

## AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, ON

## THE BOOK OF RUTH

We find in this book excellencies examples of faith, piety, patience, humility, industry, and loving-kindness, in the common events of life. Also we see the special care which God's providence takes of our smallest concerns, encouraging us to full trust therein. We may view this book as a beautiful, because natural representation of human life; as a curious detail of important facts; and as a part of the plan of redemption.

## CHAPTER 1

*Elimelech and his sons die in the land of Moab. (1-5) Naomi returns home. (6-14) Orpah stays behind, but Ruth goes with Naomi. (15-18) They come to Bethlehem. (19-22)*

⌂ **Ruth 1:1**

**Vs. 1-5:** Elimelech's care to provide for his family, was not to be blamed; but his removal into the country of Moab could not be justified. And the removal ended in the wasting of his family. It is folly to think of escaping that cross, which, being laid in our way, we ought to take up. Changing our place seldom is mending it. Those who bring young people into bad acquaintance, and take them out of the way of public ordinances, thought they may think them well-principled, and armed against temptation, know not what will be the end. It does not appear that the women the sons of Elimelech married, were proselyted to the Jewish religion. Earthly trials or enjoyments are of short continuance. Death continually removes those of every age and situation, and mars all our outward comforts: we cannot too strongly prefer those advantages which shall last for ever.

⌂ **Ruth 1:6**

**Vs. 6-14:** Naomi began to think of returning, after the death of her two sons. When death comes into a family, it ought to reform what is amiss there. Earth is made bitter to us, that heaven may be made dear. Naomi

seems to have been a person of faith and piety. She dismissed her daughters-in-law with prayer. It is very proper for friends, when they part, to part with prayer. She dismissed them with affection. If relations must part, let them thus part in love. Did Naomi do well, to discourage her daughters from going with her, when she might save them from the idolatry of Moab, and bring them to the faith and worship of the God of Israel? Naomi, no doubt, desired to do that; but if they went with her, she would not have them to go upon her account. Those that take upon them a profession of religion only to oblige their friends, or for the sake of company, will be converts of small value. If they did come with her, she would have them make it their deliberate choice, and sit down first and count the cost, as it concerns those to do who make a profession of religion. And more desire “rest in the house of a husband,” or some worldly settlement or earthly satisfaction, than the rest to which Christ invites our souls; therefore when tried they will depart from Christ, though perhaps with some sorrow.

### **Ruth 1:15**

**Vs. 15-18:** See Ruth’s resolution, and her good affection to Naomi. Orpah was loath to part from her; yet she did not love her well enough to leave Moab for her sake. Thus, many have a value and affection for Christ, yet come short of salvation by him, because they will not forsake other things for him. They love him, yet leave him, because they do not love him enough, but love other things better. Ruth is an example of the grace of God, unequalled the soul to choose the better part. Naomi could desire no more than the solemn declaration Ruth made. See the power of resolution; it silences temptation. Those that go in religious ways without a steadfast mind, stand like a door half open, which invites a thief; but resolution shuts and bolts the door, resists the devil and forces him to flee.

### **Ruth 1:19**

**Vs. 19-22:** Naomi and Ruth came to Bethlehem. Afflictions will make great and surprising changes in a little time. May God, by his grace, fit us for all such changes, especially the great change!, Naomi signifies “pleasant,” or “amiable;” Mara, “bitter,” or “bitterness.” She was now a woman of a sorrowful spirit. She had come home empty, poor, a widow and childless. But there is a fullness for believers of which they never can be emptied; a

good part which shall not be taken from those who have it. The cup of affliction is a “bitter” cup, but she owns that the affliction came from God. It well becomes us to have our hearts humbled under humbling providence. It is not affliction itself, but affliction rightly born, that does us good.

## CHAPTER 2

*Ruth gleanes in the field of Boaz. (1-3) The kindness of Boaz to Ruth. (4-16) Ruth returns to her mother-in-law. (17-23)*

### **Ruth 2:1**

**Vs. 1-3:** Observe Ruth's humility. When Providence had made her poor, she cheerfully stoops to her lot. High spirits will rather starve than stoop; not so Ruth. Nay, it is her own proposal. She speaks humbly in her expectation of leave to glean. We may not demand kindness as a debt, but ask, and take it as a favor, though in a small matter. Ruth also was an example of industry. She loved not to eat the bread of idleness. This is an example to young people. Diligence promises well, both for this world and the other. We must not be shy of any honest employment. No labor is a reproach. Sin is a thing below us, but we must not think any thing else so, to which Providence call us. She was an example of regard to her mother, and of trust in Providence. God wisely orders what seem to us small events; and those that appear altogether uncertain, still are directed to serve his own glory, and the good of his people.

### **Ruth 2:4**

**Vs. 4-16:** The pious and kind language between Boaz and his reapers shows that there were godly persons in Israel. Such language as this is seldom heard in our field; too often, on the contrary, what is immoral and corrupt. A stranger would form a very different opinion of our land, from that which Ruth would form of Israel from the converse and conduct of Boaz and his reapers. But true religion will teach a man to behave aright in all states and conditions; it will form kind masters and faithful servants, and cause harmony in families. True religion will cause mutual love and kindness among persons of different ranks. It had these effects on Boaz and his men. When he came to them he prayed for them. They did not, as soon as he was out of hearing curse him, as some ill-natured servants that hate their master's eye, but they returned his courtesy. Things are likely to go on well where there is such goodwill as this between masters and servants. They expressed their kindness to each other by praying one for another. Boaz inquired concerning the stranger he saw, and ordered her to

be well treated. Masters must take care, not only that they do no hurt themselves, but that they suffer not their servants and those under them to do wrong. Ruth humbly owned herself unworthy of favors, seeing she was born and brought up a heathen. It well becomes us all to think humbly of ourselves, esteeming others better than ourselves. And let us, in the kindness of Boaz to Ruth, note the kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ to poor sinners.

**Ruth 2:17**

**Vs. 17-23:** It encourages industry, that in all labor, even that of gleaning, there is profit. Ruth was pleased with what she gained by her own industry, and was careful to secure it. Let us thus take care that we lose not those things which we have wrought, which we have gained for our souls' good, <sup>2</sup> John 1:8. Parents should examine their children, as Naomi did, not to frighten or discourage them, so as to make them hate home, or tempt them to tell a lie; but to commend them if they have done well, and with mildness to reprove and caution them if they have done otherwise. It is a good question for us to ask ourselves every night, Where have I gleaned today? What improvement have I made in knowledge and grace? What have I done that will turn to a good account? When the Lord deals bountifully with us, let us not be found in any other field, nor seeking for happiness and satisfaction in the creature. We lose Divine favors, if we slight them. Ruth dutifully observed her mother's directions. And when the harvest was ended, she kept her aged mother company at home. Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land; her vanity ended in disgrace, <sup>34</sup> Genesis 34. Ruth kept at home, and helped to maintain her mother, and went out on no other errand than to get provision for her; her humility and industry ended in preferment.

## CHAPTER 3

*The directions given to Ruth by Naomi. (1-5) Boaz acknowledges the duty of a kinsman. (6-13) Ruth's return to her mother-in-law. (14-18)*

### **Ruth 3:1**

**Vs. 1-5:** The married state should be a rest, as much as any thing upon earth can be so, as it ought to fix the affection and form a connection for life. Therefore it should be engaged in with great seriousness, with earnest prayers for direction, for the blessing of God, and with regard to his precepts. Parents should carefully advise their children in this important concern, that it may be well with them as to their souls. Be it always remembered, That is best for us which is best for our souls. The course Naomi advised appears strange to us; but it was according to the laws and usages of Israel. If the proposed measure had born the appearance of evil, Naomi would not have advised it. Law and custom gave Ruth, who was now proselyted to the true religion, a legal claim upon Boaz. It was customary for widows to assert this claim, <sup>(6:13)</sup>Deuteronomy 25:5-10. But this is not recorded for imitation in other times, and is not to be judged by modern rules. And if there had been any evil in it, Ruth was a woman of too much virtue and too much sense to have listened to it.

### **Ruth 3:6**

**Vs. 6-13:** What in one age or nation would be improper, is not always so in another age or another nation. Being a judge of Israel, Boaz would tell Ruth what she should do; also whether he had the right of redemption, and what methods must be taken, and what rites used, in order to accomplishing her marriage with him or another person. The conduct of Boaz calls for the highest praise. He attempted not to take advantage of Ruth; he did not disdain her as a poor, destitute stranger, nor suspect her of any ill intentions. He spoke honorably of her as a virtuous woman, made her a promise, and as soon as the morning arrived, sent her away with a present to her mother-in-law. Boaz made his promise conditional, for there was a kinsman nearer than he, to whom the right of redemption belonged.

**Ruth 3:14**

**Vs. 14-18:** Ruth had done all that was fit for her to do, she must patiently wait the event. Boaz, having undertaken this matter, would be sure to manage it well. Much more reason have true believers to cast their care on God, because he has promised to care for them. Our strength is to sit still, <sup>2307</sup>Isaiah 30:7. This narrative may encourage us to lay ourselves by faith at the feet of Christ: He is our near Kinsman; having taken our nature upon him. He has the right to redeem. Let us seek to receive from him his directions: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? <sup>4016</sup>Acts 9:6. He will never blame us as doing this unseasonably. And let us earnestly desire and seek the same rest for our children and friends, that it may be well with them also.

## CHAPTER 4

*The kinsman refuses to redeem Ruth's inheritance. (1-8) Boaz marries Ruth. (9-12) Birth of Obed. (13-22)*

### **Ruth 4:1**

**Vs. 1-8:** This matter depended on the laws given by Moses about inheritances, and doubtless the whole was settled in the regular and legal manner. This kinsman, when he heard the conditions of the bargain, refused it. In like manner many are shy of the great redemption; they are not willing to espouse religion; they have heard well of it, and have nothing to say against it; they will give it their good word, but they are willing to part with it, and cannot be bound to it, for fear of marring their own inheritance in this world. The right was resigned to Boaz. Fair and open dealing in all matters of contract and trade, is what all must make conscience of, who would approve themselves true Israelites, without guile. Honesty will be found the best policy.

### **Ruth 4:9**

**Vs. 9-12:** Men are ready to seize opportunities for increasing their estates, but few know the value of godliness. Such are the wise men of this world, whom the Lord charges with folly. They attend not to the concerns of their souls, but reject the salvation of Christ, for fear of marring their inheritance. But God did Boaz the honor to bring him into the line of the Messiah, while the kinsman, who was afraid of lessening himself, and marring his inheritance, has his name, family, and inheritance forgotten.

### **Ruth 4:13**

**Vs. 13-22:** Ruth bore a son, through whom thousands and myriads were born to God; and in being the lineal ancestor of Christ, she was instrumental in the happiness of all that shall be saved by him; even of us Gentiles, as well as those of Jewish descent. She was a witness for God to the Gentile world, that he had not utterly forsaken them, but that in due time they should become one with his chosen people, and partake of his salvation. Prayer to God attended the marriage, and praise to him attended



the birth of the child. What a pity it is that pious language should not be more used among Christians, or that it should be let fall into formality! Here is the descent of David from Ruth. And the period came when Bethlehem-Judah displayed greater wonders than those in the history of Ruth, when the outcast babe of another forlorn female of the same race appeared, controlling the counsels of the Roman master of the world, and drawing princes and wise men from the east, with treasures of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh to his feet. His name shall endure for ever, and all nations shall call Him blessed. In that Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.