



A Heroine of Faith: Ruth

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Faith is an important element that defines our belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. It grants us the ability to excel in life with the Lord's blessings. "The Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man" Genesis 39:2. Joseph had faith in God and surrendered all to Him. Therefore, Joseph outshone all others in his struggle to survive in Egypt. Ruth is also a heroine of this faith. As a Gentile through tribulation, she finds the one God to ease her trials. He opens the doors to blessings and all this is due to her immense faith.

Ruth's story begins with a famine in the land of Bethlehem. One Israelite, Elimelech, felt that this famine was severe enough to relocate his family. Notice he is the only one mentioned as leaving Bethlehem due to this famine. Elimelech removed his family from the people of God and placed them in the land of foreign gods in Moab. His family consisted of his wife Naomi (name meaning "pleasant one") and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion (names meaning "sickness and consumption"). Soon, Elimelech dies in Moab. He had encountered a spiritual famine when he departed from God.

After their father's death, Mahlon chose Ruth as his wife and Chilion chose Orpah. The women were Moabites and, therefore, polytheistic. Although much is not known about the Moabite religion, it is certain that human sacrifices and impure rites were a part of their worship. Mahlon and Chilion "transgressed the decree of the word

of the Lord in taking strange wives" according to the Chaldee, a Jewish reference. Both sons die shortly afterward because they had left their God's laws and chosen the Moabite ways.

Naomi was left with Ruth and Orpah. Naomi finally decides it is time to return to the land of the one true God. She tries to send the Moabites back to their people telling them they are young and can remarry. She might have also been contemplating her people's reaction when she would return

and present the foreign women as the wives of her sons. Orpah returns to her people. Ruth, on the other hand, clings to Naomi proclaiming,

"Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you will lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me," Ruth 1:15-17.

Ruth concluded with the oath to never forsake this rightful path she has chosen. She resolved that nothing but death would keep her from Naomi. We should hold the same resolve in pursuing Christ until the end where death shall not part us from eternal happiness with the Lord. This proclamation of Ruth defines her faith. She believed in God with out even knowing much of Him. She based this faith from Naomi's attempted example of pursuing God's ways during life in Moab. Ruth is also defining her devotion to



Naomi and Ruth



Naomi. As devoted as she is with Naomi, even more does she become with God.

Naomi changes her name to Mara meaning “bitterness” since the three losses she experienced produces a woman of sorrowful spirit. Ruth, who also suffered from loss, responded to her trials differently. She takes action involving humility. When she saw that they would need food, she willingly took the position of a lowly servant and went to glean behind the threshers in the fields.

Her actions involved risk. Boaz, the master of the field she chose to glean in, advised her to glean only in his field where he instructed his workers to watch over her. He knew that gleaning was not always safe for a young woman.

Not only were her actions done in humility and with personal risk, but they were done with all she had to give. She went into the field and worked steadily from morning till night only stopping for brief rests in the shelter. When faced with overwhelming obstacles and grief, Ruth chose to act on the basis of her faith that the God of Naomi was the one true God.

St. Paul states, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love,” Galatians 5:6. It does not matter whether one is a Gentile or a Jew, but that one uses the faith through love as Ruth does. St. James also says, “and by works faith was made perfect.... You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” James 2:22, 24. Ruth acted through faith and was blessed.

Actually, Boaz was a relation to the family. Ruth was unaware of this until Naomi tells her. Naomi directs Ruth to wash, anoint herself and await for Boaz to be alone to approach him. Boaz should actually marry Naomi as tradition holds. However, Naomi through

kindness and gratitude allows Ruth to be blessed with the married state once more.

Ruth waited until Boaz was asleep to uncover his feet and lie underneath them. When he awoke in the middle of the night to see her at his feet, Ruth responds, “Take your maidservant underneath your wing for you are a near kinsman” Ruth 3:9. Boaz blesses her for not racing after rich men and choosing to stay virtuous. He tells her that there is actually another man closer in relation. However, if the man refuses, he himself will marry her. Boaz instructs her to stay the night for if she is seen wondering the streets so late, the people will classify her a harlot and ruin her honor and virtue. Ruth continued the night at Boaz’s feet, not at his side. They remained virtuous. She left early in the morning not empty-handed. Notice the tradition is still evident in our culture today. He may have not given her diamonds, but he still left his mark that he is pleased with her and will pursue the matter. Therefore, Naomi becomes aware of his position through the gift of barley.

Boaz visits the other relative asking him to redeem the land Naomi sold. The relative agreed. However, when Boaz added Ruth in the picture, the relative changed his mind claiming fear of ruining his inheritance. Therefore, as a seal of the redeeming and exchanging, the relative gave his sandal to Boaz. Boaz now has Elimelech’s, Mahlon’s and Chilion’s properties. He also has Ruth as his wife “to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place,” Ruth 4:10.

Ruth begot Obed who is David’s grandfather. As a Gentile, Ruth is among the maternal progenitors of our Lord. As St. Paul said, it does not matter if one is a Jew or a Gentile. It is all based upon one’s faith. “Go in peace. Your faith has saved you.” May the Lord grant us the faith to endeavor as Ruth has through love.