

# Sermons on Ruth-Lowell Johnson

## SERMONS ON RUTH Lowell Johnson

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## Survey of the Book of Ruth

### RUTH: THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION

Ruth 1:1 gives the setting of the remainder of the book: *"Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges rules."*

This is a time of apostasy, warfare, decline, violence, moral decay and anarchy.

Ruth provides a cameo of the other side of the story – the godly remnant who remained true to the Laws of God.

Ruth is the account of common people. It is quiet and serene compared to Judges. The clatter of camel's hoofs, the rattle of swords and the screams of war are not mentioned.

What we have are happy homes disturbed by trouble, decisions good and bad, jobs, funerals, babies, grandmothers, in-laws, the stuff of which life is made.

There are no parting rivers, angel visits, or Christians "who tear city gates off their hinges." There are just common everyday people like you and me.

Someone said "Ruth stood out like a gardenia in a garbage can."

The Naomis and Ruths – the common people – are the heart and soul of His Church. And no matter how dark and dirty the world gets, they are there, living for Him in joy and in sorrow.

The events in Ruth take place during the days of the Judges, but what a difference we see! Instead of

violence and lawlessness, we see tenderness, love and sacrifice. It is good to know that there are still good people in bad days, and that God is at work in the "corners of the land" though violence may fill the news.

### Outline of Ruth

- I. Ruth's Sorrow Chapter 1 The Weeping of Ruth
- II. Ruth's Service Chapter 2 The Working of Ruth
- III. Ruth's Surrender Chapter 3 The Wooing of Ruth
- IV. Ruth's Satisfaction Chapter 4 The Wedding of Ruth

### Author

The author of Ruth is not given anywhere in the book. Many give it to Samuel, but this is unlikely since David

appears in Ruth (Ruth 4:17, 22), and Samuel died before David's Coronation (I Samuel 25:1). Ruth was probably written during David's reign since Solomon's name is not included in the genealogy.

## The Setting

Ruth divided neatly into four distinct settings:

1. The Country of Moab Ruth 1:1-18
2. A Field in Bethlehem Ruth 1:19 – 2:23
3. A Threshing floor in Bethlehem Ruth 3:1-18
4. The City of Bethlehem Ruth 4:1-22

## The Theme

The theme of Ruth is redemption, especially as it relates to the Kinsman-Redeemer.

It also reveals God's gracious character and sovereign care of His people (Ruth 2:13).

It stresses God's providential rewards for faithfulness. Not all was lost during this chaotic period of the Judges. There was always a faithful remnant who did what was right in the sight of God.

## The Book of Ruth contrasts with Judges in several ways:

Ruth	Judges
Fidelity, righteousness, purity	Immorality
Following the true God	Idolatry
Devotion	Decline, debasement, disloyalty
Love	Lust
Peace	War
Kindness	Cruelty
Obedient faith leads to blessing	Disobedience leads to sorrow
Spiritual light	Spiritual darkness

Ruth is one of the two biblical books named after a woman:

Ruth	Esther
A Gentile woman	A Jewish woman
Lived among the Jews	Lived among the Gentiles
Married a Jewish man in the royal line of David	Married a Gentile man who ruled an empire
A story of faith and blessing	A story of faith and blessing

## Christ in Ruth

The concept of the Kinsman-Redeemer or "goel" (Ruth 3:9, "close relative") is an important portrayal of work of Christ. The "goel" must:

1. Be related by blood to the one redeemed (Deuteronomy 25:5, 7-10; John 1:14; Romans 1:3; Philippians 2:5-8)
2. Be able to pay the price (Ruth 2:1; I Peter 1:18-19)
3. Be willing to redeem (Ruth 3:11; Matthew 20:28; John 10:15, 18; Hebrews 10:7)
4. Be free himself (Christ was free from the curse of sin)

The word "goel", used 13 times in this short book, presents a picture of the mediating work of Christ (Ruth 2:1, 20; 3:9, 12 (twice), 13 (three times); Ruth 4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14).

## Ruth: The Proverb 31 Virtuous Woman

*"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies."* Proverbs 31:10

*"All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman", said Boaz to Ruth.* Ruth 3:11.

1. Ruth was devoted to her family (Ruth 1:15-18; Proverbs 31:10-12, 23)
2. Ruth delighted in her work (Ruth 2:2; Proverbs 31:13)
3. Ruth was diligent in her labor (Ruth 2:7, 17, 23; Proverbs 31:14-21, 24, 27)
4. Ruth was dedicated to godly speech (Ruth 2:10, 13; Proverbs 31:26)
5. Ruth was dependent on God (Ruth 2:12; Proverbs 31:25b,30)
6. Ruth dressed with care (Ruth 3:3; Proverbs 31:22, 25a)
7. Ruth was discreet with men (Ruth 3:6-13; Proverbs 31:11, 12, 23)
8. Ruth delivered blessings (Ruth 4:14-15; Proverbs 31:28, 29, 31)

## **RUTH'S SORROW Ruth 1**

The story begins with hunger. There's a famine in Israel.

The Promised Land has become parched and empty. How can this be? Did not God Himself describe Canaan as a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8)?

Indeed He did. But He also warned Israel that their agricultural abundance depended on their spiritual obedience (Deuteronomy 28).

Since they had ignored God's law and degenerated into spiritual famine, a physical famine followed just as God had predicted.

Bethlehem, which means "house of bread," was now a house without bread. So four of Bethlehem's citizens – a hard working Israelite, his wife, and two sons – left in search of food. They traveled to Moab, 35 miles southeast of Bethlehem, on the other side of the Dead Sea.

Elimelech (which means, "my God is king"), his wife Naomi ("pleasant" or "the sweet one"), and their two sons, Mahlon ("sickly") and Chilion ("pining away") live in Moab ("God's wash pot") for about ten years (Ruth 1:4).

The two boys married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth ... then tragedy struck. Naomi's husband died and then her two sons died, leaving three saddened widows.

Naomi decided to return to Palestine and was accompanied by her older daughter-in-law, Ruth. Naomi attempted to persuade Ruth to go back to her own home and people.

Ruth answered with the best known passage in the book of Ruth (see Ruth 1:16-17).

When the two women got to Bethlehem, the town's people said, "That is Naomi." She said, "Call me not Naomi ("pleasant"), call me Mara ("Bitterness") for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.

## **RUTH'S SERVICE Ruth 2**

Because our God is a God of compassion, He made provisions for the poor and destitute. He instructed the farmers of Israel to leave some grain in the field for the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. (Deuteronomy 24:19; Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22)

Ruth went out to glean wheat and, in the providence of God, picked a field belonging to Boaz, a near relative (goel) of Elimelech (Ruth 3:1-3).

Boaz was a son of the ex-harlot, Rahab (Matthew 1:5).

Boaz saw Ruth, and apparently fell in love with her. He treated her kindly and ordered his hired hands to do the same (Ruth 2:15-16).

Ruth brought home some 30 pounds of barley and reported the kindness of Boaz to Naomi, who immediately began planning a wedding (Ruth 2:19-23).

## **RUTH'S SURRENDER Ruth 3**

Naomi gave Ruth these instructions: "Wash yourself" (clean up), "anoint yourself" (put on some perfume), "dress yourself well," "go and lie at his feet" (Ruth 3:1-3).

While Boaz slept on the threshing floor, Ruth "uncovered his feet and lay down" (Ruth 3:7). That is, she took the part of his blanket that covered his feet and draped it over herself.

This gesture had a symbolic meaning. By sharing the same blanket with Boaz, Ruth made known that she was claiming the place of his wife, but her position at his feet signified that she did not yet have that status.

A single woman approaching a sleeping man in the dark. Does that seem a little forward? A bit indiscreet? Some scholars have tried to make a case for immorality in this passage, but nothing in the text suggests this.

Naomi had complete confidence in the integrity of the Kinsmen-Redeemer. Boaz could be trusted to act responsibly and Ruth was recognized by everyone as a “woman of noble character” (Ruth 3:11). The uncovering of the feet was a ceremonial act that was completely proper. Probably the scene took place in the dark so that Boaz had the opportunity to reject the proposal with the whole town not knowing it.

We can see in Ruth's actions a beautiful illustration of the believer's relationship to Christ. Certainly if we want fellowship with Him, we must be washed, anointed (the Holy Spirit), and clothed (Ruth 3:3). Our proper place is at His feet.

Boaz responded with joy to Ruth's plea. But one more hurdle remained. There was another relative closer to Naomi than Boaz. The law required that he be given first choice as redeemer. This was the perfect time and opportunity for Ruth and Boaz to let their feelings determine their action. “Forget the Law!” they could have said. “I love you; I don't want to take my chances on anyone else.” But they realized that gaining a blessing by ungodly means was no blessing at all. Though interested in each other, they were patient. They trusted God.

#### **RUTH'S SATISFACTION Ruth 4**

Boaz called a council meeting to determine whether the nearest kinsman wanted to assume his obligations (Ruth 4:1-4).

Boaz's heart must have dropped to his knees when the man said, “I will redeem it.” (Ruth 4:4)

But Boaz continued ... Read Ruth 4:5-10.

In time, God would give Boaz and Ruth a son named Obed. Obed would grow up and father a boy named Jesse, who would in turn have a son called David.

The Book begins with a funeral and ends with a wedding. It opens with famine and closes with fullness.

## **A FAMILY AWAY FROM GOD**

### **Ruth 1:1-5**

The story of Ruth in the Bible is a unique story

1. It is a Life Story. The story of Ruth reflects the struggles, the decisions, the joys, and the trials of day to day life.
2. It is a Love Story. The Book of Ruth has been called “The Cinderella of the Bible.” It reflects love at its highest form and true respect between a man and a woman; yet, the word “love” is not found in the book. The Book of Ruth shows us the importance of moral principles needed in romance and marriage.
3. It is the Lord's Story.

This is the most important feature of the book, for it illustrates the great truths of redemption.

Only two books of the Bible receive their names from women: Ruth and Esther. Ruth is mentioned by name 12 times in the Book of Ruth and the Old Testament doesn't mention her again. When we come to the New Testament, Ruth is mentioned once in Matthew 1:5 and is used in the genealogy of Jesus.

The theme of the 85 verses that make up the Book of Ruth is Pursued by Grace. This is a story of redemption, of love, of grace, and of hope.

If these verses teach us anything, it teaches us that living in a backslidden condition carries with it devastating consequences, but repentance and restoration are always a possibility.

The Book of Ruth begins with the conjunction “now”, which indicates that this book is tied to another book. The first clause tells us which book. It is the Book of Judges.

Acts 13:20 tells us that the period of the Judges lasted 450 years. That 450 years period of the Judges was the Dark Ages for Israel. Eight times in the Book of Judges we read the condemning statement, “Israel did that which was evil.”

There were 13 Judges in Israel during that time and Israel followed the same cycle for those 450 years: Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, Restoration, and Rest.

Israel would sin, God would raise up a nation or people against them, Israel would repent, God would send them a deliverer in the form of a Judge, the land would be at peace and Rest for a while. Then the cycle would begin again.

The Period of the Judges was called the Dark Age of Israel because God was not in their thoughts or conversation. Four times in the Book of Judges we are told that "there was no king in Israel (Judges 17:6; Jud. 18:1; Jud. 19:1; Jud. 21:25) and everyone did what was right in their own eyes." Everyone was doing their own thing, with no restraints and no boundaries.

Proverbs 16:25 "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death."

The Book of Ruth covers a period of about 12 years; many think during the time Gideon was Judge. The Book of Ruth begins with a Funeral and ends with a Wedding. It begins with a Famine and ends with Fullness. It is the story of the Prodigal Son on a larger scale, for here, it is not just a son who goes away from God, but an entire family.

Let me introduce you to the family and where they lived.

The father's name was Elimelech (Ruth 1:2), which means "my God is King" or God is the King of my life. Sadly, he did not live up to his name.

The mother's name was Naomi (Ruth 1:2), which means "pleasant, delightful, sunshine." They may have called her "Mary Sunshine!"

They had two sons: Mahlon, which means "sickly," and Chilion, which means "pinning away." Happy Kids!

They lived in Bethlehem (House of Bread), Judah (Fruitful Praise) (verse 1). They are going to move to Moab, "God's wash pot" or "Garbage can" or "God's toilet bowl."

Here is a father, "my God is King," taking his wife, "Mary Sunshine" and they are going to take their two sons, "Sickly" and "Pinning Away," from the "House of Bread and Praise," to go down and eat out of the world's "Garbage Can" and swim in the world's "Toilet Bowl" for awhile! It sounds like a recipe for disaster, and it is!

### **The Departure Ruth 1:1**

When we read that "it came to pass," we understand that "it came to pass" because God brought it to pass. There are no accidents in this world; trials as well as triumphs are brought to pass by the hand of God, according to the will of God.

"There was a famine in the land" of Canaan, the land "flowing with milk and honey," the land which once yielded clusters of grapes so large that they had to be carried on a pole between two men (Numbers 13:23). While the geographic location failed to live up to its name, so did Elimelech!

This is one of thirteen famines recorded in Scripture and each time the famine came as a result of the nation's sinfulness. God had told His people that if they continued to sin that He would shut up heaven that it rain not, and that the ground would become as brass that it would not yield its fruit. God was saying that He would cut off Israel's food supply if they continued to sin in order to get His people to return to Him.

Actually, it is a testimony to the mercy and grace of God that He did not send more famines to Israel. The same could be said about America! But the famine of food was not the worse famine. The worse famine was the moral and spiritual famine. No food for the body was bad, but no food for the soul is far worse.

A famine came! What do you do when tough times come? When testing times come? There are at least three things you can do in the midst of trials:

1. Endure Them But if that is what you try to do, eventually they will overpower you and you will become frustrated, discouraged, and bitter.
2. Escape Them You can run from them. Try to take the easy way out. But you will miss the purpose God is trying to accomplish in your life, and God will just bring other trials into your life.
3. Enlist Them You can turn trials into stepping stones instead of stumbling blocks. Realize that the Lord is trying to teach you something in the experience.

Elimelech chose to try to escape his trials, but when this prodigal family went to Moab, they took their problems with them. The heart

of their problem was the problem of the heart. A change in geography will never overcome a flaw in character. Problems of the heart go with you wherever you go and stay with you until you deal with the problem and get your life right with God and others.

To leave Israel to go to Moab was to violate the clear commandment of the Lord. To leave one's inheritance as Elimelech did was equivalent to denying the faith of Jehovah. It was a total turning from God to the world. This move to Moab involved total separation from the things of God. They could not worship at the Tabernacle, they could not bring their offerings, they could not keep the feasts that were commanded by the Law. They were totally isolated from everything that stood for God.

By moving his family to Moab, Elimelech exposed his family to evils they would have avoided had they stayed in Israel. For instance, both of these boys married pagan women. It is never right for a child of God to marry an unbeliever. There is a word for that kind of behavior: [Backsliding!](#)

I'm afraid that more believers are in that shape than are willing to admit it. There is no way to be right with the Lord as long as you are separated from the things of God.

The one place this family didn't need to go was Moab! It was a dangerous move!

1. Moab was the result of incest between Lot and his oldest daughter – Genesis 19:30-38.
2. Moab hired Balaam to curse the people of God in the wilderness – Numbers 22:24.
3. Moab refused to let Israel travel through their land and would not help Israel. They were so hateful toward Israel that God said that no Moabite or Ammonite could enter the worship assembly of the Lord for ten generations – Deuteronomy 23:3-4.
4. After Israel got into the Promised Land, the Moabite women seduced the men of Israel resulting in the death of 24,000 men because of God's judgment.
5. After Israel moved to the Promised Land, Moab oppressed the Israelites and made them serve Moab 18 years.
6. More importantly, this family didn't have to go to Moab because Elimelech had a wealthy kinsman whose character it was to help folks in need, especially his family – Ruth 2:1. The land had been divided by tribes. It was God-given land. God could take care of Elimelech's family, famine or no famine. Also, others, like Boaz, stayed in Israel and not only survived, but became wealthy. Better to life in Bethlehem in the time of famine than in Moab in the time of plenty

### **The Duration Ruth 1:1**

We are told that Elimelech “went to sojourn in the country of Moab.” He did not go intending to dwell there, but just to sojourn there. But once they got to Moab, they settled down and “continued there!”

Ruth 1:1 says they went to “sojourn” or visit in the land; Ruth 1:2 says they “continued” there;

Ruth 1:4 says “they stayed there about ten years;” verse 5 says that Elimelech and his two sons “died” there. No one who leaves God ever intends to stay away from God for a long time, but many do.

Sin will take you further than you want to go;  
Keep you longer than you want to stay, and  
Cost you more than you want to pay.

Perhaps you're thinking about getting just a bit out of the will of God – just a temporary flirtation with sin, but your “sojourn” may end up lasting years. You always make a mistake when you take a step away from God.

I want to remind you that going to Moab doesn't always involve an actual, physical move. There are folks who attend church regularly, who pay their tithes, who live clean, moral lives, but they are in Moab even now in their mind. It effects our attitude. We become blind to the fault in our own hearts.

### **The Discipline Ruth 1:3, 5**

Can you picture this family as they are GOING TO Moab? They are happy, planning for the good times, looking forward to the night life they've heard about. And those Moabite women for their sons! Who could ask for more?

Now picture Naomi and Ruth LEAVING FROM Moab. Now there are three graves and three widows. They went there thinking they would escape death from the famine, but all died except Naomi; and they returned to Bethlehem as beggars.

One could accurately paraphrase verse 4: “They transgressed the decree of the Word of the Lord in taking strange wives.” What they did was a direct violation of God's Law. God expressly forbade mixed marriages between the children of Israel and the unbelievers (Deuteronomy 7:2-3; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

Yet, their father must be blamed. He taught them by example the way of disobedience. Parents who raise their children in the lap of

the world should not be surprised to see them married to the world.

Notice verse Ruth 1:5: “The woman was left.” What a pathetic condition she was left in. She was now alone and poor, in a strange land, with no one to care for her. We must never expect to prosper by disobedience.

Somehow Naomi heard that the Lord was again blessing His people. In truth, He had never stopped blessing! Did you know His chastisement is also His blessing? If He didn't love us, He wouldn't chastise us when we sin against Him.

Like the Prodigal Son, Naomi came to herself and she wanted to go home. The step back includes Repentance. You can't get back home if you keep going the way you are going. If you keep doing what you're doing, you'll keep getting what you're getting.

I've wandered far away from God; Now I'm coming home.

The paths of sin too long I've trod; Lord, I'm coming home.

I've wasted many precious years; Now I'm coming home.

I now repent with bitter tears; Lord, I'm coming home.

I'm tired of sin and straying, Lord; Now I'm coming home.

I'll trust Thy love, believe Thy word; Lord, I'm coming home.

My soul is sick, my heart is sore; Now I'm coming home.

My strength renewed, my hope restored; Lord, I'm coming home.

Coming home, coming home, never more to roam:

Open wide Thine arms of love; Lord, I'm coming home.

## THE MAN WHO WENT FROM RICHES TO RAGS

### Ruth 1:1-5

Let me introduce you again to this Prodigal Family.

The father's name was Elimelech (Ruth 1:2), which means, “My God is King,” or God is the King of my life. Sadly, he did not live up to his name.

The mother's name was Naomi (Ruth 1:2), which means “Pleasant, Delightful, Sunshine.” They may have called her Mary Sunshine!

They had two sons: Mahlon, which means “Sickly,” and Chilion, which means “Pinning Away.” Happy Kids!

They lived in Bethlehem (House of Bread), Judah (Fruitful Praise). They are going to move to Moab, “God's wash pot” or “garbage can,” or “God's toilet bowl.”

They went to “sojourn” or to visit for a little while, but ended up staying for ten years, or until the husband and two sons died in Moab. While they were in Moab, the two sons intermarried with the pagan women of Moab.

Strangely enough, if you looked at a map, it is only a three day journey from Bethlehem to Moab; yet, they stayed in Moab for ten years.

I want us to focus our attention on Elimelech, but before we look at him, let me point out two things about him.

1. Notice Ru 1:2 – Ephrathite is a title for the aristocrat folks; those with privilege and position and power and possessions. If anyone didn't have to leave Bethlehem because of the famine, it was this family. They left, not so much because of the famine, but because their heart longed for the things of Moab.
2. The family was in good shape with regard to their food supply when they left. Naomi said in Ruth 1:19-21 that they “went out full.”

I want us to see three things about Elimelech:

#### His Name

Elimelech means "my God is King." When a person is born again, he is born into the Kingdom of God. That means that Jesus becomes not only his Savior, but also his Lord, his Master, his King ! "My God is King!" Where else would you expect a King to be, but on the throne of his kingdom? The problem is that sometimes we allow Jesus to RESIDE in our heart, but not to PRESIDE over our heart. He is RESIDENT, but not PRESIDENT!

Elimelech said with confidence: My God is King.

- It was Personal: My God; My King.
- It was Persistent: "IS" I claim Him as my King in life always. That will never change.

Who is King of your life? Who directs your attitudes, your thoughts, your actions, your motives? We should never allow a barrier to come between our Lord and us.

J. Sidlow Baxter said that once when he was away at a preaching appointment, he, his wife, and little girl stayed at the home of a friend. On the bedroom wall, just over the head of the bed on which they slept, there was a picture of the Lord Jesus, which was reflected in the large mirror of the dressing table standing in the bay of the bedroom window.

When his little daughter woke on her first morning there, she saw the picture reflected in the mirror while she still was lying in bed and exclaimed, "Oh, Mommy, I can see Jesus through the mirror!" Then she quickly knelt up to take a better look, but in doing so brought her own body between the picture of Jesus' reflection.. She now saw herself.

So, she lay down again and again saw the picture of Jesus. Then she said, "Mommy, when I can't see myself, I can see Jesus; but every time I see myself, I don't see Him." When we are out of the way, He is King. When we get in the way, we block our own vision of Him.

Someone prayed: "Dear Lord, my prayer is this: To see Thee more clearly, To love Thee more dearly, To follow Thee more nearly."

### **His Shame**

God was no longer King of Elimelech's life. It didn't happen all at once. It was a gradual process. It begins with an attitude and moves to the actions of a person. Proverbs 14:14

Let me remind you that it was just a short distance from Bethlehem to Moab. Sin tries to get you to leave the right path, just a little way, but once you take that first small step sin encourages you to take other small steps from God. Those who go far from God start with just one step at a time.

Warren Wiersbe tells of a young man who gradually got away from the right path. He got so far away that he was ashamed to go back because he thought he couldn't go back. He had gotten involved in many things until he ruined his life. He decided to commit suicide. The maid found this suicide note:

"I leave to society an example. I leave to my friends the memory of a misspent life. I leave to my father and mother all the sorrows they can bear in their old age. I leave to my wife a broken heart and to my children the name of a drunkard and a suicide. I leave to God a lost soul that has insulted His mercy."

I think of folks who got away from God.

- Demas was once a fellow-laborer with Paul, but Paul had to write of him, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world."
- You remember the story of Lot who went to Sodom. In God's judgment he lost his wife and his two girls were with child by their own father. From his oldest daughter came the Moabites.
- Robert Robertson was a faithful servant of God, but he began to move away from God. It wasn't long until he got completely away from God and started living in the ways of the world. He and a lady he had never met were sitting on a park bench. The lady was a joyful Christian who loved to share her love for the Lord. Before long, the lady began to share her love for the Lord with Robertson. She said, "The way I feel about the Lord is summed up in a song that goes like this: ' Come Thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace,

Streams of mercy, never ceasing, calls for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above,

Praise His Name, I'm fixed upon it, name of God's redeeming love.'

Robertson said, "Mam, I'm the man who wrote that song, but now I am so far away from God. Then he wrote the last verse to the



song:

“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love.

Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above.”

When you and I take that first step away from God, it is easy to take the next step away from Him.

A young man in prison wrote this on his prison wall:

“This is the price I pay, just for one riotous day  
Years of regret and grief and sorrow without relief.  
Suffer it, I will my friend, suffer it to the end,  
Until the grave shall give release.”

Sadly, the grave will not give release to those who die without Christ; only more sorrow and pain!

Did you notice that there is not one sin mentioned that Elimelech committed. There is no record of any wrong, except that he moved away from God's will and the place he should have been.

Elimelech not only defiled himself when he moved, but he defiled his whole family as well. You and I never backslide alone. We often take our spouse and children with us.

### **His Fame**

I'm not talking of fame in the sense of success, but success in reverse. He went from riches to rags.

But let me end on a positive note. The first five verses major on the family going away from God, but the rest of the book deals with them coming back to God and home. That's what God wants us to major on.

There was another man that Jesus talked about in a parable. This man said, “Father, give me what belongs to me.” At the father's house there was plenty, but he left to go into pleasure and it was not long until he began to be in want. He became hungry. He went from riches to rags. He said, “I will return...” and his father stood waiting and willing to restore his son.

God waits to restore anyone who has gone away from Him.

The song says:

If there ever were dreams that we're lofty and noble,  
    those were my dreams at the start;  
And the hopes for life's best were the hopes that I harbored  
    down deep in my heart;  
But my dreams turned to ashes, by castles all crumbled,  
    my fortune turned to lose;  
So I wrapped it all in the rags of my life,  
    And I laid it at the cross.

Something beautiful, something good,  
    All my confusion He understood;  
All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife,  
    But He made something beautiful of my life.

## **DECISIONS DETERMINE DESTINY**

### **Ruth 1:6-18**

The scene is the local burial ground in Moab. Three women have come to visit the graves of their husbands once more before leaving Moab. As they stand there comforting each other, their tears flow freely. In their minds they wonder if they will ever return to this place again.

It has been a long ten years of tragedy and suffering. The first six verses of Ruth speaks of Famine – Failure – and Fatalities, and things were getting darker! Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion are dead; Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah are widows.

They didn't think it would end up this way when they left Bethlehem. They didn't think it would hurt anything to go to Moab; but they didn't consult God about it, nor did they consider the long term effects that disobedient decisions would make.

There is a great truth here that I want you to see: "Be sure your sin will find you out." "Whatsoever a man sows, that will he also reap." You can PICK your KICKS, but not your KICKBACKS! Most of the time the consequences of sin surprise us.

In the first place, we think we can get by with our sin. Others who committed the same sin did not, but we are more clever than they; but the consequences of our sin are greater than we ever thought they would be. Again, you can pick your kicks, but you can't pick your kickbacks.

In her mind and heart Naomi begins to think about how it was before her family left Bethlehem. The blessings of God were upon them. Now she thinks again about home.

That's encouraging to me as a Pastor, to know that it's never too late to go back home; back to God and His will for your life. You can see it all through Scripture – folks who get away from God, make a mess of their life, and finally decide to go back to God. And He stands always ready with arms wide open ready to receive us back.

Like the Prodigal son whose father saw him coming back and he ran to meet his son. That Prodigal's father represents God the Father and it is the only time in Scripture that we see God running and He's running to welcome back a repentant, wayward son.

Three things I want us to see in these verses:

### **The Decision of Naomi Ruth 1:6-7**

Some nameless messenger brought word to Moab, "God has visited the land of Bethlehem and His blessing on them is back in great abundance."

"Then she arose and went." That's repentance. The word "repent" means "to turn around." The way back to God is always repentance. Sometimes the Lord has to let the fruit of evil deeds bear fruit before we humble our self and repent.

Naomi says, "I'm going back to my God and to Bethlehem" and the two daughters-in-law say, "And we are going with you!"/

And now we come to the first recorded words of Naomi: You would think she would say "Praise God! You're going to Bethlehem with me. Follow me and we'll experience the blessings of God together!"

But that's not what she said. Instead she said, "Go back to your people and to your gods".(Ruth 1:8-13).

Can you imagine a child of God encouraging anyone, especially family members, to go back and worship idols and false gods. Here is an important truth you need to learn: It is always a dangerous thing to take spiritual advice from a backslidden Christian. Why? Because backslidden Christians lose their spiritual discernment. A backslidden Christian will give you bad advice.

Why didn't Naomi want her daughters-in-law to go to Bethlehem with her? Was it for the benefit of the daughters-in-law or her's that she wanted them to stay in Moab? I'm convinced Naomi was trying to cover up her sin before her town's people.

Maybe she didn't want to take them with her because they would be living proof that she and her husband had permitted their sons to marry outside the covenant nation. In other words, she was trying to cover up her disobedience. If she had returned alone, maybe no one would know that her family had broken the Law of Moses./

Naomi tried to cover up the reason she didn't want them to go with her by suggesting three things:

1. "You'll have a better chance to find new husbands in Moab" Ruth 1:8-9
2. "She is too old to remarry and produce children. She is past the child-bearing age, and even if she could have other babies, the daughters-in-law wouldn't wait until they were grown to marry again." Ruth 1:11-13a This law is the reason brothers didn't want their brothers to marry some old hag. They wanted them to marry someone attractive in case something happened to them and they would have to marry the old girl.
3. "The Lord's hand had been against her" Ruth 1:13b.

She was saying, "Don't risk that the Lord may further chasten me and it affect you. Go back!"

### **The Defection of Orpah Ruth 1:9-10, 14-15**

This was a crisis time in the life of Orpah and she blew it! Orpah had Bethlehem in her eyes but Moab in her heart.

Both daughters-in-law made a decision and a commitment to go back with Naomi to Bethlehem. One was a Faithful commitment –

one was a False commitment. One was lasting; one was not.

How often we see today in our churches two people make a decision for Christ and both seem to be sincere; both seem to mean business with God, but then, as time passes, one delights the church because of their faithfulness and the other distresses the church because of their faithlessness.

The little Book of Jude was written to show that in the last days the church will experience apostasy. Apostasy means that some in the church will seem to be really saved; seem to be true, but they will not be.

Jude 12 describes it this way: Two types of folks make decisions for Christ. One is like a cloud filled with refreshing rain. The other is like a cloud which looks as if it is filled with water, but is not.

Jude paints a picture of a farmer who is in bad need of rain on his crops. He sees this cloud in the sky and begins to rejoice because he thinks it is about to rain, but then a little breeze comes along and blows the cloud away. His hopes and desires concerning rain are gone.

Many who make decisions for Christ are like that. Those of us who are saved expect so much from those who make decisions for Christ, but too often we are left in a state of distress because their lives do not become what they should be.

Orpah is a picture of a Professor, but not a Possessor. She wept, just like Ruth. She showed plenty of emotion; even kissed Naomi, but went back to Moab. Her faith was nothing but cosmetics!

The name Orpah means “stiff-necked”, “stubborn,” “one who is not stable; one easily moved by her emotions.” She had a kind of surface commitment.

**Naomi tried to cover-up;**

**Orpah gave-up;**

**Ruth stood up!**

### **The Determination of Ruth Ruth 1:15-18**

Let me remind you that these words were said to a mother-in-law, not to a groom! Most folks who put these words in their wedding vows really don't want their mothers-in-law with them until death parts them!

Ruth's name means “friendship” and carries the idea of consistency, steadfastness, commitment.

In what Ruth said we see:

1. **Demand** Ruth 1:16a “Entreat me not to leave thee.” “Stop pressuring me to turn back to Moab; stop tempting me with evil talk; don't insist that I leave.”
2. **Direction** Ruth 1:16b “Where you go I will go.” “No matter if the way is rough or smooth, hard or easy, I will follow you.”
3. **Dwelling** Ruth 1:16c “Where you lodge, I will lodge.” No conditions given.
4. **Description** Ruth 1:16d “Your people will be my people.” I will be identified with you.
5. **Deity** Ruth 1:16e “Your God will be my God.” She made a break from idols to trust the Living God.
6. **Death** Ruth 1:17a I will be faithful to you until death.
7. **Determination** Ruth 1:17b-18

Both girls had the same opportunity; Ruth made the best of hers while Orpah rejected hers and let it slip by.

How many are in Hell because they let their opportunity to trust Christ slip by. Don't you be one of them!

## **GOING HOME – WHERE YOU BELONG**

### **Ruth 1:18-22**

A foolish old farmer, so the story goes, concluded one day that the oats he had fed his mule for years were simply costing him too much. So he hatched a plan; he mixed a little sawdust in with the feed, and then a little more the next day, and even more the next, each time reducing the amount of oats in the mix.

The mule didn't seem to notice the gradual change, so the farmer thought things were fine and kept decreasing the proportion of oats. But weeks later, on the day he finally fed the poor beast nothing but sawdust, the mule finished the meal and fell over dead.

A silly tale, perhaps, but it serves as a parable of the backslider – the Christian who slips further and further away from God through unrepentant sin or neglect. Though we know our souls cannot survive on spiritual sawdust, we may well convince ourselves that a little won't hurt too much, and a little less real spiritual food won't be missed. Then, over time, the proportion of sawdust increases while the oats gradually disappear. Before long, the change is complete, and our starved, sawdust-stuffed spiritual life has collapsed.

Surely this is how Naomi found herself in Moab with a dead husband and two dead sons. She never meant for it to happen, but one day she woke up to find that she was miles away from where the Lord wanted her to be. This passage is all about how Naomi found her way home to Bethlehem and to the place of blessing.

Some people have allowed a little sin here and a little sin there; a little slackness there until they find themselves spiritually where they never thought possible. They look around at all they have lost as a result of their backsliding and wonder if there is hope for their spiritual restoration. The answer to that question is “yes.” This passage has something to say about how that can happen in your life and mine.

When we come to these verses in Ruth 1, ten years have passed since Naomi and her family left Bethlehem to go to Moab. Now she's coming home, where she belongs.

Ten years in Moab – out of God's will; ten years of failure and fatalities; ten years of disobedience to God! Ten years seems like a long time. One decade. One tenth of a century. One seventh of the average person's life – wasted!!! Now she's going home!

Before I go any further, look at Ruth 1:21, for there is a great principle for the believer. For the believer, you may go away from the Lord (we call it backsliding), but you can expect the Lord to be RELENTLESS in His efforts to bring you back to Himself. Like the hounds from Heaven, God's Spirit will be on your trail, using every means to get you to repent and turn back to Him.

The trip from Moab to Bethlehem would have taken between 7-10 days. It would be interesting to know what Naomi and Ruth talked about as they made their way back to Bethlehem.

No details are given, but I believe Naomi told Ruth what Bethlehem was like before she and her family left Bethlehem to go to Moab. I think she also told Ruth about Jehovah God and the Laws He had given His people to live by.

Naomi and Ruth didn't walk into Bethlehem unnoticed; nor without stirring up the people (Ruth 1:19). Notice that “all the city was moved.” The word “moved” means excited, stirred; to cause a commotion. Their entrance into the city was the topic of conversation; not just among her relatives, but with the whole town. They were puzzled about two things:

### **A. Her Appearance**

“Is this Naomi?” It was more than just an amazement of what ten years can do to one's appearance. Sometimes at High School reunions, you say to someone, I can't believe it's really you!” They may have put on 20 pounds or their hair may have changed color, or, if it's a man, he may have lost most of his hair.

But with Naomi, it was more. She had been well-to-do; now she was in poverty and distress. The usual appearance of Joy and pleasantness were gone because her life of obedience and fellowship with God was gone.

Instead of being a delightful, smiling ray of sunshine that everyone loved, she looked tired, stressed-out, and unkempt. And it was more than just the long trip. The scars of sin were prominent on her face. Sin had done a number on her outward appearance. I've seen that in folks. It makes them look much older than they are.

### **B. Her Associate**

The town folks noticed who was not with her – her husband and two sons. Why? Where were they? And, who is this Moabite woman and why is she with Naomi? Here's what the people saw!

### **She was Bitter Ruth 1:20**

Amidst all the whispers, Naomi heard the question, “IS this Naomi?” In a bitter tone she said, “Don't call me Pleasant; call me Bitter, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.”

Did you hear who she blamed for her condition? God! She did it to herself! But she didn't want to take responsibility for her own sins. We are all like that. Blame someone for our condition; even God, but don't admit our wrong or take responsibility for our sin. Folks can sow their wild oats and then blame God when their crop comes in!

What can you expect after ten years of living in disobedience outside the will of God? She was bitter in her speech; bitter in her temperament; bitter in her attitude. She was reaping the fruit of a disobedient life.

## **She was Bankrupt Ruth 1:21**

She went out full; she came back empty. Sin always drains you; always cost you. She was empty in regards to her:

1. Family – She went out with a husband and two sons; she came back without all three.
2. Fortune – She had spent all. Nothing was left.
3. Faith – The people of Bethlehem discerned her emptiness right away. We can't lose our salvation by backsliding, but backsliding can empty us to the point that we will think we are lost, and so will others. It will cause us to doubt our salvation. (See [Backsliding](#))

Being empty was the consequence of her sin; but look at our Lord's compassion. She blamed the Lord for her circumstances and state which was wrong, but she credits the Lord for bringing her back.

The Lord could have left her in Moab to experience more trouble, but in grace He brought her back home to experience blessing.

## **She was Blamed Ruth 1:21**

"The Lord testified against me." She had been trying to blame God for her troubles, but God blamed her, for she was to blame. Isaiah 59:12; Numbers 32:23

God will be the Chief Testifier against man, for God knows all the sins men commit. He has them all written in a book. His testimony will be Factual, Faithful, Full, Final; and not Faulty! The fault always lies with the sinner; not with God.

## **She was Broken Ruth 1:21**

"The Almighty has afflicted me." The word "afflicted" means to break, to humble. Brokenness is a good thing if it turns us back to God. God often has to break us to mend us or to restore us. Brokenness is the only way some of us will come back to the Lord. We have to hit rock bottom before God gets our attention.

But notice verse Ruth 1:22. "They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest." They came to the right place (Bethlehem – the House of Bread).

They also came at the right time. Harvest time was a time of plenty; a time of expectation; a time of graciousness; a time of giving; a time of helping others; a time of joyfulness. IT IS ALWAYS HARVEST TIME WHEN A PERSON RETURNS TO THE LORD!

I've wandered far away from God, now I'm coming home;  
The paths of sin too long I trod, Lord, I'm coming home.

I've wasted many precious years, now I'm coming home;  
I now repent with bitter tears, Lord, I'm coming home.

My soul is sick, my heart is sore, now I'm coming home,  
My strength renewed, my hope restored, Lord, I'm coming home.

Coming home, coming home, never more to roam.  
Open wide Thine arms of love, Lord, I'm coming home.

## **RUTH'S CONVERSION**

### **Ruth 1:6-18**

It seems clear that both Elimelech and Naomi were true believers in Jehovah God when they were in Bethlehem Judah. We don't know how committed they were to the Lord while they were in Bethlehem, but it seems that the famine in Bethlehem tested their faith and they both failed that faith test.

I say they were true believers because Elimelech's name means "my God is King." Naomi's name means "pleasant." It seems that at one time their faith in the Lord was strong. The ten years they spent in Moab took its toll on the faith of both of them.

We are not told what Elimelech's spirit was like when he died, but we are told that the spirit of Naomi was bitter. As the leader in the home, it was likely that Elimelech made the decision to leave Bethlehem and Naomi may have left reluctantly. Be that as it may, Naomi's spirit had taken a tumble as well.

But there must have been something winsome about Naomi, because when she decided to go back home to Bethlehem, both daughters-in-law are willing to leave Moab and their families to go with her. She must have had some kind of positive influence on their lives. I wonder if Naomi had taught them about Jehovah God. It is amazing that God can even use backslidden believers as a witness.

God somehow used Naomi as His instrument of grace to reach Ruth. Naomi is not over the consequences of her backsliding and discipline of the Lord, for she is still bitter. But in spite of her bad spirit, God used her. The Lord has never had much to work with, but Ruth saw something in the life of Naomi that pointed to God. Naomi became the unlikely instrument used of God to reach Ruth.

Every child of God ought to long for the privilege of being an instrument in God's hands for the winning of the lost. The Scriptures declare, "He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

Let's look at Ruth's conversion:

### **Ruth's Conflict**

God Wanted to save Ruth, but she faced many obstacles.

1. Her husband had died and she was experiencing sorrow and grief. A woman who was a widow in that day experienced a hard life, especially if she had no children. She had no one to provide for her or protect her. She was on her own.
2. Naomi discouraged her. Three times Naomi tried to get Ruth not to follow her to Bethlehem. In Ruth 1:8 Naomi said, "Go, return each to her mother's house." In Ruth 1:11 Naomi says, "Turn back, my daughter." Again in Ruth 1:12 Naomi says, "Turn back, my daughters, go." And then in Ruth 1:15 Naomi says to Ruth, "Look, your sister-in-law has turned back. You turn back too as she did."
3. Then Orpah discouraged Ruth from going with Naomi when she turned back to Moab.

### **Ruth's Conviction**

God does use the influence of people to win folks to Himself, but it takes more than another person's influence to win a soul to saving faith. Those influences must be accompanied by the power and grace of God the Holy Spirit. John 6:63 says, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth (or brings life to a dead soul)."

1 Thessalonians 1:5 says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit." Not even the preaching of the gospel can bring forth the fruit of faith in the hearts of men without the quickening power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

### **Ruth's Choice**

Notice Ruth 1:18 "When Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfastly minded, she stopped speaking to her; trying to get her to return to Moab."

Ruth made a voluntary, determined, personal choice with her heart and life. Everyone who comes to Christ must make a voluntary, determined, and personal choice with heart and life to choose Christ and to commit to Him. No one can make that choice for you.

Here is where repentance comes in. Ruth turned From Moab and the gods of Moab and turned TO Jehovah God. She renounced Moab and Moab's gods. She renounced the life-style of Moab. She made her commitment to Jehovah God.

Even though Naomi's advice to Ruth to go back to Moab was bad advice, there is an element of what she said to Ruth that I like. She told Ruth that she had better count the cost of going to God and to Bethlehem. It was not going to be easy. Since she was a Moabitess, Ruth might experience some ill-treatment from the Jews.

I think we need to tell folks that trusting Christ may not be an easy way of life. If someone is fully committed to Christ, there will be some obstacles to face. They may encounter some enemies of Christ. Being a committed Christian means daily commitment.

Too often when we try to win folks to the Lord, we just tell them the blessings of trusting Christ – Forgiveness of sin, Fellowship with Him, and Heaven forever. It's as if we tell them there may be some difficult times, we may lose them. Tell folks there may be hard times, but that our Lord will always be with us and that He will never leave us.

### **Ruth's Conversion**

In Ruth 1:14 we are told that Ruth clung or clave to Naomi. The word speaks of steadfast devotion. She would not change her mind.

"Entreat (urge) me not to leave you...I will go." "My decision is made. Don't keep asking me to go back to Moab. I will not!"

"Where you lodge, I will lodge" speaks of identification and communion.

"Your people will be my people." She was severing her old friends and her old ways for this new way. "Your friends will now be my new friends."

"Your God shall be my God." She has a new allegiance. "Your God" and not another god.

"Where you die, I will die and be buried." "Don't take my bones back to Moab. I want to be buried in the land of the living God." No turning back; no turning back.

That's the way our commitment to Christ should be.

## **BITTERNESS: BLAMING GOD FOR OUR TRIALS**

### **Ruth 1:19-22**

Someone said, "Life in this world ain't much. It begins with a slap on the bottom and ends with a shovel full of dirt in your face, and there ain't much in between except bumps and bruises." I think Naomi would agree, and so would many of us!

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

But things changed in a hurry. After ten years' absence, Naomi returned from Moab bereaved and destitute. She had lost her husband and her two sons, her money and her property. She came back to Bethlehem with nothing but the ragged clothes on her back and a daughter-in-law who was as poor and destitute as she was. How quickly things change!

When Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, as she walked down the streets, broken, weary, ragged, and worn with age and trouble, the whole town was astonished by what they saw. They said to one another, "Is this Naomi?" (In verse Ruth 1:19, the pronoun of "they said" is feminine.) She was not the Naomi whom they had known a decade ago.

Her ten difficult years in Moab had taken their toll on Naomi's appearance and personality. Cut a long-stem blooming rose, lay that cut rose on a counter somewhere and it soon withers. That withered rose is so much unlike the blooming flower that it only faintly resembles the blooming rose. Naomi was so unlike the woman who left Bethlehem ten years earlier that her friends could hardly believe it was her – "Is this Naomi?"

The afflictive hand of divine providence makes great changes, sometimes shocking changes, in a short time. When God chastens, He means to correct; and works to change us. Naomi correctly attributed all her troubles to the hand of God. She learned that everything she had experienced was brought to pass by the hand of her Heavenly Father and that it had all been for her soul's good. But – she did it to herself – and so do we! She blamed God, but she did it to herself.

She went out full. Her husband was wealthy and highly respected. Her sons were in good health. Her family enjoyed social rank and prestige. But, when she came back home, things were different. She came home empty – and she did it to herself.

I wonder what Naomi and Ruth talked about as they made the long trip together back to Bethlehem. Did they talk about Jehovah-God? Did they talk about the Law of Moses? Did they talk about the Jewish faith or the Jewish people or their new home in Bethlehem? I wonder what kind of answers Naomi gave Ruth since she was a bitter woman.

I'll tell you this, when you are filled with bitterness, your thinking and spirit are polluted and tainted. That means what you say about many things will be colored because of your bitter spirit.

Your thinking will become slanted, negative, and you will have a critical spirit. Naomi had gone out full, positive, with great hope. Now, she is bitter and she is a woman with empty hands, an empty home and an empty heart. Because she didn't surrender to the Lord and accept His loving chastening, she did not experience "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11).

#### **The Cause of Bitterness**

Bitterness is a fast-spreading disease, even in the life of a Christian. It is a very real problem.

What is bitterness? It is a state of the heart that is without joy. Its cause is usually rooted in something

that happened to an individual that they don't think was fair. Listen: Life will never be fair. We live in a sin-cursed world, and until the

Lord comes to redeem this earth, life will not be fair.

Most of us feel at times that we have been dealt a poor hand in life, or that we have been kicked in the teeth, or that we have had to endure more than anyone else. At times we feel we have been mistreated. "Why has all of this happened to me? Some folks always seem to land on their feet; not me! I always get the short end of the stick!" Ever feel that way?

Nothing comes our way without God's permission. Naomi had confused the Lord's hand of correction with His heart of love. All she could see was the bad, and, yet, the Lord was chastening her in order to bring her home again. Two important verses come at the end of that passage in Hebrews 12 on chastening or the correction of the Lord: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; looking diligently lest any man fail the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:14-15).

The attitude we take toward our difficulties determines which direction life will go, for what life does TO us, depends on what life finds IN us. Circumstances don't make us bitter. Circumstances just reveal what is already in our hearts.

### **The Consequences of Bitterness Ruth 1:20-21**

Naomi was right: the Almighty was the one who afflicted her. BUT her painful problems and troubles must be blamed on her disobedience and unbelief. Again, she did it to herself.

Notice the word "testified" in verse 21. "The Lord has testified against me." In other words, God has been faithful to testify against me; to Announce my guilt to me; to Acknowledge my sin to me; to witness to me that I have disobeyed Him; to Respond to my sin in this way." God responded to Naomi the way He did because she gave Him reason to.

If God doesn't discipline you when you sin, don't say, "Hot dog, I got by with the sin!"

"For whom the Lord loves He chastens..." If He chastens you, God deals with you as one of His sons. But if He does not chasten or discipline you, you are not His son – you are illegitimate – He always disciplines us for our Profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:6-11).

God disciplines His children because He loves them and wants to restore them to fellowship. God will do whatever He must do to correct His erring child and turn his heart back to Him again.

### **The Characteristics of Bitterness**

Are you a bitter person? What are some of the characteristics of bitterness?

1. Bitterness leads to irritability in relationships. You cannot get along with others and others can't get along with you. You go off on folks over nothing. You are negative in spirit and look for reasons to be ticked-off. You stay in a fighting mood. You are defensive and critical of others. You look for the bad in others instead of the good. You look for reasons to be upset or angry with others. You have an unforgiving spirit.
2. Bitterness leaves you empty. Naomi said, "I went out full; I came back empty." Bitterness sucks the joy out of your life. Others are enjoying themselves or having fun, but not the bitter person. Nothing is enjoyable or fun or funny to them. Their's is a stick-in-the-mud spirit.
3. Bitterness is contagious. If you give out bitterness, others will hear it, catch it, and spread it. Bitterness is never content until it shows itself.
4. Bitterness leads to sin. When are you most tempted to sin – when you are content and things are going well for you, or when you are down and you feel everything is wrong or bad?

### **The Cure for Bitterness**

1. Let go of the past. It's a choice; a decision you make. You choose to be bitter or to let go of the past.
2. That means you must forgive and to right some wrongs if needs be.
3. Get things right in your own life and you'll find what you thought was so bad in others won't be near as bad.

A little boy was sitting at the supper table. He kept saying, "What's that awful sound? What's that awful sound?" The others at the table said that they heard nothing. The boy got angry and said, "I know you do hear it. It's getting louder and louder. You have to hear it!"

His mother went over to him and looked in his ear and a small fly was stuck in his ear. No one else could hear the sound because the sound was in him.



Notice something: Naomi was BETTERED by her BITTERNESS in life. If God had not brought afflictions in her life, she would never acknowledge her sin and admitted her sin and confessed her sin and received forgiveness and restoration.

With God, it is never too late to start over again!

## **RUTH: OVERWHELMED BY GRACE**

### **Ruth 1:22 – 2:10**

The Book of Ruth is one of the Bible's beautiful love stories. Ruth and Boaz are going to fall in love and become husband and wife.

Most single young people wonder when and how they will meet that special someone that they will fall in love with and spend the rest of their life with. The song "Some Enchanted Evening" sums it up: "Some enchanted evening, you will see a stranger, across a crowded room, your eyes will meet, your hearts will bond," etc.

Well, here is beautiful Ruth. She is now with her mother-in-law in Bethlehem. Her husband is dead; buried back yonder in Moab. She is now like a "street person." She has arrived in Bethlehem in the midst of the harvest. She had planted nothing in the spring. She had not planted one seed, but, but she comes to a field to glean.

Our Heavenly Father loves and cares for the poor person and the widows. He gave His people instructions to care for them and to treat them in a fair and decent way. In Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 24 God said that when they reaped the harvest, they were not to reap the corners of the fields and if they forgot a sheaf in the field, they were not to go back to get it. What was left would be for the poor and the widows.

Beginning with chapter two of Ruth, the atmosphere of the book makes a drastic change. The focus shifts from grudges to gratitude. Naomi fades into the background, and Ruth comes to the forefront. Gloom is replaced by gladness.

#### **The Provisions of God for Ruth Ruth 1:22-2:2**

In Ruth 1:21 Naomi says, "I went out of Bethlehem FULL; I came back again EMPTY." But notice this: She came back EMPTY, but she is going to live the rest of her life FULL!

Soon after Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, they needed food. God brought them back at just the right time – it was harvest time. The wheat and barley harvest time ran from April to June.

Ruth showed a spirit of humility and submissiveness as she asked permission from Naomi to go into the fields and glean after the harvesters.

The word "glean" means to pick up what the harvesters left behind after the first cutting. Gleaning was God's way of taking care of the poor. There was no welfare program of getting something for nothing in that day. If you needed assistance, you had to work for what you received.

I like the motto, "If you want a helping hand, look at the end of your sleeve." According to the God-ordained provision for the poor, the poor had to collect the grain themselves.

Others did not collect it for them. If they couldn't be bothered to work, then they didn't eat. It gave incentive to those who worked the hardest. To continually get something for nothing destroys the desire to work. Getting something for nothing creates Dependence, but work develops Character and Independence.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 makes it clear that if a man is able to work and is unwilling to work, they don't eat. This principle needs to be practiced by our government instead of passing more welfare laws to give something for nothing. Work is healthy and builds character. Ruth qualified as a gleaner in three ways. She was poor; she was a stranger; and she was a widow.

I like Ruth. She had enough self-motivation and get-up-and-go about her to get up and go to the field. She wasn't lazy; nor did she think she was too good to go into the field; nor did she think that the task of gleaning was beneath her.

Notice that we are introduced to a key person in this account in Ruth 2:1. His name is Boaz. Ruth doesn't know it yet, but Boaz is going to be her husband.

The name Boaz means "standing in strength." That's quite a contrast with her first husband, whose name meant "sickly, puny, or weakness." Boaz was an impressive fellow.

- Look at his Pedigree. He came from the tribe of Judah, as did our Lord.
  - Look at his Posterity. From him came David, Israel's greatest king prior to the reign of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ.
1. He was a Selected man. He was God's man for Ruth and Naomi to redeem them from their poverty and God's man to be the ancestor of David and Jesus Christ.
  2. He was a Spiritual man. He lived during the days of the Judges, which was a dark, godless time for the Jews; yet, he stood out as a light in the darkness. He wore his Christianity in the work place. He greeted his workers with, "May the Lord be with you" and with respect to Boaz they say, "May the Lord bless you."
  3. He was a Sensitive man. In Ruth 2:5 he looked at the workers in his field, including the "field people," the poor gleaners, and noticed Ruth. Now I think her being a beautiful young lady didn't hurt any, but he had already heard a "full report" about her and wasn't looking for her. He is sensitive to the needs of all his workers.

There's a wonderful story from the life of Lincoln. There was a great dinner planned at the White House for some important Washington politicians. A little while before the meal, some backwoods friends of Lincoln, from Illinois, showed up for a visit. The President invited them to the dinner and extra places were set. A little while into the meal, one of the visitors from Illinois poured some of his coffee out of cup into his saucer and began to drink from it. Lincoln saw the politicians lift their eyebrows, snicker, and elbow one another to take a look. The President slowly picked up his cup, poured his coffee into his saucer and began to drink. The man who told this story commented that Abraham Lincoln knew it was "Nice To Be Important, But It was More Important To Be Nice."

4. He was a Sacrificial man. He even instructed his servants to drop handfuls on purpose for her.

We are also told in Ruth 2:1 that Boaz was a kinsman to Elimelech. The word translated "kinsman" is "goel" in Hebrew and means "redeemer" and has its roots in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus wherein God outlined a plan to prevent capitalism from getting out of hand.

Every fifty years, in the Year of Jubilee, all properties purchased by wealthy individuals due to bankruptcy were to revert back to the original owner. In the year of Jubilee, all debts were canceled. It was the Father's safeguard against the greed which causes such disparity between rich and poor.

As gracious as the Year of Jubilee was, however, fifty years is a long time without your land – especially if you're a farmer. So the Lord made another provision. The closest kinsman had the right at any time to buy back property which had been lost through bankruptcy, poor business practices, or mismanagement. That's why the word "goel" is translated both "kinsman" and "redeemer."

This is an important concept because Jesus Christ is our Goel. We're bankrupt; but Jesus is wealthy and strong enough to redeem us.

### **The Providence of God for Ruth Ruth 2:2**

In Ru 2:2 Ruth said, "Oh, that I might go to a field to glean where the owner will show me grace so I can glean in his field." Then in 2:10 Ruth says to Boaz, "Why have I found grace in your eyes? What caused you to notice me and to be kind and so helpful to me since I am not a Jew, but a stranger? I am without any covenant promise, without any rights, without anything to plead before you except my need and your greatness. Why me?"

That is the way needy sinners ought to respond to the exceeding richness and goodness of God's grace in Christ. Gracious souls are always astonished by grace!

Why would the God of glory want to save me? I have nothing to merit His grace. I am unworthy! Why would He want to save me "GRACE!" He says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

Notice that little word "hap" in Ruth 2:3. Ruth was a stranger. She didn't know which field to go to. She just joins the crowd of landless poor and goes with them into a field, following behind a cart full of barley sheaves being pulled by the oxen.

The word "hap" for the world means "luck, chance, happenstance, accident." But in God's dealings with man there are no chance happenings. "Luck" is not a word of faith. Her "hap" was simply Divine Providence; an arrangement of God, working on Ruth's behalf.

Ruth didn't just "happen" to end up in the field of Boaz, who just "happened" to be a near-kinsman, who just "happened" to think she was beautiful, and who just "happened" to marry her and who just "happened" to have a son, who just "happened" to be the grandfather of King David, who just "happened" to be in the lineage of Jesus. That meeting in that field that day outside of

Bethlehem had been planned by God way back in eternity past. Ruth's very steps were guided by the Lord.

Look at your life and you can see how the Lord led in your life as well. Remember how He open some doors and closed others to get you to where He wants you to be?

### **The Protection of God for Ruth Ruth 2:5-10**

When Boaz first spots Ruth in 2:5, I think he asked the question with a little “ump” in it: “WOW! Who's damsel is this?” Boaz is serious about her.

In Ruth 2:5 Boaz calls Ruth “damsel” or “young lady;” in Ruth 2:8 Boaz calls her “my daughter.” Boaz was a contemporary of Elimelech, about 45-55, while Ruth was in her 20's. But “my daughter” speaks not only of age, but it is an intimate term, expressing his feelings for her.

Notice how Boaz assures Ruth of his gracious intentions:

- He tells her to look to him for everything.
- He tells her to simply trust him.
- He tells her she has come to the right place and not to go anywhere else.
- He tells her to drink freely at his fountain when she's thirsty.

He assures Ruth of his protection:

- None of my men will touch you, rebuke you or reproach you.
- He lets her know that his heart is drawn to her heart.

Boaz was attracted to her romantically, but that was not enough. He investigated her to see not only who she was but what kind of person she was. If you want God to bless you with a good marriage, you have the responsibility to find out as much as you can about the person's spiritual, moral, and emotional life. Are they saved? How do they relate to God? What about their character and conduct?

Someone said, “When you court and marry trash, you can't help but have a trashy marriage!”

The servant informed Boaz of the traits he found in Ruth:

1. **The Purity of Ruth** Ruth 2:6 Ruth had separated herself from Moab and its evil practices and had committed herself to Jehovah and faith in Him.
2. **The Loyalty of Ruth** Ruth 2:7 She has been loyal to Naomi, her mother-in-law. She had been faithful to her and provided food for her.
3. **The Politeness of Ruth** Ruth 2:7 Good manners go a long way in relationships. She asked permission from Naomi to go to the fields to glean; then asked permission of the servants of the field to glean.
4. **The Good Work Habits of Ruth** Ruth 2:7 She is not lazy. She is a hard worker; doing her part.

When Boaz hears this, he is all the more interested in Ruth. Attractive plus Purity, Loyal, Polite, Good Worker – that's what you look for in a mate!

Boaz gives Ruth three things: Permission to glean, Protection from harm, and Provisions for her need.

Our Goel, the Lord Jesus, loves us. He Redeems us, Provides for us, Protects us and Assures us that we will be with Him forever in Heaven!

## **“BOAZ IS OUR NEAR-KINSMAN”**

### **Ruth 2:10-23**

When we come to Ruth 2, the focus shifts from Naomi and Ruth to Boaz. You need to understand from this point on that Boaz is a type or picture of our Redeemer – The Lord Jesus!

Let me set the stag for you. Naomi and Ruth have come from Moab to Bethlehem, and they come at the beginning of the barley harvest. They are not there long until they become hungry. They are poor and have no means of buying supplies, so Ruth says to

Naomi, "I am going to the fields to glean heads of grain. Maybe someone will show me favor or grace and allow me to glean in their field." Naomi told her to go and do so.

The first field she came to was the field of Boaz and she was allowed to glean. She thought it was by chance or luck that she ended up there, but not so. She didn't just "happen" to go to the field of Boaz; rather, she was there by the providence of God.

Boaz comes to his field to check on his servant-reapers, and after he greets his servants, his eyes fall on beautiful Ruth, and it is love at first sight. He asked his servants, "Whose young woman is this?!" The servants tell him all they know about Ruth.

### **The Goodness of Boaz**

Boaz goes to Ruth and introduces himself to her. In Ruth 2:8 Boaz says, "Will you please listen to me? Please don't go to another field to glean. You will find all you need here and I will make sure you are safe here as you glean with my young women. I have commanded the young men not to touch you and I have told the men to draw plenty of water for you and the other workers to drink when you get thirsty."

Boaz mentioned the young men and the young women he has working for him. The young men would cut the barley with a hand sickle, then the young women would tie the barley in bundles, and then the young men would come back and load the bundles on wagons and carry them to the threshing floor.

Ruth, in humility, falls on her face before Boaz and asked why she has found favor or grace in his eyes that he would be so kind to her.

In Ruth 2:11 Boaz "answered" and told her that he knows all about her. He knows she is from Moab and he knows how she has faithfully cared for her mother-in-law. The word "answered" in Ruth 2:11 is literally "raised his voice." Boaz got excited! He wanted everyone to hear what he thought about her, and he wasn't ashamed to be identified with her. She had trusted Jehovah, and she had proven her faith by cleaving to her mother-in-law and becoming a part of the people in Israel in Bethlehem.

In Ruth 2:13 Ruth says, "You have 'spoken kindly' to me" or "You have spoken to my heart." That is, "I can tell that what you have said to me comes from your heart, and because of that you have spoken to my heart."

Boaz was not only impressed with Ruth's beauty, but with her reputation. People were talking about Ruth's life, her love and her loyalty to Naomi. They were talking about how she left Moab and the lifestyle of Moab and had committed herself to Jehovah.

Ruth's godly reputation was her most valuable asset. She was poor and didn't have much materially, but her godly reputation was of great value. Proverbs 22:1 says "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." Whether you like it or not, people are watching you and how you live.

Ruth says, "You have comforted me; You have spoken to my heart."

### **The Generosity of Boaz Ruth 2:14-17**

At lunch time Boaz invited Ruth to have lunch with him. Not only did Boaz invite Ruth to the meal and provide food for her, but he personally passed the roasted grain to Ruth and ate with her. This is a wonderful picture of the communion we enjoy with Christ through His kindness to us. Notice Ruth put some in a "doggie bag" for Naomi!

Revelation 3:20. This is a picture of close fellowship. The Lord not only provides the Spiritual food that we need, but He wants to have a close relationship and fellowship with us. He wants to commune with us.

In Ru 2:15-16 Boaz tells his servants, "Let Ruth glean among the sheaves and do not reproach her. And let some fall on purpose for her." "Don't rebuke her." Don't be rude to her or hard toward her or scold her or shame her. And don't reproach her. Don't make any unbecoming remarks to her. Treat her with honor and respect. That's love!

### **The Grace of Boaz Ruth 2:17-18**

Ruth would have been tired when she returned – very, very tired. We are told she got up early in the morning and probably arrived in the field before any of the reapers had arrived. She had spent all day bending down and picking up, bending down and picking up. We can only imagine what that did to her back.

And at the end of the day, she still was not finished with the work. She would have to take the stalks of barley and beat them on the ground to separate the kernel from the husk, and then sweep up all the grain. She would then have to sift the grain and put it into a sack. When she had finished, she had about 25-30 pounds of grain.

When she gets back to town, she is greeted by Naomi. She opens her sack and Naomi can't believe it!

They had enough grain, not for just one day for the two of them, but for a week!

Like two school girls, they began to share the events of the day! "Where did you find such a generous landowner who gave so much?" Ruth said, "The landowner's name is Boaz." Naomi says, "Well, whoever he is, may he be blessed of the Lord!"

Suddenly, joy fills the house. Up until now, Naomi has been bitter every since she returned to Bethlehem – bitter about her circumstances and bitter toward the Lord for allowing the circumcises.

Then Naomi says, "Ruth, this is all about God. This blessing has come to us from God! I want you to see more than just a bag of grain, Ruth. I want you to see that God has done this!"

Then Naomi says, "Ruth, did you say the landowner's name was Boaz? That man is our relative. In fact, he is one of our closest relatives. Ruth, do you realize what that means?"

Naomi brings out a word from the Law. It is the name "kinsman-redeemer" or "goel." A near kinsman could rescue relatives from poverty and give them a new beginning. He could buy back or redeem back what an impoverished relative needed to sell. In addition, when a married man died without heirs, the nearest unmarried kinsman was responsible to marry the widow to raise up an heir for the relative who had died.

The stipulations for the kinsman redeemer are found in Leviticus 25:25-34 and Deuteronomy 25:5-10. There are three stipulations for the kinsman redeemer. He must be blood related, he must be able to redeem financially, and he must be willing to redeem.

Like Ruth and Naomi, you and I are in grave need. We have a spiritual need. We have an eternal need. We have a legal need before the judge of heaven and earth. We are guilty in Adam and condemned before God. We were born in sin. Our hearts are wicked in the sight of a holy God. In fact, the Bible says we are counted dead in the sight of God. There awaits an awful day of reckoning and we will be judged and condemned before the Holy Judge. If Someone were only qualified to redeem us. If there were only a Person who was worthy and qualified to be our defense attorney before this righteous Judge of Heaven. Is there one who meets the qualifications?

I'm reminded of the passage in Revelation 5 where the Apostle John is given the privilege of scanning and surveying every living creature ever created by God to look for one who is qualified to open up the redemption plan of God and to carry it out,

He looks in vain. No man, no angel, no created being, no one, not a one is worthy! When he thinks God's redemptive plan will not be carried out, he begins to weep greatly along with all of heaven. Then, a fellow sinner, an elder, gave a tug on John's sleeve and says, "Stop weeping! There is One and only One qualified to redeem. Worthy! Qualified is the Lamb to redeem. By His own blood He has purchased for God a people for God's own choosing."

You and I need to see this. Like Boaz, the Lord Jesus had to be Related to us by blood and flesh and He was! Galatians 4:4 says, "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman," so that He could be related to you and me.

Then, Jesus is Able to redeem us. Hebrews 7:25-28 says that Jesus is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and He offered Himself up for us. I Peter 1:19 says we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

Then Jesus is Willing. Mark 10:45 says Jesus gave His life a ransom for many. And He did it with joy – Hebrews 12:2.

Note Ruth 2:21-23. Ruth, this is a good thing. Don't mess it up and Boaz will be yours.

There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God's own Son  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.

Jesus, my Redeemer, Name above all names  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, O for sinners slain.

When I stand in Glory, I will see His face,  
There I'll serve my King forever, In that holy place.

Thank you, oh, my Father, for giving us your Son, and  
Leaving your Spirit 'til work on earth is done.

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When we study the Old Testament, it is important that we study the customs of that day. Some of the customs of that day seem strange to us today. It is also important to know that some of the words they used have a totally different meaning today.

I heard about a man who walked into a doctor's office and told the receptionist that he had shingles. She said, "Alright, I'll need to make a copy of your insurance card and I'll need you to fill out this health information and turn it back in to me."

He filled it all out and was told to have a seat. In about twenty minutes the nurse came in, asked him what he had, and he said, "I have shingles." She took his temperature, blood pressure, drew some blood, told him to take off all his clothes and the doctor would see him in a little while.

About fifteen minutes later the doctor came in and said, "What did you say you had?" The man said, "I have shingles." The doctor said, "Where are they?" The man said, "They're on the truck. Where do you want me to put them?"

When we come to Ruth 3, the wording and customs will sound strange to us, so we investigate the times in which Ruth and Boaz lived.

The key thought in the first two chapters of Ruth was Finding Grace; the key thought in the last two chapters is Finding Rest. Notice Ruth 3:1, "Shall I not seek REST for thee" (KJV). The NKJV says, "Shall I not seek security for you?" The word refers to marriage. It is talking about finding Ruth a husband and a home.

Other translations put the verse like this:

- "Is it not my duty to see you settled in life?"
- "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be provided for?" (NIV)
- "My dear, isn't it time that I try to find a husband for you, and get you happily married again?" (LB)

### **The Plan for Marriage Ruth 3:1-2**

Did you notice that it was Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, who wanted to find Ruth a husband? I've got to be honest with you, if I checked out of this life, I'm not sure I'd want my mother picking out a husband for the wife I left behind and I'm not sure she would want that either, but that's the way it was done in that day.

Naomi's plan was for Ruth to marry Boaz. It was clear to Naomi that Boaz was interested in Ruth and that Ruth was interested in Boaz. Not only that, Boaz was a near-kinsman, and according to the Levirate law, Boaz could redeem Ruth and the land of Elimelech's wife, Naomi and raise up children of her dead son, Mahlon.

Notice the motive behind Naomi's plan: "that it might be well with THEE." Marriage for Ruth would bring: Status (the reproach of not having children); Security (protection from harm); Substance (provisions for her need).

"That it might be well with thee" ought to be the goal of any marriage. When choosing a marriage partner, both men and women should choose a marriage partner that will promote a wholesome life. So many are choosing a marriage partner that makes life miserable for them.

That happens because people do not pay attention to character when they choose a mate. If you choose some deadbeat, lazy, inconsiderate, and unholy person for a marriage partner, it will not be well with you when you get married. Ruth and Boaz both had character. Their marriage made it "well" for both of them.

In Ruth 3:2 Naomi tells Ruth that she knows where Boaz will be that night. He will be winnowing grain on the threshing floor. Threshing floors were usually on a high hill. They usually had rock floors. Mules or oxen would crush the grain, they would remove the husk and winnow the grain. They would put the grain on a fan, throw it into the air, let the wind separate the grain from the chaff.

Naomi said, "Ruth, Boaz will be in a great mood tonight. It was a good crop this year. When he has finished his work, he will have a good meal and lie down to rest. Then the time will be just right for you to make your move. Ruth, strike while the iron is hot! When opportunity knocks, run open the door! You snooze, you lose! Go get him, Ruth!"

Again, the phrase "that it might be well with thee" literally means, "that you may have the best." Naomi knew what kind of man Boaz was and Ruth would be blessed to have him as her husband.

1. **Boaz had the Right Reputation.** He displayed compassion, wisdom, and grace in his dealings with Ruth. He cared about Ruth in spite of her past, in spite of what the community thought about her, or in spite of what she could offer him.
2. **Boaz had the Right Relationship.** Boaz was a kinsman and had the right of redemption. He could make a real difference in

Ruth's life.

3. **Boaz had the Right Resources.** He was a mighty man of wealth and could afford to pay the price to redeem Ruth.
4. **Boaz had the Right Resolve.** Boaz gave every indication that he was interested in a relationship with Ruth. He gave to her freely. He was kind and compassionate toward her. He gave her a standing invitation to enter and glean in his field.

### **The Preparation for Marriage Ruth 3:3-5**

To this point, Ruth's relationship with Boaz has been that of servant and master. If the relationship is to progress where it is at the present, the next move belongs to Ruth. Ruth had to make preparation to let Boaz know that she was interested in marriage. Naomi told Ruth what to do to act like a bride preparing for her wedding.

#### **A. Wash Up**

Take a good bubble bath. A little personal hygiene goes a long way. You need to make a good impression on Boaz and it's not going to happen if you have body odor.

The same is true when we approach our Heavenly Boaz, the Lord Jesus. Washing speaks of personal cleansing. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." Get rid of all that would soil us mentally, physically, and spiritually. Books, music, habits, people, places and all that would hinder our Christian growth.

#### **B. Anoint Yourself**

Use deodorant and put on some perfume that would make her nice to be near.

#### **C. Dress Up**

Take off your widow's dress and your workers dress and put on your wedding dress. Off with your Grave clothes; on with your Grace clothes. Don't dress in something sloppy. However you present yourself is what you can expect to attract!

Colossians 3:8 says that we are to put off anger, wrath, filthy communication out of our mouth and do not lie to one another. Rather, put on mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, and longsuffering.

#### **D. Go Get Him**

Let him know you are interested in him. There is nothing improper or immoral in verse four. It was the custom of that day.

Ruth was to "mark" or to pay attention to where Boaz lay down. He would lie down by his grain to protect it from being stolen. In humility and quietness Ruth was to lie at the feet of Boaz, which meant that she would like to be his wife if she pleased him.

### **The Proposal of Marriage Ruth 3:7-9**

Ruth waits until Boaz is asleep and has covered his feet with his robe. Then quietly and cautiously, so as not to disturb either Boaz or other people, she lies down at his feet and with the corner of his robe covers her face, which literally was a proposal of marriage.

Boaz wakes up and there is a woman at his feet! What would you do? He said, "Who are you?" Ruth answers, "I am Ruth, your handmaid;" not Ruth the Moabitess. Her answer reveals a new beginning in her life. She comes to humbly ask, "Would you take me to be your wife?"

Ruth asked Boaz to spread his skirt or wing over her, which indicated a covering and protection for her as his wife. Then she says, "For you are a near kinsman. You have the right to marry me under the Levirate law."

### **The Promise of Marriage Ruth 3:10-11**

Boaz calls Ruth "my daughter" twice in these verses. It would be like a boy calling a girl "honey" or "sweetheart." Romance is Alive!

Boaz says, "You have shown more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning." That is, "you are showing more kindness for your late husband now than when you first married him, for you are seeking to keep his name alive through a kinsman-redeemer marriage. You didn't follow the young men, whether rich or poor."

Boaz was a contemporary of Elimelech's, which meant that Boaz was about 20 years older than Ruth, but Ruth chose Boaz because he was a near-kinsman over the young men. Her choice was made on character and spirituality.

Now the promise: "Fear not. I will marry you. Everyone knows you are a "virtuous" woman. Ruth is the only woman in the Bible who is called a virtuous woman. Boaz Acknowledges her, Accepts her, Adores her, and Assures her.

But there is more to the story. Another man is in the story, but you'll have to come back to see what happens.

What a beautiful Romance of Redemption! It is a beautiful picture of our redemption. Jesus wants to accept us, shower His love and affection on us, but we must come to the foot of the cross and let His blood cover us and forgive us and let Him spread His wing of protection over us.

Have you been accepted in the Beloved?

## WHEN YOU ARE IN LOVE

### Ruth 3:11-18

As we get into Ruth 3, let me make you aware of a provision that God made for His people, the Jews. It is a provision that we don't often see in Scripture, but we do see it in Ruth.

God promised His people two things: That they would always be His people and that the land of Israel would always be theirs (Genesis 12:1-3). When Joshua divided up the land, each tribe got his portion of the land. It was a gift from God. They were not to sell their land except in the case of a real emergency; and even then, it was to be returned in the year of jubilee.

If a man lost his land because of some tragedy or some loss of crops, it must be returned to the man in the fiftieth year or it could be redeemed by a kinsman-redeemer or a goel!

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 says that a single brother could marry his brother's widow in order to provide the dead man who died childless with an heir. That way they could keep the property in the family by passing it on to a son.

Three things were needful to perform the right of a near-kinsman or Goel.

1. **There must be the Right to Redeem.** He had to be near kin. What does that have to do with us? God created us. We are His creation. But when Adam sinned, Satan claimed Adam. Every person born takes on Adam's sin nature. God created us, but because of sin, Satan claims us. Jesus loves fallen men and to redeem us, He must be our Goel, our Brother. John 1:14 says that Jesus became our brother in the flesh. Hebrews 2:14-18 says that Jesus shared the same flesh as we have to become our Goel. But through the Incarnation made Jesus our near kinsman, it did not make Him near enough, if He is to redeem us from our sins. In order to redeem us, the One who partook of our flesh had to carry a cross up Calvary and die on it, there accepting our sins as His own and dying our death. At the Manger the Eternal One was made "in the likeness of man" (Philippians 2:7), but on the Cross, He was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3).
2. **There must be the Resources to Redeem.** He must have the ability to pay the price. The redemption price could not be paid with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot (I Peter 1:18-19).
3. **There must be the Readiness (Willingness) to Redeem.** We see all these things in Boaz and in Jesus.

You recall the account: A family moved away from God. After three members of the family died in Moab, Ruth and Naomi go back to Bethlehem. We find out in Ruth 4:3 that things got so bad for Ruth and Naomi, that Naomi had to sell part of her land. Then Ruth goes to glean in the field of Boaz. Boaz takes notice of Ruth and Naomi knows Boaz is a near-kinsman.

Now this mother-in-law wants Ruth to ask Boaz to marry her. Naomi tells Ruth to go to Boaz, but before she does, she is to wash up, put on some perfume, put on her best dress, and go down to the threshing floor where Boaz is and to lie at the feet of Boaz in submission. Ruth does so, and at midnight Boaz wakes up and knows someone is at his feet. He asks, "Who are you?" She tells Boaz that she is Ruth.

I have entitled this message, "When You are in Love." I know that for some of you it has been a long time since you fell in love and you need a refresher course. Others of you are in love now and still others want to be in love.

What is it like when you are really in love? How can you tell if you are really in love?

Romance is growing between Ruth and Boaz. Boaz gives Ruth three things to show her that He is in love with her.

#### Boaz Gives Ruth Respect



When you are in love with someone, you have great respect for them and you show them great respect.

#### **A. Boaz's Praise of Ruth Ruth 3:10-11**

How you speak to someone shows whether you respect them or not. Boaz is kind and gentle to Ruth. He affirms her and his speech and words show her respect. When you are in love, you speak to each other in loving, gentle, kind words and tones.

A lot of couples never learn this. All some couples do is argue, disagree, and put each other down. Have you ever met a couple whose one goal seems to be to correct everything the other person says?

The words "my daughter" would be like our saying "Honey" or "Sweetheart." Here is his praise: "Everyone knows you are a virtuous woman." Boaz was a man of valor and honor and he attracts a virtuous woman.

#### **B. Boaz's Piety Toward Ruth Ruth 3:12**

Boaz was honest and truthful with Ruth. He loved her and wanted to marry her, but he knew there was another kinsman closer than he.

Boaz could have thought, "I love her and want to marry her. This other man doesn't even know she exists. I can marry her and if he does find out about her later, that he is nearer kin, it will be too late." But Boaz put integrity and God's Law above his own personal interest. He had rather have no marriage at all than to have a tainted marriage. So should everyone!

#### **C. Boaz's Protection of Ruth Ruth 3:13-14**

Boaz didn't send Ruth home in the middle of the night alone. He wanted to keep her safe. But both he and she were concerned with her reputation. She went home before it was good daylight so no one could identify her and start some rumor or gossip. Both wanted to protect her name.

Notice Ruth 3:14: "Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor." They took care to conduct themselves above reproach in the area of their romance. Their romance was not something for public display or discussion. When you are really in love, your love is mature enough that you don't have to display it in public.

One of the most distasteful things you can see is P. D. A. – Public Display of Affection. I've seen it going on at church. The only P. D. A. that goes on at church ought to be with the Lord! Couples who engage in such aren't smart enough to know that they are the butt of jokes and gossip and that their actions are repulsive to others. If you are really in love, you won't put your partner on display like that!

#### **Boaz Gave Ruth Rewards Ruth 3:15, 17**

Someone has said, "You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving." Boaz gave Ruth between 60 and 80 pounds of grain that was already prepared.

Notice Ru 3:17. When you start sending gifts to your mother-in-law, you know you're in love!

#### **Boaz Gave Ruth Reassurance Ruth 3:11-13**

Boaz says, "Ruth, I want to redeem you. I want to marry you. But there is a problem. There is someone who is nearer kin than I. But I want you to know that I will talk to him and I will do all in my power to act as your kinsman." Boaz was committed to Ruth and he made this commitment to her.

Notice Ruth 3:16-18. When Ruth reaches home, Naomi wants to know how things went. That phrase, "Who art thou, my daughter?", means, "Are you still Ruth the Moabitess or are you going to be Mrs. Boaz?" "Is there going to be a wedding?"

Ruth just says, "Look at the provisions he has given me and tell me what you think! Yes, Mama Naomi, there's going to be a wedding!" Naomi says, "Ruth, just sit tight, because Boaz will not rest until he has finished your redemption!"

Our heavenly Boaz, the Lord Jesus, loves us. He will do all He can to make His love known to us. If you are lost, Jesus, God's Son, loves you so much that He became the God-man; God in the flesh, to pay the price of redemption for you. If you are saved, He shows you Respect, Rewards, and Reassurance.

**REDEEMED!!**

**Ruth 4:1-22**

As we have seen in this little book, Ruth has worn several garments. In Chapter one Ruth has worn the garment of a Widow; in Chapter two she wore the garment of a Worker. She wears the garment of a Woman in Chapter three; and in this concluding Chapter we see Ruth wearing the garments of a Wife.

We saw her as a Stranger, living in Moab. Then we see her as a Seeker of Jehovah God as she makes her way to Bethlehem with Naomi. We see her as a Servant as she gleans in the barley field. We see her Submissive as she lies at the feet of Boaz. Now we will see her Satisfied as the bride of Boaz.

So Ruth goes from Widow to Wife!

The theme of Ruth four is redemption. Fifteen times words that have to do with redemption are found in Ruth 4:1-12. "Redeem" (8 times), "Redeeming" (1 time), "buy" (3 times), "buyest" (1 time), "bought" (once), and "purchased" (once).

The word "redeem" means to buy back or to set free from bondage by paying a price. It means to set one free from bondage.

We sing: "Redeemed and so happy in Jesus...Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb." Every lost man is in bondage to sin. He is held by sin. He is bound by sin, but Jesus, and Jesus alone, can free us from the bondage of sin, by paying sin's debt for us.

What does it take to pay a man's sin debt? It cannot be paid with corruptible things, like silver or gold. Only one price can pay man's sin debt, and that is the shed blood of the Lord Jesus. And only His blood will do. It is Precious blood. One of a kind blood. Blood without the taint of sin.

When we left Ruth in Chapter three, Ruth has asked Boaz to redeem her and in so doing to marry her. With excitement, Boaz says, "Oh, yes, I will!" But Boaz tells Ruth that there is someone nearer-kin than he. He has the first right to redeem. But he assures her that he will do all he can to redeem her himself, for he is in love with her. He is going to work on Ruth's behalf.

### **The Candidates for Redemption**

What could be redeemed in Israel?

1. **One in servitude** A person who had become bankrupt could sell themselves into servitude. I'm not going to deal with this except to give you an Old Testament example. Jacob wanted to marry Rachel but had nothing to give to her father for her to be his wife. He was to work seven years for her, but as you know he ended up working fourteen years because Laban gave him Leah first.
2. **Land could be redeemed** If a man lost his land for any reason, he may get the land back one of two ways. All land that was lost was returned every 50 years on Jubilee; or the land could be redeemed by a goel.
3. **Childless widows** could be redeemed by a near-kinsman and could marry the widow and raise up seed in the dead husband's name.

Boaz wanted to redeem both Ruth and Elimelech's land. Redeeming the land of Elimelech was a legal matter, so Boaz went to the City gate where legal matters were taken care of in those days. Boaz wanted this matter to be carried out in a proper way. In the providence of God, the near-kinsman came by the gate. It was no accident.

Boaz sees him and says, "Ho, such a one." (Ho-such-a-one is the first China-man named in the Bible.) Boaz then gets ten elders to act as witnesses and explains the situation.

Notice Ruth 4:3-4 when the nearer-kinsman said, "I will redeem it." I think the heart of Boaz sunk, for he wanted to marry Ruth. He wasn't that interested in the Land, but he was interested in the Lady.

Let me remind you that Boaz is a picture of the Lord Jesus, our Kinsman-Redeemer. Just as there was a kinsman nearer than Boaz, there is a kinsman nearer to us. Jesus wants to redeem us; to pay the price for us, but there is one nearer-kin to us. Who is it? The Law!

Jesus is sinless; separate from sinners, but we were born under the Law. But the Law could not redeem us. The Law showed us our sin and our need for a Savior, but it is unable to save.

Romans 8:3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

The requirements of the Law had to be met and they were met in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. See Hebrews 10:5-14.

The transaction was done by the Lord Jesus! "Jesus pain it all; All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain; He washed it white as snow!"

## The Credentials for Redemption

Who could redeem? It could not be just anyone. Three requirements must be met:

**1. They had to be a near-kinsman.** The kinsman-redeemer had to be one with the person he was redeeming. That is, he had to be like him or kin to him in the flesh. John 1:14 says: "And the Word (the Son of God) was made flesh (the same flesh you and I have) and dwelt among us." For Jesus to redeem us, He had to come from the glories of Heaven and be made like unto sinful flesh, even as we are.

"He came to me, O, He came to me  
When I could not come to where He was, He came to me.  
That's why He died on Calvary;  
When I could not come to where He was, He came to me.

He came to me when I was bound in chains of sin.  
He came to me when I possessed no hope with-in;  
He picked me up and drew me gently to His side.  
Where, today, in His sweet love I now abide.

He came to me, O, He came to me.  
When I could not come to where He was, He came to me.  
That's why He died on Calvary;  
When I could not come to where He was, He came to me."

**2. They had to be Able to Redeem** This nearer-kinsman must have been rather wealthy and well-able to redeem, because, without blinking any eye, he said, "I will redeem it."

**3. They had to be Willing to Redeem** Ruth 4:5-6

I heard about an 85 year old man who went fishing in a boat. Suddenly a frog jumped in the boat. The frog looked at the old man and said, "If you'll kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess and become your wife." Well, the old man didn't do anything. The frog said again, "If you'll kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess and become your wife." Again the old man did nothing. The third time the frog said, "Don't you understand what I'm telling you? If you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess and become your wife." The old man said, "Yes, I understand, but at my age I'd rather have a talking frog than a wife."

You see, the kinsman-redeemer must not only be ABLE to redeem, but WILLING also.

This nearer-kinsman was not a bad man. He wanted the land but he did not want the woman. To marry Ruth might ruin the inheritance of his children. He already had children and if he married Ruth and she had a child, especially a son, that son would get everything that belonged to Ruth and Naomi – all of it – plus. Say the man had four other sons – he would get a fifth of what they got. He'd end up richer than his other children. He wasn't a bad man. He just said, "I don't want to risk my children's inheritance. I cannot and will not."

Boaz says, "Fine. I'll do it. I'll redeem the land and the wife. I'm willing." Jesus said, "I am willing to pay the price." In John 10:17-18 Jesus said that no one took His life from Him; but He laid it down of Himself.

A story comes out of the D-Day experience. A young soldier was shot in the leg. After being moved to the medics, the surgeon told the young soldier, "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to take your leg."

The young man said, "It's alright. You won't be taking it; I'm willing to GIVE my leg for my country."

Jesus said, "No one takes my life. I willingly lay it down."

Boaz made it a public transaction Ruth 4:7-12.

## The Celebration for Her Redemption Ruth 4:13-17

Can you imagine how Ruth must have responded when Boaz told her he had redeemed her! "Redeemed! Redeemed! And by someone who loves me! I'm a part of the family! It is personal, between me and Boaz! No more slavery! No more bondage! I'm free!"

What a special bond of love between Ruth and Boaz! He redeemed her and brought her up to his level of honor!

Just so, Jesus has redeemed us. He has paid redemption's price for us. He has raised us up to His level and put us in His family. It's

personal, between Jesus and me!

The song writer put it better than I could:

"I'm redeemed by love divine; glory, glory, Christ is mine.  
All to Him I now resign, I have been redeemed!"

Because He redeemed me, He put me in His family – And:

"I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God;  
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood,  
Joint heirs with Jesus as I travel this sod,  
For I'm a part of the family, the family of God."

And because of that:

"I will sing of my Redeemer, And His wondrous love for me;  
On the cruel cross He suffered, From the curse to set me free.

I will sing of my Redeemer, And His Heavenly love to me.  
He from death to life hath brought me, Son of God, with Him to be.

Sing, oh, sing of my Redeemer, With His blood He purchased me,  
On the cross He sealed my pardon, Paid the debt and made me free."

"And the Lord gave Ruth conception, and she bore a son." I told you that Boaz was 15-20 years older than Ruth. He had never been married; never knew the joy of having a wife and a newborn son. I'll bet he was beside himself! Someone said, "Babies make fathers into men and grandfathers into boys."

We often pay little attention to genealogies, but the same genealogy found in Ruth 4:18-22 is also found in Matthew 1:3-6.

Let me close with this observation: God always writes the last chapter, and God's story always ends right. If you wait long enough, God always wins. If you know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, no matter how much you may face today, the story of your life will have a happy ending. You can't lose if you know Jesus Christ a Savior.

The Christian life is a love relationship with privileges. The Book of Ruth:

- **Begins with Famine, but ends with a Feast.**
- **Begins with Remorse, but ends with Rejoicing.**
- **Begins with Death, but ends with Life.**
- **Begins with Dishonor, but ends with Honor for God.**

Redemption takes that which is Barren and makes it Fruitful. Ruth's past is behind her; ahead of her is a Fruitful Future.

That's what Jesus does when He comes into our life. He removes our past sins, puts our sins under His blood, gives us forgiveness, and promises He'll remember our sins no more. Then He puts His power and love in our hearts.

All of this because of Redemption!

## Have you been redeemed?