

I Will Redeem You

An Expositional Journey Through the Book of Ruth

Ruth 1:16-22

2 The Curse of Moab and the Triumph of Grace

July 23, 2017

Ruth 1:16-22

16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me."

18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"

20 She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

21 "I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

To the Glory of God

Now the Lord has burdened my heart, at this time, to take this Church on an expositional "journey" through every word and every verse in the Old Testament **Book of Ruth**. And last week, we began our journey by meeting a Jewish woman named Naomi. And through Naomi, we were able to come to terms with a precious Biblical Truth called "Providence".

And this Truth teaches us that God is always busy, that He never sleeps or slumbers, but is *determined* to accomplish two things in the earth:

1. God will get Himself Glory.
2. God will bring His people into the fullness of Joy.

The Book of Ruth teaches us that God is effectively and sovereignly working, even in our sorrows and in our tragedies and in our pain and suffering, to accomplish *everything* that He has determined to do.

One of the main differences with the God of Scripture and other false and man-made “gods” of the barbarians and pagans is that God not only pays attention to nations and kings and those powerful people, who exert great influence in the earth, but our God pays attention to the *weakest* among us, the *helpless*, and those that the rich and powerful, many times, pass over, like the unborn child, the widow woman, and the sick and the poor. The Almighty hears *their* cry and He moves Heaven and earth to answer their prayers.

So, the one, true, and living God Who is revealed in the Bible, is, therefore, very busy, *assuring* that what He has decreed in ages past, will come to pass, *exactly* how and when He wills. He is *constantly* “moving”, pushing and pulling, raising up and casting down, causing and allowing ten thousand different aspects all at once, of which we might only see a few.

And God does this not simply because He likes to keep secrets, but so that we will learn to trust in Who God has revealed Himself to be. So, what is hidden from us, what God is doing that is left *unseen* and *unknown*, is not revealed so that those who say they love Him will not sin or blame Him when what He is doing conflicts with their *own* will and plans, but they will bless the Lord, even in their grief.

Even though God’s Work on our behalf to save us and to keep us saved and to make us holy is mostly hidden to us, God is faithfully busy, even in the worst of times. *Especially* in the worst of times. So, what is ironic about the Ways of God is that when we think God is the *farthest* away, or even that He has turned against us, the Scriptures are clear. It is during *those* times that God is very busy at work making *sure* that His Will and Word are coming to pass *exactly* as He has said, and that the fullest expression of Joy and eternal Happiness will be ours.

Now there are at least seven reasons why we should spend time and go through this expositional “journey” through the **Book of Ruth**:

1. Ruth is the Word of God

This Book is inspired. God the Holy Spirit moved upon somebody, probably Samuel, about 1,000 years before Jesus was born, to take this Story that had been handed down for generations by word of mouth, and write it down. And because the words of this Book were exhaled by the Mouth of God, that means that this Book is also:

- ✓ **Inerrant**: in that there are no errors contained in this Book.
- ✓ **Infallible**: in that this Book does not possess the ability to be in error.
- ✓ **Sufficient**: it is part of the reliable and trustworthy Canon of sacred Scripture.

In other words, the **Book of Ruth** is true. These circumstances that this Book reveals really happened, the words that this Book describes were really spoken, and God really moved upon these people just like it says He did.

And that makes this Book part of the “Rock” that is the foundation on which the Christian Church is built.¹ So, **Ruth** is one of only 66 Books upon which we may stand when the terrain of human logic and man-made philosophy fails. When all my ideas feel like quicksand, this Book remains solid. And that means that **Ruth** is an anchor that will hold us when the tides are ripping.

But, according to **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, because **Ruth** is part of inspired Scripture, that also means that this Book is useful for four things:

1. Teaching
2. Godly Correction
3. Edifying Reproof
4. Training in Righteousness

¹ The “Rock” that Jesus discussed with Peter in **Matthew 16**, on which the Church is built, is not the fisherman, but the Divine Revelation that “**Jesus is the Christ- the Son of the living God**”. And so, the 39 Books of the Old Testament, of which Ruth is part- shows us a glimpse of Jesus- on Whom we stand and in Whom we live and have our being.

... so that those of us who believe what this Book says, may be:

2 Timothy 3:17b

... adequate, equipped for every good work.

... and that is why I tell you that this small little four Chapter **Book of Ruth** is filled with God-inspired hope.

2. The Book of Ruth is a Love Story

The way Ruth and Boaz find each other is the stuff of epics. But the Story is the flesh-and-blood experience of a single family, living in and by and through the "hidden Work" and Providence of God.

3. The Book of Ruth is a Portrait of Beautiful and Noble Manhood and Womanhood.

In a day when movies and television and advertising and the Internet portray masculinity and femininity in the worst possible ways, we are in great need of true stories that *elevate* the magnificent meaning of biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Both Ruth and Boaz are absolutely extraordinary. And both Men and Women need heroes like this today more than ever before.

4. The Book of Ruth Addresses Racial and Ethnic Issues in the Correct Way

We must remember that Ruth was *not* a Jew. She was an "unclean" and "cursed- by-God" Moabitess at a time in history when race and ethnicity meant much more than it does in our day. And besides being the wrong race and ethnicity, Ruth was also a pagan, an idol-worshipper. And so, left to herself, she would have never even been allowed to be in the presence of a Jew, and would have never come into a saving relationship to the one, true, and living God.

So, through a series of unbelievable tragedies and sorrows, Ruth not only came to meet Naomi, but also came to know and love Naomi's God. And from that we realize that these tragedies were not random after all. They were not accidents, fate, or happenstance. The seemingly unending unfolding of one disaster after another is the only reason that Ruth ever met Naomi and was saved. And from that we

marvel at the absolute Sovereignty of God working in, by, and through terrible events to bring to pass two magnificent things:

1. The Display of the Glory of God's Grace in saving unworthy sinners by what God alone does for them.
2. That it doesn't matter how sinful you are or how far away from God you are.

God has set His Love upon some of the many fallen and sinful sons and daughters of Adam. And He is *determined* to get Himself Glory, and to bring these chosen ones into the fullness of Joy by Forgiving them and making them Righteous. And not one of those God has chosen to save will be forgotten or remain lost. But as the Apostle Paul wrote in **Roman 8:29-30**:

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

So, this Book illustrates the amazing triumph of Grace as Ruth is sovereignly drawn into faith (through a series of very hard circumstances) and into the very Lineage of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now make no mistake about this, the Marriage described in this Book is an *interracial* Marriage that would have been denounced and categorically condemned by every faithful scholar of the Old Testament of that day. And that means there are tremendous lessons in this Book that we need in our day such as the Decree of God to Peter:

The Acts 10:15b

... What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy.

Ruth teaches us that if a person is called and chosen by God, then the dirtiest, the worst, the lowest, and the most unattractive pagan in the city will find Forgiveness and Righteousness through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. The Book of Ruth Shows that God is Good

Ruth confirms to us that the hard Hand of God in the life of His people is *not* the last word. You may indeed taste bitterness from God. But that is not *all* you will taste. You are promised by a God, Who cannot lie, that God will work unendingly, but perhaps in a hidden way, to assure that those who trust in Him will never be ashamed.

On nearly every street of our city today, you can find people who are asking the very same question: *"Can I trust and love the God Who has dealt me this painful hand in life?"* And the **Book of Ruth** answers by saying, *"Yes!"*

6. The Book of Ruth Displays Radical Acts of "Risk-Taking Love

The **Book of Ruth** is in the Bible so that you and I will become a new kind of person, someone who is both willing and able to actually obey the Words of the Prophet Micah:

Micah 6:8b

... And what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

The Love of God that God alone causes to come to us will cause us to gladly risk everything we own and everything we have, including our own lives, in the radical pursuit of seeing God glorified and all of God's elect saved.

Christians are not those who look at a terrible situation and say, *"What will happen to me if I get involved in that?"* No, Christians say, *"What will happen to them if I do not get involved?"* It is the confidence that we receive from God's Love towards us that allows us to be that kind of person.

7. The Book of Ruth Displays the Glory of Jesus Christ

1,000 years before Jesus was even born, this Book glorifies His saving Work on the Cross. The **Book of Ruth** is about the Work of God, in the darkest of times, to prepare the world for the Glories of Jesus Christ.

But we need to remember that none of this was supposed to happen, because Ruth was a Moabitess. And that means that Ruth was a daughter of Moab, who lived in the land of the Moabites. She was trained in the religion of the Moabites, and she worshipped in the Moabite temples and worshipped the false gods of the Moabites.

Now why is that significant in our understanding of how God's Grace triumphed in the life of both Naomi and Ruth? Just who was Moab and why was he so bad? And why does the Prophet Samuel repeatedly tell us that Ruth was from that lineage? The Lord had a lot to say about Moab in the Old Testament, and it was all bad. But to begin with, we need to see who Moab was, so please turn with me to read **Genesis 19:30-38:**

30 Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.

31 Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth.

32 "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father."

33 So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

34 On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."

35 So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

37 The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.

38 As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.

So, both Moab and Ammon were the sons of a sinful, *incestuous* relationship between a drunk Lott and his two daughters. And what makes this all the more evil was that God had just rained down fire and brimstone upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the region all

around because of sinful, sexual perversity that was expressly condemned by God.

So, think about this, right after they just witnessed Divine Judgment in a devastating and cataclysmic way, a Judgment that even killed their own mother, the first thing these sinful daughters thought to do was to sin against the very God Who just annihilated an entire region with fire! And that shows that unless God sovereignly, graciously, and continually *intervenes* in the mind and heart and lives of people, we would literally sin ourselves into oblivion.

Now God has wisely and powerfully determined that all sexual expressions by anyone at any time, other than the one, single expression of one, naturally born man united with one, naturally born female within the Covenant of Holy Matrimony, is sin. And so, both Moab and Ammon were conceived and born in horrific sin in blatant rebellion to the Will of God. Yet strangely, that is not what condemned them or their people.

Now the children who came forth from Moab dwelt in the land that was east of the Promised Land. And we read in the **Book of Numbers**, in Chapters 21-23, is the account where the children of Moab refused to allow the children of Israel to pass through their land on their way to the Promised Land. And Moab actually hired a false prophet named Balaam to put a curse on the children of Israel. So, God determined in **Deuteronomy 23:3-4**:

3 "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of their *descendants*, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord,

4 because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

... so, the people Moab were prohibited from ever coming into the assembly of the people of God. But notice that there is a time limit with this Curse:

... even to the tenth generation ...

Now this Curse, in effect, cut these people off from ever hearing the Truth about God and being saved. Now what is fascinating is that about 3500 years later, God the Holy Spirit moved upon the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ to equate false teachers with having the same characteristics of three Old Testament men, and one of them is Balaam:

Jude 11

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Now remember, that Balaam was hired by the children of Moab to put a curse on the children of Israel. So, what is the “**error of Balaam**” that Jude is talking about here? Well, it is using the Call of God for personal financial gain. It is seeking to become wealthy through the use of spiritual means. It is using people through deception, all in the Name of the Lord. So, even under the New Covenant, Moab is looked at as being synonymous with sinful, evil people who are at odds with God and who fight *against* the Will of God.

Now the people of Moab worshipped a man-made god that they called “Chemosh”. And one of the characteristics of worshipping Chemosh was child sacrifice. And sacrificing your own children so that some false deity may bless you is one of the definitions of what it means to be “pagan”. So, the fathers took their infant children and they sacrificed them so that Chemosh would bless them. Now keep in mind that the reason the father would do this was so that his family could have a better life.

I do not honor or respect any religion that calls for fathers to sacrifice their own children. What kind of monstrous deity would want a father to sacrifice his own child? What kind of demonic teaching would encourage parents to strap bombs to indoctrinated ten-year old little girls so they can blow themselves up in a school bus, killing as many Jews and Christians as possible. I condemn all such religions as being evil.

Now nobody is suggesting that fathers allow their own children to be aborted in our day in reverence to some deity. But anytime a father would put pressure on his wife or girlfriend and drive her to the

abortion clinic and drop her off at the curb, and then wait in the car and eat a sandwich and listen to the game while the mother is in there killing her baby, anytime a father would do that, he is using the *exact* same logic and he is behaving *exactly* like the pagan men of Moab. So, in many ways, in spite of all our advancement in Technology and Medicine and Finance and Government-, many today are just as pagan and just as ungodly as the inhabitants of Moab.

Now, because of their sinful origins, and because of their ongoing sin and idolatry and their child sacrifices and their *refusal* to bow to the one, true, and living God, God pronounced a curse on Moab.

Isaiah 16:13-14

13 This is the word which the Lord spoke earlier concerning Moab.

14 But now the Lord speaks, saying, "Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all *his* great population, and *his* remnant will be very small *and* impotent."

So, in or around 715 BC, Isaiah was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to tell the people of Moab that they only had three years' left. And this is about 300 years after King David. And three years after Isaiah's prophecy, the Assyrian king, Sargon, came into the land of Moab and absolutely destroyed them, slaughtering the people and leaving only a small and impotent or feeble remnant.

Now you would think that common sense would force this remnant to bow before God, *especially* after they see with their own eyes the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. But the remnant of Moab *continued* to defy God, they *continued* to sin, they *continued* to sacrifice children, and they *continued* to plague Israel. And so, God *continued* to curse Moab:

Jeremiah 48:11-13

11 "Moab has been at ease since his youth; He has also been undisturbed, *like wine* on its dregs, And he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, Nor has he gone into exile. Therefore he retains his flavor, And his aroma has not changed.

12 "Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will send to him those who tip *vessels*, and they will tip him over, and they will empty his vessels and shatter his jars.

13 "And Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.

So, for at least 300 years until the judgment of Sargon came, the people of Moab had it pretty well. They had been, as verse 11 says, **“undisturbed”**, and they hadn't been **“emptied from vessel to vessel”**.

Now what Jeremiah is talking about here is that he is speaking on behalf of God and is equating the way the people of Moab are sinning with how people make wine.

In other words, when they made wine, they would put wine in an animal skin. There wasn't anything like glass or plastic back then, and so they put wine in animal skins called “Wineskins”. And the way you fermented the grape juice was to pour it into a new skin, and it would begin to expand because of the gas. And the bitter part of the fermented juice sinks to the bottom, and the sweeter part remains on the top.

And after a certain period of time, you pour out that top part, the sweet part, into *another* skin and let it ferment some more. And this process would continue from one skin to the other until all of the “dregs”, or the bitter part was gone. And they would take the bitter part and that is what they used to make vinegar with.

And that is a metaphor of the process of Sanctification, where we go through trouble and come out on the other side purified. And the goal of God in this sanctifying process is that we will have nothing but sweetness or godliness in us, after all of the dregs are removed.

So, what Jeremiah is saying to the people of Moab is that they hadn't had any trouble, and they had never been poured from vessel to the next. And so, they are *not* being sanctified, they aren't being *dealt with by God*, they aren't being *changed*, which means that they are *remaining* in their sins.

In other words, the people of Moab had never been disciplined like the Jew. And therefore, the people of Moab had kept their original bitterness and their aroma had never become sweet like wine that's been poured from vessel to vessel. Through Jeremiah, God is telling Moab that He has *not* moved sovereignly to bring hardship to them to change them. And that means that God had chosen to leave them alone. And that means that God has chosen to damn the people of Moab by leaving them like they already were. Because the result of

God leaving them alone is that they *continued* in their idolatry with no conviction, no repentance, and no change.

And this illustrates how God moves on His people to make them "fit for Heaven". The process of Sanctification does not save anyone. Only those who are already saved enter into Sanctification. But this process is designed to mold and shape and form saved people into the Image and Likeness of Jesus Christ. And that involves several things:

- ✓ It involves God allowing and causing circumstances and situations (some "good" and some "bad") to come into your life to allow you to see yourself as you really are
- ✓ It proves God's faithfulness
- ✓ It builds faith
- ✓ It makes you strong in the Lord and in the Power of His Might
- ✓ It produces comprehensive Righteousness
- ✓ It makes you able to share in Christ's Holiness"

... so, as uncomfortable as the fires of Sanctification may be to us, they are actually a demonstration of God's Love and Mercy. Because *without* being sanctified, we would remain as the bitterness off the dregs of the wine. So, God is telling Moab through Jeremiah that they have not been changed and therefore:

... behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will send to him those who tip *vessels*, and they will tip him over, and they will empty his vessels and shatter his jars.

... so God will send someone to tip Moab over and empty him. And what will be the result of this Divine Judgment?

Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.

And Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh. So, the Judgment will produce something in Moab that will cause them to be ashamed of their false god in the same way that Israel was once ashamed of the one, true, and living God.

Now, once again, this is a very vague reference that some within Moab will turn *away* from their false religion and their idols and their paganism. And I think that is exactly what Ruth did. So, Jeremiah prophesies that the Divine Judgment of God in damning Moab will produced a change in some that will lead them to the Truth. But, Jeremiah was not finished, and in **Jeremiah 48:42** God said:

Moab will be destroyed from *being* a people Because he has become arrogant toward the Lord.

And then the Prophet Ezekiel prophesied this in **Ezekiel 25:8-11**:

8 'Thus says the Lord God, 'Because Moab and Seir say, 'Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations,'

9 therefore, behold, I am going to deprive the flank of Moab of *its* cities, of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon and Kiriathaim,

10 and I will give it for a possession along with the sons of Ammon to the sons of the east, so that the sons of Ammon will not be remembered among the nations.

11 "Thus I will execute judgments on Moab, and they will know that I am the Lord."

But perhaps the most telling condemnation is found in **Amos 2:1-3**:

1 Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.

2 "So I will send fire upon Moab And it will consume the citadels of Kerioth; And Moab will die amid tumult, With war cries and the sound of a trumpet.

3 "I will also cut off the judge from her midst And slay all her princes with him," says the Lord.

Now, this is the fourth Old Testament Prophet that speaks on God's behalf and says that there is going to come a deadly, devastating Judgment on this cursed people. But again, it seems that there is a built-in time limit. God said:

... For three transgressions of Moab and for four ...

So, the Curse will be in effect for “three transgressions and for four”. So, what happens after that? The fact that there is a time limit in these verses, as vague as they may be, indicates that God is not finished with Moab. That at some later time God is going to do something else besides curse them.

Now much later, in **Nehemiah 13**, when the people had come back from many years in captivity, they picked up the Book of Moses, and they turned to **Deuteronomy 23**. And **Nehemiah 13** says that because God had cursed the people of Moab, that the leaders of the Jews excluded the people of Moab from their land, they re-instituted tithing, and they forced the men, who had married pagan wives, to divorce them. So, all through the Old Testament, that was great hostility toward the people of Moab because God had cursed them.

Now the **Book of Ruth** was written during the time of the Judges, when the Divine Curse of God was in effect against Moab. And Samuel is careful to let us know on several occasions that Ruth was a Moabitess. She was a woman of Moab, in every respect, *physically, racially, ethnically, culturally, and spiritually*. And that is the way it was back then under the First or the Old Covenant. You're born into a family of Moab, and you inherit the Curse of God against you. But the New Covenant speaks of things that are infinitely better. For example, over in **Isaiah 56**, the Lord said:

Isaiah 56:1-8

1 Thus says the Lord, "Preserve justice and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come And My righteousness to be revealed.

2 "How blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who takes hold of it; Who keeps from profaning the sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil."

3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me from His people." Nor let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

4 For thus says the Lord, "To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant,

5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

6 "Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant;

7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."

8 The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, "Yet *others* I will gather to them, to those *already* gathered."

Now look closely again at verses 4-7:

4 For thus says the Lord, "To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant,

5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

6 Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant;

7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."

So, here are two groups of people who were historically cut off from the First Covenant and from ever being the people of God:

1. Eunuchs
2. Foreigners

... and yet, notice that God is now welcoming both of these groups into His House. Now here is, perhaps, the clearest example that we have that God is not finished with the people of Moab and is somehow going to remove the Curse and accept them. So, what happened? What happened between:

Deuteronomy 23:3a

No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord...

... and

Isaiah 56:6-7a

6 Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant;

7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar...

This is the Glory of the New Covenant! This is the triumph of God's Grace! Because look at what God said about His House:

Isaiah 56:7b

... For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples

... and the way the Hebrew is worded here shows us that God's House will be a House of Prayer for all the different peoples of the whole world. So, God is saying here that the pagan Gentiles, who do *not know* God and who *don't have* God's law, and who have *not been* raised to know and love the one, true, and living God, that some of them will be saved and they will be in the House of God and they will find acceptance with God!

So, this is not a contradiction of anything that God said, it is a fulfillment. So, a partial thing, the Curse of God on Moab, gives way to the full thing, the acceptance of some Gentiles by God. A small portion, the ethnical and racial separation of God's people under the Old Covenant gives way to the whole, the redeeming of people from every nation, tribe, and language. And the inferior Covenant, which saved some of the Jews, gives way to the superior one, that offers Forgiveness and Righteousness to whoever believes. And this is in accord with God's *final* Will in Salvation as seen by the Apostle John:

The Revelation 7:9-10

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues,

standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands;

10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

So, the fact that God abrogates the Curse that He placed on Moab by saving this woman named Ruth is *not* an example of God's weakness or of God's failure to continue to damn people. No, this is an example of the triumph of Grace! God chose to "set His Love" on a fallen, unworthy pagan who worshipped idols and who did not love God. And God could so radically change Ruth that, even though all she knew about Naomi's God was that He had been very hard on Naomi, that Ruth could say:

Ruth 1:16b-17

16 ... for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me."

And this is so powerful that when the Apostle Levi was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to pen down his Gospel Record, he included this pagan woman of Moab in the genealogy of Jesus Christ! In fact, there are five women included in Jesus' lineage:

1. Tamar, a Canaanite who committed fornication with her Jewish father-in-law
2. Rahab, a Gentile prostitute
3. Ruth, a Moabitess
4. Bathsheba, committed adultery with King David
5. Mary, a virgin who birthed Jesus

Now for any important figure to list women in your lineage was unheard of in the 1st Century. But not only is Jesus publicly linked with these five women, Levi reminds everyone that three of them were Gentiles! So, three of these women were not even Jews! And that would be bad enough, but then Levi reminds everyone that three of these women were guilty of committing sexual sins.

Now back in the 1st Century, this would have been a scandal. So, why is Jesus linked with *women*, and why is He publicly linked with *Gentile* women and why *sinful* women? What is Levi telling us? He is displaying, once again, the triumph of Grace! And notice that Ruth is right there.

So, by doing this, God the Holy Spirit was *not* displaying shame or God's weakness, He was illustrating God's great and amazing Power. The fact that sinful women are including in Jesus' genealogy does not *tarnish* God's reputation, it *enhances* it. This does not *belittle* Christ, it *magnifies* the reality that Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost.

So, we see through the Story of Ruth that lost men and women are *not* saved because of their adherence to God's Law. Neither Jews nor Gentiles are saved by keeping God's Commandments. Fallen rebels are *not* saved because of their proper racial or ethnic background.

There is no record of Ruth ever sacrificing an animal or visiting the Temple, or of her reading the first five Books of Moses until *after* she was saved. So, Ruth was saved because God had sovereignly allowed great hardship to come to Naomi so that Naomi's son would find and fall in love with, and then marry Ruth. And the fact that a bitter Providence for Naomi was the *catalyst* that allowed Ruth to be saved speaks volumes about the hidden Work of God in the lives of people, even when things look terrible.

So bad things, terrible things, evil things, do *not* hinder the Plan and Purposes of God, they facilitate God's Will to flourish and come to pass. So, Ruth was saved because, before the foundation of the world, God sovereignly "set His Love" upon her. And Ruth was saved because God sovereignly opened her blind eyes. Ruth was saved because God sovereignly unstopped her deaf ears. Ruth was saved because God sovereignly took out of Ruth a stony heart and God gave her the gift of "saving faith". And God sovereignly *granted* to Ruth the "gift of repentance".

And that tells us that under the glorious New Covenant, wicked sinners from every nation, tribe, kindred, and tongue, even those born and raised in Moab, are saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in Jesus Personally and in His finished Work alone, all to the Glory of God alone! And *this* is the triumph of Grace!

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.