

“THE COURAGE OF RUTH”

Text: Ruth 1:1-16

Subject: How The Choices We Make Determine Our Destiny

Introduction

1. Ruth is a love story that takes place during the dark ages of the judges.
2. It is a picture of God’s grace at work today, even in the midst of despair and decay.
3. It is a revelation of God’s providence at work in the lives of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz.
4. It is a book that begins with tears and ends in triumph; it begins with a funeral and ends with a wedding. It begins with bitterness and ends with blessedness; it follows Ruth from being empty to finding fullness in her kinsman-redeemer.
5. The book of Ruth was written for one main purpose and reason: **to reveal to us the blessing of God upon the one who chooses to serve the Lord.**

The setting before us

- During the rule of the judges, a famine prevailed over the land,
- Famine was the result of disobedience to God, He said it would result if His people departed from His ways.
- This famine touched a respectable family:
 - Elimelech was the husband and Naomi was the wife,
 - Mahlon and Chilion were their two sons (who would marry Orpah and Ruth).

What happens to this family speaks to every one of us.

I. The Crisis Of Naomi (1:1-13)

1. The “Dearth” in the land

“...there was famine in the land.” (1:1)

Fact: The fertile districts were bare and

Fact: The family became hard-pressed for survival.

2. The “Detour” in the road

“And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons...and they came in the country of Moab and continued there.” (1:1&2)

Fact: Mom and dad sinned when they left for Moab.

Fact: Moab had refused to allow Israel passage through its territory when Moses led Israel to Canaan.

Fact: Moab was a product of the flesh (born to Lot through incest with his daughter).

Fact: The Moabites were immoral, unethical and the enemy of the people of God.

Fact: And, Elimelech and Naomi were detoured from Bethlehem to Moab.

1. Elimelech and Naomi chose the path of least resistance.
2. They chose rather to be full out of God’s will than to be hungry in God’s will.
3. They looked towards the land of Lot instead of looking towards the God of Abraham.
4. They forget that sin is easy to get into but harder to get out of.

Three Steps Downward

- Elimelech “sojourned” to Moab (he went where he didn’t belong) (1:1)
- Elimelech “continued there” in Moab (his sojourn lasted 10 long years) (1:2)
- Elimelech “died” in Moab (the place far from Bethlehem where he really belonged.) (1:3)

3. The “**Death**” in the family

“Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion died, and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.” (1:3 & 5)

Fact: Elimelech and Naomi choose to live in Moab; they departed from Bethlehem (which means “house of bread”).

Fact: They made the mistake millions make, thinking that others have it better.

Fact: Naomi left Bethlehem because of famine, but ended up finding death in Moab.

Fact: Naomi discovered what we must remember:

- There is no bread outside of God’s will.
- There is no blessing outside of God’s will.
- There is no benefit outside of God’s will.

4. The “**Decision**” to return

“Then she arose with her daughter-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab.” (1:6)...“they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.” (1:7)

Fact: God is the God of a second chance for Naomi.

Fact: Naomi was willing to change her mind and change direction.

Fact: Naomi lost her husband, two sons and is not willing to turn her feet toward Bethlehem.

Fact: She starts towards home and brings her two daughters-in-law to the fork in the road.

Fact: Orpah and Ruth have got to make a choice for themselves!

II. **The Curse Of Orpah (1:14 & 15)**

“...Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her.” (1:14)

“And she said, behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods.”(1:15)

Fact: Three widows were left behind, desolate and destitute.

Fact: Naomi hears that the famine is over in Israel, and starts for home.

Fact: Naomi wants her two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab where they might find security and provision. (1:8)

- Naomi knew the attitude of the Israelites towards a Moabite (Orpah & Ruth).
- Naomi didn’t want any more hardship to come to Orpah and Ruth if possible.
- Naomi pleads with Ruth and Orpah to return and stay in Moab (instead of traveling back to Bethlehem).

Orpah leaves

1. Orpah started out well, she “arose” and headed for Bethlehem. (1:6)
2. Orpah traveled a distance with Ruth and Naomi (1:7)
3. Orpah even promised Naomi “*We will return with thee unto thy people.*” (1:10)
4. Orpah was even full of outward affection. (1:14)
 - She lifted her voice (but words are not enough)
 - She wept (but tears are not enough)
 - She kissed Naomi (but emotions are not enough).

But Orpah chose to leave
“Orpah is gone back” (what a sad legacy) to:
1. “Her people” (v. 15) 2. “Her gods” (v. 15)

- Orpah looked at Moab (and the fleshly security back home) and looked at Bethlehem (where Jehovah Jireh cared for His covenant people).

She left the eternal God

1. Orpah chose the security of her past and the pleasures of Moab.
2. Orpah chose the gods of the Moabites and the path of least resistance.
3. Orpah chose the road to please the flesh and lost sight of eternity.

She forfeited so much

- She lost everything that was before her.
- She gave up all that was in Bethlehem.
- She forsook the God of Naomi and Ruth.
- She left the very one who could lead her home!
- She missed what God “had in waiting” for her in Judah.

III. The Courage Of Ruth (1:16-22)

- Naomi pleaded with Ruth to do what Orpah had done:
“Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods, return thou after thy sister-in-law.” (1:15)

But Ruth refused to be detoured.

- Orpah’s leaving made it easier for Ruth to leave,
- Orpah’s quitting made it easier for Ruth to quit,
- Orpah’s turning made it easier for Ruth to turn, but Ruth would cleave to Naomi.
- And choose to get out of Moab and return to Bethlehem.

Seven Reasons Why Ruth Made The Right Decision

1. Ruth based her decision on what was right, not what was convenient.

- There was no job offer Bethlehem, no promise of security.
- There was no guarantee of her being welcomed there,
- There was no visible reward at the present time.

“To obey is better than sacrifice.” (1 Samuel 15:22)

2. Ruth based her decision upon faith, not sight.

- Ruth knew what was in Moab (where she was).
- But had no idea of what lay ahead in Bethlehem.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went.”
(Hebrews 11:8)

3. Ruth based her decision upon conviction, not emotion.

- Orpah cried and kissed, but still forsook Naomi.
- Ruth made a decision of her will (deep down inside).

“Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:17)

4. Ruth based her decision upon the eternal, not the temporary.

- Orpah gave in to the temporary gain in Moab.
- Ruth saw beyond the here and now, to the future.

“The world passeth away, and the lust hereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” (1 John 2:17)

5. Ruth based her decision upon separation, not adaption.

- She could have tried to serve the God of Israel and the gods of Moab,
- But she knew it was either one or the other.
- She was willing to leave Moab and cleave to Bethlehem.

“No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.” (Matthew 6:24)

6. Ruth based her decision upon God’s approval, not her friend’s approval.

- She didn’t care if Orpah rejected her or not.
- She didn’t care if 10 years of friends in Moab rebuked her or not.
- She simply wanted to please God more than anyone else.

“The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” (Proverbs 29:25)

7. Ruth based her decision upon finality, leaving no room for hesitation.

“Where thou diest, I will die.” (1:17 means)

- Ruth left no room for negotiation in the future.
“We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

You say does it pay to serve God? Does it ever!

1. Ruth was used in the lineage of Jesus.
2. Ruth was provided for when she returned to Bethlehem.
3. Ruth was given a husband. (Boaz)
4. Ruth was eternally rewarded for her obedience to God.

Why was Ruth rewarded?

1. She believed the message of the God of Israel.
2. She obeyed the message of the God of Israel.

And said...

“Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

Orpah held on to the god’s of Moab, Ruth let go for the God of Israel.

- I’m asking you to do what Ruth was willing to do:
 1. Let go of everything opposed to God’s will for your life and,
 2. Hold on and move forward to all that God has for you.

In other words, get out of Moab and move into Bethlehem.

Amen!
Bill Kirk