

Lectures on the Book of Ruth

Part 3

Speaker	Alfred E Bouter
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[00:00:00] The place where he shall have lain down, and he went to lie down at the end of the heave of corn, and she went softly, and uncovered his feet, and lay herself down, and it came to pass at midnight that the man was startled, and turned herself, and behold, a woman lay at his feet, and he said, Who art thou?

And she answered, I am Ruth, thy handmaid. Spread thy skirt over thy handmaid, for thou hast the right of redemption. And he said, Blessed be thou of Jehovah my daughter, thou hast shown more kindness at the end than at the first, inasmuch as thou followeth not a young man, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not, all that thou sayest will I do to thee, for all the gate of my people knows that thou art a woman of worth. [00:01:01] And now, truly I am one that has the right of redemption, yet there is one that has the right of redemption who is nearer than I. Stay over tonight, and it shall be in the morning, if he will redeem thee, well, let him redeem, but if he like not to redeem thee, then will I redeem thee as Jehovah lives. Lie down until the morning. And she lay at his feet until the morning, and she rose up before one could know another, and he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the threshing floor, and he said, Bring the cloak that thou hast upon thee, and fold it. And she held it, and he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her, and he went into the city. And she came to her mother-in-law, and she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave thee me, for he said to me, Go not empty to thy mother-in-law. Then she said, Be still, my daughter, until thou knowest how the matter will fall, for the man will not rest until he hath completed the matter his way. [00:02:15] It might be good to review just in a few words what was before us in chapter one and two. You see new faces and even children tonight. And it is a wonderful story, this book.

You can't read it as a story which happened more than 3,000 years ago, or about 3,000 years ago. You can read it even as a kind of love story, not as the world produces, but as the Holy Spirit has found good to record for us.

But we have seen also that we, living in this time, in this dispensation, according to 1 Corinthians 10, should read it in a special way to find lessons for ourselves. [00:03:10] We can also read it, and we hope to be occupied more with that line of thought in connection with the prophetic events. And so we find in this booklet also things which will happen in the future, in connection with the future renderings, before the King, the Lord Jesus, the true David, will be introduced in a public way into this world. Now we have seen in chapter one how Elimelech and his family left Bethlehem, Judah. We have found, and you can meditate upon this yourself, how Bethlehem, the house of bread, the house

of food, was the place where God was honored.

Judah means praise of the Lord. And we find that because of the situation there, God had sent a family. We can see in the book of Judges how the situation was in that time. Everybody did according to his own ideas. There was no authority. [00:04:14] And so when we apply this to our day, we see it is the same problem today. The authority of the Lord is not recognized. Everyone does what seems to be right in his own eyes. Now in this setting we find how there is a family who follow their own ideas, but we find then also how God doesn't leave them where they are, but how God starts to work in restoration, and how God in sovereign grace brings even roots to the country, the promised land.

And we have seen also what the land means for us, for Christians. A heavenly country, where the two Boas are in chapter two, where he is the Lord of the harvest. That is chapter two. [00:05:04] Now we have seen the last time when we were together in chapter two, in a special way, how on this field of Boas, Ruth was led to go and we have seen how she was occupied there. We have thought about the wealth that is available in Boas. All the treasures of God, so to speak, are available in our glorified Lord in Heaven. But it is our task, but also our privilege, to start very low, to enter into all these blessings. We have meditated a little bit on that the last time. Now one of the most important lessons I think in this book is to see that we have to humble ourselves. It was pride of Elimelech to go away. It was self-will with which he was led. It was not obedience, it was not willingness to obey God and to listen to God's voice.

[00:06:04] But here we find in God's grace restoration. We find how Nehomai had learned to listen to God's voice. And how Ruth, who came from Moab, and we have seen Moab stands for pride, for ease also. There are no tribulations according to the word of God. But we have to leave that country. We have to humble ourselves in order to receive all these blessings in chapter 2. We find how her feet were involved. She went. It was not only the knowledge she received that Boas was a mighty man of wealth. She went to the field.

And then her eyes were on the field. Boas said that she should have her eyes on the field. That is also an instruction for us. We cannot repeat all we saw, but I just wanted to repeat that because we see that Ruth committed herself completely to the country of the Lord, as we have seen in chapter 1 already. [00:07:08] It is also an encouragement for a soul who is not really committed to the Lord. We see the only way to enter into God's heart is commitment. We have seen that Orpah walked in self-will. She was very kind to her mother-in-law, but she acted in self-will. Her name means neck. So that is an indication that she acted in self-will, Orpah. She didn't want to humble herself like Ruth did. And so many times it happens to us also that we want to go our way in self-will. We try. We don't want to humble ourselves. But in Ruth we see how she humbled herself and how she made a definite commitment in chapter 1 verse 16. And that is a key for spiritual growth. Definite commitment. And then we have found in chapter 2 how her whole body, as it were, was available. And she used her eyes the right way. Do we use our eyes in the right sense? Are our eyes directed on the field? Are our eyes directed on the Lord Jesus? How do we use our hands? She was very active. [00:08:12] She wanted to appropriate these blessings to herself. That's an important lesson. And she even used her knees. It is not mentioned literally, but this work was work that was very humble. It was done by beggars. You see how Ruth, who came from abroad, and the law was against her and Moabit could not have any relationship with the people of God, but she used the grace which was available. And we have seen how Boaz acted very kindly to her.

And she used her ears very well. It is a very practical thing. She used her ears. And Boaz spoke to

her heart. Her heart was open to listen to His voice. And so we can learn many things of Ruth.

[00:09:04] And we have thought the last time, she is really an example for us to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That is chapter 2. But that's not the whole story. By the end of chapter 2 we have seen that the harvest continued, but there was a big question mark. What was going to happen? Because after 50 days the early harvest would stop. She was there during the barley harvest and even the wheat harvest we have seen in chapter 2 verse 23. And then there was a period of about 3 months there was silence.

You find this silence also in Leviticus 23. When you study the Feast of Jehovah, you will find that there are three feasts close together. Passover, then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and then also closely linked together with the first fruit of the Lamb. And then after 50 days you have the Feast of Weeks.

[00:10:16] Now we find here a picture also of the church brought in. We find a suggestion in the wheat harvest. We cannot go into the details now, but it's just a suggestion. You can think about this. But then a practical problem was there.

Ruth had seen Boaz every day. And now she was going to miss him. She knew that he was one of the redeemed. And we will see in chapter 4 that the other redeemer, who was nearer, didn't want to. And we will see why. The redeemer had to be of the family. We have seen that already in chapter 2. So one of the great themes in the book of Ruth is the theme of redemption, of the redeemer. Not only the fact of redemption, but especially the person of the redeemer's redemption. And then the relationship into which Ruth is brought with the redeemer. But there is still a future here in the beginning of chapter 3. [00:11:20] What would she do? And we find that Naomi is her instructor. Now just a general remark. My suggestion for this chapter was the bride. We find here how Ruth prepares herself for Boaz. And that's a big difference in chapter 2.

We find the blessings of the field. The blessings which Boaz gave. He administers all to her. We have not only seen that she was very busy to glean and so on, but we have found also how Boaz himself administered to her all these wondrous blessings. [00:12:06] But you know, the heart of the Lord Jesus is not satisfied to give us blessings. How rich these blessings in themselves may be. The heart of our Lord Jesus is only satisfied when He will have us for Himself. That's the big difference between chapter 2 and 3. And for us also, we often ask for a blessing and we forget about the blessing. But the Holy Spirit would use this chapter 3, I think, to open our eyes for the need that we would enter into a real and practical relationship with the redeemer, with the blessing himself. And I think that brings in the thought of how are we prepared for this relationship. We have seen that Ruth received many blessings from the field and she ate. That was one of the important blessings. She not only appropriated these blessings with her hand, or she took these blessings to her, but she ate also. [00:13:08] And it is very important to grow in the knowledge and the grace of our Lord Jesus. We have to eat to be formed. But still then, it is not enough. But now, how is this being realized? How are we prepared for this relationship with our Boaz?

I find an important principle in the scriptures, and that is affliction, that is tribulation. I didn't realize myself until just a few days ago. I saw how this was a very difficult situation in chapter 3.

So I say, Boaz, who wanted to follow the Lord, Boaz is a very pious man, a very righteous man, how could he redeem the land for Naomi? Because he knew very well that would mean that he had also

the obligation to marry Ruth, to produce or to have a seed for Ruth's husband, who was dead now.

[00:14:14] He knew that, because we have these institutions in the Word of God, we can read in Ephesians 25 and also in Deuteronomy, in different places, where we find at the one hand how God provided that when an Israelite became poor, he could have get his portion in the land.

But not only that, we find that there was a second thing, that the one who became poor, and maybe the widow in this case, who had lost all, that then the one who would buy the portion had also the obligation to bring in the seed, that the descendant would inherit this portion. So we have seen already, I think, in the first evening that the Goel, that's the name for Redeemer, Goel, is translated in different ways, but it is always through this book the same expression, Goel, means Redeemer or also Avenger. We will see in chapter 4, Lord willing, also the role of the Avenger. [00:15:18] But the Goel had the obligation to buy the land back, to redeem the land. He had also then the obligation to marry the widow. In this case, Naomi was too old to have descendants, so it would be Ruth. And then there was not only, I skipped one thought, not only the land had to be redeemed, also the soul, the person itself had to be redeemed. That is how redemption comes in connection with us. So in order to enjoy the land, you have the redeemer who brings the land back to earth, to introduce us to the enjoyment of the land. But he is also the one who will redeem the person. And then we find how he is going to marry the person. And that's not the subject in chapters 3 and 4. [00:16:10] And he is the Avenger, the one who, when there was, in the case of Manslaughter, the one who had the obligation to revenge this. So these are the tasks of the Goel. And we find that Boaz was very faithful and he knew his obligations. I'm sure every day when he saw Ruth, he realized what his task was. But he knew also that the Moabitess, he could not marry somebody from Moab according to the same law. How was this going to be solved? It was a real problem. And I think for Nehomah it was also a problem. How could they solve this question? And I think that the other redeemer, he had realized this very well, but he didn't want to. Whereas Boaz, probably he wanted, but he couldn't. [00:17:02] Now, it is remarkable that about 50 days after the first three priests I mentioned, we have the Feast of Weeks. And that is for the Jews also called the Joy of the Law, Simchat Torah. And there we find how the thoughts of the Lord are going to be realized.

But it is a very difficult situation. At the one hand, the law said somebody from Moab cannot be introduced among the people of God. At the other hand, it was very clear what Boaz had to do. You see the problem. Now, I think that Nehomah acted by faith. And not only by faith, she had learned the heart of God. Through God's dealings with Nehomah, through all the bitterness she went through, she had learned to know God's heart.

And she had seen how faithful God is at one hand, but also how He is gracious, full of life. And I think that Nehomah understood through these dealings with her what is in the heart of God.

[00:18:16] But now, Ruth had to learn that too. And my thought was that it is through tribulation, through affliction, that we learn. And this is a very important lesson, I think, for us. We will see that in detail when we follow now the instructions of the chapter. We will have some invitations for this. So in itself, I thought these three months of silence, which followed after the first part of the harvest, before the fruit of the vineyard and the fig tree and so on were brought in, this time of silence was very difficult. And we find now how Nehomah had found a solution in her own heart, and she is going to instruct Ruth. [00:19:09] But at the same time, we should keep in mind that the objective of this chapter is to bring Ruth, and now when we apply it to ourselves, to bring us into a definite relationship with the redeemed. And we find even in this chapter and the beginning of the next chapter that there was a

competitor, so to speak. There was a possibility of another. And this matter has to be cleared. And we have to wait for the next chapter to see how this matter is solved. But it remains a question mark, even over this chapter. But we see, on the other hand, many indications how Ruth is prepared now to enter into this relationship. So I'll just repeat the difference. Chapter two is the field, and you could say Boaz is the lord of the harvest. But chapter three is Ruth in another aspect. She is now to be formed and to be brought into a relationship with Boaz. That is higher. It's not only a matter of the blessings, it's now also a relationship with the blessing. [00:20:12] Not only that, we find here also Boaz as the lord, we could say, of the threshing floor. The threshing floor is one of the points why I said it is through tribulation, through afflictions, that we are taught and that we are brought into this relationship. And therefore I have thought it might be good to take up some passages in the word of God which speak about the threshing floor. It might help us to understand why God would use these activities of the threshing floor to prepare us for this relationship. Now, just before we go to some passages, let us read verse one again. Nehomai, her mother-in-law, said to her, my daughter, shall I not seek rest for you? It's such a wonderful thought, beloved.

[00:21:08] In chapter one, she had tested Ruth. She had said in verse nine, Jehovah grants you that you may find rest each in the house of her husband. Not that Nehomai would love to see her go to the country, back to Moab, but it was a test, we have seen that. The confession of Ruth had to be tested, but here we find a higher order of rest. It is now rest in connection with this great question, would there be a definite relationship with Boaz? She had food enough now, she had blessings enough, but it was still this question of the Redeemer and of the relationship with him. And we find already suggestions for this matter of rest in connection with other questions, but just to help us to see how important this question is in general, in Genesis 5 already, when there was a difficult situation, in Genesis 4 we find the features of the world in independence from God and how then from Enosh to Enosh.

[00:22:18] They start to call on the name of the Lord, but then after a long line we come to Noah, and there his father Lamech said, God will give us rest. He was thinking of himself, not so of God's rights, but the thought of rest is introduced.

And the name Noah means rest, the one who brings rest. Now this brings us also to this thought, how can we find rest? And Omai said, shall I not seek rest for thee? But what I wanted to point out is this, where can you find rest? How can you find rest? It is in the great Noah, the one who brings rest. And there it goes through the judgment. You can only have rest, really, when you see that God's rights are met. There it is in judgment. But Noah means the one who brings rest. And so I think the Holy Spirit would bring us into a relationship with our Lord Jesus, who is the only one who can bring rest. [00:23:22] And you know in the days that the Lord Jesus was born, there was an old man, Simeon, and he had waited for the consolation of Israel. And the word consolation is closely linked with the thought of rest, in Hebrew at least. And so we find that rest is something to be desired. Simeon had wanted to have this consolation, but again we find this consolation, this rest, in the person of the Lord Jesus. That is my point to underline. We have only rest in connection with the blessed person of our Lord Jesus. And then we come to Matthew 11, where he invites us, not only those who are not saved yet, but he invites every disciple who wants to follow him, who wants to take up his yoke with him, to come to him to find his rest. [00:24:10] Find rest for our souls, but also for our conscience and for our hearts, taking up his yoke. That's the only way to have practical rest in this difficult world. It is a study in itself, but you see, rest is brought in in connection with his blessed person. And so Naomi would instruct Boaz, and so we may have the privilege to instruct younger believers how to find this rest, how to find an established relationship with our Redeemer. And then in chapter 2 we find how Boaz

was closely related.

And we can find many passages in the New Testament who show how the Lord Jesus now related to us. When the Lord Jesus was here on earth alone for the glory of God, he had no relationship, he had no family, he was alone. But in resurrection, the Lord Jesus has a family. In Isaiah 53 we read that he will have a seed. [00:25:10] In Psalm 22 we find the new generation, and among them the Lord would sing the praises of God. And so I would suggest the Lord Jesus, our Boaz, he linked himself with us, of course when he took upon him flesh and blood, Hebrews 2, but then a definite relationship was established in resurrection. And that's what you find in John 20, go to my brothers. That's what the Lord Jesus said. And there we find this definite relationship. And that is one of the conditions for the Redeemer. The Redeemer had to be closely related to the one who had to be redeemed. And so we find how the Lord Jesus came and became flesh, God, as we find in John 1, and in resurrection he is now linked with himself. And then in verse 2 we find this indication of the threshing floor.

[00:26:10] We find here that Boaz was winnowing. He is not threshing here. But I'd like to take up that thought of the threshing floor first and then come back on the thought of winnowing. In Genesis 50 we find for the first time the threshing floor mentioned. We find there in chapter 50 how Jacob died, and then in verse 9 they left Goshen to go to the country of Israel, and they went up with him, Boaz, Cariots, and horsemen, and the camp was very great. Verse 10, and they came to the threshing floor of Eteh. Eteh means the thondush, which is beyond the Jordan. And there they lamented with a great and very grievous lamentation. And he made a mourning for his father seven days. And the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Eteh, and they said, This is a grievous mourning of the Egyptians. Therefore the name of it was called Ebel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. [00:27:14] Here we find the thought of threshing floor introduced in connection with a difference between Egypt and the people of God. It's called here the mourning of the Egyptians. We find here that there is a difference between those who have no hope, the Egyptians, and the people of God.

So this is the first lesson. In the threshing floor you find that there is a difference between those who belong to the people of God and those who don't. And the threshing floor is, in general, God's discipline. God wants to show the difference. [00:28:02] And even through tribulations, the threshing floor is linked with tribulations, you find that God shows there is a difference. When today or tomorrow there will be persecution here in this country, you will see immediately the difference between the believers and those who are only professors. So the threshing floor brings in this separation between real believers and only those who have a profession. But then the second time that we find the threshing floor is here. And here it is to form a believer for this relationship with the Redeemer. I wanted to mention to you two other occasions where you find the need of the threshing floor. When we have been brought into a relationship with God, we are to be led by the Word of God. And now it is very remarkable that we find in 1 Chronicles 13 when David wanted to bring in the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, that he did not follow the instructions of the Word of God. [00:29:10] And this is a very interesting story. And we find that they carried the Ark of God on a new cart out of the house of Abinadar. The Philistines had sent back the Ark on a cart they did not know. It was ignorance. They did it and the Lord used it. But David, he could know better. And the Levites and also Uzzah, as we find in this chapter, he was the one who had watched over the Ark. He could know God's thoughts. And so we find here that the threshing floor in verse 9 is the place where it is made known when there is failure. I just wanted to read the verse.

[00:30:23] And you see that God uses the threshing floor here to reveal that. And Uzzah and his name

means strength. We can be very strong, but it is not only needful to be strong, we need also to be led by God's thoughts. It is 2 Peter that says that we should add to virtue, spiritual strength, also the knowledge. And so the knowledge of the Word of God is very important. And God brings this to the test. That is my point here. That God uses the threshing floor to put things to the test. And here it is in the life of a believer with the best intentions. What is better than to place the Ark in the center? What is better in our words to speak? To place the Lord Jesus in the center. And it is very good. [00:31:12] But you have to follow God's instructions. And here we find that there was failure because of not obeying the Lord's instructions. This was at the beginning of David's reign. Now at the end of David's reign we find another experience in connection with the threshing floor, chapter 21, where we find at the end of the life of a believer that still the test has to be made.

God maintains His rights. And so we find here that David had counted the people. Maybe there was pride in David's case, to know how many belonged to his reign. Like pride, God cannot accept it.

[00:32:03] God cannot accept, even in a person like David, spiritual pride. God has to judge them. And here we find that God not only judged David, but the whole people whom he had counted.

And then we find the threshing floor again in verse 20. And Ornan turned back and saw the angel and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing weak.

Here we find the threshing floor again. But Ornan, we have no time to go into all the details, but you can meditate on this yourself. But my point is to show that God uses the threshing floor on different stages. First, as we have seen, to make a difference between believer and unbeliever. Then to prepare us for a relationship with our Redeemer. And then to maintain His rights in connection with His Word. [00:33:01] And then at the end of our life, when we have failed, He shows His thoughts again. His thoughts in grace. And we find here how the threshing floor at the end of David's life was still a blessing. It was not easy for David, but it was an experience through which now the foundation was laid for the temple. So that is wonderful how God can use our failures and bring in something which is good. And the last reference that we have no time to read is Isaiah 28. It is a wonderful passage where we find how in connection with threshing God's wisdom is brought in. Are you passing through difficulties? Are you passing through deep waters? It is God's hand and it is according to His wisdom. And not only that, it is because He wants to establish you, to prepare you for this wonderful relationship. And that is the positive point. And so we find here an indication that God used a difficult way for our good. And now the thought of winnowing. Winnowing was to put away the chaff. So threshing is a process to remove the grain, the corn or barley or wheat from the ear and from the chaff.

[00:34:25] But what winnowing means is something which follows that process. So threshing might be severe as we find in Isaiah 28, but it is according to the wisdom of God. Sometimes God has to deal very severely with us.

But winnowing is a sweeter process. It is to eliminate the chaff from the grain. And we find here that the result is to satisfy the heart of Boaz as we will find later on. So winnowing is to secure the fruit completely without anything that is not in agreement with the fruit itself.

[00:35:13] So God wants to have pure fruit. That is what we find in winnowing. We find it in other passages, how important this is really. The Lord Jesus, when He will enter into His reign, He will burn the chaff with fire. You can read it in Matthew 3 and Luke 3. But in connection with us now, I think the

Lord wants to have fruit. And He wants to have fruit which is really according to His thoughts. Nothing which is contrary. He cannot maintain the calf. He has to eliminate it. And when does He do that? He does it during the night. We have seen it already in chapter 1, the night of His rejection. And the night means difficulties, tribulations, we have seen that. But the Lord uses the same night to take away the calf. You see how beautiful this is?

[00:36:07] And then we find in verse 3 the instructions for Ruth, how she should prepare herself. I am suggesting four points here which we might apply for ourselves, how we can enter now into this relationship with our Redeemer, with the Lord Jesus.

To prepare us for this definite relationship. Now, just to make clear the point, I found that Boaz is mentioned in chapter 2 as being a mighty man of wealth. And Ruth in verse 11 of this chapter is called a woman of worth.

In the Hebrew it is exactly the same expression. Wealth and worth is the same word. It means that there is a link here in Boaz. That Boaz, the mighty man of wealth, he needs a woman. He needs a bride, as we have in this chapter. And she is to be a woman of wealth.

[00:37:15] The same word at least. And that makes it clear that Ruth had to be introduced not only into this relationship, but she had to be brought on a level which is conformed to Boaz. In other words, she has to be conformed to him. That is my thought.

And how can we be conformed morally to our Bridegroom, to the Lord Jesus? That is what we find here in verse 3. First of all, we have to wash ourselves. That is to remove all that is contrary to His thoughts. We find a washing of the water of the Word to purify us. You can find it in John's 3, the food washing. The Lord said to Peter, when I do not wash your feet, you have no part with Me. You see, to have fellowship, to be brought on the level of the Lord Jesus, that is what we find here in this chapter, to be brought on His level. Not that He steps down on our level, He does that in grace. But here is the thought, He wants to have a bride for Himself, which is prepared for His level. Conformed to Himself.

[00:38:19] Now, to do that, He uses His Word. And He is washing us. Ephesians 5, we find it, how the Lord Jesus, now in the glory, has a service continuously to wash us, to apply the Word for us. Now that is precious service of the Lord Jesus. It is a service that lasts already almost 2,000 years. What the Lord Jesus did at the cross was once and for all. But His service now in the glory to prepare us for Himself is wondrous. But here it says, wash thyself. You see, the types in the Old Testament is not what we are positionally, it is not what the Lord Jesus is doing for us, it is how we enter into God's house.

[00:39:01] When you get granted what the types mean in the Old Testament, it is a big help. In the types you do not find the truths positionally, in the types you do not find what God's thoughts are for us, but in the types we find how we realize God's thoughts personally, how we enter into God's thoughts and are formed practically. So we have to apply the Word ourselves. But it goes together with what the Lord is doing. When the Lord is washing us through the water of the Word, Ephesians 5, and we listen to the Word, then we are washing ourselves. But it goes together. And we have often in the Scriptures these both aspects together. We have seen it also the last time, I think, in connection with the field, that with one hand all was ready, but real strength to go. And here we can say, the Lord is washing us through the water of the Word, but we have to apply it to ourselves. Wash thyself. That in a sense is negative. It removes things which are contrary. But then there is another element added. Anoint thyself. [00:40:03] Anointment or unction in the Scriptures would bring in something which is very positive, what is according to God's thought. You can link it with the Holy Spirit, but again it is not positionally here. It is not the fact that we have the Holy Spirit, but it is the

fact that we place ourselves under his guidance. It is that we realize what we have received. In Ephesians 1 we find also the fact that we have the Holy Spirit. We find in 2 Corinthians 1 that we have this ointment of the Holy Spirit, but the point is now that we use that. That we place ourselves before God, that he can direct us by his Spirit. That we anoint ourselves, that we are precious in his sight. That is what it means here. Anoint thyself.

And of course you can mention many other passages in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit is brought in, but in the types we find that we apply this to ourselves personally. And then put thy raiment upon thee. [00:41:13] You remember the prodigal son, how he came back and he got the best garment. But you have to take it, to put it on. In the New Testament we find that we can close ourselves with Christ. How wonderful this is. We have the clothes of righteousness and all these wonderful clothes according to God's thought. But we have to put it on. You see, that is the exhortation here in this part, that we must not only take knowledge of God's thoughts, but if we would apply these thoughts practically. You see, often the problem with us is, I say to myself in the first place, that we know God's thoughts, or we listen to God's thoughts, but we do not put them into practice. That's the problem. And when we know God's thoughts only, but we do not put them into practice, there cannot be a real relationship with them. [00:42:07] Of course, positionally, every Christian has this relationship before God, but practically it doesn't mean anything. But God wants that it would mean something for us, you see, and therefore these prescriptions, these instructions from Nehemiah. And it's wonderful to prepare us for this living relationship with the Lord Jesus. But there is one other step to go, to go down. And that's very hard. Because we want to maintain ourselves. We like to listen to the Word of God and even to apply these things, anoint us. And put this raiment, think of the beautiful garment the bride will have in Revelation 19, but we can apply this already today to ourselves. But to go down, that's the problem. But that is essential. When we do not want to go down, we can forget about this relationship. So this is really a very serious thing. [00:43:07] Question from the audience.

Therefore, go down. And where? We have said, go as a spirit to the Lord of the threshing floor. Here we find that we have to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, go to that place where this process takes place of threshing, but also of winnowing, and then He is going to talk. Isn't that wonderful? Make not thyself known to the man. I remember Mary in John 20, she received the Lord's instructions, but she first stood down. She went into the tomb, and she humbled herself, so to speak, but she received communications from the Lord. She was the one who could give these communications to the brothers. [00:44:22] This humble, simple sister, she received these instructions, and that's a lesson for us. How can we listen to the voice of the Lord when we follow these steps, including to go down? The Lord wants to communicate Himself with us. He is willing to do that. Here the instruction of Nehemiah says, Make not thyself known to the man until he shall have done eating and drinking, and it shall be when he lies down that thou shalt mark the place where he shall have lain down, and thou shalt go in and uncover his feet, and so on, and then he shall show thee what thou shalt do. There are other steps to be taken, but it is in order to receive His communications. Now what are the other steps? She went down to the floor, and then in verse 4, she would mark the place where he shall have lain down.

[00:45:15] Do that. Mark the place where he shall have lain down, and thou shalt go in and uncover his feet. How can you do that? Now apply for us. How can you uncover the feet of the Lord Jesus? You read the Gospel. You see a man who walked through this world there in Canaan, in the land of Israel. You find a woman seated at the feet of the Lord Jesus. She, Mary, uncovered the feet of the Lord Jesus. I say reverently. She was at His feet, and she uncovered, in that sense, His feet. It was not a

mystery for her. It was not with a veil or a cover, but she entered into that, what His feet mean. And that is what we have to do. We have to, not only to see where He died, how He died, but also to meditate upon His walk here on earth, to uncover His feet, in that sense. You see, that is the way to receive His instructions. [00:46:14] And then lay thyself down. That is, again, very humbling. It is humiliating, I would say, that she would lay herself down. Because we have to realize what she is going to do here. She was offering herself now to Boaz as the bride.

She would lay herself down. It is, again, I think, a suggestion of putting aside all pride, all our own thoughts, what we want to maintain in the presence of the Lord, because in the presence of the Lord we cannot maintain anything. [00:47:01] It is very important to see how many servants of the Lord stood down before Him. I remember Daniel, chapter 10, how he fell down for the glory of the Lord. We find it in Abraham already, in Genesis 18. We find it in John, in the Isle of Patmos, and many other references where we find how God's people, in the presence of the Lord, would stand down. That is the only acceptable attitude. But then, that is precious. He will show thee what thou shalt do. He will instruct us. Not only Nehemiah, not only a brother or a sister, He Himself will speak to us. And it is really worthwhile to go into your closet and to pray. I think that is very important in connection with this subject. To enter into a real relationship with the Lord, we have to know this secret prayer, and to be able to listen also to the voice of the Lord. I remember a story. There was a young boy, I think in France or Switzerland, when he saw his mother in the morning, when she had been in his closet, she came out with joy at her face. [00:48:18] Every time the young boy noticed it. And then he understood how she had communications from the Lord, how the Lord would speak to her through prayer and through reading the Scriptures. So this secret communion with the Lord is very important. And then in verse 5, the attitude of Ruth, it is again commitment, and she said to her, all that thou sayest will I do. That is discipleship. You find it in John 2, when the mother of the Lord Jesus said to the slaves, you do all what He says. And then they were blessed. You see, that is really important for us, to do all what He says, and how we fail in that aspect. It is again the same commitment you find here with Ruth, as you have found already in chapter 1, how she committed herself totally to the Lord, in verse 16. [00:49:11] And here again it is the same attitude. And she not only took in these instructions, she not only received these instructions, but now she put them into practice. Verse 6, she went down to the floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had bidden her. And then verse 7, that is a wonderful verse, Boaz ate and went. What does that mean? In a general way I would suggest, when Boaz speaks of the Lord Jesus, we find in his life, one who did the will of God. He said, my foot is to do the will of my father, or to do the will of the one who sent me. Seven times we find how the Lord, in John's gospel, came to do the will of God. The will of the Father, to glorify the Father, that was his need, that was his drink. And he was satisfied to do that. Drinking speaks also of satisfaction. And his heart was married. Not only because of his food, because of his drink, he was married because he had a result of his labors. [00:50:11] And we find here how the barley was ready. He went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn. We can feel the satisfaction of the Lord Jesus when he sees the fruit of his labors. He is satisfied. You read it in the Psalms. And in Isaiah 53 it says literally that he will see the fruit of his travail, of his soul, and he will be satisfied. That is what you find here. The satisfaction of the Lord. He could lie down at the end of the heap of corn. He could rest in the result of his labors. How beautiful this is. And then in verse 7 at the end, then she went softly and uncovered his feet and laid herself down. We could link this also with baptism, where we put aside all of the old men. It's just a suggestion. So you find many instances in which we find this downward path.

[00:51:07] But initially you find it already in baptism that we have put aside all of the first men. And then in verse 8, it came to pass at midnight. This brings me again back to the part of tribulation. Midnight,

and we hope to see this in connection with the future lens, the tribulation, in the middle of the week, the tribulation, the man was startled and turned himself and behold the woman laid his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth, thy handmaid. So I think also in this verse 8 we find an indication of the aspect of tribulation. In connection with the remnant, the future remnant, the great tribulation, but in connection with believers, it is through tribulations that the Lord would form us. You can read Romans 5, the first version. You see how the Lord would use tribulation to bring us into the enjoyment of his salt. [00:52:05] And at midnight, we find that he is starting to speak now. It took a long time. You can apply that to the history of the church. You see how long it took, really, before the Lord was able to speak to the church. But also the history of Israel, the Lord had said already long before about the place he was going to choose in the land, Deuteronomy 12. It took, I don't know how many years, but hundreds of years before David found a place, you see. But then, how beautiful is this? In chapter 2, the last time, we have seen how Boaz spoke to Ruth in verse 12 and said, Jehovah recompense thy work, and let thy reward be full from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. And here we find, I am Ruth, thy handmaid, thy slave. Spread thy skirt, or thy wing, over thy handmaid. How wonderful this is. Here we find Ruth not, she is a bride, she has prepared herself, but she is very humble. We find in Psalm 45 also how the bride prepares herself for the King, but in all humbleness.

[00:53:21] And here, I think this is also an indication, to please the Lord, we have to be slaves. Nothing of our own will, only obeying, only listening to his voice. And that is wonderful, because the Lord Jesus himself, I say it reverently, the great slave, Exodus 21, the Lord himself was that. And he wants to have somebody who is conformed to himself, as we find here. But the thought is so wonderful here to see that she asked his protection, she is asking that he would cover her as it were. Now she had received already this protection from the God of Israel, but now she wants to be brought into this relationship with the true Boaz, and to have his protection. And you can find many places in the Psalms especially which speak about this thought of protection and wing. [00:54:17] And then she explains, for thou hast the right of redemption. This is what Nehemiah had said to her. It was still not clear to see the matter, it was still not established. And we find also in the book of the Song of Songs the same progressive line. In the beginning, chapter 1 gives the outline, there all is established. But then from chapter 2 on you find the development, how the bride is brought into this relationship. And by the end she could say that she belonged to her beloved, and the beloved was hers, but then also his satisfaction was towards her. That is the end of this line of progress, that his satisfaction, excuse me, literally it says his desire is towards me. So that is what is going to be realized here, that we would prepare ourselves for him according to these instructions in order that his desire would be towards us.

[00:55:23] But from our side one problem has to be settled, and we will find it also the next time, that is the other Redeemer. As long as there is the possibility of this other Redeemer, there is not this definite relationship established. And this other Redeemer would speak, I think, of the law, and as long as we would, I say it now very simple, as long as we would follow our own efforts, do our best so to speak, or place ourselves under the law even out of thankfulness, as long as we do that, we cannot have this relationship with the Lord Jesus. [00:56:03] Because that takes away of his greatness and of his work, and it is very serious. You can think about it in the meantime, and Lord willing we would enter into that the next time, how the law would rob Christ, how the law would take away the result of his work. And as long as this matter has not been settled, there cannot be a definite relationship with him. So this is a very important question. And in verse 11 now, or verse 10, Blessed be thou of Jehovah my daughter, you see how Boaz recognizes her and he compares what she has done now with what she did before. And he said, what you have done now is even better than before.

You see, I said it was a risky matter what she did, but Boaz recognized what she did, it was an act of faith, and as we have seen Naomi, she knew the heart of God, she knew that these two conflicting laws were going to be solved, and there would be a solution. [00:57:10] And Boaz, now he recognized it. He recognized, now the solution is coming. She is ready for the solution. And so he said, thou hast shown more kindness at the end than at the first, and as much as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich. There is also a practical remark. Sometimes we want to follow Christians or to have a relationship with the Lord, serving the Lord, but we want to do it according to our thoughts, whether poor or rich. But it is wrong. She did not follow her own thoughts. Her heart went out to Boaz, the Redeemer. And that is for us also so important, that we would not deviate this direction or that direction. It is also in connection with the Gospel. There are those who want the social Gospel, and there are those who want only the Gospel for the chosen one, the elect. No, it is the Lord. He alone. [00:58:09] And then in verse 11, now my daughter, fear not. All that thou sayest will I do to thee. I don't know how many times we find the expression fear not, but it is encouraging for us, because often we fear. Often we have so many fears, and I do not speak about the fear of the Lord, because the fear of the Lord is another thought. The fear of the Lord is walking in His presence, realizing that He sees me. He knows my heart. He knows all my thoughts. And the fear of the Lord is a beginner of knowledge. But what we find here is human fear. And there is no place for human fear. That is what Boaz says here. All that thou sayest will I do to thee. Now I did this morning. All that thou sayest. Now He is going to listen to us. He is first instructing us, but the Lord wants to hear our voice too, you see. The Lord wants to communicate His thoughts with us, but He wants to have a response. All that thou sayest will I do to thee. Wonderful. But He wants us to bring to the point that we acknowledge our needs, and that we bring our needs to Him, and He is going to solve all the problems for us. [00:59:19] But now one beautiful touch. For all the gate of my people knows, that thou art the ruler of this. He recognizes, as we have seen already, it is the same expression in connection with Boaz. He sees that He is suitable to Him. But not only Boaz knows it, the whole gate, that means the whole administration, the government of the city, so those who are responsible, they knew it. And that is also important in connection with the future remnant, you will see that, Lord willing, how the whole people will recognize the special relationship between the Lord and the remnant. For all the gate of my people knows, that thou art the woman of worth. Where can you find this woman of worth in the scriptures? We have no time to read it now, but Proverbs 31. [01:00:05] And it is in the Hebrew the same expression and also in the translation by Mr. Darby, the woman of worth. And it is really worthwhile to study that, because there we find a beautiful presentation of the bride, of Ruth, so to speak. How we should be before the Lord. How we could be conformed to Himself. He wants to, as it were, to see Himself in us. That is the deepest thought here, that He Himself may be seen in us. That is what God wants, that Christ may be seen in us. Then we are a woman of worth. And then it will be publicly recognized, because that is the point here. It is not only that we are linked with the Lord in a hidden way, but it is here also a public aspect, that the world might recognize this. You remember the story of Abraham with Abimelech? The first, in chapter 20, Abraham acted by unbelief, but then later on he was restored. And then Abimelech recognized that God was with him. That is the point. Public testimony. And then in verse 12, And now truly I am one that has the right of redemption. We mentioned that already. There was one nearer than he. And this matter has to be solved. [01:01:23] But we will see that next time, Lord willing. And then He says, Stay overnight, and it shall be in the morning. If He will redeem thee, well, let Him redeem thee. But if He would like not to redeem thee, then will I redeem thee as Jehovah lives. Lie down until the morning. Here we find how we may identify ourselves as the Lord in His rejection. It is still the night. And we have seen the importance of lying down. Putting aside all pride, all what is of the human heart. Putting aside that to join the Lord in His rejection during the night. Though the light of the coming day is already in our heart. [01:02:05] Then verse 14, She lay at His feet. That is so beautiful. She lay at His feet. You know, I mentioned

already Mary, who was at the feet of the Lord Jesus. I mentioned already the need that we have to uncover His feet. To meditate upon the Lord Jesus. His walk here on earth. But here she lay at His feet until the morning. Three points I would like to mention in the New Testament in connection with Mary. The first time she was at the Lord's feet was to listen to His voice. Not to neglect her duties. Not to neglect what she had to do. She did her job, so to speak. But she listened to the voice of the Lord. There was real balance. Often we can be out of balance, you see. Or we don't listen to the Lord. Or we only are reading the Bible or whatever. There needs to be balance. And we find it at the feet of the Lord Jesus. Mary was there. And see, Ruth is there. But then this brings us to the need of prayer. And that is what we find in John 11. She brought all her needs to Him at His feet. And that is the place of worship. [01:03:13] We like the worship meeting. We like to be there when the hall is filled. Not only here, but almost in every meeting. But how about the prayer meeting? How about the ministry meeting? It starts with the Word of God. And then prayer. And then worship. How can we worship when we do not listen to His voice? When we do not bring all our needs to His feet? It's very practical. And then, of course, there are also practical remarks in the setting of the story. Let it not be known that a woman came into the threshing floor. The good name of Boaz and the good name of Ruth had not to be defiled. And verse 15, now a wonderful point before we close. He said, Bring the cloak that thou hast upon her. She had put her raiment on her. She had something that was prepared for Boaz. But now Boaz uses that to bless her. He says, Bring the cloak that thou hast upon her.

[01:04:13] There's another thought I'd like to bring in here. He will never be our debtor. We have seen the full commitment of Ruth. And how she stepped down. How she prepared herself for Boaz. But He is never our debtor. He is going to bless us. And that is what we find here. He gives six measures of bond. I mentioned already in John 2, tonight, how the disciples or the slaves in that house were going to do the will of the Lord Jesus. And there were six measures then of water for purification. But after that, you find six measures of bond. Bond would speak of resurrection life. We have seen that already in Connections chapter 2 and already the last verse of chapter 1. What we need is a full impression of the power of the Lord Jesus in resurrection. I've said already, the Lord is linked with us in resurrection. [01:05:09] But now He lays it upon us, as it were, that we would realize all this power, all these resources which are in Him. Because the number six measures means that there is almost full resource. Here is not seven measures, because I think Ruth was not ready yet for seven. Because the matter of this other Redeemer was not solved yet. You see, that is an indication, I think, that six is not a fullness, but it is a great blessing. And what she needed, and what we need, is to have a better impression of the power of the life resurrection. When you read Ephesians 1, you find how God showed all His power in raising the Lord Jesus from the tomb. And now God is working in the same power in you and me to operate this resurrection life. It is wonderful to hear these six measures of bond speak of the power of resurrection. [01:06:11] And we may carry that, as it were. We may carry these treasures fully in the realization of this power, and then go to the city. Then take our place where we belong. And then, to close with the last verses, we find that Nehomai asked now Ruth, Who are thou, my daughter? This is also an indication that there was now a new relationship established. Ruth had made progress. We have seen in chapter 2 how we make progress in the knowledge of the grace, and progress in knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus and knowledge of His person. But here it is progress towards this relationship. [01:07:01] And so, Nehomai recognizes this in this question. And then she told her all that a man had done to her, in verse 17, and she said, These six measures of bond gave it to me. We can be the witness of this wonderful power in resurrection, which works now in you and me. And then, in verse 18, then she said, Be still, my daughter. You see, the matter which had to be established now, that there was this relationship between Boaz and Ruth, but now publicly. You know, it was publicly known how Ruth was. It was known how Boaz was. And though there was now this link between those, it was still hidden. The city didn't know about that. We

will find it in the next chapter. And so therefore she had to wait and to be still until Boaz would settle this matter publicly. You know, for the world, this relationship between Christ and the glory and us here on earth is hidden. It is known for faith. It is a reality for faith. [01:08:01] When Paul, the apostle, was called, he was sold in. How did he see the Lord Jesus in connection with this relationship? The Lord in the glory and the church here on earth. And it is still the case. It is hidden from man's eyes, though God reveals it in His grace. But there will come a moment that it will be publicly known. When the Lord Jesus will come back from heaven, He will be glorified and admired in all the saints. Then it will be publicly known. But we cannot realize that. We cannot bring in that. There are people who are working to introduce the millennium today already, to reign already now. We cannot do that. We have to be still in that sense. We can only wait until the Lord will do that. And so be still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall. But then a beautiful text at the end of the chapter, for the man will not rest until he has completed the matter this day. He is going to complete the matter. And it is an encouragement, brothers and sisters. Maybe you started last year with the Lord. Maybe this year that you started to live for the Lord. And there are many questions. But He is going to complete the matter. You can be sure. [01:09:08] He will look after that. We find in Philippians 1, a beautiful verse, and that is really an encouragement for all of us, I think, that when He has started a work in us, He is going to complete it. It says in Philippians 1, verse 6, Having confidence of this very thing, that he who has begun in you a work, a good work, will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day. So you see how there is the thought of completion. When the Lord has begun a work in you and me, He is going to complete it. And the Lord wants completion. You read in Revelation 3 that one of the complaints of the Lord against Sardis was that their works were not complete. But He wants completion. He wants, in this sense, that the matter is completed totally. And we find it in Solomon. It struck me when I read about the temple. He completed it. He not only started, he completed it. And that is with the Lord. [01:10:13] He started this work for our blessing, and He is going to complete it. And that may give us rest and confidence. Often we, our hearts, are not in this settled rest. But He wants us to be still. He is going to establish this. He is going to complete this. And we may trust Him. So may the Lord help us in the meditation of this chapter also to enter really into this living relationship with the Lord. That we not only see what He is for us, but that we also start to see what we are for Him. Chapter 2 is what He is for us, and chapter 3 is what we are for Him. That is the challenge, so to speak. And so may the Lord help us to realize what the church, what the assembly, and what every believer means for the Lord. And therefore He sends tribulation. Therefore He allows that we have to go through this threshing floor, through this winnowing, to purify us. But in order that we may be suitable for Him to be at this side. That is what He wants. Praise be His name.