

Revelation 2:1 Missionary Conf.

by J.M. Davies

The sermon explores the letter to the Church of Ephesus, emphasizing the need to maintain one's first love for Christ and the importance of teaching faith to future generations.

Duration: 1:01:28

Scripture: Judges 18:1-19, 1 Corinthians 14:1, Revelation 2:1-3

Topics: "Following Christ", "Spiritual Responsibility"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the darkness that exists in the world and the importance of following the Lord. They highlight the cost of following the Lord, but also emphasize that not following Him is even more costly. The speaker shares a personal experience of realizing the responsibility to teach their family about the Lord. They also discuss the importance of instruction and teaching in the assembly and the need for ministerial, collective, and individual responsibility. The sermon concludes with a prayer for the days ahead.

Transcript

And so we turn please to the book of the Revelation, chapter two. From the evening we read together the first letter, the letters from the Church of Ephesus. We will read that today, tonight.

Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus writes, These things have he, that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden lamps. I know thy work, thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not dare them which are evil. And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not.

And hast found them liars, and hast borne, and hast chastened. For my name saith, Thou hast labored, and do not failed it. Some would translate that even to the French, Ephesus.

Nevertheless, I have come up against thee, because thou hast lost, for thou didst need thy first blood. Remember, therefore, since thou art fallen, repent, and do thee first work, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy lamp, stand thou to this place, and shalt thou repent. But if thou hast, thou shalt, thou shalt be distributed to the Nicolaitans, which I also see.

Be that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, and he will not overcome it till I give thee to the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. So, I believe I drew attention to the

fact that these letters are prophetic of the cause of church victory, the cause that the witness of the church to the truth of God was. I was born down to 1900 or more years, and perhaps I said too that human history is divided into three periods, each lasting about three thousand years.

In the book of Genesis, we have the first, and witnesses for God during those years were born by individuals. The family was the unit. Then, when family units were superseded by nations, God raised up Israel to be a witness among the nations of the world.

And when Israel was satisfied, God raised up the church to be a witness. And when we compare the witness as we have it in Genesis, and the cause of that witness as we have it in Israel, and in these thousand letters, we find each one to be a duplicate of the other. The cause of the one is precisely the same as the cause of each of the other.

Genesis begins, as we know, with the temptation of Eve, and Paul draws attention to that in second Corinthians, chapter eleven. I propose that you, that as a serpent did I lead through his capital, so your minds are going to be corrupted, and you're going to be alienated from that simplicity and purity of heart that is to watch Christ. Just as Eve acted on her own, and I suggest that I believe that she was the first president of the women's list, acting entirely on her own, independently of Adam.

Because, in Israel's history, we have Jaina. In the church, we have the saint Virgin. Then, at the conclusion of each of these periods, we have the overcomer, Saint Joseph, by way of testing and trial and arrest, and overcoming, arriving at the throne in the place of power.

But the end of Genesis, the end of Israel's history, nationally is found in the crucifixion of Christ, and he ascends the throne. I also overcame 13 reservations, and I'm sat down with my father at his throne. And the overcomer, in the letter to the church that will be here, is promised that he too will be granted to sit with the Lord Jesus in his throne.

So the beginning and the ending of each of these three periods are similar, and have been signed together for three weeks. We should think that each of these would define an exact replica in the other. At the night, as I promised on Sunday evening, I want to show you something of the development of this in Israel in the Book of Judges and the Book of Ruth.

These letters are quite unique. There is nothing like them anywhere else in the New Testament. They are a pattern of all human history.

Each letter begins with a revelation of Christ, and the revelation of the person of Christ in a way that meets the needs of each of the assemblies. It's a ministry of Christ to begin with, and that's of tremendous importance for all of us if we can minister the Word of God. To cultivate the ministry of Christ, and the ministry of Christ in such a way as it meets the needs of the company to which we are associated in the ministry of Jesus.

And that ministry will be a ministry as it is stated, the ministry of Christ to the heart of God's people. Then there's a ministry of commendation. In five of the letters, there is commendation.

Wherever there is anything to commend, the Lord commands. Such a ministry of comfort is commended by the Lord, but surely there is a ministry of encouragement. Then there is a ministry of center, or condemnation, ministry of exaltation.

And you can put these into what we have in 1 Corinthians, chapter 14, and verse 1. You just pop it aside. Ministry of edification, the exaltation of the company. Although we don't have the prophet of New Testament days with us, such is the name of all the future ministers of the Word of God, the ministers of edification, the exaltation, and the company.

Each of these letters is a letter from the head, from Christ Himself, the source of all ministry, the source of all ministry that will be edified according to Colossians and Ephesians. He is the one who gives the gift, and He is the one who gave the spirit, and He is the one who now ministers the Word. So each of these letters comes with the power of the spirit.

You will have to be very careful to know what the spirit says unto the church. All ministry that comes from the head, if you depend upon it, will come in the power of the spirit of God. But if it doesn't come from the head, from Christ Himself, it will not come in the power of the spirit.

Then this ministry comes through the one address of angels, to the angel of the church of death, to the angel of the church of murder. Now, there are different interpretations as to who the angel represents. Some tend them to be an actual spiritual being.

It's, I find, impossible to accept, because the angel in the letters to the church of Ephesus is charged with having fallen. Remember when Thou asked, fallen. So, of a fallen angel, you need to have a demon looking after that.

In fact, if it is to have presence, to gladly contest failure, to recognize failure, it will be a terrible thing to have a demon looking after the affairs of an affair. One of them has an angel live in his heart, and he's dead. He's really a kind of a spirit being, that is it.

So I cannot see any grounds for believing that they are spirit beings. The objection to him speaking to himself with the words is based upon that word in verse 20 of chapter one. The stars are the angels of the church.

The lamps are the churches themselves. So they ask the question, why should you interpret an interpretation? The star is the symbol. The angel is the interpretation of the symbol.

Why do you try to interpret an interpretation? That is a very radical objection. Now, the answer to that is that in the book of Malachi, both the priest and the prophet are spoken of as messengers of the Lord of hosts. They should seek knowledge of the lips of the priest, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

He's the angel. I will send my messenger before my faith. Prophecy of John the Baptist.

And the word Malachi, Malachi, is just an easy word for an angel. In Hadrian's case, that he's the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message. And so the term angel is applied in the Old Testament for those who are the professed leaders in Israel.

The priest and the prophet. They were the spiritual leaders in Israel. Sometimes they're false, but that does not mean they were the professed leaders of Israel.

And I take it that what we have in the angel here, he represents those who are those who take the place of leadership among God's people. Those who are the channels of communication between the head and the assembly. And on Sunday evening, I trust the responsibility to depend upon such was made fairly

clear.

The illustration of Aaron, I hope will not be lost and forgotten when we come to compare it with what we have here. Now in this letter we have the reference, the first reference to that word Nicolaites. It's used again in the letter to the church at Pergamon.

And at the beginning of this date, we saw what that means. Now, the book of Revelation is a book of symbols, and words are symbolic. The word Nicolaites, just like the word Antipas, in the letter to the church at Pergamon, we have a man named Antipas.

And church historians have never been able to find any master by that name, but the name is symbolic. He was a very troubled Jeremiah. Jeremiah stood alone, and Antipas means a man who stands alone against everybody and against everything.

It is suggested that he may represent Athanasius, who, when he was facing the error of Arianism, was told, You stand me alone, and all are against you. Then, by God's grace, I'll stand alone. Antipas, standing against the tide of error.

Nicolaites, conquerors of the people. They undoubtedly, according to the letter to the church at Pergamon, encouraged licentious living. They encouraged something similar to what Galen encouraged.

Galen taught Galen how to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, and of the church at Pergamon, that they controlled the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which was similar to the doctrine of Galen. There were those who turned the case of God into lasciviousness. But, along with that, we'll turn back for a moment to 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, before we go back to Josephus.

2 Corinthians, chapter 11, and we'll call into question here to those in verse 3 and verse 4, those who came to the apostles to an alternative degree. In chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12, how Josephus wrote, the apostles contrasted themselves with these false apostles. So let me come down in verse 13.

For such are false apostles, deceitful worship, transforming themselves as into the apostles of truth. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing that ministers be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.

But here are the wolves in sheep's clothing. Here are the devious wolves that Paul spoke about. To the church and to the elders of Ephesus, do that wolves shall enter in among you, not bearing the flock.

The Lord called the wolves in sheep's clothing. Satan's neighboring was to capture the pussies, to capture the ministers. As I was finding out in Gatelwood on Tuesday night, you have in the letter to Ephesus the ministers of Satan, the false apostles.

In the letter to Smyrna, you have the synagogues of Satan, Judaism, Jews divided by the apostles of Satan. In the letter to Pergamon, you have the throne of Satan in idolatry. And when he comes to Caiaphas, you've got the deep kings of Satan, the counterfeit of the deep kings of God, the counterfeit of the true church.

The true church is spoken of by Paul as the deep kings of God. Satan's counterfeit is the deep kings of Satan. Rome's sympathy is the counterfeit of the deep kings of God.

It began with the false apostles. These people, they just look at the verse, look up and down in verse 22, they say, are those Hebrews? Of course they were. The devil wouldn't put a Gentile into his apostolate.

All the Lord's apostles were Hebrews. So when the devil wanted men to be his apostles, those Hebrews too. But look back into verse 20.

You suffer if a man brings you into bondage. Characterize that. You suffer if a man robs you of your liberty.

You suffer if a man rules over you. You suffer the miscellaneous. Bringing you into bondage, robbing you of your liberty, robbing you of your privilege.

That's what these false apostles were doing. You suffer if a man devours you. This is the very meaning of the word, slavery.

Here, then, was a miscellaneous. A false minister, supreme, very early. But in the church of Ephesus, they were condemned.

In the church of Pergova, they were condemned. But in the church of Caiaphas, they were in control. That's the development of Ephesus.

It's interesting, in the reading of these letters, to see the rise and the growth and the development of heritage and of processes, and see the display, the emergence of the days of the Reformation. But now, time will not allow it. On that, we turn back to the book of Judges.

The book of Judges is the second chapter. The book of Joshua is often compared to the Ephesians. That's true doctrinally, but historically, the book of Joshua may be compared to the book of Acts.

For in both of them, we have the history in Joshua of the first twenty-five or thirty years of history of the kingdom in the land. In the Acts, we have the conquest of the gospel and the establishment of the kingdom of God, the spiritual kingdom of God, through the teaching of the apostles. Joshua, book of conquest.

The book of the Acts, the book of conquest. When you come into the book of Judges, we have a history of the next generation. The first generation died out in the wilderness.

Then, when we just look into Judges chapter two, please, and verse ten, and also all that generation were fathers under their father. And there arose another generation after that. There is a third generation.

A third generation. And the book of Judges is a history of relapses and revival. It's a history of departures and deliverance.

It's a history of apostasy and awakening. Seven apostasies. Seven relapses into idolatry.

Seven departures and seven awakenings. Seven times God raises up the liver as father. Now, let's look at this third generation for a moment.

These are four things that are said about them. They knew not the law, nor yet the works which he had done for his race. But the Muslim master would say to them, that here is a generation only the third generation.

They have no knowledge of the laws. And what is more remarkable still is they have no knowledge of what God had done for his race. Whose fault was it? The fault of the second generation.

Here's what may be called the generation gap. And I'm confident today that this is happening throughout this country. That a failure to treat the growing generation, the truth that brought a family into being, the truth that resulted in the formation of a family, truth with regard to a family testimony, that is something taught to people.

The failure of the second was responsible for the failure of the third. The failure of the third must be placed at the feet of the second. And I hope, brethren, those that are here tonight in responsibility will take note of this.

It's nice to see so many young people here. But let me charge you, brethren, as in fifty-five years or so now preachers, if you are going to see this assembly function and continue to function, then there must be teaching given with regard to a family testimony as we teach in the New Testament. I woke up one day as my family, seven of them sat around the table, some of them in their seats, and I realized one day that they would never learn anything.

I could never teach them any knowledge. The only way they'd ever learn anything was for me to teach them. I remember the occasion quite well when that came home to me with tremendous force.

Anything that I have learned, I could never be teaching them today. There's only one way I could pass it on to them, and that's by teaching them, by instruction. You, brethren, who are here in responsibility, I trust God will give you grace to see to it that the assembly gets instruction with regard to assembly life and testimony.

Intelligence and its ministry, its ordinance, baptism and the Lord's supper, these are not taught. A growing generation will never learn. They can only learn as they have taught the Word of God.

I suppose as far as you hide, John Sparks, as you read my book, *The Lord and the Churches*, a copy of which is available at the bank, told me that he'd bought these copies to give out and wished that there was a copy in the hands of every elder in every assembly in the country, because it does give teaching with regard to assembly life and testimony, as well as teaching relative to Revelation 2 and 3. Look a little lower down, please. Look into the end of verse 17. They turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in obeying the commandments of the law, but they did not throw.

This third generation, they knew not the law, they knew not the works of the law, and they failed to obey the law. Now, the last of them you have in chapter 3 and verse 1. These are the nations which the Lord left to prove Israel's blindness, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan. It was a generation that had never known battle.

They had never known any conflict. They had never had to fight for anything. Others had fought, and they were living in the enjoyment of the conquest they had accomplished.

They were living in the enjoyment of the labors of others. To quote the words of our Lord, others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor. And those that are here tonight, younger in age and experience, need to remember this.

You've got a marvelous heritage, tremendous heritage, priesthood of believers, divinely-obtained way of ministry and of gathering. A marvelous heritage, but a heritage that costs many a great deal to bring it into being. Now, I turn back into the same chapter for a moment.

Verse 11, And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they served Him daily. Verse 14, And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that foiled them. And He pulled them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

Because wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil. As the Lord had said, and as the Lord had poured unto them, they were greatly distressed. Nevertheless, the Lord raised up Judges, which delivered them out of the hands of those that foiled them.

Now, that's a brief history of the book of Judges. Failures on their part, mercy on God's part. Raising up deliverers to deliver them.

You see in the early part of the chapter that the angel of the Lord came down, left Gilgal, and went to Bokeh. Gilgal was the center in the book of Joshua, but in the book of Judges, the center is Bokeh. From Gilgal, the place where they came back for self-examination, and they came down to Judges in Bokeh in the time of Nephi.

The valley of Zakkah. They called the place Nephi. Look at verse four.

And he came to pass, and the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept. And they called the name of that place Bokeh. They called it Nephi.

That name gives character to the book of Judges. It's a book of weeping, of crying, crying unto the Lord. Now, we return with Nephites now to the... When we come into the... From chapter two right on to the end of chapter sixteen, we have national failure.

Of which I should probably draw much attention to that. Except the last in the matter of Temple, in chapter sixteen. He's the last judge that God raised.

National failure. That's what we have in the first sixteen chapters. Failure on account of being attacked by the enemies on every hand.

The Moabites, the Ammonites, the Bibyanites, the Philistines. And for over a hundred years, in the aggregates, they became subject to Gentilization. And that period is not second in the years of Israel.

Some of you may have wondered, when you read in 2 Kings, that the period from Moses to Solomon, and the fourth year of Solomon's reign, was 480 years. Well, when you reckon up, it's more than that. Over a hundred years more than that.

You say, well, that's a mistake in the Bible. Somebody made a mistake. But when you add and take into consideration the years that Israel was subject to Gentilization, then you get it correct.

That time is lost time. Wasted time. Time when they were in bondage to various Gentile nations.

One died for forty years under the Philistines. In the beginning, whenever they got in bondage to some nation, they cried to the Lord, and the Lord raised up a judge. And whenever, if you take them at this level

to begin with, you take them, say, at this level to begin with, then they go down, and they come up.

But they never come up to this level. They only come up to this level. And when they fall again, they fall lower still.

And when there's a recovery, they never recover even to the second day, and go down, and down, and down, and down. And never do they get recovered to the original position. Recovery to what they were at the beginning is not seen.

There's partial recovery, but never a full recovery. Never a complete recovery. But when you come down to the days of Samson, they never even cried for deliverance.

God raised up Samson in sovereign grace. The people never cried even for deliverance. And when God raised him up, they were prepared to hand him over to the Philistines.

And actually, the Jews on one occasion signed him and handed him over to them. They failed to recognize in Samson a deliverer that God had raised up for them. They'd become blind to their own sad spiritual state, and blind to the hand of God intending a deliverer.

And at last, Samson, a sad character in many ways, one of the saddest in the Bible in many ways, he began to deliver Israel from the Philistines. A man who could do a tremendous amount on his own. And that was his weakness, and that was his downfall.

He didn't see the need of defending upon others. He was so powerful, he could have so much on his own. But at last, you see him there with his eyes gouged out, his hair cut off, his nationalism gone.

He's the force of the Philistines. That's the picture of Laodicea, the end of evangelicalism, the force of the world. Samson was once a dreg of the Philistine world.

There was a terrible period of Samson at one time. But they've lost that era. Evangelical Christianity was at one time a tremendous power.

But where is it today? Where are we today? What is our condition today? Are we coming nearer to the end when evangelical Christianity is very similar to the testimony of Samson? A Nazarite from his mother's womb, but not a Nazarite to the end. He lost his Nazarite. And a movement like that with which they are associated was a movement of tremendous Nazarite character in its early days.

Man of godliness, man of devotion. It was undoubtedly a spiritual movement with a true Nazarite character to it. To what extent is that true of us today? I throw it out as a question that we might examine ourselves and search our own hearts.

But now turn on with me a piece of chapter seventeen. And there was a man in Mount Ephraim whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, the eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, and that which thou cursest and takest also in mine ears.

Behold, the silver is with me. I took it. His mother said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son.

What a wonderful mother. Here's the failure of the whole man. The son stealing some money.

And when he acknowledges, he says, Oh, blessed be thou of the Lord. And then she goes on to say, I had intended it to make a graven inmate, an idolatrous woman. And so the money is used to make some terrapins, to make some house idols.

Then, a little later, we have, in verse six, in those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. There was a young man of Bethlehem, Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there.

And the man departed out of that city from Bethlehem, Judah, to sojourn where he could find a place. And he came to Mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, When comest thou? He said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem, Judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place.

Micah said unto him, dwell with me. Be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee two kettles of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, that is, that's meant to cross, and thy bittles. So the Levites are given.

This is fact-shaking. This is not the failure now of the people. This is the failure of the Levites.

The failure of one who should be a teacher of the word of God. Failure of one who should be a teacher of the law. And he comes along, and he's hired by Micah.

He's given a salary, investments, and food. He went around looking for a place, and he wasn't hired to teach the word of God. If Micah had said, Well, I have a large family here.

I would like somebody to teach the word of God to them. If you stay with us a while, there will be something for God in that. But Micah had a graven in him.

And this man came in. There is those two words, the father and the priest. Very modern, isn't it? Very up-to-date.

The farthest Christianity, or Christianity, I'm sorry. Then, a little later, a tribe of Dan passed by there. A number from the tribe of Dan passed by.

They were looking for a place to live, and then they were going up to the north. And, when they came along, in verse 13, when they passed, they passed then from the Mount Ephraim and came to the house of Micah. Then answered the tribe, Men that came to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, We know that there is in these house a neat fort of cherubim, and a graven image, and a molten image.

And they turned to there, and came to the house of the young man, the Leelah. Oh, what happened? The chapter tells us what happened. Verse 19.

Verse 18. And they went unto Micah's house, at the carved image, the ephod, and the cherubim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What are you doing? He said unto him, Hold thy feet, lay thy hands upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest.

They told him, but some would say to them, You button your mouth. Come along with us. Be quiet about it all.

And he goes. And Micah loses his cherubim and his image and everything. This man goes and becomes, he becomes a priest, a Levite, a father.

He introduces idolatry. Just look on into chapter, the end of the chapter. Verse 31.

And they said, Set them up Micah's graven image, which he made all the time that the house of God was in China. So who was it? Verse 30. And the children of Dan set up the graven image.

And Jonathan, the son of Gershon, the son not of Manasseh, but the son of Moses, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. The grandson of Moses, the third generation of Levites, here he is introducing idolatry. Very soon, isn't it? We've seen the third generation nationally.

Here we have the third generation Levitically. Turn on to chapter 19. Verse 1. And it came to pass in those days that there was no king in Israel, a certain Levi, who was journeying on the side of Mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine of Bethlehem, Judah, and his concubine praised the Lord.

Chapter 19 and 20 are sad chapters. When you read it, you'll think you're reading about Sodom and Gomorrah. It's a very sad chapter.

The moral conditions of Gideah of Paul or Gideah of Benjamin that we read there in the end of the chapter, in verse 15, and they turned aside to go in and love him, Gideah. There is pendency of all kinds there. This man now turns in with his concubine to stay in Gideah.

The moral conditions of Gideah were terrible. In the morning, the woman is dead. The conditions morally were as low as they were in the days of Genesis.

But what about this man? There is a Levite. The first Levite introduces idolatry. This man, immorality.

Here's the trail of the serpent that we have in connection with the Nicolaites. Things offer to idols and fornicators. The trail that began at the foot of Mount Sinai They touch it.

They worship the golden calf, and they rose up to pray for their idolatry and their adultery together. Here we have it here. You come into the Corinthian epistle, you have the same two things there.

But here is the Levite. It's the failure of the Levite. That's what I want to emphasize.

National failure. National failure. Fab failure.

Collective failure. But the collective failure was due to the failure of the Levite. When the Levites fail to do what they should, then you can't expect the people to do what they ought to.

It's the failure of those who speak the word of God. The failure of those who stand to minister the word of God. It's the failure in the ministry.

That's what we have here. The sad departure of those... These are not false men like the men that Jeroboam made priests out of. He made priests out of the common people.

But that's not what these men... These are genuine Levites. They were Levites by birth. They belong to the Levitical family.

It's the Levitical failure. Now turn on with me to the book of Ruth. The little book of Ruth.

The last verse of Judges. In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Now we change apart 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.

The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi. The name of his two sons, Malon and Shilion, exorcised of Bethlehem, Judah. They came into the country of Moab and continued there.

Now here we have the third picture. The picture of what I drew attention to on Sunday night. Ministerial responsibility.

That's illustrated in the Levite. Collective responsibility. That's illustrated in the national failure.

Here we have individual responsibility. Now, because Judges 17 follows Chapter 16, and the record of the Levite follows the record of Samson, people may quickly conclude that those events were after the days of Samson, but they're not. They were in the days of the third generation.

The second Levite, by whose kin there was a patricidal war, and the tribe of Benjamin was nearly wiped out. The priest that's officiated at that time was Phileas. It was the third generation.

Aaron, Eleazar, Phileas. In the days of the third generation. So it's not consecutive pictures we've got here, but pictures that go along at the same time.

Concurrent pictures. Pictures of concurrent events. Three pictures of Israel's history.

Of course, the national period covers a long period. The period covered by the Levite covers a short period, and the period in Ruth covers a short period, but Ruth covers the third generation too. Elimelech, we're not told, of course, his age, nor where he lived, but we know that Boaz, the main character in the book, was a son of Rahab.

He was a son of Solomon, the prince of Judah, who married Rahab. So Boaz, possibly a man of fifty years of age by this time, old enough to speak of Ruth as my daughter, he was also of the third generation. There was another man in chapter four.

He was a close kinsman, the nearer kinsman, and he was given the first opportunity to redeem, to act a part of a kinsman, and restore Naomi to her inheritance, and he was quite prepared to do that. But when it came to marrying Ruth, he said, oh no, no, that will mar my inheritance. I can't do that.

His age is plotted out. His age is subject. I can just imagine him saying, why ever did he leave? Why did Elimelech leave here? We stayed here.

We lived through the famine. Look at all the trouble he's brought upon us. Of course Elimelech was wrong, but here was an opportunity for this man to live according to his responsibilities as a kinsman redeemer, and he failed to rise to it, and his age is plotted out.

Boaz takes his place. Plenty of opportunities today for service. Unfortunately, there are many like Naomi, plenty like Ruth.

Poor Naomi, poor Ruth, come back. Two lonely, helpless widows. I know, I believe they are a picture, undoubtedly a picture, of the remnant in Israel.

And if you want a comparison, if you want to read and enjoy, compare these two with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. There were two women whose hope had been swallowed up by the grain. Their husbands had been buried way back in Moab.

The past was bleak. Ten long years of widowhood. Ten dark years.

And if you want a very interesting comparison, I suggest you that you read with Ruth the Book of Lamentations. How is the city become like a widow? A widow. She weeps her soul in the night.

Her tears run down her cheeks. She finds no comfort in it. Naomi and Ruth coming back.

The past is dark and pale. The grave has swallowed up their husbands. The future, no hope.

Their hope had gone. Like the two on the way to Emmaus, they said, we hope that it's been he which has redeemed Israel. But he was crucified and he's dead and buried.

They say he's alive, but they've never seen him yet. Him they saw not. They didn't believe the stories they heard.

They feared they were just hallucinations. Him they saw not. There are two women.

They arrived back in the time of the barley harvest, the time that was prophetic and symbolized the resurrection of Christ. But what individual failure, but what individual faithfulness on the path of Goa. Elimelech a failure.

There's no king in Israel. Ah, but he said, Elimelech, God is my king. That's the meaning of his words, of his name.

By his name, he claimed God to be his king. And if he did believe God was his king, and God was king as far as he was concerned, why didn't he live up to his name? Oh, it's so easy, isn't it, to make a profession. It's so easy to claim that we recognize the worship of Christ.

It's so easy to fail to carry it out. It's so easy to make claims, to live by faith, and then send out personals on the field for money. It's one thing to make claims.

It's another thing to live up for causes. There's Elimelech. God is my king.

And then when the test came, down he goes. Crosses Jordan back to the place where 23,000 of his grandfathers, of their grandparents, died under the hand of God. It was dark and difficult in Israel, but it was darker in Moab.

Darker there. Conditions among the families may not be all that they should be, but it's darker in the world, brother. It's darker outside.

Darker there. Let the message of Elimelech sink down into our hearts. There's a price, of course, to pay for following the Lord.

Of course there is a price to pay, but there's a much bigger price to pay if you don't follow. To follow the Lord is costly, but not to follow the Lord is much more costly. The question is, which are we going to pay? We'll pay something if we're Christians.

If we are believers, and don't follow the Lord, we'll pay far more than we will if we are prepared to pay the price of following and obeying the Lord. And Boaz is the individual he that hath an ear. He listened to the word of God.

Because of one little scripture which told him that a stranger was to be allowed to glean after the reapers. He allowed Ruth to glean, and to glean among the reapers. He had an ear for the word of God.

Boaz might have said, his mother, his mother a harlot. But Boaz stands in her place. His background is very poor.

Parentage, nothing to be proud of. But here he is, a pillar. Later, Solomon, when he wanted to name a pillar in the house of God, in the temple he called it, we called one of them Boaz.

For Boaz was a pillar. Boaz was a pillar. Boaz stood, and others failed.

He wasn't a caterpillar, a true pillar. Everybody else failing. National failure, religious failure, eliminate failing, the other kinsmen failing to do his duty.

Boaz might have said, well I'm not going to bother. Why should I bother? But Boaz, by the grace of God, measured up to his opportunity, measured up to his privileges. May God in his grace give us grace to follow.

Ministerial responsibility, collective responsibility, and individual responsibility. May God write his word upon our hearts. I'm sorry we're only together tonight.

The guys have been together for a week over these last days. I've done his prayer for the days that lie ahead. Shall we pray? Yes.

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