



... and the name of the other Ruth ...

Part Three – The Power of Love

And Ruth said, Intreat 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 ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. (Ruth 1:16-18)

If home is where the heart is, then home is also the place of love. What is the perfect measure of love? **Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.** (John 15:13)

I am sure you already know that it is the love of God. If love is sacrificial, and it is, no other has ever sacrificed His innocent blood in the place of your putrid and sin-laden blood but Jesus Christ. In fact, God is love, and that is His essence. He loved us first and thereby enables us to return that love. But love also cleaves to the object of its affections just as Ruth “*clave unto her*” (Naomi). ***And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.*** (Ruth 1:14) In Christ, we have “*a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*” Ruth is an exemplary example of that love because it came to her heart from God’s endless fountain of love. Love will never let go. Love will lay down its life for its friends. ***This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*** (John 15:12-13)

The tender expressions of love that Ruth avers and extols (in verses 16-18) should be enshrined in the central chamber of every heart that loves God. Apart from the powerful examples of Christ, there are no greater terms of unconditional love found anywhere in Scripture – and it comes from the heart of a virtuous Gentile girl toward a Jewish mother-in-law. One message of Ruth that God would have us see is that the Gospel is open to both Jew and Gentile. Ruth was a Gentile, but even one from an accursed land; yet, she was transformed by the Holy Spirit into a child of God as much as any – even becoming an ancestor to the line of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us consider:

It might, as well, be observed that Ruth would finally have married two separate men - the first (presumably Chilion) and the last Boaz. This fits perfectly the symbolic nature of the Church for we all belonged to a different master (Prince of this World) before coming to Christ and becoming part of His Bride - the Church.

RUTH'S PREDICAMENT:

1. She was willing to desert her old acquaintances, culture, religion, family, and familiar home.
2. She was launching out into the deep of uncertain destiny – a land of different religion, culture, language, and people.
3. She was going to face the prospects of a life of hardship, hard labor, and poverty with an aging mother-in-law (Naomi).

RUTH'S RESOLUTENESS:

1. Ruth swore an oath of fealty to Naomi and her God.
2. Ruth's decision was irrevocable, unqualified, and unwavering. She hesitated not for an instant in giving it. She made the decision with her eyes open after having counted the cost. But, truly, love knows no cost at all.
3. It was a decision without limits. It was not for a while until Naomi was settled, but forever. It was the kind of vow that a woman and man make under the vows of Holy Wedlock; and the kind of commitment the convert makes to Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church.

THE DECISION:

1. Ruth said, "*Do not entreat me to leave thee, or to return from following after thee*" for she would not forsake Naomi even if asked. When I was a young boy, an old hound dog 'sojourned' to our house and 'continued' there. It thought it had found a home, and surely it had. Despite attempts to scare the old dog away, he would slink back to the porch where we stood – half crawling, and half slithering. Finally, my mother could not bear to dispense with him, and he stayed with us until he was buried in our back yard. He came to stay, and no manner of treatment would convince him to leave. That was the steadfastness of Ruth! Her mind was made up, and that was that!
2. Though Ruth had no idea where Naomi was going, that was not an issue: "*for whither thou goest, I will go.*" What a precious young lady is Ruth! Love makes no conditions when it is divine.
3. Ruth knew not where Naomi would sleep, and that, too, was no issue: "*where thou lodgest, I will lodge.*" Are you, too, not beginning to fall in love with this beautiful woman of virtue?
4. Ruth was leaving her people. But she loved Naomi and would readily accept Naomi's people as her own even without knowing of them: "*thy people shall be my people.*"
5. Next is a comment of profound meaning and application to husbands, wives, and neighbors, and the Church: "*thy God (will be) my God.*" What was the power that brought Ruth to accept our God? Was it not an unyielding love for Naomi? If we love our lost husbands or wives enough, will they not be drawn to accept the God we love and serve? When neighbors see our love, and return it, will they not be drawn to the same God we serve?
6. We see that Ruth's commitment was unending by the next comment: "*Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.*" Not only would Ruth live with Naomi in this new land of Bethlehem until Naomi slept with her fathers, but she would remain afterward to be buried there as well. Naomi's land would become, in every way, the land of Ruth. Ruth would be buried, decades later, nearby to Naomi.

7. Ruth sealed her vow by the name of the Lord in whom she had come to trust through Naomi: *“the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”* Every time we mention the Lord’s name, either in prayer or in a vow, we must mean it with all of our hearts, else we have taken the name of the Lord in vain. Ruth did not – she MEANT it, and she DID it!
8. When another speaks with undeniable conviction and resolution, there is no point in arguing with them: *“When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.”*

I wish I could meet such a lady as Ruth and witness her heart of love and loyalty. If I guard my own heart in faith, I surely shall be privileged to do so in the eternity to come.

There is such beauty in Ruth that no artist could possibly portray on canvas. It is humbling to undertake to capture such beauty by mortal hands. Just as an artist attempts to imitate the beauty of God’s Creation with his brushes, so do we undertake with our little pens to describe that beauty in the words of mere man. It cannot be done! But I strive to capture as much beauty as my unclean hands can write. I love this story of redemption – it is a perfect picture of Christ and the Church as we shall later see. How wonderful it is to see this promise related in word-pictures in the midst of the Old Testament! Just remember the story centers, at first on two women – one Jewish, and another a Gentile. These two women travel to Bethlehem Judah where the Gentile woman (Ruth) meets with her Kinsman-Redeemer. Perhaps you have met with him, too, as you traveled from the sinful land of perished hopes and dreams (Moab) to Bethlehem (Christ).

In this Book of Ruth, we are given the beautiful descriptions of seed-time and harvest, of gleaning behind the reapers that none should be lost. We will see also that the Kinsman-Redeemer who redeemed Ruth was not the nearest of blood kin to Naomi and Elimelech – there was another that was more closely and naturally related. Who might that be? It was another descendent of Adam whose blood is tainted with the poison of sin; but Boaz, is the redeemer who will pay whatever price he is able to pay to redeem the treasure of his heart (Ruth) – even the price of the cross - in latter days.

Please read this book with your spiritual eyes open, for it is a veritable treasure as you will see. Our next few devotions will cover this Book of Ruth to completion, the Lord give us light to see the Light of Christ revealed in the shadows of its tall trees.