

Ruth

Decisions that Determine **Destiny**

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This is a love story and we all love, love stories.

1) INTRODUCTION

- a) The story of Ruth is a true story.
 - i) The book of Ruth is the only book in the Bible devoted completely to the life of one woman.
 - ii) It is the story of redemption.
 - (1) Ruth is a picture in the Old Testament of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (2) Boaz, the man she marries, is a picture of Christ, our kinsman redeemer.
- b) With a good look at this story, we discover that our lives are the sum total of our decisions.
- c) The book of Ruth was written during difficult, dark days.
 - i) It was a dark day spiritually and nationally.
 - ii) There was apathy, anarchy and famine in the land.
 - iii) ***Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.***
- d) The book of Ruth is a bright hope for dark days.

e) If we find ourselves in a time of darkness, trouble or despair, then Jesus Christ will be to us what Boaz was to Ruth.

f) The first chapter of Ruth tells of choices made and their consequences.

(Remember the story of Benjamin Franklin)

These may be dark days but we serve a God who has the end of our story in His hand.

2) THE PRINCIPLE OF A WILLING CHOICE

(Ruth 1:1-2) 1In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem (house of bread) in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2The name of the man was Elimelech (My God is King) and the name of his wife Naomi (pleasantness), and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.

a) Bethlehem, the place where Elimelech lived and where Jesus would be born, means “house of bread.”

i) The Moabites were the archenemies of Israel.

(1) The Moabites were a pagan race who lived in an obscene, pagan place.

ii) Elimelech, because there was a famine in the land, decided to take his family to Moab.

(1) Elimelech made a bad decision, and this decision marked his life with tragedy.

God made us free will agents.

b) We are free to choose.

i) *Deuteronomy 30:19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,*

ii) God sets before us today the same choice that was before Elimelech: the choice between life and death, blessing and cursing.

iii) God desires us to choose life.

iv) We are not victims of fate: we are free to choose.

We like choice, that's why there are so many soda pop drink choices in America.

c) We are not free not to choose.

i) We always make a choice.

(1) There is no way we can say, "I will not choose."

(a) To refuse life is to choose death.

(b) To refuse Christ is to choose not to have Christ.

(c) We cannot escape making a choice.

ii) Some say that they will not say yes or no to Jesus; that they simply will not make a decision about Jesus. But that in itself is a decision: to choose not to say yes to Jesus is to say no to Christ.

(1) ***Matthew 12:30*** *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.*

(2) ***Luke 11:23*** *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.*

If we say no to Jesus you are saying yes to Satan.

d) We are not free to choose the consequences of our choice.

i) First we make our choice, and then our choice chooses for us.

(1) When we make a few big choices, that takes care of a lot of little choices.

(2) The biggest decision we can ever make is to receive Jesus Christ as Lord.

- ii) Our choices inevitably bring consequences into our lives and into the lives of those close to us.

If you step out of the window on the tenth floor of a building, you are free to do that, but you then you are not free to choose the consequences.

What about choosing a restaurant with your wife?

3) **THE PROBLEMS OF A WRONG CHOICE** (Wicked Choice)

a) Elimelech made a wrong choice when he decided to go into the land of Moab.

- i) He knew the truth.

- ii) His name meant “My God is King.”

b) Elimelech made a wrong choice due to three basic reasons:

- i) **He had a wrong motive.**

*(1) **Ruth 1:1** In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem (house of bread) in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.*

(2) There was a famine in the land, and he was motivated by **physical** reasons, **not spiritual** reasons.

(a) Elimelech knew that God had promised to bless him, but he decided he had to take care of himself.

(3) He placed the physical above the spiritual.

(a) ***Psalm 37:25** I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.*

(b) ***Matthew 6:33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

(4) We often have our priorities are out of order.

(a) We love things and try to use God rather than loving God and using things.

(5) God will not work in second place.

ii) **He had a wrong method.**

(1) Elimelech walked by sight, not by faith.

(a) He looked at appearances.

(2) Faith is believing God in spite of appearances and obeying God in spite of consequences.

(a) The appearance was famine in the “house of bread,” Bethlehem.

(b) Elimelech, walking by sight and not faith, tried to run away.

(3) ***Psalm 55:6 And I say, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest;***

(a) The Psalmist describes a desire to run away from problematic circumstances; but God desires to give us the wings of an eagle to mount up over our problems.

(i) Isaiah 40:31 but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

iii) **He had the wrong master.**

(1) When Elimelech went over into Moab, he went into enemy territory.

(a) The Moabites had been enemies of God.

(b) The Moabites had invaded Israel and ruled over Israel for 18 years.

(c) God had placed a curse upon the Moabites.

(2) When we live in disbelief and disobedience, we dishonor God and we move into the enemy's territory.

(a) When Elimelech moved his family to Moab, his two sons married daughters of Moab.

(b) Elimelech's entire life and his family suffered because he could not believe God.

c) Elimelech's choice brought consequences.

i) It brought death.

(1) *Ruth 1:3-5 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, 5and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.*

(a) Elimelech and his two sons died in Moab.

(b) We cannot run away; we must get right with God.

ii) It brought deprivation.

(1) Elimelech wanted to be blessed.

(a) We will find a blessing in the place of blessing.

(b) When we get out of the place of blessing, we should not expect to be blessed.

(i) Naomi changes her name to Mara, which means “bitterness.”

(ii) She begins to blame God for her situation, but God wasn’t to blame for Elimelech’s choice.

What is the difference between a Preacher and a business man who chooses where their labors will unfold.

It takes as much of the power of God to save the business man as it does to save the preacher.

He is operating by sight and not by faith.

You say, well, a man’s got to live, no, a man has to die. (face God)

Faith is believing God despite appearances and obeying God in spite of the consequences.

You cannot run from God.

You cannot from God far enough to find the place of blessing.

The Samaritan fable of the man who ran from death.

4) THE POWER OF A WISE CHOICE

(Ruth 1:6-18) Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. 7So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of

the LORD has gone out against me." 14Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return 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. 17Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." 18And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

- a) Naomi and her two daughters-in-law were left in Moab with no sustenance and no way of taking care of themselves.
- b) Naomi hears of the blessings back in Bethlehem.
 - i) God has visited His people in Bethlehem.
 - ii) Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem.
- c) Ruth 1:7-14
 - i) Orpah kissed her mother-in-law
 - ii) But Ruth clave unto Naomi.
- d) Ruth 1:15-18

i) Ruth decided to go with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem.

ii) Ruth's decision was a decision for destiny.

(1) It not only changed the course of Ruth's life, but it changed our lives, too.

(2) Ruth became an ancestor to the Lord Jesus Christ.

iii) Ruth had previously lived a cursed life.

(1) ***Deuteronomy 23:3*** "No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever,

(2) ***Ephesians 2:12*** remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

(a) Grace did for Ruth what the law could not do.

iv) Ruth had a crushed life.

(1) She had known poverty and deprivation.

(2) She had lost her husband and father-in-law.

(3) She was without a home and without help.

v) Ruth had a condemned life.

(1) Because her husband had died, she had a sentence of death upon her.

(2) Like Ruth, we have a sentence of death upon us because Adam, the head of the human race, died; and in Adam, we all die.

(a) We lost our inheritance, just as Ruth had lost her inheritance.

e) When Ruth decided to stay with Naomi and serve the living God, all things became new.

i) **2 Corinthians 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

ii) **Revelation 21:5** *And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

f) **There are seven elements of Ruth's decision:**

i) **There was a new determination.**

(1) **Ruth 1:16-18** *But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return 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. 17Where you die I will die,*

and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." 18And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

ii) There was a new direction.

(1) ***Ruth 1:16*** *But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return 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.***

iii) There was a new dependence.

(1) ***Ruth 1:16*** *But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return 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.***

iv) There was a new desire.

(1) ***Ruth 1:16*** *But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return 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.***

v) **There was a new devotion.**

(1) Ruth 1:16 *But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return 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."*

vi) **There was a new dedication.**

(1) *Ruth 1:17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."*

vii) **There was a new destiny.**

(1) *Ruth 1: 17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."*

(2) When we choose Christ, we too have a new destiny.

(a) *Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Adrian Rogers served as the Superintendent of the Southern Baptist Convention for three terms.

He got saved because his father got saved at Northwood Baptist Church when Adrian was a child.

5) CONCLUSION

- a) Ruth's decision to go to Bethlehem with Naomi changed the course of her life.
- b) Ruth chose life.
- c) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- d) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.

i) ***Romans 3:23*** *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

ii) ***Romans 10:9-10*** *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

iii) ***Romans 10:13*** *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

iv) **Acts 16:31** *And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

v) **John 3:16** *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

Decisions that Determine Destiny

THE PRINCIPLE OF A WILLING CHOICE

We are free to choose.

We are not free not to choose.

We are not free to choose the consequences of our choices.

When we make big choices we take care of a lot of little choices.

THE PROBLEMS OF A WRONG CHOICE

He had a wrong motive.

He had a wrong method.

He had the wrong master.

THE POWER OF A WISE CHOICE

There was a new determination.

There was a new direction.

There was a new dependence.

There was a new desire.

There was a new devotion.

There was a new dedication.

There was a new destiny.

Next Week, Ruth 2, God's Amazing Grace.