

Ruth 1:15-18

Ruth 1:14 ended with a tearful good-bye. Orpah returned to Moab and Ruth chose to remain with Naomi. Yet Naomi is not finished trying to dissuade Ruth from accompanying her to Bethlehem.

Before we move on, let's address the thought of sticking with those we know and love even when times prove to be difficult or uncertain. **Do we love one another enough to forsake what is certain and comfortable? Do we love God enough to leave behind the pulls of the world for the promises of a future with Him?**

Matthew 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Matthew 19:21-22 Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

In 2 Timothy 4, towards the end of Timothy's death, he speaks of those who had deserted him as the pull of the world became stronger than the message of the gospel (2 Timothy 4:10; 16).

Ruth's insisting on remaining with Naomi testifies to the relationship that has formed between them. It also gives us insight to the strong pull of Naomi's example of faith and trust in the God of Israel toward Ruth. Orpah most likely returned to the gods of Moab when she went back to her family. Ruth's heart is changing however. She is being drawn away from the idolatry taught her and into the truth of Naomi's God.

Naomi continues to make certain that Ruth has a realistic appreciation of the hardship ahead as she once again offers her a way out to return to her own people.

Ruth 1:15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

This is a true test of Ruth's conversion. No matter the unknown's ahead, if she has truly been called by God she will choose to follow Him. For Ruth, that would mean leaving the teaching and culture of Moab behind, along with her relatives, and continuing on with Naomi to Bethlehem. There will be no turning back from her decision. Read Joshua 24:15, "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Will Ruth remain steadfast in her decision to know the God of Israel? The next verses, Ruth 1:16-17, give us the answer.

Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. 17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

What can we say here but wow! A beautiful account of a heart called by God has been recorded for us. In essence we have Ruth saying, “Stop asking me to leave you and turn back to Moab. I will go with you to Bethlehem and will dwell with you and adopt your nation and your God as my own. I am committed to remain until death”.

Ruth answers all of Naomi’s concerns.

- Ruth shows her desire to follow Naomi through whatever may befall them – “where you go, I will go”,
- she explains her intent to remain permanently – “where you lodge, I will lodge”,
- she expressly says she will adopt the nation of Israel as her own which has to mean she will follow the commands of the Jews – “Your people shall be my people”, and
- She will purpose to follow the one true God – “your God, my God”.

Ruth is fully changed from being an idol worshipper to kneeling before the God of Israel! If we jump ahead to chapter two of Ruth, Boaz also determines through Ruth’s actions that she has placed her trust in the God of Israel.

Ruth 2:11-12 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. ¹² "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."

The account above begs for us to carefully examine not only whom we follow, but to what extent. *Have we laid aside all things pertaining to this world in order to follow Jesus? Even if our lives may prove to be more difficult and uncertain? Is our faith genuine – is it represented in our words, our choices, and our actions?*

Hosea 13:4 Yet I have been the LORD your God Since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any god except Me, **for there is no savior besides Me.** (emphasis added)

2Corinthians 6:16-18 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. ¹⁷ "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸ "And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

Ruth continues with her answer to Naomi in verse seventeen as she states that only death will separate them: “Where you die, I will die”. The commitment Ruth is making is long term, she has no intention of changing her direction when poverty or difficult circumstances present themselves. Ruth fully embraces the Jewish nation as her own as she is even intending to be buried with them – “and there I will be buried”.

And, just in case Naomi is still unconvinced of Ruth’s genuine affection and conversion to the one true God, Ruth adds judgement upon herself if she reneges on her promise! “Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me”.

Paul, in the book of Acts, continued to follow the one true God, even knowing that persecution was part of his lot.

Acts 20:22-24 "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. ²⁴ "But I do not consider my

life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

Naomi certainly seemed wise in making certain Ruth understood what may befall her if she chose to journey to Bethlehem. Less than a pretty picture was painted for the difficulties that might await the women. Naomi served Ruth in giving her a clear understanding of what her decision to follow meant. Ruth would find herself in a foreign land with a foreign people worshipping a God that had been unknown to her until the connection between these unlikely families years ago. The people of Israel would not tolerate worship of an idol. Ruth would have to become one of them in her thinking, in her practice and in her worship. **Was she up for it? How sincere was her commitment to God?**

Our faith is not a one-time, say the right words and own a life insurance policy, act of acknowledgement. When God chooses to transform a heart to understand who He is and what He has done, it is permanent and it is complete. There is no turning away lest we desire His hand of discipline. God will use us or He will remove us, but He will never lose us. **Will we hang tight in tough times and be used? Will we hide and not fully understand what it means to be joyful in all circumstances?** God will keep us if we are truly His. **Will we stay wholly committed to His work for His glory?**

The scene has moved from Naomi's repeated persuasion for Ruth to turn back from the hardship ahead to a clear understanding of Ruth's determination to follow. Nothing was able to dissuade Ruth from accompanying Naomi on this journey.

In Acts 21:10-12, Agabus had warned Paul that he would be bound and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles in Jerusalem. Those with Paul even begged him to not journey there for fear of what would befall him. But Paul was determined to follow God no matter the cost. **Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."**

How would we hold up to this test of our faith? Paul, in the book of Ephesians, exhorts the church at Ephesus to live according to the grace of God. Midway through chapter six, after a long discourse on Christian living, we read these words, **"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might" (Ephesians 6:10).** He then goes on to list the armor we have in Christ. It is certain we are unable to live in a manner pleasing to God without His power working in us. Ruth has chosen to forsake all things to follow God. And He will use her for His glory.