

Place: Lurgan Baptist 22:2:2005

Reading: Ruth 2:1-7

THE ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION

4. THE PLAN UNFOLDING

Many Christians are like the little girl that fell out of bed one night. Her mother heard her crying and rushed to see what was wrong. “ *Mummy, Mummy, I fell out of bed,* ” sobbed the little girl. Her mother picked her up, pulled her close and said, “ *Honey, why did you fall out of bed ?* ” The little girl answered, “ *I was sleeping to close to where I got in.* ” Many believers are living to close to where they got in when they were saved. They need to grow and move on in the Christian life. You see, Ruth is a picture of a young believer. She was in a strange land. Her actions outline the spiritual conduct of one newly come to the faith. Her attitude of care for others, lowliness, diligence, obedience and thankfulness is an excellent role for new converts. As a gleaner she is a picture of a newborn soul, going forth into the fields of Scripture, to gather food for the new life. It was not sufficient to make the right choice in confessing faith in the Lord, Ruth needed food to sustain her in the land.

So if in (Ch 1) we see *Ruth Deciding*, then in (Ch 2) we see *Ruth Gleaning*. Chapter one is all about *Grief*, Chapter 2 is all about *Guidance*. If (Ch 1) is about *Weeping*, then (Ch 2) is about *Working*. If (Ch 1) is marked by *Sorrow*, then (Ch 2) is filled with *Service*.

In (Ch 1) we come from *the Forbidden Land*, to (Ch 2) were we go into *the Harvest Field*. Ruth soon discovers that she has been brought not only into a place of satisfaction (2:14) but into a place of service. Now there are three pictures in this passage this that I want you to see. Picture no 1 is all about,

(1) RUTH GLEANING

Did you notice the threefold request in this chapter, which is as follows, (1) “ *Let me go,* ” (2:2) This splendid ambition is often seen in the new convert.

(2) “ *Let me glean,* ” (2:7) For the young believer desires to glean in the Word of God and find that which will satisfy his soul. (3) “ *Let me find,* ” (2:13) What a

righteous desire. She wants to find favour in the sight of her Lord. She is seeking the smile of Him who alone is able to bestow. (1) Now sometimes we hear folk talking of Ruth reaping, but Ruth was not a reaper she was a gleaner. Look at (2:2, 3, 7, 8, 23) *You see, there is a difference between a reaper and a gleaner.* The reapers here were gathering in the harvest, the gleaners were gathering in the ears of corn left by the reapers. The reapers were not gathering for themselves but for their Master. Ruth however, was gathering grain for herself, and for the sustenance of Naomi. (2:18) Now if the reapers represent the servants of God who minister the Word and seek to bring souls to Christ, then Ruth pictures the new convert who needs to gather for herself before she can gather for her Master. Sometimes young Christians want to go out witnessing right away, when they themselves have never ever gleaned yet. They want to feed others when they themselves are terribly underfed. Twelve times in this (Ch 2) we find the word “ *glean,* ” and that sets the trend of the chapter. For the occupation of the redeemed soul is gleaning. Now this word “ *gleaning,* ” comes from a Hebrew word (laqat) meaning to “ *pick up,* ” or “ *to gather.* ” The picture is that of individuals who follow the reapers and glean and gather than which remains. Now there is a law which should be kept in mind when studying the Word of God.

Its called *the law of the first mention.* The way we find something mentioned the first time in Scripture is indicative of what its meaning shall be throughout the Word of God. (Exod 16:4-5) Do you see that word “ *gather,* ” it’s the same Hebrew word as that used here in (Ch 2) Do you see what the means ? It means gleaning and gathering are the same thing. Now its interesting to notice that the law of the first mention relates this gathering to manna. Manna was the food that God sent down from heaven. Manna is a type of the Incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus who said, “ *I am the bread of life.* ” (Jn 6:35) Manna is also a type of the Written Word. (Deut 8:1-3) Now do you see what is to be the occupation of the redeemed soul ? We are to gather bread from heaven, we are to glean precious truths from the Word of God. *According to J.A. Carlson a bird can go 9 days without food, a man 12 days, a dog 20 days, a turtle 500 days, a snake 800 days, a fish 1000 days, insects 1200 days, but the Christian cannot go one day without spiritual food.* (1) Now there was,

(a) A SCRIPTURALNESS ABOUT THIS:

That is, the Word of God encouraged Ruth to glean. Now in the Old Testament we find some very strange laws. Strange to us because we haven’t anything in our legal system today that corresponds to them. You see, to glean grain was part of the Law. This was God’s way of taking care of the poor. And Ruth and Naomi are very

poor. The very fact that Ruth says she wants to go and glean is indicative of their poverty. And my God is concerned for the poor. Now lets have a look at this Law.

(Lev 19:9 Deut 24:19) Do you see the three categories ? ***The stranger, the fatherless, the widow !*** Now Ruth came under two of those categories, the stranger and the widow ! Evidently both Naomi and Ruth knew about this regulation in the Word of God, and so Ruth was claiming her privilege as a poor stranger in the land. She said to herself, “ *Since God has given this instruction in his Word, if I obey it by faith, then in grace He will lead for me and provide for me.* You see, the Word of encouraged her to glean. Does God’s Word not encourage you to glean ? To go to the Word and there gather spiritual food for yourself. Is this not what the Saviour Himself hinted at when He said, “ *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* ” (Matt 4:4) Christ said, “ *Search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of Me.* ”

(Jn 5:39) Do you recall Paul’s words to young Timothy ? “ *Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.* ” (2 Tim 2:15) So many believers who have been years on the Christian pathway still love to be spoon fed, but my how good are you at gleaning for yourself ? (a)

(b) A SUBMISSIVENESS ABOUT THIS:

Ruth was a grown woman. She had been married and had her own home. She was living at a time when everyone was doing that which was right in their own eyes, yet,

1. Ruth submitted to Naomi:

For here she is asking permission to go to the fields, and from her mother in law, no less. What is wrong with Ruth ? She was obviously “ *square,* ” not “ *with it.* ” I mean had Ruth not heard of “ *women’s lib,* ” and

“ *rights for women ?* ” Do you see what Ruth is doing ?

She is respecting the older woman’s experience and position in the home and therefore she was submissive.

Do you recall what Peter wrote ? “ *Ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder.* ” (1 Pet 5:5) Why ? Because they are a source of counsel, direction, and experience.

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2. Ruth submitted to the Reapers:

Look if you will at (2:7) She had the Word of God to guide her but she still acted in a sweet and submissive manner. She didn't say, " *Well I don't need to submit to these men, who are they anyhow ?*" My do you realise that you have a responsibility to those who minister the Word and oversee ? Do you know what it is ? Let me give it you in one word ! **Obedience !** The Word of God plainly says, " *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls, as they that must gave account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.*" (Heb 13:17) You may not agree with every thing that the elders of this church stand for, but what is your responsibility according to this Book ? Obedience !

3. Ruth submitted to Boaz:

Look at (2:10) Now she not know who he was or what he could do for her, but she knew that he was in charge and so she submitted herself to him. Peter speaking of Christian ladies in his epistle speaks of that which " *is in the sight of God of great price.*" Do you know what it is ? " *A meek and quiet spirit.*" (1 Pet 3:4) Ruth had it. And because she was submissive to the Lord and to others, God begun to work on her behalf. (a) (b)

(c) A SENSIBLENESS ABOUT THIS:

You see, Ruth was interested in going to work to solve the problem of the need of food. Proverbs speaking of the virtuous woman says this, " *she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.*" (31:27) My Ruth was industrious. She engaged in the tiring, backbreaking task of following the reapers and picking up stalks of grain which had fallen to the ground during the reaping process. R. A. Torrey tells how in one of his early pastorates he asked one of his members how she was getting on in her Christian life. She replied, " *Very poorly. My life is a disgrace to me and the church.*" Torrey asked, " *do you read and study your Bible every day ?*" She answered " *No, but I do look at it occasionally when I have time.*" A little baby was lying in a cot nearby. " *Suppose you underfed that baby, do you think the baby would grow ?*" " *No,*" she said, " *the baby would eventually die.*" Torrey responded, " *yet that is the way you are feeding your soul.*"

Spurgeon said, " *if we think our bodies require refreshment by food three times a day, can we think less will serve out souls.*" Ruth went to work and she met Boaz and as you glean in the Scriptures you'll come into contact with Christ for He is

the theme of all the Scriptures. (Jn 5:39) My there is no easy way to Christian growth and maturity. We must meditate on the Word. (a) (b) (c)

(d) A SELFLESSNESS ABOUT THIS:

Why did Ruth do this ? Why did she go to the field and glean ? Well, she was thinking of Naomi who was older and had experienced a great deal of difficulty. Now Ruth could have set on the “ *pity pot.* ” She could have immersed herself in “ *self pity,* ” after all she had lost her husband, she had left her home. But no, Ruth thought about others. One of the best ways to cure discouragement and despondency is to do something for someone else. John Keble, a British preacher of over a century ago wrote these words, “ *when you find yourself overpowered as it were by melancholy, the best way is to go out and do something kind to somebody or other.* ”

(e) A SERIOUSNESS ABOUT THIS:

For Ruth had worked steadily from the morning right up until the time of speaking with this unnamed servant.

(2:7) Now gleaning was not a dignified employment but Ruth did it thoroughly and whole heartedly. Now let me ask you, how serious are you in your study of this Book ? Let me tell you, if you intend to glean from the Word of God it will require diligence, time and perseverance. Its interesting to notice that Ruth’s gleaning was interspersed with periods of rest. Do you know what the Bible says ? “ *Much study is a weariness of the flesh.* ” (Eccl 12:12) Be diligent in your study of the Word, but remember to chew the cud, so that the Word will really affect your life. (1) Are you ? Brethren, how much time are you giving to this Book ? Is the silence that we hear at the Breaking of Bread when it comes to ministry indicative of the fact that you have nothing to give, and you have nothing to give because you have never taken time to glean ? (1)

(2) GOD GUIDING

Did you notice that little phrase in (2:3) “ *Her hap,* ” or literally “ *her lot.* ” Now if you had seen Ruth going out that day, you would have seen a girl who had no idea into which field she would go. How is she going to find her way into the field of Boaz ? Well, (2:3) “ *her hap,* ” the word “ *hap,* ” is an old Anglo-Saxon word coming from the same stem as “ *perhaps,* ” or “ *happens.* ” So how did she find her way into the field of Boaz when it was so important that she go into the right field ? Did the Lord put up a stop sign, a red,

amber and green light ? Did He point an arrow into the right field ? I don't think so. Well, then did a voice speak out of heaven ? Did Ruth have a vision ? How in the world is this girl going to get into the right field ? Well, lets ask Ruth. "*Ruth, I am sure that you had some pretty definite leading about the field of Boaz.*" And she would reply, "*No I didn't. You had better go back and read the book of Ruth again. It says that my "hap," was to light on this field. I just happened to go in there.*" You see, from a human point of view it was just a happening, but from God's point of view, He is going to lead her into the right field. Now if you had asked Ruth if she knew she was going into the right field, she would have said, "*I don't know what you are talking about.*" And had you asked her why she chose the field she did, I think she would have said to you, "*well I had the Word of God encouraging me to glean, and before I left home this morning I asked God to lead me.*"

With Ruth this was chance, with God this was providence. Ruth's purpose was to glean, God's purpose was to guide. This was no accident, this was an appointment. You see, when you submit yourself to the Lord and others, He will lead you and guide you and

" all things will work together for you good."

(Rom 8:28) Now there were no fences dividing the fields, only boundary markers. There was no sign that proclaimed, "*Boaz Incorporated, Visitors Welcome.*" Why then did Ruth pick this field ? The answer is found in the Word of God. "*In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths.*" (Prov 3:5-6) "*As thou goest step by step the way shall open up before thee.*"

(4:12) Ruth's heart was right with God, she was marked by sweet submission, she was fulfilling her daily obligations when "*her hap,*" occurred. Dr. F. B. Meyer was crossing from Dublin to Holyhead one dark night. He asked the Captain of the ship, "*how do you find Holyhead harbour on such a dark starless night as this ?*" The Captain replied, "*do you see those three lights just ahead ? These must be lined up behind the other in one straight line of vision, and I follow them, keeping the ship in line with the three, until I safely enter the harbour.*" Dr. Meyer, using the illustration, compared the three lights to the light of God's Word, the inward conviction of the Holy Spirit, and the divine arrangement of circumstances in the Christian's life.

My God's providential working in our lives is both a delight and a mystery. The Lord is constantly working *with us* (Mk 16:20) and *in us* (Phil 2:12) and *for us*

(Rom 8:28) and accomplishing His gracious purposes.

We pray, we seek His will, we make decisions, and sometimes make mistakes but it is God who orders events and guides His willing children. Now God guides,

(a) IN MATRIMONIAL AFFAIRS:

For did He not direct Ruth's feet to the field of Boaz ?
Was it not here in the harvest field that Ruth met Boaz ?
Do you know the outcome ? (4:10, 13) Oh, looking back Ruth could say, "*I being in the way the Lord led me.*" (Gen 24:27) But you say, I can in fall in with the right girl or the right fellow ? Well, there are some clues in this passage that I want you to see ! Notice boys some traits in Ruth.

1. The Spirituality of Ruth:

You see, Ruth was now a believer. (2:12) Do you know what that tells me ? That you should marry only in the Lord. (1 Cor 7:39) Don't start dating a non-Christian and then you will never marry one. But you see, Ruth was not only a believer now in the true and living God, she was someone who was guided by God's Word. She knew what God's Law had to say about the stranger, widow, and fatherless. That's why she said to Naomi,
"*Let me now go to the field and glean*" (2:2) Is the person you are dating a Christian ? Is it someone fellows who has a desire to hear God's Word publicly and privately and has a desire to obey it ? Now I am not asking you what meeting or church they belong to. I have seen folk come out of the "*tightest circles,*" and they have got married, and they have no desire for the Word of God. 1.

2. The Purity of Ruth:

Look if you will at (2:6) Ruth came "*out,*" of the heathen country to live in Moab. There was a separation from idolatry and immorality. That speaks of the purity of Ruth in both faith and morals. Are you looking for a marriage partner ? Make sure you get one who is sound in faith and pure in morals.

3. The Loyalty of Ruth:

You she, she "*came back,*" (2:6) Naomi. Here was a trait that did not go unnoticed by the people of Bethlehem. My in marriage loyalty is absolutely essential if the marriage is going to last. Lack of loyalty will destroy it.

4. The Propriety of Ruth:

Look if you will at (2:7) Though the Law of God was behind her she did not

demand her rights. She exercised good manners. She was gracious and respectful. Fellows are you still for a girl ? Have a look at how she treats her parents ?

5. The Activity of Ruth:

Look at (2:7) Her work habits were duly noted and reported by the unnamed servant. She was an industrious woman, working hard in the fields, and lovingly performing her home duties. (2:18) Now does that help you men in choosing a partner ? *You need to find someone who loves the Lord and His Word, someone who is pure, loyal, respectful, and industrious for you could end up with someone who runs all day, every day and the home would be neglected.* Now just in case the girls think I am prejudiced notice some traits in Boaz that Christian girls should underscore. Notice, Boaz was Gracious, do you see how he greets his workers in the harvest field ? Look at (2:4) Boaz was Courteous, for he deals courteously with Ruth in (2:8) Boaz like Ruth was also Pure. (2:9) Girls, in a day when everyone is doing that which is right in his own eyes in the moral sphere look for someone who will respect you and honour you and not abuse you. His kindness is noticed in (2:16) for he says to the reapers, “ *When you see that Ruth is gleaning immediately behind you, when nobody is looking, just drop a sheaf there and go on.* ” Courtesy, Purity, Kindness ! (a)

(b) IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS:

Do you remember Joseph ? He was part of a family that were jealous of him. So they decided to get rid of him. They sold Joseph and he ended up in Egypt. “ *But the Lord was with Joseph,* ” (Gen 39:21) Indeed Joseph became the Saviour of his people. He said “ *As for you ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.* ” (Gen 50:20) My do you think that it was pure coincidence that the daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river at the same time the baby Moses was in the ark ? No, God’s purpose was being accomplished for God had respect for the future of the nation of Israel.

Later on, another one like Pharaoh appeared on the scene who wanted to destroy Israel, but Haman’s purposes were thwarted by the intervention of Esther. (6:11) My God is still on the throne, God is still running the show, God is still in control. (a) (b)

(c) IN PERSONAL AFFAIRS:

The church at Philippi were on tender hooks. What was going to happen to Paul ?

Will he be acquitted or condemned ? They were saying, “ *Too bad for Paul, too bad for the gospel.* ” They did not understand why one so gifted, blessed, and used of God should be a prisoner in Rome. I mean now that Paul was incarcerated, there would be so little scope for the gospel. But Paul says, listen this is no accident, this is an appointment. He writes to them, “ *But I would ye should understand brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.* ”

(Phil 1:12) They felt the gospel was being restricted, Paul says the gospel is reaching places and people that they had never reached before. My don't we have a wonderful God ? A God who guides, overrules and whose providence reaches every area of our lives. (1) (2)

(3) **BOAZ GOVERNING**

How good is it to know that God has good people living in bad times. You see, if you knew only the record in the book of Judges, you might conclude that the righteous had perished from the earth. But there were still people like Boaz who knew the Lord and sought to obey His will. Boaz was concerned about his workers and wanted them to enjoy the blessing of the Lord. Here was a man who believed that his faith should have a bearing in the work place. You see, Boaz governed,

(a) **GRACIOUSLY:**

He entered the harvest field with a prayer for his own, “ *the Lord be with you.* ” That's capital speaking. They responded, “ *the Lord bless thee,* ” that's labour answering. Now I don't want to get into capital and labour but I want to say wouldn't it be wonderful if we had something of real Christianity, the born again type in the workplace. My what a marvellous relationship existed there in the fields of Boaz. This man had earned the workers respect for they had seen his kindness, his godliness, and diligence. Someone has said, “ *If a man cannot be a Christian in the place where he is (works) he cannot be a Christian anywhere.* ” Does your faith affect your daily work ? (a)

(b) **CONSCIENTIOUSLY:**

Nothing missed his eye for when he came into the field he immediately saw Ruth. He said, “ *Whose damsel is this ?* ” McKee translates it “ *Well, where in the world has she been that I have not met her before ?* ” It seemed to be love at first sight. My he took an interest in Ruth the stranger ! (Exod 20:10) Do you ? As an office bearer, a Christian, do you take an interest in the strangers that come into the

meeting ? Do you know God's Word, "*be not forgetful to entertain strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*"

(Heb 13:2) Do you know what the complaint of 21st century worshippers is ? Its this, they come and go without a welcome. We're all so busy with out little cliques that the stranger comes and goes unnoticed and unwelcome ! My will you have a word for the stranger ? For "*a word spoken in season how good it is.*" (Prov 15:23)

Boaz took a special interest in Ruth and our heavenly Boaz the Lord Jesus takes a special interest in you. You may at times feel lost in a crowd, but the Lord sees you personally. A young man before sailing abroad was presented a watch by his father. On its dial were miniatures of his loving parents. "*Take this watch,*" said his father "*and carry it with you in all your journeys. Every time you look to see the hour, the eyes of your father and mother will look into yours. When you see our faces remember we are praying for you. Go no place where you would not want us to see you. Do nothing you would not want us to see.*" My "*the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous,*" (1 Pet 3:12) God's eyes are always upon you. There is never a moment that He is not watching. ***How challenging ! How correcting ! How comforting !***