*Godly Women Series 2019 Part 3*

Ruth: Virtuous Devotion

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday March 17th, 2019

Text: Ruth

# **Intro**

1. There are examples both good and bad in the Scriptures.
2. Men and women alike can provide us with sources of strength and inspiration.
   1. Eve: “Mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20) and an example of moving past sin!
   2. Sarah: Mother of nations (Gen. 17:16), Mother of saints (Gal. 4:26,31), Mother of godly wives (I Pet. 3:6), and is an example of faith and overcoming one’s weaknesses!
3. Godly role models are greatly needed in our society!
4. The book of Ruth records the life of a virtuous woman whose name has become synonymous with faith, love, and devotion.
   1. An unlikely hero of the Old Testament because she was from the Moabite nation, Ruth won the respect of God's people and an honored place in the genealogy of the Christ.
5. Background – Book of Ruth (A Love Story)
   1. In the backdrop of the “days of the judges” (Ruth 1:1), a perilous time for Israel where they often disobeyed God and suffered the consequences, a foreigner’s example of virtue and devotion paves the way for Israel’s future king, a man after God’s own heart, and the promised Messiah!
   2. During the judges, famine forced a man from Bethlehem named Elimelech to move to Moab for ten years with his wife Naomi and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. During this time, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi a widow. Her two sons married non-Israelite women, named Orpah and Ruth, who were Moabites. Sometime later, her sons also died.
6. Ruth is an example of faith, virtue, love, and devotion!
7. **She Had Faith**
8. *Ruth 1:1-7*
   1. Desolate in a foreign country, Naomi determined to return to Bethlehem. Her two daughters-in-law desired to return with her, and she encouraged them to stay in Moab where their prospects for marriage were better than in Israel.
9. Ruth 1:8-15:
   1. Naomi recognized her daughter-in-law’s prospects for future happiness were much better in Moab than in Israel.
   2. In Moab they were among their own people; in Israel, Ruth was a foreign woman unlikely to ever remarry.
   3. Orpah wept, kissed her mother-in-law and returned to “to her people and her gods” (1:15).
10. Ruth 1:16-18:
    1. Ruth turned her back on her own people and their gods to cast her lot with the people of God. *(Heb. 11:25-26: Moses did the same once!)*
    2. Ruth said to Naomi, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (1:16).
    3. What Ruth did was more than loyalty and devotion to her mother-in-law; it was an act of faith which was recognized as such by the inhabitants of Bethlehem (2:11).
    4. Boaz recognized her faith when he said, “May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge” (2:12).
11. Notice the difference in these three widows:
    1. Naomi *(H5281: “Pleasant” or “My Delight”)* was a grieving widow – bereft of husband and sons, became bitter *(H4755 Mara: “Bitter” or Bitterness”)* – Ruth 1:20-21
    2. Orpah *(H6204: “Mane” or “Gazelle”)* was a leaving widow – she listened to the counsel of Naomi and left her – Ruth 1:14-15
    3. Ruth *(H7327: “Friend” or “Friendship”)* was a cleaving widow – she would not part from Naomi except by death – Ruth 1:16-17
12. Ruth broke the last tie that bound her to her own country and people; abandoned her kindred, renounced her gods, and by a great act of faith joined herself to a new religion, a new people, and a new life.
    1. It was an uncertain life, and one of poverty and hard work – had faith in Naomi & her God!
13. Ruth had the faith to leave all she knew to put herself under the “wings” of Jehovah! *(Ruth 2:12)*

### **She Was Virtuous**

1. Ruth 2:7, 11
   1. Ruth won the respect of the community about her by her devotion to Naomi, her industriousness, and her virtuous conduct.
   2. When she labored in the field, the workers noticed how hard she worked saying, “She came and has remained from the morning until now" (2:7).
   3. Boaz said, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me" (2:11).
2. Ruth 3:11
   1. Ruth did all that Naomi told her to do to appeal to Boaz to perform the obligation of a levirate husband *(“husband’s brother” – Deut. 25:5-10)* to raise up seed to his deceased relative (3:1-6).
   2. She laid down at his feet and when Boaz awoke in the night, he was startled at finding a woman at his feet! (3:8-9)
      1. A strange custom to our standards today! An acceptable practice then for a woman to ask for a marriage (being “forward”) – symbolized her willingness to be in subjection the man.
      2. She asked to be covered by his garment but the word in Hebrew is the same word for “wing” as Boaz said she came under the Lord’s “wings” in 2:12.
      3. Ruth asks for Boaz’s protection as kinsman-redeemer as if from the Lord.
   3. When he learned it was Ruth, he told her he would do all he could in the morning to “redeem” her under the law (3:10-13).
3. He said of her, “I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence” (3:11). (NKJV: “a virtuous woman”)
   1. *Heb. chayil (Str. 2428):* From Str. 2342b; excellence, excellent, great, might, mighty, nobly, strong, valiant, valor, virtue, virtuous.
   2. Prov. 31:10: “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.” (“Virtuous,” NKJV)
4. Not only did she work hard, she maintained her purity, winning the respect due a virtuous woman!
5. For that, Boaz wanted her and would seek to redeem her despite a closer relative.
6. Ruth was virtuous, above reproach and God’s people (foreigners to her) came to love her too!

### **She Trusted In God’s Care**

1. Ruth 2:2
   1. She trusted in the Lord's provisions.
   2. She was content to accept the provisions which God had made for widows such as Naomi and herself.
   3. In Bethlehem, Ruth took the obligation of providing for Naomi and herself. She went into the fields and gleaned with the poor, even as the law of Moses demanded *(Lev. 19:9; 23:22; Deut. 24:19) – She worked hard without complaint to provide for herself and her mother-in-law.*
   4. In the providence of God, she gleaned in the field of Boaz, a near kinsmen to Elimelech.
2. Ruth 3:6, 9
   1. She trusted in the Lord's provision for a levirate (“husband’s brother”) marriage.
   2. She appealed to Boaz to perform the duties of a near kinsman to raise up seed to one who died childless *(Deut. 25:5-10) –* to her deceased husband Mahlon (4:10)
3. She walked within the Law in both of these respects, and God blessed her for it!
4. Boaz: Funny Meme – “What kind of man was Boaz before marriage?” RUTHLESS
5. We see Boaz as a type of Christ in the aspect of a “Redeemer”:
   1. Boaz was a man of great wealth (Ruth 2:1).
   2. He was compassionate to the stranger, who had no claim on his favors (Ruth 2:8-9).
      1. He told her to stay in his fields with his maids and drink the servant’s water.
   3. He knew all about Ruth, even before she met him (Ruth 2:11), even as the Lord knows all about us even before we come to know Him.
   4. He served Ruth graciously, and all her needs were satisfied (Ruth 2:14).
      1. He fed her with his own servants! (Showed a foreigner mercy!)
   5. He granted her protection and prosperity for the future (Ruth 2:15-16).
      1. He instructed his servants to “not insult” & “not to rebuke” her, and to purposely leave extra grain for her to glean.
      2. In doing this, he secured her safety and success (Ruth 2:21-23).
   6. He redeemed (“to buy back”) all that belonged to Elimelech and his sons, and would marry Ruth to raise up a descendant for Mahlon (Ruth 4:1-10).
      1. When he redeemed Naomi’s land and promised to take care of her and marry Ruth, his kinsman gave him his sandal.
      2. Another strange custom! It symbolized the right of the new owner to walk the land!
      3. Deut. 25:9: The Law actually called for the widow to remove the sandal from the kinsman who refused and spit in his face!
6. In these acts of grace we see a foreshadowing of our blessings in Christ!
   1. Jesus came to “seek and save the lost” *(Luke 19:10)* and to redeem mankind from their sins *(Eph. 1:7),* not only the Jews but the Gentiles (foreigners), thus all the world is blessed with His mercy! *(Gal. 3:8-14)*
7. From tragedy came faith, and from faith came great blessings!

### **She Had Love and Devotion**

1. Ruth 4:15
   1. Ruth loved her mother-in-law Naomi. She was committed to her (1:16-17).
   2. Naomi was one of the Lord's people who, like Job, had been called to suffer.
   3. It has been said, “Many men have had affliction – none like Job; many women have had tribulation – none like Naomi.”
   4. We hear many mother-in-law jokes because of the friction that can exist between in-laws. *There was no such friction between Ruth and Naomi!*
   5. Ruth became to Naomi “better than seven sons” (4:15).
2. Ruth recognized Naomi's plight and was moved with love and compassion to go with her and stand by her in her hours of need.
3. They loved and cared for each other (Ruth 3:1: Naomi cared for Ruth as much too!).
4. She may have had it easier in Moab among her own people, but out of love she went with Naomi!

### **She Was Blessed Among Israel**

1. She walked in the pathway of duty.
   1. Orpah turned her back on duty to find a pleasurable life on earth. (1:14-15)
   2. Ruth turned her back on the pleasures of life in order to do what duty demanded. (1:16-17)
2. Ruth sacrificed everything that could fascinate a young woman to fulfill the demands of duty.
   1. She gave up association with her family, kinsmen, and friends to move to Israel.
   2. She committed herself to caring for her aged mother-in-law who could not provide for herself (Naomi did not go to the fields with Ruth).
   3. While others were enjoying life's temporal pleasures, Ruth was fulfilling her duty.
3. God blessed her for it! (Ruth 4:11-22)
   1. Boaz was a close relative, and very generous.
   2. He was a descendant of Perez, son of Judah and Tamar *(Gen. 38: A levirate mariage gone wrong!)*
   3. Boaz and Ruth had a son, Obed, who fathered Jesse, who was the father of King David!
   4. Jesus is from the tribe of Judah, from Perez, and a descendant of David (Mt. 1; Acts 2).
   5. Ruth 4:11-12: The elders who witnessed the redemption said, “May the woman you bring in your home be like Leah and Rachel for they built the house of Israel, and may your house be like the house of Perez.”
      1. Little did they know how true that would become!
      2. Through Jesus “all the nations” are blessed, and His spiritual house (church) knows no boundaries and is by far greater than the House of Israel!
   6. This woman of virtue (“excellence”) is an ancestor of the physical side of the Son of God! (Mt. 1:5)
4. By her life of faith, virtue, love, and devotion, God blessed Ruth and Naomi in ways they couldn’t even see!

# **Conclusion**

1. Some people, when going through trials, wonder if it’s worth it to not give up.
2. Ruth and Noami’s account give us hope that when one is virtuous, God will bless and reward!
   1. Virtue is the strength of character to do what is right no matter what!
3. The years have passed; the lives of both Orpah and Ruth have long gone.
   1. Orpah's name has passed into oblivion, having been nearly forgotten.
   2. Ruth passed down to her children an honorable name; a name still given to young ladies.
4. Our modern day “Ruth's” will also pass down a legacy to their families:
   1. A legacy that teaches their children to be devoted to God and to those committed to their care.
5. May Ruth's God-fearing, virtuous conduct be an example to each of us!
6. If you are not a Christian, you are not serving God but yourself. Repent and be baptized!
7. If a Christian, perhaps you haven’t been serving Him to the best of your ability. Repent!
8. Whatever your requests may be, come forward ***NOW***and let them be known while we stand and sing.