

THE BOOK OF RUTH BY G.F.VALLANCE

by G.F. Vallance

An exposition of the Book of Ruth, one of only two Bible books bearing a woman's name. Vallance traces Ruth's journey from Moab to Bethlehem, drawing out the spiritual lessons of providence, faithfulness, and redemption in this beloved Old Testament narrative.

3 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 3. RUTH FOUND : CHAPTER 1
2. 4. RUTH LOVED : CHAPTER 2
3. 5. RUTH REDEEMED : CHAPTERS 3 and 4

3. RUTH FOUND : CHAPTER 1

RUTH FOUND : CHAPTER 1

There is only one Book in the whole Bible devoted solely to the history of a woman, and that is the Book of Ruth, and with the single exception of the Book of Esther, it is the only book that even bears a woman's name. In the Book of Esther we have the record of a Jewish maiden marrying a Gentile Monarch, whilst in the Book of Ruth we have a Gentile bride and a Jewish husbandman. We observe also that this most interesting personage is named in the first chapter of the New Testament, in the genealogy of the Saviour, so that our study is of no mean interest. The Book of Ruth is the eighth in the Bible, which fact, as the eighth day, reminds us of another start, a fresh beginning, the introduction of something new. This is seen in Ruth the Gentile finding grace in the sight of Boaz. Our present treatise will, we trust, set forth this fact to the profit of many. The opening verse of the book gives in very brief and concise language the exact condition of things in existence when Ruth was found.

One would suggest without any fear of contradiction that the condition of things then was very much akin to that of our day.

We observe there was a famine in the land.

Possibly this famine extended some considerable distance, but it is especially commented upon here because it was in the land, God's land, the chosen land, where His people, the Jews, dwelt, and it was because they were affected that special reference is made to it, for God always cares for His own. Maybe my reader is a child of God, very possibly that God Himself has a special interest in you, the interest of a Father for His child, and it is just possible that you are much concerned with the company of the Lord's people with whom you gather for worship, prayer, Bible study, etc. because there seems to you to be a very serious lack of spiritual ministry and there seems very little food for your soul - in other words there is "a famine in the land."

"Yes," you say, "that is exactly my position, and whilst I know that my place as a child of God is 'without the camp' (Heb 13:13), separated from all sects of men, and associated with those who simply gather, without any distinctive title, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet I am much exercised as to what I ought to do, seeing our assembly at the present time is passing through a time of spiritual poverty."

Elimelech of Bethlehem-Judah was just such a man who found himself in exactly this position, but he very soon decided the matter and no doubt a knowledge of his history will prove of help to my reader. You observe it says that this man was of Bethlehem-Judah (meaning the House of Bread - 1:1). He not merely lived there, he was "of it," born there, in the land. He was, without any doubt, one of God's people. Thus he becomes a picture of every true child of God who is born from above "of Christ Jesus" (the Bread of Life). His very name "Elimelech" means my God is King, and that surely is much the same as the Christian's standard. In our acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour we confessed Him as Lord (see Rom 10:9); and to acknowledge Him as Lord of our life is

the only proper sequel to such a confession. But the meaning of Elimelech's name stands out in greater relief when we consider the conditions of his time more closely. This same verse (1:1) says that it was in the days when the judges ruled, and by turning back the leaf of our Bible we read in the last verse of the Book of Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

1. No king in Israel.

2. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. No restraint, no rule, no authority. A condition akin to the democratic spirit which abounds today and which, sad to say, is finding place among the Lord's people. His Word exhorts us to "obey them that have the rule over you" (Heb 13:17), and to esteem them "worthy of double honour" (1Ti 5:17); but the rising generation seems to prefer to take the rule in its own hand and arrange for itself. It is ever God's order that the younger be subject to the elder. Parental authority in the home, and eldership rule [Note by biblecentre: only apostles and their delegates appointed elders, hence we have no authority to do so today, but there are those who have the qualifications of elders, do their work, and should be recognized as such. For more details see: Elders, Overseers, and Deacons] in the Church are divine principles and anything which would tend to upset God's ways can only lead to disaster. This condition of things, which we must all admit is very rife today, was equally so in the days of Ruth, but in the midst of this dark picture, and of a people with such a character, stands forth Elimelech, and his testimony is "if you have no king, I have; for my God is my King; and if you do what is right in your own eyes, I do not, for I seek to obey my King." May those of us who profess to love and follow the Saviour not only bear as good a confession as this with our lips, but may we live a life which will correspond in every way. The time has now come, however, when Elimelech is to be severely tested by his God. The famine is upon them, and he must, of course, think of those dependent upon him; they will need something to feed upon and how can they get it "in the land" seeing there is a famine there? What shall he do? A message comes that there is food in Moab, and the man whose name said "My God is King" now denies his testimony by doing as others did - that which was right in his own eyes. Contrary to the will of his God, and without seeking His guidance and help, he goes down to Moab. This is the first step in a path of backsliding. How many today are doing much the same as Elimelech did. Instead of waiting upon the Lord for guidance, seeking His will and asking His help, they decide hastily for themselves. Instead of showing by their actions that they own the Lordship of Christ they deny their lip testimony and please themselves. My dear reader, learn a lesson from this first verse of the Book of Ruth. You who are of Christ, born from above; let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: He pleased NOT Himself (Rom 15:3). If at the present time your local assembly is passing through a season of spiritual famine, remember your Lord's command is "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb 10:25). Seek to please Christ and not self. Possibly you have heard that at such and such a place there is so much done for the young people; they are catered for in a way that seems to be so attractive, and really you and your loved ones would apparently be much happier there than where you are. That is how it appears to you, at any rate, and just now you hardly know what to do, and in your perplexity you ask - What shall I do then? Do NOTHING. Stay just where you are till God moves you. If He has seen fit to cause a spiritual famine then you will do better to seek to learn His purpose in it, rather than try and escape from it. For God has a

purpose in the Famine. It may be the chastening of the Lord and we must endure it. In Elimelech's day there were many families in the land who had to stay through the famine. We only read of this one family going down to Moab. If others have to stay, let us stay with them, for remember this, those families that stayed were after all the best off. For when Naomi (Elimelech's wife) returned to Bethlehem later, do you know what she said? "I went out full; the Lord hath brought me home again empty"(1:21).

God's famine after all was better than Moab's plenty, and it always is so. There is nothing like the pure Word of God for starving souls, even if there seems a dearth of gifts to minister it. Again, Naomi says, "I went out: the Lord hath brought me home" (1:21). She pleased herself and went from the Lord, but His grace brought her back. If you have already gone back spiritually; if you have been pleasing self rather than Christ, then confess your backsliding and He will graciously heal and restore you. Again note that Naomi says, "I went out: The Lord hath brought me home." She went to Moab for food, but it was only "out" compared to being "in the land." Even if there is famine there, it is "home." The little hymn says, "Where Jesus is 'tis Heaven there," and even though we may be associated with just the two or three gathered in His Name (Mat 18:20), yet what does that matter if He promises to be there? It is Home for the child of God.

Moab's pleasures and attractions, whether in the shape of theatre, picture palace, dance or social, or in the form of sacred concert, Chapel social, etc., are as chaff compared to wheat, and sooner or later you will realise their unsatisfying power and long for the real food - the Word of God. But we must hurry on. Not only does Elimelech go down to Moab, but his wife and two sons follow his example, and this is always so. We never act alone, our example is followed by others. The names of the two boys are not without their lessons, for "Mahlon" means "Sick", and "Chilion" means "Pining". How different from the testimony of their father's name, which means, as we have seen, "My God is King." His was a bold, clear testimony, theirs Sick and Pining, and maybe my reader is one who is looked up to by others and held in high esteem, perhaps a Sunday School teacher, or Gospel preacher. Have you ever thought how serious it would be for you to make a false step, for you to please self first, for you to choose Moab's pleasures? Those who hang upon your ministry, who are weaker in the faith, would very likely follow in your footsteps and thus would share in your disaster. For mark it well, in your Bible and in your heart.

They WENT to sojourn In Moab (v. 1) They CAME Into Moab (v. 2) And CONTINUED there (v. 3) And DIED there (vv. 3-5). When Paul wrote to the saints at Corinth he had to reprove them for many things, and in his first Epistle, chapter 11, verse 30, he says "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep." The sure path of the backslider - Weak (Chilion), Sick (Mahlon) - Death.

Four persons of Bethlehem Judah go to Moab and three die there. One only is now left and she, the widow and mother whose path was obedience to her husband. How gracious the Lord is to spare her to the last, and now that she is free to do as she will, she hears a message that the Lord has visited His people in giving them bread (v. 6), not in Moab but "in the land." Bread is only found "at the house of Bread" (the meaning of Bethlehem), and is for all God's people. Naomi hears this glad message and she believes it.

Thank God if this little book brings to some backsliding soul a message that there is "Bread enough and to spare," but much more shall we rejoice if that one believes and receives the

message and does what Naomi did next. She arose.

Perhaps you are thinking that this record reads very much like the story of the Prodigal Son, and surely the likeness is not to be wondered at for he was after all "a son," and more a picture of a backslider than of an unconverted soul. As both of these Bible characters arose, so must we today if "out of touch" with our Lord, and in confession to Him we must get the matter of our soul's communion adjusted.

Naomi now finds that she is encumbered, for when she arises to go to Bethlehem there are two who have somewhat of a claim upon her, and this brings us to the proper subject of our study: RUTH, and her sister Orpah, both of whom were found in Moab, a Gentile country. Unlike the other personages whom we have been considering, these two girls were not "of Bethlehem-Judah," they were "of Moab," and as such they speak to us of the unconverted person, "and such were some of you," says the apostle Paul (1Co 6:11), and how true that is, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified" (1Co 6:11).

Eph 2:1-22 shows us our condition by nature and this we have here illustrated in these two Moabitish girls, who are entirely outside all the blessings which were the portion of the children of Israel, for they were strangers to the Covenants of promise. When Mahlon and Chilion followed their father's example and went to Moab they did what followers of a bad example always do - they went one worse and married women of Moab. Of this their father was not guilty. But depend upon it if we backslide those who follow our example will go deeper into sin and depart further from the right way. God in His law had said: "Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day: And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them; for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession" (Deu 2:18-19), and, "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son" (Deu 7:3), but they disregard this entirely now, and link themselves up with those whom God forbids. This has its New Testament counterpart in 2Co 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" The unequal yoke is a very serious matter indeed for the child of God who is a party to it. The chapter under consideration shows a clear picture of this and God's judgment upon it. Ever remember that there is no blame attaching to the Moabitish girls whatever. The blame is entirely upon the heads of Mahlon and Chilion for they were the Lord's own people and the disobedience was theirs. Likewise there is no blame attaching to the worldly person who becomes yoked with a child of God whether in marriage, business or pleasure, but there is awful judgment overhanging the Christian who is a partner to such a yoke, for the Word of God is clear and distinct upon this important matter, and to disobey can only bring disaster. Should my reader be a Christian linked in any way with an ungodly and unregenerate person, whether in social or business life be warned of your danger ere God speaks more loudly. The argument is often put forward that by joining company with the ungodly we can influence them for good. Take a lesson from this incident. Mahlon and Chilion dwelled there ten years and neither of their wives, Ruth or Orpah, made one step towards God and His people, not one. And so it ever is, the child of God gets dragged down and down but never succeeds in lifting the worldly partner, for God cannot bless disobedience to His Word.

Now that Naomi has heeded the voice of the Lord, and is retracing her footsteps back to the land, we find Ruth and Orpah, her two daughters-in-law, expressing a desire to participate in the provision the Lord has made for His people. They both hear of the "message of Bread" and both appear as eager as each other in returning with their mother-in-law. We must notice here that it is distinctly said that "the Lord had visited His people in giving them Bread." There was really no message for Ruth or Orpah for they were Gentiles, but like the woman of the Gospels they take the place of the dogs that eat the children's crumbs (Mark 7:28), and whilst the law said "no Moabite should enter the congregation of the Lord" (Deu 23:3), yet they come, nevertheless, trusting to Grace and not law (see 2:2), and so it ever is with us Gentiles. We have no claim, no right, no portion. All we have in Christ is on the ground of pure grace, first to last. On the journey back Naomi takes these two girls aside and faithfully and truthfully puts before them what they must expect when they reach the land. From Ruth's words in verse 16, we judge that Naomi told them that she would doubtless be a wanderer going from place to place, that she would have no dwelling place. Only a lodging here or a lodging there, that her's was a rejected people, her God a despised God, and that even death might befall her. These facts prove too much for Orpah. Had it been a rosy, happy, joyful lot, she might have continued but such a path as this was not to her liking and she preferred Moab with "its gods that cannot save." What a sad record indeed, but yet how many today there are who have professed to be followers of Jesus Christ, yet when they are brought face to face with the facts of the Christian pathway, they are not prepared to pay the price. After all it is a narrow pathway, it is often a thorny way, and it does cost something to live a real Christian life, there are sorrows and sufferings and we must face the situation fairly, but then - Is it worthwhile?

Paul could say, "I reckon the sufferings of this present while are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18), and that is just what Ruth thought. The present suffering was worthy of the future reward and so says the true child of God. Reader, are you an "Orpah Professor" or are you a "Ruth Possessor?"

Mark this, Orpah showed more outward affection for Naomi than Ruth did, but Ruth's affection was deeper and more sincere. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her. Judas kissed the Saviour and betrayed Him. Pro 27:6 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." It is not the outward profession of Christianity that counts, but practical affection for the Person of Christ. How do we stand in this connection?

4. RUTH LOVED : CHAPTER 2

RUTH LOVED : CHAPTER 2 In the preceding chapter we have considered, somewhat in detail, the various circumstances which led up to the finding of Ruth the Moabitess.

We will now devote ourselves to the study of Ruth herself for the remaining portion of the sacred record is taken up with the details of the happenings of her life.

Naomi's faithfulness in warning these two Moabitish maidens is amply rewarded in the sevenfold confession of allegiance from the lips of Ruth:

"Intreat me not to leave thee, Whither thou goest - I will go. 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." (Ruth 1:16-17). Would that there was more of this spirit about today! How delightful it is to find those of the younger generation steadfastly cleaving to those older in years and spiritual experience, especially when the latter are in happy communion with the mind of their Lord. May those of us who are "the younger" ever seek the closest fellowship with those whom God has been pleased to place as elders in our midst [Note by biblecentre: only apostles and their delegates appointed elders, hence we have no authority to do so today, but there are those who have the qualifications of elders, do their work, and should be recongnized as such. For more details see: Elders, Overseers, and Deacons]. This characteristic of Ruth is even more marked as we proceed, for whereas in chapter 1 her words are full of I; "I will go," "I will lodge"; in the subsequent chapters we find her will entirely subservient to Naomi's, for only with her consent and approval does she embark upon her varied ways. See 2:2, "Let me now go" and 3:5, "All that thou sayest unto me I will do." We know from the end of the story how her obedience was honoured by God, for she was brought into untold blessing, and her name has been recorded upon the page of Holy Writ. Dear young Christian, or older one too for that matter, do you always seek the counsel, fellowship and advice of your fellow believers before taking any fresh step in your life's pathway? It is a course which carries with it the blessing of the Lord.

"So they two went until they came TO Bethlehem . . . All the city was moved" (1:19)

Naomi, who was verily "of" Bethlehem now comes "to" Bethlehem. She was "of" Bethlehem all the while she was in Moab, but to come "to" that city altered her entire life. We here see the difference between being a Christian and living the Christian life. Every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a Christian, but let my reader answer personally, as before the Lord, this question: Do I live the Christian life?

Just as all the city was moved on their account, so in Heaven there is rejoicing over the backslider restored or the lost one found (Luk 15:7). They reached Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest, which was a very suitable moment, indeed. Not only as far as they were personally concerned, but also as a type, for it has a most striking message. The barley was the first of the harvests, and in accordance with God's command in Lev 23:10 the people would be offering the

sheaf of the firstfruits when Ruth and Naomi arrived at the beginning of barley harvest. This sheaf of firstfruits was always offered on the morrow after the Sabbath following the Passover and it spoke of resurrection. For was it not on the first day of the week (the morrow after the Sabbath) immediately following the Passover feast, that the blessed Saviour rose from the tomb, and in 1Co 15:20-23, we read, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." He Himself is called "the First-fruits." This season of the year was typical in the Divine plan of the resurrection of Christ, and thus upon the ground of resurrection, Ruth takes her place in the land.

We have previously noted that under the law, Ruth had no claim nor place in Bethlehem, but there was a provision made for the poor and the stranger in the time of harvest, and she casts herself entirely upon the grace of God in thus providing ears of corn for those who had no right to the full harvest.

"When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest . . . thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger. I am the Lord your God." (Lev 19:9-10)

"And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace." (Ruth 2:2)

How good is the Lord even to those who are not His people. Those who are unconverted have much to thank God for, for He gives the sunshine and the rain, He provides their food and clothing, yet how ungrateful oft-time they are. In the first chapter of our Book, Ruth is found in Moab. In the second we find her learning something about a person. In chapter three she is at the feet of that person, and in chapter four he purchases her unto himself (Ruth 4:10). May I suggest that the experience of God's dear people today oft-times, if not always, in a greater or lesser degree, follows this course. First we are found of God and by His Holy Spirit exercised as to our standing and condition before Him. Then, over a course of time, perhaps weeks, months or maybe years, we gradually and slowly get to know and appreciate in some measure the Person whom God has set forth as the Saviour - the Lord Jesus Christ - His only begotten Son. The degree of that knowledge doubtless varies in each individual case, according to our environment and Christian surroundings. With many of us, as we shall see was the case with Ruth, we found ourselves much in the company of His reapers and even at times we were present at those gatherings where the Lord Himself was, but whilst all that tended as in the case of Ruth, to instruct us more and more in a knowledge of our Kinsman Redeemer yet it took us a long while before we finally decided to cast ourselves solely and wholly at His feet and leave our case entirely in His able hands. It is just possible that the one now reading these lines, has not yet even gone to that extent.

You have probably been brought up in a Christian home, at any rate you have had the benefit of Christian environment and you have oft-times been with "the reapers of the whitened harvest." You have heard them speak well of their Lord, and whilst you know that you really are a stranger to grace and to God, yet you are deeply concerned about these matters and you have a yearning after better things. May the unfolding of these divine truths lead you, as it did Ruth, to the feet of the One who is both able and willing to save. We do well to observe the way that Ruth's acquaintance with Boaz grows and how that he does not redeem her the first time she meets him. He deals with her as seems best to himself and the redemption comes in its own place. We, alas,

oft times as Gospel preachers, are much too eager to get to the redemption point, not that one would belittle such an important matter, but do we not overlook the fact that men and women today, as ever, need to know something about the One who is offered to them as their Saviour before they can be expected to yield themselves to Him? Do we sufficiently tell them about the Person of the Saviour, or do we merely urge them to "Come to Jesus"?

It was the growing knowledge that Ruth had of Boaz that finally brought her to her decision, and one ventures to suggest that if, on the Gospel preacher's part, there was more expounding of the wonderful Person and love of Christ, there would, on the sinner's part, be more ready response. We should see men and women coming to Christ for salvation, not in response to some emotional appeal or strong persuasive conversation, but out of sheer desire to have such an One as their Saviour. This, I believe, is the true message of the second chapter of our study. Ruth discovers that although she is a stranger and barred by law from much, yet there is a person in whose eyes she has found grace, yea, and Who, wonder of wonders, really loves and care for her. Let us then seek to see how all this came about.

"And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on the part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech". (Ruth 2:3) Her hap was, in other words, "it so happened." We should have called it "a chance happening," "a coincidence" perhaps, but it was in reality one of those Divine over-rulings which alter the very course of our lives. They come to all of us, to reader and writer alike. Perhaps the very fact of this little book coming into your hand [or this document popping up in your browser] is one of these divine over-rulings, for its message may mean in your life what the "lighting on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz" meant to Ruth. May it be so, is the writer's sincere prayer. Who was this Boaz, and what has he to do with the story? He was of the kindred of Elimelech. In other words, he was a relation by birth of that one who departed from Bethlehem-Judah for a strange country, but whilst he was indeed a kinsman by birth, yet he was in no way linked with Elimelech in his disastrous choice to go down to Moab. Boaz did not depart from the land, he remained in it and kept his inheritance complete, whilst Elimelech forfeited his. These two characteristics were the essential qualifications of a Kinsman-redeemer according to the law of the Lord. He had:

1. To be related by birth.
2. Not related to the catastrophe.

We shall have more to say about this topic in chapter 3, for the present it will suffice us to observe that this one named Boaz is a most clear type of the Lord Himself, and these two qualifications, as we shall see presently, are fulfilled in the Person of the Saviour in a glorious manner. The very name of Boaz, meaning "In him is strength," clearly speaks of Christ.

Ruth now finds herself in the fields of Boaz and with the approval and consent of the reapers she gleans her ears of corn. May I suggest that this illustrates in a very beautiful manner the case of an earnest seeker after light finding his or her way into a place where believers gather together either for worship, Bible study or the preaching of the Gospel, that one asks to be allowed to come and hear what there is to be said and seeks to gather up gleanings from such gatherings, for, after all, gleanings they can only gather. There will be much which to them is strange and unintelligible, but here and there, there will be something which will prove as gleanings to the gleaner.

"Whose damsel is this?" Just here may we say a word to those who are "set over the reapers." In other words, to those who are elders in the Church of God. Doubtless, "the servant that was set over the Reapers" speaks firstly of the Holy Spirit of God who is ever acquainted with all and everything that enters any assembly of God's people, for He knows every heart and them that are His, and watches with a jealous care the coming of the stranger into such a gathering. But in a secondary sense "the servant" typifies the elders in the assembly who "care for the flock." May I lovingly entreat them to consider this aspect of our subject. If our Lord, the Divine Boaz, was to ask of you "whose damsel is this?" concerning any newcomer into the local gathering, could you give as clear and concise an answer regarding the history of that one as did this servant of old? One fears that in many cases, especially with regard to the worship meeting, there is not sufficient care exercised in finding out, as the servant did here, the past history of any stranger who may come in.

"And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab". (Ruth 2:6)

Whilst there is a place at the Lord's Table for every true child of God [unless disqualified from reception], yet none but His own blood-bought people have a place there. Others may come but they must take a stranger's place, and by an observation of the feast they may be brought into a blessed knowledge of the truth and an acknowledging that God is verily in our midst.

"therefore the whole church be come together into one place . . . if all prophesy and there come in one that believeth not or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." (1. Cor. 14:23-25) May there be, then, a more careful eye upon the stranger, for John in his day had to write concerning some.

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1Jn 2:19) Boaz asked his question for two reasons:

1. His care for his reapers.
2. His interest in Ruth. So today we should all have a care for the flock of God, guarding it from any inroads of Modern Theology, and at the same time a loving interest in all seekers after truth.

Ruth has thus far been in touch with the reapers and the servant set over them, but now she is to hear a word specially for herself from the lips of Boaz.

"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence; but abide here fast by my maidens" (Ruth 2:8)

What words of cheer and comfort, and how they must have encouraged the stranger in her gleaning. The fact that Boaz addresses Ruth as "my daughter" should not be taken as typifying Ruth as a child of God, for we do not even find him addressing his reapers in such language, nor must we forget that at this point of our story Ruth has not been redeemed. Naomi uses a very similar expression in chapter 3:1 and 18, and in her case it was more in accordance with the true circumstances, for was she not her lawful daughter-in-law? Rather can we not see in the remark of Boaz something akin to the words of the Saviour in Mat 11:28, and other similar passages, "Come

unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," etc. They are words to encourage the true seeker in his or her quest for real satisfaction, and as in the case of Ruth so in many a case since, the knowledge of the Saviour's tender and gracious manner with those who are strangers to Him, has encouraged them to continue their earnest seeking after that for which their heart yearns, even though thus far they have not reached that moment, when, without any reservation they cast themselves entirely at the Saviour's feet. This comes later as we shall see, but meanwhile Ruth acknowledges that she is in a place of special favour, and her position is one of grace. Truly a picture of growth in divine things. For the unconverted person to seek after higher and better things often means much persecution at the hands of others, and the bearing of the taunts and jeers of fellow travellers to a lost eternity. In some cases it means separation from all that is nearest and dearest by the ties of nature. How many there are, especially in heathen lands, who when even attending Christian meeting halls have been cut off by their friends and loved ones, but they feel that they must bear this in seeking after light, and so we see here that Ruth had left much and her present position had by no means been lightly taken up. She had weighed up the cost, and decided to leave father and mother and the land of her nativity for a people which she knew not heretofore. But Boaz was not unmindful of this and wishes for her a full reward and divine recompense, and Ruth, as we shall see, was rewarded a hundredfold eventually for anything she may have given up (see: 2:12). Hence, if my reader, even at this time is not fully persuaded as to the Christian pathway, but yet in your seeking for knowledge and light in these matters you are enduring much persecution, let me tell you that the blessed Saviour knows all about it, and when you finally make Him your choice, you will be more than satisfied, and He will be a complete recompense.

"When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." (Psa 27:10)

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands; for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life." (Mark 10:29-30)

We next observe another step forward in Ruth's knowledge of Boaz and his ways, for there comes a time that day when with his reapers she partakes of the meal he has provided, and from his own hand Ruth receives parched corn which she eats, and is satisfied and leaves. Some may see in this a picture of the Lord's Supper for those who are His own, but may I suggest rather that it typifies a Bible reading of the Lord's people around His Word. There, gathered with them, is one seeking a like portion but who, so far, has not tasted of the redemptive work of Christ. That one has a true yearning for soul satisfaction and as the Holy Spirit, through the lips of those thus gathered, unfolds the glories of the riches of Christ, it drinks in the truth with real pleasure and delight, and realises that here is something which has long been sought after, and to that hungry soul it is as parched corn. The satisfaction derived is more than has been known for many a long day, and the result is that when that one gets away from that scene it is just bubbling over with the fulness of the feast it has had, and as Ruth takes home to Naomi that which she had reserved after she was sufficed (2:14), so that soul must tell out to others something of this wonderful treasure that it has just begun to learn something about. As this seems to be the deciding point with Ruth (for it is when Naomi learns of this that she tells Ruth to cast herself at the feet of Boaz)

so, as we observed earlier, the more the seeking soul knows of the fulness of the Person and work of Christ so it gets nearer the moment when the will is cast, and that one decides unreservedly and wholeheartedly to give themselves to the Lord. Thus may we plead yet once again with those who proclaim the glorious tidings of the Gospel, whether in open-air, Gospel hall, Sunday School, or any other place, to seek to unfold the Scriptures, to describe the Person and Work of the Saviour and the riches of His grace in such a way that the sinner may be attracted thereby. This will be far more effective than the constant reiteration of such expressions as "Come to Christ," "Accept the Saviour now," "Get saved whilst you may," and so on. Such words of wisdom have, of course, their proper place, but many addresses today consist of little else. It was the gracious manner of Boaz, and his rich provision for the stranger that attracted Ruth, for it told her that here was someone who really cared for her and who really showed affection for her. So, in the New Testament, we read that it is the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance (Rom 2:4), and John 3:16 has probably won more sinners to the Saviour than any other verse in the Bible. Why? Because it tells mankind that God loves them. From the foregoing remarks our readers may be saying, well all this seems to portray salvation rather as a process than an instantaneous act. If such are your thoughts, my friend, let me assure you once for all that the matter of your salvation, your passing out of nature's darkness into God's wonderful light is absolutely instantaneous. In the history of every soul that becomes a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a moment when the line of decision is crossed and that moment means a change... From To

Darkness Light

Death Life Despair Satisfaction

Sorrow Joy Broad Way going to Hell Narrow Way going to Heaven

It takes place, as we shall see in a few moments, directly the will is cast in favour of the Saviour. John 3:16 does not say whosoever shall be saved, but it does say whosoever believeth, and that is vastly different. Rev 22:17 does not say whosoever may take of the Water of Life, but it does say "Whosoever will" may take thereof. That deciding factor - the will - makes the final decision, and until that is made salvation is unknown. But whilst this is gloriously true, yet as we have been seeking to show, there is, in the experience of many (if not all) a process of growth in the knowledge of divine things. The child first at the mother's knee, and later in the Sunday School, acquires an elementary knowledge; and then varying according to circumstances this is deepened and broadened in many ways, some of which we have sought very briefly to describe, but also in others which will present themselves to the mind of the diligent Bible student.

Ruth, having received the parched corn and being temporarily satisfied thereby, is now counselled by Naomi to keep fast by the maidens of Boaz, and she herself pledges to seek rest for Ruth that it may be well with her (3:1). She told her further how, according to the custom of the land, to approach Boaz with a view to his fulfilling for her the part of a kinsman redeemer, and Ruth's response from her heart is, "All that thou sayest unto me I will do." Note the "I will" about it. Her will gives the final choice, and we next see her at the feet of Boaz, who assures her heart with these gracious words, "Fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest" (3:11). This unfolds itself thus in the soul's experience today, that seeking one who has learned something of divine things and realised that satisfaction is only to be found in Christ, seeks one in whom it can confide, one who has its entire confidence, such as Naomi had, and when it has poured out its soul's yearning, that

true Christian friend counsels the seeking soul to continue in these paths, abide where such food is obtainable, and promises, as Naomi did, to seek rest of soul on its behalf. This is done by secret intercession alone with God, and who can tell how much the prayers of God's people can accomplish in such cases? In their counsel they tell the anxious one how to approach to God in order to obtain the benefit of the finished work of Calvary. They point to the cross of Christ and a place at the feet of Jesus. Sooner or later this will result, as with the jailor of old, in the cry "What must I do to be saved?" or in the words of Ruth, "All that thou sayest unto me I will do." To such words there is only one answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This is the moment to urge decision, the time to plead for the final step to be taken, and as Ruth did all that her mother-in-law bade her (3:6) so the seeking soul will now be ready and prepared to say, "I will believe, I do believe, that Jesus died for me," and the work of salvation is that moment done.

5. RUTH REDEEMED : CHAPTERS 3 and 4

RUTH REDEEMED : CHAPTERS 3 and 4

Ruth at the feet of Boaz is a beautiful picture of the sinner at the feet of the Saviour, but whereas in the type Boaz does not undertake the work of redeeming until Ruth has thus sought his help, in the case of the seeking sinner at the feet of Christ the work of redemption is all fully done. He has already accomplished the work, and it but remains for the sinner to accept what the Redeemer is waiting to bestow. With Ruth it was the reverse; in other words, the type - painted onwards to a work of redemption which was yet future, whilst we look back to Calvary and there see a finished work crowned with glory and honour. At this juncture it behoves us to look more closely at the person of Boaz as a type of Christ, and a consideration of this "mighty man of wealth" will well repay the Bible student.

There are four important facts we do well to observe:

Firstly his name. The meaning of Bible names is always suggestive, and this is by no means an exception to the rule. Boaz means "In him is strength," or "In him the strong one," which as regards the Anti-type is true to a very far greater extent. In Jer 50:34 we read, "Their Redeemer is strong," or as the margin gives it, "Their Kinsman-Redeemer[1] is strong." Psa 89:19 says, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty, I have exalted One chosen out of the people." Of a truth our Divine Boaz is strong and mighty, and because of His almighty power "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb 7:25).

Boaz was not only strong, but he was also a mighty man of valour. He was possibly one of the richest men of that time, but whether that be so or not we know of a surety that our Redeemer is certainly "a mighty man of wealth." Not only can He claim the cattle upon a thousand hills, but "all things were created by Him and for Him" (Col 1:16). The sun, the moon, the stars, yea, the whole vast universe all belong to that One, Who, blessed be His Name, has made Himself my Saviour; and, what is more, has made me a joint-heir with Himself of all His vast inheritance. But more even than this He is mighty in wealth not only in possessions, but also as to His own blessed Person.

"For in Him all the fulness (of the Godhead) was pleased to dwell." (Col 1:19. J.N.D. translation).

"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col 2:9).

What wealth to be sure, and how it should bow our hearts in adoring worship when we think that that One before whom seraphim and cherubim veil their faces and cry "Holy, Holy, Holy," permits poor frail faltering man when redeemed by precious blood, to draw nigh into His immediate presence with holy boldness. May we never forget, whilst realising our blessed portion, that reverence and godly fear befits such a Presence.

All the foregoing thoughts concerning both type and Anti-type have presented Christ in His essential Deity, but we must also consider the other equally important side of our Lord's Person, namely, His Humanity.

Boaz whose name means "In him is strength," and who was the mighty man of wealth, was not thereby constituted a kinsman-redeemer; something else was essential for that, but once his position as such was clear, then these matters proved his ability to fulfil that office. So in the anti-type, whilst the very need of the sinner demanded nothing short of Deity to satisfy the holy and righteous claims of God, and to provide salvation for man, yet that of itself - wonder of wonders - was not sufficient to link the blessed Son of God with those whom He would redeem. We would pause and consider as we pen these words, for they seem so tremendous, and no mere mortal would dare utter them unless he were assured by the Scriptures that such was indeed the case, but as God Himself has seen fit to place such a wonderful fact on record we can but accept it by faith and seek to proclaim far and wide the glorious message that it contains. However, let us come back to our type, and consider this important phase of our subject in the light of it.

Boaz was a kinsman-redeemer, near of kin unto Naomi. As she herself says, "One of our next kinsmen" (2:20). Then if neither his name nor his wealth constituted him such, we must endeavour to find out what did bring him into this position, and thus we need to ask two questions: "Who could be a kinsman-redeemer?" and "What was required of such?" and for our answer we turn to Lev 25:25-26.

"If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it."

Also verses 47-49, "And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: either his uncle or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he is able, he may redeem himself." From the law of the Lord contained in these verses we observe that only a near of kin could perform the part of the kinsman-redeemer - in other words, there must first of all be relationship to the one needing redemption, either a brother (Lev 25:25), or an uncle, or an uncle's son (Lev 25:49). The kinsman-redeemer was to step in, in cases of disaster and difficulty, and buy back either the property or persons, or both, of the relatives who had sold themselves or their possessions to a stranger. More than this, the responsibility laid upon such was not to be shelved or evaded. The kinsman-redeemer who refused to fulfil his office was to be in disgrace in Israel. For this see Deu 25:5-10. That man through the fall was in a condition of disaster and difficulty there is no need to explain here, and further my reader will readily agree that a Redeemer was certainly needed, One who was both able and willing to save. But perhaps you have never thought or noticed from God's word the necessity of such an One being related to us. If salvation was to be provided it had to come by One who could claim relationship, that is, relationship by birth. Hence it is that we are told in Heb 2:14-17 concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood He also Himself likewise took part of the same. For verily He took not hold of angels, but He took hold of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." And again that well known passage in Php 2:7 tells us that He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men," and again Gal 4:4, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," and just one other

passage we would refer to in this connection, Rom 9:4-5, "Who are Israelites. and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Here we have the true Humanity, as well as the Deity, of Christ set forth in the one verse.

All these Scriptures, and many more, speak of the humanity of the Saviour, and from them we learn that it was as essential for the Son of God to become Man as it was for the Saviour of sinners to be God Himself. The two wonderful themes are inseparable, the Kinsman-Redeemer for mankind must be, and can only be, God Incarnate - Man Divine - the God-man Christ Jesus. His humanity proves His right to redeem, for thereby He became related to us - sin apart - whilst His Deity supplies the ability to redeem. The essential qualifications of a kinsman-redeemer of old were:

1. His right to redeem.

2. His ability to redeem.

3. His will to redeem. As we shall see presently there was a kinsman-redeemer in the case of Ruth who could claim priority in relationship even over Boaz, one who most surely had the right to redeem, and further was willing to redeem, but alas he came short in the second qualification. His ability to accomplish that work was lacking and he was rendered helpless to undertake the task. But Boaz not only had the right to redeem and was willing to do so, but best of all, he was able. So in the case of the Saviour, He had the right to redeem man, by virtue of His tremendous stoop from the highest glory to the deepest depths of humiliation. Because He was the Son of God became Man, it settles once and for all the question of the Redeemer's right to redeem, whilst the glorious fact that He who did become Man was also very God, establishes without doubt or controversy His ability to undertake the work. But perhaps the crowning hate of all is to be found in the fulfilment of the requirement, namely, His willingness. Out of love to our souls the blessed Saviour willingly undertook our case, giving Himself a ransom for all, and now writer and reader can say (if the latter is a child of God) "The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." He who thus fulfilled all three qualifications of the Kinsman-Redeemer has accomplished the task to the entire satisfaction of a thrice holy and righteous God, and redemption is now a glorious fact, procurable by whosoever will. Appropriation by the sinner is all that is needed to obtain the blessing which Christ has secured.

One interesting observation we would make just here is that it was only the poor who needed a kinsman-redeemer. The rich had no need of such an one, but the poor Israelite who was in dire poverty was the one that needed the redeemer's help. How true today. Not many noble, rich and wealthy, not the righteous Pharisee nor the moralist, but sinners Jesus came to call. May the Gospel preacher ever seek to show man his need of a Saviour by showing man's utterly lost, hopeless and bankrupt condition. In order that Christ might be our Kinsman-Redeemer He became man, but there is another great wonder in the sequel, and that is, that when I put my trust in Him and accept His work of redemption, I not only find I have a Saviour related to me as Man, but I am brought into His relationship and become a child of God, a member of the Church of God which is His Body, and He Himself says that "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." His grace is thus shown in thus identifying His redeemed ones with Himself; but for us to speak of Him as "our elder brother," as one hears and reads so often, is, alas, sad and without Scriptural authority. He is to us Lord and Master, and whilst He in grace calls us "His brethren," may we never speak of Him

as "our brother," but rather may we with the utmost reverence adore the blessed Person of our Redeemer. The fourth observation we would make regarding Boaz is also important. He was not the nearest kinsman, and therefore his right to redeem could only be exercised after the one who could claim prior relationship had either refused, or proved his inability, to fulfil that office.

Boaz having assured Ruth that he would do to her all that she required, takes upon himself to deal with the nearer kinsman, and takes the proper steps to ensure that the whole matter shall be dealt with in a proper manner and in full publicity. There was to be nothing done in a corner, everything must be witnessed and legally assured. But observe Boaz sees to all this, Ruth does nothing. Naomi also counsels her daughter-in-law saying: "Sit still my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall, for the man will not be in rest until he has finished the thing this day" (3:18). All this betokens complete confidence in Boaz and shows that everything is left to him in the way of "doing" or working. So in dealing with seeking souls we need to counsel them to place complete confidence in Christ. Absolute faith in Him and His word is the only way of true peace and rest. As to the kinsman that was nearest of kin to Naomi there are many who teach that he is a type of the law, but this presents many difficulties, principally because the essential qualification of a kinsman-redeemer was relationship by birth, and how can the law be said to be related to man in this way? Rather would we say that the ten witnesses in chapter 4:2 typify the law contained in the ten commandments, for they try and test both the nearest kinsman and also Boaz, as to their respective ability and willingness to redeem the inheritance, and in the one case prove the inability to redeem, and in the other witness that the transaction was carried out in full accord with the requirements of the law of the God of Israel.

We observe that the kinsman redeemer who could claim closer relationship than Boaz was certainly willing to redeem (see ch. 4:4), but his willingness was limited by his ability. Whilst he could say, "I will redeem it" he had to twice admit "I cannot redeem it." He had his own inheritance to attend to, and he found in that more than enough for him to deal with, and to attempt his brother's redemption was beyond him. I suggest for my readers careful consideration that something akin to this was in the Psalmist's mind when he wrote "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psa 49:7). He did not suggest that none of them would redeem his brother if able to do so, but that it was an impossible task. How many of us, like the nearer kinsman of Naomi, would gladly redeem our near of kin if we could, but, alas, like him we have to admit "I cannot." Seeing that the nearer kinsman was one who was more closely related to Naomi than Boaz, he seems to typify our fellow man rather than the law, for surely man has no nearer kinsman than those who are of the same kith and kin.

What Boaz does with regard to this nearer kinsman seems to confirm this suggestion, for it is in the presence of the ten witnesses that his inability to redeem is declared and proved, and as we look back over the stream of time we see that God Himself has been bringing men before His holy law, testing and proving them as it were, to see if there could possibly be found one among the sons of men who could undertake this work, but the law only condemns and proves us all guilty - therefore unable to redeem either ourselves or our brother. At the cross we see the final scene. Man shows himself in all his sin, and God condemns sin in the flesh in the Person of His Son, and for ever is it divinely assured that man can never accomplish redemption, but that Christ Jesus has once and for all "obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb 9:12).

Surely the scene in Ruth 4:1-22 is a type of Calvary for what type of redemption would be complete without a picture of that scene? The same law which proves man's inability to redeem his brother or himself, gloriously witnesses to the perfection of the work of Christ, and He thereby becomes "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Rom 10:4). Hence forward we are not under law, but under grace, made "free indeed" by the Son Himself.

We have but to add a final word upon the subject of redemption, ere we draw to a close this most interesting, and we trust profitable, study.

There are many passages of Scripture speaking about redemption which appear to have a contradictory note about them, for in this, as in many other subjects of the Bible, one portion seems to teach the exact opposite to another portion. We say "seems to teach" because we know that really there is no discord, and it is but our failing to rightly divide the Word of God, or to distinguish things that differ that makes this apparent difficulty. But in case there may be some who are troubled and perplexed upon this subject, let us briefly consider one or two passages in this connection and seek help in understanding them. Take, for instance, two verses from the Epistles to the Ephesians:

Eph 1:7 "In whom we have redemption."

Eph 1:14 "Which is the Earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession". or again two other verses:

1Pe 1:18-19, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ."

Rom 8:23, "We ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." In each case the first passage speaks of redemption as an accomplished fact, whilst in the second passage, in both instances, redemption appears to be yet future. Now, how should we interpret this, and what are we to understand by the distinction which the Holy Spirit has doubtless made for our instruction? We shall the better understand this, I think, by means of a simple illustration. A man of fairly moderate means owns several houses, but through diverse circumstances and financial difficulty he has to mortgage all his possessions, including the very house he lives in, assigning all right therein to another, and he himself is reduced to dire poverty. One day, however, a near relative, who is very wealthy, calls upon him and undertakes to re-purchase the property; in other words, to redeem it. This he does and secures the title deeds, proving that he is now the true owner of the property. There is not a shadow of a doubt about it, the property now belongs to that near relative - he has redeemed it - it is legally his, certified by a proper legal document, duly stamped and witnessed, and he can now say of all that man's estate, "That now is mine, for I have redeemed it."

So, in the case of the sinner who realises his utter lost and bankrupt condition, and sees in Christ One who has redeemed him - bought him back. He no longer belongs to himself, nor yet to Satan whom he served so long, he is now not his own, but has been bought with a price - the precious blood of Christ. The Saviour can truly say of such an one, "Thou art Mine, I have redeemed thee," and in this respect redemption is an accomplished fact. The transaction has been completed and the matter is settled. Such is the teaching of Eph 1:7 and 1Pe 1:18, but now to revert again to our illustration, having redeemed the property this wealthy relative installs a representative to attend to

all matters requiring attention. He is to have the whole place thoroughly cleaned, every sign of filth and dirt must go, new windows must be put in, all damage repaired - in fact, the whole place is to be made to look like new. This, of course, takes time, but when it is all finished the owner himself comes down and resides there permanently, and when he speaks of that house he says, "This is now my house." It was his before legally, but this is not what he means now. He means that it is his in a special sense now, it is fit for his presence and he and the original owner live together. Do you not see in this faint illustration a picture of what the Saviour does with all those He redeems. The Holy Spirit takes up His abode in us the moment we put our trust in Christ [to be precise: from the moment we have believed the gospel of our salvation and have been sealed with the Spirit], and throughout the rest of our life down here He is preparing us (maybe removing some of the hideous things which grew upon us in our unconverted days, or repairing the damage that sin had wrought in our lives, for there is coming a day - probably very soon now - when the Saviour Himself is coming, not to reside down here with us, but to take us up to live with Him - how necessary then is the work of the Holy Spirit today in removing all defilement and fashioning us for yon bright scene, and how careful we should be lest we hinder His gracious work. The day is fast drawing near when the Saviour will return for His spotless bride which He redeemed long, long ago. She is His now by right, but then, in that day, in a special sense and in a further degree He will say, "Thou art mine for I have redeemed thee." This is what Eph 1:14 and Rom 8:24 teaches when it speaks of the "redemption of the purchased possession," and "the redemption of our body." May we who "have this hope in Him purify ourselves even as He is pure," for "the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh." May we who have been redeemed look forward with joyful anticipation to the time when the "purchased possession" shall enter into the final stage of its redemption.

G. F. VALLANCE

[1] Almost without exception where Christ is spoken of in Scripture as "The Redeemer," it should read "Kinsman-Redeemer," the meaning of which we are about to consider.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net