

I Will Redeem You

An Expository Journey Through the Book of Ruth

Ruth 2:19-3:15

4 Living Hope, Saving Faith, and Risk-Taking Love

August 06, 2017

Ruth 2:19-3:15

2:19 Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives."

21 Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'"

22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that *others* do not fall upon you in another field."

23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

3:1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"

2 "Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.

3 "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your *best* clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

4 "It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do."

5 She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.

7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

8 It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and ¹bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.

9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative."

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.

To the Glory of God

In 1773, William Cowper (pronounced "koo-per") wrote a hymn that many of you have sung through the years. The title of the hymn is "*God Moves in Mysterious Ways*", and the lyrics are this:

God moves in a mysterious Way
His Wonders to perform;
He plants His Footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright Designs

And works His Sov' reign Will.

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

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

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

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

Countless believers have taken great comfort in this hymn because it speaks to both the horrific pain of a hard Providence that would come upon us and seemingly never ends, along with the undefeatable hope and trust in the Promise of God that says:

Romans 8:28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

The **Book of Ruth** was placed into the Bible to show us what this Promise looks like. **Ruth** tells us just how God can *cause* great tragedies and hardships to "work together" for the *greater* "Good", the *best* "Good", the *final* and *eternal* "Good" of the Glory of God and, ultimately, the fullness of our Joy as well.

If we didn't have this magnificent Book, then we would have the liberty to join in with the unbelievers and pagans and atheists as they curse God for the sorrows and troubles and pain and misery and

suffering that they go through. They don't believe in God, and they certainly don't believe the Bible, and so they are left to themselves, in their limited understanding and their frail minds, to try to make sense out of all the evil that they see go on in the world and that they experience themselves.

But, in His great Mercy, God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Prophet Samuel, a little over 1,000 years before Jesus was born, to record this Story, that had been handed down by word of mouth for generations, so we could read it and *not* think like the pagans. **Ruth** is in the Bible so that we would *not* act like unbelievers and atheists, but that we would grow in our understanding of the Ways of God and the Mystery of Providence, and that we could trust that, even though we might not know what God is doing, that *God* knows what God is doing, and that is enough.

Now the *reason* that William Cowper could write a song like this that has ministered so much hope and comfort to so many believers for over almost 250 years is because of the terrible affliction that he suffered. Cowper had what was called, back then, "melancholy". We would probably call it "depression" today. He described it as a dark, unreasonable, painful, despair that would come upon him like a cloud and remain for many days, or weeks, or months, or even years.

And it was while he was in that dark cloud, while he was hurting, while he was waiting and suffering, that God the Holy Spirit moved upon him, in the weakest moment of his life, and out of his belly flowed one of the best and one of the most important songs, about how the hard hand of God's Providence could turn for our joy, that the world has ever seen.

And this tells me that Cowper was not made strong, "in spite of" his struggle, but *because* of it. And he was *not* used by God simply from being *delivered from* his agony, but Cowper was used by God while he was *in* his despair. So, without the agony, there would be no glory. Without the hard Hand of Providence, there would have never been the breakthrough of Sovereign Grace.

And that means that the terrible darkness that would descend on Cowper periodically was God *moving* this man, and *changing* this man, and *teaching* this man, and *showing* this man, so he could, not only *experience* the Mercy of God *himself*, but so that he could encourage countless millions of believers as well.

Let me say this another way. Cowper's terrible ordeal, the misery that he despised and that nearly brought him to take his life, that suffering was the hard Hand of God's Providence on him. So, it was God Who sovereignly brought Cowper to despair. It wasn't the devil. It wasn't a chemical imbalance, it wasn't some hereditary malfunction. God did this.

And, again, if we didn't have the **Book of Ruth**, we could join in with the many voices that don't believe the Bible that rail against God and throw insults at Him like, "*Why would a Good God do something like this?*", or "*If God was Love, He wouldn't allow this!*", or, in the words of Mrs. Job:

Job 2:9b

... Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!

But we *do* have the **Book of Ruth**. And because we are blessed to be able to read it and understand this inspired Book, we know that God brought William Cowper and Naomi and Ruth to the point of despair. But that's not all God did. He also broke through that darkness with Sovereign Grace so that His Will and their Joy could be full.

And a little over a thousand years after Samuel wrote this Book, the very same God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostle Paul to say this in **2 Corinthians 1:3-11**:

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort.

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;

10 who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,

11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*.

Now look again at verse 4:

[Blessed be God] **who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

God comforts us “**in**” all our afflictions. So, *not* merely by being healed or by being delivered or by being rescued from our sufferings, but while we are “in” our pain and agony, *that* is when God comforts us. Now why does God do it this way?

... so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction ...

So, *part* of why we suffer as believers is so that we may be able to comfort other believers when they suffer. But with what will we comfort them?

... with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

... and may I suggest that the only reason why we were comforted by God is because we *needed* it. And that means we were hurting. So, at least *part* of the reason why Christians suffer is so that God may equip us to be able to minister hope and comfort to others who are in need.

Now Chapter 1 of **Ruth** hit us with what Cowper called “a frowning Providence”. Naomi was driven from the Promised Land by a famine, and while in the land of Moab her two boys married pagans, she

lost her husband, and finally, her two sons also died. And then, one of her daughters-in-law abandoned her as well.

But while the hard hand of Providence was afflicting Naomi, God was moving. And the famine broke in Judah and Naomi could go home. And then there was Ruth's amazing *commitment* to care for Naomi for the rest of her life. And while all this was going on, God was busy, preserving a kinsman of Naomi's husband, a man named Boaz, to marry Ruth and raise up an heir for the family name and property. And God was not only moving for this particular family, but God was moving so that Israel's greatest King, the beloved David, would come forth from this union as well. And not only that, but, in His Divine Power and Wisdom, God was moving, through all this tragedy, so that Jesus would be born, so that the Glory of God's Grace could be displayed by saving unworthy sinners and all of God's elect from every nation could worship the Lamb throughout all eternity and say:

The Revelation 5:12-13

12 ...Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

So, Chapter 1 ends with Naomi overwhelmed with her losses and she wailed:

The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

But then, in Chapter 2, we see Sovereign Grace breaking through the darkness. And God's Grace was so obvious that even Naomi could see it. So, last time, we met Boaz, a man of great wealth, and a man of great faith. Boaz was a man of God, and "it just so happened" Samuel writes in verse 3 that Boaz was also a relative of Naomi's husband, and was the owner of the very field that Ruth went to glean.

And we ended last week with Ruth taking refuge under the Wings of God in a foreign land, and being led mercifully by God to the field of

Boaz to glean. And we saw Naomi recover from her long night of despondency as she exults in God:

Ruth 2:20a

May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.

So, as bitter as Chapter 1 was, Chapter 2 overflows with hope. Boaz is a God-saturated man in his business and personal relations (vv. 4, 10–13). Ruth is a God-dependent woman under the Wings of God. And Naomi is now a God-exalting woman under the Sovereignty of God. All the darkness of Chapter 1 is gone, and God has sovereignly turned her mourning into dancing. And Naomi's lament in Chapter 1:

"The Almighty has dealt bitterly with me" (1:20)

... has given way to:

"His kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead" (2:20).

... or as William Cowper would tell us:

You fearful saints fresh Courage take:
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with Mercy and will break
In Blessings on your head.

Ruth teaches us to seek Refuge under the Wings of God, even when God seems to be the very Source of all the darkness. *Especially* then. And, at just the right time, God will let you look out from His Eagle's nest onto Sovereign Grace.

Now we enter into Chapter 3. And the question which Chapter 3 answers is:

What does a God-saturated man, a God-dependent young woman, and a God-exalting older woman “do” when they are filled with Hope in the sovereign Goodness of God?

And the answer is that they manifest a very "risky love". They manifest a *type* of love that has been *liberated* from fear, and a love that *cannot* be stopped. It is a love for doing what is "good" and "right", a love for doing what is appropriate when God is taken into account as being Sovereign and Merciful.

And this is the love that is connected to saving faith. Please look at what the Apostle Paul taught about this from **Galatians 5:6**:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

Here the Apostle teaches that ethnicity and race and culture and nationality and religious pedigree are completely irrelevant as it pertains to Salvation. It doesn't matter if you are born Jewish or as a Gentile, Salvation is reserved for God's elect who will come forth from every nation, every language, and every tribe on earth.

So, *some* Jews will be saved and *some* Gentiles will be saved, also. But Jews are *not* saved because of their "Jewishness". Jews do not have a "leg up" on Salvation because of the physical sign of the First or the Old Covenant that was carried out in the circumcision of the foreskin of their flesh by their fathers when they were eight days old. Paul says here that is *not* what saves them.

So, what saves the Jew as well as the Gentile? Faith. Lost sinners are justified before God, and they are made Righteous by what they "believe" and what they "confess" and what they "trust in", and *not* by what they "do" in carrying out various religious rituals and ceremonies.

And it isn't faith *plus something else*. Lost people are *not* justified and made Righteous "by faith *plus baptism*", or "by faith *plus the Lord's Supper*", or "by faith *plus anything else*". We are justified and made Righteous by faith and by faith *alone*. And 500 years ago, the Protestant Reformation *re-discovered* the simplicity of this Biblical Truth and they signified it with the Latin phrase:

Sola Fide (by Faith alone)

But notice what Paul says next in **Galatians 5:6**. How do we know if the faith that we have is "saving faith"? How do we know if the

instrument of our belief and trust in Jesus, our faith, is real? Look what he said:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love

... so the faith that justifies sinners and makes them righteous, all by itself, also "works" through love.

And love is not an emotion. Love is a conscious "act of your will", that has been *transformed* by the miracle of the New Birth. So, love *acts*. Love does something. You are wasting your time trying to convince somebody that you love them when you aren't doing anything for them. For example, Jesus said in **John 14:15**:

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

So, obedience *to* Jesus flows out from a love *for* Jesus. Obedience that honors God does not come out of "duty" or "obligation". Obedience to Jesus that glorifies God flows out *naturally* from a deep and real and abiding love for Jesus. And this is so true that without this obedience to Jesus, we have no way to manifest that we love Jesus.

So, love is a conscious "act of our will". And action denotes things like "intention" and "purposefulness" and "planning". So, to love someone or to love something means that you make specific plans to "do" something *for* that person, and, at the same time, you also make plans to *not* do other things that would be *against* that person.

And this "doing" is a real problem if you don't love. People who have no love for Jesus see *any* action toward Him in obedience as being hard or time consuming or a bother or a tremendous burden, while people who genuinely love Jesus see service to Him as a delight and a joy and a pleasure.

And this love for Jesus (that was a gift from God through the miracle of the New Birth) has no limits. It is truly "liberated". It is truly "free". Love like this has no barriers, no limitations, and no restrictions. Faith that works through love doesn't say, "*I will serve Jesus this much, but not that much*". It never says, "*I'm willing to do this, but I'm not willing to do that.*" Faith that works through love will never say, "*What will happen to me if I risk it all in pursuit of God's*

Glory?" Rather it says, "What will happen to God's Glory if I do not risk everything?" And this is what Jesus had in mind when He said things like:

Mark 8:34-38

34 ... "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

35 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?

37 "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

So, if Naomi and Ruth and Boaz have been saved, then the faith that saved them will work through this radical and risk-taking love in doing something specific. And that means that there is thinking involved and planning, and there is a determination to risk everything in pursuit of this radical love in God. And it also means that there is just as much planning and thinking, and just as much determination to *not* do things that would offend God.

So, whereas there is a "passive righteousness" in some that simply *avoids* evil "when" and "if" it presents itself, there is also an "active righteousness", a very powerful and robust desire to obey, that is motivated by an unshakable love for God. And this "active righteousness" takes the initiative and it dreams of how to make things right.

So, one of the lessons we can learn from Ruth Chapter 3 is that hope helps us to dream. Hope helps us think up ways to do good. Hope helps us to be creative as it pertains to love and righteousness. Hope helps us pursue our ventures with virtue and integrity.

It is *hopelessness*, the *absence* of hope, that makes people think they have to lie and steal and seize illicit pleasures for the moment. But hope that is based on the confidence that a Sovereign God is for us, gives us a thrilling impulse which I call "active righteousness". And we see this kind of hope in *Naomi* in 3:1–5, and in *Ruth* in 3:6–9, and in

Boaz in 3:10–15. And this Chapter closes again with Naomi full of confidence in the Power and Goodness of God.

Two things stand out in Naomi's thinking and planning in verses 1–5. One is that she is actually planning, and the other is *what* she is planning. The sheer fact that Naomi is thinking about *how* to manifest this faith that works through love teaches us something. People who feel like victims don't make plans. As long as Naomi was oppressed, as long as she could only say, "**The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me,**" she conceived no plans for the future.

One of the terrible effects of depression is the inability to move purposefully and hopefully into the future. But when hope arises and we begin to ponder just how we can manifest the faith that God has given us, we begin to act. And those actions are bathed in love.

When Naomi awakens in 2:20 to the Kindness of God, her hope comes alive, and the overflow of that faith and trust in God is active *righteousness*. And so her faith is working through love. Naomi loves Ruth, and she is concerned about finding Ruth a place of care and security, and so she makes a plan.

So, one of the reasons we must help each other "hope in God" (**Psalm 42:5**) is that only "Hopeful Churches" plan and strategize for the future. Churches that feel no hope develop a "maintenance mentality", and just go through the motions year in and year out to keep what they've got and not lose it. But when a Church experiences the sovereign Kindness of God, it produces a *living* hope in the Promises of God that manifests itself through various acts of risk-taking and fearless love.

And so, this kind of "living hope" causes our righteousness, our efforts to obey, to be "active" and "purposeful" and "powerful", and it ceases to be the kind of "passive righteousness" that simply *avoids* evil when it presents itself.

So, Naomi's faith began to work through love, and it took the initiative to find a husband for Ruth. But her plans were very strange. And they were very risky. She says in verse 2 that Boaz was a kinsman. And that meant that he was the likely candidate for being Ruth's husband. And that way, the family name and family inheritance would stay in the family, according to Hebrew custom.

So, Naomi's purpose is clear: to win for Ruth a godly husband and a secure future, and preserve the family line. So, she tells Ruth to make

herself as clean and attractive as possible, and go to the threshing floor of Boaz, and after he has lain down for the evening, sneak in, and lift up his cloak, and lie down at his feet.

And everybody back then, as well as everybody today, including Ruth, would respond to that plan by thinking, "*Sure, and just what do you suppose that will lead to?*" There is not a single woman in this building this morning that would tell her daughter to do this. But look at Naomi's strange answer in verse 4;

"He will tell you what you shall do."

Now one thing is clear here and one thing is not. It's clear that this is Naomi's way of trying to get Boaz to marry Ruth. But what is *not* clear is why in the world did she go about it like this? For example, why not strike up a conversation with Boaz at Barnes and Noble instead of this highly suggestive and risky midnight maneuver? Was Naomi silly? Or was she just *unconcerned* about the possibility that Boaz might drive Ruth away in moral indignation, or that he might give in to the temptation to have sexual relations with her? Did Naomi *want* Ruth and Boaz to sin?

Or was Naomi so sure of Boaz and Ruth that she *knew* they would treat each other with perfect purity. Was Naomi motivated by what she knew about the character of both Boaz and Ruth, that Boaz would be deeply moved by this outright offer of Ruth in Marriage, and that both of them would *avoid* sexual relations until after the wedding?

Now the Prophet Samuel doesn't come right out and tell us *why* Naomi chose this sexually tempting plan to win Boaz for Ruth. But this was highly unusual, even for that day. And there will be a clue later, but for now, the writer seems to want us to feel suspense and ambiguity.

Now just where did Ruth lie down? The Hebrew wording is just as ambiguous as the English. What would Boaz tell her to do? Whatever Naomi's motive was, this situation was very risky because it *could* have gone either way. It *could* have led to a passionate and illicit scene of sexual intercourse, or it could have led into a stunning scene of purity, integrity, and God-honoring self-control.

Next, we see Ruth's "active righteousness" in verses 6-9. In verse 5 she had said that she would follow all of Naomi's instructions. But Ruth

does more. Naomi had said that Boaz would tell Ruth what to do. But before that happens, Ruth tells Boaz why she has come. She is lying at his feet under his cloak, and he awakes and says:

"Who are you?"

And Ruth answers with words that were *unprompted* by Naomi:

"I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative."

Now we have to understand that Ruth is not Naomi's pawn. Ruth isn't helpless to blindly obey Naomi. Ruth has a brain and she has already born godly fruit. She went to Boaz *willingly*. And now she takes the initiative to make clear to Boaz why she is there:

"you are a close relative."

Or literally:

"You are the redeemer: the one who can redeem our inheritance and our family name from being lost. I want you to fill that role for me. I want to be your wife."

Now she doesn't say this outright. In fact, she is less direct and more enticing. She says:

... spread your covering over your maid

Now whether Boaz takes this to be an offer of outright sexual relations or something more subtle and profound will depend on his estimate of Ruth's character. We have to understand that fornication was wrong back in the Old Testament (**Leviticus 19:29; Deuteronomy 21:13-21**) just as in the New Testament (**Matthew 15:19**).

And there are two things, *besides* Ruth's character, which suggest something subtle and profound is, in fact, going on here. For example, the only other place I could find in the Old Testament where the phrase "spreading the skirt" occurs, in relation to lovers, is found in **Ezekiel 16:8** where God is talking and describing Israel as a young maiden that He

took for His wife. *"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness; yea, I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord, and you became mine."*

And if this is any indication of what Ruth wanted from Boaz, the request went far *beyond* sexual relations. She was saying in effect, *"I would like to be the one to whom you pledge your faithfulness and with whom you make a marriage covenant."*

But I think there is more to it than that, and this is the second indication of subtlety and depth here. When Ruth said:

... spread your covering over your maid

... the word that was translated here as **"covering"** in the NASB, or **"skirt"** in the ESV and KJV, is the Hebrew word for **"wing"** (also in **Ezekiel 16:8**). And this word is used only one other place in **Ruth**, back in the key verse from last week, where Boaz says to Ruth:

Ruth 2:12

May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.

But what we saw last week was that Boaz was God's agent to reward Ruth. He gave her free access to his field, and protection from the young men, and water from the well. Ruth had asked Boaz:

"Why have I found favor in your eyes?"

And Boaz answered:

"Because you have come to take refuge under the wings of God."

So, here's what I think is going on in Chapter 3. Ruth has told Naomi about these words of Boaz. And the more they ponder them the more they become convinced that they are laden with subtle loving intentions. What Boaz really means is, *"Because you take refuge under the Wings of God, you are the kind of woman I want to cover with my wings."*

Now it is not easy for an older man to express love to a younger woman. And Boaz did it with deeds of kindness and subtle words of admiration. He *said* he admired her for coming under God's Wings. He *acted* as though she were under his and he waited. And, in the course of time, Naomi and Ruth hit upon a response just as subtle and just as profound. Ruth will come to him in his sleep, in the grain field where he has taken her under his care, and she will say, "Yes!" But she will say it with an action just as subtle and just as profound as the action and words of Boaz. She puts herself under his wing, so to speak, and when he wakes, everything hangs on one sentence and whether Ruth has interpreted Boaz correctly.

Imagine how fast her pulse was racing when Boaz awoke. Then the all-important words:

"I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering [wing] over your maid, for you are a close relative."

There had to have been an immense silence for a moment while Boaz let himself believe that this magnificent woman had really understood, had so profoundly and sensitively understood. A middle-aged man in love with a young widow whom he discretely calls "**my daughter,**" uncertain whether her heart might be going after the younger men, communicating the best he can that he wants to be God's Wings for her.

And a young widow gradually reading between the lines and finally ready to risk an interpretation by coming in the middle of the night to take refuge under the wing of his garment. That's powerful stuff!! And anybody who thinks that this is simply a loose woman and a finagling mother-in-law are on another planet. This is very subtle. And this is very godly. And this is very righteous.

Now comes the active *righteousness* of Boaz in verses 10-15. To hear what he says in the right way, you have to remember it is midnight, they are under the stars, and he is looking down into the face of the woman he loves covered with his own cloak.

Ruth 3:10-11

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.

Now this is the moment in the movie when the music starts to play and the cameras zoom in, and the great love between Ruth and Boaz is clearly seen. And most movies would have ended right here, on this high note. Most directors would see this as the "high point" of the entire love story. But not God. There is yet one more word of magnificent righteousness and amazing God-ordained self-control. Because it is right here, at this moment that Boaz says:

Ruth 3:12-13

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."

And you can hear the collected cry of "Awww!" as Boaz brings up this pesky Truth. But that is what godly men do. They don't forget God, even in the midst of powerful human passion. So, the stars are beautiful overhead, it is midnight, he loves her, she loves him, they are alone, she is under his cloak . . . and Boaz stops, for the sake of righteousness, he stops and he does not touch her. What a man! What a woman!

Now this is one of those moments when God shows us how *different* He is than the fallen people of the world, and how *different* His Ways are than the ways of the world. Everybody watching this love story is now angry at Boaz. Why in the world did he say that? Why at this moment? This guy simply doesn't understand love and he sure doesn't understand women. He's got this woman *exactly* where he wants her and then he blows it by talking like this?

We have to understand that the prevailing mood of American life today is, "If it feels good, do it", and sadly, that is even true among the

people of the modern Church. Men, who say they are saved, find themselves in positions just like this, all the time. And yet, more and more men of the modern Church *fail* in keeping themselves and the woman they say they love pure. And the prevailing sentiment is, "*Who cares about all that guilt-producing, puritanical Principle of chastity and faithfulness? This is Love, and love is of God, so go for it!*" Well, God cares for one. And those who love God care, too. And lust is *never* an example of real love.

So, I say to you this morning, if the stars are shining in their beauty and your blood is thudding like a hammer and you are safe in the privacy of your place, stop! For the sake of righteousness, stop! Let the morning dawn on your purity. Don't be like the world. Men, be like Boaz. Ladies, be like Ruth. Profoundly in love. Subtle and perceptive in communication. But powerful in self-control. And fully committed to active righteousness, the faith that works through radical and risk-taking love.

Amen. Let's pray

© 2017 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

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

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse "journey" through the **Book of Ruth**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

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.