



Then she arose with her daughters in law, 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. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. (Ruth 1:6-14)

I especially like the poignant Spanish benediction, "*Vaya con Dios!*" (Go with God). Too many Christians are attempting to get God to go with them, and most often to a place that God refuses to go. But when we go with God, our path will be straight and our steps sure. Naomi came down to Moab (Ruth 1:1-5) with her husband, Elimelech, and two sons, Mahlon & Chilion, from the House of Bread and Praise to the accursed land of Moab. I am not sure that she came willingly, but the account intimates that she did for, once her husband had died, she did not immediately return to the place of promise that God had placed her at birth. Naomi was forced to face even greater loss before she would resolve to return HOME. She would finally lose both of her dear sons and be left with no blood relations – only two daughters-in-law from the land of Moab. I say ONLY, but that is a misnomer, for one of those girls would forsake all for Naomi and make the most profound statement of love found in any literature, anywhere. But that will be discussed in tomorrow's devotion. Today, I want to focus on Naomi's decision, and the differences in the two daughters-in-laws, Ruth and Orpah.

Our ill-begotten decisions often are more starkly revealed when we remember back to a time when we enjoyed the favor of God, family, and country. Naomi has come down to Moab, out of the favor of God, and finally lost EVERYTHING that God had given her save her very life. She remembers the fields of Bethlehem, the greetings in the village of her friends and relatives, the snug realization that she was where God had planted her. She remembered, perhaps, running along the fields lined with sycamore trees as a child, the joy she felt in the warm sun of home. There her conscience was unburdened by any thought of being in a place not favored by God. These thoughts had come to haunt Naomi's peace of mind for some time now. But the tragic loss of her two sons drove home that deeply buried passion to return to Bethlehem-Judah. All the acts of God and man begin with a dream – a thought – and then is realized by action. ***“Then she arose with her daughters in law, 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.”***

A desire for something different had brought Naomi into Moab in the first place. Now a desire for something old, something enduring, something blessed, compelled her to ARISE from the ruins of Moab and return to the golden fields of Bethlehem. It is not coincidental the Prodigal Son first realized his depravity in a far country, he then resolved to ARISE, and then he followed that resolution with ACTION: *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father.* (Luke 15:18-20) I love every Word of Jesus, and I love these last ones quoted as well, for all that He said was devoted to our best interest if we will but hear and believe. When we have rebelled against God, we will soon find ourselves devoid of every blessing. Hurt and wounded by the devil, as the Jew on the Road to Jericho, we cry out in despondency for a restoration of those blessings enjoyed at some other time when we had “Gone with God” on the path of life. The great point illustrated is this: anytime we decide to “Go with God” we will be arising from some very low place, because you cannot return to God without first arising from the depravity into which your own ill-advised actions have taken you.

It is a commendable mark of devotion that both girls would follow Naomi “on the way” to Bethlehem. The text does not tell us whether they went on the way simply to see Naomi off to Bethlehem, or if they cherished some unspoken thought of going all of the way. Many good people undertake to follow Christ, but they are diverted by some personal interest on the way and, tragically, turn back without going all of the way.

I pray the Holy Ghost will intimately commune with you as you read the lovely words of this story as recorded in the Book of Ruth. Though I cannot explain it, I can say with great certainty that He does so commune with me when I sit down to write of it. I am able to consider thoughts that are alien to my unworthy character as I make a futile effort to describe the magnanimous beauty of the account of Ruth and Naomi. ***“Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.”*** Just as we may love Mary Magdalene with the most tender of emotions, we are compelled by love to Ruth as well. She is the greatest expression of pure and Godly love that any person of Scripture illustrates.

Though heart-broken and weighed down with misery of her losses, Naomi finds the strength to counsel her two very fine daughters-in-law to return home and be blessed of the Lord – the Lord whose will she departed when she came into Moab.

These two are truly fine young ladies. They were loyal, unto death, to their husbands, and they are loyal to Naomi now. Their hearts contain a love and devotion that is rare in our day. At Naomi's sweet counsel, the girls realized the enormity of the cross-roads at which they now stood – to either follow Naomi ALL OF THE WAY, or return to a comfortable life in Moab. They both wept hot tears of love and remorse. The kiss Naomi gave them aroused unspeakable emotions of the tragedy of daily life for all peoples. Would it not be an immeasurable blessing if all three could remain together forever and face the problems of life just as they had suffered much together in the past? Both girls truly loved Naomi, but one loved Naomi without qualification. One was willing to go part way to see Naomi off, but the other was not willing to stop following after the darling of her heart (Naomi).

I will interject a thought here that may seem foreign to the story, but it is not: Do you truly love the Lord Jesus Christ? If the answer is yes, and many do, then the second part seals the whole – do you love the Lord Jesus Christ enough to go all of the way with Him and not turn back? Do you love Him so much that, despite the allure of comfort and social advantage, you will forsake all, as Ruth will do, and follow Him all of the way? The church of our day is more like a half-way house – filled with those who will start on the way, but turn back as did Orpah at the borders of Canaan. No person has ever gotten to his intended destination by going part way. Even the last step is required to arrive at one's destination. It is important we start, but it is more important we finish the journey.

Naomi offers no pleasant entreaty to persuade the girls to go with her but, conversely, mentions every discouragement. Naomi is too old to have a husband and more sons and, if she did have sons, could the two girls wait until they were grown up to marry with them? Jesus does not sugar coat His counsel to those who seek the Kingdom of Heaven: *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matt 5:20) The Pharisees worked hard at their paltry works of righteousness, but came not near the standard. Their attempts were based on false assumptions – that they could actually be righteous enough to merit heaven. No one can be righteous on his own merits. He must have a Redeemer and a substitute that is worthy to bear the wages of the sins he has committed. That would be the Lord Jesus Christ, but as with Ruth, it must be Love that is the key to our walk with Him. He loved us first, and therefore, our hearts must echo that love for Him that compels us to go all of the way to the cross.

The heart of both Ruth and Orpah was stricken as with a sword at the thought of parting with Naomi, but one had a heart that was sterling all of the way through – the greatest example of the enduring love of womanhood, or any other creature, ever revealed to our eyes. Ruth did not, for an instant, consider the hardship she might face in Bethlehem. She simply loved too much to turn back. Her heart was set on Naomi – nothing else could be considered.

Do you love Christ that much, dear friend?