

Lesson 3 – AN EXAMPLE OF TRUE CONVERSION Ruth 1:8-17

(1:8-14) – In lesson 2 we saw Naomi and her two daughters-in-law left destitute in Moab without any hope. But through His messengers and by His divine providence, the Lord God of Israel had sent her good news that there was bread in the land of promise. The famine was over. So, Naomi determined to return to her home. She had sold the land that she and Elimelech had there. She had no possessions or means of support. She was casting herself totally upon God’s mercy and power to save her and care for her. This is what God’s chosen people do when He, by the Gospel message, makes us aware of our natural sin and depravity, our hopelessness of salvation in ourselves or by our works. He makes us to know our sinfulness and shows us the only hope and way of salvation is by His free and sovereign grace in and by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, Redeemer (by His death on the cross), Intercessor, and Preserver. He shows us how God requires perfect righteousness else there is no salvation or eternal life. He shows us that righteousness can only be found in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this the righteousness of God that He has imputed to His people for their justification. He sends us the Gospel message that there is spiritual Bread and Water for those who have been made spiritually hungry and thirsty. They find that Christ is the Bread of life and the Water of life. They find in Him all the righteousness they need to be filled and justified before the Lord God (**Matt. 5:6**).

As Naomi set her mind on returning to Bethlehem-judah, she **“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” (1:8)**. She wished them well, but she believed that she could do them no good. From the next events, it is obvious that Naomi was not thinking spiritually but only of their earthly welfare (**1:9**). Remember, Moab was a land of sin and idolatry. Granted, there was sin and idolatry in Israel due to the disobedience of the people because of their self-righteousness and rebellion against the law of God. But there was also God’s presence and truth in that law. There was the Gospel in Word and in the types and pictures of Christ, the Kinsman-Redeemer (**John 5:39-47**). We know that God can and will get His Gospel to His people wherever they are, even if they are in Moab. But, as witnesses of Christ, we are to point sinners to where Christ is preached.

Here, we see that both Ruth and Orpah said, **“Surely we will return with thee unto thy people” (1:10)**. But Naomi told them to stay in Moab where they could find husbands and have children as she could not help because of her old age (**1:11-13**). Orpah changed her mind and stayed in Moab, **“but Ruth clave unto her” (1:14)**. Orpah was like those who hear the Gospel and, at first embrace it, but who do not persevere in faith. They had a profession but were never truly born again of the Spirit. Ruth was like all true believers who, having been truly saved and born of the Spirit, and

having been given the gift of faith in Christ and true repentance, persevere in the faith by the grace of God in Christ. All of this came about because God purposed it. God had determined to save Ruth! The famine in Israel was sent by God because He had chosen Ruth. Elimelech had done evil by moving to Moab because God had determined to save Ruth. The whole episode here in God's dealings in history was because God had determined to save us (His elect) by the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of His Son Whose incarnation came through Ruth and Boaz (**Rom. 8:28**).

(1:15-17) – Naomi still sought to persuade Ruth to return to Moab **(1:15)**. Again, it is clear that she was not thinking spiritually but only of Ruth's situation here on earth. But by God's power and grace, Ruth was determined to go with Naomi, not only because of her love for her mother-in-law, but also because of the grace of God that brought her to desire to be with the people of God and be a worshipper of the only living and true God – **“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” (1:16-17).**

So many use this as an example of a daughter's great love for her mother, and it is, but they miss the great example of a sinner who by God's grace is turned from their idols to believe in and serve the true and living God. Ruth's decision to worship and serve the Lord God was followed and evidenced by her determination to go with Naomi to Bethlehem and identify herself with the people of God. She turned her back on Moab and its idolatry. She identified herself completely and totally with Naomi and Naomi's God. As stated, **“Ruth clave unto her” (1:14)**. The verb translated **“clave”** (“clung to”) is the same term used in **Genesis 2:24** to define the “cleaving, uniting, or holding fast” of a man and woman in marriage. Ruth's identity was now fully involved in Naomi's and the God of all grace in Christ. She had made a radical and absolute dedication to Naomi, her people, and her God. This is what the Lord God does for His people when He brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry (**ex. Php. 3:3-10**).