

Reading: Ruth 2:18-23

THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION

6. LIVING WITH YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW

What a difference one day can make in your life. One day in April 1945, the late President Harry S. Truman wrote to his mother, “ *I had hurried to the White House to see the President, and when I got there I found out I was the President.* ” Moses once began his day as a shepherd, and ended it as a prophet, a prophet of God who had heard His voice. (Exod 3:10) David went out one day to take food to his brothers in Saul’s army, and before the day was ended he was a hero because he had slain the great Goliath. (1 Sam 17:17) Peter allowed the Lord Jesus to use His boat one day, and before the day was over, he abandoned everything to follow Christ and become His disciple. (Lk 5:11) *What a difference one day can make.* Today can make a difference in your life. How today affects the rest of your life depends on what you do with your day, what decisions you make. One day made a great difference in Ruth’s life also.

Had you asked why she chose the field she did, I think she would have said to you, “ *well I had the Word of God encouraging me to glean, and before I left home this morning I asked the Lord to guide me.* ” You see, Ruth’s purpose was to glean, God’s purpose was to guide. This was no accident, this was an appointment. For when you submit yourself to the Lord and to others, He will lead you and guide you and “ *all things will work together for your good.* ” (Rom 8:28) One day Ruth went into the field to glean and found herself the object of Boaz’s attention and affection. At that time Ruth did not know who Boaz was, but she certainly found out when she arrived home and gave the news to Naomi. She discovered that he was a near kinsman. (2:20) During the great Welsh revival one of the hymns that was sung at every service was Johnson Oatman’s hymn, “ ***Count your blessings.*** ”

No doubt as Ruth returned home that day she must have been counting her blessings. *She had left home worrying but she returned home worshipping. She had walked into a field hoping for a little and left happy with a lot. She had started the day with an empty stomach and ended the day with a full soul.* Have you ever heard folk say “ *All I want are the crumbs from the Master’s table.* ” I guess that is why we have so many crummy Christians. But my God is not niggardly. The psalmist describes our God like this, “ *Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits.* ”

(Ps 68:19) Ruth had been loaded with benefits. This had been a wonderful day in her life. This was a red letter day in her life. It had been a day she would never forget. Her life had been greatly, graciously and gloriously enriched. Now these closing verses of (Ch 2) present to us a very homily picture. Did you notice for example that Naomi is starting to change. There’s a new word on her lips now. Do you see what it is ? “ ***Blessed.*** ” Do you see that God is starting to bring the pieces of the jigsaw together as Boaz arrives on the scene ? Now I have entitled out study this “ ***Living with your mother in law.*** ” How do you get on with your mother in law ? *Someone has said that Adam and Eve were the happiest, most fortunate couple in the world, because neither of them had a mother in law.* How did Ruth get on with her mother in law ? Well, the first thing I want us to notice is that there is,

(1) A FAMILY WE WOULD DO WELL TO IMITATE

The home has fallen on hard times. “ *Phase out the family,*” is the cry of many in our day. Yet when we study the Bible we discover that God intended for the home to be the highest hall of human happiness. When God got ready to start the human race, He began with the home. Before God instituted the principle of human government, before the Lord brought into existence the church of Jesus Christ, God put together in the Garden of Eden a home. Now what is God’s intention for the home ? *God intends for the husband to be the head of the home, the wife to be the heart of the home, the children to be the hub of the home.* Now this home and family were not exempt from trouble. For “ *man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.*” (Job 14:1) Have you noticed what this family had to face ? They had to face *Dearth:* (1:1) Is this not what took them from Bethlehem to Moab “ *there was a famine in the land.*” (1:1) Then when they got to Moab they had to face *Death:* First Naomi lost her husband and then her two boys. *Dearth, Death,* and now *Difficulty* for it must not have been easy for these two women to eke out a living in Moab and now in Bethlehem. Yet here is a family that we would do well to imitate for as we look into this home there are two vital ministries that are being exercised that need to be expressed in our homes today. Did you notice that there is,

(a) A SHARING MINISTRY:

Look if you will at (2:18) Can you imagine the astonishment of Naomi as she looked with wonder at the quantity ? You see, Ruth not only gave her what she had gleaned she also gave her that portion of the corn which she had reserved for her from the mid-day meal.

(2:14, 18) Now the keyword here in (2:18) is “ *after.*” The order is significant and instructive !

1. Ruth Satisfied Herself:

Did you notice that twice in this chapter we see the word

“ *sufficed ?*” (2:14, 18) in regards to Ruth and this food which Boaz gave her. The word means “ *to be full and satisfied.*” Boaz satisfied the physical needs of Ruth as Christ satisfies the spiritual needs of His people. The psalmist says, “ *he satisfieth the longing soul.*”

(Ps 107:9) and His “ *grace is sufficient for thee.*”

(2 Cor 12:9) The world cannot satisfy but Christ can abundantly satisfy. Now Ruth could not give to Naomi until she had first been satisfied herself. My ...if we are going to minister for God effectively in any capacity we need to ensure that we feed ourselves first. So often we put the cart before the horse. But we must learn to go in before we can go out. Is that not what the Saviour Himself said ? “ *I am the door by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.*” (Jn 10:9) In for worship, out for witness. In for communion out for service. We’re living in days when activity is put before spirituality, but how can we give out unless we have taken in ? How can we feed others if we are terribly underfed ourselves ? 1. Then,

2. Ruth Sustained Naomi:

I am sure that Ruth almost ran home with her barley, all the time thinking about what she had to share with her mother-in-law. Do you recall what Paul says in

Romans ? He says, “ *For none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself.*” (14:7) There is a divine cycle involved in the blessings of God. The blessings come down from God to man, go out from man to man, go back from man to God and then the cycle starts all over again. Many Christians are like the Dead Sea. It is so named because of the unusual amount of salt that is found in the water. Normal sea water weighs about ten and a quarter pounds per gallon and contains about half a pound of salt. The water from the Dead Sea weighs about twelve and a quarter pounds and contains about three and a third pounds of salt. As you know very little life exists in its waters because of such a heavy salt content. One of the reasons its so salty is that it has 6 main inlets but no outlets. Its always taking in but never giving out. My do you realise that your blessings are a loan from God to be shared with others ? Do you sustain others,

1. Devotionally:

That is do others profit by your gleaning in the Scriptures ? Some believers are superficial in their study of the Word of God, then there are others who delight in the Word but never share what they have gleaned with others ! They know this book, but they never share the blessing. Is that you ? Brethren, *we want to hear from you at the Breaking of Bread and when we do, we want to see Christ !* The Table is not the place to relate our experience, to relegate other churches, to rebuke the saints, the table is the place to remember the Saviour. Will you give us ministry that will help us do that ?

2. Evangelistically:

What was Ruth doing ? She was bringing the bread of life to someone else ? The Lord Jesus said, “ *I am the bread of life.*” (Jn 6:35) My who are you bringing Christ to ?

3. Practically:

Like Barnabas when we see a need, do we meet it ? When see a load do we lift it ? Are we “ *bearing one another’s burdens*?” (Gal 6:2) (a)

(b) A CARING MINISTRY:

1. Ruth Cared for Naomi:

Look if you will at (2:23) She went forth to work and came home to live. Ruth must have been a lovely character for its not every young woman can live peaceably with their mother-in-law and work hard every day to support her. Such care was noticed by Boaz who says to her in (2:11) “ *it hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law.*” What about your mother-in-law ? A woman was leaving a store one day when she noticed a most unusual funeral

procession approaching the nearby cemetery. A long black hearse was followed by a second black hearse about fifty feet behind. Behind the second hearse was a solitary woman walking a very mean looking dog on a lead. Behind that were 200 women walking in single file. The woman could not stand her curiosity so she respectfully approached the woman walking the dog and said, “ *I’m so sorry for your loss and I know it’s a bad time to disturb you but I’ve never seen a funeral procession. Whose is it ?* ” “ *Well, in that first hearse is my husband.* ” “ *What happened to him ?* ” The woman replied, “ *my dog attacked and killed him.* ” The other lady inquired further, “ *well who is in the second hearse ?* ” The woman said, “ *my mother-in-law, you see she was trying to help my husband when the dog turned on her.* ” A poignant and thoughtful moment passed between the two women. The inquirer said “ *can I borrow your dog.* ” The lady responded, “ *get in line.* ” The wife phoned her husband at the office and said, “ *come home early we are going to have my mother for dinner.* ” “ *Good,* ” replied the husband, “ *make sure she’s well done.* ”

Enough jest ! What about your mother-in-law ? Do you care for her ? Do you treat her as the elder woman that Paul speaks of in his pastoral epistles ? (1 Tim 5:1) Do you treat her as a mother ? Do you live in the light of the fact that your heavenly Boaz, Christ, appreciates every kindness shown toward her ? 1.

2. Naomi Cared for Ruth:

Look at the questions in (2:19) Naomi was concerned where Ruth was employed and what associations she had formed. Is this not a parents care and concern ? As a Christian parent are you concerned where your children go ? What your children do ? With whom your children associate ? Do you recall that old Eli came under the condemnation of God. Why ? “ *Because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not.* ”

(1 Sam 3:13) Eli must have ached inside. Such a success at work, such a failure at home. ***Eli was a success in his ministry but a failure at home.*** Why ? Well, for one thing their father was never at home. My you can be a success in your Christian ministry but a terrible failure at home ! Now tell me, as a son or daughter do you honour your parents ? Do you obey them ? Do you answer their questions ? When they ask,

“ *where have you been ? What have you been doing ? With whom are you associating ?* ” Like Ruth are you open and honest with them ? What a question, “ *Where hast thou gleaned today ?* ” (2:19) Did you notice,

1. The Setting of this Question:

You see, Ruth is no longer in the field but in the city, in the home, and its Naomi who is questioning her. It’s the elder woman who is taking an interest in the younger woman. It’s the more mature believer who is concerned about the young convert. (2:12) My have you ever taken a moment to speak to the young converts ? To encourage them, to inquire after them, to see how they are getting on spiritually ?

2. The Timing of this Question:

For (2:17) says “ *she gleaned in the field until even.*” So evidently this question was asked at the close of the day. Do you ever ask yourself at the close of the day,
“ *Where have I gleaned today ? What improvements have I made in knowledge and grace ?*”

3. The Wording of this Question:

“ *Where hast thou gleaned today ?*” Has it been from a newspaper or magazine ? Or has it been from the Bible, the Word of God ? When Stanley started across the continent of Africa he had with him seventy seven books but as the journey continued through the days and weeks he was obliged to throw away the books one by one until they were all gone but his Bible. It is said that he read it through three times on that remarkable trip. (1)

(2) A FAVOUR WE WOULD DO WELL TO APPRECIATE

Look if you will at (2:20) Did you notice that there is a new word on Naomi’s lips ? It’s the word “ *blessed.*” She has not used that word before but now she does. Up to now Naomi has been bitter bitter because of her empty home, her empty heart, and her empty hands. But now she is using this new word “ *blessed.*” (2:19-20) Her bitterness is turning to blessedness, her emptiness is turning to fullness. *Naomi’s life is beginning to change.* She had been worried about the emptiness of her life and how she would survive, but now she can see the food that the Lord has provided. Before, her life had looked hopeless. I mean what did two widows have in Bethlehem ? But now Boaz has come on the scene and everything is different. My are you feeling very discouraged or even bitter toward God ? Are you looking at your past and saying, “ *I have wrecked everything. My whole life is falling to pieces ?*”

Well, you remember one thing. When Jesus Christ steps into the picture everything changes. For He our heavenly Boaz is here to help us. Naomi’s discouragement is turned into hope. She has a new word on her lips.

“ *Blessed.*” I don’t think we use the word “ *blessed,*” enough. Sure, we pray for the Lord’s blessing for ourselves, but do we bless the Lord with our lips and hearts ? Are we like the psalmist who said, “ *Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits.*” (Ps 103:1-2) Now Naomi speaks here of two benefits. There is,

(a) The Blessing of God’s BENEVOLENCE:

Three times in the book of Ruth, the word “ *kindness,*” is used. (1:8 2:20 3:10) “ *Blessed be he of the Lord who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.*” (2:20) God’s kindness is unfailing. The Lord never fails to be kind. Is this not what the saints in all ages have recognised ? Moses saw the Lord as “ *the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him.*” (Deut 7:9) David saw the Lord as One whose loving kindness would not be taken from him as One whose faithfulness would not fail.

(Ps 89:33) Jeremiah speaking of the unfailing kindness of God says, “ *His compassions fail not, they are new every morning.*” (Lam 3:23) My do you appreciate God’s loving kindness to you ? As you “ *count your blessings and name them one by one,*” are you thankful for the different ways the Lord has been revealing His kindness to you ? And not to us only “ *the living but to the dead.*” You see, death has not removed those who are saved from the sphere of God’s kindness !

Death means separation for us, but it does not mean separation from Him. For the one who dies in Christ is with Christ. (Phil 1:21) And the Scriptures say, “ *In Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*” (Ps 16:11) Think of this, the Lord comforts us today, and comforts those who are no longer with us but are with Christ. (a)

(b) *The Blessing of God’s PROVIDENCE:*

“ *And Naomi said unto her, the man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.*” (2:20) Now thirteen times in the Book of Ruth you will find reference to the “ *kinsman.*” The law of the kinsman-redeemer is found in (Lev 25:25) You see, this law stated that if a Jew became poor and had to sell his property or had to sell himself into slavery, one of his kinsmen could redeem him. (Lev 25:47-48) The kinsman could redeem the person and his property. Now a second law that applied to the kinsman redeemer is found in (Deut 25:5-10) So this had to do with marriage. The law said that if a man died his brother was required to marry the widow and raise the firstborn child in the name of the dead man. This was known as the levirate marriage. The word Levir means “ *a husband’s brother.*” Now Naomi saw these laws combined in Boaz. He could marry Ruth and raise children according to the law of (Deut 25:5) and he could also redeem Ruth and her property, obeying the law in (Lev Ch 25)

My Naomi and Ruth now had the promise of a redeemer. Is this all not a wonderful picture of our kinsman redeemer, the Lord Jesus ? Redemption means to pay a price so that the one who is redeemed may go scot-free. Now God did not have to redeem us. We were lost sinners. If He did not redeem us, He could still be a just and holy God. But then He loved us. You see, salvation by redemption is a love story. And here we have it illustrated by this little foreign girl from Moab. Now we have got away from the providence of God. But lets come back. You see, *Naomi is hopeful because of who Boaz was and because of what Boaz did.* He took a personal interest in Ruth. I wonder are you like the Naomi of (Ch 1) bitter ? Or are you like the Naomi of (Ch 2) blessing ? You know, sometimes like Naomi we think that providence has dealt us a hard blow and we become discouraged and despondent yet how often in God’s own time we are led to see His overruling hand.

John Flavel says, “ *Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made up of a thousand threads which when single we know not what to make of but put together they present us with a beautiful history.*” My are you grateful for His providence ? For His overruling in your life, home, business ? (1) (2)

(3) A FAITHFULNESS WE WOULD DO WELL TO CULTIVATE

For Ruth's faithfulness, constancy, devotion is highlighted by the closing statement in (2:23) You see, she was,

(a) DEDICATED TO A SPECIFIC PERIOD:

Ruth was given over to the task until the harvest was gathered in. The barley harvest occurred during March and April and the wheat harvest followed in June and July. Evidently she laboured as someone who felt that the present season of ingathering would not last forever. My do you labour with that fact burning in your

soul ? What procrastinators we are. How often we say,

“ *there's plenty of time.* ” Is this not they said in Haggai's day ? They were challenged to build the Lord's house and they responded by saying, “ *the time is not come that the Lord's house should be built.* ” (Haggai 1:2) Have we lost the sense of urgency ? Have we failed to grasp that the folk we rub shoulders with today may be out of reach tomorrow ? They may move house, die. There is not plenty of time. With what urgency, fervency

intensity the cults pump out their damnable propaganda while all the time the church sits amidst the ruins of the temple and says, “ *the time is not come.* ”

***“ The fields all are ripening and far and wide
The world now is waiting the harvest-tide
But reapers are few and the work is great
And much will be lost should the harvest wait.”***

(b) ANIMATED BY A FUTURE PROSPECT:

Do you see what Boaz says in (2:21) ? You see, he was the lord of the harvest. Ruth was now more than just a labourer in the field she was loved by the lord of the harvest. He spoke to her and invited her to his table to eat. He cared for her and had special plans for her once he had completed the harvest. In effect Boaz was saying,

“ *At the end of the harvest something special is going to happen.* ” Do you know what happened when the harvest was over ? Boaz took Ruth and married her ! Do you know what will happen when the Lord's harvest is

over ? The Saviour will return and take His bride and we go shall into the marriage supper of the Lamb.

(Rev 19:7) ***Betrothed to Christ now. Presented to Christ then. United to Christ forever.*** Does that make you glad ? Does that future prospect not animate you to live and labour for the Saviour now ? Its interesting that each New Testament letter has a special message that is uniquely all its own. Romans for example underscores the righteousness of God. The Corinthian epistles stress the wisdom and comfort of God. Galatians is the freedom letter. Philippians is the joy letter, while Ephesians stress's the wealth that we have in Christ !

But do you know what 1 Thessalonians is all about ? *The return of Jesus Christ and how this truth should effect our lives.* You see, every chapter in this letter ends with a reference to the Lord's return, and relates that blessed hope to a practical aspect of Christian living.

Ch 1: Paul relates the Lord's Return to Salvation:

Ch 2: Paul relates the Lord's Return to Soul-Winning:

Ch 3: Paul relates the Lord's return to Stability in Christian living:

Ch 4: Paul relates the Lord's return to Strength in Sorrow:

Ch 5: Paul relates the Lord's return to Sanctification of Life:

In other words, Paul did not look on this truth as a theory to be discussed but as a truth to be lived. His message is, the Lord is coming, Christian be ready. What a way to end this session of the Bible class, a session that has taken us through the book of Revelation and half way through the book of Ruth. You see, the thing that animated Ruth was her marriage to Boaz, and the thing that should animate us, is His return and our marriage to Him. My the Lord is coming. *Are you ready ?* If Christ came today, would you be ashamed ? *Ashamed* because that reconciliation has never happened.

Ashamed because that bitterness has never been removed, *ashamed* because that magazine has never been discarded, *ashamed* because that relative has never been warned. How may so live in this present day, that on that future day, “ *when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him as His coming.*” (1 Jn 2:28)

***“ A little while He'll come again
Let us the precious hours redeem
Our only grief to give Him pain
Our joy to serve and follow Him
Watching and ready may we be
As those who long there Lord to see.”***