

## Ruth 1:14-18 - Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013

- For the benefit of those who were not with us last week, I'll take just a little time to bring you up to speed with where we're at here in Ruth 1.
- We began with Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons moving from Bethlehem in Judah to Moab because of the famine in the land.
- Once there Elimelech dies and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion marry Moabite wives named Orpah and Ruth, but both the sons die too.

- After about ten years go by Naomi, hearing the Lord has provided bread to His people back home in Bethlehem, decides to move back.
- Thinking the hand of the Lord is against her, and wanting her daughter's in law to find husbands, she tells them to both go back to Moab.
- Initially they both refuse because of their love and loyalty to their mother in law Naomi, however, as we see next, Orpah ends up returning.

(14) Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is how it pictures two types of Christians when it comes to the trials of life.
- All three of these widows were in the same boat, so-to-speak, and as such, they all had a decision to make concerning their predicament.
- More specifically, they can either give up, and go back, or they can hold on and press forward in perseverance through this trial in their life.

Matthew 13:3-10, 18-23 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. (4) As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. (5) Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. (6) But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. (7) Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. (8) Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (9) He who has ears, let him hear." (10) The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" ... (18) "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: (19) When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. (20) The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. (21) But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. (22) The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. (23) But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

- Bare with me just a moment because I need to share with you a concern I have for us as believers in these last days in which we're living.
- My concern is there's many Orpah's today, who, when the going gets tough they get going, not forward, but back to their Moab in the world.
- Conversely, there are few Ruth's today, who, when the going gets tough they get going forward, by clinging to the Bethlehem of the Word.

Charles Spurgeon - "How like these two woman are to certain opposite characters we have met with: one, like Orpah, is pleased with religion, and would fain following the Lord Jesus, but gives it all up because of difficulty or trial; but the other, like Ruth, being really converted holds on through fair and foul, and perseveres unto the end."

- I find it most interesting how that we never hear of Orpah again, and as such, we can only speculate about whether or not she fared well.
- I would suggest she didn't, in that this is how it ends for the Orpah's of this world. They go back into the world never to be heard of again.
- I also find this most ironic, such that, we only know Ruth would find a husband, which is why Orpah went back to Moab in the first place.

(15) And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." (16) But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. (17) Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."

- This is perhaps one of the most, if not the most, beautiful and powerful passages in the Bible. I say that because what Ruth says to Naomi.
- Namely, that Ruth is not only unflinching in her commitment to Naomi, but to Naomi's God as well. All of this begs the question of why.
- In other words, why is Ruth so committed to continue on with Naomi and so adamant about not going back to Moab like her sister-in-law?

- I believe there are several reasons for this, chief of which is that Naomi's commitment to the Lord was unflinching in spite of her adversity.
- Let me explain, Ruth has, for the better part of ten years, observed her mother-in-law be the recipient of unspeakable difficulty in her life.
- Furthermore, what she didn't observe was her mother-in-law turning away from the Lord as the recipient of unspeakable difficulty in her life.

- I'm of the belief that it was supremely for this reason that Ruth was as committed to Naomi, as she was to Naomi's people and her God.
- You probably already know where I'm going with this so, suffice it to say, this is what attracts the non-Christian both to us, and to our God.
- Here's the question, when the world observes our lives, what do they see? Do they see a fair weathered Christian who's quick to falter?

Charles Spurgeon "Ah! You will never win any soul to the right by a compromise with the wrong. It is the decision for Christ and his truth that has the greatest power in the family, and the greatest power in the world, too."

- I'll take it a step further, what if Ruth had observed Naomi's commitment to the Lord as the recipient of only prosperity instead of adversity?
- I'm not so sure she would've been so committed. Even if she would've committed to her and followed her, I'm not so sure she would stay.
- Here's what I'm thinking, if we follow Christ vis-à-vis the perceived prosperity, the moment adversity strikes, we're prone to fail and falter

- Again, this is the concern when it comes to the church today, in that we seem to think the world will follow the Lord if promised prosperity.
- Indeed they may, but it's only a matter of time before they fall away this because, they're never told to count the cost of carrying the cross.
- Perhaps we need look no further as it relates to the condition of the church. Could it be what has now become the attraction to the church?

(18) When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.

- The reason I'm expounding on this verse by itself is because it sort of proves the previous point related to attracting people to the church.
- Let me explain, just as Naomi stopped persuading Ruth when she saw how determined she was, so too can we stop persuading others.
- Pastor Chuck Smith say's, "if you strive to gain you'll have to strive to maintain. If we strive to gain people, we'll strive to maintain people."

Charles Spurgeon - "Naomi was only too glad to have Ruth for a life companion. The people of God are glad to welcome sincere souls into their fellowship."