



# IT IS DECISION THAT DETERMINES DESTINY

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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# It Is Decision That Determines Destiny

**SERMON REFERENCE:** Ruth 1:1-18

**LWF SERMON NUMBER:** #2086

In the midst of some of the darkest days recorded in Scripture, we are given a love story: Ruth's love story, one which counts for all of eternity. The Book of Ruth is a beautiful example of how decisions determine destiny.

First, this story reveals the principle of willing choice.

Ruth 1:1-2 states that in the midst of a famine in Bethlehem, Elimelech led his family (including Ruth) into the pagan land Moab, which proved to be a deadly decision. We are the sum total of our decisions: we are free to choose, but we are not free not to choose; nor are we free to choose the consequences of our choices.

Adrian Rogers says, "First you make your choice, and then your choice chooses for you."

Second, this story reveals the problems of a wrong choice.

Elimelech made the wrong choice because he had the wrong motive. He was physically motivated rather than spiritually motivated: seeking refuge from a famine in a cursed land.

He also chose the wrong method: walking by sight and not by faith. And to his demise, he served the wrong master by dwelling in enemy territory. This wrong choice resulted in tragic consequences, as Elimelech and his two sons died, leaving Naomi, Orpha and Ruth as vulnerable widows.

But this story also reveals the power of a wise choice.

After Naomi urged her daughters-in-law to return to their homelands, Ruth's decision changed the entire trajectory of her life.

"But Ruth said: 'Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God'" (Ruth 1:16).

Ruth was a cursed, crushed, and condemned woman. But because she decided to hold onto the God of her late husband's family—even in their disobedience and their doubt—she was given a new hope. She was given a new direction, dependence and desires. Her wise choice brought on new devotion to God, new dedication to Naomi and a new destiny.

As a result, the maid of Moab married the bachelor of Bethlehem and became an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## LIFE APPLICATION

There is life and death in every decision we make; choose to hold onto Him, to live by faith and make wise decisions.



# It Is Decision That Determines Destiny

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## 1) INTRODUCTION

- a) The story of Ruth is a true story.
  - i) The book of Ruth is the only book in the Bible devoted completely to the life of one woman.
  - ii) It is the story of redemption.
    - (1) Ruth is a picture in the Old Testament of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - (2) Boaz, the man she marries, is a picture of Christ, our kinsman redeemer.
- b) We are the sum total of our decisions.
- c) The book of Ruth was written during difficult, dark days.
  - i) It was a dark day spiritually and nationally.
  - ii) There was apostasy, anarchy and famine in the land.
  - iii) Judges 21:25
- d) The book of Ruth is a bright hope for dark days.
- e) If we find ourselves in a time of darkness, trouble or despair, then Jesus Christ will be to us what Boaz was to Ruth.
- f) The first chapter of Ruth tells of choices made and their consequences.

## 2) THE PRINCIPLE OF A WILLING CHOICE (Ruth 1:1-2)

- a) Bethlehem, the place where Elimelech lived and where Jesus would be born, means "house of bread."
  - i) The Moabites were the archenemies of Israel.
    - (1) The Moabites were a pagan race who lived in an obscene, pagan place.
  - ii) Elimelech, because there was a famine in the land, decided to take his family to Moab.
    - (1) Elimelech made a bad decision, and this decision marked his life with tragedy.
- b) We are free to choose.
  - i) Deuteronomy 30:19
  - ii) God sets before us today the same choice that was before Elimelech: the choice between life and death, blessing and cursing.
  - iii) God desires us to choose life.
  - iv) We are not victims of fate: we are free to choose.
- c) We are not free not to choose.
  - i) We always make a choice.
    - (1) There is no way we can say, "I will not choose."
      - (a) To refuse life is to choose death.
      - (b) To refuse Christ is to choose not to have Christ.
      - (c) We cannot escape making a choice.
  - ii) Some say that they will not say yes or no to Jesus; that they simply will not make a



decision about Jesus. But that in itself is a decision: to choose not to say yes to Jesus is to say no to Christ.

(1) Matthew 12:30

(2) Luke 11:23

- d) We are not free to choose the consequences of our choice.
  - i) First we make our choice, and then our choice chooses for us.
    - (1) When we make a few big choices, that takes care of a lot of little choices.
    - (2) The biggest decision we can ever make is to receive Jesus Christ as Lord.
  - ii) Our choices inevitably bring consequences into our lives and into the lives of those close to us.

### 3) THE PROBLEMS OF A WRONG CHOICE

- a) Elimelech made a wrong choice when he decided to go into the land of Moab.
  - i) He knew the truth.
  - ii) His name meant "My God is King."
- b) Elimelech made a wrong choice due to three basic reasons:
  - i) He had a wrong motive.
    - (1) Ruth 1:1
    - (2) There was a famine in the land, and he was motivated by physical reasons, not spiritual reasons.
      - (a) Elimelech knew that God had promised to bless him, but he decided he had to take care of himself.
    - (3) He placed the physical above the spiritual.
      - (a) Psalm 37:25
      - (b) Matthew 6:33
    - (4) We often have our priorities are out of order.
      - (a) We love things and try to use God rather than loving God and using things.
    - (5) God will not work in second place.
  - ii) He had a wrong method.
    - (1) Elimelech walked by sight, not by faith.
      - (a) He looked at appearances.
    - (2) Faith is believing God in spite of appearances and obeying God in spite of consequences.
      - (a) The appearance was famine in the "house of bread," Bethlehem.
      - (b) Elimelech, walking by sight and not faith, tried to run away.
    - (3) Psalm 55:6
      - (a) The Psalmist describes a desire to run away from problematic circumstances; but God desires to give us the wings of an eagle to mount up over our problems.
        - (i) Isaiah 40:31
  - iii) He had the wrong master.
    - (1) When Elimelech went over into Moab, he went into enemy territory.
      - (a) The Moabites had been enemies of God.



- (b) The Moabites had invaded Israel and ruled over Israel for 18 years.
      - (c) God had placed a curse upon the Moabites.
    - (2) When we live in disbelief and disobedience, we dishonor God and we move into the enemy's territory.
      - (a) When Elimelech moved his family to Moab, his two sons married daughters of Moab.
      - (b) Elimelech's entire life and his family suffered because he could not believe God.
  - c) Elimelech's choice brought consequences.
    - i) It brought death.
      - (1) Ruth 1:3-5
        - (a) Elimelech and his two sons died in Moab.
        - (b) We cannot run away; we must get right with God.
    - ii) It brought deprivation.
      - (1) Elimelech wanted to be blessed.
        - (a) We will find a blessing in the place of blessing.
        - (b) When we get out of the place of blessing, we should not expect to be blessed.
          - (i) Naomi changes her name to Mara, which means "bitterness."
          - (ii) She begins to blame God for her situation, but God wasn't to blame for Elimelech's choice.
- 4) THE POWER OF A WISE CHOICE (Ruth 1:7-18)
  - a) Naomi and her two daughters-in-law were left in Moab with no sustenance and no way of taking care of themselves.
  - b) Naomi hears of the blessings back in Bethlehem.
    - i) God has visited His people in Bethlehem.
    - ii) Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem.
  - c) Ruth 1:7-14
    - i) Orpah kissed her mother-in-law
    - ii) But Ruth clave unto Naomi.
  - d) Ruth 1:15-18
    - i) Ruth decided to go with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem.
    - ii) Ruth's decision was a decision for destiny.
      - (1) It not only changed the course of Ruth's life, but it changed our lives, too.
      - (2) Ruth became an ancestor to the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - iii) Ruth had previously lived a cursed life.
      - (1) Deuteronomy 23:3
      - (2) Ephesians 2:12
        - (a) Grace did for Ruth what the law could not do.
    - iv) Ruth had a crushed life.
      - (1) She had known poverty and deprivation.
      - (2) She had lost her husband and father-in-law.
      - (3) She was without a home and without help.



- v) Ruth had a condemned life.
    - (1) Because her husband had died, she had a sentence of death upon her.
    - (2) Like Ruth, we have a sentence of death upon us because Adam, the head of the human race, died; and in Adam, we all die.
      - (a) We lost our inheritance, just as Ruth had lost her inheritance.
  - e) When Ruth decided to stay with Naomi and serve the living God, all things became new.
    - i) 2 Corinthians 5:17
    - ii) Revelation 21:5
  - f) There are seven elements of Ruth's decision:
    - i) There was a new determination.
      - (1) Ruth 1:16-18
    - ii) There was a new direction.
      - (1) Ruth 1:16
    - iii) There was a new dependence.
      - (1) Ruth 1:16
    - iv) There was a new desire.
      - (1) Ruth 1:16
    - v) There was a new devotion.
      - (1) Ruth 1:16
    - vi) There was a new dedication.
      - (1) Ruth 1:17
    - vii) There was a new destiny.
      - (1) Ruth 1:17
      - (2) When we choose Christ, we too have a new destiny.
        - (a) Romans 8:38-39
- 5) CONCLUSION
- a) Ruth's decision to go to Bethlehem with Naomi changed the course of her life.
  - b) Ruth chose life.
  - c) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
  - d) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
    - i) Romans 3:23
    - ii) Romans 10:9-10
    - iii) Romans 10:13
    - iv) Acts 16:31
    - v) John 3:16



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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. And 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 at 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, we love the love story.

But the wonderful thing about this story, it's not a romance novel. 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 is devoted completely 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, 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, and we'll get into that later on in this 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 and every man did that which was right in his own eyes." 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.

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 is where Jesus was born, Bethlehem, Judah. The word Bethlehem means "house of bread," "And a certain man of Bethlehem-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 Bethlehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab and continued there."

Now the Moabites, as we're going to see, were the archenemies of Israel. They were an obscene, pagan race and that was an obscene, pagan place. And here is a man of the commonwealth of Israel, because there was a famine in the land, makes a decision, and he says, "Mahlon, Chilion, Naomi, come!" "Where're we going, Dad?" "Well, it looks like there's gonna 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.

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." May I say that to everybody here listening to me, 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.

But now listen to me; you are not free not to choose. There's no way that 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 gonna 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."

I was witnessing on the streets of Pensacola, Florida, one time, and I saw two girls. I'd never



seen them before. They were walking down the streets. 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 young lady, 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, 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." So she didn't understand 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?" And 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 it, 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."

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 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 or not you'll have a live baby or a dead baby. You're gonna have a baby.

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 you want to go?" "I don't know, where you want to go?" "What do you want, what do you want?" And you begin to talk this way; and you're driving the car, you turn this way and that way and all around town. 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. 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 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's some dirty movies in hotel rooms. I don't have to decide each time I go to a different hotel whether I'm gonna watch a dirty movie. I've already made up my mind. I'm not gonna do it. You see, Christ is Lord. When a few big decisions are made then that takes 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're 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 or you can buy a Coke or you can buy a 7 Up, you can buy a large size, a small size. You can buy caffeine or caffeine-free, you can buy it artificially sweetened or sweetened. You can make all of these decisions, and there're not a lot of consequence about those. If you want to buy an automobile, there's 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 two thousand five hundred different kind of light bulbs. A lot of choices are not all that consequential, but there're 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.

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 problem of wrong choice. Now what this man did was 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 had a wonderful family because he came from a kind of a background that would give him a name like that.

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.

Number one, he made a bad choice because of a wrong motive. 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. 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 to live, and after that we have to face God. But what Elimelech is doing he's 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 I'm old and yet I've not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." 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.” 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’s not 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.” 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’s 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.

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 high tails 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 the wings like a dove, then I would fly away and be at rest.” Have you ever wanted to do that? Just get outta here. I mean, just say, “My problem’s so great, if I could just fly away to 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 I 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. 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’d 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.

Now, those are the problems of a wrong choice. What are the consequences of that choice? 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 too 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, both of them and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.” Now here, why did he leave, why did he leave Bethlehem? Well, 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 Samara." 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 Samara."

No, 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 consequences.

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 the thing that he wanted, he didn't get. Do 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 a 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.

Now, I wanna 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've 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 right, 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 is happening. In just a moment we're gonna read starting with verse 7. But 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'm too old to give you other sons to marry. You just stay here. Maybe you can find a man of Moab and marry him. I am going back."

Now pick up the story now, friend, we're talking about the power of a wise decision. Now look if you will beginning of verse 7, "Therefore, she went forth out of her place where she was," that'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 to 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 so they're crying here.

"And they said unto her, 'Surely we will return with thee unto thy people,'" Ruth and Orpah say, "We're going back with you, Naomi." And now 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'm too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have an husband also tonight and should also bear sons, would you tarry for them until they're grown?'"

She said, "Even if I had a husband, even if I could conceive, they'd be little babies; they could not marry you." "Will ye stay for them from having husbands? Nay, my daughters, for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone 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."

Now, boy, that's a very important verse right now. Did you know that we have the kissers and the cleavers? The kissers are those who 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 to her gods,'" underscore that. "Return thou after thy sister in law." Can you imagine such a back slidden 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, 'Entreat 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,'" 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.'" And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her."

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? Heh, she marries into



the royal line, and according to the flesh, she becomes a part of the house of David. 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 a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, they shall not enter the congregation of the Lord forever." The Law said, "Keep her out! She's not worthy." She had a cursed life. And we're gonna 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," but thank God, the grace of God has brought us in.

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's 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, 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 pinned it with the star of hope, because this woman made a wise decision.

Now I want you to look very quickly on the seven elements of that decision, and I want you to jot them down, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. 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. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature."

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, "Entreat me not to leave thee nor to return from following after thee." And later on it says Naomi saw that she was determined. 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 in this service say to Jesus, "Lord, entreat me not to leave You nor to return from following after You."

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." 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."

And then she has a new dependence. She says in verse 16, "Where you lodge, I will lodge." That is, I'm coming under the shadow of your wings. I am looking to you to take care of me. 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."

And then she has a new desire. She says in verse 16, "For thy people shall be my people." You know what that means? "I don't desire these Moabites any more. I don't desire fellowship with pagans any



more. 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. That's one of the reasons that some 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 am 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."

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!" She is 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.

And then there's a new dedication. She says in, in verse 17, "Where thou diest I will die." 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.

And finally, a new destiny. And she says, "And there I'll be buried. 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 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."

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. 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 there 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 our Lord Jesus Christ, she got a whole book in the Bible written just about her because she made a decision.

Have you ever made a decision for Jesus? I was sitting in Northwood Baptist Church, sitting here, my daddy was sitting right beside me. We were in a revival meeting, and I'd never gone to church, maybe once or twice visited. But somebody came and invited my parents to 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 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, first time my dad and we'd ever been in church together. 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 love my dad, respect him, why, he's a great man; didn't know Jesus. 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.

And they said, "Well, here comes Adrian," and they said, "We're glad to see him come." They knew me, just a little neighborhood, you know, little small church, they knew me, they knew the whole story. And I sat there on that front row at Northwood Baptist Church, in that little auditorium.

I sat there on the front row, and they asked me those 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, I went back to that little church and I found a custodian, and I said, "Would you let me in?" The church building 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've 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." 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 in 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, and 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. And help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen."



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