

## RUTH

### Study One

#### THE STORY OF THREE GRAVES IN MOAB

##### Ruth 1:1-7

W.G. Heslop writes, "The book of Ruth consists of less than 100 verses, and yet it would be impossible to exhaust it during the lifetime of a minister preaching from it every Sunday... It is a garden enclosed, a mine filled with the rarest and richest gems and rubies, a treasury of illuminating truths." (1)

In the book of Ruth there are scenes that are tragic, domestic, romantic, dramatic, historic, and prophetic. Yet each scene is a mine filled with precious gems. It is one of two books in the Bible that is named after a woman. There is Esther, a Jew that married a Gentile husband; and Ruth, a Gentile that married a Hebrew husband.

A fitting title for the book would be *The Love Story of Redemption*. The Book of Ruth is a beautiful picture of Christ's great love for us and the redemption He purchased for us. The key word and thought in the book is that of a "Kinsman" (Note 2:20). As we go through the book we will see this love story of redemption unfold and be reminded that Jesus is our Kinsman Redeemer.

The opening scene of the book is tragic for we find three graves in Moab. Let's notice the story behind these three graves. First, let's notice:

#### 1. THE DEPARTURE FROM THE LORD

We read, "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled" (Vs.1). The word "now" connects us to the former book of Judges. Judges closes with the words, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud.21:25). There was the absence of a ruler over the land and the absence of righteousness in the life.

When the King of Kings is not ruling there will be no righteousness. When one has made Jesus Lord and King of their life, they will no longer do what is right in their own eyes, but do that which is right in God's eyes. Many a believer is doing their own thing instead of God's thing. They sit upon the throne of their heart instead of Christ ruling and reigning over their life.

The result of this tragic condition was a "famine in the land" (Vs.1). Famines in the Bible were often a sign of God's displeasure and chastisement upon the nation of Israel. God had said, "And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye

perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you" (Duet.11:17). The famine revealed that there had been a national departure from God. Israel as a nation was suffering the consequences of doing what was right in their own eyes. The famine in the land revealed the folly of their life.

In the opening verses of Ruth we also see a personal departure from the Lord. We see a husband and a wife by the name of Elimelech and Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. At the beginning we learn of their tragic departure from God.

The name "Elimelech" means, "My God is King." Elimelech reminds us of a Christian that has served God and lived for God because God is King in their life. He is called an "Ephrathite" (Vs.2) which means "fruitful." He reminds us of one who had lived a godly and fruitful life. We also sadly see that he illustrates the Christian that is out of the will of God, living away from God and disobedient to God.

The name "Naomi" means "pleasant." She reminds us of the contentment and happiness one finds as they live for God and serve Him. But she like her husband, reminds us of how that joy and happiness is lost when one is out of fellowship with God.

As we look at this departure from the Lord we see:

#### **A. Where They Were Leaving**

The place they left was "Bethlehem-judah" (Vs.1). Their home was the town of Bethlehem in the country of Judah. The name "Bethlehem" means "House of bread." "Judah" means "praise." They were leaving the house of bread and the land of praise. It reminds us of a believer leaving the will of God and getting out of the House of God.

There is not a greater place to abide than in the will of God. There is no greater place to attend than the House of God. To abide in the will of God fills the heart with heavenly praise. To attend the House of God feeds the soul with heaven bread. The will of God is a place of spiritual rejoicing and the House of God is a place of spiritual resources.

This was the place we see Elimelech and his family leaving. They first left the city limits of Bethlehem and then left the borders of Judah. They first got out of the House of God and then out of the will of God.

We also see:

#### **B. Where They Were Living**

We read that they "went to sojourn in the country of Moab" (Vs.1). In Psalm 108:9 we find an interesting description of Moab. We read, "Moab is My washpot." J. Vernon McGee says that one way to paraphrase what God was saying about Moab would be, "Moab is My garbage can."(2) They were leaving the House of bread for the

garbage can. They were leaving the land of praise for the washpot. Moab was a place that God frowned upon. Its people were an outcast people. Moab in the Bible is a type of the old man and the fleshly desires of the old life. Elimelech's journey is illustrative of a Christian leaving God and going back to the old life.

Moab was only a short distance from Bethlehem. Yet the river Jordan stood between the two places. We often think of Jordan as a type of death. But actually Jordan is a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of the believer into the power of a new life. The Bethlehem side of Jordan represents the spiritual man. The Moab side of Jordan represents the natural man. Elimelech and Naomi remind us of a believer who at one time, God was King in their life. They were in the will of God and the house of God, living a fruitful life. Yet now, they are living in the world, seeking the things of the world and the flesh.

We read that Elimelech and Naomi "went to sojourn" (Vs.1) in Moab. Yet we read, "They came into the county of Moab, and continued there" (Vs.2). Their original plans were to be in Moab for a short time, but they ended up making their home there. There are many out of God's house and God's will that never planned on being where they are. In fact, they never dreamed that one day they would be out of God's house and God's will.

They began missing on Wednesday night. After all, they were so tired and it was so hard to get ready and get to Church on time. It was not long before they began to miss a Sunday night here and there. Things came up, you know, but there were no plans on getting out of Church and getting away from God. Then they began to miss on Sunday morning. They allowed this and that to keep them out of Church. In time they found themselves completely out of Church. They eventually found themselves doing things, going places, and living a lifestyle they never thought they would ever live again. They found themselves away from God.

We see that not only did they settle down in Moab, but their children took to themselves wives of the Moabites. We read, "And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years" (Vs.4). Marriage among the pagan nations was strictly forbidden by God. The parent's departure only led to a further departure in the children. Many a child is out in sin and has no room for God in their life because of parents that drifted from God.

The story of Elimelech and his family can be told by many. We see a departure from the Lord. As we continue looking at this story, we also see the results of leaving God.

Secondly, notice:

## **2. THE DISCIPLINE BY THE LORD**

Just as an earthly father will discipline a disobedient child, God will discipline His disobedient and straying children. “For whom the Lord loved He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb.12:6). The writer of Hebrews describes both a process and a procedure of God’s discipline.

First he tells us that God chastens His children. The word speaks of child training. It is like a parent teaching a child what is right and wrong. Then we read that God scourges his children. The word “scourgeth” speaks of punishment and is descriptive of giving a child a whipping.

When our children were small, at times they would do things and we would say, “That’s a no-no, don’t touch that again. Don’t you do that again.” Sometimes we would smack their little hands. We were “chastening” or training the child concerning what he should not do. But if after several times of saying, “No-no,” if they kept on, things became a little more intense, if you know what I mean.

At times God says, “That’s a no-no, that’s wrong.” At times He may smack our hands. But if we continue on in our sin, God takes more drastic measures. He may have to take us to the woodshed. You could say that He has to use the belt on us. When we look at Elimelech and his family we see this process and procedure of discipline.

Notice with me:

### **A) The First Acts Of Discipline**

In verse 2 we find the names of their two sons. Mahlon means “sickly, ill, unhealthy.” Chilion means “pining, wasting away, puny.” It would appear that Elimelech and Naomi, had begun to drift from God in their hearts, before they ever left Bethlehem-judah. A departure from God always begins on the inside long before it is seen on the outside. The names of their children would seem to suggest that God had already begun a work of discipline to get their attention. These boys seem to be the first acts of discipline in their life.

One day God gave them a little boy. Yet the child was not healthy. He was sick and ill. In the Bible, parents often named their children after certain characteristics of the child or a message received from God. They held that little sickly baby in their arms and named him Mahlon. It was as if God was saying to them in that sickly child, “Your heart is getting cold toward Me. You are drifting away from Me.”

Then another son was born into the family. This child was small, puny, and pining. No doubt with a sadden heart they named him

Chilion. Again, God was speaking to their hearts. It was as if God was smacking their hands and saying, "That's a no-no, you need to get right and once again walk with Me." Both of their children would seem to suggest that God was trying to get their attention.

Also notice:

### **B. The Fatal Acts Of Discipline**

First God chastens us and if that does not get our attention, He scourges us. The first warnings were ignored and finally God's discipline was drastic and fatal. We read, "And Elimelech Naomi's husband died" (Vs.3). "And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them" (Vs.5).

Paul writing to the Church at Corinth said, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Cor.11:30). Paul was saying that because of certain sins many had been disciplined by God. Some were weak and others were sick. Some were even dead (sleep) as a result of God's discipline. There are times when God has to deal with His children in firm ways. He even declares that at times He has to deal in fatal ways.

Whenever a Christian gets out of the house of God, and the will of God, God will discipline. He will deal with them patiently and lovingly. But in time, if there is no repentance and a return to God, He will deal in a more drastic measure. A departure from the Lord will always bring the discipline of the Lord.

God has his ways of bringing His children back home.

Thirdly, think with me of:

### **3. THE DESIRE FOR THE LORD**

There was left in Moab three lonely and grieving widows. No doubt as Naomi walked to the cemetery she asked herself, "Why did we ever leave Bethlehem-judah? Why did we ever get out of God's house and will?" She no doubt recalled the days when God was King and the days of happiness they had enjoyed. Life had been so pleasant.

We read, "Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited His people in giving them bread" (Vs.6). She heard of how God was blessing His people again. The famine was over at last. The people had come back to God. It was this news, coupled with all that had happened, that created in her heart a desire to return to God.

In her desire we see:

#### ***A) Her Repentance***

It is interesting how her actions are described. It was not just that she

returned to Bethlehem-judah, but we read that she returned “from the country of Moab” (Vs.6). She was turning her back on Moab. She was leaving Moab. That is repentance.

When a person gets right with God there must be repentance. The sin and failures of life must be dealt with. Moab must be left and put behind us. Sin must be confessed and forsaken. Before she could ever return home, she had to leave Moab.

In her desire we also see:

### ***B) Her Return***

We read, “Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah” (Vs.7). She returned to the place of blessing. She came back to the will of God. She leaves Moab and she returns to Judah. She is leaving the place of sin for the place of blessing.

I think of William Kirkpatrick’s familiar hymn:

*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.*

It could be that some who are reading these words need to come home. Paul said, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (I Cor.11:31). There does not have to be a story of three graves in Moab. God wants you to come home and you can come home.

## Study 2

### THE STORY OF THREE WIDOWS IN MOAB

#### Ruth 1:8-18

In our last study we saw the graves of three husbands. Now we see the grief of three widows. J. Vernon McGee calls this scene, "The meeting of the handkerchief brigade." Each has a buried husband and a broken heart. It is the story of a mother-in-law and her two daughters-in-law, each with an empty home and an empty heart.

In each widow there are lessons to learn. In one we have a troubling example, in one a tragic example, and finally in one a thrilling example. These three widows illustrate three classes of people. Let's glean three lessons from these three widows.

First, we see in Naomi:

#### 1. A DISCOURAGING WIDOW

The first widow that I want you notice is Naomi. We have seen her disobedient walk. Now I want you to notice her discouraging words. Naomi is an example of a believer that is a hindrance to the work of God. Steps had been made to return, but at this moment she was still in Moab. Naomi illustrates how the life of believer that is not living for God is often a discouragement to others knowing God.

As we view this scene we see that:

##### *A) Naomi Was Being Observed*

Orpah and Ruth were from Moab. They had grown up in a land of idolatry. They had been reared in a place that did not know the true and living God. Their life had been one of spiritual desolation and darkness. However, Naomi was from Bethlehem-judah. She knew the One True and Living God. We would say that Naomi was saved, whereas Ruth and Orpah were unsaved.

We read "Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah" (Vs.6-7). There had been a departure from the land of God and a discipline by the hand of God. Naomi is taking steps to return to Bethlehem-judah. When she started back her daughters-in-law followed her.

It would appear that Ruth and Orpah in their hour of despair were looking to Naomi for direction. In their hour of grief they looked to her for guidance. They were watching to see what Naomi would do.

Whatever she did, they would do. Every action and step of Naomi was being observed.

We as believers need to be constantly reminded that we are being watched by the unsaved. Whether we admit it or not, accept it or not, or acknowledge it or not, we are being watched by those around us. Paul said, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (I Cor.4:9). The word "spectacle" speaks of a theater. We are on the stage of this world and our performance is being watched by those who are unsaved.

As we continue looking at this scene, we also see that:

### ***B) Naomi Was Being Obstructive***

One of the chief occupations of a believer is to try and lead unbelievers to the Lord. We are to seek to "turn many to righteousness" (Dan.12:3). A person going to heaven is to work to take people to heaven. It is both astounding and alarming that Naomi, instead of seeking to turn her daughter-in-laws to God, she sought to turn them from God. Notice what she said to them: "*And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house*" (Vs.8). She encouraged them to stay in Moab and discouraged them from going to Judah.

We see how thankful she was for their care. She said to them, "The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept" (Vs.8-9) They had been good wives and good daughter-in-laws. She expressed her desire that they have a good life and one favored by God.

We also see how hurtful she was when it came to their conversion: "And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me" (Vs.10-13).

Naomi was speaking of what was known as a levirate marriage. If a man died without any children, his brother had to marry the widow to continue the family line. The first-born of such a marriage would be considered the dead brothers child and heir. Naomi was saying to them, "I don't have any more children and I am too old to have more.



**Go back to your people and start over with your life. Find you a husband among your own people.”**

**Naomi was only thinking of their material circumstances rather than their spiritual condition. She was only thinking of their physical needs and not their spiritual needs. Naomi reminds us of those who are professing Christians, but are not practicing Christians. She knew the Lord, but was being obstructive in others coming to know her God.**

**Mohandas Gandhi, the famed leader of India and the Indian Independence Movement, probably influenced more people than any man that has ever lived. The independence movement began with a handful of people and he led it into a mass movement of millions. He once made the statement, “I would be a Christian if it were not for other Christians.”**

**Robert Ingersoll, the infidel notorious for his attacks on the Bible, had a godly aunt. He sent her a copy of one of his books against the Bible. In the flyleaf he wrote: “If all Christians had lived like Aunt Sarah perhaps this book would have never been written.”**

**There are many people going to hell because of people who are going to heaven. Many believers live a life that is repelling rather than appealing. They are a blight to the name of Christ rather than a light for the cause of Christ. Dick Sheppard said, “The greatest handicap the Church has is the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians.”**

**Naomi, even though a believer, discouraged Ruth and Orpah to follow her. How sad when those who know God become a hindrance to others knowing God.**

**The second widow in our story that I want us to consider is Orpah. In her we see:**

## **2. A DEPARTING WIDOW**

**Orpah illustrates those who turn away from God and reject Him as their Lord and Saviour. As we look at Orpah, we first see her:**

### ***A) Returning To Moab***

**We read, “And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her” (Vs.14). We see the tears and hear the sobs of separation. Orpah decides to go back to Moab. She puts her arms around Naomi, kisses her and starts back. It is true that Naomi had discouraged her from going to Judah, but ultimately the decision was hers. She was the one who made the final decision to go back.**

**Orpah chose to stay in a cursed land. She chose to live in a place of spiritual darkness and desolation. She chose to go back to her false**

gods. She chose to continue to live the way she had always lived. She could have chosen to go to Judah in spite of Naomi, but she chose to stay in Moab.

Orpah reminds us of those who are given the opportunity to be saved, yet they reject that offer and choose to live a life without God. She reminds us of those who reject Christ and the opportunity to be saved. As a preacher of God's Word, there is nothing anymore disturbing and heart-breaking, than to see people reject Christ and spurn the opportunity to be saved.

We not only see Orpah returning to Moab, but we also see her:

### ***B) Remaining In Moab***

This is the last time that we ever see or hear of Orpah. The rest of the story is not given, but it would appear that Orpah returned to Moab and remained there the rest of her life. In all probability she lived the rest of her life in a cursed land and died in the same condition.

How tragic it is for someone to have heard the Gospel, to have been given the opportunity to be saved; then say no, and die lost without God. The great tragedy is that not one person in hell had to go there. All could have been saved, but they like Orpah rejected the opportunity to be saved. Untold numbers die each day and go to hell that had the opportunity to be saved. Yet they rejected the God who could save them.

The third widow in this story is Ruth. In her we see:

### **3. A DECIDING WIDOW**

We see Ruth making a decision that changed her life. We read that instead of leaving Naomi, "Ruth clave unto her" (Vs.14). Ruth illustrates for us the person that says yes to Jesus and the opportunity to be saved. Ruth's decision is described in words that have been immortalized in music and enshrined in poetry and prose. Her resolve is a classic in literature and has been used in the vows of a many a wedding ceremony. She said, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy People shall be my People, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Vs.16-17).

The decision Ruth made gave her a:

### ***A) New Life***

Ruth said "for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge" (Vs.16). She was leaving a cursed land for a blessed land. She was leaving a place of spiritual darkness for a place of spiritual light. She was leaving a land and life of idolatry for a land and life

where the One True and Living God could be worshipped. Her decision brought her into a new life.

Salvation gives a person a new life. Paul said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things pass away and behold all things are become new" (II Cor.5:17). Salvation makes us a new person and gives us a new life.

A man was speaking on a street corner and said, "Socialism will give you a new job. Socialism will give you a new house. Socialism will give you a new coat to wear. Can anyone tell me anything that is better than that?" An old man stepped forward and said, "Yes, I can! Salvation in Jesus Christ! Salvation will put a new man on the job; salvation will put a new man in the house and a new man in the coat."

We also see that her decision gave her a:

### ***B) New Lord***

Ruth said "thy People shall be my People, and thy God shall be my God" (Vs.16). No doubt she had worshipped the false idols and false gods of Moab. She had known nothing but paganism. Now she has a new Lord in her life. Her life is now centered around the God of Israel and His people.

Before God saved us, our gods were riches, recreation, and reputations. But salvation gave us a new Lord and master. We are now drawn to His interests. We no longer bow to the gods of this world, but we bow at the feet of our blessed Redeemer.

Finally, we see that her decision gave her a:

### ***C) New Loyalty***

Ruth said, "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried" (Vs.17). Ruth was saying, "This decision is for the rest of my life." She had no desire to go back nor plans to return. Her decision was for time and eternity. I ask, what did she have to go back to in Moab? What do we have to go back to in the world? There would be nothing but a life of hopelessness and emptiness? Go back? Ten thousand times no! There is nothing behind us and everything before us.

Each of us can find ourselves in one of these three widows. In which one do you find yourself?

### Study 3

#### COMING HOME

Ruth 1:19-22

On November 16, 1811, an unusual thing happened to the Mississippi River. The name "Mississippi" comes from an Indian word that means "big river." The river flows some 2,348 miles from its source in northwestern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. What happened in 1811 was unprecedented for the river. An earthquake hit the state of Missouri and had a strange effect on the river. For a short period of time the river's direction was interrupted and it flowed backward.

There have been many that found themselves going backward in their Christian life. We find several such in the Bible: Demas (II Tim.4:10), Peter (Mk.14:71), Mark (Acts 15:38), and the classic example of Jonah (Jonah 1:2-3). Instead of a cleaving to the Lord, there is often a leaving of the Lord. Robert Robinson expressed it so well in his great hymn, "Come Thou Fount."

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

Many could describe their spiritual condition in the words of Kirkpatrick's hymn:

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.

#### *Refrain*

Coming home, coming home,  
Nevermore to roam;  
Open wide Thine arms of love,  
Lord, I'm coming home.

If that be the case may I suggest you say, "Lord, I'm coming home, the paths of sin, too long I've trod; Lord, I'm coming home."

The story before us finds a believer coming home. As we have seen, Naomi has been away from home and away from God. Now we find her coming home, and most important, back to God. You can almost hear Naomi saying, "I've wasted many precious years, now I'm coming home. I now repent with bitter tears; Lord, I'm coming home."

In Naomi we see a disturbing example of failure. We see in her the bitter experience of being away from God. Yet, we also have in her a delightful example of forgiveness. We see in her the blessed experience of coming back to God. We read, “So Naomi returned” (Vs.22). Let’s notice her return.

First, think with me of:

#### **1. THE TOWN TO WHICH SHE RETURNED**

We read, “So they two went until they were come to Bethlehem” (Vs.19). Ten years has passed since we saw her leaving Bethlehem-Judah. Now we see her coming home. Naomi coming back to Bethlehem was the same as coming back to God. She illustrates for us a believer that has gotten away from God, but comes back to God. A certain businessman was asked how he had become so successful. He replied, “Good decisions.” The questioner persisted, “But how did you learn to make good decisions?” The crusty old fellow answered, “Experience.” One more question then followed. “Well, how did you get the experience?” He answered, “Bad decisions.”

Naomi had made a bad decision when she left Bethlehem and God. But now we see her making a good decision as she comes back to God.

When we think of Bethlehem, we think of:

##### ***A) The Place of God's Praise***

Bethlehem was in the land of Judah which means “praise.” It was the place where God was glorified and honored. It was the place where He was extolled and exalted. Naomi was returning to the place where God could be and would be honored in her life.

A believer away from God does not bring glory to God. When one is away from God, instead of a life that is glorifying to God, it is grieving to God. Instead of living a life by which God is honored, He is dishonored. How sad it is to see people that once honored and glorified God with their life, now living a life that displeases and dishonors Him. I am sure that you who are reading this can think of someone that once served God and lived for Him, but now they are away from Him.

On the other hand, I am sure you can think of someone who came back to God. You may be thinking of yourself. Blessed be His name we can come home and bring honor and glory to His name. To Him be praise!

Bethlehem also speaks to us as:

##### ***B) The Place of God's Presence***

We read of how Naomi heard “how the LORD had visited His people” (Vs.6). She was returning to the place where His presence was real. She was coming back to the place where she could be in God’s presence and experience God’s presence.

I think of when Jonah rebelled against God. His experience is described as running “from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah 1:3). A believer out of fellowship with God can no longer enjoy the presence of the Lord. There is not only a dishonoring of the Lord but there is a distance from the Lord.

When a believer comes back to God, they can once again enjoy and experience His presence. The Psalmist said, “In Thy presence is fullness of joy” (Psa.16:11). Many can testify to the joy of once again being in His presence.

Bethlehem also speaks to us of:

***C) The Place of God's Provision***

Bethlehem means the “House of Bread.” Naomi had heard that God had visited His people in Bethlehem in giving them bread (Vs.6). Bethlehem was the place where God was meeting the needs of His people. It was the place where God was at work in the lives of His people. It was the place of God’s provision.

When one is away from God, they live a life that is barren of God’s blessings. Whereas, there had been a time when God was working in their life and blessing their life, away from God those blessings are no longer experienced.

There are times that Satan tells those who have failed God, they will never see God at work again in their life. But Satan has always been a liar. When one comes home, they will find a forgiving God that will once again make Himself known in their life.

Bethlehem also speaks to us of:

***D) The Place of God's People***

Bethlehem was the place where God’s people dwelt. It was the place where God’s people were gathered. It was a place of kindred spirits and like-minded souls.

No doubt, you can think of someone that used to be in Church and assembled with God’s people. They never missed and their seat was never empty. But now, they are not only out of fellowship with God, but out of the fellowship of God.

Praise God we see Naomi coming home. We see her coming back to Bethlehem; the place of God’s praise, presence, provision, and people. When there is a return to the Lord, there will be a return to praising God, as well as God's presence, provision, and people.

Secondly, think with me of:

**2. THE TESTIMONY WITH WHICH SHE RETURNED**

We read, “So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord

**hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” (Vs.19-21).**

**When Naomi returned they were moved (groaned) when they saw her. They asked, “Is this Naomi?” (Vs.19). Notice how she answered: “Call me not Naomi, call me Mara” (Vs.20). We earlier saw that Naomi means “pleasant.” Mara means “bitter.” She was testifying to the results and consequences of leaving God.**

**We see that Naomi testified of:**

***A) How God Brought Her Back***

**Naomi said, “The Lord hath brought me home again” (Vs.21). She had been confronted by God. God had dealt with her sin. Now God has brought her home again. The Bible says, “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num.32:23). One thing that is as certain as grass is green, water is wet, ice is cold, and fire is hot; God will bring the wayward believer home.**

**The New York Times carried an article entitled, “In Toronto, U.S. Fugitives Can Run but Can’t Hide.” The story told of Joyce Carolyn Steven’s, who was wanted in Texas on charges of aggravated robbery and kidnapping. She was hiding in Canada like thousands of other fugitives from the United States. She was found and arrested by the Metropolitan Toronto Police Fugitive Squad. This special squad had been organized in November, 1993. Since its creation, there have been arrested more than 200 fugitives that fled to Canada, most of them Americans. The Fugitive Squad sent out the message to all fugitives, “You can run, but you can’t hide.”**

**Jonah found out that you can run but you cannot hide. Actually, he found out that you can’t run from God and you can’t hide from God. Naomi discovered that even when she left God, He would not leave her. Somewhere, somehow, God will confront the believer that is away from home. One can be certain, God will bring them home.**

**She also testified of:**

***B) How God Broke Her Down***

**Naomi said, “The Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me” (Vs.20). She said, “The Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me” (Vs.21). She testified of how God had brought her back by breaking her down.**

**God knows how to get our attention. He knows how to bring us back. A preacher back home used to have a humorous way of putting it, but he got the point across. He would say, “If you live for God down here, He will take you to heaven and crown you. But if you don’t live for God, He will crown you down here and then take you to heaven.”**

**David said, “He restoreth my soul” (Psa.23:3). David had in mind stubborn and rebellious sheep. A shepherd was known at times to take his rod and break the front legs of a stubborn and straying sheep. It taught the sheep a lesson and they never wandered off again.**

There may be some of you that can testify of how God brought you home. You are home, but you were brought home. You can say “Amen,” to Naomi words “the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. . .the Almighty hath afflicted me” (Vs.20-21).

Thirdly, think with me of:

### **3. THE TIME IN WHICH SHE RETURNED**

We read, “So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest” (Vs.22). Here are some of the most blessed words in all the Bible; “So Naomi returned.” Praise God one can come back home.

It is very interesting that she returned “in the beginning of the barley harvest” (Vs.22). This is a statement that is so full. I think it is so wonderful that the Holy Spirit included this statement describing the time she returned. It was the time the first grain was harvested. It was observed during the month of Abib, which mean “green ears.” It was a time when certain feasts were observed.

This was a time when there was:

#### ***A) The Application of the Blood***

Leviticus 23 tells us that the beginning of the barley harvest took place at Passover time. This was the time each year that the Priest would take the blood of the sacrifice and carried it into the Holy Place to make atonement for sin. It was as if the Holy Spirit was saying that when one comes home, they will find that the blood of God’s dear Son will cleanse from all sin. Praise God there is forgiveness for the returning saint.

A group of six college students were traveling from New York to Florida. As their bus passed through New Jersey, a man dressed in a plain, ill-fitting suit got on and sat down in front of them. He never moved, never spoke, only sitting there chewing his lip, staring out the window. The students eventually introduced themselves and as they talked they learned of his story.

He had been in a New York prison for the past 4 years and was now on his way home. For the past 4 years he had had no contact with his wife and children. When he first went into prison, he had wrote his wife and only told her that he was going away for a long time and if she couldn’t stand it, she could forget him and marry someone else. As far as he knew, she had done that.

He told the students how the week before, when he was sure his parole was coming up; he had written her and asked for forgiveness. He told her the whole story and expressed his desire to come home. There was a big oak tree on their place near the highway. He had asked her that if she would take him back, to hang a white handkerchief on the tree. If she did, he would get off the bus. If there was not one there, he would know that she did not want him, and he would go on his way.



By this time the bus was about 20 miles from his home. The students found themselves caught up in the man's anticipation. They were all looking out the window of the bus, waiting for a view of that oak tree. The closer they got, the quieter they got. As the bus drew near his home, suddenly the students were up out of their seats screaming, shouting, crying, and dancing in the aisles. There was not just one handkerchief, but the tree was covered in hundreds of handkerchiefs blowing in the wind like a banner saying, "Come on home."

Yes, one can come home! God is waiting and will forgive of all sin. His blood will cleanse from all unrighteousness!

This was also a time in which there was:

***B) The Anticipation of the Blessings***

It was also a time when the Feast of Firstfruits was observed. The fields had been sown and the first of the crops had come up and had been harvested. A sheaf of barley would be waved before the Lord as an offering of thanksgiving for that which was to come. It was an act whereby praise and thanks were given to God for the blessings to come.

It was as if the Holy Spirit was saying, not only can forgiveness be found, but God will begin blessing the life again. Maybe you have failed God. You may be thinking, "God will never bless me again. I've blown it." Oh, no, my dear friend. When a believer comes home, it will always be barley time.

I said that the beginning of the barley harvest was in the month of Abib which would be our April. That's springtime; a time when new life is blooming. It can be springtime for you. You can come home and start over with a new life.

## **Study 4**

### **A NEW LAND AND A NEW LIFE**

#### **Ruth 2:1-3**

**In our last study we saw Naomi coming back to Bethlehem-judah. She reminds us that believers who fail God can come back home. Another exciting truth we see illustrated in this story is that we not only see Naomi coming back to the land, but we also see Ruth getting into the land. Naomi is a type of a believer coming back to God and restored. Ruth is a type of an unbeliever coming to God and redeemed. Now we find her beginning her new life in a new land. She has left Moab, the old life, and is now in Bethlehem, the new life. She has just been saved from her old life and is just getting started in her new life.**

**In these first days of Ruth's new life in a new land, we have illustrated for us the matter of spiritual growth. August Van Ryn writes, "The whole of the second chapter unfolds the divine process of spiritual growth and enlightenment."(1)**

**Physically, when we are born, we were but babes that entered a life in which there is a process of growth. The same is true spiritually. When we are born-again, we are spiritual babes in which a process of spiritual growth begins. A new baby must learn to walk, talk, etc. A new Christian enters a world in which everything is new. Spiritual growth is learning to talk and walk that new life.**

**Peter declared in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." He also had in mind spiritual growth in 2 Peter 1:5-7, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."**

**John gave us one of the best descriptions of spiritual growth in all the Bible. We read, "I write unto you fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). John describes little children, young men, and fathers. Each of these describes a level of spiritual growth and maturity. We are little children that grow into young men and ultimately into fathers.**

**I like the description Uncle Buddy Robinson gave of spiritual growth. He said, "A converted man is a baby in a cradle, and a wholly sanctified man is a man with his breeches on and his haversack on his back and his gun on his shoulder, with both eyes open and saying, 'Where is the enemy?'"**

Ray Baughman spoke of a survey that estimated 60% of the people in this country profess to belong to some church. From that survey he gave these evaluations. Out of 1,000 people, 40% of them are spiritually dead. Of the 600 remaining, only about 200 will experience any amount of spiritual growth in their Christian life.(2)

Many believers are like the little girl that fell out of bed one night. Her mother heard her crying and rushed to see what was wrong. "Mommy, mommy, I fell out of bed," sobbed the little girl. Her mother picked up her, pulled her close and asked, "Honey, why did you fall out of bed?" The little girl answered, "I was sleeping too close to where I got in." Many believers are living too close to where they got in when they were saved. They need to grow and move further on in the Christian life.

Let's look at our text and notice Ruth's new life in a new land and how it illustrates spiritual growth. First, think with me of:

### **1. THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

We read, "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz" (2:1). This is our first introduction to Boaz in the book. Boaz is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. From this point on the emphasis in the book is the process by which Ruth becomes acquainted with Boaz and how their relationship develops and deepens. He is introduced and from here on out we see how Ruth is drawn into an intimate relationship with Boaz.

Contrary to what many would suggest, the purpose of spiritual growth is not to make us Bible scholars. Some have the idea that spiritual growth is a good and growing knowledge of the Bible. That may be part of the process, but if all your Bible study does is make you a theologian, you have missed the whole purpose of the Bible. The purpose of the Bible is to reveal Jesus Christ.

It is the person of Christ that vitalizes and energizes every page of the Bible. Jesus is prophesied in the Old Testament and He is presented in the New. The Old Testament anticipates Christ, the New authenticates Him. The Old Testament contains Christ and the New explains Him. Jesus is the fullness, the fascination, fiber, fragrance and focus of the Bible. Jesus is found on every page, in every expression, in every symbol, prophecy, psalm, and proverb. If you read the Bible and miss Jesus, you have not read the Bible.

To some spiritual growth is getting us ready for heaven. But I remind you that the light of Heaven is the face of Jesus; the joy of Heaven is the presence of Jesus; the melody of Heaven is the name of Jesus; the harmony of Heaven is the praise of Jesus; the theme of Heaven is the work of Jesus; the employment of Heaven is the service of

Jesus; the duration of Heaven is the eternity of Jesus; and the fullness of Heaven is Jesus Himself.

Friend, the purpose of spiritual growth is developing a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Keeping this mind, notice what was said about Boaz.

First, we see that he was:

***A) A Man of Relations***

Boaz is called a “Kinsman of her husband” (2:1). Boaz was related to Naomi through marriage. Jesus is our kinsman. He was One who in heaven had a Father but no mother, came to this earth and was born of a mother, but had no father. He became one of us, one with us, and one for us. By taking on Himself human flesh, he became related to us.

Secondly, we see that he was:

***B) A Man of Resources***

Boaz is also described as “a mighty man of wealth” (2:1). He was a man of possessions. Jesus is greater than the greatest, mightier than the mightiest, wealthier than the wealthiest.

The Chattanooga Times ran an article in 1995 on the ten richest individuals in the world as compiled by Forbes Magazine. According to the list, Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft Corporation, was the richest private individual in the world. The article calculated his wealth based on a forty hour work week. His wealth translates to \$923,076,292.31 per week, \$2,307,692.31 per hour, \$38,461.54 per minute, \$534.19 with every beat of his heart.

Yet, I have news for Mr. Gates. He is a pauper compared to the Lord Jesus. As one said, “God owns the cattle on a thousand hills and all the taters in those hills.”

We also see that Boaz was a:

***C) A Man of Reputation***

We read, “His name was Boaz” (2:1). Boaz means “mighty man.” He was a man with a respected and honored name. God has given Jesus a name that is above every name. At His name every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord.

This was the person that Ruth would come to know, love, and marry. From the time he is introduced, we see Ruth learning of him, falling in love with him, and living for him. This is purpose of spiritual growth; to know Christ in an intimate way.

Our prayer ought to be:

***More about Jesus let me learn,***

*More of His holy will discern.*

*Spirit of God my teacher be*

*Showing the things of Christ to me.*

Secondly, as we see spiritual growth illustrated in this story, think with me of:

## **2. THE PURSUIT OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

We read, “And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go my daughter” (2:2). In those days, much like our country, Israel had a welfare system to take care of the poor.

We read in Leviticus 19:9-10, “And when ye reap the harvest of the land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of the field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.”

When the owner of the land harvested the wheat, he was to leave the corners. He was not to go back and pick up what had been missed or dropped. This was to be left for the poor. It was God’s welfare system. It was not a handout, but something one had to work for to obtain. They had to go to the fields and gather what remained. It was a law that helped to provide for the poor.

As we see Ruth gathering from these corners, we see:

### ***A) The Food That Was Needed To Sustain Her***

We see that Ruth was concerned about how they were going to eat. They had returned home penniless, yet they had to eat. If they did not eat they would die physically. The same is true spiritually. Involved in spiritual growth is the pursuit of spiritual food. Peter had this in mind when he said, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Just as one must have food to sustain physical life, one must have a diet of God’s word to sustain spiritual life.

R. A. Torrey told about how in one of his early pastorates he asked one of his members how she was getting along in her Christian life. She replied, “Very poorly. My life is a disgrace to me and the Church.” Torrey asked her, “Do you read and study your Bible every day?” She answered, “No, but I do study it occasionally when I have time.”

A little baby was lying in a carriage nearby. Torrey pointed at the baby saying, “Suppose you should feed that baby once in two hours

today, one in six hours tomorrow, and then let it go, and feed it every two hours the next day. If you kept up that process, do you think the child would grow?" She said, "No, I think the child would die under that kind of treatment." Torrey responded, "And yet, that is the way you are treating your soul."

Spurgeon said, "If we think our bodies require refreshment by food thrice a day, can we think that less will serve our souls." If we neglect to feed our souls, our spiritual life will become lean and eventually die. As Ruth needed food to sustain her physically, we need to feed on God's word to sustain our spiritual life.

According to J. A. Carlson, a bird can go 9 days without food; a man 12 days; a dog 20 days; a turtle 500 days; a snake 800 days; a fish 1000 days, and insects 1200 days. May I say, the believer cannot go one day without eating spiritually to grow spiritually.

We also see:

### ***B) The Field That Was Near To Supply Her***

Her desire was to go into one of the nearby fields and glean corn (generic for wheat or barley). She had learned of God's welfare system and she asked Naomi if she could go and search for a field to glean. We will notice in a moment that the field she went into to glean was none other than a field of Boaz. May I say that it is only in God's fields that we can find the spiritual food that we need to sustain our spiritual life and to grow as a Christian.

The Word of God is one of God's fields to find spiritual food. Jabez Burns said, "The Word of God may be likened to food as it is essential to the life of the soul." Mark G. Pearse said, "The Word of God is the food of the life of God. The Word of God, read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested is essential to healthy, spiritual life." One has said, "The Bible is a loaf, every chapter a slice, every verse a bite."

The Will of God is one of God's fields to find spiritual food. God told Elijah to go to the river brook Cherith and it was there he would be fed. Being in the will of God is like finding manna on the ground each day as God leads us.

The Work of God is one of God's fields to find spiritual food. As we work in His field we find barley to glean and wheat to harvest.

The Worship of God is one of God's fields to find spiritual food. The Psalmist said, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psa.34:8). As we worship Him we find spiritual food.

Ruth wanted the food and worked the field. Spiritual growth does not just happen. It is pursued. One must glean from the field. One must want to grow and work to grow.

We also see illustrated in this story:

### **3. THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

We read, “And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and he hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech” (2:3). To me, this is one of the most thrilling verses in all the Bible. I like to think of it as the happy happenings of her hap. She went looking for a field in which someone would favor her and allow her to glean. She ended up in the field of Boaz.

As we see her coming to the field of Boaz, we are reminded of:

#### ***A) The Divine Guidance of Life***

The word “hap” means “chance or happenstance.” From a human standpoint, it seems as if she lucked up or by chance ended up in a field owned by Boaz. Ruth had no idea the field belonged to Boaz. It would appear that she just “happened” to choose his field. From a human standpoint it looked like happenstance. But from a heavenly viewpoint it was providence. You can be sure that she did not just “hap” to choose this field. Behind the scenes was a God that was in charge of her life and He was seeing to it that all things worked for her good and His glory.

I think many will be surprised when they get to heaven and realize that a lot of things that happened to them were not breaks, but blessings. It was more than being fortunate on earth but being favored in heaven.

We are also reminded as we see Ruth coming to the field of Boaz of:

#### ***B) The Divine Goal of Life***

What was God doing? He was arranging things so that Ruth and Boaz would come to know each other and fall in love. God is behind the scenes of life arranging all things with the goal in mind of bringing us into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. The whole process of spiritual growth is a work of God in our lives, allowing and arranging certain things to bring us closer to Jesus.

It is as Paul said in Romans 8:28-29, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

We see Ruth getting in and going on in her new life. It’s a new life in a new land!

## **Study 5**

### **THE CHURCH OF BOAZ**

#### **Ruth 2:4-7**

In our last study, we were introduced to Boaz, a type of the Lord Jesus. We also saw Ruth as a type of the new Christian and her “hap” into a field owned by Boaz. As we learned, after Boaz is introduced in 2:1, that which follows is a series of events by which Ruth is brought into an intimate relationship with Boaz. One of the important factors in the development of this relationship is the field of Boaz. There is no way to underestimate the importance of this field and the events that followed.

A field in the Bible is often symbolic of the lost people around us. Jesus said in John 4:35, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest.” The fields the Lord was referring to are the multitudes around us that are lost.

In Matthew 13:38, we find that the countries of the world are symbolized by a field. We read, “The field is the world.” We also read that Babylon is symbolized by a field; “He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree” (Ezk.17:5).

In the case before us, in the field of Boaz we have a wonderful picture and type of the Church. The field of the earthly Boaz is symbolic of the Church of the Heavenly Boaz. For symbolic sake, we will call it, “The Church of Boaz.”

As I stated, this field was a very important factor in the development of the relationship between Boaz and Ruth. The same is true in our Christian life and spiritual growth. The Church is a very important factor in our relationship with Christ. You can go to a good Church and not be a Christian, but you cannot be a good Christian and not go to Church. The Lord’s Church is essential in developing a relationship with Jesus Christ. Let’s notice this field and glean some truths about the Church.

First, think with me of:

#### **1. THE LORD'S PRESENCE IN HIS CHURCH**

We read, “And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem” (2:4). We see Boaz visiting his field. Boaz was present in the field. I am reminded that the Lord is present in His Church. We read in Revelation 2:1, “Unto the angel of the church at Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” The stars are representative of the pastors and the candlesticks are representative



of the Churches. John saw the Lord walking in the midst of the candlesticks. He saw the Lord present in His Church.

We also read in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Wherever and whenever God's people gather, the Lord is in the midst. He is present.

A number of years ago, a pastor in Washington, D.C., that pastored the Church that the president attended occasionally, received a call on Saturday afternoon. "Will the president be in the services tomorrow," the caller asked? The pastor replied, "That I don't know, but the Lord will be here."

As a pastor, my heart is filled with pleasure over the folks who attend the services. My heart is filled with perplexity over those who are absent. Yet, regardless who is present and who is absent; my heart is filled with praise that the Lord is present.

As we think of the Lord's presence in His Church, first think with me of:

#### ***A) The Lord's Personal Presence in the Church***

We see Boaz coming to his field. He is paying a personal visit to his field much to the delight of those in the field. I know the Lord is always present when believers assemble, but there are times we are not aware or conscious of His presence. In the mountains where I grew up, when the Lord's presence was real in the services, people often said, "The Lord showed up today!" He is always present, but I like it when He shows up and pays us a visit!

Astronaut James Irwin said, "My trip to the moon was a spiritual awakening in which I was brought to a realization of my dependence upon God and my relationship to Jesus Christ. The only thing I was not prepared for on the moon was that I could feel God's presence closer than I had ever felt before."

There are times when we gather, like Irwin, we can say that we "feel God's presence closer than we've ever felt it before." Oh, those blessed moments. How sweet and special are those times when His presence is so real in His Church. How glorious it is when He pays a visit to His field.

I also think of:

#### ***B) The Lord's Perpetual Presence over the Church***

In the case of Boaz, it is doubtful that he spent every hour of the day in his field. It is probable that he only occasionally visited his field. Yet, even though he was not there in person, he was there all the time in a representative. We read, "Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers" (2:5). Boaz had someone over the field

that acted in and on his behalf. In this servant, the will, plans, and desires of Boaz were carried out on a continual and daily basis. In this servant, Boaz was always present.

If you will notice carefully, this servant is unnamed. In the Bible there are several unnamed servants. There was the unnamed servant of Abraham that went in search of a bride for Isaac. There was the unnamed servant of Joseph that was sent to bring the brethren home. In this case, there is the unnamed servant that watched over the field and the reapers.

These unnamed servants in the Bible are always a type of the Holy Spirit. They are unnamed in that the Holy Spirit seeks not to draw attention to Himself, but to the Lord Jesus. Jesus said in John 16:13-14, "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

The Holy Spirit is the unseen guest of every service. He is the unseen guide of every service. He is the unseen guard of every service. He is the unseen gift of every service. Jesus is always present in the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Lord of the Church. He is the Life of the Church. He is the Leader of the Church. He is the Liberty of the Church. He is the Lover and the Light of the Church. The Holy Spirit is the One that Jesus has set over the Church to capture the attention, to control the activity, complete the assignment, to conduct the affairs, to certify the accomplishments, conform the attendants, and cause the additions to the Church.

The Lord is present in His Church! He is not seen but He is sensed. He is not visible to the eye but He is vocal to the heart. You cannot walk up to Him and shake His hand, but He can come to you and stir your heart. You cannot touch Him, but He can touch you. He is always present! Thank God for the Lord's presence in His Church.

Secondly, think with me of:

## **2. THE LORD'S PEOPLE AT HIS CHURCH**

In verse 4, 5, 6, and 7, reference is made to the "reapers." These reapers are a type of the Lord's people in His Church. As we look at these reapers we find that they were an:

### ***A) Assembled People***

These reapers are gathered together in Boaz's field. A person, a place, and a purpose had brought them together. The Church is where God's people gather, congregate, and assemble. The writer of Hebrews said, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves"

**(Heb.10:25). The plan of God is for the people of God to be in the place of God: His Church.**

**Now you think with me for a moment. These were the reapers of Boaz. Would it have been proper for them to have been in another field? Would it be normal for the reapers not to be in the field? I can imagine a reaper calling the servant that was over the field, “I know I’m supposed to be in the field today, but if it will be alright, instead of being in Boaz’s field, I’ll be at the ball field.” Now I’m sure the servant would say, “Yes, that’s fine. Don’t worry about your work and your job. You have a good time. I hope you can get back real soon, God bless you.”**

**There never seems to be a shortage on excuses when it comes to Church attendance. I think of a church in Michigan that had a “No Excuse Sunday.” Their advertisement in the paper read: “Please join us next Sunday for Church. We’re going to make it possible for everyone to attend Church next Sunday by having ‘No Excuse Sunday.’ Cots will be placed in the vestibule for those who say Sunday is my only day of rest. Steel helmets will be there for those who say, the Church will cave in if I ever come. Blankets will be furnished for those who say the Church is cold and fans for those who think it is hot. We will have hearing aids for those who think the pastor preaches too softly, and cotton for those who think he preaches too loudly. Scorecards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites who are present. Some relatives will be there for those who like to go visiting on Sundays. There will be TV dinners for those who cannot go to Church and cook Sunday dinner too. One section will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to worship God outdoors. Finally the sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who have never seen the Church without them.”**

**We ought to feel about Church attendance the way Oliver Holmes did when he said, “There is a plant in the corner of my heart called reverence, and it needs watering at least once a week.” I like Ruth’s example. We read “*so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house*” (2:7) She came to the field and did not want to leave.**

**We also see that these reapers were a:**

### ***B) Appreciative People***

**We read, “And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee” (2:4). It is very obvious that Boaz and his reapers had a good relationship. His greeting, “The Lord be with you,” was both a salutation and a prayer. It was a Jewish expression that spoke of all that happy and holy hearts wished for and needed. Boaz expressed**

his kindness and love to them and they in return expressed their love and appreciation to him. They responded, "The Lord bless thee." It was an expression of their appreciation for his kindness to them.

The Church is a place where God's people are gathered and God's praise is given. The Lord has been good to all of us and in return we should give Him thanks and praise. The Psalmist said, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:1-5).

When we assemble we ought to come with gratitude in our hearts and glory on our lips. Since he has blessed our life we ought to bless His name. A Church service is not a place where we are restrained from praise but released to praise. May the Lord be praised in His Church!

Rudyard Kipling was a great British poet whose writings have touched generation after generation. Because of the success of his writings he made a great deal of money at his trade. One day he was approached by a newspaper reporter that said to him, "Mr. Kipling, I just read that somebody calculated that the money you make from your writings amounts to over \$100 a word." Kipling raised his eyebrows and said, "Really? I wasn't aware of that." The reporter cynically reached into his pocket and pulled out a \$100 bill and handed it to Kipling saying, "Now give me one of your \$100 words." Kipling looked at the \$100 for a moment, folded it up and put in his pocket. Then he said, "Thanks."

May I say that the word "thanks" is a word that we should use when we come to Church. After all the Lord has done for us and given us, He deserves our praise.

We also see that these reapers were an:

### ***C) Active People***

In verses 4-7, the servants of Boaz are called reapers four times. They were workers in his field. They were not idle but involved. They were active for their master. When it comes to work in the Church, many are shirkers instead of workers. Someone has said that the theme song of many members is, "I Shall Not Be Moved."

I once read about a pastor who was very rigid about keep an appointment at 10 am each morning. If he was in a meeting he would excuse himself, get into his car and leave. No one knew what he was doing or where he was going. His secretary did not know. His wife

did not know. His best friends did not know. Since this aroused the suspicions of his members and deacons, they decided to investigate. They followed him one day to a place just outside of town. They watched him as he parked his car and entered a patch of woods. When they caught up to him he was standing by a railroad track. He was shouting and cheering to the top of his lungs and pumping his fists into the air at a passing train.

When the train had passed, his deacons walked up to him and asked, "What on earth are you doing, preacher?" He answered, "I can't help it. I just get excited when I see something moving and I'm not the one pushing it!"

As one has said, "It seems our Churches are full of willing people: some who are willing to work and others who are willing to let them work." Are you one of the Lord's people? Then I ask you, are you attending the house of God faithfully? Are you appreciative of the blessings of God personally? Are you active in the work of God diligently?

Thirdly, think with me of:

### **3. THE LORD'S PERCEPTION OF HIS CHURCH**

Notice verse 5, "Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?" No sooner did Boaz walk into his field and he noticed Ruth. It is obvious that he knew everyone in the field and was aware that a new person was gleaning in the field.

Boaz's notice of Ruth reminds us that:

#### ***A) The Lord Is Discerning Of Us***

He saw her. She was not lost in the crowd. There was more than just a group of people in the field. There were individuals of whom he was aware and knew. How it thrills my heart to know that the Lord knows his own. When we gather, we are more than a group. We are individuals that our Lord knows and observes.

The Lord sees and knows each of you. He knows your needs. He knows what you are going through at every moment. He knows the burdens of your heart. There is not one of you that are unnoticed by the Lord. You may at times feel lost in a crowd, but the Lord sees you personally.

A young man, before setting abroad, was presented a watch by his father. On its dial were miniatures of his loving parents. "Take this watch," said his father, "and carry it with you in all you're journeying. Every time you look to see the hour, the eyes of your father and mother will look into yours. When you see our faces, remember we are praying for you. Go no place where you would not want us to see you. Do nothing you would not want us to see."

God's eyes are always upon us. There is never a moment that He is not watching. Such a realization can be a convicting or a comforting thought.

His notice of Ruth also reminds us that:

***B) The Lord Is Drawn To Us***

Boaz asked, "Whose damsel is this" (Vs.5)? I love J. Vernon McGee's translation: "Well, where in the world has she been that I haven't met her before?"(1) He says the Hebrew would be like the sound of Hebrew wolf whistle. The best way I know how to describe this scene would be love at first sight. She not only caught his eye but won his heart. Oh, blessed thought to know that not only does the Lord see us but is also graciously drawn to us and gloriously in love with us.

Psychologists tell us that one great need of every human heart is to feel loved. Quite often people feel unloved. A wife feels that her husband doesn't love her anymore. A child feels unloved. Yet I can assure you of God's love. [SERMONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH] Ken Trivette The Living Word | The Church of Boaz (Ruth 2:4-7) 5

Some years before the death of Carlyle's wife, she wrote in her diary, "My husband has always been just to me--coldly just, but I am dying in his home for the want of love."

You are never in want of God's love. Whoever you are, whatever you are going through, whenever you are in need, wherever you are at, you are loved by God. Many are going around plucking daises, "He loves me, He loves me not." When good things happened we say, "He loves me." But when bad things happen we say, "He loves me not." We must never forget that the answer is always, "He loves me!"

I am glad to be in the Church of the Heavenly Boaz.

## Study 6

### OH TO GRACE HOW GREAT A DEBTOR

Ruth 2:8-13

In Robert Robinson's great hymn, "Come Thou Fount," we find these words:

*Oh to grace how great a debtor,*

*Daily I'm constrained to be!*

*Let Thy goodness like a fetter,*

*Bind my wandering soul to Thee:*

The story of every believer's life is a story of grace. Whether it is fully comprehended or not on our part, each of us is to grace a great debtor. In each of our lives there is the story of saving grace, living grace, and dying grace. The commencement of the Christian life, the continuation of the Christian life, and the conclusion of the Christian life, is a story of grace.

I think of John Newton, the author of "Amazing Grace." Two or three years before Newton died, his sight was so dim that he was no longer able to read. A friend and brother in the ministry would have breakfast with him, and their custom was that he would read the Word of God. Newton would make a few remarks on the passage and then they would pray.

One particular day they read the words of Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (see I Cor.15:10). Newton was silent for the longest and finally he said, "I am not what I ought to be! How imperfect and deficient I am! I am not what I wish to be, although I abhor that which is evil and would cleave to that which is good! I am not what I hope to be, but soon I shall be out of mortality, and with it all sin and imperfection. Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor yet what I hope to be, I can truly say, I am not what I once was: a slave to sin and Satan. I can heartily join with the Apostle and acknowledge that by the grace of God I am what I am!"

Each of us must say, "I am what I am by the grace of God!" Each of us must say, "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!" Each of us must say with John Bradford, "There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford." Someone has given us this acrostic of grace: "God's Riches at Christ's Expense." Grace has been defined by a comparison to God's mercy as, "Grace is that we get what we don't deserve, and mercy is that we don't get what we do deserve."

If anyone ever understood how great a debtor one is to grace, it was Ruth. She like Paul and Newton had to say, "I am what I am by the grace of God." All the glories she experienced were because of the

grace she experienced. Notice the emphasis on grace in chapter two. We read in verse 2, "Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace." Also in verse 10, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes?" Let's notice the story of grace in the story before us.

First, think with me of:

### **1. HOW AMAZING THE GRACE OF GOD**

John Newton described grace as "amazing." A few years ago, there came out a song that said, "There's no other word for grace, but amazing." There are many adjectives for grace and "amazing" is definitely one of them. In Ruth we see how amazing God grace is on our part.

As we look at Ruth, first we see that:

#### ***A) Nationally She Was Rejected***

Notice in verse two that she is called and identified as "Ruth the Moabitess." When Boaz asked his servant who the stranger in his field was, the servant answered, "It is the Moabitish damsel" (Vs.6). We might say that someone is from Canada, Mexico, etc, and not think anything about it. But to a Jew, to say that one was from Moab had serious significance. God had said, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD forever" (Deut.23:3) The Ammonites and the Moabites, because of their wickedness, were subjected to disgrace by God and the nation of Israel. They were not permitted to hold any office among the Israelites.

Nationally Ruth was a member of a race that was judged and condemned by God. It was a nation and people under condemnation. It was a nation and people that were divinely rejected. Ruth in type is a picture of us all before God saved us. We all were sinners under condemnation. Because of our wicked state and life, we were cut off from a Holy God. We were under the wrath and judgment of a Holy God.

Paul described our condition in Ephesians 2:2-3, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Paul tells us that we were *satanically dominated*. We walked according to the course of this world and according to the prince of



the power of the air. We lived under Satan's control and lived according to Satan's commands.

We were also *spiritually disobedient*. The spirit of disobedience worked within us. We were rebellious to God's Word; we were resistant of God's ways, and we were resentful of God's will.

As well, we were *sensually depraved*. We lived our lives fulfilling the lusts and desires of the flesh and mind living lives that were immoral, wicked, and carnal.

Furthermore, we were *sequentially damned*. We were as a result, by nature children of wrath. We were individuals under the condemnation and wrath of God.

We were no better off than Ruth; she was no worse off than us. We were all sinners under condemnation.

Yet, we see that:

***B) Personally She Was Received***

Ruth was first called a Moabitess, but now notice how she was addressed in verse 8: "Then said Boaz unto Ruth, 'Hearest thou not, my daughter?'" Boaz didn't receive her as a foreigner, but as family. He called her "my daughter," not a Moabitess. The law rejected her, but Boaz received her.

Oh, dear friend, is this not the story of us all. We were condemned and without hope, but by God's amazing grace, we have been accepted in the beloved.

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,*

*That saved a wretch like me.*

*I once was lost, but now I'm found,*

*Twas blind but now I see.*

We were sinners, but by grace we are saints. We were children of wrath, but now we are the children of God. Once we had no hope, but now we have a blessed hope. Once we were rejected, but now we are received.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow could write a poem and it would be worth hundreds of dollars. We call that talent. John Jacob Astor could sign his name to a piece of paper and buy a skyscraper. We call that capital. The United States Treasury department can take a special piece of paper and some special ink, press it between special plates and make a \$100 bill. We call that money. The Wright Brothers could take some used bicycle parts, wire, metal and canvas covering and make an airplane. We call that genius. Michelangelo could take some brushes and some paints and paint a masterpiece on the

ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. We call that art. A mechanic can take a used and ruin part from your automobile engine, replace it with a new one, and make the car nearly as good as new. We call that skill. God can take a poor worthless, devastated hell-bound sinner, condemned by God, wash him in the blood of Jesus Christ and make him a son of God. We call that grace!

John said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (1 Jhn.3:2) That is the story of God's amazing grace. Paul said, "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph.6). That's God's amazing grace. Peter said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet.2:9-10).

Ruth was a Moabitess, but to Boaz she was a daughter. She had been rejected, but now she is received. Instead of getting what she deserved she found grace. How amazing the grace of God.

Secondly, think with me of:

## **2. HOW ABUNDANT THE GRACE OF GOD**

In Ephesians 2:7, Paul spoke of the "exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." In Ruth we see the exceeding riches of grace that were shown to her by Boaz. When we talk about the grace of God, we speak of all that has been given to us by God. Paul said, "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God" (2 Cor.4:15). Grace is abundant in our life.

How is grace abundant in our life? First, think with me of how grace brings:

### ***A) Direction in Our Life***

Notice in verses 8-9 that Boaz said to Ruth, "Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens; Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them." She receives words of guidance and direction from Boaz.

Grace brings into our life the blessings of guidance and direction. Before we were saved we were like a ship on a stormy sea without a captain or compass. But when we were saved, by grace, a Captain stepped on board and we are guided by His divine compass.

We read in Psalm 32:8, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." We also read in Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not

unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Yes, grace, brings direction into our lives.

Also, I think of how grace brings:

### ***B) Protection for Our Life***

Notice verse 9, "Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?" Boaz was concerned that others might take advantage of Ruth. From what we know of Ruth, she was a very attractive woman. But Boaz made sure that she would be safe. God is watching over our lives. He is the keeper of our soul and guard of our life. We have this promise in Psalm 121:5, "The Lord is your keeper."

Paul Harvey told the true story of an event that happened during World War II. He told about a B29 Bomber that took off from the Island of Guam for Kokura, Japan. When the plane arrived at its primary target, a thick cloud covering hid the target. They circled above for 30 minutes, then 45 minutes, until 55 minutes had passed and their gas supply was dwindling to the dangerous point. They didn't want to pass up the primary point, but they had no choice. They headed for their secondary target where they dropped their bomb.

Weeks later an officer received information from military intelligence that sent cold chills down his spine. Thousands of allied prisoners of war, the biggest concentration of Americans in enemy hands, had been moved to Kokura a week before the suspended bombing. The city they had originally intended to bomb had become a huge prison camp. Had they bombed it, thousands of Americans would have died. That which stopped them was a cloud, and the city they bombed was Nagasaki and the bomb they dropped was the world's second atomic bomb.

There is a God in heaven that watches over His own. In the abundance of grace we find protection.

I also think of how grace brings:

### ***C) Satisfaction to Our Life***

Notice again in verse 9, "And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn." Under God's welfare program she could glean in the field, but that was about it. Yet, Boaz told her that she could drink of the water that was provided for his workers when she was thirsty. He said, "If you get thirsty, you satisfy your thirst."

The abundant grace of God has brought satisfaction to our life. Before we were saved we were like workers laboring under the hot, burning sun, without a drop of water to quench our thirst. But grace

has provided for us water to quench that thirst and satisfy our longing.

Essayist Charles Lamb said, "I walk up and down thinking I am happy, and knowing I am not." To many, satisfaction is about as rare as the bald eagle. The New York Times estimated that about 5 million people living in America had tried to kill themselves.

One couple wrote to a syndicated columnist: "We have a nice home, well-furnished; a new car, and money in the bank. Our two sons have finished college and are happily married and doing well. We have excellent jobs and our combined incomes make it possible for us to live comfortably. So why are we writing this letter? Because suddenly, we find life empty and boring. Are we different, or does this happen to all couples in later mid-life?"

The answer to direction in life, protection for life, and satisfaction to life is the personal experiencing of God's abundant grace.

Harry Truman, at first thought he lost the election in 1945. The headlines read, "Dewey defeats Truman." Later when the count was all in, Truman had defeated Dewey. Truman wrote to his mother, "I had hurried to the White House to see the president and when I got there, I found out I was the president."

Ruth came from Moab with nothing, only to find out when she got to the field of Boaz she had everything. How abundant is the grace of God.

Thirdly, think with me of:

### **3. HOW ASTOUNDING THE GRACE OF GOD**

Everything had happened so fast. One day she didn't know where the next meal was coming from and the next day her life is blessed beyond comprehension. Notice how her experience of grace affected her.

First, it was all:

#### ***A) Overwhelming To Her Heart***

Notice verse 10, "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" It was more than she could believe. All she could say was, "Why?" I submit unto you that there is nothing anymore overwhelming to the heart than what God has done for us in Christ.

I heard about a woman that had 16 children. They were like stair steps. As you can imagine she had her hands full. One day one little girl fell into a tar pit. She had tar all over her. It was in her hair, ears, up her nose, and under her fingernails. She was covered in tar. Her

mother started trying to clean her up and in frustration said, "I declare, I believe it would be easier to have another one than clean this one up."

The truth is, we were all a mess. There was nothing in us or about us that deserved God's love. There was nothing in us that merited God giving His Son to die for us on a cross. In the state and condition we were in, we should have been in hell.

Most of us were a lot like the daughter of Jonathan Edward's, the great preacher, theologian, and revivalist. He had a daughter with an ungovernable temper. It was not well-known to the outside, but was regretfully known in the home. A worthy young man fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. He came to see Edward's and asked for her hand in marriage. He abruptly said, "You can't have her." The young man, taken back somewhat said, "But I love her." "You can't have her," again was Edward's reply. "She loves me." "You can't have her." Finally the young man asked why. Edward's said, "Because she is not worthy of you." The young man said, "She is a Christian, is she not?" Edward's replied, "Yes, she is a Christian, but the grace of God can live with some people with whom no one else could ever live."

It is overwhelming to the heart to realize that God would love us, save us, and make us His own child. In the words of the songwriter, "And it's all because of God's amazing grace."

If we are so undeserving, then why? Notice verse 11-12, "And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." She had experienced the kindness and grace of Boaz because she had embraced the people of Israel and had trusted the Lord God of Israel.

Paul said in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." The amazing and abundant grace of God is experienced when by faith one puts their trust in the Lord. It is not because we earn it, deserve it, merit it, achieve it, but because we put our trust in the Lord as Savior and Lord. Still, it is overwhelming to the soul!

Furthermore, we see that what she experienced was:

### ***B) Overflowing From Her Heart***

Notice verse 13, "Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken

friendly unto thine handmaid; though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens." Overflowing from her heart was a desire to please Boaz. She wanted to find favor in his eyes. A desire to please God is the proper response to God's grace.

As Robert Robinson said, "Oh to grace how grace how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be. Let Thy goodness, like a fetter bind my wandering soul to Thee." An understanding of God's grace makes us realize what a debtor to grace we are. May God bind our wandering heart to Him!

## Study 7

### THERE'S NOTHING LIKE SWEET COMMUNION WITH JESUS

Ruth 2:14-17

No doubt, one of the most popular hymns that have ever been written is C. Austin Miles' hymn, "In the Garden." One day as Miles read John chapter 20, his heart was deeply moved by the scene of Mary as she talked with Jesus in the garden. Miles said, "I thought to myself, this is not an experience limited to a happening almost 2000 years ago." He realized with great force in his heart that day that he as well as every believer could enjoy such fellowship and communion with the Lord.

Miles that evening wrote:

*And He talks with me, And He walks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own,  
And the joy we share as we tarry there,  
None other has ever known.*

Another song writer has well expressed it:

*There's nothing like sweet communion,  
Sweet communion with Jesus;  
There's nothing like sweet communion with Him.  
When we fellowship with Jesus,  
With His manna He feeds us,  
There's nothing like sweet communion with Him.*

As we continue looking at the story of Ruth we see her enjoying sweet communion with Boaz. She is growing in her knowledge of Boaz, becoming more acquainted with him and getting closer to him. Paul expressed the passion of his life in Philippians 3:10, "That I may know Him." Knowing Christ is what spiritual growth is all about. It is becoming acquainted with Christ. It is getting closer to Christ. Communion and fellowship with Christ is an essential step in this process and in the matter of spiritual growth.

As we think about this fellowship, first think with me of:

#### 1. THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGE OF COMMUNION

Through the years I have had the privilege of spending time with certain ones that have been a special blessing to me. Some were great preachers that have been used of God in a marvelous way. Some were authors of books that had been of special benefit to my life. The time I spent with them was very special. I did not take the

time I had with them for granted, but listened to every word, watched every move, and made mental notes of all that we shared. Yet, there has been no greater privilege than to fellowship with the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our fellowship with the Lord Jesus is a:

***A) Glorious Privilege***

We read in Ruth 2:14, "And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither." Boaz was inviting her to eat lunch with him. Ruth a gleaner in the field was getting the privilege to eat with the owner of the field.

I remember during the Camp David peace talks under President Carter, hearing about a 6th grader's unusual privilege. His teacher had challenged her class to write someone famous and see if they could get a reply. Because of the peace talks, the name of President Begin of Israel was frequently heard. This little boy wrote President Begin. To his surprise, he not only received a reply, but an invitation to come to Israel and spend a week. For one week, this little boy had the privilege of spending a week with a national and international leader.

When I read the story, I could not help to think of the great privilege I have of spending each day with the greatest leader and figure that history has ever known. We have the privilege of fellowshiping with the Lord Jesus Christ.

What if tomorrow there was a knock at your door and when you opened it there was the postman with a registered letter for you. You signed for it and as you did so, you noticed that in the left hand corner of the envelope were the words, "The White House." When you opened the letter you found that it was a personal invitation from President Bill Clinton to come and spend a few days with him. I believe I know what you would do. After the rest of the family picked you up from the floor, you would have been on the phone calling everyone you know, "Guess what! I just got an invitation from the President to visit the White House." You would call every newspaper and radio station in town. You would be beside yourself with excitement. Yet, we have the glorious privilege of visiting with the King of kings and Lord of lords anytime we want and we don't even need an invitation. We have the glorious privilege of having fellowship with Jesus!

Our fellowship with Jesus is also a:

***B) A Gracious Privilege***

What had Ruth done to receive this invitation? Absolutely nothing. Yet she had the privilege of eating with Boaz. I think of the High Priest that had the glorious privilege of entering into the Holy Place



on the Day of Atonement. What a glorious privilege. Yet we must never forget it was a gracious privilege. He could have never entered into the Holy Place without the blood. His access was undeserved but provided for in another. Our access to the Father is unlimited but we must never forget it is undeserved.

Carl Sandberg, in his great biography of Abraham Lincoln, tells the story of Lincoln's little boy Tad. Tad had a speech impediment; a cleft palate. Because of his impediment, his father had a special love for him and would give him just about anything he wanted. One day a group of frontiersmen had come from Kentucky to see the President. When they arrived they had problems being able to see President Lincoln.

As they were standing outside the grounds of the White House, they were half cursing and saying to themselves, "Ole Abe won't see us." Little Tad heard them and said, "Would you like to see Ole Abe? You can see him." Tad went in and said, "Papa, there are some friends of mine outside that want to see you." President Lincoln said, "Any friends of yours are friends of mine. Bring them in." Tad Lincoln brought in the men who had been trying for over a week to see the President and introduced them.

We have access to our Heavenly Father through the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a glorious privilege but we must never forget a gracious privilege.

Secondly, when we look at this communion we see:

## **2. THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF COMMUNION**

Communion with God is not only a privilege, it is also a prerequisite. Spurgeon said, "The most healthy state for a Christian is that of unbroken and intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ." Notice in Ruth's case why fellowship with God is a necessity in the Christian life.

First, this communion is needful for:

### ***A) Replenishing the Depleted Life***

Notice when Boaz invited Ruth to eat with him. In verse 14, we see that it was at mealtime: "And Boaz said unto her, 'At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar.'" This mealtime was around noon. We would call it the lunch break. They had worked in the field all morning. Reaping and gleaning was hard, back-breaking work, as one had to constantly bend over as they worked. It was a hot and sweaty work as they labored under the hot sun. Mealtime was a time of rest, a time to sit down, eat, and replenish themselves for the rest of the day.

Serving God is a matter of giving and giving. What many fail to realize is that one who gives and gives must somewhere take in to make up for what has been given out. Never in history have we heard more about burn-out, stress, and mental, physical, and emotional break-downs. We are a lot like one lady went to her doctor. He asked what was wrong. She said, "I feel rundown." After he examined her, he said, "Lady, you're not rundown, you're too wound up."

In many cases it is both a case of being rundown and wound up in life. We need to take a bit of advice from the instructions given for a Grandfather clock: don't let it run down, and don't wind it too tight. I believe the biggest reason why folks are burning out, burning up, instead of burning on, is there has been no "mealtime with Jesus."

Vance Havner once said, "If we don't come apart we will come apart." He also made this wise observation: "There is no work that is more likely to crowd out the quiet hour with God than the very work that draws strength from that quiet hour." We need to get away and get alone and fellowship with Jesus to replenish our depleted strength. As someone has well said, "Our Master never asks of us so heavy labor as shall leave us no leisure for sitting at His feet." Time with God is essential. Like Ruth, we need to draw near and eat of the heavenly bread and drink of the heavenly vinegar to restore the strength that has been expended in service.

We also see that this communion is needful for:

### ***B) Receiving the Divine Life***

Notice verse 14, "And she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn." Boaz not only invited Ruth to eat with him, but he shared His own with her. He gave her "parched corn." This is very special and meaningful. The history of Israel can be divided into three periods: Egypt, the Wilderness, and Canaan.

They were brought out of Egypt which symbolizes a sinner being saved and brought out of the world.

They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Those 40 years symbolizes a carnal believer. It speaks of someone who has been saved, but never goes much further in their Christian life. They are brought out but not brought in.

They were brought into Canaan which is a type of the victorious life. It is living in resurrection power. It is a life where one is the conqueror rather than being the conquered. It is the experiencing of the Divine life that enables the devout life.

Now each of these three stages can be described by a particular kind of food. In Egypt they ate leeks, onions and garlic. In the wilderness they ate manna. But we read in Joshua 5:11-12, that after they crossed the Jordan into Canaan, "They did eat of the old corn of the

land...unleavened cakes, and parched corn... neither had the children of Israel manna any more."

Parched corn was the food of Canaan. It was the food of a victorious life. Fellowship with God is essential for it is in this time of communion that we receive from Him that which enables us to live victoriously.

Someone has written:

*Canaan possessors safe in the land,  
Victors, confessors, banner in hand;  
Jordan's deep river evermore behind,  
Cares of the desert no longer in mind.  
Egypt's stigma rolled away,  
Canaan's corn our strength and stay.*

The Christian life is the Christ life. The life that is required on the earth is a life that is received from heaven. In fellowship, He gives the "parched corn" of Divine life. He gives us His power, strength, and resources to enable us to serve Him.

We also see that this communion was needful for:

### ***C) Retaining the Delightful Life***

Again notice verse 14, "And she did eat, and was sufficed." The word "sufficed" means "to be full, to be satisfied." If I may say it this way, there were no weak arms, tired feet, and growling belly. She had her needs met and was satisfied. The Psalmist said in Psalm 16:11, "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Why do many believers lose their joy? For one reason they have not been spending time with Jesus.

Adoniram Judson wrote in his diary, "I have this day attained more than ever to what I suppose Christians mean by the enjoyment of God. I have had pleasant seasons at the throne of God." May we learn the valuable lesson of spending time with the Lord.

Lastly, think with me of:

### **3. THE SPIRITUAL PROFIT OF COMMUNION**

After lunch, Ruth went back to work. But she found her work different after she had spent time with Boaz. She had worked earlier and no doubt did fairly well. But after time with Boaz, her work in the field was greatly blessed. One of the greatest lessons that those who serve God can learn, is that worship must precede work.

You can serve God energetically without worship, but you cannot serve God effectively without worship. Those who are always doing

something for God without taking time to be with God; may be busy for God but they will not be blessed of God. Notice how Ruth's work in the field changed after she had spent time with Boaz.

Communion resulted in:

***A) Effective Service***

Notice verse 15, "And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not." Boaz said to his workers, "Do not do anything to hurt her or hinder her." Boaz saw to it that she could work effectively without any hindrance.

If we want our work for God to be effective we must spend time with God. God will bless with liberty in service and for service those who fellowship with him. I have often heard people say, "Something was hindering the service today." Maybe the hindrance was the lack of time spent with Jesus.

Communion also resulted in:

***B) Encouraging Service***

Notice verse 16, "And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not." Boaz told his workers to drop some handfuls on purpose." I can see Ruth as she is gleaning behind the reapers picking up what they missed, picking up a little here and a little there. Suddenly she comes upon this huge handful of barley. "Wow," she says to herself. "Yoo-hoo! Hey! You dropped this." Nobody turns around. She says, "Well, praise God, I'll keep it then."

I am sure her heart beat harder and harder as she came up handfuls after another. Notice verse 17, "So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley." An ephah was ten times as much as the children of Israel gathered manna for each day. Instead of going home with an armful she went home with a basket full. I can only imagine how her heart leaped with joy over the blessings she experienced.

Those who work in God's field, along the way, He sends those encouraging handfuls on purpose. You pick up a little here and a little there and you get to thinking, "I'm not getting much done. My life is fruitless and ministry is so powerless." Then God gives you a handful on purpose to encourage your heart.

If we want to serve without hindrance and reap effectively, spend time with Jesus.

## Study 8

### WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THE BARLEY

Ruth 2:17-20

I'm sure that most of you are familiar with Johnson Oatman's hymn, "Count Your Blessings." During the great Welsh revival it was one of the hymns sung at every service. The familiar chorus goes:

*Count your blessings,*

*Name them one by one;*

*Count your blessings,*

*See what God hath done.*

No doubt as Ruth returned home she must have been counting her blessings. She had left home worrying, but she returned home worshipping. She had walked into a field hoping for a little and left the field happy with a lot. She had started the day with an empty stomach and ended the day with a full soul.

I have heard people say, "All I want is the crumbs from the Master's table." I guess that is why we have so many crummy Christians. God is not a Brylcreem God—Just a dab will do. He is a God that as the Psalmist declared in Psalm 68:19, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits."

All of us need to count our blessings and see what God has done. If we did, we would find that we need a calculator to add up the blessings of God in our life. It would not take us long to realize that we have been loaded with spiritual benefits. To count our blessings will cause each of us to say with Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, Who hath not left off His kindness to the living and the dead" (2:20).

Now let's consider these blessings in our life as we look at Ruth's barley blessings in the field of Boaz. First, think with me of:

#### 1. HOW GOD ENRICHES US THROUGH HIS BLESSINGS

Our text and context describes for us the blessings Ruth experienced. This had been a wonderful day in Ruth's life. You might say that this was a red letter day in her life. It had been a day she would never forget. Her life had been greatly, graciously, and gloriously enriched. Proverbs 28:20 says, "A faithful man shall abound with blessings:" Ruth had abounded in blessings. She had been loaded with benefits.

Now how did these blessings enrich the life of Ruth? How do God blessings enrich our life? First, we see that God's blessings:

*A) Increase Our Apprehension*

Through all that happened on this day, Ruth was growing in knowledge of her new God. She was learning what her God could do and what He was like. By God's blessings in our life we learn how trustful is His Word, how meaningful is His Ways, and how powerful is His Work. Let me show you what I mean. Let's look back at this day in Ruth's life. Let me remind you of what has happened and notice what the blessings of the day taught Ruth about God.

She had learned something about *God's providence*. Notice Ruth 2:3, "And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech." Her "hap" was not happenstance but providence. She was learning that God was in control. She was learning that God had a plan and purpose for her life and was ordering things and over-ruling things to bring that plan to pass.

Often the blessings we experience in life serve as a teacher that God is in charge and He is in control. God's blessings are often the classroom of life whereby we learn that He has a plan and a purpose for our life and is working to fulfill that purpose.

She had also learned something about *God's provision*. Notice verse 14, "And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left." Also notice verse 17, "So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley."

She had a belly full by the middle of the day and she had a basket full by the end of the day (an ephah was approximately 8 gallons). She was learning that God would supply all her need according to His riches in glory. She was learning what David would one day learn and testify to in Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

I remember when my wife and I were first married. As teenagers, we sung in a chorus group from our Church. God had called us to Bible School and the last time we sung with the chorus was at the Hunter First Baptist Church in Elizabethton, Tennessee. We sung the verses of "Because He Lives." The pastor introduced us and made mention that we were leaving for Bible School.

After we sang the song, the pastor of the Church got up and said, "God has laid it upon my heart that He wants us to help this young couple." People started coming from all over the building putting money on the altar. We knew that God had called us to school but had no idea how we were going to get there, much less

attend school. But God met our need that night. That night God taught us that He could and would provide our needs. God's blessings in our life increase our knowledge and apprehension of God.

Furthermore, we see that God's blessings:

***B. Inspires Our Appreciation.***

We read in verse 10, "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" The blessings she experienced moved her to humility and gratitude. The overwhelmed heart is always an overflowing heart. The goodness of God inspires the thankfulness of man.

I once read a definition of a Christian that I think is excellent: "A Christian is someone that does not have to consult his bankbook to see how wealthy he really is." We are so blessed! Our wealth may not be reflected in our checkbook but it is revealed in God's Book! We are daily loaded with God's blessings. Everyday ought to be a day of thanksgiving.

A little girl, whose father was a disc jockey, was invited to a friend's house for dinner. She was asked to say the blessing. The little girl cleared her throat, looked at her wristwatch and said, "This food, friends, is coming to you through the courtesy of Almighty God."

When we realize and reflect on the blessings we enjoy hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, and eternally, our hearts ought to be overwhelmed with thankfulness and overflowing with thanksgiving.

Secondly, think with me of:

**2. HOW GOD ENTRUSTS US WITH HIS BLESSINGS**

In verse 17, we see Ruth returning home with an ephah (8 gallons) of barley. She has all this barley. What is she going to do with it all? What should we do with all the blessings we experience and enjoy? Ruth realized, as should we, that she had been entrusted with all the barley she had gleaned.

As we think about our blessings, we need to be mindful that the blessings of our life are:

***A. Seen By Others***

Notice in verse 18, "And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed." I can hear Ruth kicking against the door with her foot saying, "Open the door. I've got my arms full." The blessings of God in Ruth's life were obvious. Naomi saw what she had gleaned.

Naomi said in verse 19, "Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee." Let me put a Trivette paraphrase on her words: "Ruth, land of living, where did you get all that barley?" God had blessed her and it was obvious.

I remember as a young preacher hearing a preacher ask a question that was like an arrow to my soul: "What is it about your life that cannot be explained in terms of the natural, but only the supernatural?" I'm afraid that in too many cases we are naturally religious. We come to church with a stain-glass look on our faces and speak in funeral home tones. The preacher stands in the pulpit and intones, "Dearly beloved" as if he just swallowed the communion table.

It is like the description one gave:

*They're praising God on Sunday,  
They will be all right on Monday,  
It's just a little habit they've acquired.*

Instead of being naturally supernatural and supernaturally natural, we are just naturally natural and natural naturally. Naomi saw the blessings of God in Ruth's life. Do others see God's blessings in our life? Can they look at our life and it is obvious that God is doing something in our life?

There is an interesting statement found in I Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." The words "shew forth" describe an advertisement. We are to be a bill board for Jesus. We are to be an advertisement of Who He is and what He can do. Ruth was such a bill-board!

Notice how Ruth was a bill board for God. Notice that in Vs.19, Naomi asked "WHERE" she had gleaned. Ruth did not tell her where but with "WHOM." "And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz." Ruth witnessed to the blessings she had received from Boaz. We should be a witness to our Lord and all He has done.

We are also reminded that the blessings of our life are to be:

*B. Shared With Others.*

Notice verse 18, "And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and



**gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed." Ruth shared with Naomi that she had been blessed with. I'm sure that Ruth almost ran home with her barley, all the time thinking about what she had to share with her mother-in-law.**

**Paul said in Romans 14:7, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." There is a divine cycle involved in the blessings of God. The blessings come down from God to man, go out from man to man, go back from man to God, and then the cycle starts all over again.**

**Many believers are like the Dead Sea. It is so named because of the unusual amount of salt that is found in the water. Normal sea water weighs about 10 1/4 pounds per gallon and contains about 1/2 pound of salt. The water from the Dead Sea weighs about 12 1/4 pounds and contains approximately 3 1/3 pounds of salt. Very little life exists in its waters because of such a heavy salt content. One of the reasons it is so salty is that it has 6 main inlets but no outlets. It is always taking in but never giving out.**

**Someone has said that our service to people is the paying of interest on the life that has been loaned us. Our blessings are a loan from God to be shared with others. All the barley we have reaped is not to be stored in barns but shared with others.**

**Benjamin Franklin once received a letter thanking him for his service. He replied, "As to the kindness you mentioned, I wish I could have been more of service to you than I have been, but if I had, the only thanks that I should desire are that you would always be ready to serve any other person, that may need your assistance. . . As for my own part, when I am employed in the service of others I do not look upon myself as conferring favors but paying debts."**

**We experience the blessings and we are to extend the blessings. We take in the blessings and we are to give out the blessings. We glean and we are to give. We are blessed and we are to be a blessing. Paul said in I Timothy 1:11, "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." We have been entrusted with our blessings.**

**Thirdly, think with me of:**

### **3. HOW GOD EMPLOYS US BY HIS BLESSINGS**

**We are enriched through, entrusted with, and employed by God's blessings. The blessings we experience actually become an instrument in the hand of God to bless others. The food we glean often becomes food that others eat. I hear people all the time saying, "I want God to use me." One way in which He is going to use you is through what He has already done for you.**

Notice how God used the blessings He had given to Ruth to bring blessings in Naomi life. Notice how he takes our blessings and uses them in the lives of others. First, we see that God uses our blessings to:

***A) Encourage a Weak Faith***

Notice verse 20, "And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." When Naomi had returned she called herself Mara (Bitter). She stated that the Lord had brought her home empty. She considered herself living, but also dead. But when Ruth walked through the door with all that barley, it was like she saying, "God has not forgotten me. He still loves me and cares for me." Her weak faith was strengthened by the blessings she observed and obtained from Ruth.

Ruth had a need in her life. God met that need. By that which God met her need, God met Naomi's need. There have been needs in our life and God met our needs. It may be that God wants to take what He has done for us to help others.

I think of what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:3-6, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation."

There is a ministry in California called "Spatula." It is a ministry that seeks to give help, counseling, and guidance to parents whose children are homosexual. It was begun by a woman, whose son walked in the kitchen one day, and said, "Mom, I'm gay." It was a bombshell to this mother. Through her trial, she discovered that there were little resources for people that were going through what she was going through. That realization led to the founding of "Spatula."

What God has done for you may be how He will use you to help others. You that have lost a mate, have wayward children, have cancer, etc., God can use you to be a blessing to others. You can share what you learned and received of the Lord.

We also see that God uses our blessings to:

***B. Establish A Worshipping Faith.***

**Notice Naomi's reaction in verse 20, "And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." Naomi praises God. Her weak faith is now a worshipping faith. God used Ruth's blessings to encourage a weak faith and establish a worshipping faith.**

**Our former experiences of God may be just what someone else needs for a fresh encounter with God. What God has done in our lives may be that which God will use to make Himself real in someone else.**

**What will we do with all the barley? Let it become food for others!**

## **Study 9**

### **STAY IN THIS FIELD**

#### **Ruth 2:21-23**

**As a Christian, there is probably nothing anymore important in the Christian life than understanding the will of God and undertaking the will of God. Finding the will of God and following the will of God is an essential, expedient, and exciting part of being saved. George W. Truett said: "To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge; to find God's will is the greatest discovery; and to do God's will is the greatest achievement."**

**Miriam Booth, daughter of William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was a brilliant and cultured woman who began her Christian work with great promise and unusual success. However, disease brought her to a point of death. A friend told her it seemed a pity that a woman of her capabilities should be hindered by sickness from doing the Lord's work. She replied, "It's wonderful to do the Lord's work, but it is greater still to do the Lord's will."**

**Someone has said, "Out of the will of God there is no such thing as success; in the will of God there cannot be failure." A major key to being blessed of God is the will of God.**

**Cecil Rhodes once wrote: "If there is a God and He cares for men, then the most important thing in the world is to find out what He wants me to do and to do it."**

**David Livingstone once said, "I had rather be in the heart of Africa in the will of God than on the throne of England out of the will of God."**

**Listen closely to what Alan Redpath said: "I say without hesitation that if every Christian were submitted to God's will, we would have continuous revival. The whole tragedy of the Church is that Christian men and women, born-again, redeemed by the blood, indwelt by the Spirit, still raise their big 'I' and refuse to bend before the Lord. The thing that puts the brakes on Holy Spirit revival, that raises the bar against God's mighty blessing and the outpoured floodtide of the Holy Spirit's power, is Christian men and women who will not submit to the omnipotent will of God."**

**Someone has said, "There is nothing wrong in the world but wrong will, and nothing right but right will. To will aright is to will what God wills."**

**A believer that refuses the will of God is rejected for the work of God. If I want to experience God's work in my life I must do God's will for my life. In the story of Ruth and the passage before us, there are some lessons that we can glean concerning the will of God. As we have seen in this chapter, Ruth is learning and growing in her**

**Christian experience. In the process she is confronted about being obedient to Boaz and the blessings of doing so.**

**The first truth I bring to your attention is that the will of God is a:**

### **1. DISCLOSED PLACE OF SERVICE**

**Notice Ruth 2:21, "And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest." Also we read in Ruth 2:8, "Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens." As we review these words we see:**

#### ***A. An Understanding of the Will of God.***

**Ruth declared unto Naomi, "He said unto me." Boaz had made his desires for Ruth known. He had spoken his will and he had shown his will. He had said in effect, "This is what I want you to do. Stay in my field." Paul said in Ephesians 5:17, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." If God has a will for our life (and He does), then it stands to reason that He wants us to know His will. If He wants us to know His will, then He will show us His will.**

**I believe there are two major reasons why people do not know the will of God. One has to do with the failure to do what is already known to be the will of God. We know that we are to be faithful to Church. We know that we are tithing of our income. We know that we need to pray and read our Bibles, yet we are often disobedient in these matters. I think of what Jesus said in John 7:16-17, "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but him that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The key to knowing what you don't know is doing what you know to be the will of God. If one will not do what has been revealed, chances are they will not do what will be revealed.**

**Another reason people don't understand the will of God is that they want to check it out first and then decide if that is what they want to do. We want to make sure it fits our plans and preferences. Someone wrote an imaginary letter from Paul in response to the call from Macedonia:**

**DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:**

**Doubtless you will recall the invitation you extended to me to come over into Macedonia and help the people of that section. You will pardon me for saying that I am somewhat surprised that you should expect a man of my standing in the church seriously to consider a call on such meager information. There are a number of things I**

should like to learn before giving my decision, and would appreciate you dropping me a line, addressing me at Troas.

First of all, I should like to know if Macedonia is a circuit or a station. There is another item that was overlooked in your brief and somewhat sudden invitation. No mention was made of the salary I was to receive. I have been through a long and expensive course of training; in fact, I may state, with reasonable pride, that I am a Sanhedrin man, the only one in the ministry today. Kindly get the good Macedonian brethren together and see what you can do in the way of support.

You have told me nothing about Macedonia beyond the implication that the place needs help. What are the social advantages? Is the church well organized? I recently had a fine offer to return to Damascus at an increase of salary, and am told that I made a very favorable impression on the church at Jerusalem.

For recommendations write to the Rev. Simon Peter, D.D., at Jerusalem. I will say that I am a first-class mixer and especially strong on argumentative preaching. If I accept the call, I must stipulate for two months' vacation and the privilege of taking an occasional lecture tour. My lecture on "Over the Wall in a Basket" is worth two drachma of any man's money.

Sincerely yours,

**PAUL**

That is only an imaginary letter in Paul's case but it is not so imaginary in many cases. We want to approve the will of God before we answer the will the God. Doing the will of God is like taking a blank sheet of paper and signing your name at the bottom and then letting God fill in the page with whatever He so desires.

Boaz made known to Ruth what He wanted her to do. God will make known to us what He wants if we will yield ourselves to do whatever He may ask.

We also see in these words:

***B. An Undertaking of God's Will.***

Notice in Ruth 2:23, "So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law." We see Ruth understanding and undertaking what Boaz wanted. He said and she submitted. There is comprehension and compliance. There were the orders of Boaz and the obedience of Ruth.

The Will of God is not some theological course to ponder but a personal call to pursue. Paul said in Ephesians 6:6, "Not with eye-

service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”

Now you may be someone who feels that you cannot do much for God and that you are limited. I think about a story I read about a psychologist, an engineer, and a theologian that were on a hunting trip in Canada. The weather began to get bad so they started looking for shelter. They came upon a small, isolated cabin. They knocked on the door, but no one was at home. The door was unlocked, so they walked on in.

As they stepped inside, they saw something strange. There was a large, pot-bellied, cast iron stove suspended in midair by wires attached to the ceiling beams. They were all puzzled as to why the stove was elevated from the floor?

The psychologist concluded: "It is obvious that this lonely trapper, isolated from humanity, has elevated his stove so that he can curl up under it and vicariously experience a return to his mother's womb."

The engineer theorized: "This man is practicing laws of thermodynamics. By elevating his stove, he has discovered a way to distribute heat more evenly throughout his cabin."

The theologian speculated: "I'm sure that hanging his stove from the ceiling has religious meaning. Fire lifted up has been a religious symbol for centuries."

While they were debating the matter, the trapper returned. They immediately asked him why he had hung his pot-bellied stove by wires from the ceiling. He said, "Had plenty of wire, not much stovepipe."

You may come short in some areas, but God has a purpose, plan, and place for your life. Our place is not to question the what, why, or even the when. Our place is to obey and say yes! God wants us to understand His will and undertake His will.

The second truth I call to your attention is that the will of God is a:

## **2. DELIGHTFUL PLACE OF SERVICE**

Notice Ruth 2:22, "And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field." What Boaz had asked of Ruth was not a burden but a blessing. What he had commanded was not something that discouraged but delighted both Ruth and Naomi. The will of God is more than a job, it is a joy.

Naomi said, "It is good." What Boaz wanted she to do was good. Nothing any greater could have happened to Ruth than Boaz telling her to stay in his field. I say unto you, there is nothing any greater that can happen in our life than God saying, "This is what I want you

to do." I have known people that regretted not doing the will of God, but never have I met anyone who regretted doing the will of God.

I think of what Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

In what ways was it good for Ruth to stay in the field of Boaz? First, there was:

#### ***A. The Resources of the Field.***

The resources of the field were many. For one thing we see that she found protection in the field. Notice in Ruth 2:9, "Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn." Boaz saw to it that no one laid a hand on her or took advantage of her.

She also found provision in the field. Notice in Ruth 2:15-16, "And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not." Boaz saw to it that her every need was met.

The will of God is the greatest place of security and supply one could ever hope to find. I think of the little saying, "The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you." Amen!

Furthermore, there were:

#### ***B. The Relationships of the Field.***

Ruth came to Bethlehem knowing no one but Naomi. But in the field she developed relationships with others. There were the "men" (Vs.21), and the "maidens" (Vs.22). She became acquainted with those of Boaz' field.

I think of the dear friends that I have all over this country. Why do I know them? How did I meet them? It was by being in the will of God. The special relationships we have with others are part of being in God's will. I am often reminded that if I had been in another field, I would not enjoy the relationships that have been my delight.

Then most importantly there was the Master. By being in the field each day Ruth was near Boaz on a daily basis. She was with Boaz each day because she was in his field. The most delightful part of being in the will of God is the closeness you enjoy with Him. A



person out of the will of God is out of fellowship with God. To follow God is to fellowship with God.

John Wesley in his journal tells of how he visited a dear woman that was ill in bed. She had buried seven of her family in six months and had just heard that her husband was missing at sea. Wesley asked, "Don't you ever fret at any of these things?" She replied with a loving smile on her face, "Oh, no! How can I fret at anything which is in the will of God? Let Him take all, besides; he has given me Himself. I have learned to love and praise Him at every moment."

All who are in God's will can say, "This is good!"

The third truth I call to your attention is that the will of God is a:

### **3. DEVOTED PLACE OF SERVICE**

Boaz not only wanted Ruth in his field, but also wanted her to stay in his field. Notice Ruth 2:21, "And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest." Also we read in Ruth 2:23, "So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law." She was told to stay in the field until the end of the harvest. We read that she obeyed and stayed in the field as directed. The will of God is a place of devoted service; a devotion that lasts until the end of the harvest.

Devoted service is:

#### ***A. Continual Service***

She was to work in the field each day. Day by day, the command of Boaz was that she be in his field. We are to do the will of God day by day, devoted to His will and work.

Devoted service also involves:

#### ***B. Completed Service***

She stayed in the field day by day until the harvest was in and completed. We are to know the will of God, obey the will of God, and do the will of God until our work or His work is done.

During the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, the engineer that was over the construction was injured. For many months he was confined to a bed and a room as an invalid. Each day his wife would carry his orders and the plans to the workmen. Finally the great bridge was completed. The invalid architect asked to be taken to see the finished bridge. He was placed on a cot and carried to a place where he could see the great structure.

He scanned the work intently. His critical eye ran over the great cables, the massive piers, the mighty girders. He noted every detail carried out precisely as he had dreamed it in his dreams and

wrought it out in his plans and specifications. And then with a joy of achievement filling his soul as he saw and realized that it was finished exactly as he had designed it, he cried out: "It's just like the plan; it's just like the plan."

I want to do His will and stay in His field until He calls me home or comes after me. I want to be able to look upon His face and hear Him say: "It's just like the plan!"

## Study 10

### THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

#### Ruth 3:1-2

When I talk about the rest of your life, I am not speaking in terms of quantity. I am speaking in terms of quality. I am not talking about how many days are left in your life, but how the days are lived in your life. The "rest" that I speak of is a rest that God wants His people to experience and enjoy. We read in Hebrews 4:9, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The writer of Hebrews tells us that one of the goals of life should be the experiencing and enjoyment of this rest. We read in Hebrews 4:11, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

The word "rest" as found in Ruth 3:1 means "quiet" and speaks of someone that is settled. It was used to speak of someone who had a home and was settled in life. It describes a lack of anxiety, restlessness, and emptiness in a person's heart and life. We would describe this rest as a contentment of life, a deep satisfaction in life, peace of heart and soul.

It was the desire of Naomi that Ruth find this rest. She said in 3:1, "Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee." Naomi wanted Ruth to be happy and live the rest of her life enjoying the rest of life. She wanted Ruth to be settled in life and without certain fears and worries.

Essayist Charles Lamb said, "I walk up and down thinking I am happy and knowing I am not." To many, satisfaction is about as rare as the bald eagle. It is estimated that about every 30 minutes someone in the U.S. commits suicide. The New York Times estimated that about 5 million people living in America had tried to kill themselves. It would seem that for many Americans, life is without contentment and satisfaction.

One of the great quests of life is peace, contentment and satisfaction. Dante, the Italian poet, when asked by some monks where he was going and what he was seeking, replied, "I am searching for that which every man seeks – peace and rest."

Phillip Keller writes in his book *A Gardener Looks at the Fruits of the Spirit*, "In the world around, amongst all men, Christian and non-Christian, peace is regarded as one of the supreme attainments. In the tumultuous history of the 20th century, perhaps no other single subject has occupied more prominence in the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of mankind. Peace is ever upon people's minds and lips. It is the profound longing of uncouthed millions. Peace is the prize

sought for in the depths of the human soul, yet the attribute so often absent."

Thanks to God there is a rest of life for the rest of our life. In fact, God wants each of us to experience and enjoy this rest of life. He does not want our life's to be empty and void of peace and satisfaction. He wants us to be at rest.

Let's notice where this rest is found by considering Naomi's words to Ruth.

First, we see:

#### **1. THE PLACE SHE FIRST ADVISED**

We read in Ruth 1:9, "The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept." We recall that at this stage in Naomi's life she was away from God. In her condition she was mistaken, misguiding, and misinforming in her advice. She was saying to her two daughter-in-laws to go back to Moab and there find rest. Moab was a place cursed of God. It was a place without God. It was a place that rejected God. Yet, this was the place Naomi first suggested that Ruth seek rest. It was advice that was distorted deceptive, and dismal.

This world in which we live is not much better informed and advised on where to find rest. Our society searches for peace, but searches vainly for it looks for rest in all the wrong places.

Naomi's advice reminds us that people often search for rest in:

##### ***A. The Possessions of This World***

This world thinks if one has a lot of money and possesses all the finer things of life, they will be happy. People often reason that if they were rich they would then be truly happy.

The Chicago Tribune told the story of a Jeff Ferrera of Waukegan, Illinois. He was reconciling his checkbook and called First National Bank of Chicago to get his current balance. The electronic voice said, "Your primary checking account currently has a balance of \$924,844,204.32." Ferrera was one of 826 customers who were almost billionaires for a day because of the biggest error in the history of U.S. banking. The goof amounted to almost \$764 billion, more than six times the total assets of First Chicago National Bank.

I can hear you say, "I wish my bank would make such a mistake on my behalf. I would be a happy fellow." But the truth is; if you were the richest person in the world, you would not find peace and contentment in your riches.

A magazine article on comedian Jackie Gleason carried this subtitle: "Tragic Facts, Never Before Told, of the Torment Behind the Comedy Genius Who Earned Three Million Dollars a Year. He is Lonely, Tormented, Fearful."

Millionaire Jay Gould said when dying, "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth." Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie remarked, "Millionaires seldom smile and never laugh."

Those that do not have money think if they had money they would be happy. Yet those who have money tell us that money will not make anyone happy. Someone has written: "Money will buy a bed but not sleep, books but not brains, food but not appetite, finery but not beauty, a house but not a home, medicine but not health, luxuries but not culture, and amusement but not happiness." Rest is not found in the possessions of this world.

Naomi's advice also reminds us that people search for rest in:

***B. The Pleasures of This World.***

There are those who think if they could really live it up then they would truly be happy. This is especially a misguided conception of young people. The reasoning is often, if I could do that and go there, live this way and that way, I would be happy.

Lord Chesterton once said, "I have run the silly rounds of pleasure, and by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose."

Robert Burns wrote:

*Pleasures are as poppies spread;*

*You seize the flower, the bloom is shed.*

I think of the woman at the well in John chapter four. She had had affairs with five men and was living with a man that was not her husband. You can fill in the blanks to the kind of life she had lived. But did it make her happy? When she met Jesus was still seeking the source of genuine joy.

The philosophy of this world, "Eat, drink, and be merry," only leads to a dead-end street of frustration, boredom, emptiness and burned out lives.

As well, we are reminded that people often search for rest in:

***C. The Popularity of This World.***

Others think that if they could only be popular or famous, then they would really be happy. The ideal of being popular, well-known, and famous with their names in bright lights to many is the key to being happy.

In 1978, Chris Evert, two-time Wimbledon women's tennis champion and winner of over a million dollars the previous year, took four months off from professional tennis because, according to the Associated Press, "She realized she was not happy."

Most of us are familiar with the name of Judy Garland, the child star who became a superstar at the age of 17 in the "Wizard of Oz." By 1948 she was the leading movie musical actress. But even with her success, life appeared to be missing something. At the age of 18 she was seeing a psychiatrist. At the age of 28 she attempted suicide. She had four failed marriages. She was addicted to uppers to perform and downers to sleep. She was found locked in her bathroom by her fifth husband, sitting with her head slumped over in her lap. Doctors said she died of an in-cautious self overdose of sleeping pills. Her daughter, Liza Minnelli, said in a statement shortly after her mother's death, "It wasn't suicide, it wasn't sleeping pills, it wasn't cirrhosis. I think she was just tired." [1]

Real joy, happiness, peace is not found in possessions, pleasure, or popularity. King Solomon declared that he had tried might, money, music, mirth, and mistresses to find joy. He stated in Ecclesiastes 2:10, "And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour."

His final analysis of it all was summed up in Ecclesiastes 2:11, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

Naomi said, "The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband." She first advised Moab as the place to find rest. Yet, we are reminded that Moab is not the place to find rest. Naomi would learn this as well.

Secondly, we see:

## **2. THE PERSON SHE FINALLY ACKNOWLEDGED**

Notice our text, Ruth 3:1-2, "Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast?" Naomi now acknowledges that rest is not found in a place but in a person. Rest was not in Moab but in the Master. It was not in a land but in a Lord.

First, we see that real rest is a:

### ***A. Resource in Christ***

Naomi was acknowledging that the one who had the resources to fully satisfy and bring rest to Ruth was Boaz. He was the one who had the ability to meet her every need.

High atop a mountain between Argentina and Chile stands a massive statue entitled, "Christ of the Andes." The statue commemorates the signing of a peace treaty in 1903 that ended a long-smoldering border dispute between the two nations. The Argentine cannons which had terrorized the Chileans were melted down and reshaped into the statue. Engraved in Spanish at the base of the towering monument are these words, "Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust than Argentines and Chileans break the peace sworn at the foot of Christ the Redeemer."

Real peace can only be found at the feet of Christ the Redeemer. Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Augustine, one of the great names of early church history, said after trying to find peace in every sensual indulgence known to man, "Our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

Jesus is where real peace and rest comes from. He is the single source of real rest.

We also see that real rest is a:

#### ***B. Relationship with Christ***

Notice that she referred to Boaz as "our kindred" (Vs.2). She was referring to him as a "kinsman redeemer" of which we will learn more later. The fact is she was speaking of a close and intimate relationship between Boaz and Ruth. Jesus is the resource for real rest. Yet, many who know Christ as Saviour do not experience this rest. Many that are saved, going to heaven when they die, if honest, would admit that they are not really happy. Why? Real rest comes from Jesus, but is experienced in a close relationship with Him.

Before Jesus spoke of His peace that He would and could give. He said in John 14:23, "Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

First, there was a relationship and then there was a resource. The happiest people on the face of the earth are those who have a close relationship to Christ. Following the Lord is the finding of life. Where are you trying to find rest? In a place or in a person?

## **Study 11**

### **BEING AT OUR FINEST**

#### **Ruth 3:3**

**Special occasions call for us to be at our finest. Certain events call for us to look our best, act our best, wear our best, and be at our best. There are times that we would not want to be like the woman that made a mad dash out of her house when she heard the garbage truck pulling away. She realized that she had not put the garbage out that morning. She grabbed the garbage and ran out the door. Her hair was wrapped in big curlers, her face was covered with face cream, and she was in her bathrobe and an old pair of slippers. She ran out to the street and yelled, "Am I too late for the garbage?" The fellow on the back of truck yelled back, "Nope, hop right in."**

**At our point in Ruth's story, we find one of those occasions in her life that called for her to be at her finest. The events that are taking place are strange to our western minds. Her actions to us seem aggressive and questionable. Yet what Naomi instructed Ruth to do was customary and common to the Jewish people of that time.**

**In a nutshell, Ruth is about to become engaged to Boaz. The first steps in her becoming the wife of Boaz are about to be taken and it called for her to be at her finest. The instructions of Naomi were "wash thyself, anoint thyself," and "dress thyself." Naomi wanted Ruth to be at her finest when this glorious event took place.**

**There is coming a day when we that have been the workers of the Lord will become the wife of the Lord. When that hour comes, we want to be at our finest. We read in Revelation 19:7, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." John described the celebration at the wedding and the preparation of the wife.**

**We as the future wife of the Lord Jesus want to make ourselves ready. When that hour comes we want to be at our finest. The actions of Ruth as she prepared to meet Boaz at the threshingfloor ought to be same actions we take as we prepare to meet Christ around His throne. It is an hour that calls for us to be at our finest.**

**In her actions we are reminded that:**

#### **1. WE SHOULD CLEANSE OURSELVES**

**We read in verse 3 that the first thing Naomi instructed Ruth to do was cleanse herself. She said, "Wash thyself therefore." When we meet our heavenly Boaz, we want to meet Him without spot or defilement.**

**To meet the Lord this way involves a:**



### ***A. Consciousness of Sin***

David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." David wanted God to make him conscious of anything in his life that was not pleasing to Him. David wanted God to do an audit of his heart and let him know if anything was out of order.

It also involves a:

### ***B. Confession of Sin***

If there is a consciousness of sin there should be a confession of sin. David said in Psalm 32:5, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD." Confession is the act whereby we acknowledge our sin and we admit our sin. It is the act of getting it right in our life and getting it out of our life. There is a revealing of sin followed by a repentance of sin.

It also involves a:

### ***C. Cleansing of Sin.***

John tells us in I John 2:1-2, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." John tells us that the objective of the Christian life is to be clean from sin. But if there is failure there can be a cleansing of sin. We read in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." To be at our finest spiritually, there must be a consciousness of sin, a confession of sin, and a cleansing of sin.

John B. Gough, the great temperance orator, died while delivering one of his famous lectures. His last sentence was; "Young man, keep your record clean."

Charles Tindley said it well in his great hymn:

*Nothing between my soul and the Saviour*

*Naught of this world's delusive dream:*

*I have renounced all sinful pleasure -*

*Jesus is mine, there's nothing between.*

We also are reminded that to meet the Lord this way:

## **2. WE SHOULD CONSECRATE OURSELVES**

The second thing Naomi instructed Ruth to do was to anoint herself. She said in verse 3, "Wash thyself therefore and anoint thee." The

act of anointing is very common in the Bible. It speaks of the pouring of oil on one's head and body. This matter of anointing speaks of the consecration of our life.

First, think with me of:

#### ***A. The Common Purpose of Anointing With Oil***

Anointing one's self in every day and common use is the same to us as using perfume or cologne. Naomi was saying to Ruth, "I want you to smell good when you meet Boaz." Paul spoke of the actions and service of Epaphroditus in Phil.4:18, as a sweet smell to God: "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."

Our life is to be a sweet aroma to God. Our life is to be one consecrated to God and pleasing to Him. All too often our life is a putrefying odor instead of a pleasant odor. Many are like the fellow whose feet stunk so bad that when he put odor eaters in his shoes, he disappeared.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:15, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." The word "savour" means fragrance. Our life ought to be a delight instead of a disappointment to God. It ought to be a blessing instead of a burden. It ought to be a lovely fragrance instead of a foul stench.

Also, think with me of:

#### ***B. The Ceremonial Purpose of Anointing With Oil***

The ceremonial purpose of anointing with oil was to set apart something or someone from secular purposes to spiritual purposes. David was anointed as king; that is, he was set apart from the people as a common citizen and set apart unto God as a crowned King.

Consecration in a believer's life is a separation from the world and a separation unto God. As a sinner we lived as a sinner. But now a saint, we are to live like a saint. You have heard the saying, "Toe the Line." The saying came from the early days of the British Parliament. Years ago members of Parliament wore swords in the House of Commons. To keep the Members from fighting during heated debates, the Speaker of the House of Commons forced the Government and Opposition party to sit on opposite sides of the chamber.

Lines, two sword-lengths plus one foot apart, were drawn in the carpet. Members were required to stand behind the lines when the House was in session. To this day, when a member steps over the line during a debate the speaker yells: "Toe the Line."

The Christian is to draw a line in life and then toe that line. On one side is the world and on the other side are the things of God. The Christian then takes his stand on the side of the line with God and lives their life on that side. That is the anointed and consecrated life. It is with such a consecrated life that one wants to meet the Lord.

Thirdly, we are reminded that in order to meet the Lord this way:

### **3. WE SHOULD CLOTHE OURSELVES**

Finally we see that Naomi told Ruth to clothe herself: "Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee." Ruth had come from Moab wearing the garments of a widow. She had gleaned in the field wearing the garments of a worker. Now Naomi says, "I want you to wear something special. I want you to put on that pretty dress that you have. I want you to look nice for Boaz."

The "garments" of the Christian life speak of that which is seen by those around us. Clothing is a part of our life that others see. It speaks of our testimony and witness. To be at our finest we need to "dress up."

To "dress up" we should wear:

#### ***A. Clothing That Is Appropriate***

Different situations call for different kinds of clothing. You would not want to wear a wool overcoat to Florida in July. Neither would you want to wear a tank top and shorts to Alaska in January. Different occasions call for different kinds of clothing. You would not want to wear a sequin gown and mink fur to the ball park to watch a little league game. Neither would you wear blue jeans and a T-shirt if you were invited to the Whitehouse to meet the president.

There is a life and testimony that is appropriate for those who are saved. There is a life that should be "put off" and a life that should be "put on" by Christians. A Christian would not want to wear "Devil Jeans" and "Satan shirts."

In Ephesians 4:22-24 we read: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Also, to "dress up" we should wear:

#### ***B. Clothing That Is Attractive***

Everything Naomi had asked Ruth to do was to make her attractive to Boaz. He was already attracted to her but Naomi wanted to really get his attention this time. "Ruth, put on the nicest dress you have. I want you to look good for Boaz," was what she was saying.

**The life that we live as a Christian should have an attraction about it. It should compel rather than repel. There should be something about our life that catches the eye rather than turn the stomach.**

**The book "George Washington Had No Middle Name," tells about a biography of George Armstrong Custer by James Warner Bellah. It reads in its entirety: "To put it mildly, this was an oddball."**

**If someone wrote your biography how would they describe you? Would your biography be one that would be sold in a Christian bookstore or a secular book store?**

**Lord Peterborough lodged for a season with Fenelon, archbishop of Cambray. He was so delighted with his piety and virtue that he exclaimed, "If I stay here any longer, I shall become a Christian in spite of myself."**

**A young minister, when about to be ordained, stated that he at one period in his life, he was nearly an infidel. "But," said he, "there was one argument in favor Christianity which I could never refute –the consistent conduct of my own father!"**

**It is important to remember that everything Ruth did; cleansing herself, anointing herself, and clothing herself, was for the purpose of pleasing Boaz. Just as Ruth would later that night lie at the feet of Boaz, one day we will bow at the feet of Jesus. We want to be at our finest so that He will be pleased with us.**

## **Study 12 UNDER HIS SKIRT Ruth3:4-11**

**Many believers are quite content just to be saved and know that when they die heaven is their eternal home. To them, salvation is no more than a passport to heaven and a fire escape from hell. Their Christianity is no more than a salvation that takes them to heaven when they die. For many, their Christianity is not a Saviour that makes heaven real while they live. Many are excited in knowing about the heaven God has prepared. But not many are excited about knowing the God that is preparing heaven. For many there is an interest in golden streets but there is not an intimacy with a glorious Saviour. As we continue looking at Ruth we find that she was not content with just the blessings found in the field of Boaz. She wanted the blessings that were to be found at the feet of Boaz. She wanted more than the blessings. She wanted the Blessor. She wanted to be more than a worker for Boaz. She wanted to be the wife of Boaz. In Ruth 3 she is no longer in the barley field, but is found at the threshing floor. It is a beautiful scene, the process of an intimate relationship, with Boaz that suggests several lessons about a believer and Christ. First, notice with me from the story that we see:**

### **1. RUTH GOING DOWN TO THE FLOOR**

**We read in Ruth 3:4-6, "And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her." Naomi instructs Ruth to go down to the threshing floor where Boaz was threshing the barley. Symbolically, the threshing floor reminds us of a truth that it is involved in intimate relationship with Christ. Customarily a threshing floor was located on the top of a hill which was for the purpose of catching the wind in order the blow away the chaff. Ordinarily it was circular with a clay surface that was packed hard and smooth, with rocks lined around it. The grain would be cut and carried to the threshing floor. Sheaves of grain would be spread on the floor and trampled by oxen drawing a sled. The people would take a flail to throw the grain up in the air so that the chaff would be blown away and the good grain fell down on the threshing floor. It was usually in the afternoon, that the breeze would come up, and the people would thresh the wheat until the wind died down, whether that was at sundown or midnight. It was a place that all the families came and camped. There would always be several people present. It was not only a time of threshing the wheat, but also a time of feasting for the abundant harvest. They would sing psalms and give praises to God. When the feast was over the men would sleep around the grain. They would sleep with their heads toward the grain and their feet pointing away from the grain. Now**

understanding the threshing floor, consider with me the threshing floor and its significance concerning an intimate relationship with Christ. First, we see that it was a place of:

#### *A. Spiritual Meaning*

Threshing floors in the Bible are significant. A good example is the threshing floor of Oman the Jebusite. It was there that the judgment of God was stayed David's day. On that very site, Abraham had offered up Isaac and years later Solomon would build the Temple. That threshing floor was a place of sacrifice. In Ruth's case, the threshing floor answers to Calvary. At Calvary we see our Lord on God's threshing floor. It was at the threshing floor that Ruth was to claim relationship with Boaz, and it is at Calvary where we enter into a relationship with our heavenly Boaz. The work of Calvary is the basis of our individual union with Christ and our intimate communion with Christ. We have acceptance on the basis of Christ's work on Calvary. We also have acceptance. Our relationship with Christ and our fellowship with Christ centers on the basis of His work on Calvary Notice this work illustrated in Boaz. First we see Boaz eating and drinking. We read, "And when Boaz had eaten and drunk" (3:7). This is descriptive of the feasting and celebration that was involved. We read in John 4:34, "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Jesus said that the will of God was to do the work of God that He had been sent to do. That work was Calvary. Jesus ate of that meat and drank of that bitter cup. Jesus went to Calvary, God's threshing floor, and paid the price for mankind so that men might have an individual relationship with the Father. We not only see Boaz eating and drinking, we also see him rejoicing. Notice Ruth 3:7, "And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry..." Hebrews 12:2 says, "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before endured the cross." There was judgment, but there was also joy. One can only imagine the joy of our Savior's heart as He saw men and women being brought into a relationship and fellowship with God. Boaz was not only eating, drinking, rejoicing, but we also see him sleeping. Notice Ruth 3:7, "And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn." The day's work was done and now he is resting in that finished work. Jesus finished the work the Father had given Him to do. Jesus cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30), declaring that salvation's plan was complete. Because of the work Jesus did on God's threshing floor, Calvary is significant to each believer. It is that union with Christ that allows us to enjoy an intimate communion with Christ eating, drinking, rejoicing, and sleeping. There we see our heavenly Boaz.

Also see that it was a place of:

## ***B. Personal Marking***

Notice Ruth 3:4, "And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie." Naomi gave Ruth instructions to mark the place where he lay down to rest. The word "mark" means "to know, to acquaint thyself." She was telling her to pay close attention and be aware of where Boaz was sleeping. Christians should mark the place where our Lord lay on God's threshing floor. We should become greatly acquainted with our Lord's work on the cross. That place should be important to us and meaningful to us. Calvary should be more than a historical event. It should be a personal experience. It should be a place that we focus upon and mark in our heart and life. Calvary should be a force in our hearts. It should capture our hearts, consume our thoughts and check our walk. It is more than a fact of history.

Paul said in Philippians 3:10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Paul had marked the cross and the work of Christ in his heart. The songwriter marked Calvary in his heart when he wrote:

*On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross,*

*The emblem of suffering and shame;*

*And I love that old cross,*

*Where the dearest and best*

*For a world of lost sinners was slain. I will mark it for there the Saviour from heaven died and this sinner going to hell began to live. I will mark it for there He bowed His head and there I opened my heart. I will mark it, for there I became a son. I will mark it for there God gave His Son and*

Secondly, we see Ruth:

### **2. LAYING DOWN AT HIS FEET**

We read in Ruth 3:4-7, "And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down." There is nothing immodest or indecent going on here. Ruth, according to Jewish custom was claiming Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer. She was stating in her actions that she wanted to be the wife of Boaz. Ruth wanted the closest possible relationship she

could have with Boaz. I ask you, do you want an intimate relationship with Christ? Someone once asked G. Campbell Morgan how real Christ was to him and he held out his hand and said "He's as real as the skin on my hand."

Look closer with me at this scene. First, notice:

*A. The Privilege She Requested*

Several times we have already seen references to a kinsman redeemer (2:1, 2:20, 3:2). The law of the kinsman is a fascinating study in the Bible. It was established by God and revolved around two things. First there was the division of land. When God had given Israel the land, it was not like the pioneers going west and staking out their claim. The land was divided and assigned by God. God gave certain sections of the land to each of the 12 tribes. Each family within a tribe had a certain plot of land within that section. Those plots or tracts of land were to be kept in the families of that tribe and passed on to their heirs. It was not to be sold to members of other tribes, such as the heirs of Levi could not sell their land to the heirs of Reuben. Each plot of land was to stay in each tribe. It also involved the destitution of life. Let's say that someone found themselves in financial straits. Maybe there was crop failure and there was a need for money. In such a case the land could be mortgaged. In so doing, the owner would lose his rights to the land. There was two way's one could get their land back. There was the year of Jubilee that occurred every 50 years. In the year of Jubilee every mortgage was canceled and the land returned to its original owner. By this law, God kept the land in a family and tribe. One could also get their land back by the means of a kinsman redeemer. A near kinsman (relative) could redeem the land (pay off the mortgage). This law is found in Leviticus 25:23-25, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold." In the case of a widow, like Naomi and Ruth, the law was even more interesting. We read in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel" A single brother, or in the case where there were no brothers, the nearest single relative, was obligated to marry the widow to care for her and in so doing the land would be kept in the family. Because of this law, the widow had every right to claim



the nearest relative as a kinsman. That is exactly what Ruth is doing. Boaz is a near kinsman of her dead husband. As a widow, when she lay down at his feet, she was saying, "You are a near-kinsman. I am claiming my privilege as a widow." In other words, she was saying, "Boaz, I want you to marry me." Ruth is expressing a desire for a intimate relationship with Boaz. She was claiming her privilege to have this relationship. It is the privilege of every believer to have an intimate relationship with Christ.

Secondly, notice:

### *C. The Promise She Received*

Notice Ruth 3:8, "And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet." Boaz was sleeping with his head toward the threshing floor. Ruth came in softly so as not to wake him up, uncovered his feet, and lay down with her feet next to his. In the night Boaz woke up and was startled (afraid) to find a woman lying at his feet. He asked, "Who are you?" I confess to you it would have scared me. I think I would have been somewhat like the fellow walking through the cemetery and fell into an open grave. He tried and tried to get out but could not. He finally just sat down in a corner. In a little while another fellow came along and fell into the grave. The first fellow watched him trying to get out , but could not. he did! The first one finally said, "It's no use. You can't get out." But he did!

Notice what Ruth said to him in Ruth 3:9, "And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman." She said, "I am claiming you as a kinsman. Spread your cloak over me as an act of acceptance that you will allow me to be your wife." The word "skirt" literally means "win back" She was saying "Take me under your wings."

"Notice Ruth 3:10-11, "And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Boaz said in effect, "Oh yes, I have loved you since I first saw you in the field. There is nothing I would like any better that for you to be my wife. Yes, I will be your kinsman redeemer and make you my own." Ruth requested her privilege and received the promise that Boaz would do all that was necessary. We not only have the privilege of blessed fellowship with Christ, but He assures us that He will allow us to enjoy that closeness. Do you want to know Christ intimately? He waits with open arms for such a relationship with you. What a privilege and what a promise.

**We read in John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." He is waiting to spread his skirt over you. Will you claim that privilege?**

## Study 13 I WILL SING OF MY REDEEMER

Ruth 3:9 – 4:12

One of the great hymn writers of all time was P.P. Bliss. He and his wife were killed in a train wreck around Christmas in 1876. He was on his way to join D.L. Moody in an evangelistic campaign. Among the personal effects of Bliss were a set of words entitled, "My Redeemer." They were later set to music and have become one of the Church's most cherished hymns. When I read this portion of the Book of Ruth I find myself singing:

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

Before us is a wonderful illustration of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus and how He paid the debt and made us free. It is the story of how Boaz, as a kinsman redeemer, redeemed Ruth. In our last study we learned about the role of a kinsman redeemer. Now let's notice the only example of a kinsman redeemer in the Bible. From this example we learn three things about our redemption.

First, notice with me:

### 1. THE REQUEST FOR REDEMPTION

Ruth had a need for a kinsman redeemer. Likewise, we have a need for a Redeemer. The law had provided for a kinsman redeemer, and the Lord has provided a Redeemer for us. You might say , redemption is for the taking.

First, we see Ruth:

*A) Asking For Redemption* Let's go back and consider a few verses that we considered in our last study. Notice Ruth 3:6-9, "And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread

therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.” She said “for thou art a near kinsman.” She recognized Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer and as was the custom of that day, she asked Boaz to be her redeemer.

She was asking and Boaz responded. Notice Ruth 3:11, “And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.” On Ruth’s part it was as simple as that. All she had to do was ask. And when she asked, she received.

The Bible tells us in Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Salvation on our part is as simple as asking. We are told in John 6:37, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”. Salvation is as simple as that. We acknowledge that Jesus is the only Redeemer and ask that He be our Redeemer. To anyone that ever asked, Jesus has never said no!

We also see Ruth:

#### ***B) Assured of Redemption***

Ruth was assured of redemption by two things Boaz did. First there was his promise. Notice Ruth 3:13, “Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning.” Boaz assured her that he would do the part of the kinsman. He promised that he would take care of everything. All Ruth had to do was ask and everything else was up to Boaz. Ruth was to rest in his promise that he would redeem her. I have heard people say something like, “If we do the best we can, then that will be enough, for that is all we can do.” May I be very clear and say that doing the best we can is not enough. Furthermore there is nothing we can do. Salvation is not based on what we do, but what He has done. It depends entirely on Him. We rest in what He has done. Jesus took care of our redemption.

The songwriters said it well:

***Nothing in my hands I bring***

***Simply to Thy cross I cling.***

***My hope is built on nothing less,***

***Than Jesus blood and righteousness.***

***Jesus paid it all,***

***All to Him I owe.***

Then she was assured by his provision. Notice Ruth 3:15, “Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.” He gave her a token, 6 measures, (24 gallons or 88 pounds of barley } as a token to her that she was accepted. He said, "I will redeem you and here is a small token to prove that I mean what I say."

Notice Ruth 3:16-17, “And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.” She walked in the next morning and Naomi asked, "Who art thou, my daughter?" She was asking if she was the future wife of Boaz. Ruth said, "Look for yourself. What do you think?" The Lord loads us down with proofs that we are redeemed. He gives us the evidence that we are His. There is an internal proof. Something happens on the inside. There is an external proof. Something happens on the outside. Both His promise and provision give us assurance that He has redeemed us just as it assured Ruth that Boaz would redeem her.

Secondly, we see:

## 2. THE REQUIREMENTS OF REDEMPTION

In order to become Ruth's kinsman redeemer, there were certain requirements. There were certain business matters of which Boaz was responsible.

First, the Kinsman had to be:

### A) *Worthy*

I say worthy in the sense of meeting certain qualifications. For one thing, He had to be a relative. Not just anyone could be a redeemer. He had to be a kinsman. We read in Leviticus 25:25, ?????? Boaz met this qualification. Do you remember Ruth 2:19-20, “And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.” Boaz was a near kinsman, thus was qualified. Did the Lord Jesus meet this qualification? We read in John 1:14, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” He that was God became man. He that was Divine became

human. He became one of us. He became a relative of the human race. We read in Philippians 2:7, "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." There was a day that the Lord of Glory forsook His royal chariot to alight on this earth. You could say that he undressed Himself. He gave to the clouds His bow. He gave to the sky His azure mantle. He gave to the stars His jewels. He gave to the sun His brightness. He that was from eternity was embodied in human flesh, demonstrated in human life, and was crystallized in human form. He became kin to us! Not only did the redeemer have to be a relative, but he also had to have the resources. He had to have the money and means to pay the price. He had to be rich enough. Did Boaz meet this qualification? Notice Ruth 2:1, "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wean of wealth. He was finally, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz." He was a man financially able to be her kinsman. Did Jesus meet this qualification? Was He able to redeem? Ephesians 3:20, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Also we read in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He was more than able. He was a relative and He had the resources. When Ruth asked Boaz to be her redeemer, He said yes, for he knew that he could be her redeemer. Our Lord is qualified to be our redeemer. Dr. L.R. Scarborough, while he was president of Southwestern Seminary in Texas, was preaching on the story of Jonah and the whale. When he got home, his son said to him, "Daddy, did you really mean what you preached? Do you really believe that? Daddy, do you believe that a fish could swallow a man and keep him alive for three days and three nights?"

This great man sat his son down and said, "Well now son, let me ask you a question. If God could make a man to begin with out of absolutely nothing and if God could make a fish to begin with out of absolutely nothing, son, don't you believe that God could make a fish that could keep a man alive for three days and three nights?" The little fellow said, "Well, if you're going to bring God into it that's different."

When you look at the wonderful story of redemption you see Jesus stepping into the situation and He steps into it as a qualified redeemer.

Secondly, the kinsman had to be:

*B) Willing*

Boaz was a relative and had the resources, but there was one slight problem. Notice Ruth 4:3-4, "And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi,

that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it." Boaz was a near kinsman, but there was one that was nearer. The nearer kinsman was the first one in line to be Ruth's kinsmen redeemer. Boaz is willing to let him. But if he doesn't, then I will redeem you and you will be mine. Now notice how things happened. We read "Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down" (4:1-2). The first thing the next morning Boaz went up to the gate. The gate was the center of the life of a community and a city. It was the place where people met and fellowshiped. But more important it was the place that cases were heard and contracts were made. Boaz waited until the nearer-kinsman passed by and he hollered at him. "Ho, such one! Turn aside and sit down. I want to talk with you about something." Then Boaz asked that the elders sit down. Boaz was asking for a court hearing. Boaz put the case before the elders and the nearer-kinsman. We read, "And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it" (4:3-4). Boaz told him about the situation. There was a parcel of land that Naomi had lost. He carefully lays out the details of the case. He reminds the nearer kinsman that he was the first one with responsibility of redeeming Naomi. Boaz asks if he would redeem the land for Naomi. He said, "Sure, I'll redeem it." I'm sure Ruth's and Naomi's heart sunk when they heard him say "yes." But Boaz had a trump card up his sleeve. Notice Ruth 4:5, "Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name. By the way, if you buy the land, you will also have to marry Ruth. She is the wife of one of Elimelech's sons.

When he hears that he changes his tune. We read, "And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mare mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it" (4:6). When he realizes that a wife comes in the deal he decides that he doesn't want to be a kinsman redeemer. Legally he was qualified, but

personally he disqualified himself. He said, "I don't think I want to do that"

That opened the door for Boaz, the next in line to be a redeemer. He was both worthy and willing to be a kinsman-redeemer. Notice Ruth 4:7-10, "Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day." Boaz says, "I'll buy her." In those days the transfer of a sandal symbolized a change of ownership and came to be used as a sign of any agreement made and publicly witnessed between two parties. The nearer-kinsman pulled his shoe off and said, "Here, she's yours." In our case there was a near-kinsman. That nearer-kinsman was the law. That law declared we were sinners. That law showed that we were sinners. That law showed that we needed a Saviour, but it could not redeem us. But there was one that was both worthy and willing, both available and able. Paul said in 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." ar-kinsman. But our flesh cannot save us. But Jesus is able and willing! Praise God He is the kinsman was able and willing! He is our kinsman redeemer.

Our flesh is a ne He was willing! Thirdly, we see:

### **3. THE RESULTS OF REDEMPTION**

We see two things that resulted from Boaz becoming Ruth's kinsman redeemer and the results of our redemption.

First, there is:

#### ***A) The Position of the Saints Is Established***

Notice Ruth 4:11, "And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem." She is no longer called a Moabitess but a woman. They express their wishes that she be like Rachel and Leah, the mothers of Israel. She has a new position in life. Redemption takes



the outcasts and makes them part of God's family. It makes a sinner a saint. It makes a hell bound sinner a heavenly saint.

Secondly:

*B) The Praise of the Saïour Is Expressed*

Notice the latter part of verse 11, "And do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem." They said in effect, "May you be praised for what you have done." When we stop and think of what Jesus has done for us, the heart wants to sing out: "To God be the glory great things He has done."

*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.*

## **Study 14 THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER**

**Ruth 4:13-17** We come to the close of the book of Ruth. The book of Ruth is a story that could begin with the words, "Once upon time," and you could certainly end the book with the words, "And they lived happily ever after." A little girl had learned the story of, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." She was telling the story to her mother. When she got down to the place where the prince kissed Snow White and awakened her from her sleep, the little girl said, "Mother, do you know what happened then?" The mother knowing how the story ended said to her, "They lived happily ever after." The little girl said, "Oh no, they got married." In the case of Ruth and Boaz, they were married and they lived happily ever after. Well, I got some good news for you. One of these days we are going to be married and live happily ever after. The last few verses of the Book of Ruth tell us how everything ended up in Ruth's case and they remind us how everything is going to end up in our case. We that are the earthly servants of Christ will one day become the heavenly wife. Today we are His workers, one day we will be His Spouse and move out of the fields and move into His house.

In these closing verses we see:

### **1. OUR WAITING**

In Ruth's case, there was a night of waiting. In 4:13, Boaz said to Ruth, "Tarry this night." There was a period of waiting before everything would be legally finalized and personally realized. In our case, we await and anticipate our glorious future and the coming of our Heavenly Bridegroom. He went away and we wait for His return.

There is:

#### ***A) A Promise on Which We Rest***

Notice Ruth 4:13, "Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning."

Ruth was to rest in the promise Boaz gave her that he would take care of everything. He said in a nutshell, "Lie down and rest. I will take of everything in the morning. The Lord gave us His promise that He would come again. Jesus said in John 14:13, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." I read about a London bookmaker that accepted a bet against a visit from outer space. The odds had been 100-1, but

they lowered it to 33-1 because of a rash of bets from the United States. The firm said it stands to lose nearly \$500,000 if somebody drops in. I say they better drop it lower, for one day Someone will drop in and if I was a gambling man I'd put a bet down on that one. Here is something on which you can hang your hat. Jesus is coming again! That's a promise on which we rest. Boaz said "It shall be in the morning" (4:13). We wait in the night, but morning is coming! Do not despair the sunset for the sunrise is coming.

C.A. Blackmore, one of America's pioneer radio preachers, was preaching on the return of the Lord Jesus. He said, "My friend, we have a glorious hope, the Bible calls it a blessed hope for Christians. The Bible tells us that one day the trumpet will sound and Jesus will come back to take His children home! Dear friend, all your suffering and pain will be over, you'll have a new body, arms and legs that are missing will be replaced, friend, we'll be like Jesus! You'll have a glorified body someday, some golden daybreak when Jesus comes back." A few days later, Blackmore received a letter from a woman listener who had been bed-ridden for years. She wrote, "Rev. Blackmore, the message you gave on Jesus coming was such a blessing to me. I've been an invalid for almost 25 years and sometimes I get so discouraged, I can hardly wait for the Lord to come. To think I'll be able to walk again and there'll be no heartaches there. Thank you so much for your sermon." His son Carl was the pianist and soloist for the broadcast. He too had been moved by what his father had said. Remembering his father's words, "Some Golden daybreak," he gave us the great hymn:

*Some glorious morning sorrow will cease*

*,Some glorious morning all will bepeace;*

*Heartaches all ended, Labor all done,*

*Heaven will open, Jesus will come.*

*Some golden daybreak Jesus will come;*

*Some golden daybreak battles all won,*

*He'll shout the vict'ry, break thro' the blue,*

*r me, for you.*

*Some golden daybreak, for me, for you.*

As we wait, there is also:

#### *B) The Place in Which We Rest*

In Ruth 4:13, Boaz said, "Tarry this night." Then we read in 4:14, "And she lay at his feet until the morning." The promise on which we rest is that Jesus will come. The place in which to rest is at his feet. We are to look for Him and live for Him. We are to live a life of

expectation and a life of consecration. In 1983, I toured the ruins of Pompeii, Italy that had been destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. Hundred were buried beneath the ash, cinders, and lava. During excavation, people were found in various places and positions. There were some found in deep vaults, having gone there for security. Some were found in lofty chambers, attempting to get above it all. But there was one interesting Roman sentinel that was found. He was found standing at the city gate where he had been placed by the captain with his hands still grasping his weapon. There, while the earth shook and the floods of ashes and cinders overwhelmed him, he had stood at his post, and there 1,000 years later they found him. Like Ruth, may we stay at His feet till morning. Secondly, in these closing words we are reminded of:

## **2. HIS WEDDING**

The night passed, the morning came, and Boaz kept his word. Notice Ruth 4:13, "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife." You talk about an honorable Bridegroom and a happy bride. You talk about a sweet, special, significant wedding. This wedding certainly was!

As we look at this wedding we see:

### ***A) A Scene That Is So Thrilling***

How special this hour must have been to Boaz. He had loved Ruth so much that he had purchased and redeemed her. How special this must have been to Naomi. It was her that first saw the possibilities of all this coming to pass. How special it must have been to Ruth. She was no longer a worker in his field; she was a wife in his arms. I think it is interesting the word that is used to describe Boaz taking Ruth to be his wife. Verse 13, says, "So Boaz took Ruth." The word "took" means "to carry away, to fetch." One of these days our heavenly Boaz will "fetch" us and carry us away. I can only imagine what that hour will be like when Jesus comes and we are called home. John got a glimpse of that thrilling scene in Revelation 19:1-9, "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give

honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. That will be blessed hour. That will be a glorious time.

These are they That will be a witness to me.

We also see:

### ***C) A Story That Is So Touching***

Boaz was as described as "a mighty man of wealth" (2:1). No doubt, Boaz could have married just about any single woman in town. He was Bethlehem's most eligible bachelor. He would have been a prize catch for the any of the Bethlehem maids. But Boaz fell in love with Ruth in spite of the fact she was from Moab. Most Jews wouldn't have anything to do with such foreigners. The ideal of marrying a Moabite was out of the question.

Add to that the fact that Ruth didn't have anything. She was hopeless and helpless. She had to pick up left-over's in a field just to live. But Boaz fell in love with her and made her his wife. One day we will enjoy being the heavenly bride of the heavenly Bridegroom. When we stand there, it will be as an undeserving bride. All of us will have to say that we don't understand why He would love us and make us His own. Never will what God has done for us be understand anymore than on our wedding day.

Lastly, in these closing words we see:

### **3. OUR WORSHIP**

We read in 4:13, "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went into unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son." They had a baby boy. Notice in verse 17 what they named him. "And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." Boaz and Ruth became husband and wife and it wasn't long that they had a baby boy who they named "Obed," which means worship. And it wasn't long until the sound of worship filled their home.

First, I am reminded that worship is the:

### ***A) Precious Result of Our Love***

Obed was the result of Ruth's and Boaz love for each other. Our worship is the result of our love for Him. The more we love Him the more we worship Him. The more we understand His love for us the more we worship Him.

I am also reminded that worship is the:

***B) Proper Response of Our Life***

No doubt Ruth wanted to give Boaz a son. After all he had done for her; this was what she wanted to give him. One day Jesus will come. We will become His wife for all eternity. He will be the object of our affection and the occupation of our time. He will be worshipped and rightly so. Yes, we will live happily ever after. What a wonderful story is THE LOVE STORY OF REDEMPTION!