

# Redemption



## Ruth 4

*Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down.*

*2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.*

*3 Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. 4 So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." 5 Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." 6 Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."*

*7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. 8 So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. 9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. 10 Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day." 11 Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in*

*Bethlehem, 12 and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.”*

*13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. 14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! 15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” 16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.*

*17 And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

*18 Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, 19 Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, 20 Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, 21 Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, 22 Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.*



This man does not look very happy because he is being sued for \$125,000. He is the owner of a credit card company in Russia. One of his customers, Dmirty Argakov, made the following changes to his credit card application.

- The interest rate was set to 0%
- The credit limit was removed
- A \$200,000 fine was added in the event the contract was cancelled.

Without noticing the changes, the credit card company signed the contract. The courts have upheld the contract as valid and now the company is being sued for breach of contract in the amount of \$125,000.<sup>1</sup>

Credit cards are a 20<sup>th</sup> century invention but credit and financial transactions started with the first human family. In this last chapter of Ruth we see a most unusual financial transaction take place. A piece of property is purchased and the transaction is then sealed with the giving of a sandal. I tried this on Friday at Walmart and they wouldn't let me buy anything in exchange for my old sandal! ☺ Even more strange is that along with the land comes a wife. This chapter may not be as odd sounding as chapter three where Ruth snuck around at night, laid down next to Boaz and then asked him to marry her. Other than the sandal, the strangest thing that happens is that Boaz buys Ruth. As a pastor, this is not something I can officially endorse because such a thing will most certainly get you arrested. You have to admit that verse ten does not sound very romantic. *Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place.* Ladies, how would you like to hear your fiancé say on the day of your engagement, “I bought me a wife to help out the dead guys.”

But Boaz did not purchase Ruth like an animal or a piece of property. He was redeeming her. He was saving her. He was marrying her. Once again we need to wade through the unusual to see the beautiful.

Let me start with a quick summary of the book now that we can see the end. At the start I gave you the theme of the book: from Tragedy to Redemption through Powerful Providence. The book starts out like this:

### Chapter One

No Food  
No Husbands  
No Children



But as we move through to the end of chapter four all of these things are redeemed and renewed.

### Chapter One

No Food →  
No Husbands →  
No Children →

### Chapter Four

Plentiful Food  
Loving Husband  
Joyous birth of a Son

In other words, the story moves from tragedy to redemption and the driving force has been the powerful providence of God. This providence sometimes works behind the scenes like a stage director. At other times the providence is seen center stage, like when the Lord brought an end to the famine (1:6) and when he allowed Ruth to conceive a son (4:13). This whole book drips with powerful providence.

But there was something else besides powerful providence working here and that is the faithfulness of the main characters. We have seen it again and again.

- Ruth's undying commitment to Naomi.
- Ruth's "greater kindness" in asking Boaz to cover her with his wings and marry her
- Boaz's resolve in redeeming Ruth and Naomi at all cost

The first principle we see then is that...

#### 1. God always rewards faithfulness

Do you believe that? This book is the perfect example of this principle and Boaz himself gave us this principle. *The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!*"(2:12) In a practical sense, Boaz repaid Ruth with kindness and extra grain but Ruth's loving and faithful example necessitated a greater payment. Notice how explicit Boaz's words were. "The Lord repay you **for what you have done.**" Boaz asked that the Lord repay Ruth specifically in response to her faithfulness. It was a payment just as certain as there was an exchange of payment for land in chapter four. In exchange for her faithfulness, Ruth received as payment all of the things listed above: plentiful food, a loving husband and the joyous birth of a son.

Now this makes some people uncomfortable. After all, God doesn't owe us anything, right, so how can we get "paid" for doing good works? Not to mention the fact that life doesn't always turn out so well in the end. There are plenty of faithful believers throughout the world who don't have enough food, just as there are faithful believers whose husbands and wives die and those

who can't ever conceive children or lose them through death. Tragedy doesn't always end in redemption and a happy life like it did for Ruth.

I don't have time to deal with all of the objections because this could be a sermon in itself but let's consider Hebrews 11:6. *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* The Bible says again and again that God always rewards faithfulness but it never stipulates that all rewards have to be given in this life. Very often they are. I am turning fifty this month and was contemplating how blessed and fortunate I am. I doubt I will live another fifty years but even if I died tomorrow, I would die as a ridiculously blessed man. I am not saying that my blessings are all a direct result of my own faithfulness. The vast majority of them have come by the mere fact of being born in this country. But whether by birth or by direct blessing, it is all grace. Some rewards come in this life but God will reward your faithfulness. Everything that you do in faith is stored up for you and will be rewarded to you someday. Think about what that means—everything matters, no matter how small. The diaper that is changed with faith and hope in God is rewarded. The drive into work to provide for your family is rewarded if it is exercised in faith. There is nothing trivial in the kingdom of God when it is accompanied by faith. If you allow it, this will transform your every action and attitude.

## **2. Christian legacies are built one decision at a time.**

On her wedding day, the women in Bethlehem offered a beautiful blessing. *May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, 12 and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.*”

Tell me, what kind of women were Rachel and Leah? They were two of the most jealous, conniving and malicious women in all of Scripture. And Perez wasn't much better, was he? While away on a business trip he dropped in to see the local prostitute. Yet, Rachel, Leah and Perez are all credited here with building the nation of Israel. But the nation of Israel was not built in a day or even a generation. Legacies take multiple generations to build yet each of them is built one decision at a time.

Hopefully most of you intend to build, or continue to build, a Christian legacy that was handed down to you. More than anything, you want your family to follow the Lord. You have a long range vision of what this legacy might look like but you need to keep in mind that this legacy will be built by tens of thousands of small decisions in your daily life.

## **3. The Lord closes and opens opportunities.**

Each chapter of Ruth illustrates this principle. Each chapter begins with a trial of some kind but by the end of each chapter there is always a sign of hope, a level of suspense that is part of the larger story. Each chapter describes the closing and opening of vital opportunities.

1—tragedy→ barley harvest

Most of the first chapter is all tragedy yet by the end we see the approaching barley harvest so we are given hope.

2—starvation→ 30 pounds of barley

The second chapter begins with two women with no means of support or food but the chapter ends with Ruth having gleaned 30 pounds of barley—one day’s work which will last for many weeks.

3—no husband→ Boaz?

Food is not a problem but Ruth has no husband to give her “rest.” By the end we are given hope that Boaz is the one but we cannot be sure.

4—Boaz? → Boaz AND Obed!

Not only does Ruth get Boaz in chapter four but she also rejoices at the birth of Obed.

God closes and opens opportunities and we see this especially true in regard to the womb. Ruth was married to Mahlon for ten years while they lived in Moab but she was never able to conceive. And neither was her sister-in-law Orpah able to conceive. All throughout Scripture, God closes the wombs of women. Even though this is not an official name in Scripture for God, instead of Jehovah Jireh—the God who provides—he could be called Jehovah Ramah, the Lord of the womb. He is the Lord of fertility; the Lord of fruitfulness.

The next chapter in our Bible is 1 Samuel 1 which has the story about Hannah’s infertility. God closed Hannah’s womb and then opened it a few years later. She gave birth to Samuel who would anoint Ruth’s great grandson as the second and most famous King over Israel.

God is Jehovah Ramah but of course God is much more than Jehovah Ramah. He is also Lord of every other body part and every atom in the universe. He closes and opens opportunities as he sees fit. While I was in seminary, I believe that God put within me the desire and calling to plant a church. After I graduated I could not get matched up with any church planting opportunities. For the first few years as an associate pastor I gently pursued church planting opportunities but all doors were closed. I finally let stopped pursuing it altogether. Several years later, God threw open a door so wide you could have driven a space shuttle through it, and that is why I stand before you today. I was not ready so God closed the door shut and in his perfect timing he decided to open the door. I encourage you to be patient as doors close and open for you. As we said last week, we need to have a healthy balance of praying and planning but also waiting for God’s timing. You know what happens when you force a door open, don’t you?

#### **4. God’s blessings are often disguised.**

You’ve got to appreciate the blessing spoken to Naomi by the women of the town.

*Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! 15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”*

This is a marvelous blessing for many reasons but I want to focus on the last phrase: *for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.* As you may know, in this culture, sons were always prized over daughters—it’s just the way it was. Therefore, if a woman was to bear “seven sons,” that would have been the ideal progeny. Seven is a number of perfection so to have seven sons was as perfect a record as you could get. Such a thing would have represented a special outpouring of God’s blessing. But Ruth was not just

equal to seven sons but was “better” than seven sons. The birth of Obed is the culmination of the story and ultimate blessing for this faithful couple but this statement about Ruth being better than seven sons takes on even more significance as it came in the middle of the birth announcement.

What I am saying is that Ruth was this massive blessing in disguise. Naomi tried to persuade Ruth to stay in Moab. That was almost the biggest mistake of her life! The application is that God may have an open door or blessing for you but it is disguised or you just fail to see it as such. Right now it may even appear to be the opposite of a blessing. God used famine, death and infertility as a means to a blessing for Naomi. Ruth was necessary for the blessing, but without famine, death and infertility, Ruth would never have been in the picture.

### **5. Our sin, though grievous, cannot hinder the sovereign plan of God**

Remember that the Ruth story took place right in the middle of the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1). The best summary of the time of the judges is the last verse of the entire book. *In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes* (Judges 21:25). It was a time of anarchy and immorality. This led to the sinful request to demand a king. It was a sin for Israel to ask for a king. It was an all out rejection as God as king over his people. Recall that Elimilech’s name meant “God is my king.” It was a grievous sin. Nevertheless, the main reason for Ruth’s inclusion in Scripture is to prepare the way for King David. It was a sin to ask for a king yet God had planned in advance that David would be king. The last word in the book is David. Therefore, the heir of Elimilech (“God is my king”) is David the king!

Even greater than this, while all of Israel “did what was right in their own eyes, God was preparing a Deliverer to rescue them from their grievous sin. Of course God’s sovereignty never, ever excuses our sin. You cannot say that Herod and Pontius Pilate did the right thing by crucifying Jesus because it was the Father’s will to put him to death. What they did was utterly sinful yet their grievous sin did not hinder the sovereign plan of God. So, even while Israel sinned in asking for a king, all the while God was preparing them for a king.

The application for us is to not despair when you see the growing sin around us. Some people follow the news a bit too closely and concern themselves too much with the growing apostasy and evil. Make no mistake—it is bad and getting worse—but do not despair. Your sin, the ins around you and the collective sin and evil of the world cannot hinder the sovereign and beautiful plan of God.

### **6. Marriage is a symbol of the gospel.**

There is a wonderful mixture of salvation and marriage in this passage. Boaz married Ruth but he also redeemed her. When Ruth placed herself under the wings of the Lord and through marriage, Boaz covered Ruth with the wing of his garment. Furthermore, his work as a redeemer is an obvious foreshadowing of Christ as Redeemer. The genealogy that comes at the end finishes with King David. David is the last word of the entire book. However, the entire genealogy traces from the tribe of Judah through Perez through Boaz through David and ultimately ends with Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we can say that Boaz “purchased” Ruth but he did so because he loved her. Likewise, Christ “purchased” by his blood but the driving force was love. Now as the bride of Christ, we are married to Jesus in this heavenly union.

This mixture of marriage and salvation also looks forward to the great marriage passage in Ephesians five. <sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. <sup>25</sup>Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

<sup>31</sup> “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Marriage is a symbol of the gospel. But we must ask ourselves, is marriage actually a symbol of the gospel or just potentially a symbol of the gospel. In other words, if the wife is not unconditionally submitting to her husband and if the husband is not unconditionally loving his wife, is their marriage still a symbol of the gospel? Or do they need to be in mutual submission and love in order for it to be a symbol of the gospel? Paul said that the mystery of a man leaving his father and mother—which is exactly what Ruth did—and clinging to his wife—that very marriage is profound and refers to Christ and the church. So what this means is just by the mere sake of you being married, your marriage symbolizes the gospel. By my salvation, I am in Christ but I may not be walking with Christ at all times. In the same way, your marriage symbolizes the gospel even if it does not reflect the gospel at all times.

In his book, *Sacred Marriage*, Gary Thomas gives the following illustration.

One woman wrote in great distress, torn because she very much wanted to get married while a friend was encouraging her to remain single, insisting that it would be “more holy” for her to care for her father, and then devote herself as a celibate to God after her father died.

De Sales put the troubled young woman at ease, telling her that, far from being a compromise, in one sense, marriage might be the toughest ministry she could ever undertake. “The state of marriage is one that requires more virtue and constancy than any other... It is a perpetual exercise of mortification.”

What he called mortification we would call sanctification. In other words, marriage is intended to make us grow spiritually, to show us our own faults and sins so that we can confess them and depend on Christ more consistently. A little later Thomas wrote, “What if God didn’t design marriage to be “easier”? What if God had an end in mind that went beyond our happiness, our comfort, and our desire to be infatuated and happy as if the world were a perfect place? What if God designed marriage to make us more holy than to make us happy?”

Even if your marriage does not always reflect the gospel it is still a symbol of the gospel. And as this author is stating so clearly, marriage is intended to be a tool of sanctification, to make you more holy, more like Christ. Next to marriage, parenting has the same ability to show us our faults and drive us to Christ. Few things reveal my sin than my response to my kids. After marriage and parenting, your relationships at church are intended for the same goal. This is why it is so important to be engaged in relationships with others in the body so that you can have this affect on one another. This is also why church relationships, and relationships in general, can be so messy. They just are. It’s not easy to get along with everyone but it’s all for your good and for God’s glory.

Rich Maurer  
September 8, 2013

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<sup>1</sup> World Magazine, September 7, 2013, p. 19.