

# The Book of Ruth #3

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon explores Ruth's profound faith and commitment to God, highlighting the transformative power of faith in overcoming obstacles and receiving God's grace.*

**Duration:** 38:08

**Scripture:** Ruth 1:16-18, Ruth 4:17, Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:62, John 14:6, Hebrews 11:6

**Topics:** "Ruth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Ruth and the importance of faith. He highlights how Ruth's faith led to immense blessings in her life, including being in the direct lineage of Jesus Christ. The preacher emphasizes that faith is not easy and requires real commitment, but if we bring the Lord Jesus into his rightful place, it will be worth it. He encourages both Christians and non-believers to align themselves with Ruth's declaration of faith and be ready to fully commit to following God.

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## Transcript

I cannot expect to gather you all into the whole message of this conference, nor into any part of what has gone before. I shall have to try to make the message this evening as self-contained as I can. We come back again to the Book of Ruth, which has occupied our attention all today.

We shall now gather it all into that sublime avowal of Ruth, one of the most beautiful things in all the Bible. In chapter 1, verses 16 to 18, and Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. For 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 aught but death part thee and me. When Nehemiah saw that she was steadfastly minded, to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Faith's pathway to final fullness. For this avowal by Ruth was a tremendous decision of faith. You look at chapter 2, verse 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 heretofore. 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, disappointment, tragedy. But when you consider really what the situation was, and what she was going to, all unknown to herself of 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 great sorrow, whose life was a very 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, she said. The Lord has afflicted me.

Real spiritual disheartenment, perpetuity, and Ruth was a Moabite. She must have known of the embargo that rested upon her nation so far as Israel were concerned. The curse that had been pronounced upon Moab, the Ammonites and the Moabites shall not enter the congregation of the Lord forever.

She must have known that. And that it would be very doubtful whether 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 would mean. Future all unknown, very doubtful. Her heart might well have fainted.

She thought of it, but there was faith there enough. My God shall be my God. Evidently, with all Naomi had taught her daughters-in-law something about her God that made Ruth feel with her.

Anyway, anyway, it's better to be where that God is recognized, is 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, leave the place of security, leave home, and Boaz Markhew did recognize that this meant something to Ruth. To leave it hath been fully told me what thou hast done, and on the other side, to accept all that it might mean 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 to this gratefulness. 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 will follow the law.

And so what will come to them? We are so hardy, aren't we, in our response. We have to have so many bribes. I'm afraid, I'm afraid that the appeal of the gospel has been leveled down there to all that you'll get if you become a Christian.

Real faith, the real faith that the Lord wants to find is very difficult to find. And we're not surprised, are we, that limitation comes into the life. We are talking about faith's pathway to fullness.

And I cannot help feeling very often that the spiritual limitation, the smallness of spiritual life, of knowledge of the Lord, and of all that to which we are really called in Christ, the limitation is due to this. And we're always thinking of how it's going to affect us, for good or bad, what we're going to get. Even disciples who are with the Lord would say, Lord, we have left all for thy sake.

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

But it is aware that it's going to be costly, very likely. It's going to bring us under reproach, very likely. It's going to mean that we're, it's not going to be all easy, going to be difficult, facing the fact.

Nevertheless, 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 would actuate. For the Lord's sake.

And 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 that fullness of divine providence.

It's the motive, you see, of faith that makes all the difference. Quite clear as it's not, but if we're always thinking about ourselves in this life and how it's going to affect us, we shan't get very far. The Lord is dangling no prizes before us to bribe or cajole or entice.

He says, quite frankly, man shall not take up his cross. Follow me, he cannot be my disciple. And faith must see right through, see right through, and say, well, 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 ostracism and persecution than to be without those things and at the same time be without the Lord. Faith's venture. Faith's renunciation.

Then faith's resoluteness and finality. I like that verse 18, And when Naomi saw that she was too vastly 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. Vastly minded.

Resolute. And finally so. She's going to say, it's no use.

You're not going to talk me out of this. You're not going to argue me out of this. You're not going to persuade me out of this.

I have made up my mind. And Naomi saw that and she left. The resoluteness, finality of faith decision.

Get it like that and the Lord can do anything. What the Lord did, as we have been seeing, is certainly wonderful. We'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, quickly into his greater fullness. Are we not slow because we are irresolute? Not our spiritual progress retarded and

arrested because there's so little of the spirit of 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 year has passed. 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, a good word on which to close the conference.

Faith of all that the Lord wants and has called us unto, we must be really moved and stirred to this matter to say with root, then treat 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.

There will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if aught, if anything, but death of 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. You're not surprised at the sequel. Faith's inclusiveness, that word of verses 16, 17, 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 concentrated form. That is, I've taken full account of everything, every aspect of this matter. I see 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.

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 faith, venturesome faith, faith renouncing, faith resolute, final, inclusive, comprehensive. That kind of faith opened the door to God's grace in a most wonderful way.

God's grace. For the story of God's grace, it is, we pointed out earlier today, the handicaps of root, what handicaps that dear soul suffered and was under, the handicap of birth, the stigma, the stigma that had been handed down from her forebears, the stigma of incest, and then the handicap of the curse, the embargo. A Merbite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever.

She is going into the midst of the congregation of the Lord, over against that terrible embargo and handicap. She's a Merbite. With all that that means, that faith opened the way to the grace of God to remove every handicap.

I think it is wonderful. Let's have a side light on this. We've got it in the New Testament.

You know, in the 11th chapter of the book 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. You've got the list of them.

Now, no doubt, there was something of a sanitary kind about this, or a hygienic element in this, or healthy. It had another meaning. These unclean creatures were symbols of the pagan and heathen nations with whom Israel was to have no fellowship, and no contact, and no relationship, and no intermarriage.

All those outside of Israel were regarded as unclean. And Jews knew them. When I come to the New Testament, the apostle Peter had a vision one day, and in his vision he saw heaven opened and the sheep 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. And this thing was done three times, and the sheep was called up into heaven, and then the man at the door.

Yes, what do you want? Oh, Cornelius, the way up there is Peter here, has sent us to ask you to come to his house. He is an Italian. Come to speak to him about the things of God.

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

What said the Lord? What God hath cleansed, call not thou unclean. And being prevailed upon and over, Peter went. We know the sequel.

What has happened? Oh, Calvary has happened, and the curse has been borne by the Lord Jesus, the great king's man, 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.

Sidelined on this, and nor by this shall not enter the congregation under a curse. Ah, yes, ah, yes. Faith, faith enters into the removal of the curse.

Faith opens the door to the grace of God. Grace triumphant here. Ruth stands to declare that in her very being.

Oh, grace. The Lord said, no, never. But grace says, yes, ever.

The Lord 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. What a message. You're complaining about handicaps.

Well, grace of God, um, get rid of all your handicaps, if you will believe it. Faith then 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.

And then the door opens. Through faith and grace see the blessings that begin, 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 path of a 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 looks

just 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, rich reward, something far beyond the immediate in her life. We have pointed out the last words in this book, are these, Boaz, forget Odette, and Odette, forget Jesse, and Jesse, forget David, and then you leap, a big leap, into the gospel, and you find David, Jesus, wonderful being, and know by this, 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 reward. I wonder if she knows all about it now.

I'd like to think that she does, if she's conscious of 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, and seeing everything that has come, wouldn't she say, my word is worth it, my word is worth it, and I never imagined that my poor feeble effort of faith would result in this. Now, it's not possible to exaggerate this, is it, when you think of all that has come through the Lord Jesus, through the Incarnation? Can't say too much about that, it started with this simple, earnest, girl's faith, resolute faith, far-reaching, outworking of that faith, unto this great goal, this great goal. You never know, you never know what the Lord can do, will do, what eternity will reveal.

She did not live to see more than Oded, as far as we know. Her life passed on with the life of her child, her son. I don't mean the time of birth, but I suppose his life was more than the extent of her life, and 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 in power, and 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 the word we said this afternoon, more than anything, for their own good, for their own blessing, for their own fullness, for their own ascendancy and victory. What Israel needed more than anything else was a king, was a king.

All that tragedy of the book of Judges that we have seen, because there was no king in Israel, no uniting authority, the king came through Ruth's faith. The king came 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 it in faith, 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, we take it 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, it'll be worth it. And you and I are called to that, we're 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 instrumentation, then everything will be worth it and justified. We ought to read again this great declaration 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 heart? 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. 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 it and mean it, and to close all argument and all discussion. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded, she left speaking. Lord, have us a people like that.

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