

THE BOOK OF RUTH

by Frank Wallace

Wallace's theological exposition of Ruth analyzing the choices of its characters—Elimelech, Orpah, Ruth, and Boaz—showing how obedience and faith lead to blessing while disobedience brings consequences.

8 Chapters

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2. Introduction

Introduction This week we have been considering the book of Judges, and I thought it might be a message for us this evening, and to complete in some measure the study of the book of Judges, if we considered the beautiful book of Ruth, because the incidents that are considered there happened in the time of the Judges, "when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1).

We saw earlier that the times of the judges were days of alternating darkness and brightness. The cause of the darkness was the disobedience and failure of the people of God; the cause of the brightness was God's mercy and grace in allowing deliverance and freedom from their enemies.

3. The Choice of Elimelech

The Choice of Elimelech

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons." (Ruth 1:1-3) The book of Ruth opens in much the same way: a man and his wife and their two sons leave the land of promise and blessing and make their way into the land of Moab. Now as godly people of Israel there was nothing for them in Moab, not a thing. Moab, as we saw, was an inveterate enemy of Israel, a constant opponent of God and His people, and in the land of Moab there were plenty of gods; so there was really nothing for Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons in the land of Moab, not a thing. The reason why they went was because there was a famine in the land, the evidence of God's chastising hand on the nation because they were unfaithful.

If you take time to read the twenty eighth chapter of Deuteronomy and the twenty sixth chapter of Leviticus, you will see clearly there that God promised His people, 'If you are faithful and obedient, then the blessings will flow unhinderedly, there will be plenty for all, there will be an abundant blessing, if only you will obey' and then He said, 'If you will not obey, those blessings will not come, instead there will be trouble, there will be chastisement'. Now here we find the nation in this sad condition; obviously in a failing, disobedient condition, "there was a famine in the land" (Ruth 1:1).

They did not accept God's chastising hand, at least Elimelech did not, nor Naomi, nor their sons; they tried to remedy matters themselves instead of humbly accepting God's chastisement upon them, and waiting His time to remedy matters. Now while this is an Old Testament story, it has a great deal of instruction for us today. We are encouraged in the New Testament to look into the Old Testament. Paul reminds us of the encouragement of the Scriptures in Romans 10:17 (at that time the New Testament was not written as we know it today, so obviously the Old Testament Scriptures provided instruction and encouragement for the believers at the beginning of the Christian era). Also, in referring to the history of the nation of Israel, Paul reminds us that "all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11). So we have no hesitation in referring to an Old Testament incident, or story, to encourage us today in this Christian dispensation. I believe the beginning of this book has great instruction for us. If there is weakness in us individually, or collectively, it can be traced to this one source - disobedience.

Now you can search from the beginning of the Bible right to the end and you will find that disobedience is the root cause of all the sorrow that comes upon the people of God, either individually or collectively. Indeed, the reason why Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden was because they disobeyed, and Paul reminds us that "by one man's disobedience many were

constituted sinners" (Romans 5:19), and we can go right through the divine narrative again, and again, and again, and we trace all the sorrow to this one source - disobedience. We know what is the right thing to do, but we take our own way, and of course, we reap the consequences.

Now this man Elimelech was untrue to his name. His name meant 'God is King'. Now a man with a name like that should have referred every matter to God. We know what it is to have a sovereign in this land, her will ought to be supreme, the laws that she passes ought to govern her subjects; unfortunately, it is not so, but that is the constitution of the land. If God is King, then obviously God ought to have the final say in every aspect of our lives, whether it be individually, or in our homes, or in the company of believers, God ought to be supreme. Here was a man in his home acting contrary to his name. Instead of staying in the land that God had given to His people sovereignly, he moved out of his own free will, or should I say, his own self will; because I do not believe there is any such thing as free will. We either do God's will, or we act in self will.

4. The Choice of Elimelechs Sons

The Choice of Elimelech's Sons

"And [Naomi's two sons] took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband." (Ruth 1:4-5)

Now Elimelech went out in self will disregarding the claims of God upon him; and it was not very long before he died, and when he died his wife was bereft of headship, direction in the home, and the two sons married themselves to daughters of Moab - a thing that God had expressly forbidden in His word (Deuteronomy 7:1-4; Deuteronomy 23:3). It could not have been any plainer God said no-one was to marry anyone from Moab, or from Ammon, or from any of the nations. It was expressly said by God, and yet here are two men, bereft of their father's guidance, doing something that was contrary to God; and it was not very long before they died, and so this is a very solemn story. A wife loses her husband, two sons lose their father, and death and famine come in - a very bleak picture indeed, and it all can be traced to disobedience.

I was listening to a dear brother ministering a few weeks ago, and he was telling us that a young sister came to him and she said, 'I want some help. I want to marry a young man, he is not a Christian, but I want to marry him'.

'Well', said the brother, 'do you think that is the right thing to do?'

'Oh', she said, 'I am praying about it.'

'Well', he said, 'you are doing the wrong thing, you ought not to be praying about it you ought to be obeying God's word. God's word says expressly that you should not be united to someone who is unconverted, because that is an unequal yoke (2 Corinthians 6:14). You are considering doing something that God expressly forbids. What do you want? Do you want God to change His mind? Do you want to pray to Him, until He says to you, 'It is all right for you to marry an unconverted person', when He says plainly in His word, 'If any Christian is to marry it is to be only in the Lord'?"

Now that is plain enough. This is the very thing that these two sons did not do - they expressly acted in a way that was contrary to the will of God, and it brought sorrow.

Now this is not the only way in which we can disobey, perhaps we tend to stress that a great deal. I think it is very important that young people should know that if they are going to choose a partner, they make sure they choose a partner in the Lord. And in many other ways too we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers who will drag us down in our Christian testimony. We might be very, very happy naturally, but we certainly will not grow spiritually. But then again, we might be disobedient in a thousand ways in our lives, and if we are disobedient we will reap the consequences.

5. The Choice of Naomi

The Choice of Naomi

"Then [Naomi] arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah." (Ruth 1:6-7)

Now Naomi made a decision. She said, 'I am going back'. Now I think it is right to say that when we speak about the book of Ruth we mainly speak about the decision of Ruth, but you will find that this book has many decisions, three very bad ones, and three very good ones - the decision of Elimelech to leave the land of promise was certainly a wrong decision; the decision of his two sons to marry daughters of Moab were certainly bad decisions; and we will find that the near kinsman, when he refused to have the hand of Ruth the Moabitess in marriage, also made a wrong decision. We will not spend any more time with wrong decisions, I think we all know something about them in our lives. Thank God for His mercy if He gives us restoring grace. But Naomi made a right decision, she says, 'I am going back to where I belong, I ought not to be here, since ever I came it has been sorrow and disappointment and death in my life; I am going back. I have heard that the Lord is blessing His people with bread. We came down here into Moab to get something for ourselves, to gratify our own desires, and what a sorry mess it has put us into! I am going back because the Lord is providing for His people.' Well that was a very wise decision. Sometimes we make decisions which are contrary to the word of God and we are too proud to say that we have made a mistake, and it is a long, long time before we have retraced our steps. It is good when we know we have made a mistake to get down before the Lord and to acknowledge it, and to seek His grace and mercy that He might lead us back into the right path and follow that path in humility and obedience. So Naomi said, 'I am going back'.

6. The Choice of Orpah

The Choice of Orpah

"And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. " (Ruth 1:8-15) Her two daughters-in-law said, 'We will go with you'. They went a certain distance, until Naomi told them to go back because there was no prospect with her, no, not naturally, she had nothing to offer to them. Well, Orpah was very courteous, she kissed her mother-in-law and she left her, and went back to her people and to her gods. It was obvious that the connection that Orpah had with these dear people from Israel had had no effect whatsoever on her, she had not benefited from the instruction that Naomi, I believe, gave to them - so she went back. Oh, it is a very sad thing when we see people going back to their gods, to their people, after making a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and going on for a short time because the company is encouraging, or because certain things are advantageous, and then a test comes, and they give up and they go back; what a sad thing it is to see. I do trust before the Lord that if anyone here has failed in that way, oh, may the Lord help you to do that which is right before Him. Do not be too proud to come back, do not be too proud to follow the Lord with His people. Humble yourself under His hand and you will find a blessing; do not go away. I trust there is not one here this evening who has a desire in his or her heart to go away; the seeds of that, perhaps, working in their mind, 'What is the use of a Christian testimony, the opposition is too strong, I do not see much fruit in it, there is no pleasure in it, so I am going to give up.'

Recently our hearts were saddened by a young lad who said this kind of thing, 'I do not get any pleasure in the meetings, I am not going to go any more.' Well, for a Christian, the pleasure is not in the meetings, though thank God for all the pleasure that we do get in the meetings! Our links are with our Lord Jesus Christ, and if they are not strong, if they are not real and vital, we will be like that young man, we will soon give up. But I would say, and I am sure there are many more who would say, that the happiest moments of my life have been spent in fellowship with the believers, the happiest moments that ever I have enjoyed; and I know that many more here would say the same, and we would encourage you if you do feel like giving up to keep hanging on. There are difficulties, we are all conscious of them, but do not go back to the things that you refused perhaps

a few years ago, do not let the enemy get the victory, rely upon Christ and His strength, and keep going on and you will find a blessing eventually.

7. The Choice of Ruth

The Choice of Ruth

"And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest." (Ruth 1:16-22)

Well now, Ruth comes to Naomi and says, 'I am not going back. Do not ask me to leave, because I am not going back to my people or to my gods.' And when she uttered the words, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for where thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16-17), it was perfectly obvious to Naomi that she had no intentions of going back, so she stopped trying to persuade her. Here was a wonderful decision, and we will find that in the three good decisions that are made, one by Naomi, one by Ruth and one by Boaz, blessing follows each decision. All these decisions linked together end in blessing, and thank God we know where it ends. We read a little later of the genealogy in the last chapter (Ruth 4:18-22), but if we turn over to Matthew 1:16 we find that the chain ends in Christ - what a wonderful thing! I am perfectly sure that neither Naomi, nor Ruth, nor Boaz were aware of what was happening that day, that they were linked in a chain that would stretch centuries beyond their time and end in the coming of 'great David's greater son' - what a blessing! Oh, what honour and privilege to be linked in a movement that finds its centre in Christ.

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for where thou goest, I will go". I believe there was a great attraction in Naomi for Ruth; I believe there was something in that dear woman that held her attention and her affections. Elimelech, sad to say, had led his family astray, but after he died the responsibility of the family rested upon Naomi's shoulders. I believe that she taught her sons and her daughters-in-law the truth concerning the God of Israel. What a responsibility rests upon us, those of us who are older, I am not going to limit this simply to the household, but to every one of us who are a little older in the Christian faith. I was reading of a dear man who was out in the country, and he was watching a flock of sheep, and there were lambs there, and he noticed that everywhere the ewes went the lambs followed. Some of the ewes went

through holes in the hedge and the lambs followed, and the ewes went into a place of danger, and so the lambs went into a place of danger because they followed their mothers. Now said the brother, 'What an excellent illustration of the foolishness of older Christians!' How can we expect the young to follow in the right pathway if those of us who are older give a bad lead ourselves? Are we not responsible to lead Christian lives that are upright and truthful and righteous before God, and if they are there is every chance that those who are younger will follow our example. But if we show an example that is careless and worldly and irresponsible, can we be amazed when the young follow our example? So I believe Naomi taught those young people something of the truth of God, and it is to her credit, I believe, that there was a wonderful response that brought wonderful blessing. So says Ruth, 'I am not going to leave, I am going to follow you, there is something in you that is really worthwhile, and I am going to follow you.'

Then she says, ".....and where thou lodgest, I will lodge"; she says in effect, 'I am going to share what you have; whatever you have, I am willing to share it, I will be there.' And we find as the story unfolds, not only does she lodge with Naomi, but she contributed to the well-being of the household. She gathered in the food, she prepared it, she provided it for her mother-in-law, and Boaz came to understand something of this and he commended her for it, he commended her kindness, and her care, and her love for her mother-in-law. It is a good thing when young Christians talk like this in relation to those who are older in the faith, 'Yes, we want to follow those people, we can see that they are following the Bible, they are obeying it, they are not simply following the dictates of their own mind, they are trying to live out what the Bible says, yes, we want to be with them, we want to share what they have, they have something good, and we want to share in it, also, if we can, we will contribute to it.' Well, these are excellent exercises for young and old alike.

Then she said, ".....thy people shall be my people"; what a decision this is. She refuses the people of Moab and their gods, and their opposition to God, and she says, 'I want to be with the nation of Israel, I want to be with them.' I believe that Naomi would quietly talk over the wonderful things that God had done for the nation of Israel right from the time of their sojourn in Egypt, their journey through the Red Sea and through the river Jordan, the mighty victories that He secured by the judges He raised up, and also some of the prospects of Israel so glowingly portrayed by God in various pronouncements to His servants. All this, I believe, Naomi would have made known to Ruth.

Now said Ruth, 'I want to be connected with this kind of people; people following after God, who have experienced the help of God, who obviously joy in the things of God, I want to be connected with this people. It means refusing my people, I cannot have a share with the people of Moab and a share with the people of Israel at the same time, I must make a clean cut and be finished with Moab and her idols.' That is a very solemn thing, a very solemn step to take. That was her decision. If you like, she was 'burning her boats', there were no half measures. I can assure you dear friends, there is no joy in the Christian life with one foot in the world and the other in the Christian company; it just will not work, there is a pathway of separation that has to be followed. Do not think separation is an ugly word, it is a privileged word, it is a privilege to be clear of the vile and wicked, evil things that are in this world. It is a privilege to be away from that kind of thing, and at the other end of the spectrum, all that man boasts of in his culture and in his attainments, to be free from it all and to have a desire to be found with the people of God walking in humility and

obedience. So she gave up her people, but she found a better people in the nation of Israel.

Then she said, (and I believe this is the real kernel of her decision, this is the real heart and centre of it), ".....and thy God [shall be] my God". The gods of Moab, I believe, were many, the God of Israel was one; but that one God was the true God. How like the Thessalonians Ruth was, "they turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). They made a complete cut. We were reminded this afternoon about the solemn statement in 1 John 5:21, "Children, keep yourselves from idols". The principle of idolatry is an affront to God, it is an affront to His majesty, it is an opposition to His affections, and He wants His people all for Himself; and Ruth says, ".....and thy God [shall be] my God". She made this definite decision, she was cutting herself off from all the gods of Moab, and finding her joy and centre in the one true God.

Finally she said, "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death part thee and me." I believe, in simple words, she said, 'I am going to go right on to the end. There is no giving up, no turning back; I have made my decision, I have cast in my lot with you, your people and your God, and I am determined to go on.' There are tremendous pressures against the people of God today. Oh, what a great decision this is for each one of us, to say in spite of all that is against us and all that we feel, 'We are going to keep going on, and we are going to work and pray and have our desires centred in the one great God'. Now I know that some of the pressures are very great, and thank God we have a High Priest above who knows every one of them (Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 5:1-10). He has been through it all; as a Man down here He has tasted the bitterness of opposition, He has tasted the sorrows of the Christian pathway, He knows it all, and because He knows it all, He is competent to know and encourage those who are passing through the same circumstances. He does not guarantee to remove them but He gives strength and courage and help that they might be borne, and that a testimony might be rendered to His God. How thankful we are for the priestly grace and help of our High Priest.

8. The Choice of Boaz

The Choice of Boaz

"And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman. And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning. And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor. Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city. And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day. Then went Boaz up to the gate and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the

elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: and let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman." (Ruth 3:8-18; Ruth 4:1-12)

Now we come to chapter 3, and here it is Boaz who made a decision. He was not like the sons of Elimelech who made a wrong decision, he made a right decision, and well he knew it. This decision was not a calculated risk, this was a very wise and shrewd decision, he knew what he was doing, he knew that Ruth was a woman of worth, a woman of sterling quality, a woman fit to be his wife, and so he made his decision. This is a very good position for a brother and a sister, as we said at the beginning and we will say it again, being guided by the Lord, helped by the Lord in prayer, and waiting to make these right decisions because they have to do with a lifetime in the ordinary course of affairs. Your whole Christian testimony is at stake, in some sense if you make a wrong decision, but, oh how thankful we are, that Boaz made this right decision. Little did he know the full consequences of the decision that he made.

There was another who had a prior claim. This other man said, 'Yes, I want the belongings, I want the possessions that belong to the husband of Naomi but I am not prepared to sacrifice my good name and my inheritance for a Moabitess, No, I do not want her as my wife'. He had the prior claim. Well, we know the story well, that Boaz said he was prepared to marry Ruth, and he did. That we read at the end of chapter 4.

I want to draw your attention to Naomi's words to Ruth, "the man will not be in rest, until he has finished the thing this day" (3:18). Here was a man whose mind was made up, he knew before the Lord what he was doing, and he was not going to allow anything to turn him aside from his purpose because he knew that what he was doing was pleasing to the Lord. He knew perfectly well from what was told him that this woman was a godly woman, she was no longer a Moabitess, she was now under the shelter of the wings of the Lord Almighty of Israel. She was entitled to her place in the nation. Do not let anyone think that this story is one that we could use as out authority to marry somebody who is unconverted, and then the thing will turn out all right, you can rest assured that this is certainly not in the story. When Ruth said, "thy God [shall be] my God" she ceased to be a Moabitess, she was there in the nation of Israel, and privileged to have her place, and a fit wife for this godly man in Israel. Note what Naomi says about him, 'He is a man of purpose, he is a man of energy, he is a man of initiative, and he will not stop until the whole thing is completed'. When I say that, I can assure you dear brethren, that I am humbled. How often the Lord raises exercises within us, here is something that can be done for the Lord's name and for the Lord's people, and we think about it, and the more we think about it the more we see that, yes, it is something that can be done, but it never is done. We were reminded of Reuben in Deborah's song, there was great resolve of heart, but nothing was done (Judges 5:15-16). Here was a man of energy, a man of initiative, a man who would move on until he completed his purpose. I believe we need young men and women, and old men and women too, brothers and sisters alike, who have this definite purpose, this initiative, this energy to do things that help forward the testimony of our God because they are all links in a chain. Naomi's decision, Boaz's decision and Ruth's decision, they were all links in the one chain moving towards one end, the purpose of God being completed. How wonderful then, dear brethren, if we are all persons of decision and purpose of heart, and we

are all moving together under the guidance of God and are all subject to His word, that God's purpose might be fulfilled in us. A very wonderful desire, and as you say it here on the platform, or you listen to it, it sounds very good, does it not? It is very idealistic. But then you put it into practice and you find it is not so easy, there are difficulties, there are problems, there are challenges, and that is how we give up. Men of purpose, men of initiative, do not give up, they keep going on. This is what Boaz did, he went straight to the man concerned and put the matter before him, 'Will you do this, or will you not?' He says, 'No, I am not going to do this'. 'Right,' Boaz says, 'I will do it', and so he gets Ruth for his wife.

9. The Consequences of the Right Choices

The Consequences of the Right Choices

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David." (Ruth 4:13-22)

Just for a few moments, at the end of chapter 4, we want to see the result. Three people have made right decisions, now we see the result. Obed, a little boy was born to Ruth, and there were some wonderful things said about this child, but first of all, the blessing was Naomi's. "The women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel" (v.14). Poor Naomi down in Moab, her husband dead, her sons dead, how was the name going to be carried on (because the name was connected with the inheritance)? If the name lapsed, the inheritances went to someone else. Oh, what a sad and bleak state of affairs it was, but now all was changed, and here was one born to her own kinsman who was taking up her name, her husband's name, and the inheritance connected with his name. There was nothing lost, all was recovered because of men and women who made right decisions. Now that is a very wonderful thing. We may feel that there is so much that is lost today, but the Lord would remind us that there are some things which remain, and we are all responsible to strengthen them (Revelation 3:2). May the Lord give us grace and help to strengthen the things that remain, and not to say 'Everything is gone, there is nothing left, it is not worthwhile going on'; it is worthwhile going on, because the measure in which we strengthen things, thank God, something will be added to the position. This little child was to be a "restorer of [Naomi's] life" (v.15), this wonderful restoration had come in, she thought everything was gone, death had shattered all her hopes, but here was one who was a restorer of her life. This little boy opened up an avenue of blessing and hope for her that previously did not exist. He was also a "nourisher of thy old age". We understand why grandmothers and grandfathers like their grandchildren so much, they look upon them, love them and care for them because they see in them a continuation of those who they love, their own daughters and sons, and they see in those grandchildren those features that they love so well. So here it was with Naomi, her heart rejoiced in her old age, she was encouraged, she was blessed, as she looked upon this little boy; and his name was called Obed, which I understand means 'a worshipper'.

If we look at this story simply and think of all the recovery that took place, when everything had seemed so bleak and dark and hopeless, and now look at the changed picture, a young woman with her husband and their little boy, and the grandmother who rejoiced, everybody happy, ought that not to have produced worship in all those concerned? They all belonged to God, they were all connected with God's people, how right it was that this little boy with this name should really typify the spirit of worship and praise and response to God for mercy in bringing such a recovery. As long as we are here, I ought really to say, as long as the Spirit of God is here indwelling us individually and with us collectively, there is always a very distinct possibility of recovery and restoration, provided we are prepared to make the decisions. Provided we are prepared to be obedient to the word of God there is every possibility that God will cause us to rejoice and to praise and to worship Him for His restoring grace and mercy. Are we prepared to face the problems that are involved in obedience? Are we prepared to be concerned enough, like Naomi, Ruth and Boaz, to make definite decisions before the Lord and to show the initiative that marked Boaz to carry them out, because if we do, I believe we will see a change.

Lastly, as I close, how wonderful that all this chain of activity, not connected with the leaders, not connected with Othniel, or Deborah, or Barak, or Gideon, or any of the others, but connected with what we might call an obscure family in Judah, was unfolding which found its end in Christ, the true David, great David's greater son. We read the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-25 and there we find it all - Ruth mentioned there, Obed mentioned there, they were important links in a chain that led to Christ. Now we are not called upon to form links in this sense, the links are already formed with us to Christ, we are united to Him as members of His body, we belong to Him in glory, and I believe that we need to hold every truth that we possess in relation to Him, we hold it in the power that He gives us, in the attraction of His own glorious Person, and all that He is to us as believers; and unless we do so, I believe eventually we shall fail, but if we find our Christian living centred in Christ, then there will be an adequate response to God that will gladden His heart.

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