

Ruth

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

- [0 : 00] As the Lord may help me, I will speak from the book of Ruth, the first chapter, the 16th and 17th verses.
- The first chapter of the book of Ruth, the 16th and 17th verses. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or 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, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death, part thee and me.
- The first chapter of the book of Ruth, the 16th and 17th verses. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee.
- [1 : 29] 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, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death, part thee and me.
- Our minds think with thankfulness and affection of our dear friend, Mrs. Friend, as the Lord has taken her home to himself.
- And my mind was directed to this word, or rather this word came with some feeling of sweetness, just before her funeral last Tuesday.
- As the time drew near, and I looked across the graveyard, to where her last resting place was prepared to receive her, these words came upon my mind.
- [2 : 49] This people shall be my people, and where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.
- And I thought that so exactly expressed the strong attachment that our dear member had to us. It was her comfort, and her happiness, and her desire to live, and die amongst us, and to be buried in our midst.
- But before I speak of Mrs. Friend this morning, I will direct your attention to the substance and instruction of these words themselves.
- Now, the Lord has many, and perhaps say infinite, ways and means to bring those to the knowledge of the truth, those that he has appointed unto salvation through Jesus Christ.
- Innumerable are the ways in which the Lord has brought them to that spiritual and saving faith and love and knowledge.
- [4 : 13] The Spirit of the Lord is by no means straightened as to the ways and means that he will use to accomplish the purposes of his sovereign will.
- And sometimes, as I mentioned on Thursday evening, means that in themselves do not appear to have been good, and yet the Lord makes a good use of them.
- In this case, the purpose of God towards this Moabitish woman, Ruth, was brought to pass through the influence and instruction of Naomi.

You know the history, and I spoke a little upon it on Thursday evening. Elimelech and his wife and their two sons, because of the famine in the land of Israel, took their way into the country of Moab.

Whether they did right or wise in so doing is, I think, very questionable. Especially as the hand of the Lord went out against them in this matter.

[5 : 34] And, as Naomi said, I went out full that the Lord hath brought me home empty. one would say they would have done better to have submitted themselves to the Lord's overruling providence in the circumstances where they were and waited for the Lord to appear for them.

But, however, there was a purpose in it. And the purpose was to Ruth. For it seems very evident that Ruth was so wrought upon by the influence and instruction of her mother-in-law that when her mother-in-law was said to return to her own country and her own kindred, Ruth could not be by any means entreated to stay in the land of Moab that would go with her mother-in-law wherever she went.

There was such a union of affection between them that Ruth felt she would cleave to her mother-in-law go with her live with her and at last die with her and be buried with her.

The subject has seemed to offer these two considerations for us this morning and perhaps again this afternoon.

First we may consider these words as they applied originally to Ruth herself and then it is in my mind to enlarge upon the same with regard to all such as have it by the grace of God in their hearts to cleave to the Lord's people and to go with them in the ways of God and truth and to be united with them in life and in death and to all eternity.

[7 : 54] And first we will consider the resolution of this good person. Here is a spiritual resolution. She was resolved whatever might lie before her in this matter she was resolved to go with her mother-in-law.

One would judge that a mother-in-law must have been a very estimable woman. She must have been a very bright example of the religion of Israel and the teaching of the God of Israel because Ruth would have no other knowledge at all of the religion or people of God that would attract her to them except that she had seen and felt in the example and spirit of her mother-in-law.

Now it is really an inestimable thing when there is such an example of truth and spirit and faith and love of godliness as commends it to others in such a way as that they feel their own hearts attracted towards it.

but then of course even so if there is any real attraction any believing loving genuine abiding attraction it must necessarily be the effect of an operation and influence of the holy spirit upon the heart and that is very apparent of course in this that one was the subject of that operation and the other was not.

[10 : 02] As I have sometimes observed before you can see the truth of the sovereign purposes of god everywhere in the scriptures in some way you can perceive how sovereignly and how effectually god works in the accomplishing of his purposes of grace for Orpah was under the same influence she saw the same example she received the same instruction and to some extent she responded with affection to her mother-in-law but it all came to nothing when it came to the parting of the ways she went back there was something wrought in the heart of the one that was evidently not wrought in the heart of the other though both had equally the same influence and the same instruction and it is very apparent also that the operations of the

Holy Spirit in grace and the effect of the word and truth does not at all depend upon any predisposing conditions in the mind and in the disposition of those who come under it it isn't as though of these two sisters in law one was naturally of a hard disposition not amenable not sensitive not tender not affectionate and the other was because then it might be said well of course it was a matter of the disposition no my friends the one had apparently as tender a disposition as the other for Naomi said herself to her daughters in law that they had been kind to the dead and kind to her and although

Orpah went back to her people and to her gods she went back very sorrowfully she wept very much over it her emotions were deeply affected I should say that the one was as sensitive and as affectionate and as kind and as tender as the other but you see the one felt an influence a union and a resolution to follow her mother-in-law which the other did not well now I ask your attention first to this resolution whether thou goest I will go where thou lodgest I will lodge thy people shall be my people and thy

God my God Ruth knew her whole mind she was quite decided about it no entreaty not that Naomi would not wish her daughter-in-law to accompany her back to her own kindred but she would not take any advantage of her affection to lead her into something that she was not herself prepared to undertake no entreaty that she should go back to her own country and her own kindred would prevail against the firm decision the steadfast resolution of her mind I will go with you I will go with you don't hinder me don't say anything more about my going back to my own country don't say anything about my God my mind is made up

I feel quite decided I'm prepared to go with you wherever you go and to bear with you whatever you bear and to live and die with you she was steadfastly minded and when she saw that she was steadfastly minded now my friends this really is a great matter in these things to be steadfastly minded some some people are so irresolute undecided they're double minded first they show an inclination and then they go back from it there seems nothing really settled and definite and certain in their mind and in their spirit they're easily prevailed upon one way or another it is as James says of such a double minded man is unstable in all his ways and what instances we have in the scripture of that instability and what instances we have seen of it those of us who have lived long now there was no instability about

[15 : 49] Ruth in this matter she was quite decided it was a definite resolution it was not made ignorantly it was made knowingly intelligently graciously lovingly and she held to it my friends I wish there was more of this this definite settledness of mind about spiritual matters and the ways of God it's good to be steadfastly minded as Paul said long long after in his epistle to the Corinthians therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast steadfast unmovable not changed by this and that and the other influence comes to bear up in your mind but now with regard to this there are one or two things to be said and first that this was a gracious steadfastness now there may be an ungracious steadfastness

I mean in this way a steadfastness that is backing in a humble tender spirit in the mind hard determined resolute but not gracious in it that is a matter of course of a natural disposition some people you can't turn them you can't even turn them in the right way because they are so said now Ruth's resolution was not a mere determination in the disposition of her mind it was gracious and it was gracious in these two ways first it was an effect of the grace of God upon her own heart now there are many different effects of the grace of God and they are all very necessary they are all very desirable they are all very commendable for nothing will really endure well with us in regard of our religion and our profession and our walking in the ways of God nothing will really endure very well or wear well unless it is the effect of the grace of God upon our hearts what is the effect of the grace of God well necessarily proves stable for the grace of God is no shifty thing it doesn't make a man double minded no so far as it is effectual in his heart it brings him to a steadfastness of mind and spirit but it's not a hard bigoted steadfastness it's a gracious humble tender loving steadfastness well the resolution that these words express was gracious and then as well it was not only gracious but it was unreserved where they'll goest

I will go now Ruth didn't know where that would take her and she didn't know but very little about the people of Israel and what is more as a Moabitess woman she would naturally have had very much prejudice in her mind against the people of Israel for the Moabites were no friends to the Israelites and you can be sure that the character of Israel never stood at all high in the estimation of the Moabites the Moabites wouldn't have had a good word to say for the children of Israel but no doubt many are hard and many are bad word to say about them naturally Ruth would have been born and bred up in an atmosphere of prejudice against

Israel just as to this day there's a very great deal of prejudice against the people of God who are so indeed really godly people of their separated life and the like causes people to conceive a strong prejudice against them it's no uncommon thing for something like this to be said well I don't want to have anything to do with them I really don't I don't want to have anything to do with them and that would have been just the state of Ruth's mind left to itself but now all that was broken down I will go with you she said wherever you go your people shall be my people and as she might perhaps have thought and felt in her mind if they're all like you they're the people for me if they're all like you and the

God that has made you the woman you are the God that you love so well the God that you esteem so highly the God that you worship so faithfully he is the God for me he is the God for me there is no question my friend what that Lord may thus use the spirit and the example of those who fear him to attract others to the ways of truth Ruth could let her own people go that she knew so well and go into a people that she didn't know at all she could leave the gods of her country that she had worshipped in her earlier years and worship and seek after the God of Israel she knew that Naomi's prospects were not very good she was a poor woman now she lost all her possessions and there was no prospect as far as Ruth could see then that she herself would ever have any position in the land of

[23 : 19] Israel but no matter I will go with you I'm resolved to I will take whatever comes whatever is the way I will go with you in it however poor is your lodging it will satisfy me so that I can live and die with you love love love it was unreserved it was affectionate there was that love in this resolution that could by no means be turned away from its objective her gods could go for the love that she felt to her mother in law natural affection can carry anyone a certain way with regard even to their spiritual matters but it won't carry them away from their gods if their money is their god they'll cleave to it if this world is their god they can't give it over if honour is their god they can't forego it and suffer reproach and shame for christ's sake love ever it may seem to be affected like it was with or it's not strong enough to bring them away from their gods and their people this resolution had the true spirit of love in it that love that never faileth that can bear all things can endure all things even to the end and in this we may see further and then

I would have to leave this part of the subject we can see how real was the union that this love produced between them now I seem sometimes to be saying the same things but still perhaps that may serve to impress the thought more on the mind that love is the uniting principle in godliness faith is the saving principle but love is the uniting principle there's no spiritual union without love there may be agreement of mind there may be an acceptance of the same doctrine and of the same profession and the like but there's no union without love and the love that the grace of god brought forth in ruth's heart so united her first to her mother-in-law and then later to her god that it couldn't be broken that union spiritual union is unbreakable in one sense of course death parts the earthly union of the people of god they no longer go together speak together commune together enjoy each other's fellowship and affection death ends that and nothing but death can end it nothing but death can end the communion of those who have been brought into spiritual oneness in the gospel death if all but death art thee and me now

I commend these things to you this is a union we want to feel brethren and sisters here as a church a union that nothing will ever sever between us but death itself and that doesn't sever the final eternal blessedness and fullness of this union it only severs it as regards earthly fellowship but not as regards the eternal unity that is in Jesus Christ and into which he will gather finally the whole of his redeemed people I must break off here from the subject as I said when I began and now I can return to it this word came to me with much feeling on

Tuesday morning I felt my now Mrs. Friend was brought to us by the providence of God and she was united to us in the truth and faith and love of the gospel and she walked amongst us in that same spirit of affection and unity and love we have much cause to be thankful that the Lord brought Mrs.

Friend to us because for one thing she brought love into our church she brought love into our church it was one of the strongest features of grace in Mrs.

[29 : 16] Friend was the tender and affectionate love of her heart for us she loved the Lord first of all it began with that for there can be no love to the Lord's people unless it springs from love to him and she knew and she loved the truth she loved to hear it preached and she loved us as a people very tenderly very and she used sometimes when she was unable any longer to assemble here with us she would speak of that dear little place in her tender way that dear little place for this was a place where her soul was fed and nourished with the gospel and the blessing of it in her soul no wonder she loved the place where the Lord's honour dwelt in her feelings and the gospel that was so good to her was preached and the people that she was so knit to gathered together very graciously and very kindly the Lord dealt with Mrs.

friend who spared to a great age and for the most part her faculties and especially her spiritual faculties were well maintained and the Lord's good providence provided every care and every comfort to her for her and that she so fully appreciated I don't know that I knew anyone who more appreciated all that was done for her than Mrs.

Friend and that it was done for her as she would sometimes say so lovingly and as I said at her burial my last time with her which was not long before she died I couldn't hear very much of what she said but the last thing I could cast from her lips was this give my love to everybody that loves me and I think that expresses so much give my love to everybody that loves me and that was the secret of her unity with us here as a people we loved her I said to her you know Mrs.

Friend that means everybody at Forest Foal for they all love you she was spared much in the way of pain and distress slowly gradually her tabernacle weakened until her willing spirit took its flight to realms of endless bliss I said to her once Mrs.

[32 : 51] Friend when the time comes would you wish to be taken back and to be laid where your husband is buried no she said no you take me to Forest Foal and find me a place there let me rest there it's very touching really not that it makes any difference where our poor bodies are laid to rest but there's something and I don't think it's merely sentimental either in the feeling that one desires to die amongst the Lord's people and be buried with them it comes back to my mind this morning the time when I was in my first near fatal illness and the doctor was very desirous that I should go to a spa somewhere up on the mountains where he thought possibly the mountain air might be beneficial to me but I felt no I couldn't

I really couldn't the thought and I felt at that time that my end was coming the thought of dying amongst the people that wouldn't understand me the thought of people around my dying bed that I couldn't speak to about my feelings I couldn't receive it I felt well if it is death for me I'll die amongst the Lord's people and if it's recovery for me the Lord can recover me without my going to this distant star on the mountains I felt that I'd rather die amongst the Lord's people than go there and sometimes and this is not a morbid feeling either when I have a little while to spare and want to be quiet and thoughtful I walk out into the graveyard and look at the gravestones of those that I've loved so well many of them

I've baptized with many of them I've walked in spiritual love and spiritual affection and I thought here they lie quietly resting and their spirits with the Lord and I thought there's a spot where I shall lie presently in the midst of them all the shepherd taken and his flock taken and they rest around him quietly and peacefully to me there's nothing morbid about this at all to me it's a very sweet feeling that I shall lie in the midst of my flock and they will rest around me to the resurrection morning for there's something about spiritual union that will be one with the people of God in life and one with them in death and lay with them in the grave until the resurrection morning and then to be raised with them in the likeness and in the glory of our risen saviour our blessed death conquering saviour

Jesus Christ how do you feel about this do you feel yes that that's my heart I want to be one with them in life I want their God to be my God their saviour my saviour their redeemer my redeemer and I want to live with them in union and love and fellowship and I want to die with them and I want to be buried with them and I want to rise again with them in that glorious day when death shall be swallowed up in victory well my friends there's only one way to this and that is Ruth's way Ruth's resolution Ruth's gracious steadfast mind Ruth's spiritual loving union with them that's the only way to it there's no other entreat me not to leave thee for where thou goest

I will go and where thou lodgest I will lodge thy people shall be my people and thy God my God my God in life my God in death and my God through the endless ages of the world to come Amen Amen Thank you I will that I will take care of as soon as we go and let take care of people to come and have God that I will let you to come and have you and our family and have that i love