

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF RUTH

by

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Part One

In a peculiar way, largely because of its comprehensiveness and conciseness, this book sets forth what was brought before us at the beginning of this conference: faith, through adversity, unto enlargement, establishment, and life. That would be so apparent if you could read the little book right through.

If I were to take any particular fragment from this book which I consider to be the key to it, I think I should take from chapter 4, verse 5, the last clause: "to raise the name of the dead upon his inheritance." You could add to that what is in the 15th verse, first clause, "He shall be unto thee a *restorer* of life." I think everything in the book circles around and finds its focal point in that fragment in verse 5 - "raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance."

By universal consent and accord, this book goes by the name of Ruth. But why not Boaz? He was a man, to begin with, without the slightest suggestion of individual comparison, he was not a woman. He was a wealthy man, a religious and highly respected man; a man of outstanding personality; an honoured and distinguished citizen. And he seems to have been the chief and most responsible actor in this drama - and he *was* of Israel. Who was Ruth, after all? What was Ruth? She was a widow. Nothing discreditable about that. She was a Moabitess, and there was a good deal discreditable and dishonourable about that. We shall see that she was a stranger, an alien in the land - why should the book go down in history under her name? Well, you see, the answer to that question is, firstly, the message of the book. But more than that, it is the sum of the whole Bible.

For the whole plan of redemption, in all its principles and in all its glories, is gathered into this little book. You can read it in ten minutes. There is no more comprehensive book in the Bible in relation to the principles of God's way of redemption. This book needs to be rescued from the backseat. I trust that today something of that will be done. I have said that the whole great plan of redemption is found here in principle. And oh, how very much there is here of help for the life of the Lord's people. I confess to you that though I have read it many times and have known it for many years, in some early morning hours, recently, in the far west of America, it brought a new thrill to my own heart as I meditated in this book. I felt the Lord was speaking to me in relation to this conference.

Well, let us come to it, and begin to extract, or take note of, some of the beautiful and wonderful things that it has to say to us.

The book is so simple, isn't it? There's nothing profound here. We're not dealing with mysteries. It's the easiest book of all to read. And so these wonderful things about the Lord, and His people - you and me - are brought to us, without any strain or effort, in the very simplest way. We must not stumble, though, at its simplicity. This book unfolds itself and its message along certain quite clearly discernible lines that run right through it.

We note its historic setting. To what place in the history of the Old Testament does it belong? That is stated for us in the very first sentence: "Now it came to pass in the days when the *judges* ruled." Although it must have been written long after those days, its own internal evidence shows that it was when - not after - the judges ruled. This is not a sequel to the book of Judges. This is something that actually took place in the days of the Judges.

Now you need to be refreshed as to the content of the book of Judges. All that we can say at the moment is that the book of Judges is one of the most terrible

books in the whole Bible. Indeed, the most shocking things in the Bible are found there. There are those things that you don't like to read; you like to pass over them; you just want to shut your eyes, and take no notice. Yes, a dark, terrible and at times a very evil situation existed, showing capabilities of the people of God which are altogether beyond imagination: the depths of iniquity in the human heart; the remote position from the thoughts of God to which His people can come. It is difficult to speak in exaggerated terms of some things in that book. Indeed, more than once, as we read through the book of Judges we have been amazed at the patience of God; the willingness of God to come back to His people. Well, right in that book, while that condition in general existed, you set this contrast. This beautiful picture is given to us in the book of Ruth.

And so we are brought to see God acting, with the long view, in the midst of such conditions, and at such a time. Look at the last words of the book of Judges: "In those days, there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." And the last words of the book of Ruth: "... and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David." God, acting, with a long view, in such conditions, and at such a time. Wonderful to contemplate. Everything seems to be a contradiction of God, and indeed it is. Everything seems to say: "This situation is spiritually hopeless. This is spiritual calamity in its last stages." And right in the midst of that, *God is acting*, with a long view. And He's acting toward that day, bringing in David and the glorious kingdom, and through David another greater than David, and a still more glorious kingdom.

I think that very first thought is a tremendously inspiring one, a tremendously reassuring, comforting and encouraging one. We are sometimes inclined to think that the situation is spiritually very desperate, and very difficult, and the thoughts of God are far from being expressed and represented amongst His people. Things have gone far from that, and I say, it's reassuring to recollect that in worse days than these God was acting, secretly and sovereignly, with a long view, to have it as He ever intended it to be. It's *then* that He did it.

Well, if we said no more, that's help, isn't it? And that's the message here, right at the very beginning.

But let us break this up and let us take up these leading lines, above which the message is unfolded.

The first line, of course, is a dark line. It's the line of tragedy. "In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land." And we know, do we not, that again and again in the history of Israel, the word of the Lord was fulfilled in that very way. In faithfulness to Him, He would bless His people, *in their field*, in their basket, and in their stores. That was fulfilled again and again. Outstandingly, you remember in the days of Elijah: "Thus saith the Lord, 'there shall not be rain upon the earth these seven years'", and the drought and the famine followed, with devastating result. And when you look at the book of Judges, you're not surprised, are you, at this famine? The famine was not just something that happened. It was a part of the divine judgement, because of the spiritual state, because of their lost distinctiveness.

Read in the book of Judges again. Sometimes it seems that even the best people were implicated in this. Gideon! Even in Gideon's own home, the home of his father, there were idols. And later, after the Lord had used Gideon so mightily, he set up an image. The lost distinctiveness of the Lord's people! He was called to stand apart from all other gods. And resultantly, their lost ascendancy over their enemies. A case of constantly reiterated defeat and subjugation to one nation or another. Lost ascendancy, lost unity - they were a disintegrated people morally

and spiritually. They had no authoritative testimony in the world; it was gone. God was not all in the land where He had so signally and wonderfully moved in order that He should be the only God of Israel. We have spoken about this earlier. Dividedness, God was against. And the singleness of God's place, toward which He moved - firstly in calling Abram out of Ur, from the 5,000 gods that were worshipped there, to be His only God; and then, keeping him waiting till the day when Canaan was assailed; through Joshua, for the destruction of the seven nations because of their gods. Clear that land of idolatry, to bring His people into a land where He alone - utterly - was the object of their occupation and worship. Here, there are other idols in the land, and their testimony is gone. He is not all. No wonder there's a famine in the land.

If you like to translate that into spiritual terms, you see, it works that way spiritually now, as it were, literally and historically in the old dispensation. The measure of our food - our spiritual resources, our plenty, our increase, our enlargement - is the measure in which we are conformed to the thoughts of God. It's governed in that way. And there's a great deal of spiritual famine about today. Yes, the Lord's people today are very hungry; indeed, they're starving. And everywhere you go you have this complaint: "We can't find bread. It's difficult to find any spiritual food. There's a famine in hearing the Word in any fullness." And you know, Bible teaching is not always *feeding*. There may be plenty of Bible teaching. Indeed, there may be Bible Institutes galore and the people may still be starving. A large percentage of the Lord's people may attend them and go through their sessions and still be poor, thin, scraggly things in their spiritual life. Don't let us confuse these things for *food is food*; and there is a dearth of real spiritual food and largely because the full thoughts of God for His people do not obtain, do not govern. It's otherwise where they do. So then, there is famine in the land.

Note: "And a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab; he and his wife and his two sons."

Now Elimelech, his wife and two sons were very decent people, very nice people, were very good people. We haven't anything at all that's said against them, in their moral life, in their respectability. Perhaps in their God-fearing, in heart. But here's a thing to note: How often good, and honest, and sincere people of God become involved in tragedy because of the general state of the Church. Look at this line of tragedy. Here it is in verse 1. "They went to sojourn in the country of Moab." Verse 2, "The name of the man is Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion. And they came unto the country of Moab, and continued there, and they took their wives of the women of Moab. The name of the one was Orpah, the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. Mahlon and Chilion died, both of them. And the woman was left of her two sons, and her husband." Verse 20 and Naomi said - "Call me not Naomi; call me Mara - 'bitterness'. I went out full. The Lord hath brought me home again empty. Why call ye me Naomi? Seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me."

It's tragedy, isn't it? *Tragedy*. And it's the tragedy of good people being involved in a situation on the part of the Lord's people more generally, which is not according to the Lord's mind. Do you know what I mean? You see, this was evidently lost heart. This man Elimelech lost heart, lost hope. He lost faith. He said "It's no use staying here. There's nothing for us here. There's no prospect here, no way here. We'd better get out." This man lost heart and hope and faith, and made a terrible mistake which led to tragedy - *because of the state of the Lord's people*. Oh, how many things there are in the lives of so many of the Lord's people which would never be if the Lord's people as a whole were right.

You think of all the things which have come in to Christianity, which ought never to have come in, and would never have, if the original position of the day of Pentecost and afterward had been maintained. All the things that came in when spiritual decline came in, and all this terrible heritage of the day when the Church began to lose its spiritual position. And how many have become involved? We've got to take this attitude, dear friends, about people who seem to be in a mess. Why are so many in a mess? It's not their own fault. It's because they haven't got the help they ought to have, by the Church, and amongst the people of God. Because things are not in that condition when they can get their help amongst the people of God.

You see, *the state of the Lord's people collectively has a very tragic repercussion upon the individuals of the Lord's people and their lives.* When the Lord's people collectively are in a right spiritual state, corresponding to the Lord's mind and thought and revealed will, then the individuals find their safety among the Lord's people, and are saved from a lot of mistakes. They find their life there. They find their guidance there. They find their protection there. They find their wisdom there. That's how it ought to be. But because that state is not so, as the Lord would have it, lots of people are just making terrible mistakes and blunders. They're involved in this whole thing, and it's tragedy for many individuals because they haven't got the values of the corporate and collective life of the Lord's people as He would have it. We must be very considerate and very sympathetic, and very understanding. For the blame is not always upon the individual. They have become involved in a Christianity which has brought in a lot of things that God never intended, and which never would have been if things had continued as at the beginning.

So here are decent, respectable, nice people, God-fearing in their own heart, but moving out along a line of terrible tragedy, because the nation was wrong, because the corporate body was wrong. It was like that.

But then, *they're not altogether without blame, because there is individual responsibility. And tragedy just must overtake those who surrender their faith and principle to policy or personal security.*

Have you got that? You see, they knew quite well that the covenant related to that land, which was their home. They belonged to the covenant land and the covenant people, and they knew quite well what God had said about other lands and *especially about Moab.* Whether they'd slipped up, in forgetting their Bibles, I'm not able to say; but, you know, we get into a lot of trouble by *not knowing our Bibles.* Doing a lot of things that are altogether wrong, whereas the Bible has something to say about that quite precisely and definitely, if only we would know our Bibles, read carefully our Bibles.

You know, David got into a terrible, terrible bit of trouble on one occasion because he forgot his Bible. Over the cart and the ark. Putting the ark on the cart. Oh yes, and the Lord said the Levites should carry the ark, not a cart. It was *there*, in the Bible. David was very upset with the Lord for smiting the drivers of the cart to death. But he went and had it out with the Lord, and took his Bible and found where it was written that the *Levites should carry the Ark.* And he adjusted things, but it did not mean that he was saved from the tragedy. Listen to this: The Lord has given us the Word and made known His mind to us. He won't save us from the tragedy. He won't save us from the tragedy that follows our ignorance of what we could know, and *should* know. That's a very deep lesson that comes out of this case.

So, tragedy *must* overtake those who surrender faith. Ah, yes! It was a call to faith, wasn't it? You see, the whole of this wonderful story in this little book works out to such a triumphant issue because *faith* comes in somewhere. Faith came back where it had been lost. We mustn't anticipate, but you see, it came back, right into the family circle of Elimelech.

The lost faith led to the tragedy. The recovered faith led to *recovery and glory*.

Ah, yes! A very severe test of faith, it's true. A *severe* test of faith, *but you've got a principle here*. The Lord Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights and was hungered. The situation perhaps, physically, was quite critical, perhaps desperate. And Satan said, "Come on, let these stones be made bread."

Here's a test of faith in the Father, isn't it? You see the principle? Whether faith in the Father will lead us to do the right thing or loss of faith will lead us to do the wrong thing?

What a tragedy it would have been if the Lord Jesus had surrendered faith in His Father to apparent necessity, to the circumstances which seemed after all so desperate and so serious.

Here it is: Elimelech let go his faith under testing. Surrendered it to circumstances. *Surrendered it to policy*. And one of the most disastrous things is *policy* - what is it politic to do, as over against what God has said? Allowing policy to govern, or our own advantage, our own security, our own well-being, when God has made His mind about it perfectly clear in His Word.

You see, we cannot, after all, preserve our fullness (1:21). "I went out full". We cannot preserve our fullness off of God's ground. We may have a lot, but get off of God's ground and you can't keep it. They thought they would keep it all, you see, by going to Moab. To preserve their fullness, they went out full. Evidently, they took everything with them. They thought they would be quite secure. They'd brought everything with them. *Full they went out, she said, and they came back empty*.

We can preserve nothing at all if we get off of God's ground, if we get onto ground that is foreign to God. And Moab was altogether foreign to God, and foreign to God's covenant. Indeed, it was worse than that.

And so Naomi said, in these terrible words: "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home empty." "The Lord hath testified against me, the Almighty hath afflicted me."

You see, God acted sovereignly, in disapproval. What for? *To get them back*. *Adversity under God's hand is always intended to be firstly, a corrective and then a restorative*. God is sovereign, and He acted sovereignly with them. And so He brought this adversity upon them. He could do no other. In His kindness, in His mercy, and according to His beneficent thought, He chastened them.

David said, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray." How true that is here in this case. Ah, yes, it's all the dark line. Here is, what? Well, *death*. Elimelech is dead. His two sons are dead. *Death, deadlock, impasse*. No way then! Everything has come to a deadlock, to a standstill. All tied up. Barrenness. Naomi tells that of herself and the two wives of her two sons - No children! All is barrenness and death when we act contrary to the revealed mind of God.

*It is a terrible lesson - No fruitful ministry if we're off of God's ground. Oh, take it to heart! God has made His mind perfectly clear: on all matters concerning my life and service, He has laid down His principles. He has told us where and on what ground He will meet us; He has told us that it is in His House that He'll meet with His people. He has told us that He has appointed in His House certain things and certain people, under the Holy Spirit's anointing, for our direction, for our safety, and for our good. Let us get off of that ground and see what happens. You can put it to the test. God forbid that you would, but it's apparent, it's quite clear. There's limitation and spiritual death, and barrenness. The lives that are just moving fast on toward their close, with a story of barrenness that might have been a story of fullness, of richness of service, because they *would not* and *will not* recognize God's principles amongst His people.*

Say what you like about it. Blame the Lord's people; blame the Lord's servants if you will. God's word is perfectly clear on that. We shall find our way, and we shall find our service on the ground that God has laid down. And if we, knowing that, or, having had it given to us in the Word of God, (and we should know it) ignore it, or give ourselves out of it, depart from it, refuse to have it, violate it - alright - spiritual death, spiritual barrenness, spiritual deadlock.

These are things that we should lay to heart, hard as they sound. Let's lay them to heart. The inheritance which ought to be ours, and is ours by right, by covenant, as in this case, either falls into abeyance - we're deriving nothing from it - or it passes to others. There's a terrible warning in the book of the Revelation - "Let no man take thy crown." That crown that could be ours passing to others.

Well, that's one of the lines upon which this whole story unfolds. It's a tragic line. It's the dark line. And I know you're oppressed by it. Still, it's as well that we recognize the message of this book. Because, dear friends, it's not only a message which applies to us individually in our Christian lives, but you see, this is one of the major lines of the whole doctrine of redemption, which probably we shall see later on.

Until you recognize the ground of death, the reasons for death and deadlock, and barrenness, you're not in a position to appreciate the wonderful, wonderful *mercy of God*.

So we pass to the next line along which the book unfolds. We could gather that under one little phrase and title of the Lord's well known to us in the New Testament, the *God of hope*. That's a dark, terrible background, but over that stands this - The God of Hope.

Ruth 1:6 *"Then she arose with her daughter-in-laws, that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread."*

Verse 22, *"Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab, and they came to Bethlehem, in the beginning of the barley harvest."*

Good news from a far country! Good news in a far country. She had heard. Out of the land, in the land of Moab God had visited His people. It's difficult to place this in the book of Judges. But it was evidently one of those periods between the tragedies that were there. There were those periods, as you know in the Judges, when the situation was changed. For a little while, under Gideon, for instance, and under Deborah, and under others - insight patches in a long, dark day of 400 years. It was evidently in one of those brighter periods in that dark history, that

this is set. *"The Lord visited His people, and gave them bread."* - and they passed from famine to harvest.

There is a place where God meets us, but He will only meet us in that place. And that place is *resurrection - on resurrection ground*.

Well, "the Lord is risen indeed!" Says Thomas, "I won't believe it." And so he was not with them when the Lord appeared at first. He was somewhere away, outside, wandering about, perhaps, in his despair and darkness. The Lord never went after Thomas. He let him get on with it, let him stew in his misery. "Here is the place where I'll meet you, where you *believe* that I am risen." "Be not faithless, but believing." It was a question of faith, wasn't it? To believe in the resurrection.

The good news had gone out. "We have seen the Lord. The Lord is risen", but he wound up not believing the good news; and so he was left outside in the dark - and the Lord didn't go out to him. It was not until he came in. How it was he came in on that day we don't know. Something had been going on in him. Perhaps he'd come to the place where he said - "I'm certainly getting nowhere along this line. This is getting me nowhere. If there is any hope at all it seems to be amongst those people, in that room. The least I can do is to go and see." Ah, yes, and when he got on to the ground where the Lord was believed and where they were enjoying the reality of His resurrection, the Lord met him and he met the Lord.

There is always a ground, you know, like that. You know, the story of the prodigal has that aspect to it. The elder brother would *not* go in. Alright, let him stay outside as miserable as he could be. All the rejoicing is inside. He's got to come on to *resurrection ground* in order to be in the good of *resurrection life and joy*. That's the place where the Lord meets us, you see, *the barley harvest*.

Now you Bible students know quite well that *barley* is always the type of resurrection. It's the first of the harvests of the grain. Barley is referred to quite a lot in this little book, isn't it? Let's look. Six times in the little book. And from the barley harvest Ruth comes into her new life, her new fullness, by what Boaz gives her of this store of barley. Everything is resting on the *barley* and the *barley harvest*.

What about those five barley loaves with which the Lord fed multitudes? What did He go on to say immediately afterwards? "My flesh is life indeed." "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Well, the mystery of Christ imparting His life to us is only known by our being on resurrection ground, isn't it? The Holy Spirit ministering Christ after His resurrection. His resurrection, His risen Life ministered to us. It's the barley loaf, you see. You can go through the Bible with it and see it; it's always this one thing: *resurrection*.

1 Peter 1:3-4 "The living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away reserved for you." You can read that right in the book of Ruth.

So God always moves back, as well as forward, along the line of resurrection. That's the message here. He's moving back along the line of resurrection. In other words, *God is always on the positive line*. This situation is no pleasure to God, no satisfaction to God. This tragedy of things - either in the land or in the lives of these few - gives God no glory. He always reacts to a situation like that on the principle and the line of *resurrection*.

He's on a *positive* line. *Do believe this*. Are you somewhere in a tragic situation? Have you come to arrest? A deadlock, an impasse, and barrenness? Do you feel you've got off the Lord's ground? *Listen*, the Lord doesn't accept that, and He doesn't want you to accept that. The Lord does not believe that is the ultimate thing. The Lord acts on positive lines. There is no despair and tragedy so deep and terrible but that the Lord will react to it in *resurrection*.

Oh, lay hold of this by faith, lay hold of this, that *God is the God of resurrection!* God is the God of the barley harvest. His answer to death and desolation? He is the God who raiseth the dead.

If you feel like that, believe Him, as that. Believe Him.

There's good news for you. As for Naomi, Good News. The reversing of all our misfortunes is in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Have you got that? Yes.

Part Two

And so it says - "They went of the country of Moab." Why? They'd heard good news of the resurrection, and believed it, and acted upon it. They didn't say, "Oh, that's all talk; don't believe that's true. That's only a rumour."

No, they believed the report. There was resurrection. And they put their faith into action, and they went in that direction, embraced it by faith, and found it to be true.

The thing that you and I are called upon to do many times in our lives - *to believe in the God who raiseth the dead and lay hold of that resurrection by faith and commit ourselves to it in definite acts, to prove our faith by our works.* And on that ground we inherit the fruits of His resurrection. *The curse is removed.* You see, Moab lay under the curse. It remained under the curse. It was an accursed country and people. And in itself, Moab was still under the curse; but they left the ground of the curse because of resurrection.

You see the doctrine, can't you, of the New Testament in that? Yes, the curse, it's over all this creation as it is. But because Jesus has been made a curse for us, and has suffered the judgement, and has risen for us as justification, on the ground of resurrection we leave the ground of Moab, the place of the curse, and come into the fruits of His *resurrection!* And how rich they are!

Beware of getting back into the land of Moab. That is, because of the earth touch. Touching in your spirit the realm that still lies under the curse. And this world is still under the curse. Beware of a voluntary touch, in spirit, in life, with that which lies under judgement. For it means depriving you again of your spiritual life, and of your fruitfulness, and of your joy and your peace. Beware of the earth touch.

Note, then, God's action in *resurrection* is to make His place what it should be. You see, it's *Bethlehem*, and Bethlehem means "House of Bread." And when there's a famine that covers Bethlehem, that's somewhat altogether contrary to its very name.

Another line unfolding, running through this book, may be seen in several fragments.

Chapter 2:1 *"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz."*

Verse 20 *"And Naomi said unto her: "The man is near of kin unto us; one of our near kinsmen."*

Chapter 3:9 *"And he said, 'Who art thou?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth, thine handmaid. Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.'"*

Verse 12 *"And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman; howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I."*

Chapter 4:1 *"Then went Boaz up to the gate and sat him down there. And behold the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by, unto whom he said, 'Oh, such a one, turn aside, sit down here!' And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, 'Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsmans 'Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's; and I thought to add the ties, or to disclose*

unto thee, saying 'Buy it before the inhabitants that sit here, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it, but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee.'"

"And he said, 'I will redeem it!' Then said Boaz, 'What day thou buyest the fields at the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.'

And the kinsman said, 'I cannot redeem it myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou my right to thyself, for I cannot redeem it!'

Romans 3:24 *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"*

1 Corinthians 1:30 *"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God was made unto us... redemption"*

Ephesians 1:14 *"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of His glory."*

So we proceed with our meditation in the Book of Ruth.

This wonderful book comprehends within the small compass of its few pages the whole of the principles and the properties of God's complete plan of redemption. The book has many things, as we have seen, of real value to our Christian lives in our course here on the earth; it also has these greater aspects of the great doctrine of salvation. That we shall see again as we proceed this afternoon, and undertake to cover in this present meditation this phrase which we have just read from Romans 3:24 "In the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Ruth presents to us vividly, clearly, strongly, our own lost state. Take her birth: what a hopeless beginning her birth represented. You know perhaps, the origin of Moab. Moab was the product of incest, Lot's incest with his own daughter. That's not a very propitious, promising beginning. And then later, the curse pronounced upon Moab collectively, as a nation. That curse - which we have recorded in Deuteronomy 23 - "The Ammonites and the Moabites shall not come into the congregation of the Lord *forever*" represents a fairly hopeless situation into which to be born. *Without God, and without hope* in this world.

And then, by those tragic results of the conditions which we find in the book of Judges, the leaving of the land of covenant by Elimelech, his wife and two sons, and all the sequence of trouble and disaster which overtook them in Moab - the father-in-law is dead, her husband is dead; without helper or protector. An inheritance of death. That describes our state by nature, in every detail. Born in sin, shaped in iniquity. There's a curse resting on the very world into which we are born, and upon the very race to which we belong, by nature. And truly this New testament phrase applies - "Without God and without hope in the world." That's the state of the sinner and that's the state of every one of us by nature; and we have no helper here. Paul says "dead, through trespasses and sins." Dead.

That's the background, very clearly set forth in this book: No human loss and hopelessness, leading to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

And we saw this all, that the good news reached Moab, somehow; that there was resurrection, the barley harvest. Resurrection was on, and the news reached

these desolate souls far off, and they left Moab, the place of desolation, the curse, and judgement, the place of utter hopelessness, and went to *Bethlehem*, the place of resurrection; and through resurrection the whole glorious work of redemption was wrought out, as they entered into it. *Redemption through resurrection*. That's the gospel - "'Begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'" *On the ground of His resurrection, full redemption*.

Of course that doesn't stir any of you. It's quite obvious, because you're so familiar with it. You know all about it. But do you? God have mercy upon us if ever that loses its charm and its freshness.

But not only on the ground of resurrection was there redemption, but on the ground of *union with the Redeemer*. That's an extra step. Resurrection union with the redeeming kinsman. That is the next stage. And let us remind ourselves that that is the heart and the sum of the gospel. We break the gospel up into fragments and speak about forgiveness, atonement, justification, and so on. But they are all parts of the *One Thing*. The sum and core of redemption, of salvation, is *vital union with the Redeemer*.

Redemption is not a thing, a doctrine, a truth; redemption is a relationship with a *living Person*.

That makes Redemption so full of possibilities and potentialities. You see, Ruth might have been saved from her deplorable condition, and might have come into the land and, or, a little patch of it, and come into certain personal benefits, but look how much more accrued to her by union with Boaz. Not only then, but look at the last words of the book, and look through the last words of the book right on, down the ages. We'll look at that again, presently.

But this redemption was not just something that saved from. It was something that *saved unto*. It was not just something for the time being, or for her life, personally, with certain advantages and values. It was someone who comprehended all, and carried her into a tremendously full heritage.

Yes, redemption, salvation, is *union*. It's *living union with a living Person*.

And so we are led by that union to the inheritance which is ours *in Christ*.

Now note carefully the details, Ruth's lost inheritance, or the loss of the inheritance was due to union in a first marriage. It was because she had been married to Elimelech's son, that this whole question of inheritance arose, and the whole question of the difficulty of this inheritance arose. Indeed she had no connection with this thing only by reason of that marriage union. It brought the whole thing up into meaning. But it was lost by that union in the first marriage.

And I think that that first marriage has a side light thrown upon *nearest kinsman*. Not Boaz, but the other one. The *nearest* kinsman.

Who is our nearest kinsman by nature? The Old Adam; and we know he's a very near kinsman. Indeed, he's far too near. He is always imminent, always on the spot. He is never very far off.

Boaz said "There is another kinsman nearer than I", and that is very true. We need not work at it, or try to explain it, for we know how true, by nature, it is. There's a very near kinsman.

It's very interesting, isn't it - the unfolding of this thing. You can see very much more in it than I'm saying, if you know your New Testament, and especially the letter to the Romans. I think it's wonderful. It's almost fascinating. Boaz, the to-be-Redeeming-Kinsman. There is a *nearer*, and the responsibility rests with him in the first place; and responsibility does rest in the first place with Adam the first. Responsibility for this situation, and responsibility to do something about it. We're not talking about *ability*, but *responsibility*.

Therefore, Boaz says "Let's put this thing on him, and see what he can do about it." You see, that opens up that whole realm of whether man can find in himself, in his own natural life, in his own heredity, his redemption - in the nearest kinsman, the old Adam. And is it not just the working of that principle which the Lord follows out when He convicts a soul of a lost condition, and then, so often for a time lets that soul go through an experience by which it is coming to know more and more that salvation is not in itself? The fact is that our great Redeeming Kinsman does that sort of thing. He says, "Alright, if you can save yourself, save yourself. I'll stand back. I'll give you a chance. I'll give the old Adam a full chance, a clear way. I'll give all that humanism a full scope. Let's see what it can and will do." And look at the world that has said it can be its own saviour, that there's every good and possibility and power in human nature to redeem itself and change itself. Well, what's the answer?

Yes, the Lord brings this home to one whom He is going to bring into the good of redemption. He lets that one know that the nearest kinsman, the old man, the old Adam, is absolutely impotent. He leads up to the point where He and He only is the Redeemer, and He'll not share this thing with anybody.

And so, in His own way, He does put the responsibility there where it first of all belongs. He says, "Now then, do it if you can." And I venture to say that there is no one who ever really comes *livingly* into the good of redemption who has not come beforehand to the place of absolute hopelessness as for themselves or anybody else saving them. And I'm not sure that the Lord doesn't press that more and more *after* we are saved to make us know that really after all there is no kinsman but Himself who can do this business - either in us or outside of us.

"Well," says Boaz, "there is a nearer kinsman, and let's see what he can do about it." And so he, in a way, stands back for the other man, to give him a chance.

Dear friend, if you are still struggling to save or sanctify yourself, struggling and striving to in some way bring about redemption, at the beginning or at any other point in your Christian life, the Lord's going to leave you to it. He's not going to do anything about it until that court of appeal says "No, we can do nothing about it;" until the resource is proved utterly impotent. The thing for Christians to remember, as well as unsaved people - and you will realize that I am keeping closely to the letter to the Romans, because it was written to Christians, and it's about the two Adams, isn't it?

Well, it takes some of us a long time, even to get there, where we have once and for all closed the door of hope upon the old Adam, upon the *nearest* kinsman. Boaz puts the responsibility upon him in the first place, and challenges him and says "Now then, what are you going to do about it? Here's the situation, the responsibility lies at your door. What are you going to do about it?"

And it is found, inevitably, in the long run, that he can't do anything about it. Oh, he makes a first gesture and response, and says "I'll do it - I'll do it." But when there is that which rises up and says "I can deal with this matter; I can save this

situation; I can save myself" - that is because the whole *implication of redemption* has not been recognized.

And so Boaz just let the man know that there's something more in it than that; a great deal more in it than that. It is not only just doing this legal thing; but he has got to raise up an everlasting testimony in the House of Israel. A testimony of resurrection.

The Old Man can't do that; and when the real implications of this thing are presented to the Old Man he says "I can't do anything about it."

And why is he unable? Why is this disability upon him? Look at it, "Lest I mar mine own inheritance."

I confess that I don't altogether understand what that means, but I think I can get somewhere toward its meaning by interpreting in the light of the New Testament. You see, the Old Man is just *tied up* - just tied up, with his own interests; his own matters; and he can't do anything about this because he is so personally tied up. This nearest kinsman was like that. His disability was that he'd got all that he could do to cope with his own situation; all that he could do to look after his own inheritance. What could he do about redemption?

That's true to life, isn't it? It's true to experience. This other thing keeps us too much occupied, and too busy, to be able to do anything about heaven, and eternity, and the things of God. And if we begin to think of God - well, it's going to spoil our little bit down here in this world; it's going to upset things down here for us. Yes, that's the thing up against which souls come so often when there is presented to them the whole matter of salvation in Christ Jesus and their eternal well-being. They say, "Yes, but, oh, *see what it means giving up; see what it costs; see what it will involve in terms of friends, and my position*, etc. I'll mar my inheritance if I begin to take on this other matter of the eternal affairs. If I begin to consider the whole matter of redemption, it's going to spoil the fun for me in this world."

Of course, that's all wrong, but people are so tied up, aren't they? In their own affairs; and the old man is so tied up like that, in looking after himself, that he is just not free to entertain this matter. And his disability lies there, in his bondage to the world. And his bondage to it's king, it's overload. He just can do nothing about it.

Very well, when that is established, and proved, and settled, then Boaz steps right in. That Old Man must give it up and get out of the way.

Well, there, Christians. It's your trouble, as much as the sinners, this trying to effect your redemption; this trying to find something that will please God in yourself; this struggle and striving of the Old Man to in some way redeem or save himself. Oh, that Old Man must give it up and get out of the way before the Lord will do it. And He never will until we get there. Get out of the Lord's way! When we come to that position, then the Redeeming Kinsman, our Greater Boaz, will step in and take over.

But note this, and I think it's something about Boaz really to be noted - He never forced or asserted himself. He stood back, so to speak, and waited and waited. There's no asserting, no forcing.

If there's anyone here this afternoon who is not really the Lord's, the Lord Jesus is not going to force Himself on you, to be your Redeemer. He is not going to

assert Himself to take over. He'll wait until you come to the place where you say, "He's the only One who can do it; He is the only One."

So Boaz did not put his hand on this and assert himself to possess. He will give ample opportunity to any other course that we may think could do the thing. And He'll wait until all other resources have been exhausted, and we come to the place where we realize that *He is able*, and He is the only one who *is* able. Boaz was *able* to do it. But more than that, while waiting, He was perfectly *willing* to do it.

I confess to you, and probably, as you have been reading this little book, that when I got to that place when Boaz said to Ruth, "There's a kinsman nearer than I, and we must let him have his chance" - a flutter took place in me, so we find here - "Here's a man desperately in love with this woman". He wants her, but he's *hiding it all*, and giving the other man a chance. Oh, supposing the other man, supposing he does. Poor Boaz.

Yes, the Lord Jesus is full of concern, full of love for you and for me. He is desperately anxious to have us. But He knows quite well we shall never appreciate Him until everybody else is out of the way. And so He's not going to have a half allegiance. He's prepared to let go all, rather than have only a half, and take second place. He'll run all the risks. "If you can find another Saviour, then, alright find Him. You must come to the place where I am everything before I'm going to do anything about this." He is jealous to have such a place. He is *able*; He is *willing*; and He is *anxious*, though it's hidden, perhaps; and He is *untrammelled*. He is *free*. He has no other pre-occupations or interests. He is unlike this other man; nothing of interest with Him. He's free from all such things.

Part Three

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, Chapter 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 Chapter 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 levelled 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 Moabitess" 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 Moabitess 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.