

THE POINT OF DECISION

Ruth 1:6-18

This message delivered at Lincoln Christian Life Center, Sunday evening, April 15, 2007

The darkest moments occur just before daybreak! Still, you can remain in the dark spiritually if you allow your attitude to remain gloomy. That is the story of Naomi and Ruth. They faced the most horrid problems imaginable. Then, as Warren Wiersbe says, they tried to “hide their mistakes.”¹

THE MOMENT OF DECISION, (Ruth 1:6-14)

The Scripture colorfully describes Naomi’s choice to return to the Land of Promise. She has heard how God was once again visiting her people with blessing. Verses 6-7 says that Naomi “*arose*” and “*departed from the place where she was. . .*” It is one thing to get up and another to go! To leave the old place is leave the old crowd, the old life style, for a new way of living. When the Prodigal said, “*I will arise,*” it was the first step in returning.

You must arise and leave! Anyone who wants to follow God, must come out from among them and be ye separate.

It is difficult to understand why Naomi appealed to her daughters-in-law to return to their people, back into the heathen life of Moab. Living in America today, it is impossible to comprehend what serious ordeal these three women faced. Widows were always without support. Theirs was a perpetual poverty and widowhood!

Naomi reasoned that if she should conceive a male that very night, would her two daughter-in-laws be willing to wait until the child was old enough to marry. To accompany Naomi meant that they would never marry. The women were not only outcasts with Naomi’s relatives, but also outcasts socially and religiously. The Jews had no dealing with the Moabites.

Then, according to verse 13, Naomi felt the wrathful hand of God against her, that “*the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.*” The hand of the Lord is a powerful expression in the days when Scriptures were being composed. Elijah is spoken of as, “*the hand of the Lord came upon Him,*” (II Kings 3:14-16). That denotes that God was with him, to bless and give him victory. After the death of Stephen and the scattering of saints, the Bible says, “*The hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord,*” (Acts 11:21). Because the hand of the Lord was with them, they received the favor of God. But when Naomi said, “*The hand of the Lord is against me,*” she was expressing the displeasure of the Lord that was upon her.

What is genuine repentance? Orpah shed many tears, but they were not tears of repentance. The Greek term for repent in II Corinthians 7:10(NASU) is *metanoia* meaning, “to change your mind.” The verse says, “*For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.*” So true repentance leads to salvation!

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, History, (Colorado Springs, CO: 2003), p. 181.

To change your mind requires a whole new way of looking at life. In verse 15, when Orpah returned to her own people, Naomi concluded, “*Behold, (she) has gone back to her people and her gods . . .*” Here are the two most difficult places to change—with your relatives and your religion. Those are the most difficult things to give up. But if you are going to follow God, it must be a decisive and complete commitment. Jesus said, “*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life,*” (Matthew 19:29 NASU).

THE INVOLVEMENT IN THE DECISION, (Ruth 1:15-18)

The great need these days is for people to make real decisions for God as Ruth made. She made a six-fold decision:

Where you go, I will go.

When a person follows Christ, he wants to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. The old way of walking is over. Things of the past are all forsaken. A person wants to go where God leads.

Where you lodge, I will lodge.

When a person finds Christ, he wants to live in a different place. To lodge refers to the every day place where you live—and speaks about the new home where you live. That is why the word “submission” is so typical of the “new house arrangements.” That is a key element in your relationship with Christ. You learn to submit yourself one to another.

Your people shall be my people.

Another change when you decide to following God is you change the company you are with. You no longer feel comfortable with your old associates. You are no longer of this world or its practices.

Your God, my God.

When God becomes your God, you change the realm of worship. I Thessalonians 1:9 speaks of “*how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.*”

Notice, Ruth made God her own God. She speaks of God as “*My God.*” How good to make God your God. David said, “*The Lord is my shepherd.*” Nothing is better than a personal relationship with God. “*He is my rock and my shield,*” “*He is my healer,*” “*He is my righteousness,*” “*He is my banner over me.*” “*He is my fortress.*” “*He is my “all in all!”*”

Where you die, I will die.

When Caesar brought his troops to England, he burned their ships behind them. Likely that is where we get the expression, “Burning your bridges behind you.” When you make such a decision, it is an all or nothing decision! Jesus said, “*No one, after*

putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God,” (Luke 9:62).

There I will be buried.

At last, we come to the apex of commitment—“*and there I will be buried.*”

When Ruth said that she was making a commit beyond the graveyard. When Joseph, for example, died in Egypt, he insisted that he be buried in Canaan. Hebrews 11:22 says, “*By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.*” The most basic fulfillment of that request was Joseph’s confidence that one day the children of Israel would return to the Land of Promise. Hundreds of years later, Moses took the bones of Joseph with him as he crossed the Red Sea and returned to the Promised Land. But there is a larger significant than that!

When Abraham entered the Promised Land, the first piece of land he purchased was the cave of Machpehah—so he could bury Sarah his wife when she died. From then on, a phrase goes on and on through the Hebrew Scriptures—that when a person dies, they are gathered unto their people. That was so with Isaac. When Jacob died in Egypt, he wanted to be buried back in Israel where his people were buried.

By Abraham’s action of buying “a tomb,” he expresses a faith that the land of Israel would remain perpetually for his people. As long as the remains of his loved one remained in the land—it would be theirs.

But there is more to it than that. When God asked him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah, soon he was to discover something that would change his perspective forever. John 8:56 says, “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*” When a substitute was provided instead of his son, Abraham could see “*the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.*” He also saw that God was able to raise his own son. He began to believe in the resurrection.

Notice Genesis 25:8-10. A remarkable commentary of these verses is mentioned in the Pulpit commentary:

Then Abraham gave up the ghost (literally, *breathed out*, sc. The breath of life), **and died in a good old age**, —literally, *in a good hoary age*, i.e. “with a crown of righteousness upon his hoary head” (Hughes)—**an old man, and full of years**. Literally, *and satiated*, i.e. satisfied not merely with life and all its blessings, but with living. The three clauses give an elevated conception of the patriarch’s life as that of one who has tastes all the sweets and realized all he ends of a mundane existence, and who accordingly was ripe and ready for transition to a higher sphere. **And was gathered to his people**. And expression similar to “going to his fathers” (ch. XV. 15, q.v.), and to “being gathered to one’s fathers” (Judges ii.10). “The phrase is constantly distinguished from departing this life and being buried, denotes the reunion in Sheol with friends who had gone before, and therefore presupposes faith in the personal continuance of a man after death” (Keil).²

² H. D. M. Spence and Joseph Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary, Genesis*, (London and New York: Funk and Wagnallis Company), p. 313.

Hebrews 11:10, 13-19, in speaking of Abraham, says:

For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God . . . Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE. All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

And it was these ideas about faith that Ruth was willing to accept and forsake all else. It was a complete commitment, totally relying upon the Lord!