

Notes on the Book of Ruth - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the themes of faith, redemption, and the profound inheritance believers receive through Christ, as illustrated in the Book of Ruth.

Scripture: Philippians 2:4

Topics: "Redemption", "Faith"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the singular devotion of Christ as our Redeemer, illustrating how Ruth's faith led to her receiving a greater inheritance through Boaz, symbolizing the abundant blessings found in Christ. He highlights that Ruth's decision to follow Naomi and embrace her God was a profound act of faith, which opened the door to God's grace and removed her past handicaps. The sermon draws parallels between Ruth's journey and the need for Christ's headship in our lives, asserting that true faith involves resoluteness and a willingness to embrace God's will, regardless of the cost. Ultimately, Sparks encourages believers to recognize the transformative power of faith and the blessings that flow from a steadfast commitment to God. He concludes by challenging the congregation to adopt Ruth's unwavering spirit in their own faith journeys.

Transcript

It is a glorious thing, dear friends, isn't it, to really apprehend that our Lord Jesus hasn't any pre-occupations, where we are concerned. We are His only occupation. Where He is untrammelled by other considerations, and all personal interests have completely disappeared in the interest of getting His Bride. He's free. That's Philippians 2:4-8, isn't it? Yes, everything is gone. Even His glory in heaven, where the Father is, has gone because He is single-eyed and single-minded. He has only one interest. He's untrammelled now by any other considerations. You and I are His object, and He's free from everything else.

I'm so glad the Lord hasn't got an alternative, aren't you? He hasn't got an alternative. None at all. The other man had an alternative. Christ has not.

Well, and when things were established on that basis, and Boaz was the only Redeemer, and the Redemption was carried out, all the inheritance became Ruth's -- in Boaz. All the redemption was hers in him. All the inheritance was hers in him. It was the Redemption that was in Christ Jesus. We got it all in Him. "He who delivered up His own Son for us all, shall He not also with Him freely give us all things." We get it all in Christ.

I know how simple this is, but isn't this a wonderful and beautiful exposition of the Gospel, this book? The inheritance, let's look at that.

Well, in the first place, of course, it was a part in the covenant land. You have to go back again to the book of Joshua, don't you, when the land was taken by Joshua, and finally subdued and conquered. Then it was divided up to the tribes, and through the tribes to the families. They had their lot, their inheritance, in the land. Somehow or other Elimelech came to have a plot in the covenant land. Now we know what the Old Testament figure means. So, well, you see we've moved this afternoon, just to touch it in the letter of Ephesians. For the thing that corresponds to the book of Joshua is the letter to the Ephesians. Wonderful inheritance that is in Christ, and His wonderful inheritance in His own. It's a land, is it not, of far distances. That's the inheritance. Look at Ephesians: far distances, right back into eternity past, and right into eternity to come. Wonderful!. Very wealthy land. A very rich land. And the inheritance in the first place, here in view with Ruth, was that part in the covenant land. And it was no small thing to have a part in that, as your own.

But it never stopped there. You see, what had been hers because of her union with Naomi and through Naomi, with Elimelech - what had been hers was forfeited, lost. But in the recovery through redemption, a very great deal more than what was lost, was given. Her little bit was joined to His large bit. What a great truth this is!!! That in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus we get far more than ever we lost, far more than Adam ever had, and therefore far more than ever he lost. It's a very much enlarged inheritance into which we come in Christ. Our bit, yes, but His all.

And I like that "Now Naomi, returned, and Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem. And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's a mighty man of wealth."

Look through that glass, down the ages, through Ruth, and see the Mighty Man of Wealth. Did Ruth come into a larger inheritance than that little bit of land of Canaan that she had lost? Oh, look on to Christ, who came through her. He came by way of Ruth. What an inheritance! A greater than Boaz is here.

And then, for the present, finally, the motive, and principle of this redemption. It's stated in those words of Boaz -- "To raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." Perhaps a little perplexing, if you don't grasp the meaning of that -- "To raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." To raise up the name of Elimelech upon his inheritance. How? By a seed, by an abiding seed in resurrection. Elimelech, what's the meaning of that? God is the king. That's it. You see, the very first part brings in God. The name means "God the king." "To raise up the name of the Lord upon his inheritance!"

The last words in the Book of Judges -- "There was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." And what chaos! What tragedy! There always is, where there is no central and supreme authority. All the trouble can be traced to that. It was in the four-hundred years of the judges, the terrible condition and the final tragedy.

It is, today, in the whole world, true; and in some sense it is true in Christianity. All the divisions, disruptions, the unhappy conditions which exist because Jesus is not in His place of Headship. Because, really, while He is called Lord and King, while He is said to be that in name and profession, He really is not in that place. Other lords have dominion. We could have many of them. The things that really do rule even Christian lives, and Church affairs. Things that get in the way of the Absolute Sovereign Headship of the Lord Jesus. Is not that made perfectly clear by Paul that oneness, unity, that organic fellowship in the body

of Christ proceeds from His Headship. All the Body fitly framed, joined together, as from the Head.

Well, we're so familiar with that and here you have conditions which were anything but like that, and they are like that today.

The need is for Authority, for Government, for Headship, for a King, for the Lord, really, actually, to be Lord. Everywhere I have been recently in the States among Christians, the same thing has been said to me. I haven't said it, but it's been said to me everywhere, "Our trouble is, no leadership. Our trouble is, lack of authority. Everybody does as they think or like; there's no central authority, no leadership."

Therefore, what have you got? A famine? Hunger, need, spiritual starvation and poverty, it's all there. That's how it was in the Judges, and that's how it was in these days, until the Lord visited them. "To raise up a name of the dead upon his inheritance." It surely does mean the recovery and reinstatement of the absolute Lordship of the Lord.

Elimelech -- "God is king." To raise up that name. And when He is, there's a very blessed situation, obtaining.

There's nothing to be lost in having the Lord as absolute Lord. People seem to think that if they let go to the Lord, and let Him be Lord, altogether, then they're going to lose something.

Well, don't be deceived about that. Look again at the book of Judges, and look to see that this -- shall we call it "little book" now? Surely not! -- this Book of Ruth says inclusively and finally that it is when there is a Head and a Lord established that there is plenty, there is prosperity, there is blessing, there is life, there is everything. And when that is not so, there is nothing. "To raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance."

In another glance at that, "Thou madest Him to have dominion." He lost his inheritance in death, through sin, and yet to raise up for man, man who has sinned, and man who has died, in the sight of God; to raise up even for that man, through redemption, his dominion again, his kingship. For we shall reign with Him, our Lord.

This message this evening is as self-contained as possible.

The book of Ruth is gathered all into that sublime declaration of Ruth's, one of the most beautiful things in all the Bible, Chap. 1:16-18: "And Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. For whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die. And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death part thee and me."

"When Naomi saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her."

Faith's Pathway to Final Fullness

For this around Ruth was a tremendous decision of faith. Look at Chap. 2:11, "And Boaz answered and said unto her, "It hath been fully showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband. And how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not before."

A great venture of faith. A sublime renunciation. You may not think that there was very much to be renounced in Moab, for it was leaving a place of much sorrow and disappointment and tragedy; but when you consider really what the situation was, and what she was going to, all unknown to herself, and how things were going to work out, I think you would see the picture from another angle. At least she was at home in her own country -- known and recognized and had a place there. She had a father and a mother and a home. She was going to a foreign country. She was going with her widowed mother-in-law, who was in a great sorrow, in whose life there was a great tragedy, and who was under a very great cloud of disappointment -- not only with her life but with the Lord Himself. "The Lord has testified against me." Real spiritual disheartenment, perplexity.

And Ruth was a Moabitess. She must have known of the embargo that rested upon her nation so far as Israel was concerned. The curse that had been pronounced upon Moab, -- "The Ammonite and the Moabite shall not enter the congregation of the Lord forever." -- she must have known that, and that it was very doubtful that she would get a reception in the land of Israel, -- be made welcome. Rather, it might be very much the other way. Suspect, ostracized. And you know, Boaz had to give special instructions to his young men and maidens not to be unkind to her, not to interfere with her. And repeatedly he had to tell them to show her some kindness. Here is this woman, under a shadow, in their midst. And she must have known something about it, what it could mean, the future all unknown, and very doubtful. Her heart might well have fainted, if she thought it.

But -- there was faith enough there. "Thy God shall be my God." Evidently, with all, Naomi had taught her daughters-in-law something about her God that made Ruth feel -- "Anyway, it's better to be where that God is recognized and acknowledged than where I am in Moab." There was some faith in her heart in the God of Naomi, and the God of Israel, and it was sufficient to make her on the one side to leave the place of security, -- leave her home, and Boaz did recognize that it meant something to Ruth to leave it: "It hath been fully told me what thou has done;" and on the other side, to accept all that it might be, without any knowledge of really what would happen. It was Faith's Venture, faith's renunciation, with no real knowledge that it would work out all right, and that there were the bright prospects which did eventually come into view.

That was the first step in the way into this great fullness: Faith's Venture.

Oh, how much enticing we need, how many promises and assurances we need to get us going on the way. How much has to be held up before the eyes of people as to the blessings that they're going to get, if they would follow the Lord what would come to them.

We're so tardy, aren't we, in our response? We have to have to have so many bribes. I'm afraid the appeal of the Gospel has been leveled down there, to all that you'd get if you became a Christian.

The real faith that the Lord waits to find is very difficult to find, and we're not surprised, are we, that limitation comes into the life? We're talking about Faith's Pathway to Fullness. And I cannot help feeling, very often, that the spiritual limitation, the smallness of spiritual life, of the knowledge of the Lord, once of all that to which we are really called in Christ -- the limitation is due to this, that we're always thinking of how it's going to affect us, for good or bad, what we're going to get. Even the disciples, who are with the Lord, would say "Lord, we have left all for Thy sake; what shall we have?"

That becomes too often a motive -- "What shall we have? What are we going to get. Or, what are we going to lose?" No wonder the spiritual life is so poor. If only we had some of this kind of faith that Ruth had. It is

aware that it's going to be costly, very likely. It's going to be difficult, facing the fact. Nevertheless, "Thy God is worth it. Thy God shall be my God." For God's sake, and not for our own, is the motive which should activate. For the Lord's sake.

If it's like that for the Lord's sake -- not only in our beginning, but in our continuance, because we are brought into much costliness in this way -- but, for the Lord's sake -- we should make better progress; we should come more quickly into the fullness of Divine purpose. It's the motive, you see, of faith, that makes all the difference. It's quite clear, isn't it, that if we're always thinking of ourselves and how it will affect us, we shall not get very far?

The Lord is dangling no prizes before us, to bribe, or cajole, or entice. He says, quite frankly -- "If a man shall not take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple." Faith must see right through and say "It's better to have the Lord, than to have everything else and not have the Lord" whatever it may be. And it's better to have the Lord, with affliction and adversity and trial and obstruction and persecution, than to be without those things and at the same time to be without the Lord.

Faith's venture, faith's renunciation. Then faith's resoluteness and finality. I like that in verse 18 -- "And when Naomi saw that she was steadfastly minded to go, she left off speaking." It's no use arguing with this person; it's no use talking to her. She's made up her mind and that's the end of it. Steadfastly-minded. Resolute, and finally so, she could have said, "It's no use. You're not going to talk me out of it. You're not going to argue or persuade me out of this. I have made up my mind." And Naomi saw that. "And she left (off) speaking."

The resoluteness and finality of faith's decision. Get it like that and the Lord can do anything.

What the Lord did, as we have been seeing, is perfectly wonderful. You'll see that again in a minute. You see, such a faith opens the way for the Lord to do wonderful things. And to bring quickly into His greatest fullness.

Are we not slow because we are not resolute? Is not our spiritual progress retarded and arrested because there's so little of this finality about our decision? Still halting, limping between two opinions? Still not quite sure as to what it's going to be right through? Whether we're going right on? And therefore the years pass, and we're very much in the same position spiritually, after a long time, as we were.

It's a very simple word, but dear friends, it's a good word on which to close a conference. In the face of all that the Lord wants and has called us unto, we must be really moved and stirred to this matter, to say with Ruth: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; whither thou goest I will go. Where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, Thy God, my God. Where thou diest I will die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more so, if anything but death part thee and me." "And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded." What a statement of steadfast-mindedness that is! Then, again I say, you're not surprised at the sequel:

Faith's Inclusiveness.

That word of verses 16 and 17 that we've just quoted again is a very comprehensive and inclusive thing, isn't it? It covers all the ground. Every possible contingency. Every aspect of things. The whole thing is taken in one full survey, encompassed and brought down here in this consecrated concentrated form: "I've taken full account of everything -- every aspect of this matter -- and I see that it may lead me into a good

deal; and it may be a very testing and long-drawn-out business; but it's unto death, and all that comes between now and then I've reckoned up."

It's an inclusive avowal of faith. And then because it was like that -- that was the kind of venturesome faith, a faith renouncing, a faith Resolute and Final, Inclusive, Comprehensive -- that kind of faith opens the door to God's grace in a most wonderful way. God's grace!

What a story of God's grace this is! We pointed out earlier today the handicaps of Ruth, the handicaps that dear soul suffered, and was under! The handicap of birth. The stigma that had been handed down from her forebears. The stigma of incest, and then the handicap of the curse. The embargo: "A Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever." And she is going into the midst of the congregation of the Lord, over against that terrible embargo and handicap. "She's a Moabite" with all that that means.

But her faith opened the way to the grace of God to remove every handicap. I think this is wonderful.

Let's have a side light on this. We've got it in the New Testament. You know, in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus a whole list of unclean creatures are mentioned which the Israelites were not to eat. They were forbidden to eat all these unclean creatures. Now, no doubt there was something of a sanitary kind about this, or a hygienic element in this, for health's sake.

It had another meaning. These unclean creatures were symbols of the pagan and heathen nations with whom Israel was to have no fellowship, no contact, no relationship, and no intermarriage. All those outside of Israel were regarded as unclean. And Jews knew that.

Now come to the New Testament. The Apostle Peter had a vision one day. And in his vision he saw heaven opened and a sheet let down by its four corners, full of these very creatures mentioned in Leviticus 11. All manner of unclean creatures. He was a Jew, and he knew what that meant. And a voice said, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter said, "Not so, Lord. Nothing unclean, has entered my lips, ever." This thing was done three times and the sheet was caught up into heaven, and then -- a knock on the door. "Oh, Cornelius, away up there in Caesarea, has sent us to ask you to come to his house. He's an Italian. To come and speak to him about the things of God."

Oh, Cornelius. An unclean thing I'm forbidden by the very scriptures to have anything to do with him, to do this sort of thing. "Not so, Lord."

What said the Lord? "What God hath cleansed, call not thus unclean." And being prevailed upon, Peter went. We know the sequel; what has happened?

Calvary has happened and the curse has been borne by the Lord Jesus, the great Kinsman-Redeemer. The curse has been borne and removed out of the way, and Grace has opened the door for the unclean, and Calvary has virtually cleansed all. Calvary stands effective for the cleansing of all the unclean.

A side light on this. "A Moabite shall not enter the congregation." Under a curse, ah, yes, but Faith enters into the removal of the curse. Faith opens the door to the grace of God. Grace is triumphant here; Ruth stands to declare that in her very being. "The Law said No, Never, but Grace says Yes, Ever" The Law says a closed door. Grace says an open door.

The grace of God in redemption, and faith laying hold of the grace of God, opens the door and removes all the handicaps. What a message!

You're complaining about handicaps? Well, the grace of God can get rid of all your handicaps, if you will believe it. Faith opens the door to grace, and grace removes every embargo, and says "Let us draw nigh, with full assurance of faith." "Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace." Faith.

And then, the door opened through faith and grace, you see the blessings that begin to flow and come to Ruth. We spoke of all these this morning. The immediate blessings, to begin with. How sovereignty began to operate in her life, in wonderful providences.

There was that "hap" of which we spoke. "And it was Ruth's hap to light upon the part of the field that belonged to Boaz." And in some apparently casual, almost accidental movement, not knowing what she was doing, but God knowing what He was doing, she came into that field. Divine sovereignty and Divine providence beginning to work in this wonderful way, so simply, so easily, without the exercise of any power in a demonstrative way from Heaven. It's so easy for Divine Sovereignty to do things that it sometimes just looks like a "hap" and you wonder if it ever has taken place. So easy, to come into that very ease of God.

Blessings. I'm not going to enumerate them. The immediate blessings the book itself tells you. From lighting upon the field of Boaz, her "hap" being that. Onward, step by step, right up to the union and beyond. And that leads us to: Faith's rich reward. Something far beyond the immediate in her life. As we have pointed out, the last words in this book are these:

"Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse and Jesse begat David."

And then you leap a big leap into the Gospels, and you find David -- Jesus.

Wonderful thing -- a Moabitess with all that which rested upon her -- the dark shadow of embargo and curse, an ancestress of the Lord Christ! Right in the direct line of Jesus, and all that has come to the world.

Oh, what an immense thing has come to this world through Ruth's faith. What rewards. I wonder if she knows all about it now. I'd like to think that she does, that she's conscious of it all. Surely that would be a reward, wouldn't it. If Ruth now is looking back to those days of timidity and fear, dread, and yet, resolution. Seeing everything that has come, wouldn't she say "My word, it's worth it. I never imagined that my poor feeble effort of faith would result in this."

It's not possible to exaggerate this, is it? When you think of all that has come through the Lord Jesus, through the incarnation. You can't say too much about that, and it started with this simple, earnest girl's faith. Resolute Faith.

Far-reaching outworking of that faith, unto this great goal.

You never know what the Lord can do, or will do, what Eternity will reveal. She did not live to see more than Obed, as far as we know, Her life passed on with the life of her son, she didn't see.

Maybe she sees now; if she doesn't she's going to see.

You and I may not know, in our time, what the Lord has been able to do, and will be able to do, if only He gets a faith in us like the faith of Ruth. This faith that ventures. This faith that renounces. This faith that resolves. This faith that takes in everything that is involved, and that is not moved by consequences, but takes it all up, and says, "I will. I will. I will."

We must leave that with you, and with ourselves. Well, I'm going to close with this.

What the Lord's people needed (and this was a word we said this afternoon) more than anything, for their own good, for their own blessing, for their own fullness and ascendancy, and victory; what Israel needed more than anything else was a king. All that tragedy of the Book of Judges, as we have seen, was because there was no king in Israel. No uniting of authority.

The king came in through Ruth's faith. Dear friends, if the Lord Jesus should come into His place, as Lord, as King, through a costly, difficult, dark way, that we take in faith -- not knowing, when we take the great inclusive step what it means -- knowing only that it may involve us in some very real and big difficulties -- and we take it -- so that the Lord Jesus should come into His place, along that line, will it be worth it?

If these scattered ones find the Shepherd, if these defeated ones find their King, their Victor, it'll be worth it, and you and I are called to that. To bring the Lord Jesus into His place. It's not easy. It's costly. It requires real faith to go on with that, because there are such tremendous factors set against His Kingship and His Lordship. But if it should be that He comes into that place, through our instrumentality, then everything will be worth it, and justified.

You ought to read again this great declaration of Ruth's and put ourselves alongside it.

Are you tonight ready, Christians, in a new way to say it? Any unsaved ones here tonight ready to say it? Are you? Shall we pause in a quiet moment, and let it challenge our own hearts? Shall we? Can we? Will we say, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after 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. There will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also if anything but death part thee and me."

Whatever that means, or may mean, in our relationship to the Lord Jesus, the Lord give us grace to say and to mean it, and to close all arguments, and all discussion. "When she saw that she was steadfastly-minded, she left speaking." May the Lord have us a people like that.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/notes-on-the-book-of-ruth-part-3/>

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