

I Will Redeem You

An Expository Journey Through the Book of Ruth

Ruth 3:10- 4:13

5 Future Hope through Sovereign Interruptions

August 13, 2017

Ruth 3:10- 4:13

10 Then he said, "May you be blessed of the Lord, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.

11 "Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

12 "Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

13 "Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning."

14 So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

15 Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six *measures* of barley and laid *it* on her. Then she went into the city.

16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her.

17 She said, "These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

18 Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

4:1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down.

2 He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.

3 Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

4 "So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy *it* before those who are sitting *here*, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem *it*, and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem *it*."

5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."

6 The closest relative said, "I cannot redeem *it* for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem *it* for yourself; you *may have* my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem *it*."

7 Now this was *the custom* in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange *of land* to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the *manner of attestation* in Israel.

8 So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy *it* for yourself." And he removed his sandal.

9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.

10 "Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today."

11 All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "*We are* witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.

12 "Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the Lord will give you by this young woman."

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

To the Glory of God

I think that the Puritans were God's gift to the Church as some of the greatest Teachers in our 2,000 year history. And so, for many years now, I have recommended a small book from one of them for all of us to read during that particular month. This month is "*The Mystery of Providence*", by John Flavel, which teaches us what is going on here in the Book of Ruth.

Now when I first started the "Puritan Reading Challenge", several years ago, some were reluctant because they actually had to buy a copy of the book. But, as more and more information can now be found on the Internet for free, most of the books that I paid many dollars for just a few years ago can be possessed and read at little or no cost.

Now one of the reasons I encourage you to read a Puritan writer every month is because I believe that Christianity is a "*thinking religion*". Biblical Christianity doesn't require anyone to exercise "blind faith". The only religions that expect you to simply nod in agreement with everything they say without question and without research and without pondering the deep and serious and eternal issues that the Bible talks about are cults. And the only leaders that get angry at questions and challenges and analysis are false teachers.

But Biblical Christianity wants those who trust in it to "know *what* they believe" and to "know *why* they believe it". God wants you to understand *what* He has told you to trust in, and He wants you to know *why* you should believe in it. And so, what the 66 Books of the Holy Bible puts forth *requires* you to *ask* and to *think*. Even as critics of the Church rail out against Doctrines that *they* say "closes your minds", the Divine Truth of Scripture actually *enlarges* your mind. It *expands* your thinking and it develops believers who understand the Word of the Lord. And that is *why*, throughout history, the smartest and the most accomplished people in the world were devout believers.

Throughout the centuries, in nations that were dominated by biblical Truth, the very *best* scientists, the *best* geologists, the *best* physicists, the *best* mathematicians, the *best* doctors, the *best* lawyers, the *best* CEO's, and the *best* politicians, along with farmers, housewives and common laborers, were godly men of high integrity because they were well-versed in the sacred writings. And the people of the Church understood deep and profound issues like Providence and Sovereignty and Redemption. And they understood these issues because they read about them and they talked about them and they pondered them. And,

up until about the turn of the 20th Century, the most highly educated and most accomplished people in the United States were very familiar with the Puritans.

And that is because, almost better than anyone besides the Apostles, the Puritans were great about teaching people how to pursue Holiness and kill sin. And they were *especially* gifted in finding great Hope in obscure verses and passages to encourage the weary believer to press on and to remain faithful. And that is *why* you should read what men like Jeremiah Burroughs and Thomas Watson and John Bunyan and Richard Baxter and Thomas Manton and John Foxe wrote.

But Puritans like John Owen also recognized that concentrating only on how we may “walk this world in white” could lead to a serious misunderstanding on the part of Christians. Because in our ongoing pursuit of Holiness, Christians might be tempted to dwell so much on their *own* sins that they might forget the overall Kindness of their Heavenly Father.

Think through the logic. We know that God hates sin. And although we fight sin in ourselves, no matter how hard we try, we will always find a lamentable degree of remaining sin on this side of our final glorification. Therefore, the logic goes, God must be perpetually angry with me, right? You can see how this type of thinking can lead to horrendous legalism and to harsh thoughts about God.

So, how can God be utterly “for us” and utterly “against our sin” at the same time? The answer is, of course, rooted in the glorious Gospel of Grace, the unmerited Favor we are given through Christ’s perfect Life, Death, and Resurrection. The answer is likewise rooted in the ongoing Work of the Holy Spirit. Theologian B. B. Warfield made this connection in his study of **Romans 7-8**, when he said:

“The Christian life on earth is a conflict with sin. And therein is the dreadfulness of our situation on earth displayed. But we are not left to fight the battle alone. The Christian life is a conflict of God — not of us — with sin. And therein is the joy and glory of our situation on earth manifested. As sinners we are in terrible plight. As the servants of God, fighting His battle, we are in glorious case.”¹

¹ BB Warfield, *Faith and Life*, London, 1916, p.202.

Here's the key. Fighting sin is *not* "God-against-us". Fighting sin is ultimately God's Battle, a Battle that we have been caught up into. We are constantly reminded that our Sanctification is *ongoing* and *constantly* at work because no one is more engaged in our Holiness than God. No one cares more about our own personal Holiness than God, a point that should be obvious since God has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us.

So, the point that both Warfield and Owen make is an important one. Our pursuit of Holiness can happen precisely because God is no longer "against us". The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus from the dead and our trust in Him, and in that, has *forever* removed God's Wrath from off our heads! And that means that the Almighty is *only* "for us"! *Everything* God does "in" and "through" and "to" and "for" us now that we have been redeemed is for two reasons:

1. His Own Glory
2. Our ultimate Joy

So, we fight sin, yes! But we fight only "in" Jesus Christ and "for" His Glory! And the final Victory is absolutely certain. And this is *why* both Warfield and Owen wisely call us to two things:

1. We are called to action (the mortification/killing of our sin)
2. We are given hope-filled motivation for the battle

Nowhere in the Bible are we called to simply "obey". We are told to always obey "*because ...*" and then we are given breathtaking Promises from a God Who cannot lie. And so, as we read and understand those Promises, we begin to trust them, we believe in them, and we hope in what they say. And so, it is the hope that at some point in the *future* we will receive the Promises of God that motivates us to obey and to press on and to remain faithful, and fruitful and busy.

But look at what the Apostle Paul taught about Hope in **Romans 5:1-5:**

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Now Paul said two very important things here. First, he said that it was **“by faith”** that we were justified, and it was that very same faith that justified us that also offers us what he called **“peace with God”**. This means that God is no longer angry with us because Jesus has washed us and made us righteous. But look what he said next in verse 2:

... through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

So, *through* Jesus Christ (Whom we received “by faith”), we have received our **“introduction”** into this Grace in which we stand. Now, an “introduction” is just the beginning. And so, our Justification, that was obtained by faith alone in Christ and in His finished Work, is simply the “introduction”, the *beginning*, of all that God has for us. Justification is the *part* of the overall Act of God in Salvation where we are forgiven and made righteous. But we don’t stop with Justification.

After we are justified, we are adopted, and after we are adopted we enter into a life-long process of being made “holy”. And this is the process where we are changed as we are molded and shaped into the Image and Likeness of Jesus. And this process is called “Sanctification”.

And then we die and we stand in the very Presence of God. But we’re still not finished, because, unlike the false religions of the world, Christianity does *not* end with redeemed souls standing before God. The Bible says that at some point in the future, our saved souls will be *re-united* with a glorified body, and *then* all that Jesus did in and through and for us will be completed.

So, everyone in this room, who is saved, is involved in that process called “Sanctification”. And this is why we suffer, why we hurt, and it

is why we are blessed. God loves us so much that He isn't about to leave us like we are, but He will relentlessly change us through a series of divinely inspired events and circumstances so that we may share in His Holiness. And that is why Paul said:

... we exult in hope of the glory of God

We hope in what we do not now possess, and we trust that what God has promised will become ours at some point in the future. And that is why the Apostle said:

**3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;
4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;
5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

And that is because what we hope for is always in the future. Later on, in **Romans 8**, Paul elaborated on the "future tense" of Hope when he said:

Romans 8:20-25

**20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope
21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.
23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.
24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees?
25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.**

So, right now, even though we have been forgiven and made righteous, we possess certain qualities and attributes that would keep us from sharing in God's Holiness. And so, in His great Mercy, God *allows* and *causes* very specific situations and circumstances to come our way so that we will not miss the sharing of His Holiness! That is what Sanctification is!

But, when we are right in the middle of our trial, we tend to forget what God is doing, and so, we murmur and we complain and we bellyache, and we get angry and discouraged, and we think God has forsaken us, even though the "bad thing" that has *caused* all the complaining is the "in-your-face" testimony, that even though we might forget, that God has *not* forgotten us, and that God is *determined* to make us able to be draped with His very Own Holiness. As William Cowper, the 18th Century poet and songwriter wrote:

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright Designs
And works His sov'reign Will.

And so, we are left to hope in the future. We place our faith and our hope in what we do not now see. So, in our pain and in our suffering and in our troubles, we "trust" that what God has said He is doing, and we "hope" that what God has promised to us in the future will be ours. And then we wait.

And just about the time we think that the answer is here, something comes up to cast it all down. And just about the time we think that maybe we have arrived, something comes our way to show us how far we have left to go.

And that is what this portion of the **Book of Ruth** was written to show us. The last part of Chapter 3 and the first part of Chapter 4 of **Ruth** is in the Bible to tell us that the life of the godly is *not* a straight line to Glory, yet all who are genuinely saved will get there. Another way of saying this is that your situation will hardly ever work out like you planned it to, but it *will* work out. And through the unseen Hand of God's Providence, your situation will "work out" to God's Glory, and it will "work out" to the fullness of your Joy, as well.

The life of the godly does not begin at zero and go to one hundred in a straight line. It is not like an Interstate through Nebraska that is straight and flat, but rather like a State Highway through the Blue Ridge Mountains of Tennessee. And on that State Highway there are rock slides and precipices and dark mists and bears and slippery curves and hairpin turns that cause you to stop and ponder and think and labor and struggle, and sometimes even make you go backwards in order to go forwards.

But all along this hazardous, twisted road that doesn't let you see very far ahead, there are frequent signs that promise "Rest Ahead". And at the bottom right corner there is the unmistakable Signature and the words "*As I live, says the Lord!*" Cowper wrote:

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His Grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling Face.

The **Book of Ruth** is one of those signs for you to read. It was written and it has been preached to give us "encouragement" and to build your "faith" and to facilitate "hope" that all the perplexing turns in your life are *not* dead-end streets. Because in all the setbacks of your life as a believer, God is *relentlessly* working for His Glory and your Joy.

Back in Chapter 1, Naomi and her husband and two sons were forced to leave the Promised Land and live in a pagan land on account of a famine that God sovereignly brought upon them. And then, while in that pagan land, Naomi's husband dies. And Naomi's two sons marry unbelieving Moabite women, and for ten years, the women cannot produce any children. And then both of her sons die leaving two widows in the "house" of Naomi.

And even though Ruth cleaves to Naomi, Chapter 1 ends with Naomi's bitter complaint:

I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty... the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me

But then, in Chapter 2, Naomi is filled with new hope because Boaz appears on the scene as a possible husband for Ruth. But the man won't propose. He doesn't make any moves toward her at all. But Chapter 2 closes with excited hope, but also with great suspense and uncertainty about how all this might work out.

And then, in Chapter 3, Naomi and Ruth make a risky move in the middle of the night. Ruth goes to Boaz on the threshing floor and says in effect, "*I want you to spread your wing over me as my husband.*" And we are all holding our breath hoping that now Boaz will embrace Ruth, the camera will zoom in, the music will play, and the happy couple will ride off into the sunset.

But right when the tragedy of Ruth's widowhood seems to be resolved into a beautiful love story, a big boulder rolls out onto the State Highway of Ruth's life. There is another man, who, according to Hebrew custom, has *prior* claim, a *superior* claim, a *first* claim to buy Naomi's property and marry Ruth. And Boaz, the godly man of integrity, simply will not proceed without giving this man his lawful opportunity. So, Chapter 3 ends in great suspense of yet another setback. And Cowper, the man who spent the majority of his own life in crippling despair, again reminds us:

His Purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The Bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the Flow'r.

Now, at this point, we need to ponder just what is happening. Obviously, Ruth and Boaz are godly people. And so, we know that God is *with* them and has great future for them where He will be glorified and their Joy will be full. So, why all the setbacks? Why such a struggle? Here is Boaz and here is Ruth, so let's get on with it! Why does God either *allow* or *cause* a problem right in the middle of what seems so right? The path for Ruth and Boaz *could* be so smooth and so trouble-free, but it isn't. This road has many curves on it and it is so rocky, and so filled with strife and struggle, and the rising and falling of emotions. Why? And what should we think about problems like this?

Well, here are some things to ponder. First of all, this problem, this interruption, is godly. This other man absolutely *does* have first

rights to Ruth. So, Boaz, allowing this other man to claim his right first, was the right thing to do. It was the *honorable* thing to do, the *godly* thing to do. In other words, Boaz would be sinning to ignore that.

So, being godly is what *caused* Boaz to struggle here. Being righteous *created* the dilemma. If Boaz was *not* a man of integrity, he could have just ignored the law and simply taken Ruth, and then maybe gone to war against the other man had he objected. Yet, Boaz was a godly man, and it was him being godly that presented the problem.

And this is the way that Sanctification *always* works. Doing the right thing always *causes* problems in this life. It is much easier to just do what the lost pagan world does. It is far easier to think like they do and to act like they do.

The illustration is that believers are swimming "upstream", *against* the tide, and *contrary* to all the other fish. The theological term is "Counterintuitive". We don't think like pagans, we think like the Bible has told us to think. We don't live like the lost world, we live to God's Glory. We don't speak like those who are enslaved by sin, we speak like the redeemed.

Saved people have new eyes and new ears and a new heart. And, it isn't our fault, but that radical transformation that we call "The New Birth" has *re-created* us where old things have passed away and all things have become new. Born again souls live their lives to bring Glory to God. And, we do that in "full faith" that God will be honored, and in "future hope" that God will reward us. And *that* is why we strive to do the right thing. Look at what the writer of **Hebrews** wrote about this in **Hebrews 13:1-6**:

1 Let love of the brethren continue.

2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

3 Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.

4 Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage bed is to be undefiled*; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

5 *Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"*

6 so that we confidently say, "***THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?***"

Now some people have said that these statements are all random and unconnected statements that the writer just crammed in here at the end of this Epistle. I disagree. I sense that whoever wrote this Epistle was being very deliberate to teach us how to trust God in full faith and future hope, even when our righteousness causes trouble.

For example, verse 2 tells us:

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

So, the Divine Commandment is to not neglect to open our homes to strangers. And the Promise of God that *motivates* our obedience is found in verses 5-6 that says:

**... "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," ...
... "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"**

So, we put our faith in God and we hope in His Promise and we open our homes. But one day, we find that we have housed a criminal that steals from us or that hurts our family. So, what is our reaction? The lost world would say, "*Close your home and protect your family*". But faith says, "**Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers**", and future hope says, because the Lord has promised, "**... "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"... ... "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"**"

Verse 3 says:

Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.

But the world says, "*If you go to the Prison to encourage and pray with those other believer who have been put there for their faith, they will take you and put you in prison, too.*" Faith empowers us to obey

God's Command, and future hope motivates our obedience through the Promise that God will never leave us nor forsake us.

Verse 4 says:

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

The lost world says, "You can keep the medical benefits if you just shack-up". But faith rejects that logic and enters the hard way of struggle and trouble, and perhaps the loss of her medical benefits which results in having to pay thousands of dollars each month because we seek to honor God. And our obedience is *motivated* by future hope in the Promise of God that we will receive the ultimate Joy if we are faithful.

Verse 5 says:

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have;

The lost world says that you can make more money and pay less taxes by lying and cheating and stealing, and by taking advantage of other people. But faith seeks to honor God by rejecting that logic and doing what is much harder, and that maybe will cost us more. And that obedience is motivated by future hope in the Promises of God:

**"... "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," ...
... "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL
MAN DO TO ME?"**

So, as we strive to do the right thing, what do we find? Trouble. Pain. Agony. Loss. Struggle. Problems. Why? If you didn't know any better, you would think that God set it up for us to have to fight, to struggle, and to fail. Why is it so hard? Why doesn't God do something to make it easier? We must understand that God's Goal in our Sanctification is *not* to make our lives down here better, but in changing us so that we may trust Him and hope in Him and look to Him, and then share in His Holiness later. The writer of **Hebrews** explains:

Hebrews 12:6-14

6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

So, immediately *after* the midnight rendezvous in Chapter 3, Boaz goes to the city gate where the official business was done. And that "other guy", the "nearer kinsman", comes, and Boaz lays the situation before him. Naomi is giving up what little property she has, and the duty of the nearer kinsman is to buy it so that the inheritance stays in the family.

And to our dismay the other guy says at the end of verse 4:

... I will redeem it.

Wait a minute! This is *not* the way it is supposed to be! Now all this time we've been sort of looking over Samuel's shoulder as he has been writing this inspired Story down. And, right about now, we're tapping the Prophet on the shoulder saying, "*Wait, brother! That's not the way this Story is supposed to go!*" We don't *want* this other guy to redeem Ruth. We want Boaz to do it. So again, there seems to be yet

another huge setback. And again, Cowper speaks to us out of his own pain,

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His Work in vain;
God is His Own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

But the irony of this setback is that it is being caused by righteousness. This fellow is only doing his duty. And our murmuring, our complaining, our frustration with the Way that God is moving (or *not* moving here) is caused by our sin; we have forgotten that God hasn't forgotten. So, Boaz says to the nearer kinsman:

Ruth 4:5

On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.

Then, to our great relief, the kinsman says, in verse 6, he can't do it. Now Samuel doesn't tell us *why* he couldn't do it, only that he said he couldn't. But if this guy just didn't want to bother taking care of a widow woman, his refusal would have been sin. But there is no mention that the man was sinning here, and so, we are left to guess.

The least damaging reason to the other man is that he is already married. But most of us really don't care at this point. We are cheering in the background as Boaz gets through this bottleneck and speeds down the road to the wedding feast with the beautiful young Ruth on his arm. So, all is well, right? Wrong.

We then read that there is yet *another* cloud overhead. Ruth is barren. And there doesn't seem to be any way out of that. Back in **Ruth 1:4** we were told that she had been married ten years to Naomi's son, and yet there were no children. So, even now the suspense is not over.

Can you see why I said that the lesson of the **Book of Ruth** is that the life of the godly is *not* a straight line to Glory? By definition, Sanctification produces one curve after another. And we never know what's coming. But the point of the Story of Ruth is that we may have future hope in all these Sovereign Interruptions.

So, no matter where you are, no matter how hard your trial might be at this very moment, if you are called to Salvation, and if you love God, you have every reason in the world to hope in what God has promised for the future.

So, even though God is the One Who has either sovereignly *caused* or *allowed* every single one of these Interruptions, He is also the One Who breaks through with unspeakable Mercy, all along the way. And the dark cloud that seems to relentlessly hang over the heads of Ruth and Boaz is the *same* cloud that holds the “showers of blessings” that will fall on their heads in verse 13.

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

Notice that Samuel says that the Lord “enabled” Ruth to conceive. And that means that “life” is given solely by God. Men may do many things with test-tubes and babies. But no human being can create life. And so, other than in very few specific instances, we are to never take life. Life is sovereignly given and life is sovereignly taken by God. And that makes life to be a gift. And that makes life something to treasure and value. And that means that none of us have the right to *waste* our lives on trivial things and on issues that don’t matter. We were created to worship the most important Being in the Universe, and that means that our lives have value and purpose and meaning, and we are not to waste them on silly things and things with no meaning.

The very same God Who “shut up” Ruth’s womb when she was married to Naomi’s son for a decade sovereignly “opened” her womb with Boaz. So, not only is God the Source of all our troubles and hardships, not only does God periodically *allow* agony to come our way and call us to do hard things, but this very same Good God is also the Source of all of our Blessings and Joy.

So, we must not despair when the clouds burst forth rain upon us and ruin our plans and alter our lives. We must, at that very moment, rejoice! Because that “Sovereign Interruption”, that were either *allowed* or *caused* by God to pass through the hedge of protection that He has placed around us, is the loudest testimony of all, that even though we may have forgotten, God has *not* forgotten to never leave us and to never forsake us.

And so, we place our future hope in the Promises of God and trust that as He allows or causes Sovereign Interruptions to enter our lives, God, through Christ and in the Power of the Holy Spirit, is relentlessly changing us and molding us and shaping us into His Image and Likeness, so that we might share in His Holiness. Or as William Cowper wrote:

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The Clouds ye so much dread
Are big with Mercy and shall break
In Blessings on your head.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

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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.