

Reading: Ruth 4:1-12

THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION

9. AT THE CITY GATE

We have now come to the last chapter in this delightful book, and that means we have come, (1) *From the Forbidden Land (Ch 1) To the Harvest Field (Ch 2) to the Threshing Floor (Ch 3) and now to the City Gate (Ch 4)* Do you recall what chapter was all about ? It was all about **Weeping** ! Naomi loses Elimelech and her two sons and when she decides to return to Bethlehem her daughters-in-law are weeping. Chapter 2 is all about **Working** as we Ruth serving in the harvest field as a gleaner, coming into contact with her husband to be. In Chapter 3 we see Ruth **Waiting**. Do you recall Naomi's counsel ? " *Sit still my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall.*" Of course Chapter 4 is all about the **Wedding** for Boaz and Ruth get married and live happily ever after. Now its interesting to observe that chapters 1 to 3 show us Ruth's private life, whereas Chapter 4 show's us her public life. In the opening chapters we are informed of her private and personal career, but what is presented to us in the closing chapter is public display.

Chapter one, *the Decision expressed* on the road home was her personal choice. Chapter 2, the *Diligence revealed* in the harvest field was her personal exercise. Chapter 3, *the Devotional plea* on the threshing floor was a personal matter, but in Chapter 4, *the Destiny decided* at the City Gate was *a public scene*. All the elders, all those who passed by, and the whole city had knowledge of her exaltation and of the redeemer's love towards her. Now Boaz owned her as his own. Do you see the parallel in our Christian experience ? Our private choices to serve God, our diligence in His field, and our devotion to Christ, while unknown now, will one day be made public when standing in His presence at the Judgement Seat of Christ. (2 Cor 5:9-10) My how we fare on that future day, will depend entirely on how we are doing in this present day. Now you will notice that everything that happened in this final episode revolved around the city gate. This was the place where local decisions were made by the elders and business transactions settled. Perhaps if we use some current terminology it will help us understand the process that Boaz went through. Look at,

1. The Selecting of a Venue:

Look if you will at (4:1) In our culture, we have court proceedings behind closed doors. However, in Ruth's day all legal transactions were handled at the gate of the city and open to the public. (Deut 21:18-21 2 Sam 15:2 Job 29:7) The gate of the city " *the place of rule, where all matters were settled, all transfers made.*" (Ridout) There would be room in the open square by the gates for people to assemble and do their business. The gate of Bethlehem had already witnessed a great part of this story. Elimelech with his family had passed through it in their path of departure to Moab. Naomi and Ruth entered years later, poor, friendless and desolate. It had seen Ruth going to the harvest field every morning, and returning with her hard earned gleanings every evening. Was it not fitting that at the same gate the glorious ending would be enacted ?

2. The Summoning of the Defendant:

(4:1) The city gate was a great place for Boaz to sit and wait because everybody had to go in and out of the city by the gate, and he would be able to recognise the man he was looking for. *This reminds us that providence always comes to those who are prompt about pursuing their duties as Boaz was here.* Tell me, do you know something of the providence of God in your life ? Do you know God's guiding, directing, and providing hand ? If you don't is it because you are dilatory in your duties ? Do you recall what Abraham's servant said ?

" *I being in the way, (that is doing His duty,) the Lord led (providentially) me.*" (Gen 24:27) Notice here also

3. The Seating of the Jury:

For after Boaz had served the summons, " *he took ten men of the elders of the city*" (4:2) The Hebrew word translated " *elders,*" in our text has a wide meaning. It can refer to age, to experience, and to position of rule. The " *elders,*" selected here by Boaz could easily fit into all three categories. They would be elderly in years, full of experience, and men who had position and authority in the city. So Boaz selected ten key men and said, " *You men are the jury, you will try this case.*" Can you see here, 1, 2, 3, and,

4. The Stating of the Case:

For notice (4:3-4) My Boaz could have kept quiet about the whole deal and taken care of it privately without the nearer kinsman knowing anything about it.

But Boaz was not that kind of person. He had character and integrity and he wanted everything to be done decently and in order. Incidentally, how do you handle your business affairs ? Are you known for your honesty, your fairness, your decency ? My everything was now ready for the great transaction that would ultimately involve the coming of the Son of God into this world. In the passage that we have read this I want you to notice that there are three strands of teaching.

(1) *Practical teaching:* (2) *Typical Teaching:*

(3) *Devotional teaching:* Notice, there is,

(1) A FACT WE NEED TO REALISE

What is the fact that we need to realise ? Well, it's a very simple one, but it's a very Scriptural one. *Its this, the work of God must be done in God's way !* A good illustration of this is found in the life of David. Do you recall that when David became established as King in the city of Jerusalem he wanted to bring up the ark of God. (2 Samuel 6:1) Now the Ark was the sacred chest that stood in the “ *holy of holies,*” in the Tabernacle. In it were placed the tables of the law and above it was

“ *the mercy seat,*” which was overshadowed by the cherubim (Deut 31:26 Heb 9:4) The Ark in Old Testament times was the symbol of the presence of the living God. Concerning it God said to Moses, “ *And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee*” (Ex 25:21) Now David's desire was good, his motive was pure, but his method was wrong. He failed to read the instructions.

You see, the Word of God was very plain as to how the

“ *Ark,*” was to be moved, It was to be carried by the Levites particularly the Kohathites, (Num 4:15) who were the descendants of one of the three sons of Levi. (Num 3:17) The “ *Ark,*” was to be covered,

(Num 4:4) and borne on their shoulders, by two poles inserted through four rings, one on each corner of the Ark. (Num 7:9 18:3 Deut 10:8) And the Ark was not to be touched. (Num 4:15) My nothing was said about placing the Ark on a new cart, that was mans way, on the shoulders of the Levites that was God's way. Do you see what David had to learn ? *That God's work must be done by God's people in God's way !* He had to learn the lesson that the Word of God must guide the work of God. God's work must be done in God's way.

My its not sufficient to have a worthy cause and a proper spirit. God's work must be done in God's way, that is according to God's Word. Today we often hear the cliché, “ *well, surely the end justifies the means.*” So in order to increase the crowd in the pew and the cash in the purse, many churches will do anything. My

.... there are gimmicks galore. Churches that feature weight lifters, sword specialists, sponsored this or that anything to bring in the crowds or the cash. My do you know where David got the idea of “ *the new cart,*” from ? From the Philistines (1 Sam 6:7) He was imitating a religious world !

I heard about a pastor in Florida who said, “ *they listen this music all week long, and I’m going to gave them on Sunday what they are listening to during the week.*” My think of all the “ *new cart,*” methods that have crept into the church over the last thirty to forty years ! Instead of asking, “ *How does God do it ?*” We ask,

“ *How does the world do it ?*” We are religious copycats, we have called Hollywood to our aid as though the gospel were a form of entertainment. My we never had so many new carts running all over the place, but never has the Ark wobbled as it does today. For when modern methods supersede spiritual authority, confusion is the result. Well, what has all this got to do with Ruth Chapter 4 ? Just this, in the discussion between Boaz and the elders at the gate, we get a little glimpse into the way we should handle the work of God. How should we handle God’s work ?

(a) CALMLY:

Do you see this in the opening verse ? We find that Boaz sat down, that the elders sat down. As we have intimated the “ *gate,*” was the Hebrew Court House, the place of judgement. The place where important business was transacted before public view. (1 Sam 15:2) And in this instance, the business was dealt with calmly, for all concerned sat down. There was undue haste as they came together to discuss matters of mutual interest. Now is this not how we are to handle the Lord’s work ?

Church affairs, assembly business ? Calmly ! Do you recall what the town clerk of Ephesus said when the city was in an uproar ? “ *Do nothing rashly.*” (Acts 19:36) Moreover, if we are filled and controlled by the Spirit of God, the fruit of the Spirit which is peace will be exemplified even in church affairs ! (a)

(b) WISELY:

For do you see from (4:2) that Boaz selected “ *a full compliment of witnesses to the important transaction which he contemplated.*” The Scriptures tell us that “ *in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.*” (2 Cor 13:1) These were men of experience and authority. Do you recall the crisis that faced the Early Church, when it was on fire for God ?

Look at (Acts 6:1-2) Now this dispute was between the two main sections of the church. The Greek speaking Jewish believers had come from foreign countries, then there was the Palestinian Jewish believers, that is those with no foreign influence on their lives. Now the Greek speaking believers were complaining that their widows were being neglected in the daily benevolent fund. Do you see what the apostles did ? Some believe we have here the origin of the deacons. But do you see the requirements they had to meet ?

* ***They had to be Reputable:*** men whose integrity was beyond question.

* ***They had to be Spiritual:*** “ *full of the Holy Ghost,*”

* ***They had to be Wise:*** “ *and wisdom,*”

With Boaz there was ten men, in the Early Church seven but do you see the plurality of ministry ? No wonder the Bible says, “ *in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*” (Prov 11:14)

(c) IMPARTIALLY:

Do you see that word “ *advertise ?*” Its translated from two Hebrew words. The first word means to reveal, disclose, uncover. The second word means ear. The combination of the words conveys the idea of uncovering the ear. You see, Boaz was not trying to conceal anything. He did not present this case in such a way that it would turn out for his good. No, fairly and impartially he presents the facts. When Paul writes to Timothy who was occupying a pastoral position he says, “ *doing nothing by partiality.*” (1 Tim 5:21) In other words, “ *do nothing out of favouritism.*” How tragic it is when there is underhand dealing in the work of God, when folk are placed in positions because of their family name, or their status in society. (a) (b) (c)

(d) PRAYERFULLY:

Do you see the elders prayer in (4:11) ? “ *The Lord make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachael and like Leah,*” Although Ruth is such a small book, the Spirit of God has underscored six prayers. (1:8-9, 2:4, 12, 20, 3:10 4:11-12) Some were offered in seasons of sadness, others in days of joy. They touched daily tasks, social relationships, personal and family living, bereavement and marriage. The Lord Jesus said, “ *men ought always to pray and not to faint.*” (Lk 18:1) And who can read the Acts of the Apostles, the historical record of the early church without being impressed by the fact that they were a praying community ! My *poverty stricken as the church is today in many things she is*

most stricken here, in the place of prayer. We have many organizers, but few agonizers, many players few prayer-ers, many singers few clingers, lots of pastors, few wrestlers, many fears few tears, much fashion, little passion, many interferers few intercessors, many writers but few fighters, Failing here we fail everywhere. Spiritual adolescents say, “ *I’ll not go tonight, its only the prayer meeting.*” My are we handling the work of God prayerfully ? (1)

(2) A CARE WE NEED TO EXERCISE

You see, this business was not only handled calmly, wisely, impartially, prayerfully, but it was handled for the benefit of the needy and destitute ! Can you imagine all this for two widows ? Did you that Scripture is replete with references to the widow ? Job said, “ *And I caused the widows heart to sing for joy.*” (29:13) Of the Lord it is written, “ *the Lord preserveth the strangers, He relieveth the fatherless and widow.*” (Ps 146:9) Of us it should be written they “ *visit the fatherless and widows.*” (James 1:27) For there is a care we need to exercise to the widow and needy ! Now this caring ministry

(a) WAS ENFORCED BY THE LORD:

Do you recall the parable of the good Samaritan ?

(Lk 10:25-37) Do you see that each of these persons involved in the story had a different attitude to the man who was attacked and left for dead ? For the thieves he was a *Victim to Exploit* (10:30) their philosophy was

“ *what’s yours is mine I’ll take it.*” For the priest and Levite he was a *Nuisance to Avoid*, they simply passed by on the other side, but my for the Samaritan he was a *Neighbour to Serve*, for this man was marked by compassion and care ! (10:34) You see, what the Samaritan did for this man, is a picture of what Christ did for us. He found us as lost sinners on the road of life with nobody to care, He came where we are, He had compassion on us, and He paid the full price ! But remember Christ is not only the Saviour for lost sinners, He is the Example for living saints, who says to us, “ *go and do thou likewise.*” (10:37) (a)

(b) WAS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE CHURCH:

For of the first local church we read “ *And all that believed were together and had all things common.*”

(Acts 2:44) In (Acts Ch 6) there was a benevolent fund out of which the widows were looked after. In

(Acts Ch 11) we read about relief being sent unto the famine stricken believers in

Judea. They were a practical people and a caring church ! Are we ? Is this caring ministry being exemplified in this fellowship so that no-one in the fellowship is suffering from a need that could and should be met. (1 Jn 3:18) (a) (b)

(c) WAS ENCOURAGED THROUGH THE APOSTLES:

Did you know that through the apostolic writings we are encouraged to care for one another ? My we are to love another (Jn 13:34) receive one another (Rom 15:7) edify one another (Rom 14:19) serve one another (Gal 5:13) forgive one another (Eph 4:32) submit to one another (Eph 5:21) prefer one another

(Rom 12:10) and show hospitality one to another

(1 Pet 4:10) Now how are we getting on ? I suppose one of the biggest misunderstandings we have about the Christian life is thinking that we can get along with God and not get along with each other. But that is a lie, it is impossible to love the Lord if you hate your brother. 1:2:

(3) A PERSON WE NEED TO RECOGNISE

For beyond Boaz we see here our kinsman redeemer in whom we have redemption. The key theme of this chapter is redemption. The words “redeem,” “buy,” and “purchase,” are used at least fifteen times. The word “redeem,” means “to set free by paying a price.” One of the great hymn writers of all time was P.P. Bliss. Bliss and his wife were killed in a train accident around Christmas 1876. He was one his way to join D.L. Moody in an evangelistic campaign. Among the personal effects of Bliss were a set of words entitled, “My Redeemer.” They were later set to music and have become of the church’s most cherished hymns. My is this not what you feel like singing when you ponder this precious passage ?

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

Its interesting to notice here that redemption was,

* Accomplished at the Gate: (4:1)

Is that not where our precious Saviour laid the basis for our redemption ? “ *Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood suffered without the gate.*” (Heb 13:12)

* Accomplished in Public: (4:11)

As we far as we know all of the plans Boaz made were made privately. The city did not know that Boaz and Ruth had met at the threshing floor, but while the plans were made privately the price was paid publicly. Is this not true of our redemption ? My all of the plans for our redemption were made before the world was. The Lord Jesus is the “ *Lamb slain (set apart) from the foundation of the world.*” (Rev 13:8) But the price was paid publicly when Christ was nailed to a cross. (Acts 26:26) For

***“ To Calvary’s hill one day
The Lord was laid away
None else the price could pay
For all my sin
He on the cross was slain
Yielding His life to pain
He felt the bitter stain
Of all my sin.”***

* Accomplished before the People: (4:11)

Look if you will at (4:11) “ *the people,*” speaks of the world at large. This group was represented at Calvary.

“ *And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.*” (Lk 23:48) My our Redeemer stood at the Gate of Jerusalem, the place of judgement, where He met the requirements and penalty of a broken law. Now the Bible is very clear on the characteristics or qualifications required of a Redeemer.

You see, to be a kinsman redeemer, you had to have,

(a) THE RIGHT TO REDEEM:

In other words you had to be a near kinsman. We read in

(Lev 25:25) “ *If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.*” Over and over again this requirement is brought out in the Book of Ruth. Look at (2:1, 3, 20,

3:12-13) So the redeemer had to be a member of the family. Did the Lord meet this qualification ? Well, John tells us, “ *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.*”

(Jn 1:14) The Lord Jesus became man. He became one of us sin apart. When He was born into this world in human flesh, He became our “ *near kinsman,*” and He will remain our “ *kinsman,*” for all eternity. But in order to qualify, the kinsman redeemer had to have,

(b) THE POWER TO REDEEM:

It wasn't just enough to be in the family. The redeemer also had to have the ability to do it. Ruth and Naomi were too poor to redeem themselves but Boaz had all the resources to set them free, for “ *he was a mighty man of wealth.*” (2:1) Did the Lord Jesus Christ meet this qualification ? Was He able to redeem ? Well, the Bible says “ *He was rich.*” (2 Cor 8:9) and “ *He is able.*”

(Heb 7:25) Dr. L. R. Scarborough, while president of South-western Seminary in Texas was preaching on the story of Jonah and the whale. When he got home, his son said to him, “ *Daddy, did you really mean what you preached ? Do you really believe that ? Daddy, do you believe that a fish could swallow a man and keep him alive for three days and three nights ?*” This great man sat his son down and said, “ *Well, now son, let me ask you a question. If God could make a man to begin with out of absolutely nothing and if God could a fish to begin with out of absolutely nothing, son don't you believe that God could make a fish that could keep a man alive for three days and three nights ?*” The wee boy said, “ *Well, if you're going to bring God into it that's different.*” My when you look at the wonderful story of redemption, you see the Lord Jesus stepping into the situation and He steps into it as a qualified, able redeemer. But there was something else, (a) (b)

(c) THE WILL TO REDEEM:

Some family members wouldn't be willing to redeem, so the redeemer had to be willing. (4:4) tells us that the other kinsman was willing to redeem the land, but (4:6) tells us that he was unwilling to redeem the lady, lest he mar his own inheritance. He said, " *I must preserve my own name.*" But Boaz was not concerned about preserving his name, his only concern was doing the will of God and rescuing Ruth ! Put this down in your spiritual journal and don't ever forget it. ***God always honours those who trust Him.*** John says, " *he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*" (1 Jn 2:17) Do you see this nearer kinsman ? He was trying to protect his name. But do we know who he was ? No, and neither does anyone else. His name was lost because of his unwillingness to trust God, while Boaz's name has lived throughout history. Willing to redeem ! How like our adorable Lord. Willing to make Himself of no reputation, willing to take upon Himself the form of a servant, willing to humble himself, willing to die to secure our redemption. (4:7 Deut 25:5) Did you notice that interesting statement in (4:9) " *I have bought.*" It does not tell how much Boaz paid for the land and the bride. But we know the price that our Saviour paid for our redemption. Peter speaks of " *the precious blood of Christ.*" (1 Pet 1:19) What a price He paid, what a debt we owe !

When she was only a young lady Francis Ridley Havergal saw a picture of the crucified Christ with this caption under it, " ***I did this for thee, what hast thou done for me ?***" Quickly she wrote a poem, but not satisfied with it, she threw into the fireplace. The paper came out unharmed. Later at her father's suggestion she published the poem and today we sing,

***" I gave my life for thee
My precious blood I shed
That thou might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead
I gave, I gave, my life for thee
What hast thou given for Me ?"***