and then it nibbles on some grass right next to a hole in the fence. When it sees another tuft of green grass on the other side of the fence, it nibbles on that one and then another one?and the next thing you know, the cow has nibbled itself lost."

Boaz knew how easy it was to drift into danger. His fear for Ruth was that she might wander into the field of some unscrupulous person who would take advantage of her. Therefore he admonished her, "Stay close by my young women." In other words, don't

stray from the company of my female workers and you'll be safe.

Sin works on the same principle. Seldom does Satan open a big hole in the fence for us to dash through into sin. He always begins by tempting us with a little "tuft of sin," and that's followed by a bit bigger one, and another one, until we lift our heads and realize we have nibbled ourselves far from God. Bite by bite, we have wandered away until we're lost.

If you find yourself in that situation today, do two things. Stop right where you are and look around to see where God is. Then, take comfort. The One who loves you more than anything else in the world has come to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Admit that you have wandered and confess that you have sinned, and He will help you find your way home again.

Be careful where you take the next bite.

Ruth 2:9

Divine Protection by Woodrow Kroll

"Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

Divine Protection

An Alpine mountain climbing team came to a perilous gap in the ice. The only way to get across was to step into the outstretched hands of the guide who had met them on the other side. The first climber hesitated a moment as he looked into the gloomy depths below, where he would certainly fall to his death if anything went wrong. Seeing his hesitancy, the guide said, "Don't worry. In all my years as a guide, my hands have never yet lost a man!"

With this same assurance, Ruth placed herself in Boaz's hands. God provided someone who would protect her. Boaz took steps to keep her morally safe by commanding the young men not to touch her. He also provided for her physical protection. Under the hot Mediterranean sun, the danger of heat stroke was a very real possibility. But his young men brought jars of water to the field, and Ruth was free to refresh herself whenever she wanted. In Boaz, Ruth found a safe haven from the dangers around her.

God offers the same to all His children. There is never a moment when we are excluded from His divine protection. That does not mean we can never be hurt. It doesn't mean we will never die. But God's divine protection extends to our ultimate safety—the protection of our souls. These can never be harmed. They are safe in the care of Jesus.

Rejoice in God's divine protection. Be confident that you are safe in His care, no matter how difficult your circumstances might be. God is the keeper of your soul.

Life can hurt us but it cannot ultimately harm us.

Ruth 2:10-11

A Good Report by Woodrow Kroll

So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before."

A Good Report

When Jim Wright, the former speaker of the House, resigned, he quoted Horace Greeley: "Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today may curse tomorrow; only one thing endures—character."

When Boaz justified his kindness toward Ruth, he did not say that he had heard of her great beauty or her brilliant intellect. No mention is ever made of these things. But what spoke volumes to Boaz was what he had heard about Ruth's character. He had heard about her relationship with Naomi and Ruth's willingness to leave her own family and country in order to take care of her widowed mother-in-law—even though she was a widow herself. It's not surprising that Boaz was impressed with Ruth. He knew that a woman with this kind of character was rare and precious.

God is not interested in our fame or fortune; He cares nothing for our popularity or wealth. What God cares about is our character. The trials that He allows to come into our lives—even the loss of loved ones, as Ruth experienced—are for the ultimate perfection of our character.

What do people hear about you? Do you try to impress others with your financial portfolio, your athletic abilities or your great intellect? These are all gifts from God, so where's the brag factor? What about your character? That's what God is looking for in us. Strive to be known for what you are, not what you do. Character counts.

Concentrate on your character; everything else will take care of itself.

Ruth 2:12

Under His Wings by Woodrow Kroll

"The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

Under His Wings

Birds use their wings for many purposes other than flying. In times of danger, a mother bird's wings provide a feathered canopy of protection. When darkness falls and the temperature drops, it is under their mother's wings that young chicks find the warmth they need to make it through the frosty night. As the rain plummets to the earth, these same wings provide dry shelter. For those who are young and vulnerable, the wings of their mother promise the safety and security they need.

This is the safety and security Boaz alluded to as he assured Ruth that her kind and unselfish deeds would not go unrewarded. When she abandoned the security of her homeland to care for her mother-in-law, Naomi, Ruth may have wondered about her future. She had left everything that spelled safety, but she found something even greater—a refuge that exists only under the wings of the God of Israel. The word translated "refuge" means "to flee for protection." Under the shelter of God's wings, Ruth found the protection she needed.

God never abandons His own. In times of danger and distress, He spreads His wings of protection and comfort over us. Enveloped by His pinions, we do not need to fear the difficult circumstances of life. Personal storms may rage around us, but we are safe under the canopy of God's constant care. The psalmist assures us, "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge" (Ps. 91:4).

If you are going through painful times, nestle yourself under His wings. Take comfort in the fact that God's protection is spread over you. Nothing can touch your life without His express permission. Nothing can threaten you without His express protection.

God's protection is more than a match for our problems.

Ruth 2:14

More Than Enough by Woodrow Kroll

Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back.

More Than Enough

In 1949, Mr. Jack Wurm was broke and out of a job. One day as he walked along a San Francisco beach, he came across a bottle with a piece of paper in it. The note was the last will and testament of Daisy Singer Alexander, heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune. It read, "To avoid confusion, I leave my entire estate to the lucky person who finds this bottle and to my attorney, Barry Cohen. Share and share alike." In one fell swoop, Mr. Wurm was transformed from a penniless indigent to the possessor of over \$6 million dollars in cash and Singer stock. Suddenly, he had more than enough.

Ruth experienced the same. As a destitute widow, she hoped to glean enough barley to provide a few morsels of food for herself and Naomi. Suddenly, because of the kindness of Boaz, she had enough to eat and even some to take home to her mother-in-law. She moved from bare necessities to an abundance she could never have dreamed of.

When we encounter Christ, the same is true for us. We come to him with nothing to offer. Isaiah says that "all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). We are morally broken and spiritually bankrupt. However, in a moment of time, as we open our hearts to receive the Lord, we are forever changed. We are washed clean, and we are filled to overflowing with the eternal riches of Christ. We are changed from spiritual paupers to coheirs with Christ.

Don't count your wealth in terms of dollars and cents. As a child of the King, you have more than enough to be forever satisfied.

Only One who is Himself more than enough can truly satisfy.

Ruth 2:22-23

Abide With Me by Woodrow Kroll

And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field." So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

Abide With Me

When travelers visit a foreign land, they are often issued a visa. A visa, in essence, is an agreement with that government that you will stay no longer than a set number of days or months. If that time expires, you must either renew your visa or leave the country. A visa is not for those who plan to live in a country; it's only for those who plan to visit.

Ruth did not have a visa. When she followed Naomi back to Israel, she had no intention of ever returning to Moab. The Bible says she "dwelt" with her mother-in-law. This verb implies establishing a permanent residence. She was not just there for a visit; she was there for good.

When we come to Christ, it should be with the idea of taking up permanent residence. We do not come to sample the weather and see if we like it. Having tried everything else, we don't "try Jesus." Instead, we come as those ready to surrender allegiance to all other "countries" and to make Jesus our permanent home. Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4). The consistency and permanency about our relationship set it apart from a mere visit. Furthermore, this commitment is reciprocated as Jesus promises to do the same for us. He abides in us, as we abide in Him. Only then can we bear much fruit for God's glory (v. 5).

Do you want to enjoy life to the fullest? Then walk consistently with Christ. Be regular in your prayer times and Bible reading. Be faithful to your local church. Let it be obvious that you're not a visitor, but have taken up residence in Christ.

Those who abide in Christ don't need a visa for heaven.

Ruth 3

Ruth 3:4

Waiting for Instructions by Woodrow Kroll

"Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do."

Waiting for Instructions

A few years ago, a \$100,000 mistake was made because someone failed to wait for complete instructions. As reported in Entrepreneur magazine, a dispatcher for a cement company was instructed to send a fleet of trucks to Portland. For some reason he failed to wait for the rest of the message. The result: eight trucks of cement went to Portland, Oregon, when their real destination was 3,000 miles away in Portland, Maine.

Naomi wisely cautioned Ruth to wait for instructions?complete instructions. Ruth was to approach Boaz after the festivities at the threshing floor. Uncovering his feet was not an improper flirtation. As a Middle Eastern custom, it was a way for a woman to ask that she be taken into the man's family as his wife. There was nothing improper here. Afterwards, Naomi prudently advised her, "Don't hurry. Don't try to second-guess what Boaz might have to say. Simply wait, 'and he will tell you what you should do.'"

God also promises to give us complete instructions. The psalmist said of the Lord, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye" (Ps. 32:8). The God who knows the beginning from the end, who holds the past, present and future in His hands, wants to communicate His total plan for our lives. But it seldom comes all at one time. Instead, God reveals a little bit, and then we wait. He reveals a little more, and again we wait. But through this process, we become aware of God's complete instructions for our lives.

Are you eager to know God's plan for your life? Don't rush ahead of Him. Be patient and wait for Him to reveal His instructions. Then go only so far as He reveals. When you no longer know what God would have you do next, stop and wait for Him to tell you more. Give Him time; God will make it all clear.

Waiting for God's instructions is time well spent.

Ruth 3:8

In the Dark by Woodrow Kroll

Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.

In the Dark

Most crimes take place in the dark. In the dark of the night a thief slips into a home to steal. In dimly lit parking garages assailants lurk about for their next victims. In the blackness of alleys gang members hatch their plans.

Depraved men love the darkness because it hides their wicked deeds (John 3:19). And here was a perfect opportunity? a man alone with a woman in the dark. No one would have noticed; it was midnight and everyone was sound asleep. Nor probably would they have cared, had they taken note. Ruth was a foreigner and, worse yet, a Moabitess. Since the days of Moses when Moabites refused to allow passage through their land and even hired Balaam to curse the Israelites, no love existed between these two nations. Furthermore, Boaz was wealthy, and everyone knows that the rich take what they want. But Boaz was a man of honor and integrity? even in the dark.

God expects you and me to behave in the dark the same as we do in the light. It makes no difference if no one is watching. It doesn't even matter that our misdeeds will never be discovered. There is still One who knows and cares. The psalmist reminds us, "the darkness and the light are both alike to [God]" (Ps. 139:12). The darkness is not the time to take a chance; it's the time to show your character.

Make sure God can trust you in the dark. Ask Him to give you the consistency of character that is unaffected by your circumstances. Be as faithful to the Lord when your actions are hidden as when they're out in the open. Someday, you'll be glad you did.

What a person is in the dark is what a person truly is.

Ruth 3:11

A Virtuous Woman by Woodrow Kroll

"And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman."

A Virtuous Woman

Blaise Pascal, a 17th-century philosopher and theologian, declared, "The virtue of a man ought to be measured, not by his extraordinary exertions, but by his everyday conduct."

The people of Bethlehem had noticed Ruth's daily conduct, and that earned her the reputation of being a virtuous woman. She lived during the period known as the Judges, an era of Israel's history when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6). It was a time of loose morals, and, as she approached Boaz in the dark of night, her good intentions might have been misunderstood. But Boaz knew her reputation for virtue, and he had seen her conduct as she gleaned among the reapers. Based on this information, he had no question about her motives and no qualms in agreeing to do all that she requested.

God wants His people to live virtuous lives no matter what the rest of society does. Peter admonished, "But also for this very reason [the corruption of the world], giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue" (2 Pet. 1:5). In the midst of a society that appears to enjoy wallowing in the pigsty of immorality, it is imperative that we live with virtue. Why? Because virtuous living keeps us in close fellowship with God. In addition, it sets us apart as a witness to the cleansing power of Jesus Christ. At a time when once again "every man is doing what is right in his own eyes," you and I need to be distinguished as people of virtue.

Make sure your daily conduct reflects faith and virtue. In every respect, deal honestly with those around you. Keep not only your actions but also your thoughts from impurity. By doing so, you'll build for yourself the best reputation of all? not of shrewdness or business acumen, but of virtue.

A life without virtue is a life without value.

Ruth 3:17

Do Not Go Empty-Handed by Woodrow Kroll

And she said, "These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'"

Do Not Go Empty-Handed

Recently the Barna Research Group announced its findings that the number of evangelicals in the United States is only about 6 percent (decreasing from 12 percent in 1992). An earlier study indicated that as many as 40 percent of Americans have no religious affiliation and another 31 percent are Christians in name only. That means that at least 71 percent of the U.S. population are living in spiritual poverty. It's obvious we have a vast mission field right in our own backyard. As we send and support missionaries overseas, are we overlooking those in spiritual need nearby?

Many people in Israel lived in physical poverty, and Boaz was known for his generosity. But in his concern for those elsewhere, he didn't overlook those in need in his own backyard. One of those was his own kinswoman, Naomi. As Ruth prepared to go home from her labors in the field, he gave her six ephahs (approximately five bushels) of barley to take home to her mother-in-law. Out of the compassion of his heart, he was burdened that the young Moabitess who gleaned in his fields not go home empty-handed.

Spiritually needy people are everywhere. The majority of Christians, however, are neither able nor called to leave their occupations and homes to serve on foreign mission fields. But that doesn't mean that our neighbors must go home empty-handed. All around us are people living well below the "spiritual poverty line." Next door, around the corner or in the apartment across the hall are men, women and children who need to know about the Savior. The fields are there, and they're ready for harvest.

Make sure your friends and neighbors don't go home empty-handed. Be alert to opportunities to pass on the Bread of Life. Prayerfully ask God to lead you to someone with whom you can share your spiritual bounty. And then be like Boaz: give away what your friends need most.

If you're content to go to heaven alone, you may not be going at all.

Ruth 3:18

Sit Still by Woodrow Kroll

Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."

Sit Still

American culture is built around the oft-quoted phrase, "Don't just stand there, do something!" As a result, our lives are filled with busyness. We rush from meeting to meeting. We chauffeur our children from hockey practice to tennis lessons to shopping at the mall. We pull in to the nearest fast-food drive-through, place a quick order, and then we're off again. It's no wonder we can identify with Blaise Pascal, who said, "All the troubles of life come upon us because we refuse to sit quietly."

Naomi knew better. Her advice? sit still, stay quiet? was filled with the wisdom of experience. Ruth had come to Naomi and told her all that took place at the threshing floor. It was obvious to Naomi that God was at work. How things were going to turn out, however, she didn't know. But she did know that this was not the time to rush here and there to find the answer. Instead, it was the time to sit quietly and listen intently for the Lord's response. At the right time, God would bring everything to pass.

When much is at stake, do you have difficulty sitting still? If you will remember to wait patiently, you will see a number of positive things happen. In stillness you'll discover God in new and deeper ways (Ps. 46:10). You'll also be able to hear God when He speaks to you in a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:12). Furthermore, you'll have the wisdom and strength to act when the time is right (Isa. 30:15).

Sit still and let God work in your life. Trust Him to accomplish what is best for you in His own timing. Listen quietly and you will hear His answer.

While you rest, God will work.

Ruth 4

Ruth 4:5-6

Nearsighted by Woodrow Kroll

Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance." And the near kinsman said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

Nearsighted

Myopia is an eye condition in which visual images come into focus in front of the retina, causing distant objects to be blurred. We commonly call this being nearsighted. We can see things close up but not far away.

People also can be nearsighted in their understanding of God's plan for their life. The relative who was closest to Naomi and Ruth turned down the opportunity to redeem Naomi's land and marry Ruth because he feared it might jeopardize his own inheritance. He could see clearly what he had; however, he failed to discern what might be in the future. He chose to protect his current possessions, and thus missed the opportunity to be the grandfather of a king and the ancestor of the Messiah. Consequently, he passed off the scene without even a mention of his name.

Many individuals today do the same. They pour everything they have into this life—all their time, talent, energy and money. Yet they fail to invest in eternity, as Jesus instructed us to do (Matt. 6:19-20). They clearly discern what they have, but they fail to see that there's something even more in store for them. They focus on the present and neglect the future. They give up all the wonders of heaven for the temporary security of earthly treasures. And when the winds of history pass, even their names are forgotten.

Don't suffer from spiritual myopia. As a good steward, take care of what God entrusts to you today. But don't let today's possessions blind you to eternity's possibilities. What lies ahead is worth far more than anything you hold in your hands today. The best is yet to come.

Don't let what is good rob you of what is best.

Ruth 4:9

Twice Owned by Woodrow Kroll

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

Twice Owned

A father and son built a toy sailboat. Before launching it, the father tied a string to its stern to keep it from sailing too far. The boat performed beautifully, but before long a motorboat crossing the lake cut the string, and the sailboat drifted out of sight. The boat couldn't be found anywhere. A few weeks later the boy passed his favorite toy store and saw his lost sailboat in the window. He ran inside to claim it. The store owner replied, "You may have been its maker," he said, "but as its finder, it now belongs to me. You may buy it back for fifty dollars." The boy was stunned at the cost, but he set about earning the money.

Months later he walked into the store and handed the owner \$50. As he left the store, he held the boat up to the sunlight. Its colors gleamed. He mused, "I once owned you, but I lost you. Now I've bought you back. That makes you twice mine.

The land that Naomi's husband owned had been lost, perhaps sold to provide food during the famine. According to Jewish law, the nearest relative to her was responsible to buy back that land if possible. Boaz agreed to be that redeemer after the nearest kinsman refused.

This is a picture of what Christ has done for us. As our Creator, He made us and owned us, but by our rebellion we sold ourselves into sin. It took Jesus' death—an unbelievable price—to buy us back. Thus, for those who receive Him as Savior, we are twice owned.

We do not belong to ourselves; we have been bought with a price. That price was the blood of Christ. Rejoice at the willingness of Jesus to buy us back. With gratitude, give your life to Him in worship and service.

To be twice bought is to be forever owned.

Ruth 4:12-13

The Path to Fruitfulness by Woodrow Kroll

"May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from

this young woman." So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.

The Path to Fruitfulness

Fruitfulness doesn't just happen by chance. Some time ago, an agricultural school in Iowa reported that the production of 100 bushels of corn from one acre of land, in addition to the many hours of a farmer's labor, required four million gallons of water, 6,800 pounds of oxygen, 5,200 pounds of carbon, 160 pounds of nitrogen, 125 pounds of potassium, 75 pounds of yellow sulfur and other elements too numerous to list. It takes a lot of elements working together to produce fruitfulness.

Ruth discovered the same truth. Her life in Moab had been empty. The years of marriage with Naomi's son had been barren. But when she committed herself to the God of Israel, her life began to bear fruit. By faith she left her homeland and God gave her a new home. In simple trust she went out to the harvest fields, hoping to find someone who would allow her to glean after his reapers, and she found favor in the eyes of Boaz. Seeking to follow God's leading, she married Boaz and bore a son through whom the Messiah came to redeem the world. From a life of barrenness, God brought her, through faith, to great fruitfulness.

Faithfully trusting the Lord is still the only pathway to true fruitfulness. Jesus promised, "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit." The world offers other options, but none result in lasting fruit. Only as we place our faith in Christ for daily guidance will we bear fruit for eternity.

Begin each day with reading God's Word. As He reveals His mind to you, faithfully obey everything you understand and ask for more wisdom when you don't. That's the way to bear fruit that will last forever.

Fruitfulness is the natural by-product of faithfulness.

Ruth 4:14

Better Than Seven Sons by Woodrow Kroll

Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him."

Better Than Seven Sons

A popular magazine carries a section in which it offers its readers the opportunity to send pictures of their part of the country and tell why they think it's the best. Month after month, people send in beautiful photos from all over the United States, and invariably someone will comment about their particular area, "It can't get any better than this."

That's what the women of Bethlehem were saying to Naomi. To have a son was wonderful. It was the responsibility of a Jewish son to care for his mother when his father passed away. He was her security and companion in old age. But these women agreed; Ruth was better than seven sons. She had done all that any son would have done and more?she had borne Naomi a grandson, the assurance that she would be taken care of in her latter years. It couldn't get any better than this.

This is also what Christ has done for us. Through His blood He has cleansed us from our sins. The past is forgiven. Through His Word we have the wisdom to live day by day. And through His Spirit we have the power to be His witnesses wherever we are. Through His resurrection we have the assurance that we, too, shall be raised beyond the grave to spend eternity in heaven. Everything is taken care of?past, present and future.

Have you thanked Jesus yet today for meeting your every need? There is nothing that can be added to what He has done and will do for you. It just can't get any better than this.

Only a complete Savior can make us complete.

PAUL VAN GORDER
on Ruth
The Old Testament Presents...
Reflections of Christ

The book of Ruth provides a postscript to the Judges. The story occurred during this time of strife and bloodshed. A famine swept through the land. Even Bethlehem, the most fertile of places, was affected. This beautiful narrative, involving a family, is a graphic picture of the gospel story-- the redemption provided in Christ Jesus.

- Chapter 1: The family, having left the "house of bread," is *in a far country*.
They long to return.
Two words characterize chapter 1-- yearning and returning.
- Chapter 2: Ruth is *in a field*, seeking and serving.
- Chapter 3: Ruth is *at the door*. She has been received.
- Chapter 4: What better place could Ruth be, than *within the house*, chosen and rewarded?

Old Testament names often have great significance. The Hebrew language puts much importance upon names, both those of men and those of God. Following are the principal characters of Ruth and the meanings of their names. For further study, associate the meanings with the story and note the typology.

Elimelech...	"My God is King"
Bethlehem..	"House of Bread"
Moab.....	"Under the Curse"
Naomi.....	["Pleasant"]
Mahlon.....	"Sick"
Chilion.....	"Pining"
Orpah.....	"Fawn"
Ruth.....	"Friendship," or "Beauty"
Mara.....	"Bitter"
Boaz.....	"Strength"

Ruth was a Moabitess, not an Israelite. God had commanded, "[A] Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord" (Dt 23:3). Moabites were cut off from the covenant relationship Israel had with God. This is also the position of Gentiles by nature, and it describes us before we were saved by grace. Paul wrote, "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" (Eph 2:12). Moab was under the curse of God.

Ruth Deciding (Ruth 1).

oignant words of Ruth to Naomi appear in verse 16, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn away from following thee; for where thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God." This is like the believing sinner's experience as stated in Romans 10:9,10, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Ruth Serving (Ruth 2).-

Ruth went out into the field to glean ears of grain. Having made her decision to go with the people of God to Bethlehem, the "house of bread," she now takes the place of service. Romans 6:22 says, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." The apostle Paul declared to the believers at Corinth, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2Cor 4:5).

Ruth Resting (Ruth 3). -

What a beautiful scene! Ruth lay at the feet of Boaz, as was the Eastern custom. She was assured that he would do for her all that she needed. We read in Hebrews 4:10, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his works, as God did from His."

Ruth Rewarded (Ruth 4)

What an amazing story of grace! Boaz took Ruth unto himself as his wife, but when he did, all the inheritance he had purchased

became hers. From that precious union came children and much blessing. The New Testament picture? "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" (Eph 1:3,4).

Naomi's words to Ruth are striking. "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" (Ruth 3:18).

Every Christian has this assurance from God's Word: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Php 1:6). Ruth already had some measures of barley that were proof and pledge of the fullness that was to come.

The author of Hebrews said, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" [Heb 12:6]. Naomi, who with her family had gone into the far country away from the "house of bread," comes home, driven by loneliness and hunger. "She had heard in the country of Moab how the Lord had visited His people in giving them food" (Ruth 1:6). We are told that "they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest" (Ruth 1:22). In the far country, she had lost her husband in death. Her two sons became ill and died. How often God allows heartache, tragedy, and trouble to beset the path of His children who have strayed! He uses chastisement to bring them back to Himself.

It helps to become thoroughly familiar with the principles that were applied when Boaz redeemed the land that had belonged to Elimelech and restored it to Naomi and Ruth. I suggest that you read carefully the "law of the kinsman-redeemer" as stated in Leviticus 25.

The following observations are significant:

- "Free from the law, O happy condition;
- Jesus has died and there is remission.
- Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
- Christ has redeemed us, once for all!"

■ RUTH

■ OUTLINE OF THE BOOK--

■ THE NAMES IN RUTH--

- Let us now turn to a study of the typical teaching of this tender Old Testament story.

■ I. RUTH: A Portrayal of the Believing Sinner--

■ II. RUTH: A Picture of Christian Experience--

- Review the brief chapter outline with the following scriptural corroboration in mind:

■ III. RUTH: A Portrait of the Fullness of Redemption--

- Three great words may be placed over this brief Old Testament story: Pardoned! Purchased! Placed!

■ IV. NAOMI: An Example of Comfort for Backslidden Saints--

■ V. BOAZ: Picture of Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer--

1. *Kinsman-redemption involved both person and inheritance.* - The levitical law stated, "After he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him" (Lev 25:48). We read tremendous news in Galatians 4:4,5, "But, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Boaz redeemed the parcel of land so that he might restore it to Naomi. He also removed all of the encumbrances that were necessarily upon her and Ruth.
2. *The redeemer had to be a relative.* - "Any that is near of kin unto him of his family may redeem him" (Lev 25:49). The Lord Jesus took our nature upon Himself to redeem us. Although He is called "the last Adam" [1Cor 15:45], He was not tainted by Adam's transgression in any way. He had no sin in Himself, for He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb 7:26). Yet, He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Php 2:7).
3. *The redeemer had to be able to redeem.* - The law not only required the redemption of the property but also included the obligation to raise up seed to the deceased. As the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz was not only to buy back the property, but he was also to take Ruth as his wife so that she might bear children. In Ruth's case, the first one in line to do this was unable to redeem. [But Boaz, whose name means 'strength,' was able. In our case, the first Adam could not redeem us.] But there is One! "Their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is His name" (Jer 50:34). Here is what our great Kinsman-Redeemer said in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." Look also at Jn 10:18, "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." Our Redeemer is able to redeem!

4. *The kinsman-redeemer had to pay the price in full.*

We can only skim the surface [in this brief overview]. Christ is seen prominently in the book of Ruth as the Kinsman-Redeemer. In the words of one biblical commentator, "Add a Ruth postscript to the living epistle of your life; make Jesus your Lord, and rest in Him."

[By God's grace, Ruth became a link in the line through which our Kinsman-Redeemer entered the world (Ruth 4:13-22; Mat 1:1-6). ([OT Reflections of Christ - Ruth](#))

Robert Neighbour Ruth — A Dispensational Study

Some Striking Personages

- A Famine in the House of Bread (Ruth 1:1).
- The Departure for Moab (Ruth 1:2).
- The Return (Ruth 1:6).
- Ruth Accompanies Naomi (Ruth 1:16).
- Ruth's Recompense (Ruth 2:12).
- The Kinsman Redeemer (Ruth 2:1,20,21).
- Spiritual Lessons (Ruth 1:19).

The Book of Ruth is a priceless jewel in the inspired Word. It throbs with interest, when read as a simple story of the times of the judges; but it is passingly full of meaning, when studied in the light of dispensational forecastings. Taken dispensationally, the Book of Ruth gives us first of all the picture of Israel's scattering among the Gentiles, and of her great losses and sufferings there. All of this has been accomplished. Next comes the return, which is still future. Israel, even now is beginning to lift up her eyes toward her former land. Zionism is most significant. Men may think that Israel will be entirely swallowed up and digested of the nations; but that will never be the case. Israel must abide the day of her restoration to her land.

The next picture is that of Ruth, the Gentile, blessed through the good offices of Naomi. Many think of Ruth as a picture of the Church, but while there is a striking analogy; yet it must be remembered that the Church is not exclusively "Gentile." Again the Church is made up during the time of Israel's scattering and not after her return. Therefore, we have placed the type as significant of the enlarged Gentile blessing that will come to the nations through the good word and testimony of Israel, after the Church is taken out and Israel is grafted in again.

Striking Personages

The striking personalities, which are brought out in this marvelous story of Ruth, are the following:

1. Elimelech — "My God is King." Elimelech was the husband of Naomi. His name suggests that he was under the patronage of God as King. It seems that the life of Elimelech belies his name. If God was his King, why should he have left for the land of Moab? If God was his King, why should he die in want in a foreign land?

Even so, do we who bear the name, Christian, often belie our name. If all things are ours, in Christ Jesus, why do we not possess our possessions? Why live as servants, if we are sons; why live as peasants if we are Kingdom heirs?

2. Naomi — "My lovely one." Naomi was wife of Elimelech and mother of two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Naomi held a holy position in Israel. She was an inheritor of the kingly line. She was greatly beloved. In Israel she would have been honored, in Moab she lost her husband and her sons, and desired to be called, Mara "bitter," instead of Naomi "My lovely one."

3. Mahlon — "Sick." Here we have the son of Elimelech and Naomi. It is passing strange that the son of "My God is King" and of "My lovely one," should be named "Sick." Yet so it is. When children of God wander from their standing in Christ Jesus and sojourn in the world's country they are sure to fall heir to children such as Mahlon — "sick." Sick of heart and sick of body, must all of those become who leave the plains of full redemption for the low lands of carnal appetite.

4. Chilion — "Pining." In the name of Chilion the second son of Elimelech and Naomi, comes the wasting away of the soul that is afar from God.

In Egypt the children of Israel could do no more than hang their harps upon the willow trees, as they wept their sad estate — pining in weakness and pining for home and God.

The prodigal son in the far country was saying, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger." The prodigal was "pining." Weakened in body, spent in a foreign land and longing for home.

5. Orpah — "Hind" or "Fawn." Orpah is Naomi's daughter-in-law. She married one of the sons of Elimelech and Naomi. Orpah was beautiful, but alert. She was of seeming worth, and had some love for Naomi; "she kissed her mother-in-law." But, she could not stand the test of full allegiance and like the kind she was, she fled away and was gone.

6. Ruth — "Beauty." Ruth, the second of the daughters-in-law, followed Naomi all the way. She stands for that beauty which is the result of grace. She is beautiful because she is the Lord's very own. To those who are the destined Bride of our Lord, the Heavenly Bridegroom speaks and says:

'Thou art all fair, My love,
There is no spot in thee.
Thou hast ravished my heart,
My sister, My spouse."

And it is thus that the queen should be beautiful.

"So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty
For He is thy Lord,
And, worship thou Him."

7. Boaz — "In Him is strength." Boaz was the "kinsman redeemer." He is the one who weds the Moabitess, Ruth. He it is, who takes her from her penury and want, and enriches her with all things.

Boaz is the type of our Lord. He is the only One Who cared to redeem us, and the only One Who could. He makes his tryst with us, and we are brought to Christ as a Gentile Bride. He is our strength and also is become our salvation.

A Famine in the House of Bread

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab" (Ruth 1:1).

A famine in the land. What land? Bethlehem-judah. This is a strange paradox, for Bethlehem means "The House of Bread;" and who ever heard of a famine in the house of bread?

But it is always so. When sin comes in, the bread supply is cut short. Unto Israel, God said: "O that Israel had hearkened unto Me, I would have fed her with the finest of the wheat." The trouble lies in our disobedience.

Whenever Israel proved faithless, God punished her by withholding the rain. With Israel, famine was the fruitage of disobedience. Moses, time and again, gave this warning to the people before he died. Time and again Israel felt the truth of Moses' warning words. Her whole history reveals the chastenings of a loving God.

"Son of man, when the land sinneth against Me, by trespassing grievously * * then will I send famine upon it" (Ezek. 14:13).

This lesson has its application to the Gentiles. The things which happened unto Elimelech and Naomi, and to Israel were written for our admonition upon whom the end of the ages is come.

It is still true that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." If Christians wander away from God, God will assuredly cause them to suffer in one way or in another. Because of failing to discern the Lord's body, in the commemoration of His broken body and shed Blood, for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (see I Cor. 11:30).

When sickness comes our way, and is God's chastening for sin, the first thing we need to do is to humbly confess our sins. Surely then, "if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him;" surely then, "the Lord will raise him up."

If our hearts are right with God there will never be a famine in the house of bread. In the world, we may have tribulation; we may be reviled and persecuted and we may suffer as Christians. However, if our hearts are right with God, we will always be able to sing and praise 'mid the suffering; and we will find not famine, but "a table in the midst of our enemies;" and, our cup will run over, while goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life.

The Departure for Moab

"And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there" (Ruth 1:2).

Naomi met many reverses in the land of Moab. There Naomi lost her husband and her two sons. She also lost all of her possessions. She went out full, but she came back empty. She could do no more than sum up all her sorrows in the one word Mara, "bitterness."

This is all a picture of Israel. Israel sinned and Israel was scattered among the Gentiles. For twenty-five hundred years the Israelites have been under the feet of the Gentiles. Even to this day, Israel has been trampled down.

As we pen these words, three thousand years have passed since Naomi sojourned in Moab; and at this very moment the type of Naomi's sorrows is being fulfilled before our very eyes.

The printing press cannot adequately inform us of the agonies of Israel at this very moment. In Poland and the far East their agonies know no bounds. May our God haste the time of their deliverance.

The Return

"Then she arose with her two daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab, how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread" (Ruth 1:6).

Israel has lost much in the land of the Gentiles, but a remnant according to grace has been sustained and that remnant will surely return to the land. When Israel returns, the Lord will have restored the early and the latter rains. The famine will have passed. The very mountains and the hills will melt with new wine. The plowman will overtake the reaper and the sower of seed will follow close upon the gatherer of the grain. In those days God will rebuke the devourer, for Israel's sake; He will not destroy the fruits of their ground.

Concerning the days of Israel's return, Jehovah says: "Neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field (Malachi 3:11).. for ye shall be a delightsome land." (Malachi 3:12)

Then will Israel sing:

"I've reached the land of corn and wine,
And all its riches freely mine,
Here shines undimmed one blissful day,
For all my night has passed away."

Naomi wanted the people to call her Mara, "bitter;" but she could not be so called, for the Lord dealt bountifully with her and restored her more than she had formerly possessed.

So Israel shall be a royal diadem in the hand of her God. In the day of her return to her land, God says to her:

"Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken,
Neither shall thy land be called Desolate:
But thou shalt be called Hephzibah,
(My delight is in her),
And thy land Beulah, (married)."

Ruth Accompanies Naomi

"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" (Ruth 1:16).

When Israel is restored in the land, then the Gentiles will seek her favor.

"If the fall of them (Israel) be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness." (Ro 11:12)

So also the sojourn of Elimelech and Naomi, and their diminishing brought riches to the Moabites, but how much more their fullness, for Ruth the child of the Moabites, became heir to all the wealth of Boaz. In the days of Israel's return, when her glory is restored, she will become the joy of the whole earth. Then will ten men out of all the languages of the earth, take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew saying (just what Ruth said): "We will go with you, for we have heard that the Lord is with you."

Israel's gates shall then be open continually; "They shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles." "For the sons of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee, shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, 'The city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.'"

Ruth's Recompense

The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust" (Ruth 2:12).

How fully did God reward Ruth. Boaz had heard of how Ruth had kindly treated her mother-in-law; and how she had left her father and mother and the land of her nativity; and how she had come to a people whom she had not known heretofore. Surely, Naomi's return brought blessings to Ruth. Several lessons may be gleaned.

1. Ruth had been kind to Naomi during the time of Naomi's great grief. In Moab Naomi had lost husband and sons and all her possessions; but Ruth had loved her, and succored her.

There are certain nations which have always given hospitality to the Jews. These nations have succored Israel, and secured unto Israel every privilege of citizenship. Such nations surely have some marked blessing coming to them. "For he who blesseth thee, I

will bless," saith Jehovah.

2. When Naomi came back to her own, Ruth came with her. There are certain nations which will aid in bringing Israel home again.

"Who are these that fly as a cloud,
And as the doves to their windows?
Surely the Isles wait for Me,
And the ships of Tarshish first,
To bring thy sons from afar,
Their silver and their gold with them,
Unto the name of the Lord thy God,
And to the Holy One of Israel,
Because He hath glorified thee."

3. When Naomi was back in the land, then Ruth the Moabitess was blessed through Boaz, the kinsman redeemer. When Israel is back in the land then the nations which have succored Israel will be fully blessed.

"And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,
And kings to the brightness of thy rising."

Then shall the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The Kinsman Redeemer

"A mighty man of wealth * * and his name was Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be HE of the Lord * * the man is of near kin unto us, one of our next kinsman" (Ruth 2:1,20,21).

The story would not be complete without a special word concerning Boaz.

1. Boaz was near kin to Naomi. Jesus Christ is of the lineage of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and David, and was the Son of Mary; and yet He is the Son of God.
2. Boaz was a mighty one; Jesus Christ is the Almighty One. Boaz was a man of wealth; Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory. By Him and for Him were all things made, and in Him all things are held together.
3. Boaz paid the ransom and redeemed unto himself, Naomi and all her possessions; and he also bought unto himself Ruth, to become his wife.

Jesus Christ hath redeemed us from sin. We are His and all that we have is His. He loved us and bought us with His Blood.

"I will sing of my Redeemer,
And His wondrous love to me,
On the cruel Cross, He suffered,
From the curse to set me free."

Spiritual Lessons

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem" (Ruth 1:19),

We have been gathering more the dispensational lessons. In conclusion let us note some spiritual lessons, with which the whole Book abounds.

1. Ruth's blessed choice. She chose between Moab and Bethlehem, and between her people and Naomi. She weighed the matter wisely, and decided irrevocably. Her lot was cast once and for all with Naomi and the people of God. "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God: where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

All of us must face the same parting of the ways, that came to Ruth. We must decide for or against God. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Ruth chose wisely, Moses chose wisely. May God help each one to decide for Him. "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life" (Deut. 30:19).

2. Ruth serving. It is a beautiful sight to behold Ruth gleaning in the fields of Boaz. Oh, that we may serve Him! "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He may send forth reapers into His harvest." Surely if we will go forth as Ruth went forth, weeping, we shall come again as she came, bearing our sheaves with us.

3. Ruth rewarded. First of all Boaz says to her, "Hearest thou not my daughter? go not to glean in another field" (2:8).

Christ is calling us to serve Him, and to serve Him alone.

Following this admonition of Boaz comes the assurance of reward. "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel" (Ru 2:12, 13).

Those who reap in the Master's field's receive wages, and gather sheaves unto life everlasting.

4. Ruth married. "Ruth the Moabitess have I purchased to be my wife." These were the words of Boaz. And it is true. "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Wife hath made herself ready." This will be the blessed announcement of the angels, one of these times. "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Just one final word of admonition — "Hearken, O daughter and consider and incline thine ear; forget thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him." Ruth has given us an example of following fully the admonition above. Shall we not do as she did?

Handfuls on Purpose by James Smith, 1943 RUTH

RUTH, THE DECIDED PILGRIM. Chapter 1.

"Choose this day."

The book of Ruth, like the Song of Solomon, is full of grace and truth. It evidently belongs to the times of the Judges, perhaps to the early days of Gideon, when the Midianites prevailed and "destroyed the increase of the earth," thereby causing a "famine in the land" (Judges 6:1-6), which constrained this "certain man" to sojourn in Moab (Ruth 1:1).

Ruth 1:2, "And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there." Famine drove them there, and Moabitish connection kept them there. "In the days of adversity consider"—for adversity will either drive a Christian nearer his God or nearer the world. If faith does not cling to Him the flesh will drag from Him. Did ever any believer make anything of going to Egypt for help? What did Lot make? or the Prodigal, or Elimelech? Naomi lost both her husband and sons through her journey to Moab. It was all right to go to Egypt for help when Joseph was there, because there was corn in Egypt; but now the true Joseph has been exalted to Heaven, and woe must come upon them that seek help apart from Him. Those who go to the world for help instead of to Him are likely to come back like Naomi a weeping widow bereft of all, or like the Prodigal, repentant in shameful rags.

"Then she arose" (Ruth 1:6). The Prodigal also remembered his father's house in the far country, and said, "I will arise." "Naomi heard that the Lord had visited His people, and given them bread," and this was gospel to the afflicted wanderer. She believed the tidings, and her faith brought her back. She heard, she believed, she acted. "Faith comes by hearing." The Gospel of God is good news from a far country. Man has wandered far from God. The good news has reached the world, that God has visited the people in the person of His Son, and given them bread—"The Bread of Life." Oh! that the weary, famished, broken-hearted wanderers who have heard the good tidings would, like Naomi, "Arise." Many have heard this blessed Gospel in the far country of alienation, but how few have believed the report; the majority seem content to dwell in Moab, and feed on the husks that the swine do eat.

"She went forth OUT of the place" (Ruth 1:7). There cannot be a returning without a separation. "Come out from among them, and be you separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17). If Heaven would be gained the world must be shunned; if you would eat at the Father's table the swine-troughs must be forsaken. "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Choose whom you will serve. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him" (1 John 2:15).

"Surely we will return with you unto your people" (Ruth 1:10). This is the language of Ruth and Orpah, and seemingly both alike earnest. But those who would follow the religion of Jesus Christ must endure trial, and to stand must be decided. There are many Orpahs who, through adversity or excitement, run well for a time, but by and by they forsake, like Demas, because they love the world, and not infrequently do such sever themselves, like Orpah, with the kiss of pretended friendship. Rest, in the Moab of this present evil world, is what rebel man would like; but Matthew 11:28 is God's way.

"And Naomi said, Why will you go with me?" (Ruth 1:11).

The motives of every professed disciple must be tested. No earthly inducement is offered. No worldly preferment can be gained. "I am too old to have an husband." Undying love alone to the Person of Jesus will spurn every worldly temptation and go forward.

"Behold your sister has gone back" (Ruth 1:15). Why? Was not Bethlehem in her eye? Ah, yes! but Moab was in her heart. "Remember Lot's wife." There is no neutral standing; it must be either back to your people and your gods, or "your people shall be my people, and your God my God." It becomes those who name the Name of Jesus to depart from all iniquity. There may be mouth profession where there is heart division, and to trust in profession is to lean on a shadow.

In Ruth 1:7 Orpah went out; in Ruth 1:15 we see her gone back. The going back of one will always prove an additional trial to another; but see how Ruth overcomes the temptation. She said: "Entreat me not to leave you." What decision there is in the words and tone of her reply, and why so decided, and why did Naomi cease to try her? Because she was "steadfastly-minded" (Ruth 1:18). The double-minded are unstable. Her heart was fixed. Would that all the disciples of Jesus were like-minded. She could truly say: "One thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling" (Philippians 3:14). And did she not gain the prize of the high calling when she was made the wife of the wealthy Boaz? "Let no man take your crown" (Rev. 3:11).

Every true believer in Jesus can use the language of Ruth in a deeper spiritual sense. They can say: "Where You go I will go, where You lodge I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, Your God my God." They can also add: "Where You die I have died, and there have I been buried (but now risen again, and nothing shall part You and me. Neither life nor death, nor any other creature shall be able." Every Gospel hearer makes their choice either to go "out" or "to go back." What is your choice? "Will you go with this man?" was asked of Rebekah. Her reply was, "I will go." In Luke 14 they began to make excuse; in 2 Chronicles 30:10, "they laughed them to scorn."

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem" (Ruth 1:19). Can two walk together except they be agreed? Here we are reminded of the two on their way to Emmaus. Naomi and Ruth walking together is a beautiful picture of our fellowship one with another on our way to the heavenly Bethlehem (house of bread) with the mutual understanding that naught but death can part us; but our walk with the Lord Jesus death cannot even interrupt. "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19).

Bethlehem may represent the Church; so we read, when they came to Bethlehem all the city was moved about them. There was joy in the house when the Prodigal came back: there is joy among the angels when one sinner repents. This joy is real, because the Church is a family in nature as well as in name.

But they say in astonishment: "Is this Naomi?" (Ruth 1:19). What a change, few perhaps can recognize her. Ah! the far country experience is generally a sad one, the pleasant is turned into bitterness, plenty transformed into poverty, fullness gives place to emptiness. She has to confess, "I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty" (Ruth 1:21). So with the Prodigal. He gathered all together, but he came home empty, and if the servants did not know him, the father did, and that too a long way off. You remember how the man came back that went down to Jericho and fell among thieves.

If a Christian backslides down into the world, how can he escape being robbed of all he possesses, robbed of his peace, his joy, and his testimony, and when the Lord brings him back (for the Lord will bring him back), it will be in sorrow, shame, and in bitterness of soul, but yet Ruth may be with him, a child of the far country, an experience that will be a blessing to him in the future.

Now, Naomi in reviewing her willful wanderings, has to acknowledge that "the Lord has testified against me" (v. 21). He testifies against every backslider. Are you as near the Lord as you used to be? Is He testifying against you? Return, O wanderer, to your home!"

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER I.

I. A God-Dishonoring Choice (Ruth 1:1, 2). Elimelech means, "My God is King." Why, then, should he go to Moab, and come under Chemosh, the fire-God of the heathen? When we fail to trust the true God we come under the power of the God of this world.

II. A Miserable Experience (Ruth 1:3-5). Naomi lost her husband and two sons in the far country. Forsaking God for worldly advantages and material prosperity will surely bring soul misery.

III. A Soul-Moving Story (Ruth 1:6). "the Lord had visited, and given them bread." Such is the Gospel, the story of Divine supply for the needy.

IV. A Testing Time (Ruth 1:7-13). "She went forth." Faith leads to definite action. Her action powerfully influences others. Ruth and Orpah are both deeply moved. "They, seeing your good works" (Matthew 5:16).

V. A Final Decision (Ruth 1:14-18). The one follows no more, the other clings as for very life. The unstable kiss and go back. The steadfastly minded leave all and press on.

VI. A Humbling Confession (Ruth 1:21). "I went out full, but come back empty." Yes, we need to be emptied that we might be restored to faith in God. But, thank God, the way back is still open.

VII. A Hearty Welcome (Ruth 1:19). "All the city was moved." To come back to a life of simple trust in God is to come into the warmth of a home. Such a back coming is always seasonable (Ruth 1:22)—the beginning of harvest.

RUTH, THE HUMBLE SEEKER. Ruth 2:1-12.

"Seek and you shall find."

"Naomi had a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth" (Ruth 2:1). Then why did she go to Moab instead of coming to her wealthy kinsman? Why do many in the time of trial forsake the Fountain of living water and go to broken cisterns? Boaz means strength. What foolishness it is then in the hour of weakness to forget the friend that is strong. Our kinsman Redeemer is a mighty man of wealth, and if I speak of strength, lo! He is strong.

Perhaps the spirit of independence and self-will restrained Elimelech and his wife from asking help from Boaz. They would shift for themselves rather than bow to beg; but what disappointment it brought, what a sorrowful failure it proved. It is always so if we are too proud to let our requests be made known unto God. He may allow us to follow our own stubborn way until we have spent all the strength and energy we had. Then shall we be glad to come back in our emptiness, and be thankful for the gleanings from the fields of our rich kinsman. "You have not, because you ask not" (James 4:2).

Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean" (Ruth 2:2). Ruth may here represent an anxious soul in search of the truth. She has forsaken her old companions and her gods. "Left all," but she has not yet found rest to her soul; but like an earnest seeker, she is not ashamed to gird herself with the gleaner's apron. Those who are ashamed of the truth of God's Word are those who don't know its sacred worth. Many would be glad to get the corn of the heavenly Bethlehem for their souls, but they are ashamed to confess their anxiety by appearing as a gleaner or a seeker. Rather than seek they starve. They deem it prudent that no one should know their need. Ruth did not need to be driven to it, or even persuaded; she went because she desired to go. When any one is really anxious about their souls they will not need to be compelled to search the Scriptures.

Notice also that Ruth knew where to go to glean. "Among the reapers" (Ruth 2:3). This is the most likely place to find. Where is a troubled honest seeker most likely to find the needed blessing? Is it not by following after the ministry of those who are "reapers," those who know what to bring in, and what to leave out. As in Leviticus 19:19 some, heedless of this command, gather in all, they don't rightly divide the Word.

"Her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz;... and behold Boaz came" (Ruth 2:3, 4). "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord" (Psalm 37:23). Many a seeker has been constrained to use language like this. "They happened just to light on a part of Scripture that talked about Jesus, and as they went on, wondrous revelations were made." Behold the Master comes and talks with them. While Ruth was gleaning Boaz appeared, and after saluting his servants (for there is mutual love and confidence between Boaz and his workers; he comes with grace in his heart and a blessing on his lips, and his servants bless him; so is it with the willing servants of Jesus, mutual confidence and mutual blessing) he inquires, "Whose damsel is this?" (Ruth 2:5) "The Master is come and calls for you" (John 11:28). His compassionate eye rests kindly on the anxious stranger. He draws near, he speaks, "Hear you not, my daughter" (Ruth 2:8). It is quite possible for one to be so busy seeking that they do not at first hear the voice of the Master. His words to the seeker are full of grace. "Go not to glean in another field, but abide here."

The law allowed her to glean (Leviticus 19:9+), but only grace would say, "Abide here." Here the Master has found the seeking one. The Good Shepherd seeks until He finds. When a seeking sinner is earnestly following the "reapers" and searching the field of revelation the Master is sure to meet him, and bless him with that grace that fills His heart, and constantly flows from His lips. His grace is good news to the weary gleaner. Grace came to Ruth by Boaz. He knows how to speak a word to the weary.

"Go not to glean in another field" (Ruth 2:8). The field of carnal reason will offer you only chaff and stubble. If you abide in Me, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Grace brought to Ruth far above what she could ask or think. Not only "liberty," but "protection." "He charged them not to touch her" (v. 9). Such is the privilege of all those who share this grace "wherein we stand."

Now, what effect had this manifestation of grace upon Ruth, did it make her self-confident and boastful? Oh, no!

"She fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground" (Ruth 2:10). When a weary, heavy laden soul sees the exceeding riches of His grace self is bowed to the ground. When Saul met the Lord he fell to the earth. It is not the wrath of God that leads us to repentance, but His goodness. The hammer of the law may break the icy heart in pieces, only grace can melt it, but it is easiest melted when broken. After being bowed down with a mighty sense of unworthiness, she asks, "Why have I found grace in your eye, I a poor stranger, you a mighty man of wealth" (Ruth 2:10). "Grace," and oh, such grace! "Why?" Just because He is gracious. It is a sure sign that grace is received and enjoyed when this question is so spontaneously asked, "Why have I?" There is astonishment that such unworthiness should be so highly favored. These are the first feelings of the new born soul. "Herein is love" (1 John 3:1).

And Boaz said, "It has been fully showed me all that you have done unto your mother" (Ruth 2:11). "I know your works" (Rev. 2:2). It has been fully showed Him (Jesus) all we, have done, whether good or bad. "Inasmuch as you did it unto these, you did it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40). Naomi was the friend of Boaz. Is it not comforting to remember that He knows all the little deeds of kindness we do, no matter how much the blinded world may misjudge our acts?

"Where He may lead I'll follow,
My trust in Him repose;
And every hour in perfect peace,
I'll sing He knows. He knows."

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 2:1-12.

I. Her Great Humility (Ruth 2:2). In desiring to become a gleaner she shows her willingness to take the place of a poor one. But she would rather do that than go back to Moab. Her separation from her old life was complete. She is not ashamed to take the place of a seeker.

II. Her Good Fortune. "Her hap was" (Ruth 2:3). She may have gone out trembling, but the guiding Spirit of God was with her, as He is ever with those who have turned their backs upon the far country and its gods. It was while she was seeking that she met the mighty man of wealth.

III. Her Character Searched Out (Ruth 2:5-7). The master considers her case. Nothing is hid from him. "It has been fully showed me," he said. "I know your works, and labor of love."

IV. Her Path Made Plain (Ruth 2:8). "Go not, abide here." All fear is now dispelled by the assurance of his grace. Truth-seekers in the field of His Word will find grace upon grace.

V. Her Grateful Acknowledgment. "She fell, and bowed, and said," etc. (Ruth 2:10) "Why have I?" Just because he is gracious. She could not plead that she deserved such grace, but she thankfully acknowledged it.

VI. Her Heart Comforted. (1) Comforted with the assurance that he knows all about her (Ruth 2:11). (2) Comforted with the assurance that he is in full sympathy with her (Ruth 2:12). He desired for her refuge and rest under the wings of Jehovah. All this our heavenly Boaz (Jesus) gives to them that trust Him (Matthew 23:37).

RUTH, THE SUCCESSFUL GLEANER. Ruth 2:13-23.

"Grace reigns."

It now becomes the subject of grace to acknowledge the blessing received. Ruth said, "You have comforted me, You have spoken friendly (to the heart—margin) unto your handmaid" (Ruth 2:13). When the Master speaks He speaks home to the heart. He well knows the trouble is there; He came to bind up the broken-hearted. Ruth's confession of grace received just opened the channel wider for the outflow of grace, for Boaz said unto her, "At mealtime come you hither, and eat of the bread" (Ruth 2:14), the bread provided by Him for His servants. She now enjoys the privilege of the servant sitting at the Master's table, eating the Master's bread in fellowship with the Master's servants.

"She sat beside the reapers" (Ruth 2:14). No doubt these were seasons of rest and times of refreshing (Isaiah 28:12) to this weary laborer; and, moreover, "He reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed" (Ruth 2:14)

How sweet to get the bread fresh from the Master's hand. This is, indeed, soul-satisfying grace. Many get their bread at second-hand, and are rarely satisfied. Ruth's was a hand-to-mouth existence, but it was from His hand to her mouth, the hand of the mighty man of wealth.

What a lovely little picture is here of those memorable times of blessing wherein our Lord and Master refreshes the hearts of His servants while they are bearing the burden and heat of the day. When He invites them to "Come and dine" (John 21:12), and they sit down with Him, and receive from His own hand those things which He has provided for them, "My God shall supply all your need" (Philippians 4:19). Yet although Ruth had experienced great grace, there is still more to follow, for it is all of grace from beginning to end. Salvation by grace, and the life of faith, are beautifully manifested in this touching story. Ruth offers no excuse, but thankfully receives all He gives. She does not dishonor Him by thinking He is giving too much. Many Christians dishonor the mighty Son of God by living more like paupers than princes.

"All things work together for good" (Romans 8:28). While Ruth is busy gleaning, Boaz is busy planning for her comfort and success. "He goes before" (Matthew 28:7). Boaz commanded the young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and let fall also handfuls on purpose for her." What words of grace are these. Gleaning among the sheaves is the privilege of those who have found favor in the sight of the Master; and what rich sheaves of promise we have in the field of His Word! But only believers have the liberty to glean here (Ephesians 2:12), and according to your faith be it unto you. Those also who have found grace in His sight find many an unexpected handful that has been dropped on purpose for them. And notice, these handfuls did not fall by chance, they were each a gift of his grace. So our blessed Master does not leave His servants to the caprice of blind chance, or to pick up

what joy and comfort they may; but many a rich handful He drops on purpose to comfort and cheer them in their work. Gleaning among the greedy and the selfish is most arduous, miserable work, and such is the worldling, seeking satisfaction in other fields. But how different in the field where grace reigns! There the handfuls are dropped on purpose. If you go to glean on other fields be sure the handfuls will cease. Jesus says, "Follow Me."

Now we read that she "beat out that she had gleaned, and took it up" (Ruth 2:17). While gleaning in the field of Revelation, among the thoughts of God, how apt we are to gather also the chaff and straw of the foolish thoughts of our own evil hearts. The chaff and straw may increase the bulk, but they will not increase the value of what we may have gleaned. The wheat is precious in proportion as it is pure. So there is much need for the beating out, and this can be best done where Ruth did it—in the field. If, like her, we are more anxious for quality than quantity, then by comparing Scripture with Scripture the truth of God will be clearly beaten out. This is the fine wheat, take it up, and let the chaff go to the wind and the straw to the fire. Preach the Word; if you can't eat the chaff yourself, don't give it to another.

It is also worthy of notice that "she brought forth, and gave her mother" (v. 18) not only what she had gleaned, but also the prepared corn which she had received direct from the hand of Boaz (Ruth 2:14). She had received it all through grace, and she kept nothing back. If Naomi represents "pure religion," why does it lack so much? Is it not because many of the gleaners keep back part of the price, laying up for themselves while the kindred of Jesus are in need?

Then Naomi said, "Where have you gleaned today?" (Ruth 2:19). Ah! she had been with the "mighty man of wealth," and in the fat pastures where the handfuls are dropped on purpose. Ruth answered, "The man's name is Boaz." (Ruth 2:19). That was enough. When servants come out from the presence of Jesus to speak of His Name they come as those bearing much precious seed; there is a heavenly beauty and freshness about them, so that some may be constrained to ask: Where have you gleaned today? But the answer immediately follows: We have been with Jesus, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace.

Ruth went home and told her friend what great things Boaz had done for her and promised to her. Those who value the grace and fellowship of Jesus will also value the privilege of telling others what His grace has done for them. "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul" (Psalm 66:16).

OUTLINE OF Ruth 2:13-23.

Ruth went out empty, but she came back laden with blessing and beaming with joy. So much so that Naomi was constrained to say, "Where have you gleaned today?" (Ruth 2:19). The secret of her success lay in this—

I. She had been with a mighty man of wealth (Ruth 2:1-19). Like Christ, Boaz had (1) a wealth of possessions; (2) a wealth of influence; (3) a wealth of grace.

II. She had been with a near kinsman (Ruth 2:20). She knew not of the near relationship, but he did. The kinsman had the right to avenge or redeem. Our Kinsman Redeemer came not to condemn, but to give His life a ransom for us.

III. She had been with one who understood her need. He spoke to her heart (Ruth 2:13, margin). This is always the manner of our Redeemer, for He knows what is in man.

IV. She had been with one who was not ashamed to acknowledge her publicly (v. 14). "She sat beside his reapers: and he reached her parched corn." He gave her a time of refreshing from his own presence. Ruth never says "No" to the gifts of his grace.

V. She had been with one who planned for her good. His eye was over all the field, and all were ready to do his bidding. So handfuls were dropped on purpose for her, "according to His will" (Romans 8:28). They are blessed indeed who come into touch with the unsearchable riches of Christ.

RUTH, THE RESTFUL BELIEVER. Chapter 3.

"Rest in the Lord."

Then Naomi said, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for you?" (Ruth 3:1). Ruth had found favor in the sight of Boaz, and had tasted the exceeding riches of his grace, but she had not yet found the rest of unbroken fellowship. She was not yet in the yoke with Boaz by the marriage tie. "Take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29). This was the rest that now remained for Ruth. Union to the mighty man of wealth is the almighty remedy for her poverty. Are there not many timid believers who have rejoiced in the grace of Jesus but cannot yet call Him My Lord, My Shepherd?

The only way to abiding communion and uninterrupted fellowship is Ruth's way, "faith and obedience." She believed all that Boaz told her, and did all he bade her (v. 5).

"Behold he winnows barley tonight" (Ruth 3:2). This is not the reapers' work, they have gone to their rest. Now He comes whose fan is in His hand, He will thoroughly purge His floor. Every day's work has to be winnowed by the Master, and to the servants of Christ this is a source of comfort, for with the barley, if much labor, there is also much chaff. So they are glad to have this work purged before it reaches the garner, knowing that they are rewarded for the wheat, and not for the chaff, whose end is the fire because there is no life in it.

And Naomi said, "Wash yourself" (Ruth 3:3), and get you down to the floor. This advice given to Ruth was practical and common sense, for although she had experienced great grace at the hand of Boaz, yet in approaching him for higher favors still she must use every means possible to secure the blessing desired. And so should we in making our requests known unto Him. If we regard iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear. First, be reconciled to your brother, "wash yourself," put away and incline your heart (Joshua. 24:23).

Naomi also said, "Mark the place where he shall lie" (Ruth 3:4), and lay you down at his feet, and he will tell you what you shall do. If we want to learn the will of our Master toward us we too must be willing to lie at His feet. Mark the promise He has given, for this is where the Master lies, and lay yourself down there and pull the skirt of His Word over you, and wait patiently for Him, for He will tell you what you shall do. Notice the three steps of Ruth to the feet of Boaz: (1) Washing. (2) Watching. (3) Waiting.

"When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down" (Ruth 3:7). The master had sown the seed and carefully watched it from the blade to the ear. Now the harvest is past, the winnowing is over. His soul is satisfied, and he rests. Shall not our Divine Master also see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied when He shall with the fan of judgment winnow the mixed mass on the floor of the world? Shall there not be enough to satisfy His longing soul and make glad the heart of Him who went out from the home of His glory, bearing precious seed, and who sowed in tears? (Luke 19:41). Shall He be sorry that the chaff has been blown away? He shall rejoice over His people with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

"And it came to pass that at midnight he said, Who are you?" (Ruth 3:8). Though He tarry, wait for Him. His voice is often heard at midnight by the waiting one, while others, it may be, are all insensible to His presence. The special blessing is often received through special waiting.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 3.

Naomi had great faith in their Kinsman Redeemer. Now that Ruth had put her case into his hands, she is told to "Sit still, for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing" (Ruth 3:18). See how Ruth entered into that blessed rest.

I. She casts herself at his feet (Ruth 3:4-6). She had offered a request before (Ruth 2:7), but now she offers herself. It was in the darkest hour of the night that his voice was heard.

II. She claimed him as her kinsman (Ruth 3:9). She claims the fulfillment of his office as redeemer in her behalf. It was a great demand for a poor stranger to make, but the mighty man of grace looked upon it as an act of kindness showed Him (Ruth 3:10).

III. She received his promise (Ruth 3:10-13). There was no reluctance in Boaz to perform the part of a kinsman redeemer. She asks, and at once the promise is given. He is faithful who has promised. Ruth does not make him a liar by guilty doubt.

IV. She rests in his work. She sits still now, leaving him to do the redeeming work. What else could she do? The work was not hers, but his. She had his promise that he would finish the thing. So she rests in faith. Rest in the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass. (Leviticus 16:30, 31).

RUTH, REDEEMED AND CLAIMED. Chapter 4.

"Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat down there" (Ruth 4:1). What to do? To intercede for Ruth. And success is sure with such an intercessor, being "a mighty man of wealth." He is a man of mighty influence, and must prevail. Are we not reminded here of Him who has ascended up on high, and is set down at the Father's right hand to make intercession for us who have been found of Him? He who delights in mercy, and who is able to save to the uttermost (to the end) all that come unto God through Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.

And Boaz said to his kinsman, "Redeem, for there is none to redeem beside you; and I am after you" (Ruth 4:4). This kinsman, like the law, had the first claim, but not the ability to redeem. The law is our kinsman condemner; but Jesus, like Boaz, is our Kinsman Redeemer. By the law is the knowledge of sin, not the forgiveness of sin. This we can have through the precious Blood alone, the great redemption price. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. The answer this kinsman gave was, "I cannot redeem." But Boaz, the mighty man of wealth, is well able to redeem, therefore what the law could not do "in that it was weak" (Romans 8:3), abounding grace has accomplished, for "He has redeemed" (Galatians 3:13).

Boaz said, "What day you buy the field, buy (it) also of Ruth" (Ruth 4:5). Ruth, as emblematic of the Church, is the real treasure in the field. The field is the world; the treasure is the Church, as in Matthew 13:44. And our heavenly Boaz, who was rich, for our sakes became poor, because He sold all that He had and bought the field, that He might secure the hidden treasure.

"And Boaz said unto the elders and all the people, You are my witnesses that Ruth, the Moabitess, have I purchased to be my wife" (Ruth 4:10).

A few points are worthy of notice in connection with this **Redemption**.

I. He only could redeem. He had the right as kinsman; he had the power as a mighty man of wealth; he was also in the right condition to redeem, being alone; and now the redemption itself brings joy and satisfaction to his own soul. And shall not the redeemed Church be to the heart of her Redeemer a new source of eternal joy and satisfaction? He shall be satisfied. Christ only can redeem. His incarnation made Him our Kinsman, and gave Him the right to redeem. His divinity made Him mighty, and gave Him the power to redeem. We have redemption through His Blood (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

II. This was a Willing Redemption. Boaz did not grudge the redemption money. How could he when his heart was set on the purchase of Ruth? He willingly offered the full price, although that price included the gift of himself. So was it with Jesus, our princely Kinsman, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that He might give Himself to us. Nor did He hesitate to pay the awful price of sorrow, suffering, and blood, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

III. This was a Gracious Redemption. Boaz was not ashamed to redeem Ruth, the poor stranger. The prince of wealth stoops to lift the poor helpless one, who cannot redeem herself. He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; he has shown strength with his arm; he has exalted them of low degree, he has filled the hungry soul with good things, and now the soul of Ruth shall magnify her lord.

The wealthy Prince of Heaven is ashamed of none who look to Him for redemption. He says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved." He invites the wretched, the miserable, the poor, the blind, and the naked to look to Him and trust in Him. Yes; He stoops in His redemption work to lift the helpless from the horrible pit on to the Rock of Strength, to lift the poor and the polluted from the dunghill, to rank among princes, and to be co-heirs with Himself. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. So the gleaner, through grace, becomes an heir of His glory.

IV. This was a Public Redemption. There were many witnesses to the fact that the price was paid; this thing was not done in a corner, but in the presence of the elders of all the people. When Moses smote the rock, it was in the presence of the elders. The Rock Christ was also publicly smitten, they put Him to an open shame. He suffered without the gate. As Boaz went up to the gate to finish the work in behalf of Ruth, in the sight of many witnesses, so Jesus went up to Calvary and finished the work the Father gave Him to do in behalf of His people. Afterwards, when the price was paid, He rose from the dead; and as Boaz, when the bargain was settled, "plucked off his shoe," Jesus plucked off the grave-clothes as a token that the covenant was sealed and the inheritance redeemed; and the apostles say, "We are witnesses." He was seen of many.

V. The Purpose of this Redemption. "That the name of the dead be not cut off" (Ruth 4:10). In Adam all have died unto God; but in Christ, through His redemption, all that believe are made alive unto God. Thus spiritual seed is raised, according to the gracious purpose of God. "Boaz did not redeem Ruth to be his slave." He says, "Ruth have I purchased to be my wife," to be part of himself. What more could he do for her than that he had done? Communion has now culminated in union. Her service henceforth shall be that loving, ready service which is the glad outflow from unity of heart, and purpose, and interest, and in the self-sacrificing spirit of those who abide in the Master's presence, and who know that He hates putting away. You are not your own, you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are His. It was the grace alone of Boaz that transformed the life and relationship of Ruth, and by faith she got access into this grace wherein she now stands and rejoices in hope.

VI. This was a Perfect Redemption. "Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife" (Ruth 4:13). The prophecy of Naomi has now been fulfilled. "The man will not be at rest until he has finished the thing" (chapter 3:18). Our Kinsman Redeemer shall likewise come and finish the thing by taking His purchased Bride home to be with Himself, for where He is there shall we be also. The day that Boaz redeemed Ruth that same day he took her. The present dispensation is the day of salvation (redemption) to the Gentiles. At the close of this same day our Divine Kinsman shall appear, and take His redeemed Church to Himself. So shall she be forever with her Lord and Savior.

When Ruth knew that Boaz had purchased her to be his wife, would she not be anxiously looking for him every

moment to come and take her to be with himself? Is not this the present position of the Church? Working, waiting, watching, until He come who has redeemed us by His own Blood, for the Lord Himself shall descend, and when He shall appear we shall be like Him, we shall see Him as He is, and dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

May the Lord direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

MAX FRAZIER THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION DEVOTIONALS

No study of the Book of Judges would be complete without examining those rich truths found within the Book of Ruth. This story, which occurs during the time of the judgeship of Gideon, contains one of the best loved stories found anywhere in the Bible. Maybe it is because the story is so familiar that we neglect the deeper truths which are found within the story.

One of the underlying truths of the story found in Ruth is that of the love which God had for us and which led Him to send His only Son to die on the cross for us redeeming us from the bondage of sin. In fact, the Book of Ruth is the only book in the Bible which portrays the kinsman-redeemer. That fact alone should cause us to study more intently this little book of sacrificial, redemptive love.

NO BREAD IN BETHLEHEM Ruth 1:1

Elimelech and Naomi were from Bethlehem. That name in the Hebrew means, "the house of bread." We are not told why this town was given this particular name, but the Hebrews always equated a name with special significance. We do know from Ruth 2:17 and Ruth 2:23 that both wheat and barley were grown around Bethlehem. Both grains were the staples of life for many of the people who lived there.

Bread has always been the mainstay of life. There is hardly a culture that does not produce a bread-type substance for living. I remember my very first night in Hungary. Boy was I ever hungry after that long flight. There, before us on the table was bread - not American bread with a hard crust and a soft inside, but day old Hungarian bread - hard crust and hard inside. I was soon to learn that bread formed the backbone of the Hungarian mealtime activity.

Even Jesus told us, when we prayed the prayer which we know as the Lord's Prayer, that we should ask that God give us our daily bread. Jesus said of Himself that He was the bread of life and that if anyone ate of Him that they would never hunger again. Jesus knew the importance of bread.

But, why was there no bread in Bethlehem? Because the Israelites had chosen to live in sin, God had sent the Midianites to oppress them. Now the Midianites were a shrewd bunch. They allowed the Israelites to work the fields in the spring, plant the crops, tend and care for them during the summer months, and then when the crops were harvested, they would suddenly descend upon the villagers and plunder the food supplies. The net result was a famine which affected the entire land.

Friends, there is a lesson we must learn in the fact that there was no bread in Bethlehem. God must always punish sin. Our sin will always create a barrier, a wall, between us and God. The fellowship which we have with Him will be severed. The blessings which we have come to expect from Him will not be present. We may not experience a material famine, such as Elimelech and Naomi experienced, but we will experience a spiritual famine in our lives when we choose to live in disobedience.

Friends, a famine of physical necessities is tragic. But more tragic is a famine affecting the spiritual lives of men and women. How we need to safeguard our lives so that we do not become a spiritual wasteland.

ELIMELECH'S MISTAKE Ruth 1:2-7

As we observed in our last study, things were not going well in Bethlehem, the hometown of Elimelech and Naomi. Because of the hand of God's judgment, the people were suffering a severe famine because of the presence of the Midianites. Food became scarce. People lived in fear. Hope was gone.

Elimelech was concerned about his family's welfare, so they packed their bags and moved to Moab. Now his concern was commendable, but I truly believe that Elimelech's decision was not justified. Let me share the following reasons:

First, Israel had become fixed in the Promised Land and there was no reason to go running to another heathen land. Elimelech should have known that running never produced victory. It only produced sorrow. We have the example of Abraham in Genesis

What did he do when he arrived in the Promised Land and found a famine? Did he remain in that place which God told him about? NO! He entered into Egypt because of the famine. What were the consequences of that decision? He was forced to lie to save his own life. He compromised the integrity of his wife. His testimony was damaged for God. We should never leave the place where God has planted us until He tells us it is time to go. And the text never relates that God told Elimelech to go into Moab.

Second, Elimelech's name meant "God is king." Yet by his actions he could not live up to that belief. Elimelech thought he was in charge. He was not sure he could trust God in this situation. He could not fully trust God to supply all his needs.

God has never promised us a bed of roses if we would follow Him. He has not promised that our skies would always be blue. Jesus never said that being a Christian would be easy. But God has promised to be faithful to us and to supply all our needs and to be with us all the time.

Friends, this is a difficult message for us today. We live in an age where we want everything easy. We expect everything to be easy. I have talked with people who have quit jobs because they were too hard. I have visited with students who have dropped classes because they were too difficult. We live in an "instant" society. Just go into your grocery store and notice the "convenience food" section which keeps growing and growing. Look at the increase in "fast food" eateries. We want everything to be easy for us.

But the message of Jesus is of struggles and temptations and warfare. Jesus said He did not come to bring peace but a sword. So how do we communicate this message today? I find that too often we do as Elimelech did - we run off to a place where it is easy. How often do we dilute the Gospel in order to attract people. We call this "easy believism." We will do just about anything to accommodate people to Christ. But Jesus is not in the accommodating business. He does not like "Moab mentality." When difficulties arise, God wants us to bloom where we are planted and to trust Him for the beauty which will be manifest.

GOD AT WORK IN GODLESS MOAB Ruth 1:8-9

Things have not gone well for Naomi and her family since they had arrived in Moab. To be certain, things started out well. Both Mahlon and Chilion, the sons of Elimelech and Naomi, met and married two Moabite women - Orpah and Ruth. But then Elimelech died and soon both of the boys died as well. Now word came to Naomi that the famine in Bethlehem had ceased (probably due to the great victory of Gideon over the Midianites). Naomi began to make plans to return home. She gathers her two daughters -in-law and shares with them her intentions.

Naomi asks Orpah and Ruth to return to their mothers' homes. She, herself, is going to return to Bethlehem. Naomi then prays for her two daughters- in-law. Now what strikes me, as I study this prayer, found in Ruth 1, verses 8 and 9, is the name of God which she uses. She calls God, Yahweh or LORD (with capital letters). This was the personal name for God. She could have used the term Elohim, which was a more general term for God. But, she didn't. Why did she use LORD?

First, Naomi knew God intellectually. She knew about God in her mind. Many people know about God intellectually. I remember a conversation which I had a few years ago with a couple of leaders in the community in which Marlys and I lived. We began to talk about religion and the problems of the day. Now, both of these men knew about God. They could talk about God from their minds. God was not foreign to them. But they could not talk about God personally.

Second, Naomi knew God emotionally. Many of the cults in the world today claim an experiential knowledge about God. Their concept of God is focused on one emotional high after another. Yet we are admonished not to put our trust in our emotions.

Third, Naomi knew God personally and spiritually. Naomi was on intimate terms with God. She really knew God. Her relationship with God was like that of a marriage. Some of you have met my wife Marlys. A few of you might know some things about her. But I am the only one who can say, "I know Marlys Frazier."

Remember those words of Thomas when Jesus appeared to him: "My Lord and my God." Those are terms of intimacy. Remember those words of Mary when Jesus appeared to her in the garden that first Easter morning: "Rabboni, Master." Those are terms of intimacy. Remember the desire expressed by Paul that he might know Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings. Those are terms of intimacy. Friends, may I ask you if you know Christ personally and spiritually today? Are you intimate with Him? Does He know you intimately? Oh the joys of saying, "I know Jesus Christ."

MOTHER PRAYS FOR HER DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW Ruth 1:8-13

A sorrowing Naomi has gathered her two daughters- in- law around her. She has decided to return to Bethlehem to see if she can pick up the pieces of her life. She has nothing more to offer these two young women who are also in the midst of sorrow, each having lost her husband.

Naomi prays for these two young widows who have meant much to her. She prays, in verse 8 of chapter 1, that God would deal kindly with them as they had been kind to her in her sorrow and grief. How does God deal kindly with us?

First, God supplies all our needs so we do not need to worry. Remember these words from the Apostle Paul's pen: And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). Jesus told His disciples during His Sermon on the Mount that they were not to worry about what to eat or what to wear or where they were going to live. God understands the daily needs of His children and will provide for them. At times we need to have the faith like that of the little four-year old boy who was being put to bed by his father, who noticed a piece of rope tied to the boy's bed. "What's the rope for?" asked the father. "I'm praying for a pony tonight," said the boy, "and that rope is for the angels to tie the pony to my bed." Friends, God deals kindly with us in supplying all our needs out of His infinite resources in glory. You need not worry about God ever running out of anything.

Second, God provides a way of escape in times of temptations. Allow me to share that great promise from 1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. Even in the midst of her suffering, Naomi knew the presence of God. What a tremendous blessing to know that God will not give us more than we can handle with His help. That truly is dealing kindly with us.

Finally, God will provide security and rest and blessing for us. I am reminded of these words from Isaiah: And the work of righteousness will be peace, And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever. Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation, And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places (Isaiah 32:17-18).

All blessings come from God. And, when we trust Him, He will give us rest.

TWO PICTURES OF LOVE Ruth 1:14-18

Now Naomi could have forced her two daughters-in-law to return with her to Bethlehem, and thus they could have escaped the snares of idolatry in the land of Moab and been converted to God. But Naomi did not want them to come with her because of pressure by her. No, if these two young ladies were to come with her, then they would have to make a deliberate choice and sit down and count the cost.

Now both Orpah and Ruth loved Naomi. Of this we can be certain. Both had witnessed the grief Naomi had gone through. In fact, they had shared a similar grief. The future looked bleak for these three widows. As we have read, Naomi had heard news that things were better back home. She would leave Moab and return there, hoping to pick up the pieces of her life, at least those pieces that remained. After hearing her initial plans, both Orpah and Ruth committed themselves to going with her.

Then Naomi appealed to their logic. These young women still had their futures ahead of them. Naomi appealed to their minds to stay back in Moab. And here is where Orpah and Ruth showed a different love. Orpah stated, "Naomi, what you said makes sense. I do love you and I wish for you the very best, but you are right, I do need to think about myself and my needs. So I will go back home."

Orpah had counted the cost and was not willing to pay the price of going to Bethlehem. Orpah decided that she loved her ownself, her own country, and her own desires to have a husband more than she loved Naomi.

This is a certain picture of many people today. They will not come to Christ as Savior because they have their own agendas to maintain. They might have a career they want to explore. They might have a boy or girl they want to marry. They might have a sin they want to indulge in. Face it, they want to live their own lives as they see fit. They don't want to face the costs of following Jesus. It was Jim Elliot who said, He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. Orpah was a big loser. She returns to Moab. She returns to her pagan ways. She is lost forever from the pages of Scripture. And all because she was not willing to pay the cost.

The entreaty of Naomi made Ruth the more willing to go. She was not really concerned about her own welfare, but she had a deep love for Naomi that caused her to sacrifice herself for her mother -in-law. Ruth had a heart of love. Why could she make this type of sacrifice? I believe the answer is found in verse 17: Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me. Notice the word for God she uses there. It is the same word Naomi used earlier - Yahweh - LORD. Ruth had already come to trust in God personally. She had already become as intimate with Him as had Naomi. Ruth had observed the witness in the life of Naomi. Thus, Ruth was willing to forsake everything to follow the Lord.

A CHANGED NAME Ruth 1:19-22

We often hear people use the expression, "My how you have changed! Is that really you?" This often happens when we have not seen that person for quite some time. Within the context of these closing verses of Ruth chapter one, we could say that that expression summarized the content very well. Naomi was going home. She had spent the last ten years in Moab. But she returned home a different woman than she had left.

As Naomi approaches the city of Bethlehem, the women run out and meet her, exclaiming, "Is this Naomi?" There was something very different about this Naomi from the one they had known ten years previously. Yes, this Naomi was indeed different. She was now a widow and had also buried her only two sons. She has returned to Bethlehem, not the woman of prominence she had enjoyed ten years ago, but a woman of sorrow and destitution. And yet, God was at work in her life, and so, there was a change.

Whenever a person has had an encounter with God, our lives are forever impacted and people do cry out, "Is that really you?" I am reminded of that outstanding testimony found in Acts 4:13, where, after observing the lives of the Apostles, even in the midst of persecution, the religious leaders took note that these men had been with Jesus. God always produces a changed life.

I had an Uncle Charlie. He and Aunt Bess lived in Salem, Oregon, where Uncle Charlie worked on a fruit farm. He grew some of the best cherries I have ever eaten. Uncle Charlie came to know Christ as his Savior later in life. Before that time, he was a chain-smoker. But when he got saved, God removed from his life the desire for tobacco. At first Uncle Charlie thought he would box up all his cigarettes and ship them to his brother, my Uncle Benton. But then he reasoned, "if God had told him that tobacco was bad for him, then those cigarettes would be bad for his brother also." So he burned them all. Everyone knew about a change in Uncle Charlie's life.

God is still in the business of changing lives. Yet for Naomi, the workings of God were not pleasant. In fact, she asks that her name be changed from Naomi to Mara, which means "bitter, bitterness." This name expressed the tremendous sorrow in Naomi's life.

The question naturally comes to our minds: Did these sorrowful circumstances ultimately damper her Christian testimony? I believe, as one looks at the evidence within the book of Ruth, that the answer is no. As one reads verse 20, Naomi ascribes the name of Almighty to God. Now this was not the common biblical name for God. In fact, it is found only 48 times in the Old Testament, with 31 of those times coming in Job. It is first found in Genesis 17:1 where God established His eternal covenant with Abraham. It is also used in Genesis 28:3 in the context of Jacob's wrestling with God. In each of these passages the thought is of the power of God. God disposes as He sees fit, and no obstacle can stand in His way. Yet, also, there is that thought of the compassion of God. God blessed Abraham and Jacob and gave precious promises to them.

Secondly, I notice that Naomi is not bitter or antagonistic toward God. She has graciously accepted what God has done, although she had not fully understood it. Sometimes God must bring us to the point of complete brokenness in order for Him to use us. Although Naomi did not know it, God was about to use her and her family in a very special way that is still bringing blessings to people all around the world.

A WILLING HEART Ruth 2:1-3

Naomi and Ruth have now arrived back home in Bethlehem. There are not a lot of pieces remaining for them to pick up, but they do begin. Of course Ruth knows no one there. In fact, I am sure that she is probably looked upon with some suspicion by the towns people because she is an outsider, yes, she is an outcast being a Moabite. Now I don't know how you might have responded had you been in her situation, but I think I probably would have gone into the house and closed the door behind me and said I needed some time to get settled in before going out among the people.

But not Ruth. She realized that she had a responsibility to provide for the needs of her mother-in-law. The pantry of the former Elimelech-cottage was bare. A debt hung over the property, so any kind of a loan for provisions was out of the question. There was only one thing for her to do. She must go out and work in the fields to secure whatever she could find to satisfy the physical hungers which she and Naomi had.

The Bible always commends honest labor and always condemns laziness. I am reminded of the admonition of the Apostle Paul to the believers living in Thessalonica. He wrote these words to them: For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10). With a heart that was willing to work, Ruth ties on her bonnet and puts on her apron and sets out to find provisions for her family.

But, where should she go? She had no idea of where to go to glean. She had no friends to protect her from the rowdiness which always seemed to be present in the fields. She was new in the community. Who would give her a helping hand? Friends, when I think of Ruth's situation, I am drawn back to her statement in verse 17 of chapter one where she expresses her confidence and her trust in the Lord God. I believe that, as she headed out to the fields that day, she prayed to God asking that He might guide her footsteps to the right fields where she might glean grain to provide for her needs. Oh to simply follow Jesus, even as Ruth did.

Now there is an interesting statement in verse 3. The King James Version expresses it this way, and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz. We might say that this was quite a coincidence. But I believe it happened in answer to Ruth's confidence in God's leading. God directed her to the field of a man who would not only have compassion on her need for food, but also compassion on her need for a redeemer. Isn't that just like God! As He is providing for our immediate need, He is often orchestrating to meet our greater need.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GREETING Ruth 2:4

Abraham Lincoln said, Kindness is the only service that will stand the storm of life and not wash out. It will wear well, look well and be remembered long after the prism of politeness or the complexion of courtesy has faded away. The word "kindness" has its roots in an Old Germanic word which meant "of noble birth." As it was adapted into the Old English, it took on the sense of "compassionate."

Let me read for you verse 4: Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!" "The Lord bless you!" they called back. Notice the words with which Boaz greets his servants, "The Lord be with you!" We can tell a lot about a person from his manner of greeting. We soon discover if he is friendly or not; if he is sympathetic or critical; if he is proud or boisterous. The tone of our voice and the manner in which we speak communicates much about our present disposition.

In the Bible, greetings were the sincere expressions from the inner man. In Psalm 129, the writer relates that those who hate Zion were to be like withered grass which evaporated before the reapers. They were not to hear the words, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord." Remember the greeting with which the angel greeted Gideon in Judges 6:12, The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior. Remember also the greeting of the angel Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:28, Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you. Think of our Lord's words of greeting to His disciples as they cowered with fear in the upper room the evening following His resurrection, Peace be with you. One of the marvelous greetings recorded for us in the Bible is that used by the early Christians as they met one another. It was a simple one word statement, Maranatha, but oh the hope it contained as they encouraged one another with the thought that "the Lord is coming."

This greeting of Boaz to his servants has caused me to reflect upon how I greet others. Do I glibly say, "Hi, how are you?", not caring at all how they feel, not interested at all in what is going on in their lives? Can I dare greet them with the blessings of God, as Boaz did with his reapers? Do I want God to bless their life? When I extend my hand to them, does my handshake or my embrace communicate that I honestly care about that person, or am I just going through the motions of courtesy. Sadly, I must admit that too often my words of greetings are merely perfunctory as I have been too involved in my own life. This passage has rebuked me more than once as God has reminded me of the importance of greeting one another with the proper attitude.

So, friends, today I do want to greet you warmly in the name of the Lord and wish upon you the blessings of God.

MOTIVATED BY KINDNESS Ruth 2:5-13

If someone were to pay you ten cents for every kind word you spoke and collected five cents from you for every unkind word, would you be rich or poor? Sobering question, isn't it?

In our last study, we noticed the importance of the words with which Boaz greeted those who worked for him. I would like to continue with a few more thoughts from verse 4 for this study. The ones to whom Boaz spoke were the reapers, the hired hands, if you will. It was hard work in the heat of the day to be gathering the sheaves. I suppose it would be easy to get hot, tired, and irritable. Maybe these reapers were thinking that here they were working in the hot sun and what was Boaz doing? He was probably at home sipping lemonade like all the rich people do. The text does not tell us the temperament of the workers, but I can imagine that they would not be much different from people today. In the heat I am sure that tempers flared very easily.

It was into this scene that Boaz gave his greeting. Its purpose was to cheer and to inspire his workers. His desire was to make them feel like their task was very important. He was their cheerleader, if you will. And, by their response to him, these reapers considered themselves fortunate to be working for such a caring man.

I am reminded of the story I read a few years ago in the OUR DAILY BREAD devotional. It seems that a farmer and an elderly gentleman were painting a farmhouse on a hot summer day. They had just refreshed themselves with a cold drink of water and were returning to their ladders when a small boy with only one arm came riding toward them on his bike. He stopped and said, "I live down the road away. Ma sent me to see if you needed some drinking water. If you do, I can go back and fetch it in a glass canning jar." The farmer was about to decline the offer, but his older companion said, "You sure came in the nick of time, Sonny. A good drink of water would do wonders for both of us." The youngster grinned and called out, "I'll be right back. I bet you think you're lucky that I came along!" The elderly man replied, "You can say that again! Now our worries are over. We've got another man on the job." Words of greeting had been turned into words which gave encouragement.

Kindness does pay rich dividends. I believe that Boaz and his attitude toward his workers, aptly illustrate the truth which flowed from the pen of an unknown author: When we treat a person as though he were the kind of person he ought to be, we give him a giant boost toward what he is capable of being. Oh that God might use each one of us in a similar fashion.

MORE ACTS OF KINDNESS Ruth 2:4-13

Before we leave our study of these verses from chapter 2, I would like to have us consider three more pictures of kindness which are depicted here. In verse 11, I observe the kindness of Ruth toward her mother-in-law. In fact, it was a kindness which everyone living in Bethlehem was cognizant of. The naturalist, W.H. Hudson, tells in one of his books, about a thrush and a blackbird that always came together, visiting the place where food was put for birds. The blackbird would pick up the crumbs and put them in the thrush's mouth. Then it was noticed that some trap had cut off the thrush's beak close to its head, so that it could not pick up food, and the blackbird was coming to the rescue.

Doesn't that remind you of Ruth. Naomi was an elderly widow. She had no one to provide for her needs. She was a lot like that thrush. Ruth gave up everything that she knew to travel with Naomi to a land she did not know to take care of a woman that she loved dearly.

A second picture of kindness is found in verses 8 and 9, and then again in verses 14 through 16. It is the kindness of Boaz to Ruth. He instructs her to stay in his fields. They were large and she would not need to go elsewhere to supply her wants and desires. He offers her protection from the other workers. And she was free to drink of the water already drawn so she would not have to take time to draw for her own needs.

I am reminded of another story which I think illustrates this heart of kindness of Boaz. At one end of a truck terminal was a coal company with a high fence around it. Nearby was a railroad, and each day several freight trains passed by. The owner of the yard, who was a Christian, threw chunks of coal over the fence at various places along the track. One day he was asked why he did this. With compassion in his voice, he replied "A poor elderly woman lives across the street, and I know that her old-age pension is inadequate to buy enough coal. After the trains go by, she walks along and picks up the pieces she thinks have fallen from the coal car behind the engine. Her eyesight is failing, and she doesn't realize that diesels have replaced steam locomotives. I don't want to disappoint her, so I just throw some pieces over the fence to help her. Friends, that is just what Boaz did, and isn't that just what Jesus Christ has done for us?"

The final picture is found in verse 12 where Boaz encourages Ruth in her faith in God. The imagery which Boaz used would be familiar to those within the agricultural community. It is of a tiny bird snuggling under the wings of its mother when a time of trouble and crisis is imminent. This provides a picture of trust and security. God asks us to take refuge in the shadow of His wings. And, friends, I can think of no greater place to be, can you?

AN UNSELFISH ACT Ruth 3:1

The underlying theme of this third chapter in Ruth is that of marriage. It is not played out in the usual way both for our day or even for the day of Ruth and Boaz. But behind the scenes we see God bringing together a man and a woman of His choice who were to play an important role in the redemptive story of mankind.

This marital drama begins with an unselfish act on the part of Naomi. It begins with the question she addresses to Ruth there in verse one: My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Naomi realized that Ruth needed a husband and a provider. She realized that the life Ruth was now living was not the best one for a young woman. Now Naomi could have maintained an attitude of selfishness and could have insisted that Ruth remain with her and continue to provide for her needs. Ruth had done this since Elimelech had died and especially since they had returned to Bethlehem. And, Naomi was appreciative of all that Ruth had done, but she realized that this was not a healthy way of life for her young daughter-in-law.

Selfishness is the downfall of so many people. It was William Gladstone, the great British statesman, who said, Selfishness is the greatest curse of the human race.

Friends, God wants people who will share what they have with others. God wants us to share out of our abundance, just as Joseph shared his tomb with Jesus. God wants us to share out of lack of abundance following the example of the poor widow who gave all she had to Jesus. God wants us to share out of our material resources, even as the early church pooled their resources and the Bible says that no one lacked anything. Finally, God wants us to share our faith. Peter and John had no money to give to the paralytic man, but they could share their faith with him. How readily do we give of ourselves and what we have to help someone else?

I find it interesting that the King James Bible words Naomi's question this way: My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee...? This suggests the heart-cry of Christ for those who know the sting of sin and have borne the burden of life. He cries out, in Matthew 11:28, Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

If sinners were honest with themselves, what is the greatest need in their lives? Is it not to find some kind of rest? They are searching for something that will give them some sense of completion, of satisfaction, of peace. Does the world offer any of these? They have found, as we did, that the answer is no. Jesus says that only He can give rest. Only He can give the quiet shelter from the storms of life. Only He can give the quiet shelter and tranquillity of heart that a person needs. Not that all of their problems will be

solved when they find Jesus. Jesus never guarantees that. But He does guarantee that they will find rest. Our responsibility is to point people to that rest to be found in Jesus.

NEW CLOTHES FOR A NEW YOU Ruth 3:2-4

There is an old adage which states that "the clothes make the man." It means that what we wear had a great deal to say about who we really are. We are often judged by our appearance. Before I step out the door, my wife usually gives the okay on how I am dressed. She will straighten the tie. She might refold the collar. She knows that our personality is often judged by the way we are dressed.

So it was in Bible days. When a woman lost her husband, it was expected that she would wear the clothing identifying her as a widow. Up to this time, Ruth had been wearing such clothing. This was out of her respect for the dead. But time had healed those wounds and Boaz had filled that void in her heart. Naomi urged her to change her clothing from those dark mourning clothes to the brightly colored ones of beauty. This change broke the last thread of Ruth to the past of Moab. She was now completely free from that aspect of her life.

I am reminded of those words from the Apostle Paul, found in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17: Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. When we receive Christ, we receive a new nature. Our lives are transformed. To use that beautiful analogy, we change from an ugly caterpillar into that of a beautiful butterfly. As a result our links with our past life are broken and gone as long as we let His life flow in and through us.

Truly the Christian life is a life of freedom. It is a freedom we have in Christ. As a caterpillar is bound to the earth by crawling, so a butterfly is destined to soar into the heavens. As a sinner is bound by his sins, resulting in his death, so the believer is freed from the shackles of his sins and soars into the kingdom of light.

Friends, are you still wearing those garments from your past? Or are you wearing those brilliant garments given you by Christ? Paul reminded those believers in Ephesus that they were to put off the old garments and to put on Christ and those garments which He supplies. When we do so, God does turn our mourning into dancing, as the psalmist relates to us.

When Ruth changed her clothes, it was a turning point in her life. When we change our old life for the new life in Christ, that also is a turning point for us. I trust that you have made that change.

A VERY UNUSUAL WEDDING PROPOSAL Ruth 3:6-15

I remember so very clearly that time when I asked a certain young lady whom I was deeply in love with to be my wife. We had been dating for two years and knew that God had brought us together. I remember taking her out to dinner and later that evening proposing to her. It was the evening of June 30, 1968. Of course, she said yes, which made me feel greatly relieved. We entered the home of her parents and told them. They rejoiced with us as did my family the next day when we shared with them.

Now I enjoy reading the stories of how others have done this proposal thing. And many are very creative. But this account in Ruth is among the most creative of all. And its roots lie deeply buried in an obscure passage in Deuteronomy 25, verses 5 through 10. There we read, If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. However, if a man does not want to marry his brother's wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to carry on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me." Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, "I do not want to marry her," his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, "This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line." That man's line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled.

This passage is describing what is known as the levirate marriage. The concept was wrapped up in the land. Land, in Israel, belonged to the family. So, when a person died without heirs, the question remained concerning the land. The concept of the levirate was to raise up heirs for the purpose of receiving the land of the deceased.

Ruth was attempting to urge Boaz to fulfill his role as the levirate. By going and uncovering Boaz's feet and lying at his feet, Ruth was making a proposal to him for marriage. Boaz had been dragging his feet because of the closer relative to Ruth and did not want to interfere if they had a relationship established. Now Boaz could definitely see that Ruth was only interested in him.

Boaz responded by covering Ruth with his cloak. This was the Eastern way of saying, "Yes, I will marry you." Thus the wheels were set into motion for one of the most unusual wedding ceremonies in all of Scripture. But, before that could occur, another event needed to happen. That will be our study tomorrow.

WHAT IS A REDEEMER? Ruth 4:1-22

Here, in this fourth chapter, we have one of the clearest descriptions in all of the Old Testament, and perhaps in all of the Bible, of the requirements and duties of a redeemer. In the person of Boaz we find a picture of Jesus Christ as our Redeemer.

As a person carefully studies this chapter, a discovery is made of five traits which a person had to possess in order to be called a redeemer. Each day this week we shall look at one trait.

The first requirement was that the redeemer had to be a close relative. Ruth 2:1 and Ruth 2:20 both state that Boaz was a close relative of Elimelech. Tradition claims that Boaz was a nephew of Elimelech. Tradition also states that the "barefoot kinsman" was probably a brother of Elimelech. Boaz had no relationship by blood to either Ruth or Naomi. It was the family estate of Elimelech and his son, Ruth's husband, which was in need of a redeemer.

Ruth was excluded by the Law from being a part of the family of Israel. We read these words in Deuteronomy 23:3, No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord. The only way Ruth could become a part of the family of Israel was through the act of being redeemed. And that act could only be accomplished by a close relative.

Friends, Jesus Christ is our close relative. Listen to these words from the pen of the Apostle John: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1, 14).

Then, here are similar words from the Apostle Paul: Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:5- 8) .

These verses declare that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. In the Garden of Eden, man sought to be like God and failed. In the sinful world, Christ sought to be like man and succeeded. God became a close relative to us that He might redeem us.

Friends, there could have been no real redemption if Christ had not become our close relative after the flesh. An angel could not have secured our redemption. An ordinary man could not have done it either. It took God in the form of man to make it available to us.

WHAT IS A REDEEMER? Part 2

Ruth 4:1-22

In our last study we acknowledged that in order for a person to become our redeemer, he had to first be a close relative to us.

Boaz was this for Ruth, and Jesus Christ became this for us.

The second requirement was that the person had to be willing to act as a redeemer. It is obvious from reading this fourth chapter of Ruth, that Boaz was very eager to redeem Ruth. The other closer relative never exerted any initiative in the matter of redemption. He knew that Naomi was back from Moab. He knew that the property of Elimelech needed redeemed. But the text

tells us that he was only willing to redeem a portion of that which belonged to Elimelech. He was not willing to redeem Ruth, for we read in verses 5 and 6, Then Boaz said, "on the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property." At this, the kinsman -redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."

According to the Old Testament Law, there was no compulsion placed on the redeemer. The act of redemption was solely in the hands of the redeemer. The only motivating force was the attitude of the redeemer to those being redeemed. The closer relative had no strong desire to fulfill that role, but Boaz did.

Jesus Christ was willing to be our redeemer. We read these words from the Gospel of John, No one has taken it (speaking of His life) away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father. (John 10:18). In Matthew 20 and verse 28, Jesus told His disciples, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

The message which echoes loudly and clearly from these verses is that Jesus Christ willingly laid down His life for us. He was a willing redeemer. Why did Christ die for us so willingly? It was because of His great love for us. Why not recite with me those familiar words from 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.

Christ redeemed us because of His love for us, just as Boaz redeemed Ruth because of his great love for her.

Father, How can we not praise You for Your love. We are reminded of the great demonstration of Your love as we see Jesus dying upon a cross for us. He bore the penalty which was due us. He died that we might live. We sing with the hymn writer, "Amazing love, how can it be? That You, my God, should die for me?" For this we give You praise in Christ's name. Amen.

WHAT IS A REDEEMER? Part 3

Ruth 4:1-22

So far in our study of this great chapter, we have observed that in order for a person to become a redeemer, two conditions had to be met. First, he had to be a close relative; and second, he had to be willing to become a redeemer. Boaz met both of these requirements in his becoming Ruth's redeemer, and Jesus Christ met both when He became our redeemer.

But there is a third requirement which had to be met as well. The person seeking to become a redeemer had to possess the ability to accomplish the redemption. Now Boaz was capable of being the redeemer for Ruth for the following three reasons. First, because he was a man of wealth, he could pay the price. Second, because he was a man of valor, he was strong enough to enforce his claim. And third, because he was a man of the law, he could fulfill all the legal requirements. Boaz possessed the power to redeem and he exercised that power on behalf of Ruth. The Law had kept her out, but he used his abilities as a redeemer to set her free from the power of that Law.

Jesus Christ was capable of being our Redeemer. Let me share some verses from John 10: I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep....I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the

Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one Shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I have received from My Father...My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (John 10:11, 14-18, 27-30).

In these verses, Christ is set forth as the Shepherd who has the ability to redeem. At least three times He emphasizes that the Shepherd will die for His sheep. He also emphasizes the fact that His death for the sheep will not only be a willing death, but a death over which He has the power. Furthermore, the redemption is a mighty redemption in that the sheep will never perish. This passage reveals the extent to which God is willing to go to redeem lost sinners - it is an infinite extent.

WHAT IS A REDEEMER? Part 4

Ruth 4:1-22

This fourth requirement in order for a person to become a redeemer is one that is often overlooked, and yet it is vitally important for the success of the redemption. It is the requirement that the person seeking to become a redeemer must be free himself. He could not be encumbered with the same problems which plagued the person being redeemed.

In the case of Boaz and Ruth, that meant that Boaz had to belong to that part of the family which was not in trouble. Yes, indeed

Boaz was free to become a redeemer. He was free according to the Law. He had done everything which the Law had specified.

He was free according to his character. He was already a member of the family of Israel. He was free according to his wealth.

Whereas Ruth and Naomi were encumbered with debt, Boaz had none. Whereas Ruth and Naomi were saddled with cares for which little relief could be found, Boaz could provide the relief for those cares. And act, he did.

This fourth requirement sets forth some of the greatest truths concerning the Lord Jesus. He was truly free from the curse of the law. Jesus Christ knew no sin. He was never implicated in man's sin in any way. Listen to these words from Jesus as He shared some closing thoughts with His disciples that evening before He was betrayed. He said to them, I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me (John 14:30) . There were no skeletons in Jesus' closet. There were no rumors which He sought to avoid. There were no errors which He had done in His ministry. As hard as Satan could, there could be found no fault in Jesus.

The writer to the Hebrews also echoes that same thought when he writes, For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize

with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Was Jesus ever confronted with temptations similar to the ones which attack you and me today? This text assures us that those temptations did occur, but Jesus never succumbed to them. He never yielded to sin. He was victorious over sin every moment of His life.

Friends, Jesus Christ is the only person who could accomplish our redemption. I could not have redeemed you, because I am in the same boat you are - the boat of a sinful nature. A sinner cannot redeem a sinner. Only the perfect, sinless, spotless Lamb of God could take away the sins of the world. Let's take a few moments just to praise Him for His sacrifice.

WHAT IS A REDEEMER? Part 5

Ruth 4:1-22

Today we come to a close in our study of this great love story. There is yet a fifth requirement for a person to become a redeemer and that is the ability to pay the price required for the redemption to take place.

Boaz was able to pay whatever the price was in order to redeem Ruth and the property which belonged to Elimelech. His bank account contained sufficient funds to make the transaction a reality.

Jesus Christ was able to pay the price which God demanded for redemption. Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). Peter expressed this similar thought with these words: knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18 -19).

Redemption by blood has been abhorred by the natural man since the time that Cain brought the lovely fruit of the cursed ground as a sacrifice for his sin. It is continued today by the modernism which states all that is necessary is to strive to be like God.

But Leviticus 17:11 informs us that it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. And the writer of Hebrews proclaims that without the shedding of blood there can be no redemption (Hebrews 9:22). The shedding of the blood of animals is a substitution for the one making the sacrifice.

But why do we need a substitute? The Bible tells us that the soul that sins shall die. This places every man under the sentence of death because the Bible also states that the wages of sin is death. The only hope for man is to get someone to pay the penalty for him which would be satisfactory to God. No man can redeem himself. The price is too great. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can and did purchase our redemption.

Boaz not only redeemed Ruth, but married her and the offspring borne to them became the ancestors of the great King David and of the greater King, the Lord Jesus. And, friends, not only has Christ redeemed us, but He, too, has married us and through us raises up offspring who also will come to know the name of Christ.

For our closing time of prayer today, let's use the words of the hymn writer who states: Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it; Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Redeemed through His infinite mercy; His child and forever I am. Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen.