

The Kiss of the Backslider.

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon contrasts Orpah's kiss, representing a divided heart and compromise, with Ruth's cleaving, representing decision, faith, and an undivided heart.

Scripture: Ruth 1:14, Isaiah 16:4, Matthew 6:24, Luke 9:62, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:8, James 4:4, 1 John 2:15-17, Revelation 21:8

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Commitment to God"

Description

Horatius Bonar contrasts the choices of Orpah and Ruth, highlighting Orpah's kiss of farewell as a symbol of indecision and attachment to the world, while Ruth's commitment to cleave to Naomi represents true faith and devotion to God. Bonar emphasizes that many people, like Orpah, wish to maintain ties with both the world and God, but true discipleship requires a decisive choice to follow the Lord wholeheartedly. He warns against the dangers of half-heartedness and the necessity of forsaking worldly pleasures for a complete commitment to Christ. Ultimately, Bonar calls for believers to embrace a life of unwavering faith, cleaving to God and rejecting the allure of Moab.

Transcript

"Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth insisted on staying with Naomi." - Ruth 1:14

In this book we have the Gentile sheltering the Jew, and the Jew in return inviting the Gentile to partake of Israel's land and blessing. Moab receives Judah, and feeds him in the day of famine (as the prophet in after years speaks, "Let my outcasts dwell with you, Moab," Isaiah 16:4), and Judah bids Moab welcome to his better portion. Israel's famine first sent Israel to Egypt for food; Israel's persecution drove Israel's true Son- Messiah, Son of David- to seek protection in Egypt; so now we see Naomi leaving Bethlehem, passing over the rugged hills of Judah, crossing the Dead Sea, and settling in the land of Moab, until the calamity was past.

Whether it was faith or unbelief that led her to flee from Bethlehem, we say not. It was faith that led her to return. It is as a believing woman that we now find her leaving her exile to seek her own land again, though as yet she knew not that Messiah was to spring of her line. She sets out with her two daughters-in-law, after a ten years' sojourn in Moab. They travel onward for a little, until they come to some particular spot- perhaps the shore of the Dead Sea, which they must cross. There Naomi tests them; and there the difference comes out between the two. It is to this difference we have now to attend. The difference is brought out in Orpah's kissing good-bye, and Ruth's cleaving.

There was great resemblance up to a certain point. Both were Moabites; related by marriage, if not by birth; both attached to Naomi up to a certain point; both linked to Bethlehem by their marriage; both going out with Naomi to dwell in Judea. There were many points of likeness between the two. It will be profitable to notice these.

There are many Orpahs among us- few Ruths; many Balaams, many Demases, many who follow a while, and then go back and walk no more with the Lord.

I. ORPAH AND HER KISSING GOOD-BYE. There are many kinds of kissing spoken of in Scripture; some evil, some good. There is the murderer's kiss- that of Joab (2 Samuel 20:9); the harlot's kiss (Proverbs 7:13); the kiss of the enemy (Proverbs 27:6); the kiss of idol worship (Hosea 13:2); the flatterer's kiss (2 Samuel 15:5, Absalom); the traitor's kiss (Luke 22:48). These, however, have nothing in common with Orpah and her kiss. Then there is the kiss of affection (Genesis 50:1, Joseph); the kiss of homage (1 Samuel 10:1, Samuel); the kiss of reconciliation (2 Samuel 14:33); the kiss of meeting (Luke 15:20, The prodigal); the kiss of parting (Acts 20:37).

In some of these we find Orpah's kiss. It was the kiss of affection, and the kiss of parting. Thus far it was good and not evil. But we must consider its meaning in the circumstances. Everything depends on that. It meant that,

(1.) She was not prepared to leave Moab. The ties between her and it were still unbroken, though for a time a little loosened. Moab was still Moab to her, the home of her kindred, the center of her affections, the dwelling place of her gods. Thus millions are not ready to leave the world, though often in some measure broken from it. They cling to their old haunts of vanity, foolishness, pleasure, lust, or literature. They cannot think of forsaking these. No, they soothe their consciences with the argument, that it would not be right to break off from all these. To them the world is still the world; attractive and excellent. They cannot think of crucifying it, or themselves to it. They have been born in it, lived in it, their friends are in it- why should they leave it? Their hearts are still here, their treasure is here; and they linger in it, though at times they feel the necessity of leaving it. What would life be to them without the novel or the ballroom, the theater, the gay assembly, the banquet, the revel, the folly, the wine-cup, and the song?

(2.) For the sake of Moab she was willing to part with Naomi. She was not without longings after Naomi and her city, and her kindred, and her God. But her old longings and ties kept her back, and in the end prevailed. Yet she wished to part in peace, to bid a decent farewell to her mother-in-law. She kissed that she might not cleave. Her kiss was a farewell; a farewell to Naomi, her land, and her God. Have we not many Orpahs? They would sincerely have both Israel and Moab. They would rather not part with either. Their heart is divided. They would sincerely cast in their lot with God's people, and obtain their inheritance. They are not scoffers; not openly godless; not reckless pleasure-seekers. But half-and- half, or rather not so much.

They would be religious up to a certain point- to the point when a choice must be made- and then their heart speaks out. They give up Christ, and turn back to the world. Yet they do so quietly, as it were, and kindly. They kiss at parting; but will that kiss avail them? Will God accept the kiss as an excuse for turning back, or as a substitute for the whole-hearted service which He desires? What does that kiss mean now? What will it stand for in the great day of the Lord? It is not the kiss of Judas certainly, but it is the kiss of the "fearful and unbelieving" (Revelation 21:8).

II. RUTH AND HER CLEAVING. Orpah kissed good-bye, but Ruth cleaved. Orpah kissed that she might not cleave. Ruth cleaves silently, and without show or demonstration. She lingers not nor halts. Moab is behind her, Israel is before her, Naomi is at her side. Her choice is made. She falters not either in heart or in step. Yonder are Judah's hills; behind them lies Bethlehem; she presses forward. Jehovah must be her God, and Jehovah's land her heritage. Nothing shall come between. She forgets her kindred and her father's house. What are Moab's hills, or cities, or temples, or gods? Jehovah, God of Israel, is now her God forever.

Here is cleaving; here is decision; here are faith and love; here is the undivided heart. It is this that God looks for still. Nothing else will He accept. Not half a heart or half a life. Not Orpah's kiss, but Ruth's cleaving. He needs decision. He abhors vacillation and compromise. If you prefer Moab, go dwell there; enjoy its pleasures, and worship its gods. If you choose Israel, pitch your tent there, and take Jehovah for your all. It is a low and poor thing to divide yourself between the two. Be decided, brave, manly, and determined.

Don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Love not the world. Love the world to come. Love Him who is Lord and King of that coming world. Come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Indecision will profit nothing. Even in its gentlest and kindest form, it is hateful to God. It will not satisfy you; it will not satisfy God.

A whole world and a whole Christ you cannot have. Half of the world and half of Christ is equally an impossibility. Alliance with the world and alliance with Christ is out of the question. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. Beware of carnal fascinations and snares. Beware of pleasures and vanities. Meddle not with worldly amusements. Suspect that with which the world is enamored. Blind not yourselves by creature-love and creature-beauty. Lull not your conscience asleep by an outward religion, a fantastic, and pictorial, and sensual worship. It is not religion but Christ that God points you to. Forsake all for Him. Let Him be all to you.

Look to Bethlehem, where Naomi and Ruth were on their way. He was born there. Let your heart rest there. Look a little farther, to Jerusalem and Golgotha. There He died, the Just for the unjust. There He finished the work. There He shed the reconciling blood. There He gave full testimony to the free love of God. Let your conscience get its purging and peace there. Let your whole soul go forth and abide there, with Him who died and rose again, and who has promised, saying, "I will come again, and receive you to myself!"

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/horatius-bonar/the-kiss-of-the-backslider/>

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