

THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION AND REVIVAL IN RUTH



A series by David Legge

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The Romance Of Redemption And Revival In Ruth - Chapter 1

"Sojourn In Moab"

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I want you to turn with me now to the book of Ruth - Joshua, Judges, Ruth - and I've taken a title for, I suppose, the whole series: 'Redemption and Revival in the Book of Ruth'. We only want to read the first 6 verses of chapter 1.

Verse 1: *"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of 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".* Now that should be pronounced 'Eli-melech', it means 'My God is King' - but we pronounce it here in Ulster as 'Elimelech', so I'll keep with our pronunciation, not to confuse you! But that's an important little point to make: *"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. 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".*

Now I don't know how familiar you are with this little book of Ruth, but there are a number of purposes that the Holy Spirit has inspired this book to us. Perhaps the first and main purpose is historical. When we get to chapter 4, particularly the last verses, you will see that the writer explains the ancestry of King David. What he is doing for us is building a bridge between the time of the Judges - of course, Judges is the book before Ruth - and the time of the kingdom, when God gave to Israel kings to reign over them. So it's bridging the gap between those time periods to show that God was answering the cry of His people in giving them a human king, and how He was doing it, eventually through David.

There isn't only a historical purpose to this book, but there's a prophetic one. Now we're not going to spend time on this this morning, although we will touch on it in subsequent studies, but we see within this book how God has a plan for Israel, and still has a plan for them today - and yet how God is dealing presently with Gentile peoples, yet there is a day coming when He's going to bring Israel back to Himself. There is, thirdly, a typological purpose in the book - you know what a 'type' is, I hope. It's simply a picture in the Bible of some spiritual truth, particularly a New Testament one. Here within this book we have a beautiful romance, but that romance is a picture of a relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church - for He is our Kinsman Redeemer. We'll find out what that means as we study this book.

Then fourthly, and I think this is often the purpose that we miss when we study the scriptures: there is a practical purpose. There is something that this little book says to all of us. It's not just a study of history, a study of prophecy, or typology - it's a study that is personally relevant to all of us here today, particularly those of us who name the name of

Christ, because it touches very poignantly on our relationship as individuals with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it is noteworthy to point out that the two books in the Bible that have titles that are names of women have a contrast with each other. I'm sure you know that the other one I'm thinking of is the book of Esther, and that's a book about a Jewess who married a prominent Gentile. Esther the Jewess married King Ahasuerus - and this other little book named after a woman, Ruth, is about a Gentile woman who married a prominent Hebrew, Ruth marrying Boaz.

Now some people these days say the Bible is all down on women - well, here is the Bible naming two of its titles after a woman. In fact, as you study both of those books, you find out that both of these women played a significant part in God's plan of redemption. Esther, of course, was instrumental in saving God's people from physical destruction. As we will see, Ruth is important in the genealogical link in the messianic line - first of all to King David, and then ultimately to our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Son of David who would save His people from their sins. These women are important, and the books are important! In fact, if you had time - you could turn to it now for a moment - Matthew chapter 1, you'll see the genealogy of the King of the Jews, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In verse 5 of Matthew chapter 1, you see that Boaz - who Ruth will marry - was a descendant of another Gentile, Rahab. We're almost certain that this is Rahab of Jericho, the harlot that we read about. Ruth is another Gentile in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ. She is entering in along with Rahab, a Gentile, to the lineage of Christ.

That is a great picture for us today of the grace of God - what do I mean? Well, you see, both Ruth and Rahab - being Gentiles - were outside the commonwealth of Israel, and all the promises of God that we find in the Old Testament weren't to them. So they were cut off from Jehovah, the God of the Israelites - and yet here we see, in the Lord Jesus Christ, by grace they are being brought in and blessed irrespective of their ethnic origin. That's the wonderful message of the Gospel, that's what the whole Bible is leading to, isn't it? That this is a Gospel, and God is a God who loves the world of sinners lost, to redeem them from the fall!

This little book of Ruth is wonderful, because Ruth, the character herself, belongs to all of us. She was a Gentile, not a Jew - and because she belongs to all of us, we can identify with her. Her Saviour belongs to all of us, Jehovah of the Old Testament, and the Lord Jesus of the New. As the little poem put it:

'What a star of Messianic truth
More beautiful than Gentile Ruth?
In her the Gentiles find a place
To share the hope of Judah's race;
Now see from royal David's line
One hope for Jew and Gentile shine!'

Now the keyword of this book, of course, is the word 'redeemed'. It means simply to buy back that which was lost, and another keyword is connected to the word 'redeemed', it's the word 'kinsman' - or it could be translated 'relative', and you find it 12 times within the book. Now, of course, Boaz is the redeeming relative, or in Hebrew the 'Go'el' - which has such rich meaning we'll see in subsequent studies. Boaz is the one who buys back the land that belonged to Elimelech. He goes into a far country to find bread, he loses everything. Naomi returns back to Bethlehem, and Boaz - her kinsman redeemer - buys back her possessions

and her family in the person of Ruth, and marries Ruth who is now a widow herself. Boaz, Ruth's Go'el, is the picture of our Kinsman Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ - our redeeming Relative who has bought us, not with corruptible things such as silver or gold, but with His own precious blood.

Roy Hession has written a lovely little book on the book of Ruth called 'Our Kinsman Redeemer', and he says that 'Redemption is the key theme of this book, along with revival'. Redemption and revival! He points out that revival is a Greek word beginning with the Latin prefix 're', like 'redeemed', 'revival' - and that Latin prefix simply means 'again'. There are several Bible words beginning with 're', and all of them speak of the restorative - there it is again - the re-storative grace of God: restoration, renewal, regeneration, resurrection, revival. All of them are pointing to the fact that our God is a God of grace who restores what we have lost in sin. That's what this little book is about.

Finney, the great revivalist, said: 'Revival is nothing less than a series of new beginnings' - starting all over again. God starts to do something again because we did it wrong. He does it again, and even if it goes wrong at the time He does it again, He does it over and over again until we get it right. That reminds me of a story I heard on cassette recording told by Peter Brandon, who is an evangelist who sometimes visits the province. Some of you may be familiar with the writings of W.W. Faraday - he wrote on several Bible character studies, good books, it would be worth your while getting them. He was one of the early Christians who belonged to what we now know as the Brethren movement - but there was a great move of God way back in the beginning, when they got back to the New Testament pattern and knew the blessing of God upon them. In his late life W.W. Faraday was expressing reminiscences of those experiences where, at the very Table of the Lord, when they were breaking bread, people were being converted - imagine that! There, after they would break bread, they would bow their heads and ask the Lord for guidance about what they should do in evangelism that day - and whether it was renting a theatre or a cinema, they would go to the places where the people were and preach the gospel, and there were hundreds saved.

Now Peter Brandon is now in his eighties, so he's going back to when he was starting off in ministry and W.W. Faraday was in his eighties or nineties, and he was expressing all this to young Brandon. He said these words, he said: 'You will live to see the day when Gospel Halls and New Testament Assemblies will start closing their doors'. Now, we're in that day today. 'You'll live to see it, but do you know what you need to do when that happens? Do what we did: start all over again!'. I think that's tremendous, there is great profound truth in it, because that is a work of God: He redeems that which is lost, and He revives that which is flagging in life.

Now we're not going to concentrate on redemption this morning, we have plenty of time to do that, but we're going to look at revival. I want you to see in verse 1 the time when this little book of Ruth was taking place - incidentally it was harvest time, as it is harvest time now. But it says specifically here: 'It came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land'. Now if you have a Bible like mine, you'll see right above the title of the book of Ruth the last verse of the book of the Judges - chapter 21 verse 25 - and this was the characteristic mark and trait of this era: 'In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes'. It was a time of moral decay, indeed it was one of the lowest points in the history of the whole nation - there was division, cruelty, apostasy, civil war and national disgrace. So it should not surprise us that it was a time of famine.

Why is that? Well, God promised that He would send famine as chastisement for His people's

disobedience. When they removed themselves from the obligations of covenant blessing, He would send famine. We see this in 2 Chronicles 7, if you want to turn to it, verses 13 and 14 read: 'If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land'. Now there, in those two verses, are the cause and cure of this chastisement of famine that come upon the people. Now notice that famine is in the land because every man did that which was right in his own eyes, but God has told them assuredly: 'If you call upon me in repentance and faith again, I will answer you' - but the people didn't. Oh, they did in cycles of shallow superficial repentance, but they always went back to their sin again.

That is the time that we find this little book of Ruth in. They heard God's calls upon them, but they decided upon their own plans. It is in embryo, in cameo, here in verse 1, of the life of this little family headed by Elimelech - for here he is in Bethlehem, in the promised land, and he gathers his little family together and he leaves Bethlehem and travels to Moab. The famine is there, but he doesn't call upon the Lord - he goes somewhere else. In verses 3, 4 and 5 we see that after Elimelech died in Moab his sons married Moabite wives - Mahlon married Ruth, chapter 4 verse 10 tells us that, and Chilion married Orpah. Now again this was a transgression of God's holy law, because the law said that they weren't to marry Moabites, and Moabites were not to be received into the congregation of the Lord until the tenth generation - Deuteronomy 23:3.

Now we know, with hindsight, that grace, God's grace, is overruling all this to bring Ruth into the line of David and Messiah - but see the disobedience of Mahlon. Oh, grace often overrules our failures and mistakes, doesn't it? Thank God it does, or we'd all be done! But it doesn't make our failures and mistakes right, does it? In verse 1 we see that Elimelech, along with his family, they were only going to sojourn, they were only going to visit this place to get bread in time of famine - and yet in verse 4, at the end, we see that they were still there after ten years, enough time for his two boys to mature and marry wives!

Mahlon and Chilion died leaving Naomi with two foreign daughters-in-law, only married, perhaps, a number of months - Orpah and Ruth. Now imagine the responsibility of the head of the home here, Elimelech. He had led his family from the land of the living, the promised land, to the place of death and barrenness - not only did Elimelech die there, Mahlon and Chilion died there, and the two daughter-in-laws of Naomi were barren there. Mahlon and Chilion didn't have any children.

Warren Weirsbe said: 'A family makes a bad decision, and exchanges one famine for three funerals'. Sidlow Baxter says: 'They sought bread but found graves'. That's what Moab became for them: a graveyard. Now, what does that tell us? Simply that it is a most serious thing to step out of the will of God - that should frighten us, it frightens me.

Well, let's look at these individuals for a moment, or their names at least. If you look at verse 2, let's look at this man Elimelech. Well, I have said already his name means 'My God is King', but it's obvious from this story that he wasn't living up to his name. He wasn't submitting to the Lordship of his King, Jehovah. Naomi, his wife, Naomi's name means 'My pleasant one' - well, as we shall see in our further studies, she had lost all her joy. She said: 'Don't call me 'joyous' or 'pleasant', call me 'bitter''. Mahlon means 'sickly', Chilion means 'pining'. So here's a man whose name says 'My God is King', whose wife is 'a pleasant one' - meant to be, at least - and he doesn't behave as if God is his Lord, and his wife certainly isn't full of joy but

sorrow, and they have two sons who become sickly and pining in this barren land of Moab.

Now look at where they left, verse 1 says they left Bethlehemjudah. 'Bethlehem', you know, means 'house of bread' - it was a place that was meant to be blessed with bread and substance, and great sufficiency. 'Judah', of course, means 'praise'. You will remember from the prophecy concerning the Messiah in the book of Micah, that He was to be born in Bethlehem Ephratah, and 'Ephratah' is the old ancient name for Bethlehem, and it's the root of this name that is given to Mahlon and Chilion, 'Ephrathites'. That ancient name 'Ephratah' means 'fruitfulness'. Bethlehem, 'the house of bread', its ancient name 'fruitfulness' - now, put all these things together for a moment and we get a very powerful picture and message to our souls. These folk could be classed as backsliders, and the message is: we will always backslide when, like Elimelech, we do not submit to the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Living God. When we step out of God's will we lose our joy, we cease to be like Naomi, 'pleasant ones'. We become like Mahlon, 'sickly'; like Chilion, 'pining' away in barrenness, because we have left Bethlehem, 'the house of bread'; Judah, 'the place of praise'; Ephratah, 'the area of fruitfulness'. All we get is barrenness and death!

You know, that's true of individuals and groups of people, assemblies of God's people. When we operate on our own initiative, our own human wisdom rather than waiting on God for His divine direction, it always - always - ends in disaster, no exceptions. So often when I get a gift to me, or a book or something like that, or a card, the person will write Proverbs 3:5-6 on it - oh, that everybody that wrote it would live by it! 'Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths'. Now I know it can be difficult, and it is more difficult today than perhaps it was a generation or two ago. I know, in many respects, Christians' backs are against the wall and it can be difficult to live faithfully and godly lives in a perverse and adulterous generation in which we are living today. Sometimes we feel like David did in Psalm 55: 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest' - we just want to escape. Sometimes the pressure of living a Christian life in this wicked world gets to us. Even in service and ministry, it can be so difficult at times.

Confession is good for the soul, so I'll confess to you one of my recurring dreams - I hope there's no psychologists or psychiatrists here, because it might be something worse than I'm imagining! I have a recurring dream - you know the way sometimes people have a dream that they're falling, and then they waken up before they hit the ground. I'm told if you don't waken up before you hit the ground, you're in trouble - but anyway, that's another thing! I have a recurring dream that I can fly - alright? Maybe you've had this one too? I beat my arms, in the dream now, and I start to fly. I go so high, and I can see everything panoramic down below. Now I'm not a psychiatrist nor a psychologist, but I imagine that it's some kind of interpretation of the fact that I might find myself at that moment in a difficult experience - and you just want to get out of it. 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! That I might fly away'. Now last night my wife was coughing, and my wee boy was coughing all night and I never got a wink's sleep - that was the second night, so that's probably, after I did fall over asleep, just before the alarm went, what I was trying to get away from! But we can feel like that, can't we? Sometimes we take the avenue of exit that is into the world - into Moab - because that's easy, that's the way everybody's going!

Whereas Isaiah says, whilst we might want wings to escape difficult situations: 'They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles' - but it doesn't come by going your own way, no matter how much pressure you're under, it comes by waiting on God, waiting for His way. God is never in a hurry - that's what frustrates me

about Him at times, because I'm always in a hurry! But He never is. So much of the time it's when we're under pressure like that, that we make the wrong move - isn't that right? We have a knee-jerk reaction. Now this is what they did: in famine they went to this place. We've looked at the time, the time of the Judges, look at the place: they went to Moab of all places, southeast of the Dead Sea.

Now the Moabites were the descendants of Lot from his incestuous union with his firstborn daughter that we read about in Genesis 19 - but they also became the enemies of Israel, and treated then despicably during their pilgrim journey in the wilderness from Egypt to Caanan. Even in the book of Judges, nearer to where we are now, we see that Moab invaded Israel and ruled over them for 18 years - Judges 3. Isaiah 16 says they were a proud people, and the Lord says of them in Psalm 60: 'Moab is my washpot' - an expression of disdain.

Now in the Old Testament we can see several other disastrous decisions of men and women of God who decided to sojourn in the world for a while because of difficult situations. Abraham experienced a famine too, and it says in Genesis 12 that Abraham went down to Egypt, and he got all sorts of problems upon himself because of that. Lot, in Genesis 13, went to Sodom - those well-watered plains that looked well to the naked eye, but were full of such wickedness and evil - and would incur the wrath and judgement of God not long after he moved there. We read a similar situation about Isaac. Isaac, in Genesis 26, in a famine as well, went to the Philistines for help - why? I heard it on the radio even this week, to do with the credit crisis and fuel disaster and all the rest: 'Desperate times call for desperate measures'. Now that might be the clarion cry of pragmatism in our world, but you'll never hear God say those words - never!

Sojourning ended up in 10 years of barrenness and backsliding, because bad choices end up in ruined lives, wrong decisions - why? All because God was left out of their plans! Now, today is like the day of the Judges, I'm sure you'll agree - every man does that which is right in his own eyes, and there is no king, there's no answerable responsibility in our society. That is the model of any archetypal permissive society, and we're not surprised about that out in the world, but what about the church? Well, it is the case, similar to the time of the Judges, that our King, our Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ has not returned yet - and many true believers are living like Elimelech, as if they had no King or Lord at all, in unbelief, in disobedience, God has been left out of their lives! They go to church on a Sunday, and they carry the Bible, and they maybe read it, and they maybe pray - but what I'm talking about is: in the intricate details of their life, in the decision-making processes of their plans, God is left out!

I wonder, Christian, is He left out of your life? Is He left out of your business? Is He left out of your studies? Is He left out of the way you run your accounts? Is He left out of the way you operate in your family? There's an interesting point to note when we compare the book of Joshua with the book of Judges, and the two time periods. It's like a tale of two generations, because Joshua's generation was the generation that conquered the land in triumph, but the Judges' generation are the group that polluted the land by their compromise. It was Joshua and his generation that fought the enemies that the Judges' generation ended up making friends with! They end up, as the people of God, fighting each other and not the enemy. Joshua begins as a tale of the rule of God - that's theocracy, where God was in charge - and at the end of Judges we see that it's under the rule of none, not even a king, anarchy!

Through Joshua's conquest the Judges' generation enjoyed comfort, but their problem was: their comfort lead to complacency, and that complacency led to compromise. If that was the case for a second generation group of people in ancient Israel's day, what is it like for a

second, or third, or fourth, or fifth, or sixth, or umpteenth generation of Christians in Ulster today? I think it's the reason why we're in some of the problems we are in as the church of Jesus Christ. Certainly we are a materialistic society, we are comfortable, maybe because of the blessings our forefathers have known. There's nothing to be scorned in being comfortable, every good and perfect gift comes from God - but the problem is when that comfort goes to complacency, and eventually to compromise, and we cease to worship the Giver and worship the gift instead!

You would have seen, I'm sure, the Olympics - and of course, China is in a capitalist boom, a revolution of consumerism. One Shanghai pastor put it like this: 'Consumerism makes you think you don't have to suffer to follow Jesus. It makes you think you can have lots of things, and Christ as well. In reality you end up with lots of things, and most of the time you don't even realise Christ has gone'. Sidlow Baxter said of the book of Ruth and the era of the Judges: 'The God of their fathers was simply a convenient resort in times of extremity. When things were tolerably comfortable, bare-faced betrayal of Jehovah was the order of the day'.

Now I'm asking you as a company of God's people - we've a lot to thank God for, and praise God for that, we all have - but I'm asking every single one of you: do you find yourself in Moab today, in the world? Oh, you don't have to be going to the clubs and pubs to be in the world, you know. A place of stagnation - Moab is spoken of in Jeremiah 48 and verse 11, a paraphrase puts it like this: 'From her earliest history Moab has lived in peace. She is like wine that has been allowed to settle, she has not been poured from flask to flask' - that's the fermentation process, but you could describe it as stagnation. You're not going anywhere! Have the refreshing movements of the Holy Spirit been lost to your heart lately? Has the Bible become a dry book to you, dead? Prayer no longer has passion in it, but it's an empty exercise when you even get round to it? Personal witness is the farthest thing from your mind or heart, let alone volition. Service to God, whatever menial or great way it might be, it's a task, it's a chore - and you've lost your joy!

You see this little book of Ruth? It's a cry to us to examine our souls, because it could be that there is famine there! The prophet Amos talked about a famine not of bread, nor of thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord - and all of that can take place, believe it or not, in a place like Bethlehem, in the house of bread! The New Testament Assembly is the house of God, and you can be experiencing famine there as any place. Now we have to say, and maybe someone will say, 'Well, it wasn't all their fault, because there wasn't much bread in Bethlehem, was there?'. Well, that's the truth, there wasn't. There was no bread in the house of bread, and we have got to face this today: sometimes the reason why Christians go back into the world is not because the world is attractive to them, but Bethlehem has become dry to them!

Now that can be the church's fault - and of course it's not all the church's fault - that the Lord Jesus is not real to people any more, so they feel they have to have a bit of fun in life, and go into the world - some bit of joy, something to occupy their time. If Bethlehem has no bread, it's all our faults. If my soul is famished, it's my fault, don't you think that the pastor's responsibility is to feed you on one day out of seven, so that you can live the rest of the six with what he gave you! You're to feed your own soul, and maybe you're not doing that? Well, the answer, my friend, is not to go to the fields of the world, it's not to go to Moab for help or ideas, but it's staying in Bethlehem, it's seeking the face of the Lord as to why we are in this state, why our hearts are cold, why it seems - to me at least - to be out of touch with God.

These Israelites were under God's discipline, and they didn't know it. Now I'm baring my heart

to you this morning - a man said to me once, be careful who you bare heart to, because they could stick a knife in it! I hope you'll not do that! But I believe the church of Jesus Christ in the West, and in Ulster, though we are blessed from our Christian heritage, I believe we're under the discipline of God. I believe we're under a measure of chastisement. We haven't been faithful with what God has given to us. We are Laodicean in our spirits. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus said to that church? 'You say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent'. He's only chastising us because He loves us, don't think of it as punitive justice - that was dealt with at the cross! This is restorative justice, He wants to bring us in line with His will!

Do you know how God did it with this little family in Bethlehemjudah, with the head of it, Elimelech? He let them go into Moab, and He took away all their breadwinners: Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion - any hope of bread was gone. That's what He'll do with us. If you have your back to Christ today, and you're a child of God and you're walking out of fellowship with Him, and you're doing things that are not pleasing in His sight, He will attempt to bring you back - and He might do it by taking away those breadwinners, stripping you. The result will be death and desolation, and Moab became a graveyard to these people! Imagine it! Burying a father and burying two boys, three widows out of it all - why? Because of a sojourn in Moab that lasted ten years.

Hebrews 3:12 says: 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God'. Was there a road back? Praise God, there was! That's what this little book is all about, that in the darkness of the Judges' age where there was anarchy, there's a little jewel of hope in a person called Ruth. The road to revival started when, in verse 6, we read that Naomi had heard that the Lord had visited His people again in Bethlehem with bread. Isn't that wonderful? News of a revival back home! O to God, that the news of that would go forth to the four corners of the globe from Ulster and from Ireland! You know there is revival in parts of our world today, where the famine has been lifted and the rains of God have come, and there are full fields of ripe grain that are being reaped as we speak - and it's all happening because the folks have repented and got before God.

I wonder have those experiences - and you have heard about them from India via your pastor - do they make us hungry enough to repent here? Do they? Maybe we don't need God's blessing any more, we've three or four square meals in the day, and then the trip to McDonald's. We have our fancy car with air-conditioning, and a seat to warm your bum - we have everything we need! We don't need God any more...but she heard the sound of the revival cry in Bethlehem, and that was the start of a wonderful journey - but listen: you've got to be prepared to make it. It's like you ladies going and viewing outfits in the fancy shops, 'Oh, I love that one, that would look fantastic on me', and then you look at the price tag and you're not prepared to pay the price! Oh, we all want revival, don't we? We all want to know God more - 'O, for a closer walk with God' - but we need to go through with God, and pay the price! That's a different thing...

Good news from home started the road of revival, and then there was something else: she learned her lesson - that's Naomi. In verse 20 she said: 'Don't call me Naomi! Don't call me joyous!', chapter 1 verse 20, 'Call me bitter', and we'll preach on this tonight, 'for I went out full, and I came back empty' - what a statement! But she had come to that realisation, and she was starting to repent. Can I tell you something? Repentance is not, what is often said, forsaking your sin as such, in a practical way. Repentance is in the mind and the heart - it

means, it's 'metanoya' in Greek, 'turning your head, turning your mind', changing your mind about your sin and what Christ means to you. Out of the seven churches addressed by our Lord Himself in the book of Revelation, five were told: 'Repent, repent, repent, repent, repent!'. People in Ulster think repentance is something you do the night you're saved - it's something Jesus says you do every day, when daily you take up your cross and follow Christ. We've got away from this, have we not?

Let me finish with the story, as we come just now - this is where we are now, we're at the foot of the cross. There was a great revival on the Isle of Lewis during the 1940's. Duncan Campbell was used with several others as instruments of God in that awakening there - but before it, and this is where the real work of God happens you know, men of God in that place were aware that the spiritual temperature of the island was in dire straits. They had once before, not that long before this, experienced a touch of God in revival and they realised that their spiritual vitality had gone cold and indifferent. In view of the situation the Free Church Presbytery of Lewis got together and made a public statement, a declaration. They put it in the Stornoway Gazette and in the West Coast Advertiser, the local press. This is how it went, and I'm just quoting it, but let it sear into your soul as you think of this theme of redemption and revival in Ruth. They wrote: 'The Presbytery of Lewis, having taken into consideration the low state of vital religion within their bounds, and throughout the land generally, call upon their faithful people in all their congregations to take a serious view of the present dispensation of divine displeasure, manifested not only in the chaotic conditions of international politics and morality, but also and especially in the lack of spiritual power from Gospel ordinances, and to realise that these things clearly indicate that the Most High has a controversy with the nation'. They go on: 'The Presbytery affectionately plead with their people, especially with the youth of the church, to take these matters to heart and to make serious inquiry as to what must be the end should there be no repentance! They call upon every individual, as before God, to examine his or her life in the light of the responsibility that pertains to us - that haply, in divine mercy, we may be visited with a spirit of repentance and may turn again unto the Lord whom we have so grieved with our iniquities and waywardness'. Amen - and can I say something? They were not in a fraction of the state, morally and spiritually, of our own nation today.

While most of the nation of Israel was wandering away from the Lord, there was a Gentile named Ruth whose faith shone out in brilliance. Even today in this darkness, Jesus says to His church: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man, if any woman - not a crowd now, just individuals - if any will hear my voice, I will open the door, and come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me' - commune with him. I trust you'll come back tonight, and tomorrow night, and Tuesday night to see this great message of redemption and revival - but more than that: I pray to God that you'll experience it, and I'll experience it, for, O, I need it - in all our hearts.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - October 2008
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The Romance Of Redemption And Revival In Ruth - Chapter 2 "Return To Bethlehem"

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Well, thank you very much for your welcome again, and for your encouragement. It has been a delight to be with you and to share God's word with you over this special weekend, particularly from this little book of Ruth that we're looking at over the next three sessions that we have left. So we're turning to Ruth, the book of Ruth - Joshua, Judges, Ruth - and I will be preaching the Gospel tonight, but particularly the message will be for those who we could class as backsliders. You remember the title I took for this, 'Redemption and Revival in Ruth', and that's what this little book of Ruth is all about.

We're going to take our reading from chapter 1 again, verse 6 this time we'll begin at, and we'll summarise the first five verses as we saw them this morning in my introduction. But let's just take up our reading at verse 6 of chapter 1, and we're going to read through to chapter 2 verse 3: *"Then she arose", that is Naomi, "with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. 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, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest. 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 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: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech".

Now if you were with us this morning, we looked at the first six verses of chapter 1. We saw the time period, historically, that is spoken of here. It was, of course, the time of the Judges - and we noticed that the last verse of the book just before the book of Ruth, the book of Judges, reads like this, chapter 21 verse 25: 'In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes'. It was a time that was characterised by moral decay and decadence, one of the lowest points in all of the history of God's children, Israel. And so we were not surprised to see that God, as He had promised, chastised His people by sending a famine. So in verse 1 we read that there was a famine in the land - God, you see, promised that if His people disobeyed Him, well, He would make the heavens like brass and the earth would not yield forth any fruit.

During that difficult period in the nation a man called Elimelech gathered together his little family, and left their home in Bethlehemjudah and traveled to the land of Moab. In verses 3 through to 5 we saw that after Elimelech and his family had uprooted and moved to Moab, Elimelech died. His sons then married Moabite wives - Mahlon, his son, married Ruth; Chilion, his son, married Orpah - and we noted also that God's law forbade an Israelite to marry a Moabite. Indeed a Moabite or a Moabiteess was not allowed to enter into the congregation of the Lord's people until the tenth generation, and yet they had disobeyed the Lord in this regard. At the end of verse 1 we saw that the intention of Elimelech and his family was only to sojourn, to traverse for a little time, in the land of Moab - but ten years later we see that they're still there. Mahlon and Chilion have now died, they have left Naomi, their mother, with two foreign daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.

We marked very seriously the point that Elimelech, in very very difficult circumstances it is granted, Elimelech led his family from the land of the living into the land of death and barrenness - and that is marked by the fact that Mahlon and Chilion bore no sons to their two wives, and Naomi returned to Bethlehem eventually childless. None of her own children are surviving, and she has no grandchildren to show for their two marriages. They have exchanged one famine for three funerals. They sought out bread and found graves. We pointed out forcibly, particularly to those who call themselves Christians, what a serious thing it is to step out, consciously, of God's will and plan for your life. I trust if you were here this morning you got that message - but there may be someone here this evening, and you didn't get it, or you weren't here this morning - or you know that you're, at this very moment, about to be or currently are out of God's will. You're absolutely aware of it! Well, I'm warning you: from the testimony of Scripture, particularly this Scripture and Elimelech's family experience:

'Sin will take you further than you want to go,
Slowly, but wholly, taking control.
Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay.
Sin will cost you more than you want to pay'.

Elimelech's name, we saw, means 'My God is King' - but he didn't live his life, he did not arrange his affairs with the Lordship of Jehovah in mind. We saw that Naomi's name meant 'My pleasant one', but she had lost all her joys - they had gone! Her son's name, Mahlon, means 'Sickly'; Chilion means 'Pining' - and that was their experience as they moved from Bethlehem, which means 'the house of bread', where God had promised to feed them, as they moved away from His chosen place for their lives. They move from Judah, which means

'praise', they have lost now their note of song, celebration in the Lord. As they move from that region that we have seen was called in ancient times 'Ephratah', which means 'fruitfulness', they themselves die spiritually - and three of them die physically!

The message very clearly was, where we ended up and where we start this evening: for anybody to operate on their own initiative in their lives, rather than seeking God's will, God's word, God's plan, anybody living like that will end in disaster. It mightn't look like disaster, but in God's eyes it is. They went to Moab of all places, southeast of the Dead Sea. Moab, we saw, were the enemies of ancient Israel. They, indeed, had ruled over Israel during the Judges period for 18 years. Here we see children of God moving away from Bethlehem, 'the house of bread', the place of rejoicing, the place of triumph, and they're going to their enemies to find sustenance.

We saw that Abraham did the same thing in famine in Genesis 12, he went down to Egypt. Lot did the same thing, and chose the well-watered plains of Sodom. Isaac, during famine, went to the Philistines for help - and all of those sojourns ended in disaster. Bad choices, wrong decisions, all because God was left out of their lives. Now I want to bring four people before you this evening. The first is Naomi, the second is Orpah, the third is Ruth, and the fourth is Boaz. I want you to look at each of their testimonies, that is: what they have left, the mark they have made of their lives spiritually - that's what a testimony is.

Let's look first of all at Naomi's confession. We find it in verses 20 and 21 of chapter 1: 'She said unto them', when she returned to Bethlehem, 'Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me'. Here, I feel, is one of the saddest verses in the whole of Scripture, verse 21, she says: 'I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?'. Naomi's confession is the confession of a typical backslider, a person who has started off well with God. Like Naomi, 'pleasant one' her name means, you have known the joys of the Lord; but because of the path that you have taken in your own wisdom, not God's, you find yourself 'Mara', 'Bitter'. The joy has disappeared and, as someone prayed in our prayer meeting - not knowing that I was going to say it tonight - you become one of the most miserable people in the world, for that's what a backslider is. You see, they have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, they know that God is real, they know that the power of God unto salvation is the gospel, and they're trying to satisfy themselves with the things of the flesh, self and the world - and it doesn't work, and they know it doesn't work!

It makes them miserable, even though they seldom admit it. They cannot be satisfied with the imitations of this world. It makes them bitter - but I think Naomi was bitter for another reason. She was blaming God, I feel, for her predicament. You need to read over it again, but she points the finger at God several times for what had happened in her life. She was blaming God, and perhaps even blaming God's people, Israel, and the promises that were given to them. Yet in all of her blaming of God, she forgot - conveniently - that she made the decision to go to Moab.

Now the root of bitterness, as the Bible calls it, is often the cause for men and women backsliding. You see, sometimes things can happen, particularly in churches - and that's often the way it goes, sadly. The root of bitterness springs up in a person's heart, and all of a sudden the daggers are out for another brother or sister in Christ - and before you realise it: your joy is gone, your fellowship with the Lord has been interrupted, and it's all downhill after that! It poisons your life - but, you know, bitterness can also poison the lives of the people around you...sitting at the dinner table when you're carving up the pastor, or the elders, or

that brother or sister in Christ, rather than the roast! Your children are listening, and it's affecting their lives.

Hebrews 12:15 says: 'Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled'. A lot of people hold things in their heart and say: 'Well, I might be grumpy and bitter, but I'm not harming anybody only myself' - that's a lie! You're harming more than yourself, you're harming those around you, and your bitterness is contagious! Many backslide because of bitterness. They're carrying a grudge against God or one of His children. Proverbs 14:14 says: 'The backslider is full of their own ways', full of themselves, full of their rightness.

Naomi's other confession was that she had gone out full, but the Lord had brought her back empty. Oh, this is so sad. How had she gone out full? Well, she went away from the house of bread, even though there wasn't much bread there - but we saw this morning, what they should have done is call on the name of the Lord and ask why this famine had come, and repented, and they would have got the bread back...but they went away. She went out from the place of bread, but there's more than that: she went out with a husband and two children - and she came back empty! I imagine before she left Moab, she, Orpah and Ruth went to those three graves, and would never see them again.

She came back a widow, childless, along with her daughters-in-law. What she is saying in 'I went out full and came back empty', is 'My life has been ruined because I have turned my back on God and His people'. Is there someone here tonight who can say that? She is filled with regret. Oh, that's a backsliders heart. What regrets have you this evening? Naomi was the embodiment, and maybe you are as well, of Proverbs 13:15: 'The way of transgressors is hard', or Proverbs 14:12: 'There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death'. You see, this was all self-inflicted - Elimelech and Naomi had brought this upon themselves - but God is so gracious, for God works things together for good to them that love Him. What they had brought upon themselves adversely, the Lord is now using in His will and plan to bring them back to Himself! He's a gracious Father, we see this very clearly.

Now I was looking up my concordance to see the verses in Scripture concerning backsliders, and it's amazing to note that I think most of the verses to do with backsliders are found in the Old Testament prophet of Jeremiah. You know, of course, that Jeremiah was called 'The Weeping Prophet'. He wept buckets of tears, at one stage he said that his whole head had become like a river of waters, all because of the waywardness, the backsliding of God's people! He speaks of the depths to which backsliding Christians - we put it in our context - children of God can go. Jeremiah 3:6: 'Hast thou seen', God says, 'that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot'. Do you know what He's talking about there? The Canaanites had a religious ritual where they worshipped fertility gods - and we'll not get into it tonight, save to say that through sexual immorality they thought that they would make the fields grow with grain and the rains fall upon it. There they were at the shrines of these pagans, engaging in immorality and harlotry - and they're God's people!

You know, some people think Christians are above all that. I'll tell you: in the church in Corinth, Paul said, 'There is fornication among you which the people out in the world wouldn't even mention'. The depths to which those who call themselves children of God can go, never underestimate it! In backsliding Israel went far. Jeremiah tells us more, in fact he says that God was brought to question His relationship with Israel over their backsliding. Jeremiah 3:8:

'For all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce'. Imagine this! God was going to cut Israel off, in a sense, for her backsliding. Now you say: 'Well, God will never do that with a true child of God' - well, that's true, but then a true believer, if they are a true believer, would need to question their heart and their relationship with the Lord. As one man put it: 'A lot of backsliders would need to question whether they were front-sliders in the first place'!

Jeremiah says backsliders often try to justify their behaviour, Jeremiah 3:11: 'The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah'. God is angry with the backslider, that's what Jeremiah is all about - and yet God in His grace and love wants to be merciful to His people! 'Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God'. Yet, time and time again, when God came to His people, and - if I can say it reverently - begged with them to return unto their Lord, they were so stubborn and intransigent. Is that where God finds you this very evening?

'Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?'. It's as if it's a constant state of being: 'How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?'. Jeremiah is a book to the backslider, if ever there was one. But there is something interesting, the Lord Jesus came to the apostles on one occasion and He said: 'Whom do men say that I am?'. The response that came back was, 'One of the prophets', etc, etc - but one of the names that was mentioned, it's a strange one, 'Some say you're Jeremiah'. Why do you think they thought He was Jeremiah? Because of the tears over a wayward nation, over a people that had rejected Messiah - do you not see Him standing on the Mount, looking over Jerusalem with the tears running down His blessed cheeks? 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens, but ye would not!'

He was the Man of Sorrows, wasn't He? And His heart is still breaking over those who call themselves Christians, or have done in the past, and they're nowhere tonight. But can I say to you this evening: we're all backsliders in a sense, because all of us in our first father, Adam, and Eve, were once in fellowship with God - but sin broke in and destroyed that, and we've all turned our backs on God. 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way'.

Verse 6 says that Naomi, in this terrible state, remembered the house of bread, Bethlehem. You know, I like to call Naomi the prodigal daughter of the Old Testament. Charles Dickens was asked the question: what was the greatest short story in all of English literature? And he said, 'It is the prodigal son' - and he was no Christian. Well, here is the prodigal daughter, like the prodigal son - you know the story, don't you? Luke 15, he had everything in his father's house and he asked for his inheritance - which was tantamount to telling his father, 'I wish you were dead, so that I could get your money' - and his father gave it to him. He went to the far country, he wasted everything in riotous living, sin. He hit rock bottom. The Bible says there was a famine in the land. He went and hired himself to a farmer, and ended up that he was so hungry that he ate the pigswill. It was when he reached that bottom point that he remembered home! He remembered that in his father's house there was bread, and that to spare! The Bible says, 'He came to himself' - do you know what that means? If I can put it in the vernacular, 'He wised up'. But he only thought that he could ever be a servant in his father's house, little did he know that his father would be running out to meet him halfway, and would make him his son again, and re-clothe him, and have a whole celebration that he

had come back - his son that was lost had now been found! That's what the Lord wants to do for you, whether you're a prodigal son or a prodigal daughter.

Naomi's confession: 'I went out full, but I came back empty' - is that you tonight? O, the Lord would meet you this evening, and the Father would put His arms around you, and kiss you on the neck, and restore you to everything that you had ever lost. There's something else: Orpah's intention. I want you to see Orpah's intention as well as Naomi's confession. Verse 8: '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'. Now this is interesting, Naomi is a backslider here - did you know that backsliders lead other people astray? No man is an island, Paul said no man dies unto himself or lives unto himself - you have an effect on other people by the way that you live. Here is Naomi, and she's sending her two daughters-in-law back to the land of Moab. Three times, if you look at the passage, she sends them back to paganism - imagine a Jewess sending them back to idolatry!

More than that, if you look at verses 8 and 9, she prays that they would go - that shows you how good a backslider's prayers are. Now why did she not want them coming home to Bethlehem with her? Well, of course, the obvious reason was: she felt she couldn't give them any more sons, and they would remain unmarried. They would have more of a chance going home to their own father's house. Well, there is that, but I think and suspect that there's another reason. Imagine Naomi going home to Bethlehem, she had left there in good standing - reasonably so - the circumstances were grave enough to in some way legitimise her leaving Bethlehem, but here she is coming back with two daughters-in-law, and they're pagans! They are a living embodiment that revealed her family disobedience. I'll tell you: you see when you backslide? There's a lot of water goes under the bridge. They had backsliden for ten years, and it was making it harder to return home because of the baggage they had - but listen: she didn't realise, maybe you don't realise tonight, that's not a reason for delay, that's a reason not to delay before you gather any more baggage and it's made any harder!

Well, in verse 10, Orpah seemed to have the strength to resist the invitation of her mother-in-law to return back to her pagan roots. 'And they', look at the plural, 'they said', verse 10, 'unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people'. There's strength in numbers, isn't there? Sometimes people can say and do things because their friends and family say and do things. Maybe Christianity has been like that for you: you're coming here to this church because the family does. You say you're a Christian because the family does it, but in your heart of hearts it isn't real to you. That's what Orpah was like, 'Oh', she said, 'We'll go with you, Naomi', verse 10 - and then look at verse 14: 'And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her'.

Now we don't have time to read it, but the reason for this change of heart is found in verses 11 to 13, where Naomi was reiterating: 'I have no more sons to give you, neither will I have any more to give you' - and because of those thoughts, Orpah was having second thoughts and she changed her mind. Now can I say something to you: you're a backslider tonight, or you're not saved - now listen, whatever the devil tells you is the cost of becoming a Christian or renewing your fellowship in Christ, it is a lie from the pit of hell. Here's the proof: Ruth got everything that her mother-in-law said she would lose by going to Bethlehem, and she got more! Now I'm not saying that it's an easy thing to be a Christian - no, no, no, it's not. The Lord wants to make disciples, that means He wants all of you - it's hard work. It was hard work for her, and it would mean poverty. She would have no male provider, there would be separation from her home and her loved ones too - but what I'm saying to you tonight is: don't believe the lie of the devil that your life that you're living now is better than living for

Christ, for it's not, it's not life at all! Satan is a thief who comes to steal, and to kill and destroy; Jesus Christ says, 'I'll give you life abundantly'.

Orpah had good intentions. I wonder is there someone here tonight, and you have Orpah's intentions but you are indecisive about your salvation? Like the man who said: 'I used to be indecisive, but now I'm not sure'. It's a dangerous thing to be indecisive. There was an old boy who lived on the border that separated the North and the South during the American Civil War, and he didn't know what side to take - so he decided he would wear a Confederate army jacket, and Union army pants. Of course he ran into trouble, because the Union soldiers shot at his jacket, and the Confederates shot him in the pants! It was fatal for him. Now I had someone say once: 'It's better to make the wrong decision than build up the habit of indecision' - well, I don't think that's right, because you can see the problem that Naomi and her family got into from making a wrong decision. But that being said, praise God, she got right with God in the end - but, mark, we never hear of Orpah again!

Indecision. Well, thirdly, look at Ruth's decision - verse 14 of chapter 1, it says at the end: 'Ruth clave unto her mother-in-law'. Proverbs says: 'He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy'. Oh, what a wonderful thought - and Ruth said, 'I'm going with you'. Look at verse 16: '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'. There it is! 'Thy God shall be my God', she was resolute, decisive about that step of faith in Christ. Do you have Ruth's resolution tonight? Do you have her determination to choose Christ? Backslider, what are you going to do? Are you going to make a greater mess of your life? Are you going to go further into Moab, into sin, and cause grief to the heart of your Saviour that was pierced, and forthwith came blood and water for you?

Person who has never trusted in Christ: what are you going to do? It's in your hands. There was once a wee fellow, and he had a twinkle in his eye, and he was wanting to trick an old friend of his. He had a wee bird in his hand, and he said: 'You tell me now, is the bird dead or alive?'. The old boy was cute enough to know that if he said it was dead, he would open his hands and it would fly away; and if he said it was alive, the wee brat would crush it and kill it! Do you know what the answer the old man give was? He says: 'The decision is in your hands, you choose'. That's where you are tonight: whether you're a backslider, or you've never been a front-slider; whether you've been saved many years ago, or you've never been saved - whatever your spiritual state is now. It comes to the very common denominator - though we need the Lord working in our lives - that 'be it unto thee according to how you will', that's what the Lord said, wasn't it? What do you want to do about it?

Ruth decided: 'Thy God will be my God'. Naomi's confession, Orpah's intention, Ruth's decision - oh, that it would be yours tonight. Look finally at Boaz's redemption. In verse 22 we read that they returned home to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest: 'And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz'. Now this is wonderful, you've got to understand a bit about the Bible: this 'kinsman' was just a word for 'relative', but there is a law in the law of Moses in the Old Testament, and it says that if a man died and had no children a close relative, a kinsman, should redeem - that means take back what is lost - and marry the widow, and raise up a perpetual family to the name of the deceased. That kept his name going, but it also kept the family within the tribe forever. Now since Boaz was a relative of Elimelech, that means that he was eligible to serve as the redeeming relative by marrying Ruth.

Now Naomi had foregone the privilege, she probably felt she was too old anyway, and passed it down to Ruth - but you need to see that there was something special about Boaz, because you had to be more than eligible to do this job, you had to be able! That meant you had to be rich enough - if you couldn't keep your own family, you were hardly going to take another one on. But not only had you to be able, you had to be willing! Now Boaz is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, if ever there was one. It shows how He is towards sinners, backslidden sinners, unconverted sinners - and if you read all of chapter 1, you'll not find Boaz's name mentioned, and you might never have known about Christ, or have had no regard about Him - Ruth didn't even know Boaz existed in chapter 1! But Boaz knew all about her, in chapter 2:11 he was set to tell her all about what she had done in leaving her home and following Naomi back to Bethlehem. Do you know that the Lord knows all about you? Jesus could say to Nathaniel: 'When you were under the fig tree, I saw you there. I know all about you'. He knows all about your struggles, He knows all about your fears, and your tears, and your trials. He knows all about your sins, He knows all about your habits, He knows all about your brokenness, He knows all about the things that have driven you to where you are just now. The miracle of it all is: He loves you.

He's a compassionate Saviour to the stranger. Remember Ruth was a Gentile, she wasn't a Jew, and yet here is Boaz being compassionate to her, and being willing to redeem her and all that she owns. Then in chapter 2 we find that Ruth goes from not knowing Boaz to being in his field, and then in chapter 3 she gets to Boaz's feet, and then in chapter 4 she's found in Boaz's family! Oh, that you would get to the feet of Jesus tonight: 'To as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God'. Oh, that you would be a member of His family tonight. Now there's a difference between Boaz and Christ, and it's simply this: to redeem Ruth and all that her family had, he only had to buy and marry; but for the Lord Jesus Christ to redeem your never-dying soul, He had to bleed, He had to go all the way to the cross and be nailed there to buy back what was lost.

You see, your debt isn't money, it's sin. You'll pay your debt in death and hell if your sin isn't dealt with, but Christ dealt with it at the cross, and you must come - like Ruth, as we will see in subsequent nights, she did, and she came to the feet of Boaz and asked him to take control of her life, and he did, and he changed it for ever! He'll do that for you too this evening. You see we are not redeemed with corruptible things, Peter says, like silver and gold, or the tradition of our fathers, or our way of life, but by the precious blood of Christ. It cost the precious blood of the eternal Son of God in human flesh for your redemption, for you to be bought back from sin, ruin, destruction, degradation.

Well, this is a wonderful story. By the grace of God Naomi's emptiness - remember her cry: 'I went out full, and have come back empty' - it was transformed again to fullness. Her sorrow was changed to joy. Her hard labour in the fields was turned to rest. Her fear was transformed into peace and assurance. This book that begins with three funerals ends with a marriage. Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, moves from bitterness to blessedness; and Ruth travels on the journey from loneliness to love - all because of the redemption of Boaz. The difference was made when Ruth put her life at her redeemer's feet, and entrusted herself to him. He took over, and he changed everything - that's what you need tonight.

I believe this is a message from the Lord to someone, or more, in this gathering. Bill Gaither wrote a song many years ago, and it could describe your experience tonight, it went like this:

'If there were ever dreams that were lofty and noble,
They were my dreams from the start.

And the hopes for lives best, were the hopes that I harboured
Deep down in my heart.
But my dreams turned to ashes, my castles all crumbled,
My fortune turned to loss.
So I wrapped it all in the rags of my life,
And I laid it at the cross'.

The chorus says:

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

He'll do that for you tonight, wherever you are, whatever you've done. My friend, backslider or unsaved, you've got to come to His feet, the foot of the cross - those nail-pierced feet that now live for you, and would save you, because He's here tonight by His Spirit. Will you come and lay, in the rags of your life, all your brokenness, sin and strife - and He'll make something, something beautiful of your life.

Let's all pray. Now I say it lovingly, though it's quite pointed: you could be here in a suit tonight, or a fancy hat, you could have your Bible with you, you could be a member of this church - but you're as big a backslider as Naomi ever was. I believe our churches have such people in them. You might even have a position, that means nothing if your character isn't to match. This is serious stuff now, we all find ourselves in this position from time to time, where we grow cold and we backslide - some to lesser or greater extent. But I know - and listen, I'm sure about this, for God has testified this to me in the last couple of days concerning this message - it's for people in this gathering tonight, it's for you...but it's up to you to respond. What will you do? Backslider, it's time to come home. Unsaved person, it's time to make this God your God, this Saviour, this Redeemer yours. Now you say: 'How do I do that?'. Well, just where you are, from your heart now - you don't have to say it audibly, but by faith believing - you just say, and you can even repeat after me if you really mean these words: 'Lord Jesus, I confess I have sinned. I deserve to be judged, but I thank You that You took my judgement and my sin on the cross to be my Redeemer. I want You to redeem me now, I fall at Your feet. Take me and make me Yours, and change my life forever and save my soul'.

If you do that, God has promised, if you have done it in faith, He will save you. We would urge you not to go without being redeemed, and something beautiful - backslider, imagine that, you thought it could never happen again, too ashamed - something beautiful! Unsaved one, something beautiful can be made of your life. Oh, He's a wonderful Saviour.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - October 2008
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The Romance Of Redemption And Revival In Ruth - Chapter 3 "At His Feet"

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I want you to turn with me, please, to Ruth - and this time chapter 2. We read a number of verses from chapter 2 last evening, but we'll begin reading at the beginning of the chapter once again, verse 1. Now we're getting to the sweet and the rich part of the book, and so we're going to have to read two chapters - but it's very, very special, what we're going to encounter tonight. So I want you to concentrate with me, we don't make apology for reading God's word even at length - it is the living, inspired, eternal word of God - and yet we want you to pick up everything as we go through, although we'll be highlighting it in our study. Remember our title: 'Redemption And Revival in the Book of Ruth'.

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 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: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. 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: 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, 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. 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? 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. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed. And her*

mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. 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. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law".

"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, 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, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. 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: 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. And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor. Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city. And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day".

Could we bow in a brief word of prayer please: Father, we thank You for Your holy word. We thank You that, just like the Temple, every whit of it speaks forth Christ. Lord, that's our great desire this evening, that as we look into Your word we would see Jesus - the Author and Finisher of our faith - and that in seeing Him, it will help us to endure the contradictions of this life. We pray that You will minister to each heart. Lord, You know our individual needs and requirements. We thank You that the Lord is that Spirit who searches every heart, and can meet the needs of everyone gathered here, whatever they may be - but we believe, Lord, with all our being, that if each of us, whatever our circumstances might be, if each of us would get a glimpse of the Master, our Kinsman Redeemer, our lives would be changed

forever. Hear us we pray, and help me Lord, for Christ's sake we ask it. Amen.

Now yesterday morning I gave you a number of the purposes that the Holy Spirit give us this little book of Ruth. First of all there was the historical purpose, that simply being that this is a book that explains to us the ancestry of King David, and effectively builds a bridge between the time of the Judges - the book of Judges being before the book of Ruth - and the time of the Kings, which comes after in 1 and 2 Samuel and so on. So it is of historical significance that we have it, and we'll see that maybe tomorrow night in a bit more detail as we look at chapter 4, and the lineage of King David that is given to us there.

A second purpose was prophetic. I hinted at this, and I might go into it in more detail, I'll tell you tomorrow night - but you remember, yesterday morning we saw that in chapter 1 Israel was out of favour with God, and there was a famine in the land. God was chastising His people, and God turns and begins to deal with a Gentile girl called Ruth. Now that's of prophetic significance when we have revealed to us New Testament prophetic truth, because a similar thing is going on today with the nation of Israel. Paul says, 'Blindness in part has happened unto Israel', and Israel is presently under the chastisement of God for rejecting their Messiah, and God has now turned to the Gentiles. It's the time of the Gentiles, and He is calling out a people for His name from the nations of the world - but, incidentally, this is what's going to happen: when Ruth eventually gets married to Boaz, it is after that that Naomi begins to get really blessed again. You know, that's God's prophetic plan in His calendar - Naomi's blessing comes after Ruth's wedding. Israel will be restored and start to be blessed, when Christ and His church are united in that great marriage of the Lamb.

But we'll not spend time on that, for there is a third purpose for this book, and that is typological. We saw that a 'type' simply means a picture, an illustration beforehand of New Testament truth. Here we have, in the picture of the kinsman redeemer - and we'll explain what that means in a few moments - we see a wonderful portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ and His relationship to the church, His bride. We'll be spending a considerable amount of time on that.

Then fourthly there is a practical purpose for the book, and we often miss this. You see, this book has something to say to all of us if we're children of God - even if we're not, but particularly if we name the name of Christ, because it's all about our relationship with the Lord Jesus, because this is a book about redemption and revival. If we read all about it and know all about it, and don't experience personal redemption and personal revival, well, we might as well have never read it in the first place. You see, it's got to hit us personally. I hope it has done that already, but I hope it goes deeper this evening.

Now, I'm not going to spend any time on the ground we've already covered - save to say, in short summary, that in chapter 1 we saw that Elimelech and his family sojourned in Moab. They left the house of bread in Bethlehem, and we saw the ramifications of that, and went to the world for help. They exchanged a famine for three funerals. Elimelech died, Mahlon died, Chilion died - Elimelech's two sons. We saw then, last night in our gospel meeting, that they returned eventually - that is, Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah - they returned to Bethlehem. We saw how Naomi could be called the prodigal daughter of the Old Testament.

So let's look at the portion, and this part of the story that we have read from this evening. Verse 2 of chapter 2 tells us that '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'. There were no bread winners any more, Elimelech had died, and Mahlon and Chilion had died, and now they had to fend for themselves. But the law of Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 24, and Leviticus 19, specified that whenever, at harvest time, farmers were gleaning and reaping the fields, they were not to strip them bare. There was a social reason for that. Instead they were to leave some grain lying, gleanings for needy people within the nation of Israel - needy people being strangers who might traverse past that way, even if they weren't Jews, fatherless, widows. So these sheaves, or little bundles of grain, would be left there - that was God's will.

Now Ruth was only a believer for a very short time, as we have already seen - but Ruth knew her Bible well enough to know that this is what God's Word says. So she took advantage of this, and she had come already to trust in this God of Israel - and isn't it beautiful to see that she knew Him as a God who was concerned about the widow and the orphan? It's interesting to note, and we saw last night how bitter Naomi had become - when she arrived back in Bethlehem she said, 'Call me not Naomi', which means 'pleasant one', 'but call me Mara', 'bitter'. But it was not Naomi's bitterness that turned the circumstances around for her family, it was Ruth's faithfulness, in the midst of very difficult circumstances, to believe in God's word against all the odds.

So she went out to glean in the field these bundles that ought to be left for her. Oh, there's a lesson in that, isn't there? Because there's many a time, as the saying goes, that we cannot trace the way that the Lord is leading us - but when we cannot trace the way, we can trust the heart that plans. It's a hard lesson to learn, isn't it? But it's vital, because so easily we can turn bitter, and bitterness will never change our circumstances - but faithfulness will. We see what happened: she believed in God's word, operated in it, and in verse 3 we see 'she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was', the margin says, 'it happened that she was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech'.

Now, it says it was 'hap', or 'it happened to be' - but this was far from chance. I think I mentioned yesterday morning those famous verses in Proverbs 3:5-6: 'Trust in the Lord', that's what Ruth was doing, 'with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths'. She had acknowledged Him, she had acknowledged His word, and in faith she was going into the fields to gather grain - and God led her, think of it, to the very field to come face-to-face with the very man, the one man God had chosen to redeem her and her family, and eventually to marry her. It was Proverbs 16:9 says: 'A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps'. When you trust in the Lord's word, and you venture your all upon it, God guides you.

I wonder do you believe in the providence of God? It's a wonderful thing to be able to say: 'I, being in the way that the Lord led me...'. The Lord led Ruth to Boaz - whose name, incidentally, means 'In him is strength'. He was the wealthy relative of her dead father-in-law, Elimelech - and she couldn't have known that, and yet God brought their paths together.

There are three pictures I want to bring to your attention tonight from our portion. The first is: Ruth, the gleaner in the field of Boaz. The second is: Boaz, the near-kinsman. The third is: Ruth, at the feet of Boaz. Let's look at the first: Ruth, a gleaner in the field of Boaz. In verse 5 of chapter 2 we read: 'Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?'. 'Who's this girl picking up all this barley?'. Now, you've got to understand that there was a big difference in these days between a reaper and a gleaner. A reaper was an employee, it was a proper occupation, and you got a wage from the farmer for doing it -

but a gleaner was just one of the poor folk that had come along to gather up these pieces of barley and sheaves that were left for social welfare, effectively.

Now what Ruth was doing here was: she was a gleaner, not a reaper. She was taking the position of being poor, it was the low place. Do you know what she was saying? You remember Naomi had told her and her sister, Orpah, to go back to Moab, and to go back to her father's house - and maybe she would have a husband and well-being there. Ruth was saying: 'Look, it's better to be one of the poor, it's better to take the low place, it's better to be among such people who have a God like the God Jehovah, than be a well-paid reaper anywhere else'. What a statement!

So, here she is in this field, and in verse 8 we read: 'Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens'. Ruth esteemed it better to be one of the poor gleaners in this man's field, because of who his God was, than to go home to Moab and be a reaper, earn a living. Proverbs 15:16 says: 'Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith'. Do we believe that? The Psalmist said in Psalm 84: 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness'. It seems strange in today's day and age, but you see that's the way the child of God is meant to be:

'I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands.
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand'

Do we believe that? Oh, maybe we believe it, do we live like it? Or do we envy the world? Well, Ruth here had gone so far in her young faith, and she had took the lowly place. Now, we believe that grace is unmerited favour, don't we? We believe, and it's often said, that God sees nothing in us to be gracious toward us. Now that's true in one sense - there are no merits in our lives as sinners, that we can in any way qualify for God's grace - but there is one thing that needs to be in each of our hearts: we need to see our need. We need to see our need! If there's a qualification for a sinner to be saved, and to experience the grace of God, it is to put themselves in the lowly place as a sinner. It was only when Ruth took that place that she got grace.

That's what God said: He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. You see, grace is undeserved, but grace does not allow humility to go unnoticed. Ruth took the lowly place, and we're going to see tonight the gracious riches that were lavished upon her - unexpected blessings that she knew she didn't deserve, all because Boaz took notice of her and gave her so many unusual favours!

Now in these days, as I've said, reapers and gleaners were different. Gleaners were only really tolerated by farmers, they certainly were not welcomed - they put up with them because God's law said they had to! But here we see Boaz welcoming her, this is unusual. Verse 9: 'Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them'. 'Follow them', he's telling Ruth, 'I've already told the young men not to harass you. You go to the vessels that the reapers drink of, and you drink of their drink'. In verse 14 we see that he invited her to the table where the rest of them were dining to dip her bread into vinegar, and she sat with them, and he reached over parched corn to her, and he gave her so much at that meal time that she was able to go home with enough for Naomi! Now why was it?

Well, she asked that question in verse 10: 'Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?'. In verse 11 it says: 'And Boaz answered', and I'm led to believe that the sense there is 'Boaz shouted', he was not ashamed to say these words, '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'. Boaz knew all about Ruth before Ruth knew anything about him.

You see the parallel, don't you? But come further with me, before we tease it out in more detail. We've got to realise that in every circumstance, and this is no exception, with every privilege comes responsibility. In verse 8 Boaz said, 'Now look, I'm going to allow you to glean here' - and oh, how much more in superabundance Boaz allowed her, but he says 'Don't go to any other field, stay in my field'. Then when, eventually, Ruth gets home, Naomi gives her the same counsel. In verse 22, 'Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field'. The sentiment was, 'How inappropriate it would be, Ruth, if - after Boaz's kindness to you - having received such abundance in Boaz's field, that these other maidens or some other people should find you in another field hoping for anything more'.

You see, it would be tantamount to saying Boaz had not done enough for her. Now, you know what worldliness is. It's when, perhaps, it's not the attractiveness of the world that draws the child of God away - we saw this, I think, yesterday morning - but the lack of satisfaction that we don't find in Bethlehem, the house of bread. The word of God becomes dry to us, prayer life is empty, our service becomes a chore. In the barrenness of Bethlehem we become dissatisfied with the things of God and the Christ of God, and we feel we need more. So we go into the world - that's how it happens. Not because the world has it all, but because we have ceased to be satisfied with the all-in-all.

With every privilege there is responsibility, and if you're saved today you've got to realise that there is a responsibility. The blessings that Christ has given to you, you've got to respond to them. In Romans 2 and verse 4 Paul said: 'Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?'. Romans 12:1, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service'. Now listen: whenever the Christian wanders into the world, or covets the ways of the world, or makes friendship with the world, it is not a deficiency in Christ that is the problem, but a deficiency in the Christian's knowledge of who Christ is, who your Kinsman Redeemer really is, what He truly has done that you might be redeemed, to be your nearest Kinsman, and the lavish gifts that He wants to give to you in grace. It's a deficiency in your understanding of it that is the problem, we've got to get that message across! When we get to grips with who He is, and His goodness toward us, and what He wants to give us and do for us in a day that is yet to come - it will drive us again and again to the foot of the cross in repentance!

I wonder are you deficient in the knowledge of Christ? Are you deficient in the experience of Christ? Now here's a question that all of us have to answer, and Naomi asked it of Ruth in verse 19: 'Where hast thou gleaned to day?'. Where are you gleaning? In the fields of the world? Are you trying to satisfy yourself with worldly things? They mightn't be inherently sinful things, but are you feeding on them at the expense of the things of God and Christ? As the hymn says: 'None but Christ can satisfy!' Ruth became a gleaner in Boaz's field, and she was told: 'Don't glean anywhere else'.

Here's the second picture I want you to see: Boaz, the near-kinsman. Now again you've got to understand some of the Old Testament background to this story of redemption. In Leviticus 25 we read about the near-kinsman. We read there, read it when you get home, that the near-kinsman had the right to redeem, for his brother or for a member of this family - a relative - his estate which had been lost. It could have been lost for several reasons. Now when we come to Deuteronomy 25, we see there that that near-kinsman also had a responsibility if his brother died - he was responsible to take the widow of his brother, in order to raise up seed in his brother's name, and that seed would eventually inherit his brother's lands. It was called 'the law of the levirate marriage', and 'levir' in Latin means 'a husband's brother' - so you can see the connection.

But this teaching on the levirate marriage, it is the heart of the doctrine of redemption in the whole of the Bible! It's not in the New Testament now, the heart of it is found in the book of Ruth and in the Old Testament law, Leviticus 25 in Deuteronomy 25. It's the law of the *go'el*, that's the Hebrew word for 'kinsman'. This law of the *go'el* said that the next of kin had the right to redeem. Now to be qualified as a *go'el*, kinsman redeemer, you had to possess three qualities. Now here they are: the first quality was, you had to have a right to redeem. What I mean by that is, you had to be a near-kinsman. That might sound like a truism, but you've got to understand that there's two different Hebrew words here that are often translated in English 'kinsman'. One of them simply means 'relative', and the other means 'go'el'. To be a kinsman redeemer, a *go'el*, you had to be a relative - and it was only the relative who had a right to redeem.

Let me show you what I mean, chapter 2 verse 20: 'Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen'. Now if you have an Authorised Version, in the margin you will see there's a marginal rendering here of that last statement: 'The man is near of kin unto us, or one that hath right to redeem'. There are different words used there: because he's next of kin, he's a relative, he has a right to redeem - because he's a relative, he is qualified to be a *go'el*, a kinsman redeemer.

Now if the Lord Jesus Christ is to redeem on the behalf of sinners, you and me, and indeed to help failing and struggling saints, He has to acquire the right to do so. The only way He can do that is to become a Kinsman with us - that means, become our Brother. Now the incarnation that we celebrate at Christmas time, when God the Son clothed Himself in human flesh and became man in every sense, that is when the Lord Jesus Christ became our Kinsman. Now with that Old Testament knowledge from Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Ruth, if we turn to Hebrews for a moment - chapter 2 - it takes a new light. I believe it's given deeper meaning to us, true meaning, when we read in Hebrews 2 verse 14: 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he', the Lord Jesus, 'also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil'. In other words, we were enslaved to the wages of sin that is death - that was the penalty and the judgement - and verse 15: 'He will deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage'. Enslaved to death, spiritual death, physical death - how did He do it? '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 behoved him to be made like unto his brethren', His brothers, 'that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted'.

You see the Lord Jesus taking upon Himself human flesh made us His brethren in humanity, and He had to partake of human flesh if He was to become our near-Kinsman . Now this is a sweet truth, and I don't have time to expound it all - but it was Michael Bruce in the 18th century who did it very well in the words of his hymn:

'Though now ascended up on high,
He', the Lord Jesus, 'bends on earth a brother's eye,
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.

Our Fellow Sufferer now retains
A fellow feeling of our pains,
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, His agonies, and cries.

In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows has a part.
He sympathizes with our grief
And to the sufferer sends relief'.

That's why He can be a High Priest who understands what we're going through, because in His incarnation - becoming flesh - He was made our near-Kinsman. But can I tell you something? That was not enough to redeem us, because the Redeemer had to be more than a near-Kinsman, he had to be the nearest Kinsman. Though, when our Lord was incarnated, He was made in the likeness of men - Romans says He was made in the likeness of sinful men. He lived in a fallen world, and yet all of that was not enough to redeem us, to become our nearest Kinsman He had to be made sin! Imagine it! 'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him'. Oh, it's wonderful, this is deep truth.

H. C. Trumbull, a minister, was preaching to inmates in a prison on one occasion, and he said in his discourse to them that the only difference between he, a minister, and the inmates in front of him was the grace of God. After that one of the inmates found that a bit hard to swallow, and he sent him a letter, and he said: 'Sir, did you mean what you said about sympathising with us, that only the help of God made you any different from the rest of us?'. The prisoner received a reply from Trumbull, and it went like this: 'Yes, I meant everything that I said' - and here was the prisoner's explanation, he said: 'I am here for life in this prison, but I can stay here more contentedly now that I know I've a brother out in the world'. Now grasp that, the import of it: because that minister identified with that prisoner, he felt he could stay there for the rest of his life because he had a brother out in the world. We have a near-Kinsman, we have a nearest Kinsman in the Lord Jesus, who took our human flesh upon Him apart from sin, and died for our sin - was made our sin - and that's meant to make a difference to us down here on Earth! I say it reverently: to endure down here, knowing that up there we have a Brother in human flesh:

'We have a priest who suffered, knowing weakness, tears, and pain;
Who, like us, was tried and tempted; unlike us, without stain'.

The near-kinsman had to have the right to redeem, our Lord Jesus has that now - but a second qualification was: the near-kinsman had to have power to redeem. Now, I think I touched on it yesterday, that the near-kinsman had to have the financial means to take on

another family. If he already had his own, maybe he was struggling, and therefore he couldn't afford it. We know obviously, don't we, that our Living God - His hand is not short that it cannot save, and indeed in Isaiah 50 the Lord said: 'Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?' - He has! In Jeremiah 50 it says of Israel: 'Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name: he shall throughly plead their cause'. Jehovah would be their Go'el, their Kinsman Redeemer.

The go'el had to have the right to redeem, the power to redeem, and thirdly: the willingness to redeem. This is the most important of all, because a man could be eligible to do the job - he might have the right, he might be a relative, and he might have the ability to do it, he might be wealthy enough and have the power - but he may not be willing! Now we're not going to spend time on this tonight, but we've already read in chapter 3 that there was another man who was nearer to Elimelech's family than Boaz was. Whilst - we'll spend a bit of time maybe on it tomorrow night - he was willing to redeem the land that was Elimelech's, he wasn't willing to take on another wife. He didn't want to raise a seed to Mahlon, Ruth's deceased husband.

Here Boaz is the one who is eligible, able, and most importantly: willing! Now why was that? Why was he willing and the other boy wasn't? Well, ultimately, I believe it was because Boaz, that mature man, had lost his heart to young Ruth. Our Lord is eligible to redeem, He has the power to redeem, but isn't it wonderful that He is willing to redeem for the same reason that Boaz was - now you grasp this: because He's lost His heart to you. Is that not precious?

'Fairest of all the earth beside,
Chiefest of all unto Thy bride,
Fullness divine in Thee I see,
Wonderful Man of Calvary!

That Man of Calvary' - this is our response, as it ought to be -
'Has won my heart from me,
And died to set me free,
Blest Man of Calvary!'

Ruth, a gleaner in the field of Boaz - and God guided her to the right field, and to the right face, a kinsman redeemer. Now come with me to the third picture that I want to leave with you in closing tonight. In chapter 3 Ruth moves from being in the field, to being at the feet of Boaz. Now in verse 3 of chapter 3, look down at it with me, Naomi gives Ruth this instruction - she knows now that she has met this man, and she has rejoiced because God has guided Ruth to the kinsman redeemer. She is now forgoing any rights that she has, Naomi, she's maybe too old anyway; and she is giving all this privilege to Ruth, and she's getting her prepared. 'Wash thyself', verse 3, chapter 3, 'anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor', the threshing 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'.

Ruth is instructed by Naomi: 'Now you watch out, go down to the threshing floor, and watch out where Boaz makes his bed to sleep tonight'. Now in these days they would lay down at night with the winnowed barley, in order to prevent it being stolen - they were guarding it. So Ruth was watching to see where he would make his bed that night. Naomi told her to go down to his feet and draw his garment over herself. Now that seems a bit odd - and in verse 4, let me just read this, we see that these are the words Naomi spoke: 'uncover his feet, and lay

thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do'.

Now Ruth's response is remarkable because, just the way you don't understand what's going on here, she didn't, she was a Gentile. Naomi had to explain this to her, this was Jewish custom, it wasn't her way. Yet, even though she doesn't know the full import of it all, look at her response in verses 5 and 6, she said: 'All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her'. She listened, and she was obedient - and listen, there's a lesson: that's why she was blessed.

In verse 7 Boaz ate and drank, his heart was merry, and he lay down at the end of the heap of corn, 'and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down'. When he was asleep, she crept in and - as Naomi had instructed - she uncovered the clothes that covered his feet, and lay down there. Now why did she do that? Well, probably the reason was to ensure that Boaz eventually awakened. By uncovering his feet, he would do it slowly, but he would do it naturally - he wouldn't be startled. He would waken up in the middle of the night, his feet being cold - as often happens some of us - and he would be asking himself what was going on.

We find here that at midnight, verse 8, he awoke 'and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet'. Look what he says to her: 'Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman'. Now please, when we read this in the 21st-century, when everything has been sexualised beyond recognition - don't think that there's anything improper in this whole escapade here. You see, there was a custom to spread a skirt over another - a man would do this as a symbolic act of claiming a woman to be his wife. There was nothing sordid in it at all. What we see here is not strange in this custom, but I'll tell you what is strange: the man wasn't taking the initiative here, it was the woman. Ruth is asking Boaz to put his skirt over her, to claim her as his bride - we would say that's like the woman proposing to the man! Now it's not impossible, but it's not usually the done thing!

Now we might think, 'Well, Ruth must be being a bit forward here' - if it was not for the fact that Ruth gives her reason for her request, at the end of verse 9: 'for thou art a near kinsman'. Now that changed everything, because she had a claim on this man, and the claim was according to the word of God. If there was blame to be put on anyone, it was with Boaz, because he hadn't wakened up to his responsibilities toward Ruth and her family. The response of Boaz in verse 10: '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'. What's he doing? He's thanking her! Isn't that remarkable? He's thanking her for her request. In effect, what he is saying is: 'Thank you, Ruth, for allowing me the privilege of exercising my responsibilities as a near-kinsman redeemer to you'.

What a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ - because He, in grace, loves to be trusted, loves to dispense strength and grace for all our needs. He has provided for us a throne of grace - He is more willing to give than we are to receive from Him! Sometimes we think of prayer as trying to prise open the iron clad fist of almighty God, eking blessings out of His cold hard heart - it's not like that at all! The old puritan said: 'In prayer we are not conquering God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness'. That's what we see here: Boaz thanked her for her claim upon him.

Didn't our Lord Jesus say in John 16: 'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and

ye shall receive, that your joy may be full'. He's asking to ask, He's asking you to ask! He thanked her and commended her - look at the end of verse 10 - that she didn't follow the young men. Now, what did that mean? Well, Boaz was more mature, and Ruth would have had every right to go after younger men if she had wanted to. What Boaz was commending her for was that she wasn't forsaking her old family, and her old life for a selfish new start, turning over a new leaf - but she had a desire to revive the old!

Now listen, things were hard. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. This was a dark day in the history of Israel. It would be forgiven if a young girl decided to cut her losses and start a new chapter of her life - and sometimes we can feel like that. Forget about the old, it doesn't work any more. There's times in our lives when our back is against the wall, and we're having difficulties, and we're finding the Christian profession hard going. Maybe it's in a church context, and we want to cut our losses and leave. Maybe it's a marriage that is on the rocks, and the easiest thing to do is go to the divorce courts, not go to the Lord. Maybe it's your work, or your service for the Lord - and I'm not saying that God always says, 'Stick at a thing', but as one man put it like this: 'God wants to mend things when we choose to end things'. He is a Redeemer, a Redeemer of that which is lost.

What we need to do is just what Ruth did - every single one of us - with all our problems, and all our trials, and all our difficulties, all our struggles, all our questions: come and lie at the feet of our Kinsman Redeemer. Our Christian failures, whatever those might be, He has the right, He has the power, He is willing to redeem whatever is broken. We should come and pray what Ruth prayed: 'Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman'. Do you know what that really means in contemporary language? 'Lord, take over. Take over!' - when was the last time you came to the Lord and said that? 'Lord, take me'. What she was doing here, without realising it, was what the child of God does when they come to the cross, and they say 'Lord, take me, spread therefore Thy skirt over Thine handmaiden', or Thy servant, 'for Thou art a near Kinsman to me. Lord, take charge and change!'

He might change your circumstances, but even if He doesn't you will find direction only at the cross, only at the Master's feet. In verse 13 he tells her: 'Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he', that's the nearest kinsman, 'if he won't perform his duty, well then I'll do it', in effect is what he says. Now you don't need to be waiting to get saved, you can get saved here and now. You don't need to wait to get revived, you can get revived at the cross here and now. But what we have here is Boaz saying: 'Look Ruth, it's time for you now to rest. You rest, and I'll do the rest'.

Now this is beautiful, because up until this point Ruth did all the work for Boaz, isn't that right? But now Boaz was changing, turning the tables, and the emphasis - he is now doing all the work for Ruth. It's now time for Ruth to tarry, now time for Ruth to wait and trust and rest in him. It's beautiful, isn't it? Boaz said to her in chapter 2 verse 12, did he not, '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'.

Dear friends tonight, do you believe in the providence of God? As the Psalmist said in 138: 'The LORD will perfect that which concerneth thee'. Tarry, if you've committed it to Him - it's the hardest thing in the world to do, I'm doing it over a number of things just at the minute, and I tell you it's hard! Just wait, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Jeremiah 29:11, one translation: 'I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'. Do

you know what Ruth did? She's great! She believed the word of her redeemer, and she received his gifts. It was like a deposit, a guarantee, a token - we have got the Holy Spirit - that God is going to do it right in the end one day. She was willing to wait patiently for him to do the rest.

Look at the words of Naomi in the last verse of chapter 3, this is beautiful, she said: 'Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day'. The Lord's not going to rest, you know, until He gets us all to glory. Too many of God's people are content to live in chapter 2, in the field where Ruth was eking out a living, living off the picked leftovers of the children of God, doing the best of a difficult situation. Some of us are like that: we want God's gifts, but we don't want a deeper communion with our Heavenly Boaz, our Lord.

Can I ask you tonight as we close: what is it that hinders you? What is it that binds you from this place of abundant blessing? You know the ancient Hebrews had the year of Jubilee every 50 years. The slaves would be set free, and the land that had been taken from tribes would be restored unto them - but do you know something? If you had a near-kinsman, you didn't have to wait until the year of Jubilee! If he was able, if he was eligible, if he was willing, you could have your lands back, you could have your life back right away!

Now there's a great Jubilee celebration happening one day very soon in glory, where God is going to put everything right. But do you know something, believer? You don't have to wait until then. You can enjoy the fullness of Christ's redemption and revival now through your nearest Kinsman, and you don't have to settle for anything less than the word of God promises you. What are you struggling with tonight? The romance of redemption and revival in Ruth - in her years of prosperity in her past in Moab, her early years of marriage, Boaz meant nothing to her. We don't even read of him in chapter 1, and in chapter 2 by divine design she is found in his field, in chapter 3 she is prostrate at his feet, and in chapter 4 she becomes - as we will see tomorrow night - a member of his family. Sure, it's wonderful, isn't it?

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The Romance Of Redemption And Revival In Ruth - Chapter 4 **"In His Family"**

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Let's covet the Lord's presence tonight as we turn to Ruth chapter 4, that's where we are now, the crescendo and the climax of this whole story - and of course we have taken as our title throughout the series: 'The Romance of Redemption and Revival in Ruth', and we're going to read the whole chapter 4 tonight, beginning at verse 1:

"Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. 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". Just pause there for a moment, please note that many times the word 'redeem' is now found in the passage. "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 mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman. 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. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. 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. Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David".

Let us pray for just a moment please: Father, we take the words of that hymn as our prayer tonight: 'Beyond the sacred page, we seek Thee, Lord. Our spirit pants for Thee, the Living Word'. Lord, we thank You for the wonderful pictures inspired for us in Scripture - and yet, Lord, with all that we will learn tonight, we ask one thing: that the face of Boaz, the face of Naomi, the face of Obed would fade into insignificance as we focus and see clearly the face of our Kinsman Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ. In whose name we pray, and whose help we ask now by the Spirit, Amen.

Now this may well be your first night with us in these studies - and for that reason I want to just recap a little on where we have come until now. You will remember that on two occasions now I have given you the purposes that we have this book, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the little book of Ruth, four chapters in the Old Testament. The first reason, very clearly - as we have seen directly tonight from the latter verses of chapter 4 - is an historical purpose and reason. The book is given to us to explain the ancestry of King David, and what it effectively does is: it builds a bridge between the period of the Judges - the book of Judges, of course, coming before Ruth - and the period of the Kings beginning at 1 and 2 Samuel. So there is an historical reason why we have it, it gives the genealogy of King David.

There is a prophetic reason as well. I pointed out that in chapter 1, Israel was being chastened by God - there was a famine in the land because of their backsliding, and the Lord turns from them, effectively, and turns His attention toward a Gentile woman and begins to deal with her. That is exactly what is happening today in God's prophetic calendar. The book of Romans teaches us that blindness in part has happened unto Israel for her disobedience, and the fact that she did not accept her Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. At this very present dispensation God is calling a people for Himself, for His name, out of the Gentiles. We are now in that time of the Gentiles - but as we see from the book of Ruth, it was blessing that came to Naomi after Ruth was married to Boaz; and so Israel will be restored once the church of Jesus Christ is married to the Saviour at the Marriage Supper. God's prophetic calendar for Israel will start to tick again.

There is also a typological purpose for this book. Historical, prophetic, and typological - and we know that a 'type', of course, is a picture, an Old Testament picture of a New Testament truth beforehand. Of course we spent some time looking last night at the kinsman redeemer, and we saw that that was a wonderful portrayal and illustration of the relationship of our Lord Jesus Christ to His bride, the church.

Of course there is a fourth purpose, and we dare not miss this one: it is practical. This book is intensely practical. Of course we should always apply the word of God to all our lives, but the message of redemption and revival in Ruth has got all to do with our own redemption and our own potential revival as we tap into the wonderful eternal truths that are found within these four chapters. So we have to be challenged individually and personally from this book, and I hope we have in our series, and will be tonight.

Now in chapter 1, you remember on the Lord's Day morning, we looked at the sojourn into Moab, and how Elimelech had gathered his little family together and went into Moab - which is a picture of the world. They left the house of bread, Bethlehem, and we saw the ramifications of that. Elimelech lost his life, his two sons died - Chilion and Mahlon - and Naomi had to return back to her home in Bethlehem with no husband, no sons, but just two pagan Moabite daughters-in-law.

Of course, on Sunday evening, we called Naomi the prodigal daughter of the Old Testament. We saw how she returned, and what tragic words we read that night, she said: 'Call me not Naomi', which means 'pleasant one', 'but call me Mara', bitter, 'for I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty'. The words of a backslider, if ever there was any. Then in chapter 2 we saw last night - I'm trying to remember what night it was! - last night we saw first of all the beautiful picture of Ruth as a gleaner in the field of Boaz. God providentially led her there, and she gleaned the leftovers that were directed to be left there by the law of God for a social basis, for the needy - whether it was the stranger, the widow, or the orphan in the land, they had to lie there - and Ruth decided to go out and glean for her and her mother-in-law. God directed her to the very field and to the face of her kinsman redeemer that God had chosen, and indeed the one whom she would marry.

Of course what poignant words we read in verse 8 of chapter 2, Boaz said: 'Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens'. It would have been a supreme insult to the goodness and grace of Boaz for Ruth to try her chances - chance her arm, as we would say - in other people's fields when he had been so kind. We saw how it is incumbent upon us as Christians not to glean in any other field, the Lord has been so good to us. It's only when we realise who He really is, and what He has done for us, that we become satisfied truly in Him and we don't need to go to the world any more for a buzz - because He is the Altogether Lovely One to our souls.

The second picture we saw last night was: Boaz, the near-kinsman. We spent some time looking at what Leviticus 25 teaches us about the near-kinsman's right to redeem his brother's estate. We saw that 'redeem' means 'to set free by paying a price', and Deuteronomy 25 specifically said that if a brother died, the other brother surviving in the family had the responsibility to take on his widow and raise up seed in his brother's name...in order to inherit his lands. Of course, the margin of chapter 2 and verse 20 bears that out very well at the very end, in relation to Boaz Naomi said to Ruth: 'The man is near of kin unto us', the margin says, 'One that hath right to redeem'.

We saw that there were three qualifications for a go'el, the Hebrew word for 'kinsman redeemer'. One: he had to have the right to redeem - and we saw how, through the incarnation, and the Lord Jesus not only being made flesh, but being made sin for us, He had the right to redeem us. He had to have the power to redeem, and what great power God has to do that - His hand is not short that it cannot redeem. But the most important of the three qualifications was: he had to be willing to redeem - praise His holy name, He was and still is!

In chapter 3, the last picture we looked at was Ruth at the feet of Boaz - that's where we left her in chapter 3 verse 9, where she said: 'Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman'. That's where we left her - effectively verse 18, the last verse of chapter 3, Naomi's advice was: 'Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day'. Ruth believed what her redeemer said to her - that he would, with all his power, if he could, redeem her. She received gifts, which were like a guarantee, a deposit, that he was intending to be true to his word. Now she is waiting in patience for him to do the rest. We saw last night - I think it's worth repeating - we can rest because our Kinsman Redeemer will not rest until He has our redemption complete.

I omitted to tell you a little story last night about Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission. During the Boxer Rebellion in China, many of the missionaries were under threat. At that time Hudson Taylor was in his seventies, and he was far from well. He said to one of his

colleagues during that tumultuous time: 'I cannot read, I cannot think, I cannot even pray - but I can trust'. Isn't that wonderful? That's where Ruth was: she's left now just sitting at her kinsman redeemer's feet, resting under the wings of the God whom she had come to trust. That's where we are meant to be:

'Jesus, I am resting, resting,
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart'.

So there we left her, and now we must move her on - because, as Boaz goes away to take upon himself this work of redemption, he finds a potential blockage. Now, of course, he already alluded to this right away when Ruth made the request. If you turn back in chapter 3, you will see in verses 12 and 13 he responded to her and said: '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'.

You see, the nearest kinsman had first claim - if you like, we would say 'first refusal' - to redeem lands or indeed a widow. Now it is very interesting to note, to his eternal shame, that the name of this nearest kinsman is never recorded. It was Matthew Henry who said: 'It is a just punishment upon him, he who would not preserve his brother's name, that he might lose his own'. Now although Boaz, clearly, was more willing to redeem Ruth than this nearest kinsman was, Boaz could not legally redeem Ruth until the next of kin - the go'el in Hebrew - had first refusal.

Now you might anticipate that we have encountered a problem typologically - because if we are saying that Boaz is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, near-Kinsman Redeemer, well then how do we understand this nearer kinsman that was nearer to redeem Ruth? Well, I think most Bible scholars agree that in this nearest kinsman we have a picture of the holy Old Testament law of God. Now how can that be? It might seem a bit far-fetched for some of you - well, when you consider it, it's obvious, because the law of God has a prior claim upon all of us. You see, the law of God cannot be bypassed in our redemption. The claims of God's law must be met first, before Boaz redeems Ruth and plays the part of a go'el. It is the same with our Lord Jesus Christ. You know people think He just came as the Saviour of the world, and He could do anything. They think that because we preach a free gospel of grace - and we do, praise God - that redemption is like sweeping sin under the carpet, wiping the slate clean and nothing else has to be done. Now listen: God can't do that! There are things God cannot do - and because God is a holy God, and God is faithful God, and God is a God of His word, He cannot go against His own purposes or transgress His own law. The holy standards of His law must be upheld.

Let me show you this clearly from the New Testament. Turn with me to Romans 3 verse 26, I'll read it if you don't want to turn to it, but it's good for you to see it for yourself - Romans 3:26. I just want to take up the verse where it says: 'that he might be just', that's God in the working of salvation and redemption, 'and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus'. Now God wants to be the justifier of sinners who believe in Jesus, but God has got to be just in being the justifier of those who believe in Him as Saviour. Therefore, if He's going to be just, the law has to be satisfied - there's no way around it. So in this nearer kinsman we see the law of God.

Now when Moses presented the people with the law from God, he pronounced: 'Do, and thou shalt live'. If you're able to keep this law, you'll live. Romans 10:5, if you turn over to it as well, we read there Paul reiterating that sentiment: 'For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them'. If you want to live by the law, you've got to keep the law perfectly in every point. So therefore the law condemns us - if you like, the law is our kinsman-condemner, rather than our kinsman redeemer - now why is that? Well, Romans 8:3, turn back a couple of chapters, tells us why the law condemns us - and I just want to take up this little statement: 'the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh'. The law could not redeem or save us because it was weak through the flesh. Now that doesn't mean there was a problem with the law, the problem is with us: God's law is holy - but as Romans 3:22-23 teaches us, 'There's no difference between any of us, for all have sinned, and come short', fallen short, 'of the glory of God', the standard of God's holiness.

So, as Romans 7 verse 10 says: 'the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found', Paul says, 'to be unto death'. 'Do, and thou shalt live', but because none of us can do it and keep it completely, it causes death to us. Now don't misunderstand what I'm saying - that doesn't mean that Christians can just discard God's law and do as they like. None of us can keep God's law of our own accord, and the miracle of the gospel is that the Holy Spirit - who has been gifted to us by the redemption that is in Christ - when He lives in us, He lives out God's perfect law, and His law becomes part of us.

But on our own, we are hopeless. In chapter 4 we see this confessed by this nearest kinsman, twice he says in chapter 4: 'I cannot redeem, I cannot redeem'. He couldn't redeem, he could only condemn. Now Paul goes even further in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 56, and we're all familiar with this verse from funeral services, but we don't really grasp the import of it all. He said: 'The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law'. What he saying? He's saying that God's law, effectively, has added power, now, for us to be condemned for our sinfulness. If it was bad enough being sinners, now that God's law has been given, the law has added power to condemn us in our sin.

Now let me illustrate this to you from everyday life, for you have experienced this without realising. Whatever sphere of existence you want to apply it to, if you have standards - they can be spiritual standards, they can be sporting standards, they could be working standards - if you have standards, the higher your standards will be, the harder time you will give yourself. That's why perfectionists are always beating themselves up. God's standards and laws couldn't be any higher, and because of how high they are we are all the more condemned.

I want to ask you tonight - and I don't have the circumstances of everyone here - but I want to ask you: are you experiencing a hammering from God's law? Maybe you're finding it difficult to live up to His standards found, perhaps, in the Ten Commandments. Or maybe it's other aspects of God's word - I don't know what it is - but it's very possible that this is what you are experiencing. You see, when you try to live by law - whether it's God's law, or your own laws, or other man-made laws - what we do is: we set these standards high, and we allow the accuser of the brethren, that's the devil, to condemn us over again, and again, and again. He can do it, because we will always fall short.

Now, you know 1 John 1 and verse 9: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. This is the great question: if our

nearest kinsman condemns us and can't redeem us, how can God be just in saving us and cleansing us from our sin? Well, it's the same as it was with Boaz. To redeem Ruth, Boaz first had to satisfy the demands of the law; and to redeem us, the Lord Jesus Christ had to do the same.

Boaz, in chapter 4 verse 1, took this matter of redemption to the gate of the city. He took the law to the gate. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to satisfy the just demands of God's holy law to redeem us, He went without the gate, without the city, without the camp - Hebrew says: 'Bearing the reproach'. What was His reproach? His reproach was being numbered among transgressors, that's how Isaiah puts it. That means more than Him being impaled between two thieves, and being treated as a criminal - He was taking the just judgement of God's holy law upon Himself.

Turn with me to Galatians chapter 3, because this is exactly what is taught there by the apostle Paul - to a people, incidentally, who thought that 'OK, Christ has died for us, but we need to keep the law, the ceremony, and the ritual to get into heaven. It's not enough that Christ died, we've got to keep the law'. Paul points out to them very forcibly in chapter 3 of Galatians verse 10: 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse' - if you're wanting to live by law, you're cursed, 'for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them'. You see, we can't do them all, and because we fail even in one point, we're cursed. 'But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them' - it's by works, by doing, but we can't do it! 'Christ', now mark this, 'hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree'.

There at Calvary He satisfied the demands of God's law. Effectively what He did was, He robbed sin of its power to condemn us. He took the curse of the law, and there is no more for me. Romans 6 and verse 10 says: 'For in that he died, he died unto sin once' - that does not say He died for sin, it says 'He died unto sin'. It goes on, 'but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God' - and what it means is that there was no longer any reason for the Lord Jesus Christ to stay in the grave one more moment than God ordained, because sin's power had been broken. Now the nearest kinsman, our nearest kinsman, the law, has no more power to condemn us - hallelujah!

In verse 2 we read that there were ten elders that were called out to witness this legal transaction, and I just wonder is God in His inspiration wanting us to think of the Ten Commandments that are a witness to the inability of God's law to redeem an outcast, particularly someone who wasn't even in Israel in the first place - that's a Gentile like Ruth, and you, and me. Well, I hope that you can see clearly that it's very foolish for anybody to be living under law. If you're not a saved person, born again, and you're trying to earn your salvation, it should be obvious to you now that it's impossible - that's not why God's law was given. It was given more like a magnifying glass to show us our sin, than a ten-runged ladder to heaven to climb to glory - it's impossible to do that, for every one of those rungs is broken.

But you know, believers can live under law - and believer, if that's you, do you know what that's like? It's like Ruth trying to marry this boy that didn't love her and didn't want her! But it's worse than that, and I want to be sensitive in what I say, but it's almost like wanting to marry someone that's going to beat you to a pulp - because that's what the law will do to us. It will condemn us, not redeem us. Yet Christians are letting the devil, day after day, hammer them with the law. 'You don't shape up! You're not what you ought to be!', he is the accuser

of the brethren. But God's word very clearly says that if we get a grasp of grace and redemption, that ought not to be the case. Romans 8, we quoted verse 3, but read it all: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh', not keeping the law by flesh, 'but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death'.

Now the law of sin and death there is not talking about our old sinful nature, he's talking about the law of God! It magnified sin to us, and condemned us to death: 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh' - here it is! - 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us' - hallelujah! Now Christian: the devil has a lot of believers over a barrel because of their guilt, and he's hammering you. Now I'm not exonerating you in sin or backsliding, you should know that by now through this series, but I'm telling you this: if you're a true child of God, you have no reason to be condemned, you have no reason to have a troubled conscience. If you confess your sin, if you own up to it, if you get this road of repentance and revival that we find in the book of Ruth - whatever your failure is tonight, maybe you're struggling, as we heard earlier, with some kind of standard in God's word, or a manmade one. You need to know, listen: Jesus Christ has delivered us from the curse of any law, through the shedding of His precious blood:

'Abel's blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies;
But the blood of Jesus
For our pardon cries.

Oft as it is sprinkled
On our guilty hearts,
Satan in confusion
Terror struck departs'.

Revelation 12:11 says: 'They overcame him', the devil, 'by the blood of the Lamb' - that's our victory ground, and we're on it if we're saved! The devil can't get us off it, but he can make us think we're not on it! That's where a lot of the damage is: he robs us of our joys, he robs us of our triumphs, he robs us of our victory - and do you know what happens? We go down deeper and deeper into sin. You might think: 'Oh, you're talking about an easy-believism, an antinomianism, no law and people can just have grace and live as they like' - you know, the opposite is the case, it's the people who are living under law that find they're on the downward spiral of sin, because it convicts them more of their sin - but it's only by grace that we can be free from sin through the blood of the Lamb.

It wasn't just the blood of the Lamb, it was the word of their testimony. I'll tell you: your testimony, if you're enslaved by something and shackled by something tonight, your word of testimony - you might think you haven't got a testimony as you stand before God - it could be how, this very night, God delivered you by the precious blood of Christ from the bondage you're under. He has already done that, but it's about you experiencing it in your own life here and now.

Verse 6 of chapter 4 shows us that the near-kinsman, he was qualified, he was eligible in other words, to redeem - but the problem was: he's not willing. When he thought there was a field and land in it, he was happy - but when he found out that he would have to marry Ruth, that was a different thing. The reason given was: 'I mar my own inheritance', that was his

fear. He was afraid to harm his inheritance, maybe for his own children. But the miracle of God's grace - and you only need to read Ephesians 1 - is that our Lord Jesus Christ, for Him it was no concern to mar His own inheritance, He made us a part of His inheritance! Miracle of miracles, He shares His inheritance! We become joint heirs, and everything that's His is ours.

Boaz was like that you know, he wasn't ashamed of Ruth the way the nearest kinsman was, the way the law of God would be to us. You remember, I told you last night, chapter 2 and verse 11, he shouted of the virtue of this woman. He was not ashamed to own her! Boaz planned this marriage privately, but he went to the gate in chapter 4 and verse 1 and he paid the price publicly. There were the witnesses, in verses 7 and 8 of chapter 4, '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'.

Now Deuteronomy 25 and verse 9 actually specifies that the widow was the one who should have taken this man's sandal off, and after she took it off she was to spit in his face - it's a disgrace for him not to be willing to redeem her. But here we see what is happening, is that this man himself, the nearest kinsman, takes off the shoe and hands it to Boaz. He is relinquishing his right as nearest kinsman to redeem Ruth, and he's conceding to Boaz.

You know, there's a great symbolism here. This custom of taking the shoe off is linked to what God told Joshua's generation. You remember He told them: 'Every place where the sole of your foot shall tread, I'll give it to you'. So whenever your foot, the sole of your shoe, tread on something, it was tantamount to claiming it as your right. What's happening here is: he is relinquishing his right over all that Naomi owned, and Ruth herself, and he's handing it to Boaz. What we see, as New Testament believers, is - as someone said - 'The law has no right to walk over, to condemn, that which Christ has redeemed'. He has redeemed you if you're saved, the law has no right to hammer you, to condemn you. The devil has no right to accuse you for, just like in this situation, verse 9 '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'. The claims of the law were fully met at Calvary! John 19:30: 'It is finished!'.

It's very interesting to note that when this transaction took place in Ruth, at the gate of the city, we read - I think - five times in verses 1 and 2 (you can check that when you get home) of these men sitting down. That signified that this was going to be a deliberate transaction, legally. A price was going to be paid to redeem, whether it was by the nearest kinsman or the near-kinsman. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible says He sat down having made redemption for us, having purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The wonderful thing is: Ruth was told by Naomi, 'Now you sit still, Boaz will not rest until this work is done' - and because the work has been done, and the Saviour said 'I go to prepare a place for you', and He wasn't going to heaven, He was going to Calvary, then He went on to heaven after He rose again, and He sat down for the work was finished; and so we can sit still. Is it not beautiful?

What are you getting uptight about tonight? Is the devil condemning you? Oh, we all could do a lot better, and the grace of God has been given to us, and the Spirit of God, to be the best that we could be - 'Be perfect, even as my Father in heaven is perfect', the Lord said - but don't let the devil accuse you and take your joy, for the Lord has finished the work! Don't be looking to yourself. A lot of people have trouble over assurance. I remember for years being

perplexed about the issue of salvation, whether I was really saved. I used to go to school in the centre of Belfast, and almost every week I would go to one of the three or four Christian evangelical bookshops in the centre of town to read books to try and get some kind of comfort of mind and heart to tell me that I was saved. But my problem was I was looking to myself, I was looking to my circumstances, I was looking to my sins, and I wasn't looking to Christ. I wasn't looking to what He had done, I wasn't looking to what He had said: 'It's finished!':

'Free from the law, O happy condition,
Jesus has bled and there is remission,
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.

Once for all, O sinner, receive it,
Once for all, O brother, believe it' - what's the message?
'Cling to the cross, your burden will fall,
For Christ hath redeemed us once for all'.

A potential blockage was there, that was the problem, but grace got by it. We find then in chapter 4 a perfect marriage. The potential blockage gave way to a perfect marriage. Now, I wonder do you have the perfect marriage? There's some Christians I know, and they talk about the perfect marriage. There's one, an entertainer in America I think it was, he said: 'Marriage is a mistake that every man should make at least once in his life'. That's not the way we view marriage as Christians, it ought not to be - but this was a marriage made in heaven, literally.

Let me put it like this: love found a way to redeem Ruth's soul. In chapter 4 and verse 10: 'Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife', isn't that beautiful? Paul says: 'Love suffereth long. Love is kind'. This was a match made in heaven, this is the romance of redemption and revival in this book. It's a happy ending! You know, everybody loves a happy ending, but the story of grace has the best ending of all. God specialises in happy endings. I don't know where you are tonight, but for the one who, like Ruth, casts themselves at the feet of our heavenly nearest Kinsman, and says: 'Cover me with the border of your mantle. Take control of me. Take my life, take over', I'll tell you: there's always a happy ending. It'll be hard, but it will always be for the best in the end.

It's only those who do that who can know a happy ending. Here were two lonely people: Ruth a young widow - well, it's obvious she's lonely, but you might say: 'Where are you getting it from that Boaz was lonely?'. Well, you remember that he was a mature man, he wasn't a young man - he said that himself. I'm sure he had been lonely without a partner in life. 'What are you going to get out of that? Are you going to tell us the Lord is lonely?'. Well, I mightn't use those terms, but let me put it like this: He is our heavenly Bridegroom, we are His bride, we're not His wife - but the Marriage Supper is going to come one day, and He will not rest until that day. J.N. Darby wrote some beautiful hymns, and one verse of one of them goes like this:

'Yet it must be, Thy love had not its rest
Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest.
That love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs!'

Christ's love will not rest until He gets us there, until His redeemed - that's you and me - are

fully blest, and He shares all that He possesses with His loved co-heirs. That is the perfect marriage made in heaven, and that's what we have a picture of here in the book of Ruth. Oh, the great blockage was there - sin, and the law that condemned us - but praise God, through His precious blood, through His love for us, 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it', He purchased the church with His own blood. It's beautiful, isn't it?

But come with me again: there was a potential blockage, a perfect marriage, but then we see at the end of this story a prestigious lineage. In verse 11 of chapter 4 the witnesses blessed Boaz and Ruth: 'The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah'. Now please notice that they called her now 'a woman'. 'Oh, what's big about that?', you might say. Well, up until now she was being called 'a Moabite woman', 'the Moabite' - but something had happened here, and her past had died because she was now united with Boaz. She is never referred to that way again in the rest of this book.

Remember in chapter 2, the way she referred to herself in verse 10 when Boaz allowed her to glean in his field: 'Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?'. But she is no longer a stranger from the promises of God that are to the commonwealth of Israel, she is open to everything - why? Because she took the lowly place as a gleaner, she stood upon the promises of God to gleaners, and God led her to her kinsman redeemer. She took the lowly place at his feet, and he took her in and made her his own. You know, that's what He has done for us.

They did more than that, they prayed for the couple, particularly this woman Ruth, that she would be like Rachel and Leah. Now you know who Rachel and Leah were, they were the mothers of Israel. Don't forget that this woman is a Gentile, a Moabite, and now they're treating her effectively as royalty, as the princesses of the nation. Actually this was proved prophetically, God answered their prayers - because just the way that Rachel and Leah were in the lineage of Israel's kings, and indeed of Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus, Ruth and Boaz would be...all because Ruth found grace at the feet of her kinsman redeemer.

Now, what other blessing was given? Look at it, verse 11, at the very end: 'be famous in Bethlehem'. How could they not be famous? Because Boaz was set in God's plan to become the great-grandfather of King David, you can't get much more famous than that! But more than that, we turn to Matthew chapter 1 - turn to it please - and we find that the lineage of David is the lineage of the King of the Jews, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Boaz is in it as well. May you be famous in Bethlehem! Now when we look at the Gospels we find that this phrase, 'be famous', is used in connection with our Lord Jesus. In Matthew 4:24, it says 'His fame went throughout all Syria'. In Matthew 14 and verse 1, 'At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus'. But what was He famous for? Was it kow-towing with politicians, and celebrities, and business figures? We're told what He was famous for. You remember John the Baptist sent his disciples to the Lord Jesus asking: 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?'. The answer that the Lord sent as a reply was regarding His fame: 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them' - that's what His great renown was for! He was famous for meeting the needs of people, people who come to His feet.

Now keep your hand, please, in Matthew 1, and look at verse 12 of chapter 4 again of Ruth. We're almost finished - the blessing continues from these witnesses, 'let thy house be like the house of Pharez', or Perez, 'whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall

give thee of this young woman'. Now that's significant, you've got to go home and read Genesis 38 for this story, but Tamar had a similar situation to Ruth, inasmuch as she was married to one of Judah's sons, and God slew him because of his wickedness, and he died - Er was his name - without having any children. So Tamar was a widow. Now what happened in the story was more than appears to the naked eye. We find Tamar's name mentioned in Matthew chapter 1 - if you look at it, you see it in verse 3, it's there in the Authorised 'Thamar', but it's the same person, Tamar, there she is.

But you've got to understand from Genesis 38 that Tamar had a right to marry her brother-in-law because of this levirate marriage of the nearest kinsman that we've been dwelling on these nights. His name was Onan, but he wouldn't perform what was his responsibility. Her husband Er, deceased, now only had one other brother who was too young to be married, and Judah - her father-in-law - promised that when he was of age, she would be given to him in marriage. He became of age, and she wasn't given to him. So she plotted, she dressed up as a harlot, she tricked her father-in-law, Judah, into committing immorality with her, and she conceived a child.

Now I haven't got time to elaborate into that story, it's a torrid affair, but the fact of the matter is: it is astounding to think that this woman is mentioned in the messianic line. Ruth is there, Ruth and Boaz are there. Matthew chapter 1 verse 5: 'Boaz begat Obed of Ruth', but here, hold on a minute! Look before that, verse 5: 'Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab' - now that's Rahab. Rahab, who's she? She's the harlot from the book of Joshua, she is Boaz's mother. It's coming together a little bit - maybe that's why he was loving and gracious toward a Gentile, because Rahab was a Gentile - but she was also a prostitute, and here she is in the lineage of Christ.

Come with me a bit more. In verse 6 it's alluded: 'Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah'. Uriah, who's that? Bathsheba. So what are we seeing here? There are four women in the lineage of Christ mentioned in Matthew chapter 1, two are harlots, one is an idolater, one is an adulterer - in the lineage of Christ! What is God thinking of? He's thinking of you. What I mean is, as someone put it: 'These four were included to show that sinners might have a share in Christ. For if sinners were among His ancestors, there's a place for sinners among His descendants, spiritual descendants'.

Now, don't get me wrong: His sinlessness, the Lord's, was not affected; His divinity was not affected, because He was conceived in the virgin womb by the Holy Spirit. He did not have an earthly father, but according to the flesh He was of the line of David. These were His ancestors, and what is it there for? It's a demonstration of the grace of God, that where sin abounds grace doth much more abound! It's wonderful, isn't it?

What a blessing Obed would be to Ruth. She never had a child through her deceased husband. What a blessing Obed would be to Naomi, a first grandchild, drying her tears as she nursed him. The future was secure, look at the pronouncement in verse 15: 'He shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age'. She didn't have to worry any more about her inheritance being lost - but Obed would not only be a blessing to Ruth and Naomi, he would be a blessing to Bethlehem. He would be the grandfather of King David the Great! But what a blessing Obed would be to the world! For, in the fullness of time, God would send forth His Son, made under the law, born of a woman. It's mighty, isn't it - the Redeemer?

Oh, the romance of redemption and revival in Ruth. In her years of prosperity before the famine, Boaz meant nothing to her. In chapter 2, by divine design, she is found in his field. In chapter 3 she is at his feet. In chapter 4 she's in his family. The difference was made by obeying God's word, when Ruth put herself at her redeemer's feet and entrusted herself to him. He took over, he changed everything. In chapter 1 Ruth had faith; in chapter 2 she's gleaning leftovers; in chapter 3 she gets generous gifts; and in chapter 4 everything that belongs to Boaz belongs to her, because she belongs to him!

'My Redeemer! Oh what beauties
In that lovely Name appear;
None but Jesus, in His glories,
Shall the honoured title wear'.

I trust you're at His feet tonight. If you're not, you need to get there. You'll never know redemption, you'll never know revival, unless you take the low place and say: 'Cover me'. May God bless His word to all our hearts.

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