

Meditation #1  
**Ruth 1:21**  
Rev. Cory Griess

*I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

Naomi means “pleasant.” But Naomi believes neither she nor her life is pleasant at this time. And from one perspective she is correct. Naomi is coming home to the little town of Bethlehem having forsaken the church of God. With her husband and two sons she had left the church during a time of famine to seek better fortunes in worldly Moab.

God chastised his daughter to lead her to repentance and return her to the fold. Both of her sons married ungodly (at that time) women. Her husband died. And then her sons died. Naomi returns an older woman, a widowed woman, a penniless woman, a sonless woman. The fifty mile journey from Moab back to Bethlehem can be driven in an hour. But given that distance and the 4,000 foot climb in altitude, it must have taken Naomi and Ruth a week. She comes back tired, worn, scarred with the effects of her sin inside and out. All of God’s elect, chastened, and now returning people do.

But though God has brought Naomi home in love for her, Naomi is spiritually depressed. She knows she has been chastened, but she cannot see yet that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Heb. 12:6). She tells the crowd who has gathered around not to call her Naomi, but Mara. Naomi knows each one of them would know the significance of that word. Mara means bitter. It’s the name of the place where the people of God on the exodus expected sweet water, but then it turned out the water was bitter. She had gone forth with sweet expectation, but returns with a bitter pill to swallow in her life. And she cannot yet see the love of God in it. This happens sometimes to God’s people who have been severely tried and tested, or chastened, by the Lord. Has it happened to you? Are you there now?

But Naomi’s pill is not as bitter as she thinks; and neither is yours, repentant, humbled child of God. God has led Naomi to genuine repentance. You can see that in her confession, can’t you? You draw it out. Think about the significance of the first words of her confession in verse 21, “*I went out.*” Next, think about what it means when she says, “I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty.” If you would have asked her *before* she left, she would have said, “I am leaving empty, and if I ever come back from Moab I hope to come back full!” Third, think about what it means that she admits, “The Almighty hath afflicted me.” And fourth, notice the significance of the fact that she recognizes the place to which God returned her as “home.”

God has worked true repentance in her! That is his love! He’s brought her back to the church! The church embraces her in verse 19! (We would too if an erring brother or sister returned chastened by the Lord, wouldn’t we?) She comes back with a daughter-in-law who has just made a wonderful confession of faith in God! Things are not as bitter as they seem, Naomi! Are things really so bitter in your life, child of God, that you cannot see his blessings? That you cannot see his hand of love upon you? God turned the bitter water at Mara sweet, and whatever difficulties are in your life he transforms into sweet water for you. By his grace he casts the tree of the cross into your seemingly bitter life that you may know that all, yes all, is for you, to draw you to himself in love.

Memory Verse: *Exodus 15:25a And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet:*

Meditation #2  
**Ruth 2:8**  
Rev. Cory Griess

*Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:*

Ruth chapter two is all about God's provision for His people. Ruth was a Gentile convert from Moab who by sovereign grace had come to trust under the wings of Jehovah (v. 12). Would she be cared for in the church? Would the people of God accept her on the basis of her genuine confession? Or would she be ignored and rejected? Jehovah ensures that in his nest (the church), under his wings, this convert would be cared for.

He uses the means of a godly and wealthy man in the church, Boaz. Boaz has no romantic feelings for Ruth at this time; he simply recognizes the need of this woman and the sacrifices she has made to come out of her heathen religion and worship Jehovah with the people of God (vv. 11-12). Boaz is godly, mature, wise, caring, and generous. He sees that Ruth's need is not only material; she also needs to be brought into the life of the church. He seeks to provide for both of those needs. First, in verses 8-9 he gives her the best spot among the gleaners to make her feel welcomed and cared for. The "maidens" were the women who tied up the cut stalks of grain and took them to the threshingfloor. Ruth is given the best spot to glean, right behind the reapers, where these maidens were working. Second, in verse 14 he gives her a place at his own table, welcoming her in. Third, he assures her she will be protected from the "young men" harvesting (v. 9). Fourth, in verse 8 he tells her not to glean anywhere else. You could translate it, "Are you listening, my daughter? Don't glean anywhere else." Boaz means to continue to bring her in and welcome her and provide generously for her, as a father would care for his daughter. And this being the time of the judges, he is not sure others would.

God still uses the means of faithful church members to care for his needy people, whether they are being brought into the church by sovereign grace or have been part of the church from their youth up by sovereign grace. Are you a Boaz? Are you willing to care for those who not only have physical needs but need to be brought into the life of the church?

Though God uses the means of his nest (the church) to care for Ruth, it is still his wings under which we come to trust. God is the one who gave the laws of gleaning to his people to care "for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow" (Deut. 24:19-22). God is the one who preserved a faithful remnant even in this godless time of the judges, so that Ruth is cared for. God is the one who led Ruth safely to himself under His wings and into his nest, and finally to Boaz. Verse 3 speaks of Ruth's happening to come to glean in Boaz's field. That is an ironic way of saying that God directed her footsteps all the way to Boaz's field.

Has not God cared for you, believer? Have his wings ever proven untrustworthy? Has he not directed your steps and brought you to himself in the nest of his faithful church? Has he not directed your footsteps all the way to Christ, the greater Boaz? His control over your life is total, and all is directed in care for you.

Memory Verse: *Psalms 91:4a He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust:*

Meditation #3  
**Ruth 3:9**  
Rev. Cory Griess

*And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.*

Under the goodness of God to her through the church, Naomi recovered from her spiritual depression and began to fulfill her callings. Her main calling in Ruth 3 is to “seek rest” for her daughter-in-law Ruth (v. 1). That rest, or security, will be found for Ruth, Naomi knows, in a truly God-fearing marriage. Therefore, even though there is a nearer kinsman than Boaz, Naomi seeks a husband for Ruth in Boaz. The nearer kinsman has not done his duty and will show himself to be an ungodly man.

There is a lesson here for every godly parent in the covenant of grace. Naomi takes a risk by requiring Ruth to lay at the feet of Boaz. But so important is a marriage where two are truly one in the faith and able to bring up a faithful seed in the truths of God’s Word, that Naomi will do what she believes is necessary. Every parent must actively “seek rest” for their children in a godly marriage. That means training them from their youth up in the truth of God’s Word. It means training them from their youth up to look for a spouse who is one with them in the faith. Sometimes it may even mean taking a risk.

Ruth heeds Naomi’s godly instruction. She seeks Boaz and not the other kinsman or the “young men” of Israel (v. 10). And here is why: she would seek a marriage for the sake of the covenant of grace. In verse 10, when Boaz says to her, “Thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning,” he is not speaking of a kindness Ruth showed to him. Ruth did not need to show kindness to Boaz in the beginning and didn’t. Boaz is speaking of Ruth’s kindness to Naomi, for Ruth would seek marriage from a godly kinsman who would be able to raise up a righteous seed in Naomi’s line of generations once again.

Is this a significant part of the reason why we seek marriage in the church—for the sake of the covenant of grace? (Cf. Ps. 128 and Mal. 2:15.) Yes, there was perfume involved (Ruth 3:3), and there still may be perfume involved, but the perfume was not just for anyone, but for a man who could raise up a godly seed in the line of generations with Ruth.

So Ruth, to the surprise of Boaz (“Who art thou?”), proposes that Boaz propose to her. To spread your skirt over someone is to make a promise of marriage (see Ezek. 16:8). It is a picture of the man taking the woman under his protection and care—as Christ takes the church under his protection and care. When Ruth says, “[S]pread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid,” the Hebrew word for skirt is the same word Boaz used when he said that Ruth had come to trust under the “wings” of Jehovah (Ruth 2:12). Ruth and Boaz are ultimately a picture of Christ and the church. In Christ, Jehovah spreads his skirt or wings over his church and protects her from the devil, this world, and her own sinfulness. And the church seeks that protection solely in Christ. No other kinsman will do. Only he is able and willing.

Memory Verse: *John 6:68-69 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*