

The Renewal of Hope - When Providence Comes to Light

Ruth 3 – January 31, 2010

Romans 2:4
I Corinthians 11:32
Hebrews 12:6-7, 11
Psalm 30:11

➤ **Hope That Gave Birth to a** _____
Ruth 3:1-4

Psalm 42:5
Leviticus 25:13
Deuteronomy 25:7-9

Three things Ruth was to do

II Corinthians 7:1

II Corinthians 2:15

Isaiah 61:10

➤ **Hope That Led To Obedience and** _____
Ruth 3:5-9

➤ **Hope** _____
Ruth 3:10-11

➤ **Hope That Had To** _____ **Upon Another**
Ruth 3:12-18

And just like Boaz ... God had to obey His _____
_____!

Ezekiel 18:4
Romans 8:32

Wrap Up: Philippians 1:6

My NEXT STEP for this Week

- Come to *A Season of Prayer* (February through April)
Fridays - 6:30 - 7:05 a.m. in the main sanctuary
- “*In obedience to God’s prodding I will ...*”
(write below for prayer support)
- How has God used tragedy to bring good?
(write below as a praise)
- Write names of immediate family in Military.

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Turn with me to the Book of Ruth ...

Three Main Characters...

Naomi – a believer who experiences God’s chastening

Ruth – a Moabite who comes to faith in God

Boaz – a picture of Christ – a kinsman redeemer

Intro: In the first chapter of Ruth – Israel experiences a famine ... so Naomi goes with her husband and their two sons to the land of Moab.

- It was not God’s will that they do so. God’s hand of discipline would follow.
- Naomi’s husband died there.
- Her sons would marry Moabite women ... also not God’s will
- Not long after this ... they too would die in the land of Moab. **This family exchanged ONE FAMINE FOR THREE FUNERALS.** But don’t miss this – Naomi – the survivor of this painful chastening – is a child of God!

God’s dealings with His children

If you are a child of God – your sins have been forgiven ... past, present and future ... all by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ✓ God will not pass judgment on His children by taking away our salvation and sending us to hell.
- ✓ But He chastens – and chastening is painful.
- ✓ God does this so we remember that ... though He has forgiven us of our sins – HE STILL HATES SIN AND WANTS US OUT OF OUR SIN!

We do well to understand ...

God often allows many non-believers to have a better experience in this life, more comforts and even more money on earth than He lets His own children. Creature comforts, better life experiences and money are not signs of spirituality. God is kind to sinners – the unsaved – but an absence of problems and prosperity ARE NOT INDICATORS OF GOD’S FAVOR!

Romans 2:4

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

On the other hand ... when God allows His children to experience chastening for compromise and sin ... our judgment is different than the worlds.

I Corinthians 11:32

But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Characteristics of a believer’s life

- A life at peace with God

- A life interrupted by the sorrows and grief of living in a sin-filled world
- A life periodically characterized by happiness – an absence of problems
- A life interrupted by times of trials even when walking in obedience – when God is pruning our lives to develop our character
- A life interspersed with chastening for disobedience

When we are obedient – we might experience blessings and happiness. But we're guaranteed pruning and trials when obedient too.

When we are disobedient – we will experience chastening to get us back to a life of obedience. But a life of obedience is not a life void of problems.

Hebrews 12:6-7

“... those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”

12:7 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?

Transition: Chapter 1 ends with Naomi in a state of hopelessness.

Ruth 1:20-21

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

1:21 “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?”

She will discover soon, however, what we know from Hebrews 12:11 ...

Hebrews 12:11

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.

The story shifts to Ruth who has become a believer in the true God – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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.”

Ruth has abandoned the idolatry of the Moabites ... is trusting in the God of Israel and is now a child of God.

Transition: In chapter 2 ... the mercy of God begins to shine through the clouds of bitterness. God extends mercy to Naomi – by giving her a godly daughter-in-law - a daughter-in-law that shares the same faith in God. All the darkness of chapter one has disappeared. For we meet Boaz ... the hero of the story. But how Ruth meets Boaz is via the marvelous providence of God.

Key verse ...

Ruth 2:3

So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and *she happened to come* to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

She had no idea which field to glean in ... but she just *happens* to come to Boaz's field. From Ruth's perspective ... she just happened to come to this field. But God led her there. ... she was providentially directed to this field.

Maybe she used the children's rhyme – pointing to the different fields ...

My mother told me to pick the very best one, and that is Y-O-U

God in His sovereignty over-ruled the “Eeny, meeny, miny, moe” – an arbitrary decision and led her to Boaz's field. This is wonderful to note.

Transition: She is given permission by the superintendent of the farm to glean. She works hard and doesn't ask for any special favors. The poor of Israel were provided for by gleaning in the fields of the rich. But they had to work for it by following the harvesters. Boaz, the owner of the field, discovers an attractive stranger, and he's heard great things about this beautiful young widow. So he showers her with kindness ... and apparently falls for her. But he's quite a few years older than her. He sends her home to Naomi with all kinds of food.

Ruth 2:20

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.”

My friends, God is still active in restoring our souls after chastening ... or after traumatic experiences. The Lord had brought Naomi through her time of darkness. He's still doing the same today.

Psalm 30:11

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing ...

When Ruth tells Naomi who has been so kind to her ... Naomi's gloom and depression cease ... and hope appears. Naomi sees the hand of God at work. Naomi knows Boaz ... for he is a relative!

➤ Hope That Gave Birth to a **STRATEGY**

Ruth 3:1-4

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?

3:2 “Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.

3:3 “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.

3:4 “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.”

In verse 1 Naomi tells Ruth that she wants to seek security for Ruth. Security is found in a husband. This is what Naomi has in mind. But before the events of chapter 2 ... Naomi was living in the fog of despair. God providentially leading Ruth to a distant family member's farm ... an godly and eligible bachelor ... resurrected Naomi's hope.

My friends, marriage was designed by God

When hope is present ...

Spirit-filled people plan and dream godly dreams. Depressed people are incapacitated ... unable to be optimistic about the future. Depression suppresses the ability to have purpose and erodes all hope. When the soul is renewed – especially for those coming out of the wood-shed of God's chastening – hope is revived. Hope revived moves people from a *survival-mode* to a goal setting-mode. People of hope plan and pray about the future.

Psalm 42:5

Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence.

God revived Naomi's spirits and gave her hope when she discovered WHO it was who treated Ruth so kindly.

Key word

In the Hebrew the word for kinsman-redeemer is *goel*.

One of the reasons Naomi had been in despair was this. There was no way for her to keep her family from being extinct. Her sons had died and she had no grandchildren. The Old Testament had a provision for widows in this case.

Laws regarding indebtedness in Israel

- ✓ If an Israelite sold his land ... it could only remain in the hands of the new buyer until the year of jubilee.

Leviticus 25:13

On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property.

- ✓ The year of jubilee came every 50 years.
- ✓ So if Elimelech had sold his land before he left for the Land of Moab, immediately after the year of jubilee, we know he lived in Moab for 10 years ... and the year of jubilee had come 10 years before that ... the land would not be given back to Naomi for 40 more years.
- ✓ And Naomi was no spring chicken – she would probably not be around in 30 years. But Old Testament said a kinsmen could buy back the land before the year of jubilee ... if the widow did not have any children. Naomi was not a candidate for this ... BUT RUTH WAS! Obviously, the kinsmen redeemer had to be wealthy in order to do this.

Concerning a kinsmen redeemer ... the rule of law in Israel

A kinsman redeemer can buy back the family inheritance before the year of Jubilee.

(Deuteronomy 25:5-10) says that if a man dies and has no children by his wife ... the brother has a duty to take his brother's widow as a wife so she can have children. And these children were considered the children of her deceased husband ... and they would retain rights to their land.

Naomi came up with a plan...

The late night strategy

3:2 – Naomi knew that Boaz would be working late and sleeping at the threshing floor that night. Harvest was always a joyous time for farmers. So Naomi was probably thinking that by being in a good mood – Boaz would be more inclined to be favorable to what Ruth would be asking – or at least kind to her if he was favorable.

Naomi

Ruth 3:3

“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.

3 things Ruth was to do

1st – ***Wash yourself*** (take a bath and be outwardly clean)

In the Jewish culture ... Ceremonial washing preceded special events (Genesis 35:1-3). Naomi is telling Ruth to act like a bride – and a ceremonial washing would be part of that.

Parallel for us today

II Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2nd – ***Anoint yourself*** – I believe this is perfume. McGee says he even knows the name of this perfume – it's called *MIDNIGHT IN MOAB*. I disagree with him ... for I know the name of my wife's perfume – and if Ruth wanted to smell fabulous – she used what my wife uses. After 35 years of marriage I *finally* put to memory the name of her perfume!

Another parallel for us today ...

The anointing here could speak of the anointing of the Holy Spirit – that which we all have as believers. And when we are anointed by the Holy Spirit ... we have become a *fragrance of Christ* to God (II Corinthians 2:15)

3rd – ***Put on your best clothes*** – Naomi wants her to put on her finest go-to-meeting clothes – her nicest dress ...

I have a feeling that Naomi was telling Ruth ... “*if Boaz thought you were attractive in your black widow's clothes ... wait til he sees you in your finest dress.*”

I can't help but think of parallel for us ...

When we were stained with sin ... in dirty clothes as a worker in the field ... Christ washed us ... anointed us with His Holy Spirit ... and clothed us with His robes of righteousness! We as the church are the bride of Christ made acceptable to Him by His garments.
(Isaiah 61:10)

Isaiah 61:10

“... He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness”

But here is the oddest thing of all ...

Ruth 3:4

“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.”

At first glance ... this seems terribly suspicious. This may appear to be a sexually tempting strategy to win Boaz.

What IS CLEAR

Naomi is playing match-maker – this is her way of getting Boaz to marry Ruth

What is NOT CLEAR

Why do all this in secret? Why do this in the darkness of night? Why set this up while Boaz is sleeping? Why doesn't Naomi simply meet with Boaz and tell him ... *Ruth is crazy about you ... and you appear to be crazy about her. So why not get married?* (I do not have an answer.)

But let me remind you of the character of the three people here

- Boaz is a godly man – revered by his laborers ...
- Ruth is a godly woman – for she was now a believer in the true God. Boaz commended her for this ...

... the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge

- Naomi's bitterness has been replaced by joy in the Lord. **SO NOTHING HERE SUGGESTS IMMORALITY OF ANY SORT!** None whatsoever!

The hope that had seized Naomi's soul helped her to think of ways to do good.

Well said

“It's hopelessness that makes people think they have to lie and steal and seize illicit pleasures for the moment.”

But if you have a hope renewed by observing the providence of God – a hope founded on the sovereignty of God – you will do what is right and good. One more thing is possible ... the threshing floor at harvest time was a public place. Other workers could have been sleeping not too far from Boaz. This would discourage any thoughts of sexual impurity.

Transition: True to the character we've seen in Ruth ... we observe

➤ Hope That Led To Obedience and ACTION

Ruth 3:5-6

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

3:6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.

Ruth is going willingly. She has learned the law of the kinsman redeemer ... and she wants the law to be applied to her.

There is about 6 weeks from the time the barley was gathered to the time the wheat was gathered. And I'm sure that during the time of harvest ... every day Boaz saw Ruth he was elated. Though 6 weeks isn't a long time to get to know someone ... Ruth's reputation and Boaz's reputation go before them.

Ruth 3:7-9

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.

3:8 It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.

3:9 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."

Key phrase

"Spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative"

My friends, Ruth is proposing to Boaz. This is a marriage proposal – one initiated by a woman. Boaz hasn't had time to do any shopping for a ring ... for though he's crazy about Ruth ... he's not sure she feels the same way about him. But now he knows! Ezekiel 16:8 uses this phrase – spreading of the skirt – a phrase that included a wedding covenant. Ezekiel 16 is the marriage covenant God makes with His elect.

By laying at his feet and asking Boaz to cover her eliminated any question as to Ruth's intentions for marriage. Had Ruth used any other approach – Boaz would have been confused. This custom was well known to them ... a mystery to us.

One of the things that crossed my mind when I was examining this phrase I wrote to the side of my notes. I wrote, "*DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!*"

Boaz and Ruth were godly people in a different culture ... both upholding the utmost of purity ... but I don't give any of us credit to do the same today. They were better people than us!

Transition: Naomi had hoped for a great result ... Ruth shared the hope. But in the big picture ... there is something else we should note about their hope. For we notice ...

➤ Hope COMMENDED (Ruth 3:10-11)

Ruth 3:10-11

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. 3:11 “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**.”

A famous cartoonist once used the line ...

“*Life is full of rude awakenings*” ... and many biblical characters would agree.

- ✓ *Adam went to sleep and woke up to discover he'd **been through surgery** and was **now a married man***
- ✓ *Jacob woke up to discover he was **married to the wrong woman***
- ✓ *Boaz woke up at midnight to find a woman lying at his feet (Warren Wiersbe)*

Why didn't Ruth wait for Boaz to propose to her?

Verse 10 suggests the answer:

1ST – Boaz was convinced she'd marry one of the younger bachelors in Bethlehem.

Notice the compliment he gave Ruth.

*“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.*

*“**Daughter**”* may imply she's quite a bit younger ...

*“**Not going after young men**”* ... makes it clear that she was young and attractive.

Most available and attractive women would be looking for a young and handsome man.

Boaz is an older man. Boaz probably was convinced that he was out of the running with Ruth. Maybe he thought it would just be a matter of time before she realized any young and handsome man in town would want her for a wife.

2ND – Boaz was also convinced that if Ruth was interested in a kinsman redeemer – he was out of the running for this too – for someone else had that right if he wanted it.

Transition: But now Boaz realized Ruth was in love with him. This leads us to our last point ...

➤ **Hope That Had To WAIT Upon Another** (Ruth 3:12-15)

Boaz had to do all the work to redeem her.

Boaz – a man of integrity – he will do what is right and good. He must abide by the law – that's the kind of man he is.

Ruth 3:12-15

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

3:13 “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.”

3:14 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.”

3:15 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.

When Boaz said ...

“Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”

I believe he wasn’t as concerned about what others might think ... he wanted to force the hand of the first in line kinsman redeemer ... without warning.

Application:

My friends, Jesus Christ is our kinsman redeemer. God had to become a man to be our kinsman redeemer. God could not do this without becoming a human being. Boaz is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

An important truth

And just like Boaz ... God had to obey His **OWN LAWS!**

Ezekiel 18:4

“... the soul who sins will die”

Watch this: God did not try to avoid this law. Death is the result and punishment for sin! God obeyed this Law and went further ...

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all ...”

It was Naomi’s desire ... that Ruth would marry a godly man ... that a secure future would follow ... that the family line would be preserved. But God would do more than this. He would give us a picture of salvation in Boaz ... and include Ruth in the very line of our Lord and Savior!

Transition: When Ruth returned home to Naomi – it was clear that everything was in the hands of Boaz. They could do nothing to be redeemed. It was in the hands of the redeemer!

Ruth 3:16-17

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.

3:17 She said, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’ ”

Naomi is saying ...

Things are looking good, Ruth. But there is nothing we can do. Everything is in the hands of our redeemer.

Wrap Up

A glorious picture of salvation appears:
Naomi’s hope in Boaz was well-founded.

Ruth 3:18

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."

I see human responsibility here – Ruth saw her need for a kinsman redeemer ...
But I also see the sovereignty of God in salvation. Ruth saw her need for a kinsman redeemer ... but she couldn't redeem herself.

Boaz was busy working for Ruth.

Ruth couldn't demand that Boaz redeem her. She humbly let Boaz know she wants him as her kinsman-redeemer.

But Boaz is the master of the situation. Ruth is willing but unable to provide for herself.

Redemption is God's work!

God does not need our help in saving us!

You and I have nothing to offer Him – He decided to love us when we hated Him.

We are spiritually bankrupt. We have to come to Christ to receive everything.

Spurgeon said,

"It is not thy hold on Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It's not even thy faith in Christ, though that be the instrument; it is Christ's blood and merit."

But this story takes the salvation story and puts it in terms of love. Our salvation is a love story. It is the love of God for sinners ... that turns sinners into those who love their Savior!

Philippians 1:6

"... He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Sinners ... today you can either trust Him or not trust Him.

You are either resting in His finished work – fully aware that you can do nothing to earn your own salvation ... or you are trying to earn your salvation.