

The Cross and Eternal Glory - Part 4

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the mysterious urge of God that leads people to make decisions, using the story of Ruth as an illustration, and highlights the redemption of believers through Christ and their heavenly vocation.

Duration: 47:21

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1

Topics: "Eternal Glory"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker tells a story about a man named Goan who had the right to redeem a lost inheritance. However, there was another man who had a prior right to redeem. The two men met in the gates where redemption transactions took place. The speaker then applies this story to the lives of Christians, emphasizing the importance of living differently and taking on the conduct of God's people in every relationship and connection. The sermon concludes with an invitation to respond to the urging of the Holy Spirit for redemption and union with Christ.

Transcript

Good to be able to sing from the heart such things as those, and to really be in the enjoyment of them. I'm going to turn you again this evening to the little book which goes by the name of Ruth. And in chapter two, verses eleven and twelve, we have this.

And to Boaz answered and said unto her, that is to Ruth, It hath been fully showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband, and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people that thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. There are two fragments of two words only in those two verses.

Art come, thou art come. And I want to say a little this evening about what we have come to. I could wish that you were familiar with the whole of this story we have in this tiny book.

It would help me a lot if I could be sure of the background of knowledge. But I'm not going to traverse anew the story. You will probably, if you do not already know it, pick it up from what I do say.

But I think it might be helpful to those who are not acquainted with it, if I just read again that wonderful passage containing the great decision which this young woman made, Ruth the Noah by death. We have

it in chapter 1, verse 16. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and 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 aught but death pass thee and me. That really does give me the background for what I want to say this evening in connection with what we have come to. I begin by pointing out how unsuspecting was Ruth of all that to which she was coming by her great decision.

How unsuspecting was the greatness and the values bound up with that decision. I think it very possible that Ruth did not know of the ban which rested by God's edict upon her nation, her people, and herself as included therein. Or for some very good reason, God had pronounced a ban upon the Moabites and said that a Moabite should not come into the house of the Lord forever.

It is rather probable that Ruth did not know of that ban, that edict, any more than those who are outside of Christ are alive to or aware of what a position they are in. As under judgment, it is probable that if there are any people here tonight outside of Christ, they would be either amazed or offended if they were told that they lie under the judgment of God. And yet the Scriptures declare it to be so, that outside of Christ all are in condemnation.

But whether she knew it or not, and whether any such here tonight know it or not, there is the fact. She may not have known about that ban, that divine edict. Perhaps the reason for this decision she came to, to go with her mother-in-law, Naomi, from her country into the land of Israel, was just that she felt it was something she must do.

Probably she had waited up, thought about it, considered it. And then Naomi had done everything to dissuade her, to get her to go back and not to accompany her. But if we had asked Ruth why it was that she decided, and was so decided about it, the probability is that her answer would have been, well, I can't explain.

I can't give you any reasons for it, but I just feel it's a thing to do. I've got to do it. You know, that is very often the only reason at the beginning why people come to Christ.

They feel somehow that they've got to do it. They cannot explain or give a reason. But, well, that's all.

I just felt I had to. There was an urge, a constant, a something working in me. And all I can say about it is I felt I just had to do it.

It was a big thing. I had thought about it. I had waited up.

I had paced what it might impose, but there you are. I couldn't get away with it. And I think probably that is exactly how it was with Ruth.

Because, you see, there were costs attached to this. Costs enough to discourage and even to disconcert. It was no small thing.

As Boaz said, she left her father and her mother and her country to go into a strange land. And one of our verses says, to a people whom thou knewest not heretofore. There were costs attached to it.

The thing might, if it had been just placed as something in itself, might have been regarded as something she could not do, she could not face. But there you are. There you are.

I just couldn't help it. I just had to. The urge, the constraint, the drawing, the something working in me was more than all my reasoning, all my argument, and every other consideration.

And you know, dear friends, that is just it. For as it proved, although she did not know it, and could not explain this thing at all, she could not define it, it came to be seen afterward that there was a mighty will at work upon her. Yes, all undefined, all unexplained, without any bribes, or any offers, or any prizes, or anything to try to get her in mind to go this way.

There was this working of God. This working of God. I'm not prepared to wait to the end of this meeting to apply the message.

I am far from sure that there are not some here now just like that. I can't help feeling that in our singing of those hymns someone has been a bit wistful. Someone has been feeling, oh, I wish.

I could really sing that from my heart. I wish that were true of me. I wish that I were in the good of that.

And that wish, that wistfulness may just be this thing, quiet, quietly, but strongly and deeply, spirit of God at work, creating something that you can't define any more than, well, that's the way in which I feel I ought to go. That's the way in which I know sooner or later I'll have to go. Put it off, but I know I'll come to it.

And sometimes, yes, perhaps Ruth had no more than that. And she had plenty to discourage. Her very mother-in-law was seeking to shake her off, it seems, and send her back, saying, don't come.

Your sister, your sister's gone back, you do the same. But no, no. She would have said, I think, no use.

That's the way I feel I've got to go. And so whatever it means, I'm going. And treat me not to leave it, nor return from following after it.

Whither thou goest, I will give. Well, that's all there was to this great decision, I think, when it was made. But then, what a tremendous amount came to be afterwards, shown as bound up with it.

These two fragments in the statement of thou as to her, look at them, for they really are an explanation. They are an explanation of this decision under divine constraint. Thou art come unto a people that thou knewest not heretofore.

Thou art come to the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. That's how it's explained. A place amongst the people of God.

A place amongst the people of God. And a place under the wings of the Lord. That doesn't sound very much, does it? As it's stated.

But oh, what a lot is in there. What a lot is in there. Let us turn for a moment to the story.

You know that the property of Ruth's father-in-law, and therefore of Ruth's own husband, had been disposed of because they had left the land. They had lost it. They had forfeited it.

But when they came back, this man, Boaz, this great man in the land, by strange and wonderful providences, came across their path, so to speak. Or they came across his. And it was found that he was

a near kin's man, who had the right to redeem this lost inheritance.

To make the story short, he decided to do so. And at one set about dealing with the difficulties, which we'll not refer to at the moment, the main difficulty was another man, who was a little nearer kin's man, and therefore had a prior right to redeem. And these two, Boaz and the other man, met in the gates where these transactions of the redemption of lost possessions were carried out.

And he challenged the other man and said, Now look here, you have the first right to redeem this lost inheritance. Are you prepared to do so? The man said, Yes, all right. But then said Boaz, Look here.

The day that you redeem the inheritance, you've got also to redeem Ruth. For she had the inheritance at once. And the man said, No, I'm sorry, I can't do that.

Therefore I cede you the right to redeem. And Boaz redeemed the inheritance, but he also redeemed and purchased and married Ruth. And that was all in this strange, mysterious urge.

Of God in her heart. He was urging her firstly in the direction of redemption. Of being purchased and then married.

Joined to Christ through redemption. We've sung it tonight. That's why we sang this hymn.

Redeemed and purchased with his blood. Redeemed and sanctified. And sanctified.

And know it by this. Outside of the pale is an unclean thing in Israel. Redeemed and by union with this great Israelite.

Sanctified. You see the picture? The urge of the Spirit of God upon you contains this. Your redemption from the ban, from the condemnation, from the judgment that lies upon all who are outside of Christ.

Redemption. Oh, wonderful story. Purchased.

They are bought with a price and joined to the Lord. The Lord Christ. All that is in the urge, in the constraint, in that something that is making you desire, long, wistful, say, oh, that I knew all that in my own life and experience.

Yes, that is a work of the Spirit of Christ. Urging you in the direction of redemption and union with his Son. But then there is more.

There is more to follow. And I come unto a people that thou knewest not here too far. Yes, you say that is the Old Testament.

That is the Old Testament, a beautiful Old Testament story, a beautiful idyll of long ago. But is there anything now to correspond to that? The answer, of course, must be in whether you agree that the New Testament belongs to now. Does the New Testament belong to now or does it only belong to long ago when it was written? No, of course not, it belongs to us now.

It is contemporary, it is right up to date and everybody who comes to Christ finds that it is the most up to date document in existence. Well then, have we got something in the New Testament that corresponds to and is illustrated by Ruth the stranger, Ruth the alien, Ruth under condemnation, being brought into redemption and union with Christ? Yes, we have got it. Here it is, let me read it to you.

Wherefore remember that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made by hand, that ye were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye that once were apart of are made nigh in the blood of Christ, for he is our saviour. So what? Couldn't have a better commentary, an exposition of the story of Ruth than that, true to the letter, unto a people whom thou knewest not heretofore, unto the people of the Lord, you, you, now the people of God.

When you come to look at that, from which I have just read that whole letter, you have some wonderful things said about this people of the Lord. This people of the Lord, not of the Old Testament, but thou, to which the majority of us here tonight belong, who have our citizenship in heaven, who have been born from above, who do form for God his new nation, his new spiritual people. Wonderful things said.

First thing is, that this people is an elect people from all eternity. Now Israel as a nation was an elect nation. God chose Israel from among all the nations.

He elected Israel. But the election of Israel is only a mere shadow of this greater election of the Church. The election of Israel was a time matter after all.

But here in this wonderful document, from which I have just read, we are told that this people, to which you and I most of us here tonight belong, and to which the Spirit of God is urging everybody else to belong, this people has been chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world. It's a wonderful thing to think that that simple act upon an undefined and unexplained urge of the Spirit of God involves death. You can come afterwards to see that your decision, as it is termed, as it is put, your decision, rather your response to this constraint of the Spirit of God was involving you in something which God had already planned and marked out before ever this world was.

A wonderful thing. Not just something of the moment, of your lifetime, something in itself. You decide for Christ.

You decide to give yourself to Christ. You decide to be a Christian, however you may put it. What you really decide to do is to fall right in with the eternal plan of God.

And you don't know that when you make your decision, any more than Ruth did. She made her decision simply because she felt that was the thing to do. And all unsuspectingly she found eventually that she was right in and a part of a covenant people.

An elect people with whom in the next place the covenant of God was. The covenant of God. See, in my translation, I didn't write, read it as it's translated.

The word Lord is Jehovah. Jehovah every time. Jehovah recompense thee under whose wings? The God, the Jehovah of Israel.

And that name is the name which implies and means the covenant of God. It's the name which has to do with man. A little technicality by the way.

When God created things, heaven and earth and these things, he was called by another name. Another name below him creating things. But when it comes to dealing with man, his name is changed and he's called Jehovah.

Means the covenant of God. The covenant. And she had come, not knowing it, right into the realm of the divine covenant.

God made a covenant. And you know that covenant is a tremendous thing even with Israel. The prophecies of Jeremiah, a very, very strong way is taken of indicating what his covenant was with Israel.

He said, look at the stars. Look at the moon. If you can, if you can cause to cease the ordinances of the heavens, the sun, the moon and the stars, then my covenant will cease with Israel.

It shall be as long as the sun, the moon and the stars. Well, what are you going to do about that? But even so, even so, it's not like the covenant made in the blood of Jesus Christ with you and with me. This is an eternal covenant of another order.

I cannot say this. Even if I were able to explain that, all I'm trying to say is that here is something tremendous that she had come into. Into an elect people and into the place of God's covenant.

And that's all in the direction of this constraint of God's Spirit if it is upon you. And dear friend, those of us who have come in response, this is what we've come into, is something very great. Going further in this letter from which I've read, this people is not only an elect people and the covenant people of God, it's a people called with a great vocation.

People here who know this letter to the Ephesians know what I'm talking about. Here it is made known that this people stand in relation to God for a very great purpose. A great vocation.

A heavenly vocation. I've often put it here that when we really come to the Lord Jesus, one of our first senses is that we've come into the very purpose for which we have a being. A sense that there is now purpose in life.

Whereas that was not so before in this way, now we know there's a purpose in life. But oh, what is it? This tremendous vocation with which the church is called. The apostle here says, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

A great vocation. Now in the case of Israel amongst whom Ruth came, of which he became a part, well, Israel was raised up to be a nation by which God should be made known to all the nations. What kind of God He is.

A merciful and gracious God. Slow to anger and plenteous in loving kindness. What kind of a God He was.

He raised them up as a nation for that vocation. But here this people, this people to whom you are being urged and of which we are a little part are called with a great heavenly vocation not an earthly one. An eternal one, not a temporal one.

To serve the purposes of God in this universe as this letter has it unto the ages of the age. How little Ruth suspected all this in that day when she said, I will. And you are going, dear friend, when you respond to the constraints of God's Spirit to find the right unto the end of your life no matter how long you live that it's one continuous discovery of how much there is in Christ to whom you've come.

That's how it should be and that is how it can be. People whom thou knewest not heretofore and the next thing in this letter is the conduct of this people.

I've just quoted or cited the fragment walk wildly of the calling wherewith you are called in all lowliness and meekness and then it makes some practical applications husbands and wives it's all got to come in there and wives and husbands children and parents and parents and children masters and servants and servants and masters Christians and the world and in effect it is saying this look here when you come and ask these people these people have a testimony and you have you have got to take on responsibility for that testimony and be loyal to the very vocation of this people come in and stand truly with them that in every relationship of life in every connection of life it might be seen that this is no ordinary people this people is different this is a heavenly people you're taking on

the conduct of this people yes it's true Christians are different and their conduct and behaviour is supposed to be different from all others on a very much higher level it should be than others and when we come amongst this people well well you may say it's all different and it's all strange but I venture to say that it was not very long if it was long at all before Ruth said I don't know but I feel more at home amongst these people than I did in my own country I somehow or other feel these people are more my people than even my people amongst whom I was born somehow or other I feel this to be more my family than even my natural family now is that true Christians? isn't that exactly what happens? isn't that we cease to love or be concerned for those of our relations who are outside of

Christ but somehow or other those inside of Christ have become our nearest relations we feel more at home and when we go back home to the unconverted relations we don't feel at home at all isn't that we cease to love or be concerned for those of our relations who are outside of Christ but somehow or other those inside of Christ have become our nearest relations we feel more at home and when we go back home to the unconverted relations we don't feel at home at all we feel strangers isn't it true? people we knew not heretofore we seem to know now better than we've ever known anyone else we're at home I'm sure that was true of the world but that is a very blessed wonderful reality a wonderful reality but you see it involves a responsibility alright then their interest must be my interest thy

people shall be my people their interest must be my interest their testimony must be my testimony I must be loyal I must stand with them in what they stand for vocation and finally in this letter strangely enough these people are not universally liked you think they ought to be wonderful people like this about whom all these things that are true well they ought to be the most liked people in the world somehow or other no one likes them they're all disliked by other people and somehow whenever, whenever they are present or are mentioned the very atmosphere seems to get thick that's exactly where this letter to the Ephesians finishes here this people right at the center of this letter and then it says principalities and powers world rulers of this darkness hosts of evil spirits all against

them they're involved in a great spiritual conflict you're involved in that when you come amongst them yes we don't want to tell you otherwise you're involved in that you're probably going to be very much disliked if you become a Christian you're going to find that your very presence sets up a conflict an antagonistic conflict and if it doesn't come from men it'll come from the unseen you know it ah but then being quite frank about it what it means to come to the people whom thou knewest not heretofore there's the other side there's the other side thou art come unto the God of Israel under whose wing thou art come to take refuge under whose wing refuge refuge the wings of the Lord are over the people of the Lord and I want to point out here that the Lord's wings are to be found over his

people you want his wings over you you'll not get them out in nowhere you'll get them in the midst of his people somehow or other the Lord has appointed that all the blessings that he will give are to be found

amongst his people and not to be had apart you've got to come in with the Lord's people to get the wings of the Lord whatever it is that the Lord would have for us we're going to find it relatedly and not independently corporately and not in a detached way now this is very true to the letter from which I've read and I'm keeping true to the scripture that you see here's the protection of the wings under whose wings thou art come to take refuge you want that to be proved from this very little book very well Ruth with her husband left the place of the covenant elect people and went

into nowhere and what happened they lost it and they lost the protection of God calamity upon calamity they fell and Ruth put it this way and I went out proved I am come back in upon she deserted the place where the wings were it always let me say to Christians a disastrous thing to leave the place where the Lord is and where the Lord would have you they may have thought that it was going to ease the situation but it made it a thousand times more difficult not until they came back to the place where the Lord was did they find the Lord's wings and their refuge now that's a word to Christians remember remember forsake the place where the Lord is wherever that may be where the Lord wants you to be and you forsake the Lord's protection it's there forsake the fellowship of his people forsake

the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is and trouble will follow trouble will follow protection is found there in the house of the Lord amongst the people of God and so when they came back it was just put like this under whose wings thou art come to take refuge come where the wings are and ought that not to be oh I must put it like that it ought to be like that and it is and it is where things are as the Lord would have them that people find amongst the Lord's people a refuge a wonderful thing isn't it to belong to the Lord's people when the Lord's people are as the Lord would have them oh what we owe to the Lord's people when we are in trouble what a refuge they are what it is what a thing it is to have them pray for us to take them on our heart care for them oh yes

a refuge amongst the Lord's people it's a sorry thing to be a lonely soul with no spiritual fellows yes that's where the wings are and I perhaps will close with this the Lord is more than once in the Bible spoken of as having wings in this representative or symbolic way and there was one instance in which his wings were referred to in the history of Israel you find it in the book of Deuteronomy says this about Israel speaking to Israel as an eagle casteth forth her young hovereth over them and taketh them upon her wings so the Lord thy God redeemed for as you know the truth of nature the eaglets high high up in the lofty crags overlooking the immense abyss the day comes when the mother eagle seemingly so cruel and heartless takes them and pinches them after them right up never yet been on

the wings how cruel but then she flutters over them and then swoops under them catches them on her wings and takes them back to safety and her cruelty is only her way of teaching them to fly and to take responsibility for themselves and the wings of the Lord are said to have fulfilled that function with his people oh yes it's a terrible experience a frightening experience through which the Lord takes us but his wings are his means of training us to take responsibility and they'll never let us down they'll never let us down the crash that we fear will never come while it is the wings of the Lord not only under which but upon which we have come to rest great thing to have the Lord and the wings of the Lord and the shelter of the people of God and so I finish James say if you haven't come

and the Spirit of God is just laying his gentle constraints upon you and yet sufficiently strong to make you know where you ought to be what you ought to do the way that you ought to take if you haven't responded come and although everything may seem strange and it may seem a great venture and there may seem great risks and great involvements and costs you're going to find that there are very great compensations

far outweighing everything else but the Lord is not going to tell you all about this make it all plain although I'm telling you about it it's only information it can't be real to you until you have made your response it's only what someone else knows or other people know you don't know it until you've made your response but what we can say to you is that the gentlest

influence of the Spirit of God upon your heart constraining you toward Christ involves the greatest things conceivable wrapped up in your response immensely to miss which would be irreparable if you haven't come come I said just now it looked as though Ruth was leaving home and kindred and country but in effect she really only came home but I'm certain she was able to say later this is really home to me and so we say come home come home if you've gone away come back come back you know you're not happy you know you've left home and if you're at home stay at home don't run away don't be driven away don't allow anything to force you away however difficult it may seem your refuge is at home abiding shall we pray

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/1/SID1058.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-cross-and-eternal-glory-part-4/>

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