

Lectures on the Book of Ruth

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Guten Abend, liebe Freunde, Brüder und Schwestern, was für ein wundervolles Hymn, das wir gesungen haben, und ich bitte Sie um die Worte Gottes, in Ihrem Buch, das Sie veröffentlicht haben, Ich sehe den Herrn.

Das Buch von Ruth, Kapitel 1.

JMD Translation I have before me the JMD translation, so if there is some difference with your translation, bear with me, please.

Not that I would exclude other translations, I'm just adjusting that.

[00:01:04] The Book of Ruth, Chapter 1. And it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man went from Bethlehem, Judah, to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

And the name of the man was Elimelech. And the name of his wife, Nehomai.

And the name of his two sons, Mahlon and Keolion, Ephratai, of Bethlehem, Judah.

And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

And Elimelech, Nehomai's husband, died, and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them, Moabitish wives, the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the second, Ruth. And they abode there about ten years. And Mahlon and Keolion died also, both of them. [00:02:01] And the woman was left of her two children and of her husband.

And she arose, she and her daughters-in-law, and returned from the fields of Moab. For she had heard in the fields of Moab how that Jehovah had visited his people to give them bread.

Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she had been, and her two daughters-in-law whispered, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

And Nehomai said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house. Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest,

each in the house of her husband. And she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept. And they said to her, We will certainly return with thee to thy people. And Nehomai said, Return my daughters.

Why will you go with me? Are there yet sons in my womb that they could be your husbands? [00:03:02] Return my daughters, go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hopes, should I even have a husband tonight? And should I also bear sons? Would ye wait on that account till they were grown? Would ye stay on that account from having husbands? No, my daughters, for I am in much more bitterness than you. For the hand of Jehovah is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clayed to her.

And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone, back to her people and to her God. Return after thy sister-in-law.

And Ruth said, Do not entreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

Where thou diest will I die, [00:04:02] and there will I be buried. Jehovah, do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part me and thee. And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking to her. And they too went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they came to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and the women said, Is this Nehomai?

And he said to them, Call me not Nehomai, call me Marah, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and Jehovah has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Nehomai, seeing Jehovah has brought me low, and the Almighty has afflicted me? So Nehomai returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law with her, who returned out of the fields of Moab. [00:05:03] And they came to Bethlehem, in the beginning of the barley harvest. So far.

The task I have tonight, brothers and sisters, is not so easy, because some of us are quite familiar with this book. We may have read even books on it.

Others may hear it for the first time, or read it for the first time. And apart from that, in this book, we find old people, or at least old people, or at least older, and young, quite young people.

And I think for all of us, there are many lessons to learn.

And we have sung in our beautiful hymn, how we really depend on the Lord, that He might show what we need.

The needs are so different. And only the Lord can provide, [00:06:01] but He uses His Word to fulfill our needs.

We have planned, Lord willing, to have five evenings on this little booklet.

We might have more evenings, but we have only a limited time, of course. And therefore, we have to go through a chapter an evening. But it might be very helpful, and that is what we would like to

reserve for the last evening, to look into the prophetic meaning of this book. You know, when you start reading the Scriptures, then the first impression you get about the literal meaning is, of course, very important. The literal meaning of the Scriptures, the historical meaning is very important. And so, in that sense, we could read this book, and we see how God, in His line to bring the Messiah, has provided here, in some generations, [00:07:01] we find it at the end of the book, to go to David.

So we find, connected with the New Testament, Matthew 1, how here, in this little booklet, an important chain, in the long chain of generations, from Adam to the Messiah, here the Lord has provided in some of these chains. So, in historical ways, it is important to study this book. We will come back to that meaning in a few minutes. But when you read the Scriptures, I dare say that the first meaning for Christians is the spiritual meaning.

Not to put the literal meaning aside, not at all, but the most important meaning is the spiritual lessons we can find. There are many Scriptures in the New Testament which explain this to us.

And I would say, first of all, we should try to find the Lord Jesus [00:08:01] in these pages.

And we have some of the Lord Jesus, that it is the intention of the Scriptures to bring Him before us. And this is in this little booklet, in a special way the case. When you see at the end of chapter 4, the last word of this book is David.

David means the Beloved.

Now, what the intention is of God, the Holy Spirit, is to introduce the real David into our lives, the Beloved, our Lord Jesus. That is really a very important meaning. And that is the spiritual meaning for us. And when you read in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Himself, as the true teacher in Luke 24, has spoken to the disciples of Emmaus that Moses and the prophets and the Psalms have spoken of Him.

How wonderful this is! So also these pages speak of our Lord Jesus. And we will find that, Lord willing, [00:09:01] the next time in Boaz, in a special way, and also later on in David.

There are more Scriptures in the New Testament. In John 5, for example, the Lord has said that Moses has spoken of Him, of Him.

And think of 1 Corinthians 9 and 10, how important the lessons of the Old Testament are for us.

You see, all the history of the people of Israel has been written for you and me in the first place. Not in the first place for them, but for you and me. That is what we can find in 1 Corinthians 9 and 10. We have no time now to elaborate on that, but if you have questions, you can always come after the meeting and I can explain it in more detail to you. There are more passages. Think of Romans 15, where we find that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are given for our consolation or encouragement, how great it is. And so even this little book that we have now before us [00:10:01] has been given for our consolation and encouragement, really, for spiritual encouragement. And so we find many times in the New Testament that these Old Testament Scriptures have a special meaning bearing for us.

And then we have the typical or prophetic meaning, but we, as I said, will keep this for the last

evening, Lord willing, and concentrate more on the spiritual lessons and the moral lessons for you and me today.

Now, to come back on the historical setting, we know in the book of Genesis we find that God is the creator of the material universe, and that's a wonderful subject in itself to study. But then we find also that in that same book God shows himself as the one who gives life, spiritual life. And the lesson we find in the book of Genesis is first the natural and then the spiritual. And then it is God who introduces this spiritual life [00:11:03] in a wonderful way.

Then in the book of Exodus we find how God wants to have a people for himself.

And what was true for the people of Israel, the sons of Israel, God wants to have sons of Israel today, a people for himself today. And he sends a deliverer, Moses.

So he sent the Lord Jesus for us to deliver us from the power of Satan, from this world system, to set us apart for himself, to serve him.

Let my son go that he may serve me. That's what God wants. God wants sons.

Did you ever study that in the Scriptures? How great this is, that God wants something for himself. And he has called you and me, like he did Abraham, to have us for himself in this world. And then we find in the book of Exodus at the end how God has given the tabernacle system as a dwelling place. He wanted to dwell among his people. [00:12:01] And that's even today true. He wants to dwell among us.

And how great this is.

In the book of Leviticus you find how this whole service is worked out to be in the presence of God.

We are so used to these expressions that we often do not realize the greatness of these privileges, the greatness of the privilege to be in the presence of the Lord. We easily confess that Matthew 18, verse 20, but do we realize it practically?

And then in the book of Numbers we find how this people is a witness for God in this world, in this wicked, wicked world. God has a testimony, his own people presented as soldiers to defend the testimony, presented as Levites to carry on the testimony. But then, now we come closer to the subject of tonight, the land. God draws them, as it were, to the land of his promise, to the land of his counsel. You know that God has a special purpose [00:13:02] in relation to Israel.

It is a purpose from the beginning of the creation.

But in relation to the assembly or the church, God's purpose is from before the foundation of the world. Imagine, God had sought for you and me already before the creation, from, as it says in the scripture, before the foundation of the world. How great it is that God had thought of you and me, to have you and me, and not only individually but also as a whole, as a company, the assembly for himself.

And this is God's purpose.

Now we find how the people of Israel despised the land.

Numbers 13, 14, you find that they despised it. They had no faith to go into it.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we find how God, as it were, [00:14:01] presents in detail the beauty of this land in a wonderful way.

It is to attract the new generation, the younger children, who did not reject the land as the parents did, to attract them and to present for them the beauties of the land that God had prepared for them. What does that mean for you and me? The land of God's counsel is heaven for us.

The heavenly places where now the Lord Jesus, the heavenlies, where now the Lord Jesus is seated, crowned with glory and honor, is your and my portion. That is our land.

That is what God has reserved, prepared already before the foundation of the world for you and me.

And what he now brings out through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the epistles and in the New Testament, he shows in detail what these blessings are.

Ephesians 1, verse 3, we find how God has blessed us [00:15:01] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus.

That means, every blessing which rejoices the heart of God, the heart of the Father, he has given to you and me.

Imagine, there is nothing excluded that God does not want to share with you and me, how rich God is.

Do we really appreciate that? Do we really appreciate that God has given us such a rich portion with the Lord Jesus and in the Lord Jesus? I hope to come back in a while on that. Then we find how the people of Israel was brought into that land, under Joshua. That's a whole story in itself. We cannot enter into the details now. But there you find how they conquered the land and put it in possession.

They got it. And they had then to dwell in that land.

[00:16:03] That's what God wants now for us. Not only in a physical way, that we may conquer a land, of course that is not the situation for us. But that we would occupy these blessings and let us say in another sense, that we would enjoy them, that we would appropriate them. All these blessings I mentioned, Ephesians 1, verse 3, puts them all together, that we would really enter into these blessings. That is what God wants. And we find how in a literal sense the people of Israel failed. In the book of Judges, we find then how they failed. They did not really appreciate these blessings. And what happened in the history of the Church? What happened with all these wonderful blessings? Were they appreciated?

Already in the days of the Apostle Paul, he said, he complained really, in Philippians 3, that many were more serving the God of the belly, [00:17:04] instead of enjoying these wonderful blessings linked up with Christ in heaven.

How sad this is.

And then we find in the book of Judges, how the enemy comes in and takes all these blessings away, in different ways. This is a very, very sad picture. Now, what did we read in the first verse of this chapter? It came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, in this dark day, when you turn the page back, you find in those days, at the end, the last verse of Judges 21, in those days, there was no king in Israel.

Every man did what was right in his own eyes.

This was the picture.

And is it not so in our days?

This is what we will find, tonight, in Ewan Malick.

[00:18:01] Self-will.

Every man did what was right in his own eyes.

There was no king.

No recognition of the authority of God. There was a king.

What does God say to Samuel, later on, in the book of Samuel? They have rejected me.

And in Deuteronomy, we find that God was the real king, and Moses, in a sense, too.

So they had a king, but they didn't recognize him.

Now, God is going to change that situation. In the book of Samuel, we find how David is introduced. Now, you see the link, because our book ends with this name, this little name, David. God is going to introduce his king, his beloved, in a public way.

That is what you have in Samuel. And that is what we get in the Millennium. The Lord Jesus will be introduced. But now, God is introducing the Lord Jesus, the true David, in a moral way. [00:19:02] And that's a matter of love, of our affection.

It's wonderful. David means the beloved. And it is wonderful to find in Ruth somebody who shows real love.

Now, what caused all the failure in the church history I just mentioned was lack of love.

What says the Lord to the First Assembly, in Revelation 2, I have one thing against thee, that thou hast forsaken thy first love. His first love was forsaken.

Now, that's what we find in Elimelech, you know.

We find it in verse 1 already, that he went away.

There was no love for this real portion, for this wonderful land. You know, when you are studying in a book of Deuteronomy, God is, as it were, trying to do his best to encourage you to appreciate this portion. [00:20:02] When you read Deuteronomy 8 and many other chapters, you find a wonderful presentation of the beauties of the land. And so God, in the scriptures, in the New Testament, tries to present to us all these heavenly blessings we have now linked up with Christ in heaven.

Now we come back to the hymn we sang in Thy book revealed, I see thee, Lord. Because it's not a matter of our blessings only. It is, first of all, a matter of the blesser. It's, first of all, a matter of the person. So the real question is, do we love the Lord Jesus?

That's the question.

Do we really love the Lord Jesus?

You know, in the church history, there was lack of love. And what did God send them? What did the Lord Jesus send them? Tribulation, afflictions. That's the second picture you get in Smyrna. [00:21:03] What do we find here in the book of Ruth? When the judges ruled, there was a lack of appreciation of that wonderful country. They were there, but they didn't appreciate it. They didn't recognize the greatness of it. And they had forgotten about the blesser. What did the blesser do then? Did he leave them?

Verse 1 says, there was a famine in the land.

Was that for nothing? Was that just in God's providence, or just that happened to be so?

Impossible.

You know what we read?

In the same verse, there was a man, a certain man, went from Bethlehem, Judah. Bethlehem means house of food, or house of bread.

Imagine, in this wonderful country, where God had said that it would be, that it would flow from milk and honey, where you can find all kinds of fruits [00:22:02] mentioned in Deuteronomy. A wonderful country.

And there is a famine.

How is that possible?

How in the world is that possible? In Deuteronomy 11, God had warned them already. He had first said, this country drains water of the rain of heaven. It means it is dependent on God for the blessing. That's an important key. What we see tonight in this chapter is to learn to rely on the Lord alone.

It drinks water of the rain of heaven. And what do you find in Deuteronomy 11, verse 17?

That God warned them, and if they would not listen, God would shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the ground yield not its produce, and ye perish quickly from of the good land which Jehovah is giving you. You know, why God gives us all these lessons from the Old Testament, [00:23:01] the types, all these types he has given to help us to enjoy what we have in the New Testament. I will say it in other words. In the New Testament, God gives us the position, as I said in Ephesians 1, verse 3, for example, all heavenly blessings in Christ.

Every Christian has them. No exception. Every Christian has these blessings. But the point is, do you enjoy these blessings? Have you entered into these blessings? That is the point. And therefore, God gives help in the Old Testament, and the types of the Old Testament help us to enter into the enjoyment of the blessings.

That is the point. And you find that every time and again, how God gives us all these types in different ways to help us to appreciate these blessings, to appreciate the position, and to enter into the enjoyment of them. [00:24:01] Why? In order that there may be fruit for God. He wants fruit. He wants fruit in your life, in my life. But when we are only following our own wills, then he has to send something else. And that is what we find in verse 1. We found it. You see, in the book of Judges, even the grandson of Moses introduced idolatry. We find a very sad picture at the end of the Judges. It is an appendix. But when we study the Scriptures, we find that, literally, these chapters should be placed at the beginning of Judges. Historically, I mean.

In a historical sense, we find that the failure was so soon after that Joshua and the elders passed away that already then, in the third generation, idolatry was introduced. And all these moral evils we find at the end of Judges happened already then, in the beginning. How sad this is.

Now, we have thought of the church history, [00:25:01] but now we think of our own history. When we came to the Lord Jesus, when we received the Lord Jesus by grace as our Saviour, God, in principle, gave us already all these blessings.

But did we appreciate them?

Did we enter into these blessings?

You see, Elimelech had a wonderful name.

His name means, My God is King.

Now, that was just lacking. We have just read there was no king. What a wonderful name he had, My God is King.

A better name you couldn't have in that time. But what happened?

Did he really consider God to be his King?

You see, so often we say that we confess, at least, to do the Lord's will.

We come together to the Lord's name. [00:26:01] But is it reality?

You see, what here decays is lack of reality.

Now, and I speak to myself first of all. And the Lord speaks to every one of us. How far is there a lack of reality? You see, what David had to learn through very deep and humiliating experiences in the history of Bathsheba, he learned, Psalm 51, God wants reality.

God wants truth in the endless path. That's what God wants.

He doesn't want only a beautiful confession. Orpah can give that as well, as we will find later on. A beautiful confession is not so difficult to give. But to be up to that confession practically, really, that's another thing. And we find that here, Eli Malak had a wonderful name, a wonderful confession, so to speak, but he didn't care about God's rights. He didn't really care.

[00:27:02] He went his own way.

And instead of going to the Lord, confessing all the needs, we try to find our own solution.

You see, one of the first lessons we have to learn here already is when there is something wrong, like this famine was obviously wrong, that was not normal, do we go to the Lord? When we find something in our lives, personally or in family or in the assembly, that is not right, where do we go to?

Bring me these things before the Lord? Or will we go our own way?

We find Eli Malak went his own way. Sad to say.

He had many good excuses.

He would go to the country of Moab only for a while to sojourn there as a stranger.

Even Abraham, the father of all believers, [00:28:02] tried once when there was a famine in the land to follow his own will. But it had sad consequences. You can read it in Genesis 12. God brought him to the land in a wonderful possession of the land. He blessed God there. He had an altar. He was a worshipper. How wonderful! That is what God wants to give us, really, that we may enjoy these wonderful heavenly blessings. And I really think the Lord wants to stress that to us, that we would realize more what Christian blessings mean. Christian blessings is not good health. Many unbelievers have good health. Christian blessings does not have many earthly blessings, a good family, a good job, wonderful to receive from the hand of God, of course. I don't say a bad word about that.

Of course not. These are all blessings we can receive from God's hands. Earthly blessings.

But God has much more to give. Heavenly blessings. Blessings all linked with the Lord Jesus. [00:29:01] And what do we see? In our own history, and in the history of the Church, that exactly these blessings, which rejoice the heart of God, which rejoice the heart of the Lord Jesus in heaven, have been despised.

The wonderful land, as I said before, the Israelites did, was despised.

And so it happened so many times in the history of the Church, in our own history.

What do we... Do we really appreciate these wonderful blessings? Think of the Lord Jesus as He is now in the glory. He is the delight of the Father. The Father is only one object, and that is the Lord Jesus. And you can study the Gospel of John, for example, and many other, the whole Scriptures, and you will find more and more details of the beauties and the glories of the Lord Jesus, as He now is in the glory. But instead of being occupied with Him, instead of confessing our lack of appreciation, we go our own way. [00:30:01] What do we do?

You know, it might happen, just one word about the land. It's wonderful to see here that Bethlehem is connected with Judah. You know, when there is food, when God provides this wonderful food for our souls, the result will be praise. That is what God had in mind. Maybe you can think about it. I would suggest Bethlehem, Judah, would also be a picture of a local assembly. You see, in Bethlehem, Judah, we find these many blessings.

We find that the Lord was born later on. Wonderful.

We find in chapter 2 that Boaz was living there. But we find also that these blessings were despised. You know, this man who introduced idolatry, or at least was part of it, came from Bethlehem, Judah. This Levite who was connected with moral evil, [00:31:01] in a sense, he came from Bethlehem, Judah. So, it's really a point, what do we do with these blessings? Do we despise them, or do we appreciate them? Now, to continue our story, we find that Elimelech, though he had this wonderful name, went his own way. Where did he go to? To the country of Moab. You see, the world is presented in the scripture in many different ways. We find the world as a system of self-support, independent from God in Egypt.

I don't want to say a bad word to our brothers coming from that country, but we speak now in the spiritual sense of that land.

The Nile provides food, and they are independent from heaven. That is the difference with the country that God gave. All the blessings there depend from the blessings of God. [00:32:01] Whereas in Egypt, they could work, and they were not dependent on heaven. Even Pharaoh regarded himself as God, and he, we find in the prophets, said that he had produced the Nile. So we find idolatry connected with that as well. Then secondly, we have Babylon as a religious system.

We could talk about that long, because we find that Abram left that system to be a faithful witness to the only and true God, but his descendants later on the people of Israel was brought back there when they had reintroduced idolatry. And so it happened with the history of the church as well. But Moab is another picture. Moab would speak of pride and ease.

You know, when we have so many exercises, so many tests the Lord allows in a local assembly, I don't know about your situation, [00:33:01] but you know better than I do, and the Lord does even better know than you do how many exercises there can be in such a place.

And then it might happen, as I said, it's too heavy for me. I will go away.

I prefer to follow my own will.

Like, he didn't say that, Elimelech, but he acted that way.

He followed only his own will. He didn't care about God's authority, the Lord's authority, not at all.

And we find in the prophets a very sad picture of Moab. Moab is presented as connected with pride and ease.

One of the kings of Moab occupied the country, Jericho. Rebuilt Jericho even.

God had cursed Jericho. And this man came and he rebuilt Jericho. In a sense, it was his possession. In Judges 3 you can find it. And this king, Ehad, was a very fat man.

You see, the ease, [00:34:01] all things were quite at ease there. There were no exercises. There was not a...

You see, Moab is characterized as a vessel, as wine in a vessel that had not been poured out from vessel to vessel. To improve the quality of wine, it has to be poured out from vessel to vessel. And that is a picture of the exercises the Lord would introduce into our lives in order to have fruit.

You know, when God introduces in your and my life difficulties, it is out of love.

It is not to plague us.

It is not to get rid of us.

It is love.

Even this famine that God brought was an act of love.

In Hebrews 12 the Lord says, All those whom I love, I rebuke.

That is what he did. He tried to speak to them. In the time of Smyrna, the same thing in Revelation 2, [00:35:03] God sent these tribulations and it was a wonderful result.

When you go to China and Russia today, suppose it would be possible, you could see these believers there, through these afflictions and pressure, they are spiritually wonderful, doing wonderful.

And so it was really love from God's side to send this famine, to bring restoration.

But Elimelech despised that. He preferred love. He preferred his own will. He preferred ease. He preferred even pride.

And that can happen in my life easily, how proud we are.

And we have to judge that pride, otherwise we cannot be brought into the blessings of the land. That is one of the lessons we find in this chapter. Self, pride, ease, [00:36:01] has all to be judged in order to enjoy the blessings of God.

Now we find in verse 2, he took his whole family with him, there you find that a backslider like Elimelech influences others.

That is another sad lesson. When I am a backslider, I confess the authority of the Lord but I do not act accordingly. I follow my own will. I will influence others.

And the end result is death.

Spiritual death. That is the end result for us. Here it was literal death. But for us, of course, in the spiritual way, death.

You see how serious this lack of reality is, really.

And we find in another indication in verse 2 already, that there was something wrong in this family. Nehomai, beautiful name, [00:37:02] means my pleasantness.

A wonderful name.

But what is the result of this couple? What they produce is makwan and chilion. You see, there must have been something wrong, spiritually. And that can happen in our case too. We can have a very wonderful confession. Outwardly, all things can be very nice. But what is really going on?

Now, just one other word about verse 2. It says they were ephratites.

That means they were connected with a region that was fruitful.

Ephra means fruitfulness.

Now you see again, a sensing of the land.

We have found Bethlehem, Judah. Food, house of food.

House is also linked with fellowship, with dwelling place.

God wanted to dwell with his people. God wants to dwell with you and me. The Lord wants to stay with you and me. [00:38:02] He wants to bless us. He wants to have praise as a result. He wants fruit.

He wants fruit for you, but also fruit for himself. Ephra.

But there was no fruit. There was no fruit. Instead of that there was sickness, pining, fading away.

What a different picture we get when we read the prophecies about the future, the millennium. We will come to that in the last evening. When you read, for example, Psalm 132, you find how the presence of the real king brings blessing. Wonderful.

But they despised this wonderful portion. Now we will move somewhat faster.

You find in verse 3 the consequences of this way.

When we go our way in self-will, do not honor practically the Lord Jesus, [00:39:04] there will be some result.

There will always be a result, but it is here very negative. In Galatians 6 we find a principle that you cannot mock with God.

It is impossible.

When we follow our own will and we confess that we follow the Lord's will, God has to intervene because of his own name. And we find here that he does that. In the end it is desolation, death. Not only Elimelech, but also his sons.

How sad this is.

And then we find that in verse 4 both sons had married, but shortly after probably died already. And then Nehomai and her two daughters-in-law left alone.

[00:40:02] The total time Nehomai left there was about ten years.

It speaks also about the responsibility we have. We find that she stayed there ten years. It was a complete period according to her responsibility to show that Nehomai, despite her beautiful name, did not produce anything for God.

How sad was that.

But what we get now in this chapter is God comes in in sovereign grace. When we fail, that is one of the lessons we have to learn, we fail.

God can give us wonderful blessings.

We will fail to appreciate them. But then God will come in to help us to appreciate them.

We can see that in so many different ways. Every one of us has a responsibility. Or as father, or as mother, as husband or wife, as brother or sister, [00:41:01] in your job, in so many different senses. As God's stewards, we have so many different responsibilities. Can you say really that you have been faithful in connection with all these responsibilities? I think when we will be honest before God, we have to say no.

And then the important question in the setting of this chapter, have we been faithful to appreciate these wonderful blessings, these heavenly blessings, to enjoy them, to be fruitful, to produce fruit for God? That is what God wanted. He wanted to have fruit for himself. Did we produce some fruit?

Now, according to our responsibility, we have to say no. That is the lesson we have to come to. But then we will find, when there is a restoration and true love introduced, then things will change. And I think this is one of the secrets of this chapter, [00:42:01] of this whole book.

The turning point is where love, real affection, is introduced.

When our hearts are opened for the Lord. You know what Ruth had learned, I think, maybe even through her husband, you see how wonderful God's dealings are, nevertheless, because God overrules all. Our failures are calculated, as it were, by God.

God is not embarrassed, so to speak.

And maybe even, Magdalene had...

You might say, being filled with...

Not only that, very cruel, terrible.

She had heard about the God of Israel. Totally different character. Totally different.

And we know so much more about our God, [00:43:01] who is our Father now. So much more than Magdalene did about the Eternal, about Jehovah, the Lord.

We know so much more.

And what do we speak to others around us?

Do we influence others? Probably Ruth has learned a lot about the true character of his God.

What a difference between the God of Moab and the God of Israel. The God of Moab, of course, is not a real God. Behind his idolatry are Satan and his demons.

And that is even today an important lesson to learn, that behind all idolatry are the efforts of Satan.

But now we find here a heart that is attracted to the true God of Israel.

What a change! Instead of turning away from him, there is now a heart that turns towards him. But when we find, [00:44:02] in the next verses, we find again that confession is put to the test.

You know, in verse 6, there is a wonderful expression, just to mention that, Nehomai had heard that the Lord had visited his people. This expression, he had visited his people, is really a wonderful expression. You find it in the book of Exodus, when the people was in slavery, in bondage, in Egypt, we find that God visited them. In Luke's Gospel, you find it several times that the Lord, in grace, visited his people. This is really a wonderful expression. Has God visited you in your situation?

When you come to the recognition of that fact, that God has touched you, in other words, the touch of the Master's hand has come into your life, then all things start to change. All things start to change. This is the real change that starts here, when God intervenes.

[00:45:03] And then, we find in verse 7, Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she had been, and her two daughters-in-law with her.

Maybe it was, in the beginning, politeness of these two daughters to go with Nehemiah to help her and just to accompany her to the border of the land. But then, they are put to the test.

You see, in verse 8, Nehemiah says, Go back.

And then, she has many good reasons, humanly speaking. Return my daughters, verse 11.

Verse 12, Return my daughters.

She has many good reasons, humanly speaking. Very good reasons.

There were no resources in Nehemiah herself. Absolutely nothing.

And we will see, later on, in connection with the prophetic meaning, what that means, also for Israel, the recognition that there are no resources. What had Ruth to expect from this woman?

Nothing, [00:46:01] humanly speaking. Nothing could she expect from her.

Why not go back to her house, to her mother, to her father, to her isles, her gods?

You know, I think, Nehemiah was very glad that Ruth came with her. But he put her to the test. You know, we can be very happy when we meet a neighbor or somebody in the street or at school or at work who confesses the Lord. That is wonderful.

But you have to put the test. You have to check if it is real.

We have seen that the Lord will check in your life if your confession is real. But you have to do the same with others who you meet. And now we find that Orpah did not want to pay the price.

She had a beautiful confession, but then when she really was put to the test, she turned her back to Nehemiah, towards Nehemiah and towards the Lord.

And so, it is a lesson also for us. [00:47:02] We have to put confession to the test. But not only that, I am sure that Nehemiah was very happy that Ruth's mind was not. But she wanted to be sure. And so the Lord wants to be sure when you say, Lord, I want to go with you. The Lord wants to be sure. There is a wonderful story in 2 Kings 2, Elijah and Elisha.

It was a very bad picture in those days.

Idolatry everywhere and so many other things that were not correct.

And then Elijah said, Would you not stay? Would you rather stay here? No. Elisha wanted to go with Elijah. And three times again, he puts him to the test.

But how glad was Elijah that Elisha wanted to go with him. How glad is the Lord Jesus when you want to go with him. The Lord put the disciples to the test once in John 6, when many disciples went away. The Lord said, Would you not go away too? Peter said, No, thou hast the word [00:48:01] of eternal life. It's the Lord.

By seeing the Lord, we have son. That's what the Lord wants. To see Him and to love Him.

That is the point. Ruth really loved the Lord.

That's the change.

And you see, the Lord will put us to the test. Think of the disciples of Emmaus. I've mentioned them already. When they reached home, the Lord, He just pretended to go on.

But then they asked, Lord, come with us. They didn't realize then at that time that it was the Lord Jesus. But they had felt something. They wanted to have this stranger with them. When the disciples were in the ship and the storm was there, the Lord came walking on the sea.

They didn't recognize Him. But then, when they had understood it was the Lord, they wanted to have Him in the boat. And so the Lord puts you and me to the test. Do you really love Him? Do you really follow Me? [00:49:02] You see, the Lord will allow some tests. But through these tests, we learn, we are formed. It's like a tree surrounded by many winds, many adverse circumstances.

But the tree will grow, will be stronger and stronger. The Lord will allow these tests that we will show the reality of our life. And how beautiful it is in verse 14.

When Orpah at one hand kissed her mother-in-law and went away, Ruth clave to her.

It would be a wonderful study in itself already to see other passages in the Scriptures which speak of the same attitude like Ruth had.

Clave to her. That is real love.

We have seen lack of love. But here is real love.

There were no expectations.

There were no resorts in Naomi. And nevertheless, Ruth wanted to go with her. [00:50:02] Only real love can explain this.

And so the question is for me and for you.

Do we love the Lord Jesus? Have we appreciated really what we now have received as Christian blessings linked with the Father? Not only the God of Israel, but this God of Israel is now our Father.

Not only our Heavenly Father, but the Father, our Lord Jesus, is our Father. How great this is! Do we love Him? Do we love the Lord Jesus? Do we want to clave to Him, but also to clave to the testimony? Because Naomi speaks about the testimony in its public form.

It is in a sad situation.

But we are, as Christians, also linked with the testimony of the Lord. That is also a thing to think about.

Every Christian, only through his name already, is part of the testimony. And even when this

testimony is despised, [00:51:01] even when this testimony is in bad shape outwardly, we belong to it.

But when we start to see the things as God sees them, then we will change our attitude. And that is so often the key.

We love it.

We often see only the failures in ourselves or more in others.

Instead of appreciating what God has given, Ruth started to appreciate what God had given and all changed.

When we see the church, the assembly as it is, according to God's Word, we start to appreciate the truth.

Now we find real faith in Ruth.

Instead of going back to her people and her God, she gives a real confession.

And it is commitment, real commitment. Is that not what is lacking with us?

Real commitment. We are living in a world where there is no commitment. [00:52:02] People want only profit but no commitment.

They want to have the profits of married life but no commitment. They want to have profits of spiritual blessings but no commitment, and so on.

Here we find a heart that is wholly committed, totally committed.

There is a heart here that is prepared to be obedient.

Lately I saw a tract written by a brother in the last century and he gave a review of the blessings God had given and he said, how was it possible that God gave these blessings? And he realized it was by being.

You know, the path to enter into these blessings we have spoken about a little bit and very weak because these blessings are so great, all linked with the Lord Jesus. How can you present them? It is wonderful to meditate on these blessings, to see the Lord Jesus, but how can you really [00:53:01] enjoy these blessings when you are obedient? How can you enjoy God's thoughts in connection with the assembly, Bethlehem, Judah, even in connection with family, life, and other ways?

How can you enjoy these thoughts, these things, only when you are obedient? Obedience is a key to enjoy God's blessings.

We find already in Adam and Eve that that was the point. They were not obedient and therefore they failed all these blessings.

Here we find true commitment and an interest in God's things.

That's the point. How great it is when we start to appreciate what rejoices the heart of God.

Think about a father who has a son. I have only one son, five dogs, but how great it is when you can really have fellowship with children. When they grow up and you are able to share with them [00:54:03] what rejoices your heart. That's wonderful.

How great for God, our Father.

How great for the Lord Jesus, the great administrator of all these blessings, when he can really share with you what rejoices his heart. And that will result in worship.

That is great.

Now to go on. Just one word about Orpah.

You see, we have often come to a choice.

We find it, for example, in Simeon already and Levi, the sons of Jacob.

The one was a blessing, Levi. In the beginning those were evil men.

Genesis 34, you can read it. But then, one of them changed later on, finally.

Another example, the two murders at the cross. There was only one. One of them, he turned to the Lord Jesus, the last hours of his life. But the other didn't care. You see, many times in the Bible, you find [00:55:01] these choices.

Orpah, she knew about the land, she knew about the God of Israel, but she turned her back to him. Maybe there is somebody here who heard the gospel, maybe many times, but did not receive the blessed tidings.

It is, even now, an opportunity to receive the blessed tidings. Orpah means neck. She hardened herself against God's grace.

It's terrible when you harden your neck against God's grace, but also for believers. We have seen that in Elimelech, the consequences of this hardening is terrible.

But Ruth, Ruth means friend or delight, as some translate.

And I've even found a translation, satisfied.

Maybe that is somewhat artificial. I don't know if that is too artificial. We will find it in Ruth too, at least, that she is satisfied. And a brother in our prayer [00:56:01] mentioned, I think, that the Lord satisfies the longing heart. That's the key in Ruth, that God will satisfy the longing heart. But anyway, we find here beautiful characteristics in Ruth.

This commitment. She had no rights, no claims whatsoever.

We will find that later on.

But she turns her eyes to the God of Israel, to the blesser. Not only to the blessing, but to the blessing. That's a lesson for us.

And then, this confession in verse 16, and then we will hurry on to the end.

Whither thou goest, I will go.

Yesterday night, in Hawkesbury, in the meeting, a brother has read this verse in Revelation 14, verse 4.

They follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Whither thou goest, I will go.

How beautiful it is.

Whither thou goest, I will go.

Is that the intention [00:57:01] of my heart? Of course, we will fail to realize this.

But the Lord sees the intention of our hearts. If it is real, then the Lord will rejoice in this.

He will be very glad when that is at the bottom of our hearts. Whither thou goest, I will go.

This is the pass of the pilgrim. Think of Abraham. Secondly, where thou lodgest, I will lodge. We are strangers here on earth. We can try to settle down as best as we can.

But we have seen in Moab how dangerous this is with our own ease. How dangerous this is with our own pride.

It is very dangerous that they will take us away from the presence of the Lord. We are strangers. And lodge would also be an indication of the night. We are living in the night. But we have the light of the day in our hearts. But we are living in the night. Realize that. We realize that. But it says, Where thou lodgest, I will lodge. [00:58:01] Think of the words the Lord Jesus had spoken at the end of Matthew 28 to the disciples. He said, I will be with you.

But here, it is a free application, but think now a moment that the Lord would go with us and that we could say, Where thou lodgest, I will lodge.

That is something. Where the Lord wants to be, I want to be in the night of this world. And then there is an identification with the people of God. Thy people and my people. Sometimes, when we meet a brother, we feel ashamed.

You know, when Moses was 40 years old, a prince in Egypt, he went to these poor beggars, to these poor slaves.

He was not ashamed of his brethren. He identified himself with his brethren. When we find the Lord Jesus, what a person. Did he feel ashamed to identify himself with the people of God, [00:59:01] with those who wanted to kill him? No, not at all. He was baptized, Matthew 3, Luke 3.

How great it is to identify ourselves with the people of God. Not to be ashamed. The Lord is not ashamed for the brethren, Hebrews 2.

Are we ashamed for our brothers and sisters? Thy people shall be my people. But now it comes, Thy God, my God.

That was the real center of all. Thy God, my God.

We have spoken a little bit of that. How diest will I die?

Here is full commitment. Not only for a day, for a whole life. Think of Ittai.

When David was rejected and he went out of Jerusalem, Ittai had just come from a strange country and he loved David. He wanted to be with David. That's the same commitment.

You can read it in 2 Samuel 15. Wonderful story. That's what the heart of the Lord would really rejoice in [01:00:01] when he sees this commitment in your and my life. Until death. Think of Paul. Think of the apostles. How they were committed to the Lord. Why? Love. They loved the Lord. That's the only reason. Otherwise, it's impossible to explain how they would go through sufferings and afflictions. It was only love. How much love do we have for the Lord? And where thou diest, I will die.

And there, I will be buried. It is in the light of resurrection, for sure.

We have so much more light than Ruth had, but how less dedication, how less committal is there compared with Ruth. And then, in verse 18, Nehemiah sees that he was steadfastly minded. That's a wonderful expression. Steadfastly minded. To have our minds directed on one goal, one aim.

The Lord says in the Gospels that when we have a single eye, [01:01:01] the whole body is enlightened. And that means one object.

Do we have one object?

Like Paul had, Philippians 3. One object in the glory. That is steadfastly minded. One object.

And so, wonderful expression in verse 19. They too went until they came to Bethlehem. We have spoken about different people who went together, like Elijah and Elisha. How wonderful. Think of Abraham and Isaac who went together. And that is fellowship.

There is a verse in Amos that says how should two go together when they are not one mind?

You see, there we find this one-mindedness, having the same mind that is precious for God and also for ourselves. And then we find how they came back to Bethlehem. See, Nehemiah is brought back to the point where she came from. And, really, the head person, I think, [01:02:01] the most important person in chapter 1 is Nehemiah. Ruth is brought into connection with her, but only in chapter 2 we

will find another person, Boaz. And then in chapter 3 the full light is shed again on Ruth. But here we find many details about Nehemiah. So therefore, I said in the beginning, it is difficult because you have different lessons. There is a conversion, as it were, in Ruth.

New birth, new life, new affections, love for the Lord. And you find a totally different picture in Nehemiah, how to bring these two together. Sometimes you find that when the Lord brings a new soul to a meeting that it stirs up the whole company. And here, as it were, the whole city was moved about, I think, Nehemiah, first of all. Because here is where Nehemiah brought back where she came from. Now, just a word on restoration. We have seen the backslider, Elimelech.

[01:03:01] And Nehemiah linked with him. Elimelech speaks of the practical failure and Nehemiah of the position. And when you have questions about that later on, we have no more time to elaborate on that.

But here we find that God, in His grace, brings her back. You know, when we have failed, when we have backslidden, when we have turned our back to the Lord, the Lord, in His grace, will come in between. He always will deal with us, as He says here, the Almighty has dealt with me, verse 20, at the end.

God will deal with us. His love will do that. But in order to bring us back, that is always the point.

Even when we have mentioned in Revelations 2, lack of first love, the Lord brings back us back to first love. How does the Revelation end? In 22, in first love. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit, and the Bride says, Come, [01:04:01] Lord Jesus.

That is first love. So you see, that is the dealing of the Lord. He brings us back to the point where we were, in Bethlehem, so to speak, in His presence, enjoying these privileges.

And the whole city was moved.

That is, maybe, an expression of real concern. Do we have concern, each one, for each other? Do we have, really?

Are we moved when we see how some go astray?

Are we moved when some would come back? Have we compassion for each other? Then we find, in verse 20, that Nehemiah had accepted the hand of the Lord. He says, Call me not Nehemiah.

Call me Marah.

That was the result of her own ways. She didn't accuse Elah Melech. How often we accuse somebody else when we have the fault.

But she had now accepted the dealings of the Lord [01:05:01] and she sees the consequences of her ways. Then she says, Call me Marah. For the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

But He has dealt with me.

And then, secondly, bitterly.

It is not pleasant that the Lord will deal with us when that is necessary. It is not a pleasure.

Not at all.

But it is out of love that the Lord will do it.

And then she says, in verse 21, I went out full. You know, she recognizes then, and that's often the case, we only appreciate what we have when we have lost it.

I remember very well, I was a young boy, I lost, I had got a present, some money and I lost it somehow. I was very sad about it.

You see, but when, what about these wonderful blessings in connection with Bethlehem, the land, the portion that the Lord has given us, when we have lost this, really, [01:06:01] we start to realize what we had. And then, the Lord will bring us back in His grace, in sovereign grace. I went out full and Jehovah has brought me home. You see, she returned, but it is here Jehovah has brought me back. In Psalm 23, He restores my soul.

It says, you can translate it, He brings my soul back. It's the same word for return, or He brought me back. That's what the Lord does in His grace. When it depends on us, we will be lost, so to speak.

And then, empty.

That's the consequence of a way without the Lord. The consequences of our acting in self-will is that there is no result for God.

Empty.

Emptiness.

There was barrenness.

Empty.

No fruit.

What a difference with chapter 2, we will see later on.

But that is [01:07:01] the consequences of our failures. No progress, no fruit.

And then, verse 22, we find that they came back to Bethlehem.

And then it is added in the beginning of the barley harvest. There we have, we stop here at this point, it is the introduction for the next chapter, but I would suggest it is also the basis of restoration.

Because, what does this mean? Just in a few words, the barley harvest started right after the

Passover.

The Passover is the real basis.

Passover speaks of our Lord Jesus, not only crucified, but sacrificed for us.

And when the Lord Jesus entered into our lives in this practical way, we find this basis, his death, his person, for us, is the starting point, [01:08:01] because closely linked with that is the barley harvest.

Then the Sunday after that, the Passover was slaughtered, the first fruit of the barley harvest was offered for God.

And that speaks of the Lord in resurrection, because on that day, the Lord Jesus was raised from the tomb. The barley harvest introduces a risen Christ.

Now that is just the introduction to go into the land.

How can you enter into the land where the Lord Jesus now is?

How can you enjoy spiritual blessings? Only when you are linked with the Lord Jesus, the risen one. When you see him, who is now the head of the new creation, who is entered now already in heaven as the risen one, and he is glorified there. Then we come to Boaz. But this is the basis, and how great this is.

When we have felt that God would bring us on this basis, on the basis of the person and the work of the Lord Jesus, [01:09:01] and his resurrection, that is the only real basis to stand upon. There is no other basis that will hold us.

And so God, in his grace, in restoration, he brings us to that point. Not only back, but on a solid, very solid base.

And this is the basis when the Lord will help us to enter into the enjoyment really of the land, the blessings of the land. Not only that, bring us into a living relationship with this man in the glory. That is what God wants. Not only a confession from our mouths that we belong to the Lord Jesus. Fine. Full stop.

Know that this means practically something for you and me. That is what the Lord wants us, to bring us into the enjoyment of the land, and the enjoyment of these blessings with the blessing.

Just one verse, we will close.

Isaiah 1, verse 19.

[01:10:07] Isaiah 1, verse 19.

If ye be willing and hearken, ye shall eat the good of the land.

But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of Jehovah hath

spoken. What a solemn word it is.

If ye be willing and hearken, that is what the Lord says to you and me. If we want to follow this road, so to speak, this way that Ruth went, and Naomi, recognizing God's dealings with her, Ruth was attracted to the God of Israel, and she obeyed, she had real faith, real love, [01:11:01] real hope.

If ye be willing, ye shall eat the good of the land. That is what God has in store for us. He wants to share with us all the blessings of the heavenly land for you and me, if we are willing to listen.

So may the Lord in His grace help each one of us to listen and to take these things, these instructions at heart, to consider these things, and to follow these instructions. That is what the Lord wants, to help us, to bring us to the enjoyment of these wonderful blessings in fellowship with Him, and there will be results for God as well in worship and adoration. May the Lord help us, all of us, for His name's sake. Amen. [01:12:03] Amen. [01:13:33] Amen. [01:15:03] Amen.