



LESSON ELEVEN

Ruth's Ten Statutes and Taking the Way of Life

Scripture Reading:

Ruth

- 1:16** But Ruth said, Do not entreat me to leave you and turn away from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you dwell, I will dwell; and your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.
- 1:17** Where you die, I will die; and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more as well, if anything but death parts me from you.
- 2:2** And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I find favor. And she said to her, Go, my daughter.
- 2:11** And Boaz answered and said to her, All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, as well as how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people whom you did not know before.
- 2:12** May Jehovah recompense your work, and may you have a full reward from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.
- 4:9** And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, You are witnesses today, that I buy from Naomi's hand all that was Elimelech's and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's.
- 4:10** Furthermore Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, I acquire as my own wife so that I may raise up the dead man's name upon his inheritance and the dead man's name may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses today.
- 4:11** And all the people who were in the gate and the elders said, *We are* witnesses. May Jehovah make the woman who has come into your house like Rachel and like Leah, the two who built the house of Israel. And prosper in Ephrathah, and gain a name in Bethlehem.
- 4:12** And may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the seed that Jehovah gives you by this young woman.
- 4:13** So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah made her conceive; and she bore a son.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. What are the ten statutes of Ruth?
2. How does Ruth typify the believers in their statutes? How does this apply to us?

Section 2

1. What can we see from the account of Samson? How does it relate to today's situation?
2. How can we say that the book of Ruth is a book of life?
3. What kind of lesson should we learn from all the examples given in this section?

----- [SECTION 1] -----

The book of Ruth tells us a very famous story. In this story the central role belongs to Ruth, and this role has ten statuses. In this message, therefore, I have the burden to speak a very brief word concerning Ruth's ten statuses and concerning how they are a type of the statuses of the believers in Christ today.

RUTH'S TEN STATUSES

Ruth's first status was that of a God-created person who was very good (Gen. 1:27, 31). Second, she was a fallen person in Adam who was condemned by God and constituted a sinner before God (Rom. 5:18a, 19a). Third, she became an old man to be, by forsaking God as her Husband, an old husband to herself (Rom. 6:6a; 7:2) who brought her into indebtedness. Fourth, she became a debtor in the sin of her old husband. Fifth, she was a Moabitess, an incestuous Gentile abandoned by God (Deut. 23:3). Sixth, she became one who joined God's elect, Israel, in partaking of God's promises (Eph. 2:12-13; 3:6). Seventh, she was redeemed by her kinsman, Boaz, to be a new wife to him, her new husband (Ruth 4:5, 13). Eighth, she was one who kept the line of Christ's incarnation (Matt. 1:5b). Ninth, she was the great-grandmother of David who brought forth the royal family of the God-ordained government on the earth. Tenth, she became a crucial ancestor of Christ who brought forth Christ, the embodiment of God, to men on earth.

We may summarize Ruth's statuses by saying that she was a natural, God-created person; a fallen, corrupted person; an old wife to an old husband—a person in the old man involved with sin, with indebtedness; a person who joined God's elect; a redeemed person; a new wife; a person who brought in the royal family of the divine government on earth; and one of the crucial ancestors of Christ who brought Christ to the human race. Stated simply, Ruth was a natural person, a fallen person, a person involved in sin, a redeemed person, a person united to a new husband, and a person who brought Christ to humanity.

A TYPE OF THE BELIEVERS' STATUSES

Now we need to see that in her ten statuses Ruth typifies the believers in their statuses. First, as a God-created person with her status of a natural person with its rights by birth, Ruth typifies the

believers as a natural man. Second, by her status as a fallen person—as a Moabitess, a descendant of an incestuous race—Ruth typifies the believers as the fallen man with all his corruption in nature. Third, in her status as the wife of her old husband with his indebtedness—that is, as a person involved with sin and indebted because of it—Ruth typifies the believers as the old man composed of the natural man and the fallen man. Fourth, in her status as a person redeemed by her kinsman, Ruth typifies the believers as those who have been terminated by the cross in the fallen part of their old man and redeemed back to God in the God-created part, with all the indebtedness of sin cleared up and with the birthright recovered. Fifth, in her status as the wife of Boaz in the marriage union, Ruth typifies the believers in God's new creation as parts of the new man to be the counterpart of Christ in the organic union. Sixth, in her status as an ancestor of Christ to bring forth Christ to the human race and to minister Christ to all the people on earth, Ruth typifies the believers as ministers of Christ, who bring and present Christ to all men, supplying them with Christ universally.

From the typology of Ruth's statuses, we can see that as a natural man, we became fallen and involved with sin. Because of this, we needed Christ as our Kinsman to be our Redeemer. After we were redeemed, we became a new wife to Christ, our new Husband in God's new creation. As such, we have become the ministers of Christ.

May we all be impressed with the fact that in these great things Ruth typifies us, the believers in Christ: in God's creation, in man's fall, in the old man's living, in Christ's redemption, in God's new creation, and in Christ's ministry. Today we are ministers of Christ, bringing Christ forth and ministering Christ to people everywhere.

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In this concluding word on the book of Ruth, I have the burden to cover a very crucial point in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.

GOD'S MOVE IN THE SPIRIT OF POWER AND GOD'S MOVE IN THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

This crucial point is that these books show us one picture with two sides. One side concerns God's

move in His economical Spirit, the Spirit of power; the other side concerns God's move in His essential Spirit, the Spirit of life. With all the judges, and even with Joshua and Caleb, we can see only the work, the move, of God in power. In the books of Joshua and Judges it is hard to find even a hint of God's move in His life.

SAMSON AS A TYPICAL ILLUSTRATION

Samson is a typical illustration of one who moves in the Spirit of power but not in the Spirit of life. Samson was very powerful, even at the time of his death (Judg. 16:28-30), yet with him we cannot see anything of life. Yes, he was a Nazarite, keeping his hair long as a sign that he submitted to God as his Head, not drinking wine, and not eating unclean food. However, this was his following the divine regulations; it did not indicate that he had anything of the divine life. Even though Samson was a Nazarite, he did not know how to restrain the lust of his flesh. The matter of sex was a great stumbling block to him, and both among God's holy people in the Holy Land and among the Gentiles, he practiced the indulging of his lust. This shows that he was not a person in life.

Furthermore, the account of Samson, as the last judge, the conclusion of the judges, indicates that the entire situation of the judges consummated in the exercising of power without anything of life. It is difficult to understand how a Nazarite could be such a fleshly person. He was full of power and also full of lust. In his case, these two things went together.

This picture answers a question that I have had for many years. A number of Pentecostal preachers have been reckless, without any restraint, or control, of the lust of their flesh. Yet at the same time they have been genuinely powerful in their preaching. On the one hand, they powerfully preached the fundamental gospel concerning Christ, the Son of God, as our Savior; on the other hand, they were living in fornication. For a long time I could not understand how there could be such a situation. Now I realize that these preachers are today's Samsons. Jehovah's Spirit came upon Samson (Judg. 13:25; 14:6, 19); there is no doubt that he had the real power of God. Nevertheless, he and so many of the judges had no control over their indulgence in lust, such as Gideon, who had seventy-two sons of many wives (8:30-31; 9:5);

Jair, who had thirty sons (10:3-4); Ibzan, who had thirty sons and thirty daughters, and brought in thirty foreign daughters from abroad for his sons (12:8-9); and Abdon, who had forty sons and thirty grandsons (12:13-14).

THE BOOK OF RUTH BEING A BOOK OF LIFE

In contrast, the book of Ruth is a book not of power but of life.

The Example of Naomi

Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, was punished by God because he did not live according to God's eternal economy. He did not commit fornication; on the contrary, it seems that he just made a little mistake in leaving the Holy Land. But when he left the good land due to the famine, God came in and dealt with him, leaving his wife and his two daughters-in-law with nothing, as widows without children. I believe that before going to Moab, Elimelech mortgaged all his property, including the inheritance of his two sons. Eventually, Naomi, a widow with two widowed daughters-in-law, returned from the land of Moab, owning nothing. Nevertheless, Naomi did not rebel against God's dealing. Instead, admitting that God had dealt not only with her husband but also with her, she said, "The All-sufficient One has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but Jehovah has brought me back empty" (Ruth 1:20b-21a). From her speaking we can see that she was a godly woman. She believed in God, regarded Him, and feared Him.

When Naomi came back to the Holy Land, she came back to the rest in God's economy to participate again in the enjoyment of the God-promised land, where there would be the possibility of being related to Christ's genealogy. Her returning was a great thing, yet it was not accomplished by power. Rather, she came back as a poor beggar who sent her daughter-in-law Ruth to glean in the field.

The Example of Ruth

Ruth was outstanding in life. The purpose of the book of Ruth is not to tell us anything concerning power but to reveal the things of life to the uttermost. Naomi made it clear to Ruth that she had no capacity to produce a husband for her who could redeem her and bring forth a descendant for her father-in-law, Elimelech.

Feeling that the situation was hopeless, Naomi encouraged Ruth to return to her mother's house in order to have a future. Ruth's reply was full of life. She would go with Naomi forever, being with her in poverty. Ruth said to Naomi, "Do not entreat me to leave you and turn away from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you dwell, I will dwell; and your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die; and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more as well, if anything but death parts me from you" (vv. 16-17). This is the real spirit of the New Testament believers—to follow Jesus by forsaking everything: parents, children, relatives, houses, and so forth (Matt. 10:37; 19:29; Mark 10:29-30; Luke 14:26). This is the way of life revealed in the New Testament.

The Example of Boaz

Like Naomi and Ruth, Boaz was a person in life to the uttermost. Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I must seek some resting place for you, that it may go well with you" (Ruth 3:1). Then Naomi charged her to wash herself, anoint herself, put on her best clothes, go down to the threshing floor, and, at the proper time, make herself known to Boaz. Eventually, Ruth identified herself to Boaz, saying, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Spread your cloak over your maidservant, for you are a kinsman" (v. 9).

In his contact with Ruth at the threshing floor that night, Boaz was absolutely restrained, not moved, in his lust, absolutely different from the lust-indulging judges. Boaz blessed Ruth and highly appraised her. Then he told her that he was willing to bear his responsibility according to God's ordinance to redeem Elimelech's inheritance, yet he would not overstep the one who was ahead of him in this matter (vv. 12-13). Here Boaz seemed to be saying, "Daughter, wait until tomorrow. Yes, I am your kinsman, and we are free in God. But there is another kinsman who is closer to you than I am, and he must be allowed to go ahead of me. If I do not care for him in this matter, the holy people of God will condemn me for overstepping. Let the other kinsman go ahead of me. If he is not willing to do the kinsman's duty for you, I will do it for you." Boaz was lawful in every way, and his being lawful was based not on power but on life. This shows that Boaz had the highest standard of life.

TAKING THE WAY OF LIFE IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

In the Lord's recovery, should we take the way of the judges to be powerful and to do a great work? If we take the way of the judges instead of the way of life, whatever we accomplish will mean nothing. Not one judge was a forefather of Christ. The judges had nothing to do with keeping the line in humanity to bring in God in His incarnation. It was Ruth and Boaz who participated in keeping this line. However, they did not fight a war; they did not exercise any power.

It is crucial for us to see that only life can bring Christ forth. Only life can keep the lineage, maintaining the thin line to bring God into humanity, to produce Christ and to minister Christ and to supply the entire human race with Christ. This was done not by the judges but by Ruth and Boaz, who took the way of life.