

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



## RUTH

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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# Ruth

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# God's Redeeming Love

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Ruth 1–4**

*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.”*

RUTH 4:10

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## Introduction

We're going to be thinking, tonight, about "God's Redeeming Love," the love that has brought us into the family—that same love that Randy was singing about. You know, the Bible is a love story, and we all love love stories.

I was thinking about the girls in the college dormitory, who were having a prayer meeting, one night, and all of those girls were praying. And one of the girls prayed, "Lord, give us clean hearts. Lord, give us pure hearts. Lord, give us sweethearts." And all the girls said, "Ah-men." We love love.

And the Bible is the greatest love story ever written. And in the greatest love story, the Bible, there is a special love story that is tucked away, and it's the Book of Ruth. And it is really a romance—a romantic story—that tells of love and marriage; but, it goes beyond that. It is a wonderful illustration of Christ, and the Church, and God's redeeming love.

Benjamin Franklin, one time, was a member of a literary society—a French literary society—and they would meet together and share literary masterpieces that they had written, or they thought—hoped—would be masterpieces. And Benjamin Franklin stood up and gave the story of the Book of Ruth. And those men and women in that literary

society did not know it was the Book of Ruth; they did not know it had come from the Bible—and they applauded. And they said, “Dr. Franklin, that story is a masterpiece. It needs to be printed and put into circulation.” He said, “It is already in circulation. It’s in that book that you seem to despise but, evidently, know so little about: the book of Ruth.” Redeeming love—that’s the theme.

Let’s get started, here, in the first five verses: *“Now it came to pass in the days when judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab, the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband”* (Ruth 1:1–5).

Now let me just, if I can, give you the story in a nutshell; and, then, I want to go back and give you five facets of redeeming love. But there was a man whose name was Elimelech; he lived in Bethlehem. He was married to a wonderful woman named Naomi. But they had to leave Bethlehem, because of economic circumstances; and, they went to a pagan country. That pagan country was the country of Moab. Now they have two sons, and, of course, I’ve given you the names of those sons already. Mahlon was the name of one, and Chilion was the name of the other. And there, in the land of Moab, those two boys married two girls in the land of Moab: Ruth and Orpah. Then, Elimelech dies. Ten years later, both of the boys die, and there’s Naomi without a husband, and she has two daughter-in-laws: Ruth and Orpah. Naomi decides she’s going back to Bethlehem, back to her hometown. Ruth says, “I’ll go back with you, Mother,” but Orpah says, “I’m going to stay here.” When Ruth goes back to Bethlehem, there is one of her relatives, her husband’s relative, who was there. His name was Boaz. Now he was the town’s most eligible bachelor, and the bachelor from Bethlehem marries the maid from Moab; and, they live happily ever after. It’s really a Cinderella story; but, if you have eyes to see, it is one of the most wonderful pictures of what we’re celebrating tonight—our blood redemption that Randy just sang about.

There are five facts I want you to learn about Ruth, because Ruth is a picture of you, the Church; and, Boaz is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Now I’ll tell you why I say that, as we go through this story. Notice these five things about Ruth.

## **I. The Problems That Hindered Ruth**

First of all, I want you to notice the problems that hindered her, the problems that were

against her.

#### A. **She Was Cursed**

Number one: She was under a curse; she lived a cursed life. Now why was she under a curse? Well, look, in verse 4: *“And they took them wives of the women of Moab”* (Ruth 1:4). Now who was Moab? Well, Moab was the son of Lot, and he was born out of an incestuous relationship. And the Moabites were always a thorn in the side of the people of Israel, and the curse of God was upon Moab. The Bible says, clearly and plainly, in Deuteronomy chapter 23 and verse 3: *“An Ammonite or a 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 for ever”* (Deuteronomy 23:3). Now remember this: Ruth was a Moabitess, and being a Moabitess, she was under a curse; and, she’s a picture of every man, woman, boy, and girl, in this place tonight, without Jesus Christ.

Did you know that all of us are under a curse? Let me give it to you from the New Testament. Put this Scripture down—Ephesians 2, verses 11–13: *“Wherefore remember, that ye being in the time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”* (Ephesians 2:11–12). That’s the way every person is without Jesus: aliens, hopeless strangers under a curse.

#### B. **She Was Crushed**

But not only did she have a cursed life; she had a crushed life. She was a broken-hearted woman. Death had invaded her house. Poverty had come upon her. Her life was marked by tragedy and sorrow. I think you could sum it up in verse 5: *“And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband”* (Ruth 1:5). These three women are there: helpless, hapless, and hopeless. They represent so many in the city of Memphis, tonight—not only cursed, but crushed.

#### C. **She Was Condemned**

But even beyond that, she was not only cursed and crushed; she was condemned, because she would die in her sin and go to Hell. She lost her estate because of the death of her husband, the head of her home. We lost our estate because of the death of Adam. Just as her husband was her head, Adam was the head of the human race. The Bible tells us very clearly, in Romans chapter 5, verse 12: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12). Think about it. The three problems that Ruth faced were sin, sorrow, and death. The Bible is the only book in the world that has the answer

to those three problems. Philosophy, science, government—none have the answer to those three problems. And so you see, first of all, as you see Ruth, that she's a picture of the Church. You see the problems that hindered her.

## II. The Purpose That Held Ruth

But the second thing I want you to see is the purpose—the purpose—that held her. Ruth had a purpose, and that purpose was so strong that it changed the course of her life.

I begin to read, now, in verse 6: *“Then she arose with her daughters in law,”*—that's Naomi—*“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.”* And actually, Bethlehem means “the house of bread.” *“Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people,”*—now, watch this—*“and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.”*—now listen to this—*“thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her”* (Ruth 1:6–18).

You might call Ruth, *Resolute Ruth*. Verses 15 and 16 are the key verses here. And what Ruth was doing was choosing against paganism. She was choosing against the gods of Moab. Naomi had said, “Go back to your god,” but Ruth said, “Your God is going to be my God” (Ruth 1:15–16). There were the problems that hindered her, but there was the purpose that held her. She said, “I want God. I want the God of Israel. I want the God of the Bible. I want Jehovah God, the Lord God, to be my God.”

What a difference there was between Ruth and Orpah: two girls—similar

circumstances, a similar choice—but one chose God, and one went back. You know, I've preached enough to see... It's strange—you can preach in an auditorium like this; you can pray, soak your soul in prayer, get up, and preach the Word of God, tear your heart out for souls, stretch forth your hand, and say, "Please come to Jesus." Some will come, and some won't. Some will say, "I want God." Others walk out. Strange, isn't it—that God gives people the ability to say yes or the ability to say *no*?

Almost 100 years ago, Billy Sunday was saved. Billy Sunday was saved in 1886, I believe—actually, more than 100 years ago. He was a baseball player. In his time, he could circle the bases faster than any man living. He was rough. He was a drunkard. He was a fighter and an excellent athlete, but he didn't know God. He was the Billy Graham of his day. Let me tell you how he got saved: He was in Chicago—Estate and Van Buren streets. Some of the boys, athletes, had been out; they were drinking. They were sitting on a curb, there, just out in the open, and there was a group of people from a mission house like the Salvation Army. They were having a street meeting, and they were singing and praising the Lord. And Billy Sunday—I read this, as he told his own story—he said, "A lump came up in my throat; a strange thing moved me. And," he said, "I went with those folks where they were going, back to the mission house, and I listened to them." He said, "I went back again and again, and," he said, "the Spirit of God got hold of me." And as he was telling this story, he said, "If that place is still standing," he said, "I can take you to the place. I can show you the knothole in the floor, where I knelt, and gave my heart to Jesus, and He saved me." Pain is an interesting thing. He was with some other men. They heard the same message; they heard the same invitation. But Billy Sunday said, "I want God," and he found God.

The Bible says, "Whosoever will may come" (Revelation 22:17). *If you want God, you can have Him tonight. But if you don't want God, there are not enough demons in Hell or out of Hell to drag you down this aisle; but if you want God, there are not enough angels to keep you from coming or to make you come. It's up to you.* The demons can't hold you back; the angels can't force you. It's up to you.

### **III. The Providence That Humbled Ruth**

Now there were the problems that hindered her. There was the purpose that held her. She said, "I want God." And then, there was the providence that humbled her. When she said, "I want God," God began to providentially work, and work in her life He did. I want you to notice here, in chapter 2, now, and verses 1 and 2: "*And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth,*"—underscore that. He had power, and he had wealth—"of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, *Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she*



*went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers.”—underscore this—“and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech” (Ruth 2:1–3).*

In that day, when people would reap down the field, the poor people could get the grain in the corners that the reapers left; they called them *gleaners*. That was, it was sort of a welfare system of that day. Now Ruth is impoverished. She has nothing, except to go back into the field and pick up little bits and slivers of food and grain, that she might bring it home and eke out a meal—a meal and a living. The Bible says that she happened to go into the field of the one man in all of the world who could be her true redeemer to redeem her. Her hap was that she went into the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:3). Now the carnal mind would call that a coincidence, but the spiritual mind calls that the Providence of God. Boaz is the town’s most eligible bachelor. He is wealthy; he is mighty. And he is the one that held the key to her future happiness.

I’m going to tell you something else, friend: If you are saved and brought to Christ, it takes more than your desire—even the desire God puts in your heart. But then, God moves, by providence, to get the message of Almighty God to you. Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 4, and see what happens: *“And behold...”*—the Bible...when the Bible says *behold*, it’s expecting you to be impressed—*“And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, the LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.”* Old Boaz is a good man; he loves God. *“Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?”* You have to understand how he said it. I mean, evidently, Ruth was a looker, and old Boaz said, “Hey, who’s that gal?” He said, “Whose girl is that?” And he sees her, and something begins to happen in his heart. *“And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house”* (Ruth 2:4–7).

Now you see how providence begins to work? Here is providential love. She was there, and he put his eyes on her. Later on, she’s going to love him, but he spied her first. Did you know that we love Him, Jesus, because He first loved us? Did you know that?

Do you know why Joyce loves me? I loved her first. It was in the sixth grade. She was sitting right over there, just a few steps up. My desk was *here*, another row; her desk, and she was right up *here*. I couldn’t concentrate on my study! That’s the reason I still should’ve learned things in the sixth grade that I don’t know, because Joyce was sitting right over there, and I had my eyes on her. I wrote her a love note. I walked past her desk and dropped that love note. Did you know we still have that love note? Want to know what it says? Joyce says, “Don’t you dare tell them,” but I wrote a love note and



gave it to her. She loves me because I first loved her. Ruth loved Boaz because Boaz first loved her. And I love Jesus because Jesus first loved me.

So by the providence of God, she comes into this particular spot, owned by the most eligible bachelor, and he sees her; and then, grace begins to work. Look, in chapter 2 and verse 8—what a wonderful story this is: *“Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go into the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.”* Now listen to verse 10; oh, folks, listen to it: *“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?”* (Ruth 2:8–10).

Ruth recognizes that it is grace that has caused this man to show love to her, as she falls at his feet. And I’m telling you, every mother’s child in this building tonight ought to fall at the feet of Jesus because of His wonderful grace, for the Bible says, in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8–9). The problems that hindered her; the purpose that held her; the providence that humbled her, and caused her to fall on her face, and say, “Who am I that I should find such grace?” That’s what we’re going to do, tonight, when we have this Lord’s Supper. We’re going to say, “O Lord, who am I that You should love me so?”

#### **IV. The Person That Helped Ruth**

Now here’s the next thing I want you to see: I want you to see not only the providence that humbled her, but the person that helped her. His name was Boaz, and he’s a picture of the Lord Jesus. Look, now, in chapter 3, verses 1 through 5: *“Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee,”*—that is, “Put on some sweet perfume, Ruth”—*“and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, 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”* (Ruth 3:1–5).

Now Boaz is a wonderful, wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a relative of Ruth’s family. He was a relative of Elimelech. He was a relative of Ruth’s father-in-law.

Now let me tell you how the Old Testament law worked. Are you ready for this? If a Jew had lost his estate, if he had gone into bankruptcy, a relative could buy his estate back for him—just not anyone could do it, but it had to be a relative. Put in your margin: Leviticus 25, verse 25. Here's what it says: *"If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin..."*—underscore that—*"if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold"* (Leviticus 25:25). So to redeem a man's bankrupt possessions, you had to be his kinfolk.

Now there was another law: not only could you, if you were a kinsman, redeem your brother's lost estate—that is, what Elimelech had lost Boaz could redeem; but, secondly, you could also marry your brother's widow, or your relative's widow, if he died, and there were no offspring. A Jew without a son needed a relative to marry his widow to carry on the family name. Here it is, in Deuteronomy 25, verses 5 and following—now listen to it: *"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 a 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."* That is, if a man dies, and he doesn't have a son to carry on the family name, then it is incumbent upon the man's brother or relative to marry the widow, so that the man's name might go on. *"And if the man like not to take his brother's wife,"*—that is, if he doesn't want to marry her—*"then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto the man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed"* (Deuteronomy 25:5–10).

You say, "Pastor, what on Earth does all of that matter?" It was the law of that day. If a man lost his estate, a relative could buy back his estate on his behalf. And if a man died without children, the relative could marry his widow—and should—and raise up children to him. Now Ruth knows this; she knows that Boaz stands in the place to be her redeemer, to buy back her lost estate, and to give her children, and to give her name, again. But so, she goes and she places herself at the feet of her redeemer.

Look, if you will now, in chapter 3, beginning in verse 7: *"And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of a 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” (Ruth 3:7–8). Now she has placed herself—listen—she has placed herself at the feet of her redeemer. She has placed herself there at the feet of the only man she feels who ought to redeem her. But there was a problem: There was a kinsman that was closer to her than Boaz was.

Now go to chapter 4, and I’m just hitting the high spots here, but I’ll be finished in a moment. Look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 1: *“Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by”* (Ruth 4:1)—that is, the nearer kinsman.

Why don’t we... Let me just back up to chapter 3 again, and get that. Now there she is at the feet of her redeemer. Look, in verse 9, again: *“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. 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. And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman’s part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning”* (Ruth 3:9–13).

Now he says, “Ruth, I’ll do it. Ruth, I’ll marry you; I’ll be a husband to you. You’re a virtuous woman, Ruth. I will do it. But I’ve got a problem: I’m not the first one in line. Now there is a kinsman nearer to you than I, and he’s got to be given the first chance.”

Now let’s go to chapter 4. Look, if you will now, in chapter 4—the first six verses: *“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.”* He doesn’t know what he’s about to hear. *“And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.”* Now they’re having a little business session, so he gets ten men and says, “I want all you men to witness this.” *“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,”*—for good—*“I will redeem it.”* He wanted to get that property that belonged to Elimelech; but, wait a moment, he hasn’t read all the contract: *“Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his*

*inheritance. And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it” (Ruth 4:1–6).*

Two kinsmen there: Boaz, who represents the Lord Jesus Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer. Who was the other kinsman? The other kinsman was Adam—I mean, in our story. He’s not Adam right here, but I’m talking about in the analogy. That is the old Adamic nature. There are ten witnesses there that say the old Adamic nature can’t redeem us. What are those ten witnesses? The Ten Commandments—the Law—and they’re all there to witness that, if this man tries to redeem, he would mar his own inheritance. They’re saying, “It’s impossible. You cannot do this”; and the man knows it. And the old flesh cannot redeem. You see, we all have that old nature, that nearer kinsman, that old Adam that’s in all of us; and, he can’t redeem a one of us. We’re not redeemed by corruptible things. And so then, Boaz says, “Now since this man is out of the way, I will redeem it.”

Now I want you to see what begins to happen now. And look, if you will, in chapter 4, verse 7: *“Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel.”* This is the way they did business. Now can you imagine going down to a bank, today, to make a contract, and take off your shoe and give it to the banker? That’s the way they did it 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” (Ruth 4:7–10).*

Now what was the meaning of that? Why would a man take off his shoe and give it to another man in a business contract? It just simply means, “I am standing in your shoes, and you’re standing in mine”; that’s what it means—“I’m taking your place.” Have you ever used the expression, “I’d hate to be in his shoes,” or, “I’d love to be in his shoes?” A man, an ignorant man—I say ignorant—an uneducated man God saved, and there were some people making fun of him, and saying, “What’s it like to be saved?” He said, “Well, I don’t know whether I can explain it to you, where you would understand it or not.” He said, “But it’s like this: I’m standing in Jesus’ shoes, and He’s standing in mine.” A theologian could not have said it better.

“Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). That’s what we’re going to celebrate here, in just a few moments. And so Boaz takes off his shoe to say, “I am willing to

stand in the place of this man, Elimelech. I am willing to take his place; let him stand in my shoes, and I stand in yours.” Jesus Christ on the cross stood in the shoes of Adam, took our sins, carried that sin to the cross, and paid, in full, our sin debt.

In order to be a kinsman redeemer, there were three things that were necessary. Listen. Number one: He had to be a near kinsman. Have you ever wondered why Jesus became a man? Jesus could not have redeemed us without becoming our near kinsman. He took upon Him human flesh. He became our kinsman in order to redeem us. Not only did he need to be related, but he had to be wealthy; he had to have the ability to pay the price. Boaz was rich; he could not have redeemed, had he been, himself, impoverished. And he had to be willing. Thank God, Jesus was willing. Thank God, He was able. Thank God, He became our near kinsman, our Kinsman Redeemer.

## **V. The Position That Honored Ruth**

Now here’s the final thing; then, we’re going to have the Lord’s Supper. We’re talking about the person who helped her; his name was Boaz, the kinsman redeemer, and he pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, who stands in the shoes of the law and the shoes of old Adam to redeem us. Now here’s the final thing that I want you to see; and then, we’re going to have the Lord’s Supper: I want you to see the position that honored her.

Remember, she was a woman cursed, crushed, condemned. She was outside the commonwealth of Israel. She was impoverished, without help, without hope; and now, this man sees her, falls in love with her, pays a price to redeem her. And he literally marries her. Chapter 4, verse 13: *“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife”* (Ruth 4:13). The maid of Moab is married to the bachelor of Bethlehem. She now has a husband; she now has a home; she now has a harvest. She’s not gleaning anymore.

The story that began with a funeral ends with a wedding. It opens with a famine; it ends with a feast. Only those who have spiritual insight can see that that’s one of the world’s greatest love stories. It’d be a wonderful love story, if there were no redemption in it; but, folks, that’s redeeming love.

## **Conclusion**

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Ruth fell on her face at such amazing grace. She placed herself at the feet of her redeemer. Would you do that, right now? Would you bow your head, and would you say, “Lord God, thank You for Your amazing grace to me. Thank You for amazing grace”? Would you say, like Ruth, to your heavenly Boaz, the Lord Jesus, your Kinsman Redeemer, “Lord, I’ve placed myself at Your feet. Thank You, Lord, that You redeemed me. Thank You, Lord, that You have bought back my lost estate. Thank You, Lord, that I’m married to you, that I might bring forth fruit that might remain”?

# The Romance of Redemption

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Ruth 1–4**

*“Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife.”*  
RUTH 4:10

## Outline

Introduction

I. Ruth’s Desperate Condition

II. Ruth’s Definite Decision

III. Ruth’s Divine Provision

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to the Book of Ruth, and let’s look in chapter 1, verses 1 through 5: “Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahon and Chilion died both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.”

I want to tell you tonight that this is a love story. And we all love love. If you don’t love love, there’s something wrong with you. And we love not only the love of God that He has for us, but we love romantic love. And the thing that makes this story such a wonderful story is it’s a story of romantic love that tells us of God’s even greater spiritual love for us.

I heard of some girls who were in a girl’s dormitory at a college. They were having their prayer meeting one night. And one of them prayed, “Give us clean hearts.” Another one said, “Give us pure hearts.” Another one said, “Give us sweet hearts.” And they all said, “Ah, men!”

Now, dear friend, there’s not a girl, not a boy, that is not really interested in this matter of romance. And this story here from the Bible, the Book of Ruth, is a beautifully romantic story.

Benjamin Franklin was the American ambassador to France. And when he went to France, because he was a literary man, he joined a literary society. And they were supposed to present on particular evenings a literary piece that they'd written. Benjamin Franklin, however, just re-wrote the Book of Ruth. And he stood it up, he stood up and read it to them. And when they heard it, they applauded, just like you applauded the Celebration Bell Ringers. And they said to Benjamin Franklin, "That story is an absolute masterpiece. It needs to be reprinted and broadcast to the entire world." And then, Benjamin Franklin said, "It has already been printed and broadcast to the whole world. It is in the Bible, the Book that you despise, but know so very little about." And he pulled one on them. We don't want, tonight, to be ignorant of this book, the Book of Ruth.

Now there was a certain man, and Israelite. His name was Elimelech. He had a wife named Naomi. There was a famine in the house of bread. Bethlehem means "the house of bread." And they left the house of bread and went into the country of Moab, hoping there that they could escape the famine. They took with them their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. There in Moab, Elimelech died. The two boys married the two girls, Orpah and Ruth. Both of these were Moabite girls, and they married these girls. And then, after a while, the two sons died and left three widows, a mother and her two daughters-in-law.

They received word that the famine had ended in the land of Judah in Bethlehem, and so the mother, Naomi, says, "I must go back. God wants me to go back to the land, to the land of my people and to the house of my fathers. I'm going back. Now you girls must stay here. You must go back to your people. I don't have any other sons for you to marry, and we can't take care of Moabite widows there in the land of Israel. So you'll just have to stay here." And Orpah said, "All right," and she wept and kissed her mother-in-law and returned to her people there in the land of Moab. But Ruth said, "Oh no, oh no, wherever you go, I'll go. And where you dwell, I'll dwell. And your people will be my people. And your God will be my God." And she followed her mother-in-law back to the land and to the place of Bethlehem.

And it just so happened there in the land of Bethlehem, the maid from Moab met the world's or the land's most eligible bachelor, a man named Boaz, who was very wealthy and very godly. And it just so happened that Boaz was a man that, according to the law of God, was able to redeem the lost inheritance that Ruth had lost and that Naomi had lost. And he did so. And they got married, and they lived happily ever after. That is the love story, and a beautiful story it is. And I wish I had more time to tell you the details of that story. But there are three things, and I want to delineate them very briefly, that I want you to notice about Ruth, because to me there are many things in this story, but Ruth pictures to me the redeemed sinner. And Boaz pictures to me the Lord Jesus Christ, our kinsman redeemer. And there are three things that I want you to notice as



we think about this girl named Ruth.

I want you to think with me for a few moments about her desperate condition.

And then, I want you to think with me for a few moments about her definite decision. And then, I want you to think with me for a few moments about her divine provision. And I believe you'll see the gospel is preached right here in the Book of Ruth. *Somebody asked, "Have you read the four gospels? "Friend, I've read all of the gospels, all sixty-six of them.* I believe all of the Bible some way, somehow, tells us the story of Jesus. Jesus said, "Search the Scriptures, for these are they which testify of me."

Sometimes I'm accused of seeing Jesus too much in the Bible. But I tell you, I'd rather be guilty of seeing too much of Jesus than too little of Jesus. I believe that Jesus is the hero of this Book. And I believe that salvation is the theme of this Book. And I believe there are many lessons in the Book of Ruth, but I, indeed, believe that one of them is redemption through a kinsman redeemer. And I believe that Jesus Christ is our kinsman redeemer.

## **I. Ruth's Desperate Condition**

Now there are several things I want you to notice about her desperate condition. The very first thing I want you to notice is that Ruth was living a cursed life. Ruth was a woman under a curse. And why was she under a curse? I want to read to you Deuteronomy chapter 23 and verse 3. The Bible says, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even unto their tenth generation they shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD forever."

Here was a woman under a curse. Again, Deuteronomy chapter 23, verse 3: "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even unto their tenth generation they shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD forever." Why was this? Why was there such a curse upon the people of Moab? Well, Moab was the son of Lot through an incestuous relationship with his own daughter. And the Moabites had become a thorn in the side of Israel. They were a hated and a hateful race. And God had placed a curse upon them. And so Ruth was a maid of Moab. And so she was living a cursed life. And that represents all of those of us outside the Lord Jesus Christ, for listen to Ephesians chapter 2, beginning in verse 11: "Wherefore remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." And then, verse 19 (should be verse 13) says, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who were once were afar off are made near by the blood of Christ." Rather now, verse 19: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the

saints, and of the household of God.”

Just as Ruth was a girl that had a curse upon her and was outside the household, the commonwealth, of God, friend, all of those of us who are unsaved were in the same condition. Spiritually, we were under the curse.

But not only did she live a cursed life; she also lived a crushed life. Hers was a life that was a heartbroken life. Look again, if you will, please in verse 5. And the Bible says, “And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the women, and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.”

And then, the following verses speak of the sorrow and the heartache and the anguish that belonged to this little girl, Ruth. Hers was a life filled with tragedy. Hers was a life filled with sorrow. Hers was a life whose dreams had turned to dust. And I want to tell you something, friend. Sooner or later, this is true of every unsaved person. Life for an unsaved person has its kicks, but it doesn't have its joys. Oh, the sorrow, the crushed life, as people are crushed under the heel of Satan, sin, sorrow, and death. Someone wrote these words:

*“A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in;  
a minute to smile and an hour to weep in.  
A pint of joy and a peck of trouble,  
and never a laugh but the moan comes double.  
And this is life.”*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Well, not if you know the Lord Jesus. But it's life if you don't know the Lord Jesus.

But not was hers a cursed life, and not only was hers a crushed life; hers was a condemned life. She was condemned to a life of sorrow, a life of destitution. You see, she'd had an inheritance, but the head of her family died. And when the head of her family died, she lost her inheritance and, therefore, she was condemned to a life of poverty unless she could be redeemed.

And I want to tell you, dear friend, we, too, have been condemned by a death, and it was the death of Adam. When Adam died spiritually, and Adam, our federal head, the head of the family of the human race, when he died, he forfeited the inheritance that belongs to us. And the Bible says in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12: “Whereas by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin....” And so we find out through Adam that we have been condemned just by his death as, in a way, Ruth was condemned by the death of her husband. And so her life was a life that was a life marked by a desperate condition; a life that was a cursed, a crushed, and a condemned life.

## **II. Ruth's Definite Decision**

But I want you to see something else. Not only was her life marked by this condition, but

it was also blessed by her decision. She made a decision, a strong decision, a definite decision. I want you to begin reading now in verse 6, chapter 1, verse 6: "Then she arose with her daughters-in-law..." Now when the Bible says she, it refers to Naomi. "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 to the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? Are there yet any more sons in my womb, that ye may be, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband also tonight, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? Would ye stay for them from having husbands? Nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law has gone back unto her people (now mark this) and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said (now watch this very carefully), and Ruth said (one of the most poignant and powerful passages in all of the Bible), and Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, nor 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." You might call her resolute Ruth. The key verses are verses 15 and 16. "...thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

On the background of her sin, her sorrow, her suffering, and her lost inheritance, she made a decision. And the decision that Ruth was making right now, and I want you to understand it, was to turn from idolatry. The decision that she was making was to turn from paganism. She decided to seek after God, to go God's way, to serve the LORD, no longer an idolater.

And what a difference there was between Ruth and Orpah. Orpah went back to her gods, went back to the Moab way of life, went back to the curse. She'd turned her back upon Israel's God. She'd turned her back upon the way of faith and God. And so we learn of Ruth, who has become an ancestor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the great-great grandmother of King David, one of the most noble women in all of the Bible.

But we hear no more of Orpah. Two women. Two of them with equal opportunities.

Two of them hearing an equal message, but one goes one way and another goes another way.

And I've seen it happen so many times in preaching the gospel. I see people come. They hear the gospel message. An appeal is given. An invitation is given. Both of them hear the same message. One will rise and come down here and put his life under the blood of Jesus. Another will rise with the benediction and walk out there over the blood of Jesus. And, oh, the difference and the destiny of the two.

Here was Ruth who made a definite decision. She turned her back upon paganism, idolatry, and decided to go God's way.

I found these words:

*"One ship sails east and another sails west  
By the self-same winds that blow.  
'Tis the set of the sails and not the gales  
That tells them the way to go.  
And like the winds of the sea or the waves of time  
As we voyage along through life,  
'Tis the set of the soul that determines the goal  
And not the calm or the strife."*

— ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

That is, dear friend, all of us face the same pressures. All of us face the same problems. All of us go through the same storms. All of us suffer the same advertise. Trouble is common to man. But there's something about some people who have a heart like Ruth who say, "I'm going for God," and they decide for God. Hers, dear friend, was a desperate, a desperate condition. But hers was a definite decision. "I'm going for God."

I was studying the biography of Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday preached here in Memphis and across America, and God used Billy Sunday marvelously as an evangelist. But Billy Sunday was a professional baseball player before the Lord saved him. And he was quite a bounder and quite a rounder. And In Billy Sunday's biography he tells how in 1886 that he was walking down State Street in Chicago. He and some of his friends had come out of a saloon. They'd been in there drinking. And there was a street meeting, and some people from a rescue mission were preaching. And his buddies were there. And they all heard the same thing. But Billy Sunday said, "Something came up in my heart, and a lump came into my heart, and I began to weep as I heard those people sing, as I heard them testify, as I heard them preach. They invited us to come to the mission place." He said, "I left my friends. They jeered at me. They laughed at me." But he said, "I turned my back on my friends and I went down to that mission hall to listen to those people preach." He said, "I went back again night

after night until one night,” he said, “I stumbled out of my sins and into the arms of Jesus.” And then, he said, as he told that story, he said, “If you will go to that mission house today, and if they still have the same floor there,” he said, “I can show you the spot on the floor. I can show you the knothole where I kneeled and gave my heart to Jesus Christ.” Thank God he did.

But why is it, when there are a group of baseball players, why is it there’s a man like Billy Sunday who hears the voice of God and says, “I’m going to God’s way,” and the others go the other way? Friend, I wish I knew the answer to that. But I want to tell you, it’s not because some are more intellectual that they’re saved, or that some are less intellectual that they’re saved. It’s not because some are more hardened sinners or others are less hardened sinners. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that it is your decision. I cannot make you come to Jesus. I cannot keep you from coming to Jesus. I preach as best I know how. There have been times when God’s Holy Spirit has been on this place and I know that every man, woman, boy, and girl has felt the move of God’s Holy Spirit. But some say yes and some say no.

She made a definite decision. And what an eternal difference there has been between the life of Ruth and the life of Orpah. I expect to meet Ruth in heaven. I do not believe I shall see Orpah in heaven. What a difference a definite decision. Decision, my friend, determines destiny.

### **III. Ruth’s Divine Provision**

Now there’s one last thing I want you to see. Not only her desperate condition, not only her definite decision, but I want you to see her divine provision. I want you to see that when this maid of Moab said, “I’m going God’s way. I’m going to do what God would have me to do,” I want you to see how God begins to move heaven and earth to bring her to a redeemed position because she had a hunger in her heart to know God.

I want you to look now in chapter 2 and let’s begin reading in verse 1: “And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me go now into the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the heapers: and her hap was (just underscore that word hap), and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.”

Now, in this day, they did allow the widows, they did allow the poor, after the harvest, to come along and pick up stalks of wheat or stalks of barley that perhaps would fall out of the bundles after they’d been bound, and they picked them up. And sometimes they wouldn’t harvest the very corners of the field, and the poor could go in and harvest the corners. And they called that gleaning. And they were so poor that

they're searching around on the ground for a few handfuls of grain. And she's gleaning, and she says, "Now let me go," Ruth says to her mother-in-law, "let me go. See if I can get just a few handfuls of grain just simply to glean." And the Bible says that she just happened to glean in the field of one who was by marriage her relative, one whose name was Boaz, a man, doubtless, who was strong and handsome. He was very rich. The Bible calls him a great man. He was the town's most eligible bachelor, and he was also her husband's kinsman. And so he was the one who alone would hold a key to her, her happiness and her redemption.

And so the very thing I want you to notice is the providence of God. Just by the providence of God how this thing happened.

And then, the second thing I want you to notice is not only the providence of God, but I want you to notice the love of God that's illustrated here. Look in verses 4 and 5: "And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee." What a godly man he was. And, and, can you imagine a man coming to find his workers and saying that today, "The LORD be with you," and they answer back, "The LORD bless thee."

"And then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?" And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab."

Now I really believe that this is a good translation, but I really don't believe you catch what he's saying. He looked at her, and said, "Wow, who is that?" That's what he was saying. "Where did this gal come from? I've never seen her around here before." It was, it was love at first sight.

He was taken up with her. And, you see not only the providence of God as she came into that particular field to glean, but you see the love of God that is illustrated as this man spies her and he is swept off his feet by her.

And then, he begins to make special provisions for her. He starts to, to give her good things. You see, the Bible says that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. And he gives her all kinds of special favors. And I don't have time to go into that tonight. But she realizes that the favors that she has received are pure grace. Look, if you will, in verse 10 of this same chapter. "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him—to Boaz—What, why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" And, friend, every one of us tonight ought to fall at the feet of Jesus and say the same thing, did you know that? "O, my God, my God, who am I, that I should find grace in Thy sight?" Oh, friend, listen. As you see this story as it unfolds, you see the providence of God. As it unfolds, you see the love of God. As it unfolds, you see the grace of God, for the Bible says, "For by grace as ye saved through faith...."

And so she discovers, discovery of all discovery, that this man Boaz, who loves her so much, who is related to her former husband who is now dead, is a man who has the right to redeem her.

Now let me tell you what I mean by the right to redeem her. You see, in the Old Testament, there was a law. And the law and the plan was this: That if a Jew had lost his estate; that is, if he'd gotten impoverished, and he had gone into hock and had somehow mortgaged his estate, it could be redeemed, it could be bought back by a near kinsman. That near kinsman is called the kinsman redeemer.

I want you to mark down in your margin, if you've not already done so, Leviticus chapter 25 and verse 25. And let me just read that to you. "If thy brother hath become poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold." That is, if somebody's lost his estate legally, lawfully, that kinsman can come and buy it back. And the present owner cannot refuse to sell it. It can be redeemed. It must be redeemed, for in the Bible they respected the right of personal property that was given to these families to be held in perpetuity.

But now, wait a minute. Not only had she lost her estate when her husband died and the family went into bankruptcy, but there was another law, and this law said that if a Jewish man died without a son, that his brother, or a near kinsman, should marry his widow. And then, she was to have a son by this brother, and the son's name would be the name of the man that had died, and the inheritance would also be his. And she's to raise up a son for her departed husband, and her brother is to do this. So, fellows, you ought to be kind of glad you don't live back in those days, because if your brother died, that would mean, and she were childless, you, your brother's widow, that you would marry your brother's widow.

Now let me show you a very interesting and a very quaint passage. I say quaint not because I believe it is not true, but just because it is so strange. I want you to turn to Deuteronomy chapter 25, and this will be worth turning to for a moment. Deuteronomy chapter 25. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. All right. I want you to begin reading here in verse 5. Strange passage. Here's what it says: "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 a husband's brother unto you. And it shall be that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother, which is dead, that his name not be put out of Israel. Now if the man not like to take his brother's wife...." Let's suppose she's ugly as a mud fence. All right. "And if the man not like to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother's name in Israel, he will not



perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto the man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."

Now I told you that was a strange passage. And if, if she says in front of all these witnesses, "Mister, if you won't marry me, I'm going to take the shoe off your foot and spit in your face." And she had every right to do it. And then, he had the onus on him of being the man who refused to perform the responsibility that was his.

But the, the point I want to make out is that in Israel there was a right to redeem property and there was a right to marry the widow. Now guess who had that right? Boaz. Boaz was the kind of a man who could do that. Boaz, because he was a relative by marriage to Ruth, had the right to redeem her lost estate, and he had the right to become her husband. Now, friend, if you do not see a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ here, I believe you've got spiritual blinders on, because it is Christ who has redeemed our lost estate for us. It is Christ who has become the heavenly bridegroom. And we, who've been under the curse, have become the bride of Christ.

Now I want you to notice what happened So a romance begins to build. And Ruth knows that Boaz can redeem her. And she and her mother-in-law get together, and these women start to connive. They're going to get this romance cooking a little more. And so Naomi says to Ruth, "Now, Ruth, I want you to get yourself all bathed and perfumed. I want you to put on something very beautiful. And tonight, when the harvest is finished, and old Boaz is tired, and he's lying down there on the threshing floor....." In that day, they would lie on the threshing floor to watch over their crops and things that they'd harvested, lest anybody steal them. She said, "Now, Ruth, you just go down there. He's already got his eyes on you. And you just go down there where he's sleeping and just uncover his feet there, and lie down at his feet, so you'll be there when he awakens."

And so, when this man awakened, he said, "Who is this? What is this?" And he looked there and saw her in all of her radiance and all of her beauty. And poor, old Boaz. He didn't have a chance. And he realized then. The story went on that, that, that she had been so good to Naomi, and she was such a precious girl and a wonderful girl, and, and they got engaged right there to get married. And, but Boaz said, "Sweetheart, there's just one thing. Before I can marry you, before I can redeem you, before I can take the place of your husband that died and fulfill the law of Israel, and before I can buy back your lost estate, I must tell you that there is someone who is even a nearer kinsman. He is ahead of me in the line. And you must give him the chance. He must say

yea or nay before I, before I can do it. We must give him the chance.”

I want you to look here in chapter 4, verses 1 through 6 and you’ll get that idea.

“Then went Boaz to the gate, and sat 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 down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech’s. And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I’ll redeem it.” Oh, he said, “Yes. Anybody wants another piece of property. Looks like a good business dealt to me. I’ll buy it back. I’ll buy it out of hock. I want this property.” And then Boaz begins to read the fine print to him, verse 5, in the contract.

“Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.” That is, “Ruth comes with the property. And if you buy the property, you’re going to have to marry Ruth.”

“And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.”

Now this man said, “I, I, I just can’t do it. I’m not going to buy it back.” And the reason that he would not buy it back is he would mar his own inheritance. He was very, very interested in keeping everything that he had to himself. And he made a selfish decision. And I, I really don’t say that it was an illegal decision. But he’s living strictly by the law, and he says, “I cannot buy it myself.”

Now it’s a very interesting thing. Look in verse 2. The Bible says, “And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.” And then, this man comes out in front of these ten witnesses. This near kinsman comes out in front of the ten witnesses, and Boaz says, “Do you want it?” And as these witnesses are listening, and they all knew law, this man says, “No, I can’t do it. Because if I do, I will mar my inheritance.”

Now I don’t want to spiritualize here too much, but I really believe what you have here are ten commandments that tell us that the flesh cannot redeem anything. There are ten witnesses here that testify against us and tell us that the, the, the near kinsman that we have, that old flesh that is always a part of us, cannot redeem us. And there are ten witnesses against us that say, “Indeed, we cannot redeem ourselves. We cannot save ourselves, for it is not by works of righteousness that we have done, this, but according to His mercy that He saved us.” Friend, the Bible says if you keep the whole

law, and yet offend in one point, you're guilty of all. And it doesn't matter which of the Ten Commandments you've kept. It's the ones that you've broken that counts, that count. If a man is hanging over a fire by a chain of ten links, how many links in that chain would have to break before he'd fall in the fire? Ten of them? No, just one of them. And a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. And there are ten witnesses, Ten Commandments, that tell us that the flesh cannot redeem. That old life cannot redeem. That nearest kinsman, which is that old nature that I have, cannot redeem me.

Now, therefore, I want you to continue to read and see what happens in verse 7: "Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things (now watch it); a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor: 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, 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."

Now, dear friend, why did this man take off his shoe? What did that mean? You see, this was a law in Israel. When they had a business contract, and the witnesses are there, and everybody agrees, and here's the nearest redeemer, and he says, "I can't redeem it," why did he take off his shoe and give it to Boaz? Pay attention now. Pay attention. It was their way of saying, "You have a right to walk in my place. You have a right to stand in my shoes." Have you ever used the expression, "Say, I wish I were in his shoes?" Huh? Or, "I'd like to be in his shoes." You see, that's exactly what this means. "You have a right, you have the authority to stand in my place."

And so what I think the picture is this: That only Jesus, and Jesus alone, can stand in the shoes of the law for us. "God hath made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." And what it means, dear friend, is that Jesus Christ is taking our place, that Jesus Christ is standing in our shoes and we are standing in His.

An ignorant man got saved. And someone asked this ignorant man, "What does it mean to be saved? What does it mean to be a Christian?" This man, who'd not been to seminary, this man, who'd not been to college, this man, who'd not even been to Sunday School described it this way: He said, "The best thing I know to say is this: That I'm standing in Jesus' shoes and He's standing in mine." Friend, a theologian couldn't have said it better. "I'm standing in Jesus' shoes and He is standing in mine."

And this man, when he took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz, says, "Here, you have

a right to fill these shoes. You have a right to fulfill this obligation.” And I want to tell you that’s exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing for you and for me tonight.

And just very quickly, let me tell you what the requirements are for a person to redeem. Number one: He had to be a near kinsman. That’s the reason Jesus became a human being. Jesus could never have stayed in heaven and saved us. It was necessary for Him to come and be partaker of flesh and blood, that He might be a, a, a, that He might be a near kinsman.

But, wait a moment. Not only did He have to be a near kinsman; he had to be very wealthy. He had to have the ability to redeem. And aren’t you glad that our sovereign God is so rich? And out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

But not only did he have to be a kinsman, and not only did he have to be wealthy, but, dear friend, he had to want to. And aren’t you glad that He wants to? Aren’t you glad that Boaz loved Ruth? But aren’t you more glad that Jesus loves you?

And then, the next thing. No one who was a slave could redeem another slave. Now a man, who was himself enslaved, could redeem no one. One drowning man could not redeem another drowning man. He had to be free. And there was one who was completely free. His name was Jesus. And that’s the reason that Jesus could redeem us.

## **Conclusion**

Well, dear friend, I must close this love story tonight. And my heart has been warmed. And my heart has been blessed. They got married. They lived happily ever after. And the marriage of Ruth and Boaz pictures Christ and the church. And the maid from Moab has become the wife of the bachelor of Bethlehem. And now she has everything she needs. She has a husband. She has a home. And she has a harvest. What a story in this little Book of Ruth. It begins with a funeral; it ends with a wedding. It begins with famine; it ends with fullness. And only those with spiritual insight can begin to understand now the glories that await us who are married to the Lord Jesus Christ as we think of Christ who is our kinsman redeemer.

I want every head bowed and every eye closed. While heads are bowed, while eyes are closed, let me tell you something, dear friend. There’s someone who wants to stand in the shoes of the law on your behalf. There’s someone who wants to fulfill the law for you and redeem you tonight if you’ll let Him – and His name is Jesus. I wonder, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, no one stirring, no one looking around, how many in this building tonight can say, “Brother Rogers, I know that I know that I know that I’m saved. I know if I died tonight I’d go straight to Jesus, straight to heaven.” May I see your hand? Would you lift it up? You know that you’re saved. Thank you. Now how

many tonight would say, "Brother Rogers, I cannot say that I know that I'm saved, but I can say this much. I'm concerned about my salvation. I would like to know it. I'd like to be right with God. And I would appreciate it if you would remember me in prayer, that I might be able on another occasion to lift my hand and say I know that I'm saved, because I don't know it right now. But I am concerned about my eternal destiny. I am concerned about my relationship with Jesus Christ." While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, and no one is stirring, and no one is looking around, if you would just say, "Brother Rogers, in the prayer that you're about to pray, would you please remember me, because I do need to be saved and I do need to get right with God." Would you just slip up your hand? Hold it up for a moment, then take it down. All right. Are there others? Just hold it up for a moment. Up in the balcony, down here on the ground. You're saying, "Yes, pray for me. I need to know Jesus as my personal Savior and Lord." Is there anyone else? Hold it up where I may see it. Yes, God bless you. Anyone else? "I'm not a Christian, but I need to be, I ought to be. Pray for me." Yes, God bless you. Now while heads are still bowed and eyes are still closed, are there those here tonight who would say, "Brother Rogers, I know that I'm saved. That's already settled. But I'm not a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. And I want to know and do God's will about my church membership. Would you pray with me that as a Christian I might know and do God's will concerning my church membership." May I see your hand? Would you just hold it up for a moment. Yes. God bless you. Quite a number of you. Let us pray together. Now, dear Lord, in the name of Jesus we pray tonight that You'd bless these who've lifted their hands; these, dear God, who need to be saved, that they tonight would trust in Christ, their kinsman redeemer. And, Lord, that they might understand that if they'll just decide to follow You, that, Lord, You will begin to work in their lives with Your providence, with Your love, with Your grace, with Your redeeming power. Lord, help them to understand tonight that Jesus is, indeed, their kinsman redeemer who can redeem them and set them free. And, Lord God, I pray for these tonight who may need to come and transfer their church membership. Lead them, Lord. Give them guidance and freedom for Jesus' sake. O God, bless and save. In Your dear name we pray, amen.

# The Romance of Redemption

*By Adrian Rogers*

## Main Scripture Text: Ruth 1–4

*“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.”*

RUTH 4:13–14

## Outline

- I. The Problems That Hindered Her
  - A. A Cursed Life
  - B. A Crushed Life
  - C. A Condemned Life
- II. The Purpose That Held Her
- III. The Providence That Humbled Her
- IV. The Person Who Helped Her
- V. The Position That Honored Her
- Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word tonight and turn with me to the Old Testament book of Ruth—Joshua, Judges, Ruth. We find the book of Ruth tucked away there. It is a short book, but it has a tremendous message. Really, it’s a love story, and I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: “The Romance of Redemption”—“The Romance of Redemption.”

Now, we all love love. If you don’t love love, something is wrong with you. I remember hearing about some girls in a girls’ dormitory at college. It was a Christian college; and so, they were having their devotions at night, their little vesper service. And, one of the girls was praying, and she prayed something like this: “Give us clean hearts.” And then, she prayed, “Give us pure hearts.” And then, she prayed, “Give us sweethearts.” And, all the other girls said, “Ah, men!” Now, I believe that that’s just true not only about girls, but it’s also true about boys. One girl was told she ought not to be so selfish as she prayed for a boyfriend, so she stopped praying for a boyfriend and began to pray for her mother—that her mother might have a son-in-law. So, it’s just a wonderful thing this thing called love. But, the Bible—the Bible—is the greatest love story ever written. Now, there are some brittle theologians that seem to see the Bible as a math book or a history book rather than a love story, but it is a great love story.

One of my favorite stories about the Bible is a story concerning Benjamin Franklin. Benjamin Franklin was the United States Ambassador to France, and he became a member of a French literary society. And, of course, these people got together and compared their stories and so forth. And, Dr. Ben Franklin took the story of the book of Ruth that I'm going to share with you in a moment, and he just, more or less, rewrote it in his own words and stood up and read the story of the book of Ruth to this French literary society. When Dr. Benjamin Franklin finished reading that, they said, "Dr. Franklin, that is the greatest love story written in any language, and this society requests that you would give us permission to put it in printed form and distribute it for worldwide distribution, that other people might enjoy—especially the literary world—might enjoy the romance and the love story that you've written." Now, Ben Franklin had pulled a trick on them; and so, he stood up, and he said, "I'm sorry, but it has already been printed and it has already been given to the world. You'll find the story that I have just read in the Bible, the book you profess to despise but whose content apparently you know very little about."

Now, that's the story tonight. It is a love story. And, let's begin reading here in Ruth chapter 1, and I read the first five verses: *"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of [Bethlehem]. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband"* (Ruth 1:1–5). So, this basically tells us that a man named Elimelech and his precious wife named Naomi leave Bethlehem in the land of Judah, and they go into a strange country, the land of Moab, because there's a famine. And, they have two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. And, they go there, and while they're there, these two boys find two Moabite girls to marry, Ruth and Orpah. And, everything is wonderful for a while, but then tragedy strikes. The father, Elimelech, and both of the sons die. And, there are these three women left alone in the land of Moab. There they are—away from loved ones, and away from friends, and away from any kind of resources at all.

And so, they decide that they're going to go back into the... Naomi decides she's going to go back to her home. She's going to go back to Bethlehem. And, there are two daughters-in-law there, Ruth and Orpah. And, Ruth says to her mother-in-law, "I'm going to go back with you." Orpah—she says, "Well, I'm going to—I'm going to—stay in



the land of Moab.” Well, Ruth goes back with Naomi. And, when Ruth goes back to Naomi, she finds a man named Boaz, and she marries him. Now, Boaz was related to her. He was one of her relatives. And, she marries Boaz. And, he is extremely wealthy, and he’s very rich. And, he restores to her her inheritance in the land of Judah, and they just seem to live happily ever after. That’s the kind of a story it is. And, the maid of Moab marries the bachelor of Bethlehem, and they live happily ever after. It’s kind of a Cinderella story.

And, it would be a beautiful story if that’s all there is to it, but oh, there’s so much more to it. You’re going to see one of the most wonderful, wonderful pictures of salvation—what I want to call “the romance of redemption”—in all of the Bible. I want you to see how Ruth is a picture of you, and I want you to see how Boaz, her husband, her kinsman-redeemer, is a picture of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer. And, I want you to notice five things in this story as we look at it together.

## **I. The Problems That Hindered Her**

First of all, as you consider Ruth, I want you to notice what I’m going to call “her desperate...her desperate condition.” Or, let me put it another way: I want you to see what I’m going to call “the problems that hindered her.” She had some tremendous problems.

### **A. A Cursed Life**

Now, the very first problem that she had—and I want you to see how she represents an unsaved man, woman, boy, or girl—is that she was under a curse. Look in verse 4, if you will: and these boys *“took [to] them wives of the women of Moab”* (Ruth 1:4). Now, all of the Moabites had a curse upon them; and, therefore, Ruth had a cursed life. The curse of God was upon Ruth. Put in your margin “Deuteronomy 23:3”: the Bible says there that *“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 for ever.”* That is, that was the law of God, and the law of God had condemned her.

Now, what did God have against Moab? Well, Moab, who was the progenitor of the Moabites, was the son of Lot by an incestuous relationship with his daughter. And, the Moabites were a thorn in the side of Israel. They were a hated race; they were a hateful race. And, the law of God would not admit this woman, Ruth, to the covenant blessings of Israel. And, because of that, she’s a picture of every unsaved man, woman, boy, and girl. We could say it—we could put it this way: spiritually, we were all born on the wrong side of the tracks. Just put it that way: spiritually, we were all born on the wrong side of the tracks.

Now, let me give you a New Testament verse that points that up. Ephesians 2:11–13—listen to it: *“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That [all] that time [you] were without Christ...aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the [covenant] of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus [you] who...were [once] far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”* And then, verse 19: *“Now therefore [you] are no more strangers and [sojourners], but fellowcitizens with the saints...of the household of God”* (Ephesians 2:19). Now, Paul says, “Just like Ruth was an alien, not a part of the commonwealth of Israel, we are spiritual aliens. And, we’ve been on the outside, until the Lord Jesus Christ brought us in.”

### B. **A Crushed Life**

But, not only was she under a curse and not only did she have a cursed life; she was brokenhearted, and she had a crushed life. I want you to notice in verse 5: the Bible says, *“And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons [with] her husband”* (Ruth 1:5). And then, in verse 9: *“The LORD grant you that [you] may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept”* (Ruth 1:9). Here’s a story that was marked by tragedy and sorrow. With these women, their dreams had turned to dust, and their hopes had melted away. And, their lives were just crushed with sorrow. Somebody wrote these words:

*A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,  
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,  
A pint of joy [and] a peck of trouble,  
And never a laugh but the [moan comes] double;  
And [this] is life! (Paul Laurence Dunbar).*

### C. **A Condemned Life**

But, there’s a third thing that she...third thing had hindered her: not only did she have a cursed life and a crushed life, but she had a condemned life. She was under judgment. Now, verse 5 says that *“Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband”* (Ruth 1:5). This is the Bible way of saying that *“the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). The death of her husband, who was the head of the family, plunged her into poverty, just like the death of Adam has plunged the human race into bankruptcy. And, the Bible says in Romans 5:12: *“by one man sin entered the world”*—we all were plunged into sin and are separated from God. Now, what were the problems that hindered Ruth? The same problems that every unsaved man, woman, boy, and girl in this city faces: sin, sorrow, and death. And, the

Bible alone—listen to me—the Bible alone is the only book that has the answer to sin, sorrow, and death. Science doesn't have the answer. Philosophy doesn't have the answer. Medicine doesn't have the answer to sin, sorrow, and death. So, here was a life; here was a woman. She had a cursed life, a crushed life, and a condemned life. Now, being that way, she pictures every unsaved man, woman, boy, and girl on the face of the earth. And so, I just want to call those “the problems that hindered her.”

## II. The Purpose That Held Her

Now, I want you to see something very wonderful: there was also what I want to call “a purpose”—“a purpose”—“that held her.” Now, continue to read here in chapter 1:6: *“[And] then she arose with her daughters in law”—that is, Naomi, who is the mother-in-law of these two daughters-in-law—“that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread”—by the way, the name Bethlehem, where they were going to return, means “house of bread”—“[Therefore] she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on [their] way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said [to] her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that [you] may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people”—now, Naomi says, “Girls, just stay here in Moab.” They said, “No, Naomi, we’re going with you”—“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; [Will] ye tarry for them [until] they [are] grown?”—she said, “Look, even if I could get married right now and have a girl immediately—just be a baby. You couldn’t marry one of my sons again. Would you wait ‘til they’re grown up?”—“would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again”—now, watch this—“and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her”—when the Bible says that Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, it means that she kissed her good-bye. She just said, “Well, all right, Naomi, if you don’t want me to go with you, I’ll just go on back to my mother and I’ll just stay here in the land of Moab”—but now, notice in verse 15—“And she said”—Ruth says to Naomi—“Behold, thy”—or, Naomi says to Ruth—“Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said”—and here’s one of the most beautiful passages in all of the*

Bible. We quote it...I quoted it last night at a wedding—*“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee”*—now, this is Ruth speaking to her mother-in-law, Naomi—*“Intreat me not to leave thee, [nor] to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge”*—now, here’s the key; look at it—*“thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, [I] will...die, and there will I be buried: the LORD”*—he’s talking...she’s talking now about Jehovah—*“the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me”*—and now, notice in verse 18—*“[And] when she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her...she left speaking unto her”* (Ruth 1:6–18). That’s the reason I’m calling this segment in the story “the purpose that held her.” Ruth, though she had problems that hindered her, she had a purpose that she was steadfast, and her purpose was that she wanted the God of Israel. She said, *“Thy God [will be] my God”* (Ruth 1:16). In spite of her sin, in spite of her sorrow, in spite of the judgment of death, she wanted to know and serve the true God.

Now, the Moabites were idolaters, and she was choosing against idolatry. Now, both Ruth and Orpah were so much alike; and yet, they were so different. One woman went back into idolatry; another woman went on to know the Lord. What a line of demarcation there was between these two! It was a line that would separate them from all eternity. One said, “I want God,” and the other turned back to idolatry. Ruth made a clear-cut choice. There was a purpose. The Bible says that she was steadfast in verse 18 (Ruth 1:18). Somewhere I have read and copied down these words:

*One ship sails East,  
And another West,  
By the self-same winds that blow,  
'Tis the set of the sails  
And not the gales,  
That tells [them] the way [to] go.*

*[And] like the winds of the sea  
Are the waves of time,  
As we [voyage] along through life,  
'Tis the set of the soul,  
That determines the goal,  
And not the calm or the strife (Ella Wheeler Wilcox).*

Isn’t it amazing that some people seek God and other people don’t seek God? Isn’t it amazing that some people hear the gospel and they’re turned away from the gospel—other people hear the gospel and they’re brought to the gospel?

I was reading the biography of Billy Sunday. Now, Billy Sunday was a somewhat

eccentric evangelist of his day. Billy Sunday's preached here in Memphis, Tennessee, in a great crusade, and some of you were at that crusade because you've told me so. And, Billy Sunday was an ex-baseball player who came to know the Lord and made an impact on our nation—very similar to the impact that Billy Graham has made. But, he told about how he got saved. It was a Sunday afternoon in 1886. He and some baseball players had just visited a tavern, a saloon, and they'd had a few drinks. And, they were walking around—just more or less strolling up and down State Street in Chicago, looking for a little mischief to get into. And, there was a rescue mission that was having a service on the street—a street service. And, Billy Sunday stopped right on the corner of Van Buren and State Street in Chicago, and he listened to this little rescue mission band hold this street service. Billy Sunday, in his biography, said, "For some reason there got to be a lump in my throat." And, he said, "As I heard these people sing, and pray, and testify, I began to weep. I followed them to the mission. I listened to the message that they preached." And, he said, "I went back again and again as they preached the Word of God." And then—I copied these words down, and they're beautiful; I want you to listen to them—Billy Sunday said, "One night, I went on my knees and staggered out of my sin into the arms of the Savior. If the same floor is still in that old building, I can show you the very knothole in the board where I knelt that stormy night."

Now, what made Billy Sunday different from the other baseball players there that day? I don't know—I don't know. But, Billy Sunday heard something that stirred something in his heart and in his soul. And, I'm sure that Billy Sunday followed the Lord because the Lord first called him, but God calls everybody. But, there are some people—there are some people—who say "yes" to the call of God, the hunger for God. I just pray that that hunger will be in your heart. I don't care how many problems that hinder you. I just pray, dear friend, that there will be a purpose—a purpose—that will hold you as it held Ruth. She said, "Thy God will be my God, and nothing is going to hinder me or hold me back—not sin, not sorrow, and not death."

### **III. The Providence That Humbled Her**

And then, I want you to see a third thing, as you see this wonderful romance of redemption: I want you to see the providence that humbled her. God had a way of humbling this woman. Notice, if you will, in chapter 2, and I read the first three verses: "*And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz*"—don't forget that, because he's the star of this whole story—"*his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go [into] the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace*"—oh, isn't that a beautiful word? Here she's going to find grace in the sight of a

man named Boaz—*“And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech”* (Ruth 2:1–3).

Now, dear friend, this is what we want to call “providence.” When she—when this woman—said, “I want God,” then God began to work. God began to move heaven and earth. God began to arrange the affairs of her life. There was an unseen hand that began to guide this woman because there was a hunger in her heart to know God. Verse 3 tells us she just happened into the field of Boaz: the Bible says it was “her hap” to be there (Ruth 2:3). That is, from the outside it...that’s the way that it just seemed to happen—by coincidence. But, what the carnal mind would call “coincidence” the spiritual mind can easily see as providence.

Now, this man, Boaz, was the town’s most eligible bachelor, and he also was a kin to Elimelech, her husband’s kinsman. Therefore, he was the one and the only person on earth that truly held the key to her future and her happiness. Now, she’s out there in the field, and while she’s in the field, I want you to notice what happens. Boaz sets his eye on her, and he begins to have an interest in her and to love her. Notice verses 4–5: *“And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee”*—you can tell Boaz is a good man. He...it’s easy for him to talk about the Lord—*“Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers”*—“Who is that girl?” Now, boys and girls in the choir, he said—*“Whose damsel is this?”* (Ruth 2:4–5). But, that’s not what he said. He said, “Who’s that?” He’s looking at Ruth, and I can tell you, he has eyes for Ruth. He said, “Who is that girl?” And, it’s not just that he has a passing interest. He is swept off his feet by this girl who’s out there gathering leftover grain. They call that “gleaning.” She’s gleaning in the fields. And so, when he asks this question, “Who is that?”, and they say who it is, he says, “Well, I want you to make some very special provision for her.” That is, “Just leave some handfuls of grain on purpose for this particular girl,” and he makes a special provision for her.

And, I want to shorten the story. And go, if you will, to verse 10. Ruth realizes now that Boaz is being very good to her—better to her than she ought to have someone be good to her. And, when she realizes what happens, she comes to Boaz. And, the Bible says in verse 10: *“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?”* (Ruth 2:10). And friend, that’s the only hope that any of us will ever have—is that we find grace in the eyes of our great Lord. We’re strangers, aliens, under a curse of God. But, you see, as Boaz was good to Ruth because he loved her, Jesus has been good to us. And, the Bible says, “It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance” (Romans 2:4). How good—how gracious—God has been to us! And

so, she falls on her face before the one who can redeem her whose name is Boaz. And, how we ought to fall on our face before our dear Savior because of His wonderful grace! And so, it was providence that humbled her.

#### **IV. The Person Who Helped Her**

Now, the next thing I want you to see is the person who helped her. Who was this man Boaz? When you see this, you're going to see why I tell you that Boaz was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Go on now to chapter 3, and read with me the first five verses:

*"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?"—that is, "You need somebody to take care of you and to put your soul at rest"—"And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy [garment] upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do"* (Ruth 3:1–4). Now, let's just stop right there and say that this man Boaz is a wonderful Old Testament portrait of Christ, and he became what we call the "kinsman-redeemer" of Ruth. And, Jesus Christ is to us a kinsman-redeemer.

Now, let me tell you what a kinsman-redeemer is. In Old Testament times, if a Jew lost his estate and sold himself into poverty, he could be bought out—he could be bought out of poverty and brought out of poverty, and his estate could be returned by someone who was a relative. The Bible calls that a "kinsman-redeemer." For example, just put in your Bible "Leviticus 25:25" (in the margin)—and here's what it says: *"If thy brother [hath become] 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."* Now, it was also a law that said if a Jew died without a son to carry on his name, that his relative—his brother or his kinsman—should marry the widow so that the name of that the son of the second marriage could carry the name of the first husband and receive his inheritance. That is, somebody, in order to redeem Ruth, had to be what the Bible calls a "kinsman-redeemer." So, she knows that she knows that she knows that—that Boaz is her kinsman-redeemer.

Now, notice what she does: she prepares herself, and she comes and she places herself at the one place on earth that she can find help—at the feet of her redeemer. That's where she places herself—right down there. She prepares herself, and she comes and places herself right at the feet of her redeemer. Skip on down, if you will, to chapter 3...or chapter 2:7–8: now, the Bible says, *"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...*" (Ruth 4:7). Oh, I'm sorry. I gave you the wrong reference. If you will, go back—so, chapter 3, verses 7–8: *"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"* (Ruth 3:7). That's the verse I wanted to give you. She's right there at the foot of her redeemer.

But, there's a problem. He wants to redeem her. He wants to buy back her lost estate. He wants to restore her, but there is a little problem in the law. The Bible says that a relative can redeem her, but if she has a closer relative, he must have the first chance. He must be given the first opportunity. So, look in chapter 3:12, and here's what Boaz says to her: *"now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I"*—Boaz says, "Before I have a chance to redeem you, there's somebody else who must be given a chance." And so, he says in verse 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"*—"let him"—*"do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then [I] will...do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning"* (Ruth 3:12–13). Now, what Boaz says to her: "Look, I want to redeem you, but there's somebody else who must be given a chance. You have a relative who is closer to you than I am, and this nearer kinsman must be given a chance." And so, I'm going to tell you what that means here in a moment.

But, skip on down now to chapter 4, and let's find out who this nearer kinsman was. In chapter 4, I begin in verse 1: *"Then went Boaz up to the gate"*—now, that's the courthouse of that day—*"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"*—"Hey, fellow, come over here and sit down. We've got some business"—*"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"*—now, these ten men were ten witnesses—*"And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: And I [sought] to advertise thee, saying"*—that is, "I want you to know that before"—*"Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it"*—that is, "If you want her inheritance, if you want to buy it, buy 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, [Okay, I'll] redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead [unto] his inheritance"*—that is, "When you get the land, you're going to get Ruth also, and you're going to have to marry her"—*"And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest"*—now, underscore this—*"lest I mar mine own*

*inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it*" (Ruth 4:1–6).

Now, the nearer kinsman is the law—the law. You know, the Bible says the law of God is written in our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10). And, the law came first and then grace. There are ten witnesses—ten commandments—that say we cannot—we cannot—by our own effort, by the keeping of the law, we cannot redeem ourselves. We need somebody to do for us by grace what the law cannot do. And so, the law as a redeemer is disqualified. And, these ten witnesses say, "Yes, it is true that the nearer kinsman cannot redeem."

And now, Boaz, who is Ruth's lover-redeemer, begins to act. And, I want you to see now... I'm in chapter 4; begin in verse 7, if you will: *"Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing"—now, watch this—"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"—this one man, representing the law, the Ten Commandments, takes off his shoe, and he gives it to Boaz. And, he says, "If you want to buy it, buy it for me"—"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. [And] 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 [unto] this day"* (Ruth 4:7–10).

Now, what does all of this mean? All right, here's this nearer kinsman, who says, "I can't redeem it." He's first. The law comes first, and then comes grace. He says, "I can't redeem it. Here is the shoe. You redeem it." Now, what is the meaning of all of that? Why, why, why the handing of a shoe? Well, you'll probably use this expression and not even know it. Have you ever had... Have you ever said something like this: "I wish I were in his shoes," or, "I'd hate to be standing in his shoes"? You see, to be in somebody's shoes is to take their place. And, what Boaz is saying is, "I will stand in your shoes. You give me your shoe. I'll stand in your shoe. I will stand in your place." You see, what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing is standing in the shoes of the law to redeem us. Just as Boaz stood in the shoes of the near redeemer, or the nearer kinsman, Jesus stands in the shoes of the law to redeem us and He stands in our shoes to take our judgment. Somebody asked an unlettered man if he would describe what salvation was all about, and he said this: he says, "I don't know whether I can explain it where you can understand it or not, but the way I understand it is this: that I'm standing in Jesus's shoes and He's standing in mine." I don't think a theologian could say it a better way.

Now, for Boaz to redeem Ruth, he had to have four qualifications. I want you to

listen to them: number one, he had to be a kinsman; number two, he had to have the ability—he had to have the wealth; number three, he had to be a free man himself; and number four, he had to be willing. Now, you’re going to understand why Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. You see, dear friend, Jesus Christ was virgin-born that He might be our kinsman—that He might be our kinsman. The Bible says He’s “*made like unto his brethren*” (Hebrews 2:17). God could not redeem us without the incarnation. The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world. That’s the reason for the incarnation—that Jesus might become our kinsman. And then, dear friend, Jesus Christ is infinitely wealthy. You see, Jesus Christ, with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood, purchased our redemption. He had to have the ability. And then, He had to be free Himself. That means that Jesus Christ could have no sin in His own heart and in His own life. **You see, one drowning man can’t rescue another drowning man. One slave cannot redeem another slave. One person with a curse upon him cannot set another person with a curse upon him free.** The Lord Jesus had to be our near brother. He had to be infinitely rich. He had to be free Himself—free of all sin, free of every impediment. And then, He had to be willing—and, thank God, He was. You see here a wonderful story of the romance of redemption. The Lord Jesus Christ stands in the shoes of the law, and He stands in our shoes.

## V. The Position That Honored Her

Now, the last thing I want you to notice in this love story is what I want to call “the position that honored her.” Look, if you will, in chapter 4 now, and verses 13 and 14—look at it: “*So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife*”—just as Ruth became the bride of Boaz, we have become the bride of Christ—“*and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son*”—now, the Bible tells us in Romans 7 that we’re married to Jesus that we might bring forth fruit unto God—“*And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel*” (Ruth 4:13–14).

Now, here’s this woman. Remember what I said about her? She had three great problems: sin, sorrow, and death. She had a cursed life, a crushed life, and a condemned life. But now, I want you to see the difference. Now, she has a husband, she has a home, and she has a harvest. And, you see, here’s the story. This is the reason why it’s such a great love story. It begins with a funeral, but it ends with a wedding. It begins with a famine; it ends with a harvest. It begins with separation, but it ends with reception. Now, dear friend, if you see what I see here in Ruth chapter 4, you see but a faint glimmer of the glory that belongs to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ when the marriage is consummated and we become one with our Lord in the fullness and most wonderful way.

## Conclusion

Let's bow our heads together in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Let me ask you this question tonight: How many in this building would say, "Brother Rogers, I know that I'm saved. I know that I'm a child of God. I know that I know if I died tonight, I would go to heaven"? Can I see your hand? Would you hold it up? Just lift it up. All right, take it down.

Now, how many would say, "Brother Rogers, I don't know for certain that I'm saved, but I surely would like to know. I would like for Jesus to stand in my shoes. I would like for Jesus to do for me what the law cannot do. I would like to be saved. I want Him to redeem me with His precious blood. I really do need to be saved. I am concerned about my soul. I couldn't lift my hand a moment ago, but I want you to pray for me. And, before it's everlastingly too late, I may know Jesus as my personal Savior and Lord"? If you feel that way, would you just slip up your hand, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed? "I'm not saved, but I need to be. I want to be. I ought to be." Slip it up, and then take it down. "I need Jesus." Thank you. Just slip it up, and take it down. Anyone? All right.

Now, how many would say, "Brother Rogers, I am saved, but I'm not a member of Bellevue Church. Would you pray with me that, as a Christian, I might know and do God's will concerning my church membership"? May I see your hand? If you'll just slip up your hand and take it down. All right.

Father God, I pray now in the name of Jesus that you'll bless. During the invitation I pray, dear Lord, that many will say "yes" to Jesus. Draw the lost to Jesus. In His name I pray. Amen.

# It's Decision That Determines Destiny

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Ruth 1: 1–18**

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

RUTH 1:1

## Outline

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  - B. You Are Not Free Not to Choose
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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find the Book of Ruth—the Book of Ruth. You'll find that in the Old Testament, right after the Book of Judges. And we're going to be spending four Sundays together in the Book of Ruth. It is a love story. Everybody loves a love story. Actually, it's kind of a Cinderella story, because Ruth was from Moab—that is, she was from the wrong side of the tracks. And she married the most eligible bachelor in Bethlehem, whose name was Boaz. And so the maid from Moab married the bachelor from Bethlehem. It's sort of a Cinderella story; it really is.

And we love a love story. Some girls were in the dormitory in college, and they were praying, “Lord, give us clean hearts. Lord, give us pure hearts. Lord, give us sweethearts.” And all the girls said, “Ah-men.” So we love the love story.

The wonderful thing about this story is it's not a romance. No, it is a true story. It's one of the most remarkable love stories ever written.

Benjamin Franklin—you remember Benjamin Franklin, in the founding of our country—was also an ambassador to France. And he went to France, and there, in France, he was part of a literary society. And different people were reading different literary works, and they were agnostic. They didn't care for the Bible at all. But Benjamin Franklin, without telling them where he'd gotten the story, gave to them the story of Ruth. And they said to him, “Dr. Franklin, that is the most beautiful, most wonderful love story we've ever heard. We request that you allow us to take this story, and put it into print, and give it broadcast to the world.” He laughed, and he said, “It's already in print and has already been given to the world. It's in that book that you despise: the Bible.”

What a wonderful story this is! It is a love story. It is a true story. It is a unique story. It's the only book in the Bible that's devoted to the life of a woman whose name was Ruth. And it is a rich story, because it tells us about redemption. You're going to find out, as we get in succeeding Sundays—we won't have time to do that today—but, Ruth is a picture in the Old Testament of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, the man that she married—Boaz—is a picture of Christ, our kinsman Redeemer. We'll get into that later on in that story, but I hope that you will be blessed by this story.

Now the title of our message today, which will deal primarily with chapter 1, is “It is Decision that Determines Destiny.” We are the sum total of our decisions; and so, I want you to think, today, about your decisions that you make, and I pray God that some of you will make the greatest decision that you've ever made today. Now let me just say something about the background of this book: It was written in dark, dark days. It was written in the time of the judges; and, if you're in the Book of Ruth, if you'll look just right up above the Book of Ruth, the last verse in the Book of Judges, it says this: *“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 21:25). That is, it was a dark day. It was a dark day spiritually. It was a dark day

nationally. There was mayhem; there was apostasy and anarchy in the land. It was a dark day economically. There was a famine in the land. It was a dark day domestically, as we're going to see. In every way, it was a dark day.

And yet, right after the Book of Judges, there comes this Book of Ruth. And it's there like a diamond star in a dark, dark night. It's there like a gardenia in a desert—an arid desert of despair. And so really, what the Book of Ruth is, is bright hope—listen to me—bright hope for dark days. Now folks, these are dark days, but there is a bright, bright hope. And maybe, like Ruth, you're going to find yourself in a time of darkness, a time of trouble, and a time of despair; and then, Jesus Christ is going to be to you what Boaz was to Ruth. And when you give your heart to Jesus Christ, you're going to find yourself in the middle of a beautiful love story.

## I. The Principle of Willing Choice

Three things that we're going to see in this chapter—three things. First of all, we're going to see what I'm going to call the principle of willing choice—the principle of willing choice.

Now look, if you will, in verse 1: *“Now it came to pass in those days when judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem...”*—and, by the way, Bethlehem was where Jesus was born—*“Bethlehemjudah...”*—the word *Bethlehem* means “house of bread”—*“And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there”* (Ruth 1:1–2).

Now the Moabites, as we're going to see, were the arch-enemies of Israel. They were an obscene, pagan race, and that was an obscene and a pagan place. And here is a man of the commonwealth of Israel, who, because there was a famine in the land, makes a decision. And he says, “Mahlon, Chilion, Naomi, come.” “Where are we going, Dad?” “Well, it looks like there's going to be a famine here. We're going over to Moab.” They were going into that cursed country. He made a decision, and it was a bad decision, as we're going to see. It was a decision that marked his life with tragedy, but he made that decision.

### A. You Are Free to Choose

Now let me say something to you about decisions, because the whole chapter here, in my estimation, is based on decisions. And remember the title of the message: “It's Decision That Determines Destiny.” We are free to choose. That's what makes us not machines, but people. That's what makes us morally responsible. Put in your margin,



Deuteronomy chapter 30 and verse 19—God said to His ancient people, *“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live”* (Deuteronomy 30:19). May I say to everybody listening to me and those precious friends who are listening by television, God sets before us the same choice today: life and death, blessing and cursing. And we are free to choose. And God says, “Choose life!” You are free to choose. Do you understand that? You’re not a machine; you’re not a victim of fate. Throw away your horoscope. You are free to choose.

## **B. You Are Not Free Not to Choose**

But now listen to me. You are not free not to choose. There’s no way you can say, “I will not choose between life and death.” To refuse life is to choose death. You’re not free not to choose. I’m going to give you a chance at the close of this service to make a decision for Jesus Christ. If you’re not a Christian, you will make a decision. You say, “No, I’m not going to make a decision, this morning.” Oh yes, you will. If you decide not to give your heart to Jesus, that is a decision: You decided not to do it. You see, to refuse Christ is to choose not to have Christ. There’s no way that you can escape making a choice today. We always make a choice. Jesus said, *“He that is not with me is against me”* (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23).

I was witnessing on the streets of Pensacola, Florida, one time. I saw two girls. I’d never seen them before. They were walking down the street. I said, “May I have a moment of your time?” They said, “Yes.” And I explained the gospel of Jesus Christ to these two young ladies, and they both seemed to be under conviction. And so I asked one of the young ladies—I said, “Would you like to pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and be your Lord and Savior today?” She said, “Yes, I would.” And I prayed with her, and she gave her heart to Jesus. And then, I asked the other young lady, “Would you like to receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord?” She said, “Well, I’m not ready to do that right now.” I said, “Well, now is the accepted time. There’ll never be a better time, and why don’t you just give your heart to Jesus?” She said, “Well, I just don’t want to make a decision right now.” I said, “Well, listen. If you don’t accept Christ, you’re rejecting Christ.” “Oh,” she said, “I would never reject Christ.” I said, “Well then, will you receive Him?” She said, “No, I’m not ready.” She didn’t understand what she was...that to refuse Christ is to reject Christ. She didn’t understand that not to accept Him is to deny Him.

And I knew that I didn’t want to press it any further, but I said, “Well, I’ve got to go. Will you shake my hand?” She said, “Of course I will.” I said, “All right, if you’ll take Christ and salvation, take my right hand; if you’ll take the devil and damnation, take my left hand. Let’s shake.” She said, “What?” I said, “You said you’d shake hands.” I said,

“If you’ll take Christ and salvation, take my right hand; if you’ll take the devil and damnation, take my left hand. Let’s shake!” She put her hands behind her back and backed off like that. It never dawned on her that, while she was free to choose, she was not free not to choose. And today, you’ll either say *yes* or *no* to Jesus Christ. Do you understand that? Jesus said, “*He that is not with me is against me*” (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23).

### **C. You Are Not Free to Choose the Consequences of Yuur Choice**

Now listen. You’re free to choose; you’re not free not to choose. And you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. Now that’s very important. You’re free to choose, but you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

You’re free to choose to jump out of a ten-story building; but then, after you jump out of that ten-story building, that’s your freedom. Then, your choice begins to choose for you, right? You see, you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

People talk about freedom; they talk about *free love*. But they’re not free to choose the consequences. And we’re seeing that in America today, in this the vile epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases, and precious little babies that are born into homes where they ought to come into love. And many who go through the abortion mill—they talk about choice. Why don’t they finish that sentence? It’s a choice to kill a baby—a choice. They say, “Well, we decided not to have this baby.” No, you’re not free to choose that way. You’re just free to choose whether you’ll have a live baby or a dead baby; you’re going to have a baby.

### **D. When You Make a Few Big Choices, That Takes Care of a Lot of Little Choices**

You see, you’re free to choose; you’re not free not to choose; you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. First you make your choice; and then, your choice chooses for you. And let me say this: that when you make a few big choices, that takes care of a lot of little choices.

Have you ever gone out, say, to dinner at night, and you and your wife get in the automobile and say, “Well, let’s go out to a restaurant.” “Where do you want to go?” “I don’t know. Where do you want to go?” “What do you wanna...?” “What do you wanna...?” And you begin to talk this way as you drive the car; you’re going this way, and that way, and all around town. Oh, have you ever done that? How many of you have ever done that? Let me see. Okay, good. You know exactly what I’m talking about. Now let me tell you the difference: Last night, I was invited to some friends’ house for dinner. It was a wonderful, wonderful meal. When Joyce and I got in the car, we didn’t have to drive all over town. No, we didn’t have to make a decision at every corner we came to, because we knew where we were going. You know, when you make some big

choices, a lot of little choices are just automatically made.

When I go—I travel a lot—and I get in a hotel room. And you know, there are some dirty movies in hotel rooms. I don't have to decide each time I go to a different hotel whether I'm going to watch a dirty movie. I've already made up my mind I'm not going to do it. Christ is Lord. A few big decisions take care of a lot of little decisions.

We're free to choose; we're not free not to choose; we're not free to choose the consequences of our choice; and, if we make a few big decisions, then that takes care of a lot of little decisions; and, the biggest decision that you could ever make would be to say that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Now there are a lot of decisions in life that we make that are not all that consequential. If you want a soft drink, you can buy a Pepsi; you can buy Coke; or you can buy 7-Up. You can buy a large size, a small size. You can buy caffeine and caffeine-free. You can buy artificially sweetened or sweetened. You can, you know, you can get all of these decisions, and there is not a lot of consequence about those. If you want to buy an automobile this year, there are 752 different models that you can go down and choose an automobile—all different colors and all kinds of accessories. There's a store in New York City that sells light bulbs; it has 2,500 kinds of light bulbs. A lot of choices are not all that consequential, but there are some choices that are very, very important.

And so here's the first thing I want you to understand: It's the principle of willing choice.

## **II. The Problems of Wrong Choice**

Now here's the second thing in this chapter. First thing: the principle of willing choice. Number two: the problems of a wrong choice. The principle of willing choice; the problems of wrong choice. Now what this man did is, he went into the land of Moab when he had no business going. He came from good stock. He knew the truth. He was born in Bethlehem. And Bethlehem, you know, is where our Savior would be born. But Elimelech made... And by the way, the name *Elimelech* means "my God is king." He, evidently, he had a wonderful family, because he came from a kind of a background that would give him a name that way.

### **A. The Cause of a Bad Choice**

Now what was the cause of his bad choice? We're talking, now, about the problems of a wrong choice. Let me submit to you that Elimelech made a wrong choice for three basic reasons.

#### **1. The Wrong Motive**

Number one: He made a bad choice because of a wrong motive. Verse 1 tells us,

*“There was a famine in the land,”* and he’s being motivated, now, by the physical and not by the spiritual (Ruth 1:1). And Satan had whispered into his ear, “Elimelech, a man’s got to live.” That’s a lie, you know. We have to die—not necessarily live. And after that, we have to face God. But what Elimelech is doing is saying, “Look, I know what God has said. I know that God has promised to bless me. But I’ve got to take care of myself.” And so he puts the physical above the spiritual.

Now let me give you—if you’ve been doing that—let me give you a couple of verses. Psalm 37 and verse 25—old David said, *“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread”* (Psalm 37:25). And Jesus Christ said, in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). You say, “Now wait a minute, Pastor. Wait a minute. I don’t think that’s true.” Well, let me ask you a question: Have you ever put God first, and He’s failed you? You think about it. Don’t say, “That isn’t true,” if you haven’t tried it. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). Now most Americans love things and use God—or try to use God. But we are to love God and use things. God will not work in second place. And here is Elimelech, and he made a decision. And it was on the wrong motive; it was the physical rather than the spiritual. Put it down big, plain, and straight: God will not work in second place.

## **2. The Wrong Method**

Number two: Not only did Elimelech have the wrong motive; he had the wrong method. He’s walking by sight and not by faith. He’s just looking at appearances. Do you know what faith is? Faith *is* believing God *in spite of* appearances, *and* obeying God *in spite of* consequences. Faith is believing God in spite of appearances, and obeying God in spite of consequences. And so here’s the appearance: There’s a famine in the house of bread, in the land of Bethlehem; and so, he just simply hightails it over to Moab. And that is, he’s walking, now, by sight and not by faith. He’s trying to run away.

You know, one time the psalmist had that same thing. He said, in Psalm 55: *“Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest”* (Psalm 55:6). Have you ever wanted to do that—just get out of here? I mean, say, “My problems are so great. If I could just fly away, and find a sweet little nest somewhere in the West, and let the rest of the world go by! Oh, if I had the wings of a dove, that it might fly away!” Listen, friend. God doesn’t want to give you the wings of a dove to fly away. God wants to give you the wings of an eagle to mount up over your problems, right where you are. And *if this thing called Christianity will not work now, if it will not work in your situation, if it will not work for you, then it won’t work anywhere in any situation for anybody.*

### 3. The Wrong Master

I'm telling you, folks, here was a man who was motivated, first of all, by the material, rather than the spiritual. He has the wrong motivation. He has the wrong method. He's walking by sight, rather than by faith. And let me say a third thing about this man and the wrong decision: He had the wrong master. When he went over into Moab, he went over into enemy territory. The Moabites had been the enemies of God. They had invaded Israel. They had ruled over Israel for 18 years, and God had placed a curse upon them. Did you know that when you and I live in disbelief and disobedience, we dishonor God and we get over in the devil's territory? And what happened to this man when he got his family over in the devil's territory? He had two sons, and you know what they did? They married the daughters of Moab, and his entire life was just skewed and messed up, because he could not believe God.

#### B. The Consequences of a Bad Choice

Now those are the problems of a wrong choice. What are the consequences of that choice?

##### 1. Death

Well, it brought death. Look, if you will, here, in verse 3: *"And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they two took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband"* (Ruth 1:3–5). Now here, why did he leave? Why did he leave Bethlehem? He left Bethlehem because he was afraid he couldn't survive. And he left the house of bread, went into the devil's territory—the wrong motive, the wrong method, the wrong master—and he gets over there, and what does he do over there? He dies. And what happens to his little boys that he's so concerned about? They die. You know what that tells me? Friend, you can't run away. You need to get right with God.

There's an old story, a fable, about a rich merchant of Baghdad, and that rich merchant of Baghdad had a servant. And the servant came to him and said, "Master, I want you to give me one of your best horses. I must flee." And the merchant said to his servant, "Why do you need to flee?" He said, "I was in the marketplace today, and a sinister figure jostled me. And I turned, and I looked in his face. And I was staring in the face of death. Master, give me a horse. I must flee to Samarra." The master, loving his servant, said, "Take my best horse, and flee, if you will." And then, the rich merchant of Baghdad went to the marketplace, and there, he saw death—this sinister, hooded figure. And he said to death, "Death, why did you startle my servant when you saw him?" And death said, "I didn't mean to startle your servant. It was your servant that

startled me. I didn't expect to see him here. I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra."

## **2. Deprivation**

Now you can't run away. And here's a man trying to flee death. And he gets over there, and that's what he finds. This is the consequence—not only that, but deprivation. He wanted to be blessed. How many times do you want to be blessed? "God bless us." "God bless us." "God bless us." "God bless us." We're all wanting God to bless us. And here's a man over there, in a place of sorrow, and heartache, and tears, and graves; and, it—the thing that he wanted—he didn't get.

You want a blessing? Well, let me tell you where you're going to find a blessing: You're going to find a blessing in the place of blessing. And when you get out of the place of blessing, don't expect to find the blessing until you get back into the place of blessing. So many of us want God to bless us, and it's sort of, "God bless us, anyhow." Well, He's not going to do it. And so here is Naomi. She's got two daughters-in-law now; they're all three widows. They're out of place, out of fellowship, over in Moab, and Naomi changes her name to Mara, which means "bitterness." And she begins to blame God on the situation, when God wasn't to blame at all.

## **III. The Power of a Wise Choice**

Now I want to move to the third and most important part of this message. I've talked to you about the principle of willing choice. You can choose. Elimelech could have stayed or gone; it was up to him. God gives us a choice. We're free to choose; we're not free not to choose; we're not free to choose the consequences of our choice; and one big choice will take care of a lot of little choices. He made the wrong choice; he made the wrong choice, because he had the wrong motive, he had the wrong method, he served the wrong master. But now, we're going to see another thing. I want you to see the blessings. I want you to see the power of a wise choice.

Now here's what has happened. In just a moment, we're going to read verse 7, or start with verse 7. Here's what is happening: Here is Naomi; she's destitute in the land of Moab. Her husband, Elimelech, has died; her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, have died. And she's there with two daughters-in-law, and they have no sustenance, no way to take care of them. And Naomi hears of the blessings back in Bethlehem, that God has visited His people in Bethlehem; and so, Naomi decides that she is going to go back to Bethlehem. Now both Naomi and her late husband, Elimelech, have been backsliders; but now, she's going to go back to the place of blessing, back to the house of bread. And she tells her two pagan daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, "Now you stay here with your people. I don't have any way to take care of you, and I can't. I'm too old to give you other sons to marry. You just stay here. Maybe you can find a man of Moab.



I am going back.”

Now pick up the story. Now we’re talking about, friend, we’re talking about the power of a wise decision. Now look, if you will, beginning in verse 7: *“Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was,”*—it’s talking about Naomi—*“and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each of you to her mother’s house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband.”* And the word *rest*, here, in the Hebrew, literally means “security, provision.” *“Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.”* And you know, when you get a bunch of women together, that’s what they’re going to do; and so, they’re crying here. *“And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.”* Both Ruth and Orpah say, “We’re going back with you, Naomi.” And verse 11: *“And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 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?”*—“Even,” she said, “if I had a husband, even if I could conceive, they’d be little babies; they could not marry you”—*“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.”* Now she’s blaming God for her problems, which were really not His. *“And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her”* (Ruth 1:7–14).

Now boy, that’s a very important verse, right now. Do you know we have the *kissers* and the *cleavers*? The *kissers* are those that get moved with sentiment, but they don’t really make a decision for Jesus. And so you’re going to find that Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth *clave* unto her.

Now notice verse 15: *“And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods:”—*underscore that—*“return thou after thy sister in law.”* Can you imagine such a backslidden person as Naomi, saying, “Go back to your pagan gods”? What bad advice that was! But notice what Ruth said, and here’s the wise decision; I’m talking about the power of a wise choice, right now—listen to it: *“And Ruth said...”*—this is one of the most beautiful passages in all of the Bible; mark it in your Bible, if it’s not marked—*“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people,”*—now, watch this; here’s the key to it—*“and thy God my God:”—*now, remember this was a pagan; this was a woman from Moab, and she’s saying that “the God of Israel will be my God.” And then, she says—*“where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but*



*death part thee and me. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her” (Ruth 1:15–18).*

Now here is a decision for destiny. When Ruth said what she said, her life was changed. And listen. Not only was her life changed, but my life was changed. Did you know that Ruth, this pagan girl, became an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the flesh? She marries into the royal line, and, according to the flesh, she becomes a part of the house of David.

## **A. What Ruth Had Against Her**

### **1. A Cursed Life**

Now she had so much against her. She had a cursed life. The Bible teaches that there was a curse upon her. Deuteronomy 23, verse 3: *“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter the congregation of the LORD for ever”* (Deuteronomy 23:3). The law said, “Keep her out. She’s not worthy.” She had a cursed life. And we’re going to see what the law could not do grace did for this woman—and what the law could not do for me, because I’m like old Ruth. The Bible tells us, in Ephesians 2, we are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12). But thank God, the grace of God has brought us in.

### **2. A Crushed Life**

But not only did she have a cursed life—listen to me, if you’re in trouble today—she had a crushed life. I mean, she’d known poverty, deprivation. Her husband had died. Her father-in-law had died. And she’s without a home; she’s without help. In those days, there was no social security to take care of a woman like this. They would starve, or maybe go into prostitution. Here she is with a cursed life; here she is with a crushed life.

### **3. A Condemned Life**

And this dear lady had a condemned life. She had a sentence of death upon her. She was going to die, because her husband, her head, had died. And she’s just like us, because the head of our race, Adam, has died; and, in Adam all die. And we lost our inheritance, as Ruth lost her inheritance, when her husband died; we’ve lost ours when Adam sinned, and we entered into his death. But in spite of all that—listen—God pulled back the curtain of night and painted it with the star of hope, because this woman made a wise decision.

## **B. The Seven Elements of a Wise Decision**

Now I want you to look, very quickly, before we close the book today, on the seven elements of that decision; and, I want you to jot them down—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Dr. Hawkins has reminded us of these, and I want you to see what they are.

We're talking, now, about decision. We're talking about decision that determines destiny. Number one: When you make this kind of decision, all things become new. Jesus said, "*Behold, I make all things new*" (Revelation 21:5). "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

### **1. A New Determination**

Now look at it. First of all, there was a new determination. Look at it. She says to her mother-in-law, in verse 16: "Intreat me not to leave thee, *or to return from following after thee*" (Ruth 1:16). And later on, it says that Naomi saw that she was determined (Ruth 1:18). Now folks, listen. Listen to your pastor today. Do you want a new start? Then, you have got to mean business. God does business with those that mean business. Why don't you say, in this service, to Jesus, "Lord, entreat me not to leave You, nor to return from following after You"?

### **2. A New Direction**

Not only did she have a new determination; she had a new direction. She says, in verse 16: "Wherever you go, that's where I'm going" (Ruth 1:16). Now I don't know a better description of a Christian than that: a person who says to Jesus, "Lord, I will not leave You; and, wherever You lead, I will follow. I have decided to follow Jesus."

### **3. A New Dependence**

And then, she has a new dependence. She says, in verse 16: "Where you are, I will lodge"—that is, "I am coming under the shadow of your wings. I am looking to you to take care of me" (Ruth 1:16). Would you say that to Jesus? "Jesus, in spite of all my problems today, I will look to You. I will put my dependence upon You, Lord Jesus, to take care of my every need."

### **4. A New Desire**

And then, she has a new desire. She says, in verse 16: "*Thy people shall be my people*" (Ruth 1:16). You know what that means? "I don't desire these Moabites anymore. I don't desire fellowship with pagans anymore. I want to be with the people of God. Naomi, you're going to Bethlehem. You're going to Judah. You're going to the house of bread. You're going to the God of Israel, and I am going with you." He gives you a new desire, and that's one of the reason people don't come to church on Sunday: They have no desire to be with the people of God. They can't say to the Lord Jesus, "I'm determined to follow You, Lord Jesus. Wherever You lead, I'll follow. Lord Jesus, I will depend upon You, and, Lord Jesus, I want to be with Your people. I want to be with the people of God. I will not forsake the assembling of myself together with the people of God."

### **5. A New Devotion**

There is a new desire in verse 16, and that brought a new devotion. She says, in verse 16: "Thy God shall be my God" (Ruth 1:16). She's turning from idolatry; she's turning

from her immoral gods. Have you ever said that to the Lord? “I’m finished with paganism. I’m finished with the old way.” She knew that’s what it meant to follow the God of Naomi.

## 6. A New Dedication

And then, there’s a new dedication. She says, in verse 17: *“Where thou diest, will I die”* (Ruth 1:17). Now what does she mean by that? She meant, “I am going with you, Naomi, all of the way. I’m not going to turn back. I mean, if we get over there in Bethlehem, and there’s another famine in Bethlehem, and you die in Bethlehem, I am going to die with you. I’m going all the way.” Do you know we’re to love the Lord Jesus unto death? Friend, that’s what we’re talking about: a new dedication.

## 7. A New Destiny

And finally, a new destiny. And she says, “And there I’ll be buried” (Ruth 1:17). “Wherever you get buried, Naomi, I’ll be buried with you.” Now what does that mean? She knew that nothing should separate her from the one that she loved. And the Bible tells us, *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come...nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38–39).

Now here’s the whole message. Here’s the whole message, and I hope you’ll get it; I hope you’ll understand it. We’re talking... Today, we’re talking today about decision. It is decision that determines destiny. There is the principle of a willing choice: You’re free to choose; you’re not free not to choose; you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

And here, Elimelech was free to choose. Now there are also the principles of a bad choice. Here was Elimelech, and he chose with the wrong motive—the physical, rather than the spiritual; he chose with the wrong method—he’s walking by sight rather than by faith; and he got over and began to serve the wrong master—he got over in the enemy’s territory.

But then, here was Ruth. She had so much against her; and yet, she chose, and she said, “I am determined that the God of Israel will be my God.” And He made for her all things new. You know what happened? The maid of Moab, we’re going to see in another chapter or two, she marries the bachelor of Bethlehem; she becomes an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ. She got a whole book in the Bible written just about her, because she made a decision.

## Conclusion

Have you ever made a decision for Jesus? I was sitting in Northwood Baptist Church—sitting *here*; my daddy was sitting right *here*. We were in a revival meeting,

and our church... I'd never gone to church—maybe once or twice visited—but somebody came and invited my parents to a revival meeting. Now I'd never smoked dope, or been addicted to substances, or anything like that—never committed sexual immorality, but I knew what it was to tell lies, and take God's name in vain, and take things that didn't belong to me, and cheat in school, and get in street fights. I needed to be saved; I'll guarantee you that. My dad was sitting *here*, and it was the first time my dad and I had ever been in church together. My dad sitting *here*, and that preacher preached. And he gave an invitation, and my dad got up and started down that aisle. I couldn't believe it. There went my daddy. I loved my dad, respected him. Well, he was a great man—didn't know Jesus. But when my dad got up, that was just like a stake in my heart. I thought, "Well, if my daddy needs to be saved, I surely need to be saved." And I went down. I went down that aisle, right after my dad. He said, "Well, here comes Adrian, and we're glad to see him come." They knew me. Just a little neighborhood; you know, a small church. They knew me; they knew the whole story. I sat there, on that front row in Northwood Baptist Church, in that little auditorium. It would just take one little section of this thing right here that was about the size of the auditorium. I sat there, on the front row, and they asked me the questions, and I nodded my head. Very frankly, I didn't know much. I was just giving all I knew of me to all I knew of Jesus. But it was enough, bless God! I've learned a lot more. I've done a lot more repenting after I got saved than I did when I got saved. But you know, I gave my heart to Jesus Christ.

Some years ago, not many years ago, I went back to that little church, and I found a custodian. I said, "Would you let me in?" The church had been sold to another group. I said, "Would you let me in? I just want to be alone." I went in that little auditorium. It was now a dining hall; they'd built a bigger auditorium. But I went in there, and I found the spot—that same spot, just wanted to be alone, and got down on my knees, and I thanked the Lord that, by His grace, He enabled me to make a decision. The result of that decision is I'm standing here today, preaching the gospel.

We're free to choose. We're not free not to choose. We're not free to choose the consequences of our choice. "See, I've set before you this day, life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose life!" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Would you bow your heads in prayer? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you begin to pray for those around you who may not know the Lord Jesus? And friend, if God could save Ruth, so long ago, and all of her problems, I tell you, no matter how big your problems are, he can save you today. Would you pray, "Lord Jesus, I choose You. I receive You. I know not to receive You would be to deny You and reject You. But I choose You. Come into my heart. Be my Lord and Savior. And begin, now, to make me the person You want me to be. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

# It's Decision That Determines Destiny

*By Adrian Rogers*

## **Main Scripture Text: Ruth 1:1–18**

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

RUTH 1:1

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you find the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament? And you'll find it right after the Book of Judges—Judges. And we're going to be studying, now, the Book of Ruth for the next four Sundays. The Book of Ruth is a wonderful book. It is a love story, but it is a true love story. It is not a romance novel; it is true.

And we all love love. We all love love stories. I heard of some girls who were in the college dorm at the Christian college, and they were praying in their dorm. And they were praying, "Lord, give us pure hearts. Lord, give us clean hearts. Lord, give us sweethearts." And all the girls said, "Ah-men."

We love a love story. And this is a love story, but it is a unique story—the Book of Ruth. It's one of two books of the Bible that bear the names of women: the Book of Ruth and the Book of Esther. But this book is unique because it is devoted primarily to a woman whose name was Ruth. As we're going to see, Ruth is a picture—in the Old Testament—of the Church. And she marries a man named Boaz, who was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our kinsman Redeemer. Now we won't get to that this morning, but it's there; and, it's some of the most beautiful teaching in the Bible about the redemption we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you're going to love the story of Ruth. And there is so much to learn about this story, because, you see, Ruth was a pagan. She was from Moab; spiritually, she was from the wrong side of the tracks. And she comes to Israel, to Bethlehem, and she meets Boaz—very rich, very strong, very kind, very good. And Boaz, as we're going to see, was a bachelor; and so, it's a Cinderella story. The maid from Moab meets the bachelor from Bethlehem, and they get married. It's a love story, a wonderful story, an intriguing story, with plots and subplots.

Benjamin Franklin—as you know, one of the fathers of our country—was also the ambassador to France. And when in France, he was a member of a literary society, and they were giving different readings and so forth. Ben Franklin, without letting this agnostic literary society know where he had gotten it, shared with them the love story of Ruth. They were astounded. They said to him, "Dr. Franklin, that is beyond a doubt the most beautiful romance—love story—we've ever heard. Would you give us leave, please, that we might have it published and give it broad distribution?" He said, "It is already published, and it already has broad distribution. It is found in the Bible, that book that you profess to despise"—this wonderful story of Ruth that is found here, in the Bible.

Now the Book of Ruth was written in dark days. It was written, as we're going to see, in a time of the judges. And you know that it follows the Book of Judges. And the last chapter in that Book of Judges—the last verse—says, "*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 21:25). Therefore,

it was a day of anarchy. It was a day of apostasy. It was a day of apathy. It was a day when sin was rampant. And it was a dark, dark day. And right in the midst of that dark, dark day, God gives us this wonderful four-chapter Book of Ruth, which reminds us that God is still alive; He is still on the throne.

I believe we're living in a dark day, but I refuse to despair, as long as there's a God in the Glory. And books like the Book of Ruth tell us that, no matter how dark the day, there is always the star of hope in that dark sky. And God is the One who pulls back the curtains of night, and pins those curtains with the star of hope, and opens the gates of our lives, and floods it with His life and His glory. And if you are discouraged today, let me tell you there is hope for you. And if you will do what Ruth did and yield your heart to the Lord, He will make your life a love story. And you can be part of a dramatic and wonderful love story, just like Ruth's life was a part of a dramatic and wonderful love story.

Now this is bright hope—bright hope for dark days. And in chapter 1, we're going to be talking about the choices that people make, because you're going to see that a man named Elimelech made a bad choice. And then, you're going to see the choice that Ruth made, which was a wonderful choice. And our house, very frankly—our lives—are the sum total of our choices. And so we're going to think under this heading, "It Is Decision That Determines Destiny." That's our title this morning: "It Is Decision That Determines Destiny." We're going to learn some things about decision making today—the importance of decisions—because we make decisions every day, whether we like it or not. Or, whether we agree or not, you will be making some decisions.

Now look, if you will, in chapter 1 and verse 1: *"Now it came to pass in those days when judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem..."*—now, this is very interesting, because the name *Bethlehem* means "house of bread." You remember, it's where Jesus, the Bread of Life, was born—*"And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech..."*—and, that name *Elimelech* literally means, "my God is king." And so here is a man who evidently had a godly heritage. He lived in the little town of Bethlehem; he had so much going for him—*"And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi,"*—which means "sweet, pleasantness"—*"and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there"* (Ruth 1:1–2).

Now what had happened, very quickly, is this: There is a famine in the house of bread. And rather than trusting God, and doing what God would have him do, here's a man who goes into a pagan country. The Moabites had been enemies of Israel; they had invaded the land and kept the Israelites under subjection for some 18 years. They



were pagan, barbarous, cruel. They were born out of an incestuous relationship of Lot with his daughter. It was a terrible place. And here is a man of God who makes a choice, and he goes over there.

## **I. The Principle of Willing Choice**

There are three things about choices—three things about choices—that I want you to notice with me, this morning. And the very first of these three things is the principle of willing choice—the principle of willing choice. God gives us a will, and with that will we make choices. We're not automatons; we're not machines. We're not forced. God made us moral creatures; and, when God made us moral creatures, God gave us a choice.

### **A. We Are Free to Choose**

Now you are free to choose. God says, in the Book of Deuteronomy, "I have set before you this day life and death, blessing and cursing...choose life, that you may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). God says, "It's here. You can go to the right. You can go to the left. You can receive Me, or you can reject Me. You can honor Me, or you can despise Me. You can accept Me or reject Me. It's there." And God has given every mother's child in this building today a choice. There's the principle of choice.

And we like choice. Did you know that, if you want to get a soft drink, you can get Pepsi; you can get Coke; you can get 7-Up; you can get something else? You can get caffeine-free or with caffeine. You can get sugar-sweetened or artificially sweetened. You can get small, large, medium. We just like choices. If you want to get a new automobile, they have, now, 752 different models that you can choose from. And then, out of those different models, you can get different colors and different accessories. Americans like choice. There is a store in New York City that has 2,500 different kinds of light bulbs. Now a lot of these choices are inconsequential. The necktie that you chose this morning—it doesn't really make all that much difference. Earrings that you're wearing, dear lady—doesn't really make all that much difference. But some choices are very, very important. But some choices are very, very important. And some choices are life-changing. And here is a man named Elimelech who makes a choice. So we're talking, now, about the principle of willing choice. You are free to choose. Do you understand that?

### **B. You Are Not Free Not to Choose**

But now listen to me very carefully. While you are free to choose, you're not free not to choose. You're not free not to choose. At the close of this message, as I did earlier today, I will give an invitation to say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ and ask you to choose Christ as your personal Savior. I will ask you, very frankly, to make a choice and a decision; and, at the close of this service you will make a decision. If you're not a

Christian, you will make a decision. You say, “No, I won’t.” Oh yes, you will. You say, “I beg to differ. I will not.” Oh yes, you will. If you don’t decide for Christ, you will decide against Christ. But you will decide. There’s no way that you can be neutral. Jesus Christ said, *“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad”* (Matthew 12:30). You will choose Him or refuse Him, but your refusal to choose Him is a choice. There is no way that you can be neutral. There is no way that you can say, “I will not choose. I choose not to choose,” because, when you chose not to choose, you just chose. And it’s a choice. It’s so simple: that we’re free to choose, but we’re not free not to choose.

I was in Pensacola, Florida, one time, walking down the streets, and there were two young ladies there. And I just stopped and engaged them in conversation—never seen them before, and haven’t seen them since. And I began to witness to them and tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ. And as I finished my witness, I asked one of the young ladies, “Would you like to pray and ask Christ Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior?” She said, “I would.” And we prayed, and she, very sweetly and wonderfully, prayed, and asked Christ to come into her heart. And then, I asked the other young lady—I said, “Would you like to pray and ask Christ?” She said, “Well, I’m not... I’m not ready.” I said, “Well, let me explain it again,” and I explained salvation. I thought maybe she didn’t understand, because she obviously seemed under conviction. Then, I asked her again. I said, “Would you like to pray and receive Christ?” She said, “No sir, I’m not ready to do that.” I said, “Well, young lady, don’t you realize that if you do not say yes to Christ, you’re saying *no* to Christ, that you’re rejecting Him, that you are saying, ‘I don’t want You, Lord Jesus?’” “Oh,” she said, “I would never say that.” But I said, that’s what you are saying. And I gave her Matthew 12, verse 30. Jesus said, *“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad”* (Matthew 12:30). And I talked to her about that, and I said, “Now don’t reject the Lord Jesus Christ. I’ve explained how to be saved. Why don’t you pray?” She said, “I just can’t do that.” I said, “Would you reject Him?” She said, “Oh no, no, no, no. I’m not rejecting Him; I’m just not ready to receive Him.”

I said, “Okay.” I said, “I’ve got to go.” I felt like I didn’t want to push it anymore. I said to her, “Well, I’ve got to go. Would you shake hands with me?” “Oh,” she said, “yes.” I said, “Fine. If you’ll take Christ and Heaven, take my right hand. If you take Satan and Hell, take my left hand.” She said, “What?” I said, “You said you would shake. Now,” I said, “if you’ll take Christ and Heaven, take my right hand. If you’ll take the devil and Hell, take my left hand.” She put her hands behind her and said, “I’m not going to take either one.” But I said, “Young lady, you are. When you say *no* to Jesus, you say *yes* to Satan. There’s no way that you can be neutral.” What I’m trying to say is this: You’re free to choose, but you’re not free not to choose.

### C. **You Are Not Free to Choose the Consequences of Your Choice**

Now listen very carefully. And you are not free to choose the consequences of your choice. You're free to choose. You're not free not to choose. You're not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

Now you climb up a 10-storey building, open the window, and step out—you're free to do that; but then, after that, your choice chooses for you. You see what I mean? You're not free to choose the consequences. You're going to go down. You're not going to break the law of gravity; you're going to demonstrate it, because your choice then begins to choose for you. And you're not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

We have a lot of people, today, talking about *free love*. They say, "I'm free to do whatever I want to do." But you're not free to choose the consequences: the sexually transmitted disease, that broken life, that affront to Almighty God, that little precious baby that might be conceived, perhaps put to death—those are the consequences. You're not free to choose those consequences. Those come. You may make the free choice, but the consequences that follow are still there. You're not free to choose the consequences of your choice. Sometimes, people conceive. They say, "We've decided not to have this baby." Wrong. The only choice now is whether you're going to have a live baby or a dead baby. You're going to have a baby. You see, you're not free to choose the consequences of your choice. People don't understand that there are consequences that come with these things, and you cannot choose the consequences.

### D. **One Big Choice Takes Care of a Lot of Little Choices**

Now let me say this about a choice, also: One big choice takes care of a lot of little choices.

Have you ever decided to go out to dinner with your wife, and you get in the car, and you haven't decided where you're going to go? "Where do you want to go? What do you want—Chinese, Mexican?" You drive the car all over, all around like this, everywhere you're going, turn in this corner, that corner. You both are talking. "Well, let's don't go..." and so forth. And you just—every corner—you don't know which way you're going to turn. You have to decide whether you're going to turn right, left, or go straight. But if you've already decided where you're going to go, you don't have to make a decision at every corner, do you? Because, the big decision—well, that's not really a big decision, as the big decisions of life go—but one decision there takes care of a lot of other decisions.

I travel; I go to hotel rooms. You know, there are dirty movies in hotels. I don't have to decide whether I'm going to watch them. I've already decided. I've already decided that I'm going to give my life to Jesus. I'm going to honor Him. I'm not going to set some

wicked, dirty, filthy thing in front of my mind. I've just simply made a decision. So each night that I'm there, I don't have to keep making little decisions: "Should I, or should I not?"

You see, you're free to choose. You're not free not to choose. You're not free to choose the consequences of your choice. And a few big decisions take care of a lot of little decisions. Here was a man, Elimelech, who said, "My God is king," but he made a very ungodly choice; and, he choose to do something he ought not to have chosen to do. Now we're talking here about the principle of choice—the principle of a willing choice.

## II. The Problem of a Wicked Choice

Now let me talk to you about the problem of a wicked choice. The principle of a willing choice; the problem of a wicked choice. Here was a man who made a very unwise—literally, a wicked—choice. He got out of the will of God. He went over into the land of Moab; and there, he meant to sojourn there. He stayed there for 10 years. He just thought he was going to take a little side trip into Moab; but he went into Moab, and Moab got him. And he met tragedy there, in Moab, because he did not trust the Lord. He made a wicked choice.

### A. The Cause of a Bad Choice

Now what was the reason for that choice? What was the cause of his choice?

#### 1. The Wrong Motive

May I submit to you that, first of all, he had the wrong motive in his choice. Do you know what his motive was? It was physical—he went there for bread—rather than spiritual. He's not seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. There was a famine in the land of Israel; and therefore, he hightailed it over to Moab to get some food, to get some bread. What motivated his life was what buttered his bread.

Now a lot of people are just like that. You make your decision. You may call yourself a child of God, but you are motivated primarily by the material and the physical, rather than the spiritual. You say, "What's wrong with that?" Well, there is much wrong with that. The Bible says, in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33).

Now many of us seek things first and try to tack God on. We worship things and use God, when we're to worship God and use things. We wonder why it doesn't work for us. Well, I'll tell you something about God: God *never has—and God never will—work in* second place. *He's not going to be some moonlighting God, part-time God, with a duplex for a throne.* *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness"* (Matthew

16:33). But here was a man seeking things and bread first.

Some of you are businessmen, but when it comes to business decisions, you just have one bottom line; and, it's not necessarily the things of God. What would you think if a pastor, who was serving happily and fruitfully in a church, received a call from another church and went to another church because they offered him a bigger salary? What would you think of a pastor like that? You say, "Well, good riddance, if that's the way he is, if that's what motivates him, if he would go from Point A to Point B simply because somebody said, 'I'm going to give you some more money, if you will come.'" You would say, "That man is a materialist," and you'd be right. I wouldn't have any respect for him, and neither should you. Let me ask you another question: What would you think of a businessman who leaves one city and goes to another city, simply for money? "Oh," you say, "that's different." Why? Why? It takes just as much of the blood of Jesus to save that businessman as it does that pastor. Listen. We're all children of God. We cannot make our decisions on something that is motivated by money. And here was a man that had the wrong motive.

## **2. The Wrong Method**

And not only did he have the wrong motive; he had the wrong method. He is operating by sight and not by faith. That's the wrong method. How easy it is to walk by sight! We want to see it—something we can understand. And we just simply say, "Well, you know, a man's got to live." No, he's got to die; and, after he dies, he's got to face God. We don't necessarily have to live. And things may not look like they're going to work out for us. Do you know what faith is? Faith *is* believing *God in spite of* appearances *and* obeying *God in spite of* consequences. That's faith. Not operating by sight, but by faith. He had the wrong motive. He had the wrong method.

## **3. The Wrong Master**

And he ended up serving the wrong master. He got over into Moab. He left the covenant blessings of Israel, and got over there with the ungodly pagans, and found himself in the devil's camp. He became a dirty double-crosser of the God of Israel. And that's what we do, sometimes, when we make the wrong decisions. We disgrace and dishonor our God, and say, "God, I cannot trust You. I'm going over to the enemy camp. I am going over to the other side." That's what he did.

## **B. The Consequences of a Bad Choice**

The consequences were devastating.

### **1. Death**

When he got over there, we found out that he died over there. Can you imagine—a man of God dying in Moab? And his sons took wives of the Moabites; and then, those sons died. Look, if you will, in verse 3: "*And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she*

*was left, and her two sons.” Now there she is in a pagan land—a widow, with two boys. “And they two took them wives of the women of Moab;”—that was contrary to the Word of God—“the name of one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband” (Ruth 1:3–5).*

There is a woman there, Naomi, whose name means “pleasantness,” but her life is not pleasant now. There she is in a pagan land; she is a widow. She’s got two daughter-in-laws who are widows. And her husband—Naomi’s husband—Elimelech, is dead, and her two sons are dead. And there she is with her daughter-in-laws, Ruth and Orpah. You see, the reason that Elimelech left Bethlehem was for a livelihood, and what he found was a grave.

## **2. Deprivation**

Now we need to understand this: that you cannot—you cannot—run from God. Don’t you think that, if you get somewhere else, you’re going to somehow get out of the will of God and get into the place of blessing. So many of the times, we’re praying, “God bless us. God bless us. God bless me. God bless me. God bless me.” Well, I want to ask you a question: Are you in the place of blessing? Ruth was not in the place of blessing. Orpah was not in the place of blessing. Naomi was not in the place of blessing. They were over there, in the pagan land; and, there’s no blessing there, away from God. Hey, folks, if you want God to bless you, find a place of blessing where God can bless you. Get back where you need to be, so God can bless you. Here, they’re going for life, and they find death.

There’s an old fable about a rich merchant of Baghdad who had a servant who came to them. The servant was ashen face and trembling—frightened and trembling. And the servant said to his master, “Master, give me one of your best horses. I must flee Baghdad.” And the master said to his servant, “Why do you need to go from Baghdad?” He said, “Well, master,” he said, “today, in the marketplace,” he said, “a sinister figure jostled me in the marketplace. And when I turned to look in his face, it was Death. I was looking into the face of Death. I must flee for my life.” And the rich merchant of Baghdad gave to his servant one of his finest horses. He said, “Flee? Where are you going?” He said, “I’m going to Samarra,” and the servant left. Later on, the rich merchant thought he would go down to the marketplace and see, according to the fable, what was there. And he saw this hooded figure, this boney figure, who is Death. And he pulled Death around, and looked in Death’s face, and said to Death, “Death, did you frighten my servant? Why did you jostle my servant? Why did you alarm my servant?” Death said, “I didn’t mean to frighten him. I didn’t mean to alarm him. He surprised me. I didn’t expect to see him here. I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.”



### 3. Disappointment

You can't run away. Here was a man running from death, and he ran to death and found his grave right there, in the land of Moab, rather than staying where God had put him and where God had planted him. He couldn't trust God. And he found death, and he found disappointment. And his wife, Naomi, now changes her name from Naomi to Mara, which means "bitterness." And she blames her bitterness on God. There are many people saying, "Well, if there's a God, why are all these things happening to me?" Part of them may just be simply the result of a choice that you've made.

## III. The Power of a Wise Choice

Now what I've talked about is this: the principle of a willing choice. I've talked to you about the problems of a wicked choice. But I'm just moving toward the third thing and the most important thing, and that is the power of a wise choice. Ruth, in this book, makes a choice. She chooses for God. And she makes a very wonderful choice that not only transformed her life and changed her life, but, in a very real sense, has touched your life and my life, because we're going to see—not only does she become a beautiful picture of redemption and salvation, as we're going to see later on, when we get into the other parts of this book, but she, Ruth, became an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the flesh. And King David was one of her descendants. What a wonderful... I mean, she is a Moabite.

### A. What Ruth Had Against Her

Now you think you have it bad? You think that things are going bad for you? You think there's no hope for you? I want you to think about Ruth for a little bit. I want you to understand the condition of Ruth's life.

#### 1. A Cursed Life

First of all, she had a cursed life. She was under a curse. The Bible says that "a Moabite should not enter the camp of Israel, the covenant of Israel, even up to the tenth generation," because there was a curse upon Moab (Deuteronomy 23:3). And folks, there's a curse upon us. The Bible speaks of us, in Ephesians 2, as "*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*" (Ephesians 2:12). We have a curse upon us, and the Bible says, "Cursed is every man that abideth not in all things of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). And the law said to Ruth, "Stay out." But we're going to see that grace said, "Come on in."

#### 2. A Crushed Life

She was a young woman; her husband died. She watered that grave with her tears. She's there, in the land of death, and dirt, and degradation. She just had a crushed life. She knew sorrow. Do you know sorrow? Do you have a broken heart? Well, the Book of



Ruth is for you. You can become part of a love story.

### 3. A Condemned Life

Not only was she cursed and crushed; she was condemned. I mean, she was condemned to death. She had no way. A condemned life—because her husband, who was to be her provider and her protector, was dead. There was no social security. There was no way for widows to be taken care of, apart from the goodness of God. And just as her husband died, and her hopes died when her husband died, we, through the death of Adam, are condemned. By one man's disobedience, many are made sinners. There's such a parallel there between Ruth. But against this dark background there is a diamond of God's grace, as we're going to see next time that we come together. But don't say there's no hope for you. Don't say, "It's too late for me," or, "too dark for me," or, "too difficult for me," or whatever—"too degrading for me." God will make a way for you—the same God that made a way for Ruth, because, against all of that, Ruth made a decision.

And, you know, her life then became a new life—a new life. Do you know what the Lord Jesus says? The Lord Jesus says, "*Behold, I make all things new*" (Revelation 21:5)—*all things new*. Do you know what the Apostle Paul said? The Apostle Paul said, "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

#### B. The Seven Elements of a Wise Decision

I want you to see seven new things that happened to Ruth, right here. Let's begin reading now, in verse 7: "*Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was,*"—that is, Naomi—"and her two daughters in law..."—that would be Ruth and Orpah—"...and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah." Now Naomi has heard that there is bread in Bethlehem, and she is going home. She is going back to the place of blessing. "*And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each of each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.*" They said, "No, Naomi, we're going to go with you. But now, notice what she said, and this is sad. Verse 11: "*And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 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?*"—that is, "You can't have any more sons from my womb. Even if I could have children, they would just be babies. You couldn't wait for them. Verse 13—"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*” (Ruth 1:7–13).

And like many backsliders, she’s blaming God for it. Now notice verse 14: *“And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.”* Now I’ve been pastoring long enough to know that, in a service like this, you have the *kissers* and the *cleavers*. You have those who get emotionally moved but never go through with a decision for the Lord Jesus. And then, you have those who get hold of God and will not let go. Now there’s a difference here between Ruth and Orpah that is a line of demarcation that goes for all eternity. But now listen to what Naomi said in verse 15—and that’s the reason why I said it’s so sad: *“And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law”* (Ruth 1:14–15).

Can you imagine this? Naomi is so backslidden that she would tell her two daughter-in-laws to “go back to your people, back to your land, and back to your pagan gods.” What a disgrace! And Orpah turned and went back. And friend, that’s the last we’ve heard of her. But resolute Ruth makes a decision, a wonderful decision, and I want you to see that decision, right now. And we’re going to look at that decision, because that is what I am talking about: a wise decision. And it was a decision for Almighty God, and what a wonderful decision it was! And remember we said that, when you come to God, He makes all things new.

### **1. A New Determination**

Notice what Ruth had—look in verse 16. She had a new determination. She says, *“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee”* (Ruth 1:16). Now what she’s saying is this: “Naomi, where you go I will go. It is a decision. Don’t tell me not to follow you.” I wonder, would you make a new determination today? I mean, would you say, with every inch, every ounce, every nerve, and fiber, and sinew, “I am going with You?”

### **2. A New Direction**

She has, in verse 16, a new determination, and that new determination leads to a new direction. Look again, in verse 16: *For whither thou goest, I will go*” (Ruth 1:16). Do you know what a Christian is? He is a follower of Jesus. “Wherever He leads, I will follow”—have you said that to the Lord Jesus Christ? A new direction. You see, when Jesus calls disciples, He says what? “Come and follow Me.”

### **3. A New Dependence**

And then, there was a new dependence. In verse 16, she says, *“Where thou lodgest, I will lodge”* (Ruth 1:16). That is, “I am coming into your household. I’m coming under your shelter. I am coming for your provision. I am coming to live with you. I’m coming, Naomi, to look to you for my provision. Where you lodge, that’s where I’m going to

lodge.” Have you ever said that to Jesus?

#### **4. A New Desire**

A new determination: *“Intreat me not to leave thee.”* A new direction: “Wherever you go, I’m going.” A new dependence: wherever you lodge, I will lodge.” And a new desire: *“Thy people shall be my people”* (Ruth 1:16). “I want to be with your people. I don’t want to be with the pagans. I don’t want to be the heathen. I don’t want to be in this land of death, and degradation, and debauchery, and defilement, and idol worship. I want to be with the people of God.”

One of the marks that we’ve been saved: We want to be with God’s people. I can’t understand why a man says he loves the Lord Jesus and doesn’t love the people of God. The Bible says that we are not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25). When a man gets saved, he desires the fellowship of the people of God.

#### **5. A New Devotion**

And there’s a new devotion. She says, in verse 16—Ruth says: *“And thy God my God”* (Ruth 1:16)—“I’m turning from my idols.” You cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). And friend, you’ve got to let go of this world and give your heart to Jesus Christ. She knew that she had to follow the God of Israel.

#### **6. A New Dedication**

There is a new devotion and a new dedication. She says, in verse 17: “Where you die, I will die” (Ruth 1:17). Now what does that mean? She said, “Look, Naomi. I am going with you all the way. I’m not going to get there, and, if things get bad over here in Bethlehem, I’m not going to turn around and go back to Moab. This is a lifetime commitment; and, where you die, I will die.”

#### **7. A New Destiny**

And then, she says, “There’s a new destiny. Where you’re buried, there, I’m going to be buried. I mean, I’m with you” (Ruth 1:17). You see, even death—even death—will not separate us. Isn’t that what Paul says in Romans 8? That *“neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38–39)? And this is one of the sweetest declarations of faith in all of the Bible: *“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.”* And where you die, I’ll die; and where you’re buried, I’ll be buried” (Ruth 1:16–17). She made a decision. It was her decision to make. Elimelech made a decision—a bad one. Ruth, out of a dark background, made a wonderful decision, and it counts for all eternity.

## Conclusion

There were some people who came to our house when I was a teenage boy and invited our folks to a revival meeting. I was out there with my dad cleaning the front yard. I saw my dad go over and speak to those people and nod his head. And so my dad said, “We’re going to church tonight.” We were not a church-going family. We went to church in Northwood Baptist Church there, and I was sitting about 12 rows back. My dad was sitting right next to the aisle, and I’m sitting next to him. And the preacher was preaching; and then, he gave an invitation for people to come forward and give their hearts to Jesus Christ. My dad stepped out. I was amazed. I didn’t even think he was listening. My dad went out. It was like a dagger of conviction in my own heart. I knew I needed to be saved. I knew I needed God. I didn’t know anything about sexual immorality or dope, and I thank God I never have and never will, by God’s grace. I knew what it was to tell a lie and get in strife, fights; and, I knew what it was to skip school, and be disrespectful to my parents, and cheat, and all those things that boys ought not to do...take God’s name in vain. I knew I needed to be saved.

And I went down there. I got up and followed my dad down the aisle. They said, “We’re glad Adrian has come,” and I’m sure they were, because I terrorized that neighborhood. They’re glad Adrian has come. And they sat me down there and dealt with me; and, there, on that front row, I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Jesus. I’ve learned a whole lot about both since then. I’ve done far more repenting after I got saved than I ever did when I got saved, because I’ve learned more and more about me. But I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Jesus and made a decision there, as a teenage boy.

Many, many years passed since that time, and I went back to that church, and I found a custodian. The church had passed on to other hands, and that little auditorium where I had gone forward was no longer an auditorium. They had changed it into a little dining hall. But I said, “Can I be alone here?” And they let me be alone, and I went to the front, and found, as best I could, where that pew would have been at that time, and got on my knees, and thanked God that, by His grace, I was able to say to the Lord—not in these words, but I meant it: “Entreat me not to leave Thee, nor to return from following after Thee, for where You go, Lord, that’s where I want to go. And where You live, Lord, that’s where I want to live. And Lord, Your God will be my God; your people my people.” And as a result of that decision, I am standing here today—because of that.

It is decision that determines destiny. You are free to choose. You are not free not to choose. You’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. And when you make a big choice, you make a lot of other choices right along with it. Let’s bow our heads in prayer.

# God's Amazing Grace

*By Adrian Rogers*

## Main Scripture Text: Ruth 2

*“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.”*

RUTH 2:11–12

## Outline

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II. It Is Sovereign Grace

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## Introduction

We're talking about God's amazing grace as it is found in the Book of Ruth, and I would like very much for you to be finding the Book of Ruth—right after the Book of Judges in your Bible. You go right past it, if you're not careful, because it's only four short chapters. It is the story of redeeming love. And it is a love story, but it is more than a love story. It tells about the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now I want to be very frank with you today. The message will be very hard to understand unless you keep a Bible in front of you, if at all possible, and keep your mind focused. It's not really all that difficult, but I want you to listen carefully, because if you don't listen carefully, you're going to miss a blessing, because the blessing is, in some ways, hidden or tucked away.

The other day, Joyce and I went out for a meal. And when we were sitting in the restaurant, they gave us a placemat, and the placemat was a picture—a very complicated picture. And in that picture on that placemat were things that were hidden that you could not see when you first looked for them. Do you know the kind of picture I'm talking about? For example, we had to look for a lizard, it was somewhere in the trees there, but you couldn't see the lizard at first until you turned it just right. There was a woman's shoe in that picture, but you had to keep looking. “Do you see the shoe, Adrian?” “No, I don't see it. Do you see it, Joyce?” “There's the shoe.” And then, there

was an engagement ring in that picture; and then, I think, a bird—a toucan—and so forth, all in that picture. And we're looking for that. Now it was there, but you had to look at it carefully. If you didn't look at it carefully, you might miss it.

Now that's the way the Book of Ruth is. There's the story that is obvious; and then, there's another story. If you'll look carefully, suddenly, it comes into focus. It is the story of redeeming love; it is the story of God's amazing grace. And I don't want you to miss it.

Now let me give you the big picture now, first of all, before we go to look at the details again. I think you will remember last week—there was a man whose name was Elimelech, whose name means, “my God is king.” He was married to a woman whose name was Naomi, whose name means, “pleasantness.” Well, it sounds like a happy marriage right there—“My God is king” is married to “Pleasantness.” And they have two sons: Mahlon, which means, Brother Jamie, “song, joyful song”; and they have another son, Chilion, whose name means, “perfection,” or, “perfectness.” Well, it sounds better all the time. Here is “My God is king” married to “Pleasantness,” and their offspring is “Song” and “Perfection.” And they live in Bethlehem—the same Bethlehem Judah where Jesus was born.

But there arose a famine in the land. And this Elimelech decides he's going to leave Bethlehem, and he is going to go over to a place—a land that had a curse upon it, the land of Moab, Israel's ancient enemies, that represented the territory of the devil. And in a time of famine, rather than having faith in the House of Bread—Bethlehem, Elimelech takes his family—takes Naomi, takes Mahlon and Chilion—“Song,” and “Perfection,” and “Pleasantness”—and they move into this God-cursed place. And while they're there, Elimelech dies; and Mahlon dies; and Chilion dies. And Naomi is left a widow, and she changes her name from Naomi to Mara, which means, “bitterness.” “Pleasantness” has turned to “Bitterness.” And she returns home now, back to her homeland, back to Bethlehem.

However, while she's been there in Moab, her two sons have married the girls of Moab. And one of the girls who was married to one of Naomi's sons was a girl named Ruth, for whom this book is named. And when Naomi decides she's going to go back to Bethlehem, Ruth says, “I'm going back with you”: *“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God”* (Ruth 1:16). And this girl, out of paganism, whose name was Ruth, turned her back on family, and friends, and pagan gods, and said, “I am going with the God of Israel. I am going with you, Naomi. I'm going with you back to Bethlehem.”

And when Ruth goes back to Bethlehem, she meets a man whose name is Boaz; and, we're going to meet Boaz in this second chapter, in a little bit. And the name *Boaz*



means, “in him is strength.” And so Ruth meets Boaz—a mighty man, a wealthy man, a noble man, a rich man—and she marries him. This pagan, this maid from Moab, meets the bachelor from Bethlehem, the most eligible bachelor in all of the land; and, he loves her so much that he buys back the lost estate of her former husband, Mahlon. And he marries Ruth, and Ruth becomes—are you ready for this?—an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the flesh.

Now that’s the story—that’s the story. You see the story. That’s the placemat; there’s the story. But now, let’s begin to turn it and to look at it a little bit; and, we’re going to see some great, great lessons, because, you see, Elimelech represents the nation Israel—“My God is king”—and he’s married to “Pleasantness,” but he turns his back on his faith; he turns his back on the Lord, the land, the law, and he goes into exile, as it was. And there, when he does that, “My God is king” dies; and “Pleasantness” is turned to “Bitterness”; and the “Song” ceases; and “Perfection” is gone. And now here is Naomi, representing a remnant, coming back home—coming back home in bitterness. But we see, also, a Gentile bride. Do you know who that Gentile bride represents? The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you studied the Bible enough to know that the Church is the bride of Christ, that we are the Gentile bride of the Lord Jesus, and we have been drafted into the commonwealth of Israel, and we have become a part of the family of God? And Ruth, the Gentile bride... Look around at the people round about you, folks. Typically, we’re Ruth. You just keep looking at that picture, and you’re going to see it now. And Boaz—he represents Jesus Christ Himself.

Now I had to say all of that to set the picture. It might be a little complicated to you. You might want to get the tape and listen again, or just go back and read the story again. But you’ve got to understand that, folks, in order to understand how God has just tucked this away in the Bible.

Now why does God do that? Why does God kind of say, “You’ve got to look for these things”? Well, for one thing, so we can have the joy of discovering them. It’s just a joy. I don’t know why it is, but haven’t you found it is a peculiar joy to find Christ in the Old Testament? You know, Jesus, one day, was on the road to Damascus, the road to Emmaus; and, He was with two forlorn disciples. It was after His resurrection. He had disguised Himself; they didn’t recognize Him. And the Bible says, as they were walking along that day, He opened to them the Scriptures and showed them “*in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*” (Luke 24:27)—and that was the Old Testament. I wish I had a tape recording of that—of Jesus showing “*in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*” And I have little doubt but what He showed them some things in the Book of Ruth concerning Himself. And so that’s what we’re going to look at.

Now the theme in this second chapter is grace. For example, look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 2: “*And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the*



*field, and glean ears of corn after him*”—now, watch this—“*in whose sight I shall find grace*” (Ruth 2:2). Isn’t that a beautiful word—*grace*? And then, look, if you will, in chapter 2, 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?*” (Ruth 2:10). This is the story of how Ruth, who would become the bride of Boaz, became the bride of Boaz by grace. For, how are we saved? How do we become the bride of Christ? “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8).

Now having said that, I want to say several things about God’s grace, and I hope that you’ll write them down. I think, perhaps, if we have time, we’ll mention four, maybe five, wonderful truths about God’s saving grace that is pictured here, in this little Book of Ruth.

## **I. It Is Saving Grace**

First of all, it is just that—it is saving grace. Now look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 1: “*And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth,*”—underscore that—he’s a kinsman; he is a mighty man of wealth—“*of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz*” (Ruth 2:1). Now Ruth is about to meet a man named Boaz, who is going to become her redeemer and her savior.

Now if ever a woman needed a redeemer and a savior in the physical realm, it was this woman Ruth. Now remember, she is a pagan. Remember that she is in a weakened condition. What I mean by “she’s in a weakened condition”—she’s famished; there’s a famine in the land. Besides that, she’s under a curse. She’s a Moabite, and the Bible says there was a curse upon the Moabites. On top of that, she is a widow; she has absolutely nothing to commend her. If you think of Ruth, think of weakness. But when you think of Boaz, think of strength. The name *Boaz* means, “in him is strength.” And the Bible says it right here: He is “*a mighty man*” (Ruth 2:1).

Now here is Ruth—she’s crushed, because her husband has died. She is condemned, because the law says that there is a curse upon her; the law excluded her. Listen. The law excluded her, but grace is going to include her. There was, in the land of Israel, a law called *the law of the kinsman redeemer*. And if a man were to die, and he did not have children, and he, perhaps, had gone into bankruptcy and lost his estate, a near kinsman, according to the law of the kinsman redeemer, somebody related to him, could come and redeem that estate that had gone into bankruptcy. That is, he could buy back the land that this Israelite had lost, buy it back from the man who was holding it, and it would become his. He could redeem it, if he were a near kinsman, because God wanted to keep it in the family. But when he bought back his brother’s lost estate, when he bought it back and brought it back, he also had to marry his brother’s wife, who was now a widow, and raise up children for his brother. That’s called a *levirate marriage*.

The word *levir*, in Latin, means, “brother”—a husband’s brother; it means, “brother.” And so he had to buy the estate and then marry the widow. Now that was a law in Israel, and you can find that in Leviticus chapter 25 (Leviticus 25). And it is the principle of redemption—he redeems the lost estate.

Now Naomi, who was Ruth’s mother-in-law—she wasn’t wealthy enough to redeem it; only Boaz could buy it back up. Now I want you to see with me how Boaz is a picture of Christ. Are you ready for this? Number one: He was from Bethlehem, as was the Lord Jesus Christ. Number two: He was a near kinsman to Ruth, as Jesus is a near kinsman to us. You say, “Is Jesus a near kinsman?” That’s why—that’s the reason—He came to this earth. Put down in your margin, Hebrews 2, verses 14 and following: “*Forasmuch then as the children*”—talking about us, the children of God—“*are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself*”—that’s Jesus—“*likewise took part of the same*,”—that is, flesh and blood—“*that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*” (Hebrews 2:14). And then, again, in verse 16: “*For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren*” (Hebrews 2:16–17).

Isn’t that wonderful? You see, He had to be a near kinsman in order to redeem us. That’s why Jesus stepped out of the ivory palaces, and came into this world of woe, and was born through the portals of the virgin’s womb. He took flesh and blood to be made like His brethren. As Jesus was from Bethlehem, so was Boaz. As Jesus is a near kinsman, so is Boaz.

And then, of course, in order to redeem, you had to be wealthy enough. To redeem, you have to be able to redeem—you had to have no obligations against you; you could not be bankrupt yourself. Boaz was a wealthy man, and Jesus was a man of wealth. And all of the riches of Heaven reside in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, not only, to redeem, did you have to be a near kinsman, and not only did you have to be wealthy enough to redeem, but you had to be willing to redeem. And the Lord Jesus, thank God, was willing to redeem, just as Boaz was willing to redeem. And we’re going to see that Boaz—as we’re going to see later on—came to the fields where Ruth was, just as Jesus came to where I am.

And so first of all, I want you to think about this grace. It is saving grace, because Boaz pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

## **II. It Is Sovereign Grace**

Now here’s the second thing I want you to see: Not only is this grace saving grace, but it is sovereign grace. Look, if you will, in verses 2 and 3: “*And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go into the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace.*” Underscore that. “*And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And*

*she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap...*”—underscore that—“*her hap*”—perchance—“*was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech*” (Ruth 2:2–3). Now folks, I want you to see the sovereign grace of God in this. I want you to see the unseen hand of God moving in history in order to bring Ruth to Himself.

Now they had, in that day, a law—a welfare law—and it was this: When you would harvest the fields, you were not to pick up all of the grain that fell to the ground. You could harvest the major part of the harvest, but when the reapers would go around the fields, God said, “Don’t reap the very corners. Just leave the corners there. And if some grain falls to the ground, just leave it there; and then, the poor people can come in, and they can do what is called *gleaning the fields*; they can go into the corners and get wheat and barley; they can pick up the grain that was there, on the ground.” It was just a form of welfare that God had there, in that ancient time, and a very beautiful law.

And so Ruth and Naomi—they’re penniless. And now by this time, certainly, Naomi, who’s turned to “Bitterness”—she can’t go into the fields; she’s too old for that. And here’s Ruth, the young widow—she says, “Well, I’m going into the fields, and maybe I can just find some grace here, in the fields,” and she goes.

But I want you to see the hand of God in all of this. Number one: When did they get back to the land? Just in time for the barley harvest. This is not by accident. The harvest is going on there. And then, she goes into the fields to glean, and whose field does she get into? There are no signs there that say this field belongs to this family or that family, no fences or demarcation. She just simply goes into a field, and it’s the field of Boaz, her near kinsman. You can see the hidden hand of God. And then, when she’s there in the field of Boaz, who happens to come to the field at just that moment? Who happens to visit his fields at just that moment? Boaz himself.

Folks, if you can’t see the hand of God in all of this... God is just arranging the circumstances. And Boaz sees Ruth out there, and he says to somebody, “Who is that?” I mean, now, you have to understand, Ruth was a beautiful woman, and Boaz was a man just like any man. And he sees her. Now remember that Ruth has gone through so much. She is broken and bankrupt; she’s bruised and beaten; she is cursed and crushed. Well, did God do all of that out of cruelty? No. As you read the bigger picture, you see that God has a sovereign plan in it all. We need to understand this.

I read something that a friend gave me last week that’s very beautiful. It was written by Dr. A. W. Tozer; and Dr. A. W. Tozer is really quoting somebody else—a saint named Rutherford. Mr. Rutherford, who is a saint of God, had done like so many in this building. He had been through suffering—great suffering. He wrote one of the most beautiful things I’ve ever read; I want to share it with you:

He says, “Praise God for the hammer, the file, and the furnace. The hammer is a

useful tool. But the nail, if it had feeling and intelligence, could present another side of the story, for the nail knows the hammer only as an opponent—a brutal, merciless enemy who loves to pound it into submission, to beat it down out of sight and clench it in the face. That is the nail’s view of the hammer; and, it is accurate, except for one thing: The nail forgets that both it and the hammer are servants of the same workman. Let the nail but remember that the hammer is held by the workman, and all the resentment toward it will disappear. The carpenter decides whose head shall be beaten next and what hammer shall be used in the beating—that is his sovereign right. When the nail has surrendered to the will of the workman and has gotten a little glimpse of his benign plans for his future, it will yield to the hammer without complaint.

“The file is more painful, still, for its business is to bite into the soft metal, scraping and eating away the edges, until it has shaped the metal to its will. Yet the file has, in truth, no real will in the matter, but serves another master, as the metal also does. It is the master, not the file, that decides how much shall be eaten away, what shape the metal shall take, and how long and painful filing shall continue. Let the metal accept the will of the master, and it will not try to dictate when or how it shall be filed.

“As for the furnace, it is worst of all. Ruthless and savage, it leaps at every combustible thing that enters it, and never relaxes its fury until it has reduced it all to shapeless ashes. All that refuses to burn is melted into a mass of helpless matter without will or purpose of its own. When everything is melted that will melt and all is burned that will burn, then—and not until then—the furnace comes down and rests from its destructive fury.

“Has it seemed like you’re a nail, and some hammer is coming out of somewhere, beating on you? Does it seem like you are a piece of metal, and there is some file that is gnawing, and scraping, and reducing you? Does it seem like you have been flung into a furnace and are being consumed? Remember that God holds the nail and the hammer. God holds the metal and the file. It is God who has allowed you to be in the furnace and watches over the furnace.”

Ruth, I’m sure, wondered, “Why this hammer? Why this file? Why this furnace of fire? Why?” But if you back out and look at the bigger picture, you’re going to see that it was saving grace; it was sovereign grace. And it was God that was moving everything so that Ruth shows up just at the right time in the barley field when Boaz is there, because God has a plan.

### **III. It Is Seeking Grace**

Now there’s a third thing I want you to see. It is not only saving grace and sovereign grace, but it is seeking grace. Look, in verses 4 through 8: “*And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem,*”—oh, Jesus came from there, also—“*and said unto the reapers, The*

*LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.*” He must have been a good man to work for. He comes down into the field. He—this man—comes from Bethlehem, down to the field, where the servants are. He takes upon himself the form of a servant. He’s a mighty man; he’s a wealthy man—but there he is among these reapers himself. *“Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?”* (Ruth 2:4–5). He’s looking around, he sees... “Where did she come from? Who is that girl?”

Now folks, he sets his eye upon her. Now she doesn’t know anything about this. She doesn’t know who Boaz is. She doesn’t know that Boaz is looking her over. Friend, put it down big; put it down plain; put it down straight: He loved us before we ever loved Him, and we loved Him because He first loved us. *“Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:”—*she’s a pagan; she’s a Moabite; she’s under a curse; she’s in poverty—*“and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth,”*—notice he speaks first—*“Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens”* (Ruth 2:5–8).

Now what I’m trying to say is that this saving grace, this sovereign grace, is seeking grace. It is Boaz that takes the initiative; Ruth could not take the initiative. And first of all, she’s a woman. A woman could not approach a man in those days, and times have surely changed. But furthermore, she’s bankrupt; he’s wealthy. Furthermore, she’s a pagan; he’s an Israelite. Furthermore, she is in a low caste; he is a mighty man—*“a mighty man of wealth”* (Ruth 2:1). He’s the owner of the whole thing; she’s gleaning in the fields. She didn’t have a prayer, unless he first took notice of her.

Friend, that’s the way we are. This is seeking grace. First John 4 and verse 19: *“We love him, because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19). And Romans chapter 5 and verse 8: *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). He spoke to us. You know, Hebrews chapter 1 says God *“hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son”* (Hebrews 1:2). And I’m sure that God has brought you here today, many of you, and God is speaking to you. How does God speak? He speaks through Scripture; He speaks through song; He speaks through suffering; He speaks through His servants; He speaks through His Scriptures. The Lord takes the initiative, and He speaks to us.

#### **IV. It Is Satisfying Grace**

Now here’s a fourth thing I want you to see. Yes, saving grace—thank God for our Boaz, the mighty man of strength from Bethlehem. Yes, it is sovereign grace—thank

God for the way that God rules over these affairs to put us in a situation where we can hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank God it is seeking grace—that He takes the initiative and He speaks to us, so that we can speak to Him. Next thing I want you to notice: It is satisfying grace. Thank God for that. You are looking at a man who has never been disappointed in Jesus. It is satisfying grace.

Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 8 of this chapter: *“Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn”* (Ruth 2:8–9). “Ruth, are you hungry? This is my field; stay in my field. Ruth, are you thirsty? Come, Ruth, and drink.”

Look, if you will, also, in verses 14 through 16 of this same chapter: *“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,”*—underscore that. I’m talking about satisfying grace. That’s, in plain English, “She was satisfied”—*“and left.”* Continue to read: *“And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves,”*—“she doesn’t have to go to the field; she can go where the grain is stored”—*“and reproach her not: and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her,”*—“now, when you’re gathering, look, just throw some on the ground; leave some handfuls on purpose for her”—*“and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not”* (Ruth 2:14–16). That is, “Look, this is Ruth. Let her have what she wants. I want her to be satisfied.”

When I was studying this, a thought came to my heart, and I almost wanted to shout by myself, just sitting there. And by the way, that’s probably the best time to shout—by yourself. But I was thinking about that. There’s Ruth; she’s out there in the fields. And Boaz says, “Ruth, are you thirsty? You just help yourself to the things that I’ve got for my workers there. Ruth, go ahead—glean the fields. Ruth, you can glean, if you want to, among the sheaves. Hey, fellows, leave some on the ground for her. When it’s dinnertime and all the workers are eating, she doesn’t have to go up there, in the corner of the field. Just invite her to the table, and let her eat until she is satisfied.” And I got to thinking about that. And after a while, she’s going to carry some grain back to Naomi. She’s really going to carry about 60 pounds back; he really loads her down. But I got to thinking about that. Did you know—listen to me, folks—did you know that soon she’s going to own that field—she’s going to own that field? She’s gleaning in the field right now, but she is going to marry the owner of that field, and all that he has will be hers. You think about it.



Now folks, you think about it. We're just getting the first fruits. And thank God for those handfuls of purpose. He gives me some day by day. Doesn't He give you some? And He says, "Sit down, and eat, and be satisfied." But bless the Lord. Oh, listen to me, friend. The meek will inherit the earth—the meek will inherit the earth (Psalm 37:11; Matthew 5:5). We are going to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ, our heavenly Boaz. And all that Boaz had would become Ruth's—the very field that she's gleaning in. Look around, folks. Do you think God made all this for the devil's crowd? He made it for His people. *"The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof"* (Psalm 24:1). And *"the meek shall inherit the earth"* (Psalm 37:11). And *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32).

Now listen. When you take this placemat and keep turning it, isn't it fun? I mean, when you look in there, and you see what God has provided for His children, just tucked away here, in the Old Testament.

## V. It Is Securing Grace

Now just one last thing, and time has gone from us. Not only is it satisfying grace, but, precious friend, it is securing grace.

Now when Boaz sees her, the one that he's going to redeem, he's very interested that she be protected. Look, for example, in chapter 2, verse 9—and, he says to her, *"Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them:"*—now, watch this—*"have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?"* (Ruth 2:9). He said, "You'd better not touch that woman; you keep your hands off of her. I have charged the young men that they will not touch thee." And then, look, if you will, in verse 21 of this same chapter: *"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"* (Ruth 2:21). He said, "Don't touch her. You protect her; you take care of her." You see, Ruth had come under the wings of grace, the Almighty. Look, in verse 12—Boaz said, *"The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust"* (Ruth 2:12). Ruth the pagan is now under the wings of Jehovah God, because she has a kinsman redeemer. And she is safe and secure, as well as satisfied. And folks, when we come to our Kinsman Redeemer, the Lord Jesus, not only are we saved, not only are we satisfied, but we are secure.

You know, it's wonderful that we can be saved, isn't it? It's more wonderful that we can be saved, and know it. But it is thrice wonderful that we can be saved, know that we're saved, and know that we can never, ever lose our salvation. It is securing grace. That's there, in the Word of God.

Put these verses down. I just thought of some security verses I wanted to put as



ancillary verses. Jude 1, 24 and 25: *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling...”*—think about that—*“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever”* (Jude 1:24–25). Well, if He’s able to keep us from falling, don’t you think He will? Paul said to Timothy, in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12: *“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day”* (2 Timothy 1:12). He’s able to keep. And 2 Timothy 4, verse 18: *“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom”* (2 Timothy 4:18).

Well, that’s the grace of God. That’s the grace of God that we find here, in this Book of Ruth. It’s saving grace; it is sovereign grace; it is seeking grace; and it is satisfying grace; and it is securing grace.

## Conclusion

Now listen to me carefully—listen. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul wrote over there, in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith”* (Ephesians 2:8). What is grace again? What is grace? You say, “Pastor, I don’t even know what grace is.” Well, let me tell you: Grace is the love that God shows to sinners such as we, where there is no merit. It is love that we do not deserve, cannot earn, and would not even seek, unless He first touched our hearts—that’s grace. *“For by grace are ye saved...”*—g-r-a-c-e: “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.”—*“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”*

And if you will put your hand of faith in God’s hand of grace, the same God that took a pagan girl from Moab and made her the bride of Boaz will take sinners such as we and make us the bride of Christ. Glory to God! That’s good news; that’s wonderful. That’s the story of redeeming love. Ruth was not in the field of Boaz by accident. You’re not here today by accident. God brought you here to save you.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. You begin to pray for those round about you who may not know Jesus. And if you don’t know Jesus, would you pray, “Lord Jesus, today, I need You; come into my heart right now”? Father God, I pray that many today will say an everlasting yes to Christ and be saved. In His dear name I pray. Amen.

# Five Ways to Draw Closer to Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Ruth 3**

*“And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.”*

RUTH 3: 5

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Be Freshly Cleansed
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- III. Be Fitly Clothed
- IV. Be Fully Committed
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Conclusion

- A. He Received Her
- B. He Reassured Her
- C. He Replenished Her

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find the Book of Ruth—Joshua, Judges, Ruth—and turn to the third chapter. And when you’ve found it, look up here. A man said these words some time ago—He must have been a saint, because it was in his prayer that he prayed these words: “Lord, I want to see You more clearly. I want to follow You more nearly. I want to love You more dearly.” I think that’s the prayer of most of our hearts. We may not have been able to put it in words like that, but we want to see Him clearly; we want to get closer to Him, and to follow Him more nearly, and to love Him more dearly. We want an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, don’t we? We hear other people talk about it, and we say, “Lord, I just really want to know You in a very close way.”

Well, we’re going to be talking about that today. We have been, for the last two Sundays, and will be this Sunday and next Sunday, in the Book of Ruth; and, we’re doing about a chapter a Sunday. Now we’re talking here, in the Book of Ruth, and

showing you that it is a story—a true story, a love story. But there is a story behind the story—as Paul Harvey would say, “the rest of the truth.” And that is this: that this woman who was a Moabite, whose name was Ruth, who was a pagan, a Gentile, outside the commonwealth of Israel, is brought to faith in her Lord. And she has a redeemer whose name is Boaz, whom she marries. Boaz from Bethlehem pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the maid from Moab marries the bachelor of Bethlehem, and they live happily ever after. And that’s a picture—a true picture, an illustration—of the Church and the Lord Jesus, for the Church is the bride of Christ.

And with that in the background in your heart, there comes a time... And by the way, the whole scene takes place during the barley harvest—at least what we’re studying today. Boaz was a “*mighty man of wealth*” (Ruth 2:1), and he became Ruth’s redeemer. And we’re going to see that more next week, and I don’t want to spend too much time this morning talking about that, because, if I do—I’d love to do it—but I won’t be able to get finished with what I want to say today. The scene is during the barley harvest. And Boaz is the one who owns the barley fields, and he is there with his harvesters in the fields. And Ruth, who has come recently from Moab to the land of Israel, is going to be married to Boaz. And he is her husband’s—her former husband’s—relative. Ruth is a widow; and now, she’s going to be married to Boaz.

Now the scene that we have today is a scene of a very close and intimate relationship of Ruth, who pictures the Church, with Boaz, who pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope you’ve got the setting. Now let’s look, if we can, in Ruth chapter 3: “*Then Naomi her mother in law*”—that is, Ruth’s mother-in-law—“*said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?*” That is, “Do you want rest and refreshment? Do you want replenishment? Do you want all that your heart yearns for?” “*And now is not Boaz of our kindred,*”—Boaz, remember, pictures Jesus—“*with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor*” (Ruth 3:1–2). To *winnow barley* means, “to toss it up in the air and let all the chaff be blown away, so that the barley will remain.” There they are, as the old-time custom and habits were, separating the barley from the chaff.

Now here’s the advice—here’s the advice, now, that Naomi gave to Ruth, and it is the advice that I’m going to give to you, if you want to draw near to the Lord Jesus Christ—listen to these words now: “*Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. 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...*”—Ruth said to Naomi, her mother-in-law. You remember, now, she’s a mother-in-law, because Ruth is the widow of Naomi’s son—“*And she said unto her, All that thou*

sayest unto me I will do” (Ruth 3:3–5). Now there you have the setting.

Let me tell you—let me tell you, now—five ways to draw closer to Jesus, and it’s right here. I want you to see it; it’s so important. Now remember, folks, Christianity *is not a code; it is not a cause; it is not a creed; it is not conduct; it is not a church. It’s Christ—it’s Christ*. And the mark of a Christian is a love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and the true desire of every child of God is to know Jesus Christ intimately. We want more than redemption; we want a relationship. We want more than the gifts; we want the Giver. We want Jesus Christ to be real to us. As the Apostle Paul said, “Oh, that I may know Him” (Philippians 3:10). Well, Paul already knew Him intellectually; he already knew Him spiritually; but Paul wanted to know more and more about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you can know about somebody without knowing somebody. I want to know Jesus, don’t you? I want Jesus to be more real to me than Bob Sorrell, or Jim Whitmire, or David. I want Christ to be real to me. I want to know—not merely about Him—I want to know Him. And when the Rapture comes—and it may come soon—I want to rise in the Rapture and meet somebody face to face that I’ve already known heart to heart: the Lord Jesus Christ—to know Him. As the Apostle Paul says there, in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10: “*That I may know him*” (Philippians 3:10).

## I. Be Freshly Cleansed

Now Naomi’s advice is wonderful, wonderful advice. If you want to know your redeemer Boaz in an intimate way, step number one—write it down: Be freshly cleansed—be freshly cleansed. Look, in verse 3—Naomi says to Ruth, “Wash yourself. You’re going to meet him. Be clean” (Ruth 3:3). And this is what we must do, if we would draw near unto our Lord.

Put these verses down. James is talking about drawing near to our Lord, and James says, in James chapter 4, verse 8: “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded*” (James 4:8). James said, “If you’re going to draw nigh to God, you’ve got to be cleaned. You can’t worship with dirty hands, defiled hearts, and double minds.” That’s what James is saying: “Wash your hands—no more dirty hands. Purify your heart—no more defiled heart. Get your mind single—this one thing I do.” And so that’s the very first step in coming close to the Lord Jesus Christ: to be clean—to be clean. Put this verse down—2 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 1: “*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (2 Corinthians 7:1). If you would draw near to your lover, your Redeemer, you must be clean—you must be clean.

Many people complain that their prayers are not answered. They say, “I prayed, and

I prayed, and I prayed, but my prayers are not answered. My prayer life is fruitless and dead.” Listen to these verses. Isaiah chapter 1, verses 15 and 16—God says, *“And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you:”*—here we are, up here, saying, “Oh, God...” Here’s God saying, “I’m not watching. I’m not looking. I’m not listening.” Well, why would God do that? Listen. He says—*“when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil”* (Isaiah 1:15–16). God says, “I will not hear your prayers. You can’t draw nigh to Me with dirty hands, double minds—you can’t do that. Be clean before you come before Me.”

Isaiah chapter 52 and verse 11: *“Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from hence, touch no unclean thing...be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD”* (Isaiah 52:11). Can you imagine a maiden wanting to be near her lover, her bridegroom, who’s dirty, and sweaty, and grimy, and smelly? Can you imagine that? Can you imagine anybody going to have an intimate relationship with one that she loves, who doesn’t even care enough to bathe? You’re coming to the Lord. You’re coming for an intimate relationship with Almighty God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Be freshly cleansed. We’re not talking about yesterday’s bath; we’re not talking about one you had a month ago. We are talking about being freshly cleaned. Naomi says to Ruth. “Listen. Be freshly cleansed.”

How are we cleansed? Now in a very practical way, how do we get clean before we come to the Lord?

#### A. **By the Word of God**

Well, we’re cleansed by the Word of God. Put these verses down. Ephesians 5, verse 25 and 26: *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”* (Ephesians 5:25–26). The Word of God is to your spirit what water is to your body. You are washed with the Word. David said the same thing in Psalm 119, verse 9: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word”* (Psalm 119:9).

##### **1. The Word Reveals the Sin**

Now how does the Bible cleanse us? Well, James said the Bible is like a mirror (James 1:23–24). It shows what we are; it reveals the defilement and the dirt in us. You see, not only do we read the Bible—the Bible reads us. That’s the reason that some people don’t like to read the Bible. You see, there’s the washing of water by the Word.

##### **2. The Word Reveals the Solution**

But not only does the Word reveal the sin; the Word reveals the solution.

## B. By the Blood of Christ

Now you're cleansed by the Word, and you're also cleansed by the blood. Listen to this scripture—1 John chapter 1, verses 7 through 9: *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,"*—now, watch this—*"and the blood"—the blood—"of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:7–9).

Now Naomi says to Ruth, "Be clean. Be freshly cleansed." How do you do that? You do that with the Word; you do that with the blood—because the Word points out your sins, and the Word reminds you of the blood, and the Word gives you these sacred promises. *"If we confess our sins..."* It doesn't say, "our sin"; it says, *"our sins."* Now what's the difference? Well, we say, "Oh, I guess everybody's a sinner. Lord, I just confess my sin." That won't do it. He says, *"If we confess our sins"* (1 John 1:9)—*"our sins."*

You see, the kind of prayer that says, "Well, Lord, if I've sinned, I'm sorry"—you're wasting your breath. Say, "Lord, I lost my temper. Lord, I had a lustful thought. Lord, I was unkind. Lord, I was lazy. Lord, I did this; I did that." Name it; nail it. Confess your sin—that means agree with God about your sin. The word *confess—homologeo*—means, "to say the same thing," not, "to admit it." There's somebody getting ready to admit some things—you know who I'm talking about. That is an admission. A confession is agreeing with Almighty God that it is wrong—getting on God's side. *"If we confess our sins..."*—by the way, come tonight. I'm going to be talking tonight about true confessions and counterfeit confessions. I want you to come—*"If we confess our sins"—our sins—"he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

Now the very first thing, if you would have an intimate relationship with your Heavenly Bridegroom: Be freshly cleansed. That's the first thing. And by the way, friend, when you do get clean, the Bible says, *"The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7); and, what God calls clean let no man call unclean (Acts 10:15). Hallelujah! Thank God for that!

## II. Be Fragrantly Consecrated

Now secondly, not only be freshly cleansed, but be fragrantly consecrated. I've chosen those words carefully. Be fragrantly consecrated. Look, in verse 3—she also says, *"Anoint thee"* (Ruth 3:3). That is, "Ruth, put on some perfume—put on some perfume." These women know what they're doing—you know that? They're smart. "Ruth, be clean, and be sweet. Be nice to be near. Come with an aroma; come with an anointing."

Now not only were brides anointed, but priests were anointed. And the anointing of

the priest meant a consecration—that we’re set aside. You know, in that love poem in the Bible, the Song of Solomon, also is a picture of Christ and the Church. And the bridegroom says, in chapter 1, verse 14: *“My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi”* (Song of Solomon 1:14). He goes to say, in chapter 4, *“Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices”* (Song of Solomon 4:14). They didn’t have Walgreens, but they could go out into the field and compound an anointing oil. And they would wear it, and the very fragrance—their very fragrance—would speak of love and intimacy.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, if I’m cleansed—if I’m cleansed by the Word and by the blood—how am I anointed? What gives me a sweet-smelling fragrance to my Bridegroom?” The anointing is the Holy Spirit—your anointing is the Holy Spirit. First John chapter 2, verse 27: *“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie”* (1 John 2:27). You see, the anointing that we have is the Spirit of God.

And you know what? When I am clean and when I am filled with the Holy Spirit, and I come before the Lord Jesus Christ, He says, “I like that—I like that.” It is the Holy Spirit, the Bible says, that gives us the fragrance of Christ. You want to be near? You want to have an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? Be anointed, but surrendered, to the Holy Spirit of God, so that He can make you a sweet-selling savor, and so that your very life—your very life—will be like incense to Him.

You know, there are people like that. Folks, I know people that walk with the Lord Jesus—when they walk in the room, you can just smell the incense. I don’t mean physically; I’m talking far beyond the physical. Now these are only emblems of the deeper spiritual truth.

### **III. Be Fitly Clothed**

Number one: Be freshly cleansed. Number two: Be fragrantly consecrated. Number three: Be fitly clothed—be fitly clothed. Look, in verse 3—she says, *“And put thy raiment upon thee”* (Ruth 3:3). Now she’s a prospective bride, and Naomi says, “Now Ruth, wear your best. Dress up—dress up, Ruth. You’re going to see Boaz.” Now she’s been a widow; she is wearing her widow’s garments—garments of mourning. And she’s been in the field gleaning and working, and her clothes are dusty and dirty. “Get rid of those things, Ruth. Dress up, Ruth. You’re going to meet Boaz.” That must have been wonderful good news for Ruth.

Do you know the gospel of good news is this? Put these verses in your margin—Isaiah chapter 61, verses 1 through 3—here’s what Isaiah the prophet said; the Lord



Jesus quoted him when He began His public ministry: *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,”*—Ruth was brokenhearted—*“to proclaim liberty to the captives,”*—Ruth had been taken captive by sin, sorrow, and death—*“and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;”*—this poor, brokenhearted woman needed comfort. Notice this—*“to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”* (Isaiah 61:1–3).

This is the way Ruth is to dress up. “Ruth, put off your ashes of sorrow. I’m going to give you beauty for ashes. Ruth, put away your mourning. I’m going to give you joy for mourning. Ruth, put off the garment of heaviness. I’m going to give you the garment of praise.” How do you come before the Lord Jesus Christ? Friend, with beauty, and joy, and praise—that’s the way you dress up for the Lord.

Well, where do you get those kinds of clothes? Isaiah 61, verse 10: *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels”* (Isaiah 61:10). You want Jesus to be real to you? Pull some of the groans out of your prayers and shove in some *hallelujahs*. *“Come before his presence with singing”* (Psalm 100:2). Praise Him; praise Him; praise Him; praise Him! Put on the garments of praise, and you’ll find out that He’ll be more real to you than He has been with old, stale, stained, take-it-or-leave-it prayers.

#### **IV. Be Fully Committed**

So be freshly cleansed—wash yourself. Be fragrantly consecrated—anooint thee. Be fitly clothed—put off those old garments, and clothe yourself with the garments of salvation to come before the Lord. Number four: Be fully committed—be fully committed. Now look, if you will, in verse 3 and 4—the last part of verse 3: *“But make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down,”*—watch this—*“that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down”* (Ruth 3:3–4).

What does this mean? “Ruth, you place yourself at the feet of your redeemer.” The most sacred place on earth is at the feet of Jesus. You place yourself at the feet of your Redeemer. This was a sign of full commitment. She was saying... When she did this, she came to the threshing floor. Boaz is asleep on the threshing floor. She pulls back the corner of his long garment, and there, at his feet, she places herself. It was her way of saying, “Boaz, I am willing to take you as my redeemer husband.”

There's nothing dirty here; there's nothing indecent here. Do not interpret this in the light of modern America. This was a threshing floor. There were whole families there. As a matter of fact, she said, "When you go to this threshing floor, you look and see where he is—where he's lying down." It's not something in some clandestine motel room somewhere, and people are there. And as a matter of fact, in verse 11, he says to Ruth, "I know that you're a virtuous woman" (Ruth 3:11). Nothing dirty, nothing impure—no. But what she is doing here—she is placing herself at his feet, under his protection. As a matter of fact, when she says, "Put your skirt over me," the word *skirt* is the same word that is translated *wings* in the earlier chapter, where this woman was said to come under the wings of Jehovah (Ruth 3:9). What she is saying is that, "I've placed myself under your protection. I am fully committed to you."

Question: Can you have an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ if you're not fully committed to Him? Answer: No—no. Is Christ Lord? I mean, have you—and I ask myself this question, folks. I prayed over the message before I preached it. I had to ask myself every one of these questions—Have I placed myself at the feet of my Redeemer? You know, it was Mary, in the New Testament, who had the habit of sitting at the feet of Jesus. The most sacred place on Earth is not in that pew where you're sitting, not at this altar, not behind this pulpit, not some temple somewhere; the most sacred place on Earth is at the feet of Jesus, when you are fully, fully, fully committed to Him, amen?

## **V. Be Faithfully Compliant**

Now here's the last of these five things. If you want Him to be real to you, you want that intimate relationship with Him, not only, be fully committed, but be faithfully compliant—faithfully compliant. Look now, in verses 4 and 5 of this same chapter: "*And she said unto her,*"—that is, Ruth said to Naomi—"All that thou sayest unto me I will do" (Ruth 3:5). And verse 4: *And he will tell thee what thou shalt do*" (Ruth 3:4). Ruth is compliant; she is ready to obey. She is ready to be not only a hearer of the word, but a doer of the word. And this is the final step in fellowship with our Heavenly Boaz and Redeemer Husband.

Do you want to be near to Him without obeying Him? Do you think, somehow, that you can take your place at His feet without hearing His Word? No. Naomi said that, "He will tell you what you should do" (Ruth 3:4). Ruth said, "I'll do what he says. I'll say, 'Yes, Lord. Yes, to your will and to your way'" (Ruth 3:5). You want the Lord Jesus to be a bright, living reality to you? Jesus said, in John chapter 7, verse 17: "*If any man will do [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*" (John 7:17). That is, if you surrender your will to the Lord, God will teach you. It's not, "Lord, You show me what You want me to do, and I'll tell You whether I'll do it or

not.” No—no. You say, “Lord, I’ll do it. What is it?” Have you ever done that? “Lord, I’ll do it. What is it?”

John 14, verse 21, is one of the greatest texts in the Bible about knowing the Lord intimately—listen to it—Jesus said, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,”*—now, watch this next thing—*“and [I’ll] manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21)—“I’ll manifest Myself to him.” *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will...manifest myself to him.”* Fully compliant. The Lord says, “I’m going to be real to you.”

Now do you think you’re going to know God by Bible study? Listen to me—and this may frighten you, and you may disagree with it momentarily—but you don’t know God by Bible study. Sorry about that. Did you know that boys go to seminary sometimes and backslide with a Bible under their arm? What good is it if you know Hebrew and don’t know Him? What good is it if you know Greek, and you don’t know God? Bible study gives you knowledge about God; obedience gives you knowledge of God. There’s a difference—there is a difference. *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me”* (John 14:21). All the rest is just religious talk.

Don’t you stand up and sing, “Oh, How I love Jesus,” and you don’t obey Him. He says, *“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 6:46). *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will...manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21). Boaz was near, and dear, and clear to Ruth, because she says, “Whatever he says to me, I’ll do. I will be faithful and compliant to his will and to his way.”

## Conclusion

Well, in the few moments that we have left, I want you to see Boaz’s response to his bride.

### A. He Received Her

Notice, first of all, that he received her—verses 8 and 9: *“And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman. And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter”* (Ruth 3:8–10)—*“Blessed be thou of the LORD.”* He blessed her—he blessed her. You want a blessing? Ephesians 1, verse 3: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3). The most blessed place on Earth is at the feet of Jesus.

## B. He Reassured Her

Not only did he receive her; he reassured her. Look, if you will, in verses 11 through 13: *“And now my daughter, fear not; for I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of the kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman’s part: but if he will not do the part of the kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning”* (Ruth 3:11–13).

Now I don’t want to get into this too deeply, but there was a nearer kinsman who stood in line before Boaz. We’re going to talk about that nearer kinsman next week, because that nearer kinsman is the law that cannot redeem. We’re going to talk about that next week, but I just want to say that he says to her, “Don’t you be afraid.”

Not only did he receive her, but he reassured her. He spoke peace to her trembling heart. And that’s what so many of us need: to be reassured. You see, she knew that he loved her; and, he did love her. As a matter of fact, he loved her before she loved him; he took the initiative. And the Bible says that, *“We love him, because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19).

And then, the Apostle John says, in the Epistle of 1 John, *“Perfect love casteth out fear”* (1 John 4:18). You know, I used to read that and think, “Man, that’s great, but what good does that do me? I’ve never done anything perfectly but sin. So yeah, if I loved Him perfectly, I wouldn’t have any fear.” And then, one day, God opened my eyes and put this in my thick skull: “Adrian, it’s not your perfect love for Me that casts out fear; it’s My perfect love for you that casts out fear.” As a matter of fact, one translation gives it this way: “We have no need to fear someone who loves us perfectly” (1 John 4:18).

## C. He Replenished Her

Listen. He received her; he reassured her—he said, “Don’t be afraid”—and then, he replenished her. He loaded her down. She had a shawl. He said, “Put that out here.” Now remember, she’d been gleaning in the fields. He put so much barley in that thing that one commentator said it weighed 60 pounds. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, “He loaded it on her” (Ruth 3:15). You know, the Bible says He *“loadeth us with benefits”* (Psalm 68:19). He loaded it on her. I mean, she didn’t need that much barley. Our Lord is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). He loads her down, because he loved her—because she’d come to that place at his feet.

He received her; he reassured her; he replenished her. And I’ve got to hurry to get to the end. She comes back to Naomi. Naomi says, “Who are you?” Now she knew who

she was. You have to understand the question. What she's saying: "Are you the new Mrs. Boaz?" That's what she's saying. "Who are you? Who are you?" And she said, "Oh Mama, it's wonderful. Look at the grain." She told all that she had done; and then, Naomi gives this advice—I want you to listen to it. Look in verse 18—this wraps it up: *"Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall."*—now listen to this—*"for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day"* (Ruth 3:18). "Ruth, you've done your part. Just sit still; just be at rest. The man will not rest till he hath finished the thing. Be at rest; sit still. The man will do it. Ruth, your responsibility is your response to his ability. You sit still. The man will not rest till he finish the thing."

You see, Jesus, our Heavenly Redeemer, came to this earth. The first time we see Him is in the temple, and His parents said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's work?" (Luke 2:49). In John chapter 9, He says, *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day"* (John 9:4).

"The man will not rest till it is finished" (Ruth 3:18). I see Him, as they spit on Him, and jerk the beard on Him, and tell the lies about Him, and laid the lash on His back. Why doesn't He quit? "The man will not rest till He hath finished the thing." I see Him, as they lift Him up to Calvary and nail Him on that cross. And they say, "Come down from the cross." Thank God He didn't, because "the man will not rest until it He finished the thing." And then, there comes that moment when He says, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30)—"It's done; it is done." And now the man is resting. He's seated at the right hand of the Father, for He hath done it—He hath done it. The man did not rest until He finished the thing. And that's the reason, folks, that I can rest, and you can rest—because we've entered into the finished rest of our Redeemer—our Boaz, the Lord Jesus. Amen? Amen.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Now if you have never, ever given your heart to Jesus, you need to do so today. And I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you, if you want to be saved. He's already paid for your sin with His blood on the cross. If you'll just say, "Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. I open my heart now. I turn from my sin. I take my place at Your feet, my blessed Redeemer Husband, my Heavenly Boaz. I give You my heart and my life forever"... Say, "Pastor, I can't remember all of that." Well, just pray this: "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, and forgive me, and save me. Save me, Jesus." Pray that from your heart. And then, those of you who are already saved, would you say, "Lord, teach me how to draw near—teach me how to draw near to You—and to know You intimately. In Your name I pray. Amen."

# Redeeming Love

*By Adrian Rogers*

## Main Scripture Text: Ruth 4

*“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.”*

RUTH 4:10

## Outline

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- II. A Picture of Our Renewed Life
  - A. Your Past
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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you turn, please, to Ruth, the Book of Ruth—Joshua, Judges, Ruth—and turn to Ruth chapter 4. This is the fourth in a series of messages entitled “Redeeming Love.” We come to the end of this four-chapter book today; and, it’s been a blessing to my heart to review it, and I have been strengthened by it.

A little boy went into a pet store, I’m told, to buy a puppy, went in with his dad, and there was a box full of puppies. And you know, puppies are wonderful—at least they are, as long as they’re puppies—and they were all there in the box. There was one little puppy that the boy wanted more than any other puppy; it was a puppy that was happily wagging its tail. And the little guy said, “I want the one with the happy ending.”

Well, friend, the story that we have today has for us a happy ending. It doesn’t start happily, but it ends happily. It starts with a funeral, but it ends with a wedding. It starts with a famine, but it ends with fullness. And you know, the Bible says, very much like

our music that we've been singing today, in Psalm 30 and verse 5, that, "*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*" (Psalm 30:5). And this is the happy ending to this story. It is a wonderful story about two people who get married. And we just feel like we just want to add a last verse to this book and have it say, "And they lived happily ever after." It is the story of a marriage between a woman whose name is Ruth and a man whose name is Boaz.

Now it's a wonderful love story in and of itself, but Ruth was a Moabitess and Boaz was an Israelite. And Ruth was a stranger and alien; she was from Moab, which was a nation—a hated and hateful nation—which had a curse upon it. And she was alienated from the commonwealth of Israel; and yet, Boaz redeemed her, brought her in, married her, and Ruth has become, therefore, a picture of all of us. Ruth is a picture of the Church, which is the bride of Christ. And Boaz, who redeemed her, is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our kinsman Redeemer. Now we've been telling you that before. We don't want to belabor that point, but I do want to keep it in your heart and in your mind.

Now in this fourth chapter, the key word is *redemption*. Have you got that? The key word is *redemption*. The word *redemption* is used in this one chapter at least 15 times. Let's just take one verse, and you'll get the idea. Look in verse 4: "*And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it besides thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it*" (Ruth 4:4). Now I know you may not know the meaning of that verse. All I'm reading that verse for is to show you the word *redeem, redeem, redeem, redeem, redeem*. We're talking, folks, about redemption and our kinsman Redeemer—that is, the One who is very near to us, the Lord Jesus, has redeemed us. So here's the story. Now remember, it begins with a funeral, but it ends with a wedding. It begins with a famine; it ends with fullness. It begins with weeping, but joy has come.

Now there are three things that I want you to see in this fourth chapter—three pictures. Remember that we told you that, in the Old Testament, we have pictures of salvation and pictures of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes, we have to look for a long time to see them, and then they just burst out in front of us. Why does God hide these things? Well, I think, for one reason, that we can have the joy of discovering it. I think, for another reason, it's one of the great affirmations and confirmations of the inspiration of the Scripture. None of this could've happened just by chance. But you're going to see three pictures of salvation here, in the fourth chapter of the Book of Ruth. And what you're going to see is a picture of our redeeming Lord—that's the Lord Jesus; and then, you're going to see a picture of our renewed life—what happens when we come to Jesus; and then, we're going to see a picture of our restored legacy—what we get when we come back into the family of God. Are you ready for that?



## I. A Picture of Our Redeeming Lord

Let's look at a picture, now, of our redeeming Lord that's found here, in this book. Look, if you will now—I'm going to read verses 1 through 6: *"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"—that is, Boaz—"took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar my own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it"* (Ruth 4:1–6).

Now right away, if you're not familiar with this, if you're a new Christian or new in the Bible, this is all very confusing to you—perhaps makes very little if no sense at all—but let me give you some background that will help clear it up. This took place in ancient Israel, and there were some laws in ancient Israel that you need to understand. Number one was the law of the kinsman redeemer, and number two was the law of the Levite marriage—the kinsman redeemer and the Levite marriage.

Now God would give to a tribe in a family land, and He wanted that land to stay in the family. Sometimes, an owner of the land would mortgage his land; he'd get bankrupt, and he'd sell his land to somebody else. But God had a plan—that if a man did this, that somebody else who was a near relative could come and redeem that land and buy it back. So obvious the name—*kinsman redeemer*. There was also a law of the land called the *law of the Levite marriage*. If a man married a woman, and they didn't have any children, and the man died, then, in order to keep his name alive, a brother of this man was to come and take this man's wife, who is now a widow, marry her, and endeavor to have children, that he would have his name perpetuated. So the land and the name are very important to the Jews. So there was the kinsman redeemer who could come and buy back the land, and then there was the kinsman who would come and marry the widow to raise up children.

Now Boaz is a kinsman redeemer, and also he's one who's going to marry Ruth. Ruth is a widow. Her husband has died, and her estate has been sold; and so, that's the background of this passage of Scripture. If you don't understand that, it's going to be hard to understand.

Now there were three things that were necessary in order for a man to be able to buy back the land, to buy back the estate, and to take the widow that came with the estate. Number one: He had to have the legal qualifications—that is, he had to be a near kinsman. Number two: He had to have the money to do it; he had to be wealthy enough to buy it. Number three: He had to be willing to do it, because it wasn't forced upon him. So he had to be a near kinsman; he had to be wealthy enough to do it; and he had to be willing enough to do it. Now friend, that is a picture of our redeeming Lord, and I want you to see that very clearly.

Now let me just go back before we get into this a little deeper and show you who Jesus is a picture of that. Put in your margin, if you want to find these laws, write down—I'm not going to read them to you—but if you want to find these laws, you can find them in Leviticus chapter 25 and Deuteronomy chapter 25.

#### **A. Jesus Is Legally Worthy**

Now I want you to see how Boaz, number one, was legally worthy. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it”* (Ruth 4:6). Now what does that mean? Well, Boaz says to Ruth, “Ruth, I'd be happy to buy this land back, and I'd be happy to marry you, but I'm not the first in line. There's somebody else who's first in line. I am a near kinsman, but there is somebody who is nearer to you than I, and he has to have first chance. And if he doesn't do it, then I will do it.”

So they went out to the gate of the city, and Boaz waited until he saw that man who was the nearer kinsman than even Boaz. He said, “Hey, you...”—King James, “Ho, such a one!”—“Hey, you, come over here. I want to talk to you,” and he explained to him about Ruth, and Naomi, and the land, and all of that. And he said, “Do you want to buy this property? Do you want to redeem this property? You can do it; you have the right. You're standing in line; you're a near kinsman. You're a kinsman redeemer.” He says, “All right, I'll buy it.” But he says, “Now wait a minute. Along with the land comes a woman, Ruth. You're going to marry Ruth if you buy this land. You're going to get Ruth along with the land.” And he says, “Oh no, I'm sorry, I cannot redeem it, lest I mar mine own inheritance.”

Now who is this man? Who is this nearer kinsman? If Boaz pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the nearer kinsman who cannot redeem? He's Adam—Adam. You see, everybody's either in Adam or in Christ. You see, who is my real, real close relative? Adam. We're all related to Adam, are we not? And in Adam, all die. He is the near relative that we all have.

I was preaching in a revival, one time, and a woman said to me—she came up afterwards, and she said, “You're a Rogers, aren't you?” I said, “Yes ma'am.” She said,

“Well,” she said, “I have been doing some work on our genealogy.” She stood up real tall, and said, “Because I’m a Rogers.” She said, “You will be happy to know that the Rogers came over on the Mayflower.” I said, “Well, that’s wonderful.” I said, “I’ve traced it back further than that.” Boy, did she get excited. And I said, “I’ve traced it all the way back, and you need to know that we came from a crooked farmer and a drunken sailor. The farmer was Adam and the sailor was Noah. That’s how far back we go.” And that let some of the air out of her just a little bit there.

But folks, I want to tell you that our near kinsman is Adam, and in Adam all die (1 Corinthians 15:22). Remember what Boaz said. He sat there, in the gate, and he said, “Let’s get ten witnesses—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.” Who are the ten witnesses that say that our Adamic nature cannot save us? The Ten Commandments. Got ten witnesses, and there they are—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Count them up. And by the way, all of us are guilty of breaking all of them. You say, “Well, I’ve never committed adultery,” or, “I’ve never killed anybody.” No. Listen, friend. The law hangs together. The Bible says if we break the law in one point, we’re guilty of all—we’re guilty of all (James 2:10). God demands perfection.

You say, “well, I’ve only broken two or three of them.” Let’s just say you’ve broken one of them. Let’s suppose that you’re hanging over a fire by a chain of ten links. Nine of those links are forged steel, and one of them is crepe paper. How safe will you feel? You see, friend, God demands perfection.

There are ten witnesses that say we cannot redeem ourselves, and this nearer kinsman—notice how full of self he is in verse 6: “I need my inheritance” (Ruth 4:6). No, he can’t do it, so full of self and selfishness. But there is One, therefore, who is next in line: the Lord Jesus; and so, friend, Jesus became a human being, that He might become our near kinsman. You see, that’s the reason for the Incarnation. Why did Jesus step out of Glory? Why did He come down on that dark Judean night to be born through the portals of a virgin’s womb? Why did the great eternal God become a man? Why the Incarnation? Why the virgin birth? So that He could be our nearer kinsman.

Let me give you a birth there—put it in your margin—Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14: “*Forasmuch, then as the children*”—that’s talking about us—“*are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;*”—Jesus, because you and I are flesh and blood, became flesh and blood—“*that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil*” (Hebrews 2:14). And the Bible now calls the Lord Jesus Christ our brother—our brother. You see, that’s why He became man: that He might be our near kinsman. And so I want to say—put this down if you make notes and like an outline—Jesus is legally worthy; Jesus is legally worthy. He could not redeem us as God, though He is God. He had to redeem us as man. He had to be our

near kinsman. Our estate was lost by a man to a nearer kinsman. It is redeemed by a man: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let me just share with you a little bit from the Book of Revelation. Now let's just praise the Lord a little bit. You don't even need to turn to it; just let me read it to you from Revelation chapter 5. I want you to listen. We're talking about our Lord, who is legally worthy. The Apostle John is on the Isle of Patmos, and he has a vision of things to come. And here's the vision—listen to it. John says, *"And I saw in the right hand of him that set upon the throne a book written within and on the backside,"*—now, the One sitting on the throne, of course, is Almighty God. And John sees the Father has a book, a scroll, that's written on the front and on the back—*"sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?"* Now this book, friend, is the title deed of the whole earth. This book is the official document that determines the outcome of all history. And John sees this book, and it's sealed. And John says, "Who's able to open this book?" *"And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah,"*—that's Jesus—*"the Root of David,"*—that's Jesus—*"hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain"*—the word for *lamb*, here, is the word that means "little lamb." I mean, it means "baby lamb"—*"as it had been slain..."*—now, here's a little lamb that has been killed, but this lamb has *"...seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book"*—the little lamb takes the book—*"out of the right hand of him that set upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours,"*—that's incense—*"which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people"* (Revelation 5:1–9).

Now John sees this book, and there's nobody that is able to open the book—no one in politics, no one in government, no one in religion, no one in science, no one in philosophy, no one in economics—no one can open the book. And you know, the question is not, "Who is willing?" but "Who is worthy?" John sees no one is worthy until he sees the Lamb, and the angel says, "Don't you cry, John. The Lamb is able to open the book."

Now I want you folks to listen to me very carefully. Our world's in a mess—you know

that, don't you? Our world's in a mess. And you know how Satan is described? Number one: as a dragon. You know how the coming antichrist is described? As a beast. Now here is the great ferocious dragon, and here is the beast with his militant maidens. And you know who the Lord sets against the dragon and the beast? A little lamb—a little lamb. Now friend, I want to tell you that that Lamb has redeemed us with His blood. He alone is worthy. Now put it down: Worthy is the Lamb. Jesus is legally worthy.

### **B. Jesus Is Lavishly Wealthy**

But not only is Jesus legally worthy; Jesus is lavishly wealthy. Now in order to buy back Ruth, Boaz had to have money. In chapter 2, verse 1, Boaz is not just called a *wealthy man*; he is called “*a mighty man of wealth*” (Ruth 2:1). Remember that the kinsman redeemer...remember he had to be a near kinsman? Number two: He had to have sufficiency to buy the estate back. Now Jesus is lavishly wealthy. You see, Jesus paid a greater price for us than Boaz paid for Ruth. Put this in your margin—1 Peter chapter 1, verses 18 and 19: “*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...*”—underscore the word *redeemed*—“*...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1 Peter 1:18–19). Then put down Ephesians 1, verse 7: “*We’re redeemed through His blood*” (Ephesians 1:7). And then, remember Revelation 5:9 that we already read: “*Thou...hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.*” There is no redemption without a price. Jesus paid that price. Put down 1 Peter 3, verse 18: “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*” (1 Peter 3:18).

You know, sometimes I will preach on Calvary, and I will study and try to imagine and to take from Scripture all the stories—at least all of the things, the events—that surround dark Gethsemane and bloody Calvary. And sometimes I will be so moved when I study that I will weep. And I want to make it so real to the congregation; and so, I say, “God, help me. Help me to tell people the price that was paid. Lord, illumine my mind. Father, anoint my tongue; energize my body. Help me, Lord, to tell a jaded congregation the price that was paid.” And I’m going to tell you something, folks: I’ve been preaching long enough to know that people’s eyes glaze over; they become numb; they don’t seem to pay much attention to it.

Let me tell you a story. There was a fisherman who went out fishing; he took his dog with him. This fisherman was a great fisherman, and catching fish was very important to him. And the dog somehow got sight of some movement on the shore—maybe some waterfowl or something—and the dog began to bark while the fisherman was trying to be very quiet to catch fish; irritated the fisherman. And he spoke to the dog; the dog kept barking. Again, he hit the dog; the dog kept barking. This fisherman, in a fit of rage, took out a hatchet he had in the boat, and took one of those dog’s paws, and put it on

the gunnels of that boat, and, with that hatchet, cut off that paw, and threw it in the water. Then, he took another paw of that yelping dog, and put his hatchet down, and cut that paw off, and threw it in the water; then cut both paws of the hind legs from that dog, and, with blood pouring out and nothing to swim with, threw that dog in the water to drown.

I've been watching your face, now, as I've told that story. Some of you have been going like that: "How terrible!" Friend, I've seen people get more upset over a dog having his paws chopped off than the Son of God hanging upon the cross in agony and blood. You see, what's wrong with us? What is wrong with us is that we have heard the story of Calvary so much that we fail to understand the price that was paid for us? Jesus, with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood, redeemed us; He redeemed you. Say to yourself, "He redeemed me; He died for me."

### C. Jesus Was Lovingly Willing

Jesus was legally worthy. Jesus was lavishly wealthy, because He redeemed us with His blood. And then, last of all, He was lovingly willing—listen: legally worthy, lavishly wealthy, and lovingly willing. You see, Boaz did not have to buy Ruth, nor did the Lord Jesus have to buy us. There's nothing that says that He had to redeem us. I have told you many times: *He does not love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because He loves us.* Friend, He just loves us by His sheer grace, just as Boaz loved Ruth before Ruth ever knew his name. And we love Him because He first loved us. That's the great love that He has for us. And so I want you to see, first of all, that Boaz is a picture of our redeeming Lord. Have you got it? Legally worthy, lavishly wealthy, and lovingly willing.

## II. A Picture of Our Renewed Life

All right, now, here's the second thing I want you to see: Not only do we have a picture of our redeeming Lord, but we also have a picture of our renewed life.

Now I want you to think about who Ruth was and what Ruth was like. Ruth had three major problems. I'd like very much, this time, if you'll turn in the Bible—put your bookmark there, in Ruth chapter 4—and turn in the Bible to Ephesians 2; just turn to Ephesians 2. And there are two verses here that so clearly delineate what I'm trying to say. You're going to see Ruth's three problems; and, if you're an unsaved person, these are your three problems. Here they are. She had three major problems; they're found in Ephesians 2, verses 12 through 13. Now Paul is describing what we were before we met the Lord Jesus Christ, and he says, "*At that time ye were without Christ,*"—and, everybody here in this room is with Christ or without Christ. Now here's the description of those without Christ—"*being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now*



*in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*" (Ephesians 2:12–13).

Now friend, that's the story of Ruth. Now Ruth had three problems: her past, her present, and her future. And every unsaved man, woman, boy, or girl is like Ruth, and you've got three problems.

### **A. Your Past**

Your past. What was her past? Well, she was born a Moabite; she was an alien. Look, if you will, again, in this passage of Scripture—Ephesians 2:12: *"being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel."* She was a Moabite. She was under a curse; she lived under a curse. Deuteronomy 23, verse 3 says, "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter the congregation of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 23:3). The Moabites were descendants of Lot, who had a child through an incestuous relationship with his daughter. They were a thorn in the side of Israel, and the curse was upon them. And according to the law, the law could not admit Ruth. By the law, she was shut out. Spiritually, she was born on the wrong side of the tracks, and so is every one of us. *"In Adam all die"* (1 Corinthians 15:22). Now she was an alien; and so, that's her past.

### **B. Your Present**

Now her present—look at her present there, in verse 12: *"strangers from the covenants of promise"* (Ephesians 2:12). She did not enjoy the things of God; she was without the things of God. She was a stranger to these things; the joys of the life with Christ were not hers. Hers was a life marked by tragedy and sorrow. And her dreams had turned to dust, and her hopes had melted away. That's her present. And if you're without Christ, that's your present; that's where you are today.

### **C. Your Future**

And then, Ephesians chapter 2, verse 12 goes on to say, *"having no hope"* (Ephesians 2:12). That was her future: hopeless. Her past: cursed. Her present: crushed. Her future: condemned. God help people to understand where they are! That's where you are. Sitting in church won't change that. You need Jesus. Ruth is a picture of all of us. She had three major problems. You could sum them up in three words: sin, sorrow, and death. That's the enemy of all of us.

But now, wait a minute. I want you to see what happens now. Remember, put this verse down—Ephesians 2, verse 19: *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God"* (Ephesians 2:19). Why? Because, Boaz had redeemed her. Do you know what the word *redeem* means? It means "to purchase, to buy back." He had redeemed her. I did a word study of the word *redeemed*, this week. It also means that... There's another word that has a



little prefix that's used with redeemed, and it has the word *ex* in front of it; it means "to buy." And then, again, it means "to buy out" or "to buy, take out of the marketplace"—that is, "to take off of the slave block." When our Lord redeemed us, not only did He buy us, but He took us out of the marketplace. That is, we're no longer for sale. That speaks of our eternal security. And then, to *redeem* means "to set free," and that's what happened to Ruth; that's what happened to Adrian. I have been bought; I've been taken off the marketplace. And I, dear friend, have been set free in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's redemption. That's the wonderful doctrine of redemption that we read over and over again.

Now let me show you something very interesting. This will help to make it clear. Look, if you will, beginning in verse 7, and let's read through verse 10. Now remember that they are there at the gate of the city, and this near kinsman says, "I can't buy her back. No, I don't want to ruin, to mar, my own inheritance." Now notice in verse 7: *"Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe"* (Ruth 4:7–8).

Now here's the way it works: They would say, "Look, you want to buy Ruth?" And he says, "No, I can't buy Ruth. You buy Ruth for me." And he took off his shoe, said, "She's yours—she's yours." That's the way he confirmed it. He just took off his shoe and handed it to the other guy. That's a strange custom, but you know what? Boy, I hope I can get this back home. Do you know what? Do you know what? There's so much richness in that. The Bible's a wonderful book. I think this, Brother Bob, is where we get the statement, "Boy, I'd hate to be in his shoes," or, "I'd love to be in his shoes," or, "If I were in your shoes, here's what I would do." It talks of one person taking the place of another person.

Listen. That's what Jesus did when He saved us. He stands in our shoes; He stands in our shoes. He takes the sin—the Hell, the degradation—all that we have coming; He takes the price that we cannot pay, and Jesus says, "I will stand in your shoes"—as Boaz stood in the shoes of that nearer kinsman—"the old flesh, the Adamic nature." And He said, "I'll do for you what you can't do for yourself: I'll stand in your shoes."

They asked an old man, one time, who had been saved, but wasn't biblically literate; he hadn't been to the Bible fellowship classes at Bellevue, and he wasn't biblically literate. But he was saved—and good and saved. He didn't know anything about the Book of Ruth, but somebody said to him, "Okay, what's it like to be saved?" He said, "Well, I don't know whether I could explain it to you where you could understand it, but to me it's like I'm standing in Jesus' shoes, and He's standing in mine."

Friend, a theologian couldn't have said it any better than that. That's what it is; that's

what it is. “Him who knew no sin, God made Him to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Here was this woman. Her past: She’s an alien. Her present: She’s outside the commonwealth of Israel, outside the promises of God. Her future: no hope. Boaz says, “I’ll take her place. I will redeem her.”

### III. A Picture of Our Restored Legacy

Now here’s a third thing that I want you to see. Now we have seen two things now. We have seen our redeeming Lord; we’ve seen our renewed life. Now I want you to see our restored legacy and, very quickly, some things that Ruth got back. And I just have time just to run through these real fast. But Ruth got five gifts, beginning in verse 10. Look in verse 10.

#### A. The Family That She Received

First of all, look at the family that she received: *“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”* (Ruth 4:10). Now Ruth comes into a family. And friend, when you get saved, you come into the family of God. I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God. She received, as a legacy, a family.

#### B. The Fortune That She Received

She also received a fortune, because (verse 10) Boaz—who, remember, is a mighty man of wealth—marries Ruth. No longer is Ruth now just gleaning in the fields, picking up handfuls of grain. Folks, listen. When she married Boaz, she owns the whole shebang. I mean, she owns it all. She is married to him; she shares his wealth.

Did you know that the Bible says we’re heirs with God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ? (Romans 8:17). Do you know what *joint-heir* means? It means “share and share alike.” I mean, everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to us. Have you ever—have you ever—thought about that? The Bible says that *“the meek shall inherit the earth”* (Psalm 37:11). She received a family; she received a fortune. Now notice—don’t you ever be envious of the prosperity of the wicked—never! Friend, you’re a plutocrat; you’re married to the Lord Jesus.

#### C. The Fame That She Received

And she received a family; she received a fortune; she received fame. Look in verse 11 of this same chapter. The Bible says, *“...be famous in Bethlehem”* (Ruth 4:11). The name Ruth, today, is spoken of with reverence—one of the most beautiful names in the world—and we’re talking about her now, thousands of years after her life. She is

famous. Without Jesus you're going to die—your body's going to rot in the grave; your soul will burn in Hell. But if you know Jesus, you'll shine as the brightness of the stars forever, and ever, and ever. If you know Jesus, folks, you've got fame; you're a royal blueblood; you're a prince; you're a princess; you're married into the family of God.

#### **D. The Fruitfulness That She Received**

And then, she received fruitfulness—listen: a family, a fortune, fame, a fruitfulness. Look, if you will, in verses 11 and 12 of this same chapter here: *“And all the people that were at 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”* (Ruth 4:11), which means—the word *Ephratah* means “fruitful”. She became fruitful—she became fruitful. You—when you go, what difference will it make? Jesus said, “You’ve not chosen Me. I’ve chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit” (John 15:16). She became fruitful, and I wish I had more time to say that.

#### **E. The Future That She Received**

But last of all, folks, she received the future—she received the future. Look, if you will, in verse 16. She had a little baby. *“And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David”* (Ruth 4:16). And David, of course, you know, is the ancestry of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a future this woman has! She's up in Heaven, right now, serving the Lord and glorying in the Lord. I wish I had more time, but time is gone.

### **Conclusion**

Think. Listen. If people knew what they had in the Lord Jesus Christ and had any sense, folks, you couldn't keep them away with a machine gun—you could not do it. You see, listen. Here you are—here you are. Your past: You're an alien. Your present: You're a stranger to the covenants of promise. Your future: You're without hope. But there is a Boaz, a kinsman redeemer. He, friend, is legally worthy. He is lavishly wealthy. He is lovingly willing. And he says, “Hey, I want to marry you. I want to give you a family. I want to give you a fortune. I want to give you fruitfulness. I want to give you fame. I want to give you a future. I want to marry you.” And that's what Jesus is saying to you today: “I gave my life to redeem you. I want you to be my bride.” That's what the Church is: the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now back in verse 11, when they got married, the Bible says all of those witnesses were standing around (Ruth 4:11). Can you imagine Ruth saying, “Well, you now, Boaz, I really would like to be married to you, Boaz, but I don't want anybody to know it. Could

we just do this in secret?” No, she didn’t feel that way. She was happy that everybody knew that she loved Boaz. That’s why we have a public invitation. Did you know that? That’s why we ask people to come forward.

I stand here, and we have weddings, and, coming down this aisle, coming down this aisle, dressed in white is the bride, and there’s the bridegroom. She’s not hoping that no one sees her; she’s hoping everybody sees her. Here she comes; here she comes to him—not ashamed of him.

Jesus Christ said, “If you’re ashamed of me and of my Word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I’ll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). How can you be ashamed of the One who died in agony and blood on that cross for you? You can’t do it. He is your kinsman Redeemer—legally worthy, lavishly wealthy, and lovingly willing. And He said, “I do” to you. It’s time you said, “I do” to Him. Amen?

Father God, seal the message to our hearts, and I pray that many will come to Jesus today. In His dear name. Amen.