

## Ruth. (Quality: Good)

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Date: 22 August 1982

Preacher: Hoadley, Harold

[ 0 : 0 0 ]      that hymn dear friends is as sweet to me tonight as it was 51 years ago when it was sung at my baptising and it is true today as it was then in all the words that it says and I believe it will be true when this life is spent and done may we ask our God of all grace shall help us I want to speak from a word in the book of Ruth the first chapter in verses 16 and 17 verses 16 and 17 in that first chapter of Ruth 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 all but death part thee and me and that is well known

I suppose these words of Ruth and I hardly need introduce them in any way but I do want to look at these this character Ruth there was two of them there was Orpah and Ruth they had both come from the same backgrounds of idolatry their gods were gods of wooden stone that had eyes but could not see ears that could not hear a mouth that could not speak a hands that could not carry feet that could not walk and they trusted in them but presently they were brought in contact with the God of Israel they heard about him they both knew through what their mother-in-law instructed them and possibly their husbands what the God of Israel was one proved to be a mere formality a mere natural desire to please others and for the time being she accepted what they said but when the choice had to be made forsaken all and going after no other but the Lord God of Israel she couldn't stand that test back she had to go back again to a useless

God of wood and stone back again to the land and the people of her nativity the other one how different it was a real work there a real work of grace a gracious and merciful God had brought in her heart a real and a true love to the God of Israel and to Naomi so that she was willing and nothing that could be said would alter her purposes it was a testing time when she said behold thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods return thou after thy sister-in-law I believe this is true of the Lord's dear people when it's working in their hearts especially in the days of their spiritual youth the temptation will be placed in their way return again go back again don't venture any farther don't leave the place where you're so used to being why venture into a place where you know nothing at all and amongst the people you know nothing of you don't know their God but you do know our God the God of our nation the God of our people whom our fathers have always worshipped come back while you can while it is yet possible for you to take this step and return what a temptation how powerful does it apply to all our senses our feelings and sometimes to our most tender feelings is this temptation placed there to return again and from cease to fall in after the Lord but with dear Ruth because of the work of grace in our heart the God of Israel the God of Naomi had a great attraction for her a greater attraction than her father and mother's love and care a greater attraction that could ever be found amongst the idols of Moab my dear friends you younger ones how's the God of Israel the God of the people of Israel spiritually found in your heart such a great attraction that you're willing to forsake all to follow him willing to go through fire and water if need be willing to part with all willing to part and be separated from your families from those people you've grown up with and loved willing to go forward into an unknown place and to dwell amongst an unknown people here is a work of the power of God in the soul overcoming all that which is natural to us the natural feelings of a young woman for her own people having lost her husband the tie had been broken you see she was bound to Naomi and her family by the tie of marriage but death annuls that she was no longer under the bondage or under the rule as we may put it of her husband she was now free free to go where she would but no she'd come and put herself and come to trust under the wings of the God of Israel as Boaz said to a lighter the Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord

God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust this will always be the cause and the order of the work of grace in a poor sinner soul that be brought to trust in the Lord to trust him at all times to trust him to provide for him because what provision that Naomi might have got I don't know how many years she'd been in the land of Moab but it was beyond ten years because she dwelt there for a certain time and Elimelech died Marlon and Chilean died and then she was still there ten years quite a long time wasn't it a long time so that there was nothing left of Naomi's possessions in the land of Israel they'd been appropriated by the next of kin now she must go back she'd heard that there was bread in the land again for Bethlehem is commonly meant to be the house of bread but wasn't there bread in Moab of course there was but a very different bread to the bread of the land of Israel here was food for them spiritually and Ruth on hearing of the words of her mother-in-law entreating her to go back do the same as all tradition but she could not she said entreat me not to leave thee don't speak any more to me about leaving you there was a bond now between these two widows one old and one young a bond brought about by the work of grace by the love of

God shed abroad in their hearts though the future before them was blank she said I went out full and come back empty Naomi I realised there was nothing but emptiness as far as she could see before her and Ruth was willing under the grace of God to share the empty life of her mother-in-law seemingly empty as far as this world's goods were concerned but all there was the God of Israel this God was the God of her mother-in-law and it so attracted her though at present time it had held out no providential blessings but providential blessings are not always necessary for us we like them we expect them but they're not always necessary and they were not necessary here in the case of Ruth she wanted more

[ 9 : 55 ] I believe than providential blessings she wanted more than just the riches of this world she wanted the God of Israel she wanted his blessings I believe she'd enjoyed under the teaching of her mother-in-law something of the peace of God the peace of the God of Israel which was so obviously in Naomi and by the grace of God she'd be brought to share in that that we've come that path by God's grace being brought to share in the peace of God to share in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ this is what binds people together for we're all one body of the Lord Jesus Christ and it is love his peace that binds us together in a unity which neither friends nor relatives neither poverty nor riches can ever separate us from for nothing can separate us from the love of God and this has joined these two dear widows together inseparable they must go on together entreat me not to leave thee do mention such things to me how can

I leave thee thou hast the words of eternal life said the disciples when so many went away and our Lord said to them will ye also go away will ye also go away they said Lord to whom else can we go thou hast the words of eternal life thou hast the words of forsake all and to follow their Lord and hear his roof a type and the Lord steer people throughout all ages willing made willing I believe by God's grace and nothing else to follow Naomi wherever she went because wherever she went the God of Israel went but God and his people are so joined together that they cannot be separated nobody through realised that that when she was travelling and walking with

Naomi she was travelling and walking with Naomi's God she probably heard and had listened for many years to the prayers of Naomi as she prayed unto her God in her widowhood and in her lonely state she probably noticed her peace her calm mind in view of her great losses of her husband and two sons all that she had as it were had gone there was nothing left for her to stay in the land of Moab was it nothing left for her to stay there at all she must set foot forward again and do what should have been done before return to the land of her nativity to return unto Bethlehem unto the people of God and so she went forward and Ruth said entreat me not to leave thee or kissed her mother-in-law said goodbye to her left her alone she thought more of perhaps getting another husband than going with

Naomi on what might be a fruitless journey or entreat me or to return from following after thee don't try to persuade me in any way not to follow thee all the yearning you see of our heart to go with Naomi the yearning of our heart to go and join us out to the people of God or have you ever looked on the people of God and said Lord let that God be my God let these people be my people I will go with them I used to sometimes walk around the dear old Gow Street chapel during the week sometimes and I used to look at it and I used to think well what a blessed people they are that worship there I felt surely they were the people of God and I felt they were the people

I wanted to be amongst that was where I heard the gospel preach to the blessing of my soul it joined me to them it drew me to them so that I felt I could say the truth entreat me not to leave thee or return from following after thee not that they made a fuss of me in any ways it wasn't their habit or their custom to do it rather it was the very reverse but I'll leave that side of it but nevertheless I believe it was the Lord's way I was like Ruth I wouldn't be persuaded to leave them and go elsewhere I wouldn't be persuaded to stop going there for all their way they had of putting people off it was their custom which I believe has been altered and so she was determined to follow she didn't know the way it was a way she'd not been heretofore a pathway she'd never walked in before but when the Lord says this is the way walk ye in it grace will be given to submit to walk in that pathway thorny as it may be rough as it may be and we cannot always see the end of it

[ 16 : 02 ] Ruth had never been that way before it was a way she'd not walked heretofore and this is what the Lord says to his dear people when they're beginning to follow him this is the way walk ye in it it's a way you've not walked in here for but it isn't a way whereby it shall be known that the Lord is with you the Lord is with you follow me he says follow me this is the way I will have you go and you won't be persuaded by neither men nor devils that they'll try hard the devil tried hard with me oh so they were hard people oh he taught up a thousand and one reasons why I shouldn't join myself to them and go with them flesh and blood too tried to dissuade me the world tried as well the world said had nothing to do with them you'll never get on in life you'll never prosper every man's hand will be against you if you join yourself to those people and I'm sure this was where Ruth was many persuaded

I'm sure Naomi wasn't the only one there'd be a mother and father there'd be all the people of her village or town would all come out and say Ruth stay with us we are your people we're your flesh and blood stay with us don't go with Naomi let her go alone you don't want to go back to Bethlehem with her it must have been so for parents cannot likely see their children go away from them and know they're never coming back what a poor but the grace of God is stronger than all earthly fools the grace of God is stronger than all earthly ties the grace of God enables the weakest saint to follow him we don't follow in our own strength and I'm sure Ruth doesn't go in her own strength she was going in the strength of her

God who had been revealed to her through the teaching of her mother in law she'd become not only acquainted as we might say but she'd grown to love the God of Israel to him he was the only true God the only one she could rightly worship she could no longer worship the idols of Moab they were now an abomination to her what was the good of a God that had eyes and couldn't see what's the good of a God that had legs and can't run a God that has hands and can't stretch them out towards you in mercy but the God of Israel says he stretches out his hands all the day long do you know something about these things our Savior stretching out his hands all the day long toward you drawing you with the cords and the bands of love drawing you nearer and nearer to himself so that you say entreat me not to leave thee for whither thou goest

I will go oh there must have been a secret attraction that something secret in real religion which attracts us to the Lord Jesus Christ that something secret that sweetens every cross and every loss because it must have been so to Ruth to have lost her husband of her youth to have him so quickly taken away from her with all the expectations of having a family which perhaps she so much desired because she appears to have had no children something secret was sweetening that bitter cup so that she was ready to follow Naomi who called herself Mara bitterness Naomi you see drunk deeply of a bitter cup and it had that tendency to make her life somewhat bitter oh what a dreadful thing is bitterness when it comes into the life of a child of God it spoils them it mingles them it's like a corroding poison in them but blessed be

God he's got a remedy for it when bitterness and sorrow comes into your life dear friend the saviour has a remedy for it that remedy is his own self whatever else he takes away he never takes himself away if Ruth had gone back into Moab she'd have gone back alone not only without Naomi she'd have gone back alone without the Lord but in the strength of her God in the strength of her God given faith and grace she could go with Naomi even if Naomi was bitter but sometimes he knows he makes every bitter thing sweet and I believe the bitterness of Naomi was made sweet to Ruth and later on Naomi's bitterness was to be made sweet again the

[ 22:11 ] Lord knows how to make bitter things sweet I believe there's a word in the scriptures where it says every bitter thing shall be made sweet when we think of the waters of Mara bitterness the children of Israel came to them so willingly they thought here is water oh we can now refresh ourselves here we can bade our weary souls in it they came to the waters and it was bitter all the anguish that it brought them into what a disappointment totally unexpected bitterness at the beginning of their wilderness journey right at the very beginning and the Lord told Moses cut down a certain tree cast it into the waters and they shall be made sweet what was that tree surely is none other than the cross of Christ that's the tree which will make every bitter thing sweet for you and I believe here it is with

Ruth there was some sweetness coming to her through the grace of God as something to soothe the sorrow of her heart over the lumps of her husband so that she could willingly leave his remains buried in Moab so that she could leave her family as it were buried in Moab the core of them was lost in the sweetness of the drawing power of the God of Israel you will find it so as the Lord leads you along you will find his drawing power his sweet love his gracious mercy is more to you than your daily bread you may tread such a bitter path that you'll mingle tears with your daily bread but that bitterness in the end will be sweetened his grace will sweeten it for he will see your tears

I believe he saw the tears of Ruth when her husband died he saw the tears of Naomi when her husband died and her two sons died for he puts all our tears in his bottle lays them up in store in remembrance for he says I have set over against the day of sorrow the day of joy the days of your mourning shall be ended Ruth was leaving Moab a mourner she was going to come into the place where a mourning would be turned to joy step by step the Lord was leading her along whether thou goest I will go whether lodgest I will lodge she wanted to stay and be every place where Naomi was to lodge because it's about 60 miles from Moab to

Bethlehem you couldn't walk that in a day it probably could have been accomplished in four days they went step by step every day drawing them nearer to the land of Israel nearer to Bethlehem but there would be several lodging places en route lodging places perhaps where they had no company but the wild beast of the woods no company but the canopy of heaven to be over them none to protect these two women no strong armed man with sword and spear they had to go on trusting in the God of Israel to bring them safely to Bethlehem and it is often so with the child of God as they travel along that new way that fresh way a way they had not been heretofore they will find they have no other helper but God all other helpers have taken away you have to prove that the

Lord God of Israel is my helper and you say at the last he has helped me hitherto well help me all my journey through all what prayers and thankfulness must they have put up every morning when they have been brought safely through the night to the God of Israel who so graciously had watched over them while they slept in that wilderness journey suffering other robbers to break in upon them for anyone else to harm them oh what a wonderful God we have and what a gracious demonstration it was of the love of God to that poor woman that young woman to see how their God the God of Naomi the God of Israel was protecting them so that none could hurt them or do them any harm no and what about the serpents that lay in the way serpents we are told that bite their horses heels you are told in one place in the word of God and I understand this is literally true this little poisonous serpent coils itself in the footsteps of a horse waiting for the next one to put its foot down there and then it bites him and throws the rider backwards they weren't suffered to do them any harm

[ 28 : 23 ] Psalm 91 to them must have been a very real psalm if they knew anything of it in their day I don't know they possibly did but it said they should tread on an arrow and it shall not bite thee and I believe they were protected all their journey through every step of the way till they came to Bethlehem that's where Naomi was going to lodge that's where Naomi was going to find a dwelling place though she had got nothing she had got nothing she had lost her inheritance God had appointed a way for that to be restored wasn't a way of Naomi's choosing wasn't a way of Ruth's choosing for we're told it was our path to go and light upon the field of

Boaz in this case it may have appeared to Ruth that it was a mere chance that she chose that particular field but we're no different it was not chance but God that was leading her for the fulfilment of his purposes that for because out of this foreign girl this stranger in the land of Israel was to come a saviour from that long line of succession oh where they goest where they lodgest I will lodge do you want to go anywhere else do you want to lodge with anyone else no one as she knew like Naomi had the God of Israel for their protection for their help for he flyeth upon the wings of the morning for the help of his people she was brought in humble dependence upon this

God to which nationally she had no claim on the Lord for she was not one of his people by nature therefore naturally speaking she had no claim on the mercy of God and naturally speaking you and I as we are born into this world have no other claim on the mercy of God accept our need of it that's the only claim we have our need of it we can't claim birthright we can't claim any ability or any good thing that is in us but our need that's all we have to say Lord here I am nothing in myself nothing in my hand I bring Lord receive my soul far after whom else can I go thou hast the words of eternal life all thy people shall be my people she was prepared and willing to surrender her moabite citizenship her nationality she was willing to change all that and to identify herself with the people of God thy people shall be my people you've been come to that place dear friends where by the grace of

God has been so much in your soul that you've been willing to change your people to come and dwell with the people that you've not dwelt with heretofore a willingness to identify yourself and say now these are my people I think it's in Psalm 45 I'm not certain but where it says the Lord desires you to forsake your people forsake your own people and come and abide with me what a forsaken there has to be we've to forsake your former companions those who we've been so friendly with perhaps over a number of years there comes a time when the grace of God the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ makes that separation and this is one of the features of the gospel one of the features of following the

Lord Jesus Christ is separation keeping thyself unto thine husband and to no other that's it she wanted to bind herself in the closest possible ties she didn't want that tie which had come to her through marriage to one of them no she didn't want that tie to be the alone tie that would have been broken by death death dissolves all ties doesn't it no matter how dear we hold a loved one but the moment they die that tie is broken she wanted to go on in it she wanted a closer tie she wanted her mother in law's God to be her God and thy God my God that's what was attracting her that was the real attraction not merely the people because after all the children of

[ 34 : 22 ] Israel didn't have a very good name they weren't very popular amongst the surrounding nations were they but nevertheless they attracted Ruth her mother in law was one of that despised people oh my dear young friends are you willing to go amongst the despised people a people not reckoned amongst the religious people of the world a people thought of very little worth a people not of great or high honour and esteem are you willing to humble yourself and say thy people shall be my people thy God my God no other no other knowing no other people no matter what attractions may surround them their religion may seem brighter more cheerful more exciting in so many ways but excitement is not real religion gaudy and tinsel attractions are not real religion real religion is a heart work a world that changes the affections a world that settles the affections which makes one willing to walk in this way willing to go with this people thy

God shall be thy people shall be my people thy God my God has the Lord Jesus Christ that attraction for your soul that you're able this night to say my God my God do you want the God of those who've grown old and great headed here in this service do you want that same God to be your God who's seen and through so many changing scenes of this life who's watched over them in health in sickness in poverty and in wealth they've been called upon to forsaken all others and cleaving only to their Lord their God and as you look upon them you know that they've got a God you know they've got a God that helps them that has blessed them that has brought them along safely thus far and you want this

God for your God and so you say thy God my God want to be a participant in that blessed and most sacred worship of sitting down at table with him of walking in the ways he has said this is the way walk in it if you love me keep my commandments or you've said like many another one perhaps oh I'm afraid of water oh I'm afraid of people's faces where nobody could be more afraid than I was to go before a large church of nearly a hundred people old and grey headed saints who have been long in the way Satan said now you'll make a fool of yourself but my God and the God of those people most of whom gone home to glory now I believe they practically all are stood by me that night a thousand times better than all my fears their

God was my God those people were my people I saw they were the blessed of the Lord and I desire to that they should be my people and go with them and attend them to the things which their God had commanded I would have gone another way if there was a way I would have gone in through a back door but the Lord won't let his people go in through a back door you know you have to go in through the front door you know when you go in the church of England the first thing you see is the font isn't it you come in through the door and there right in front you is the font which they say is the way into the church right at the very beginning of everything and I think they're right in that sense they're right the way into the church is through the water and it has always been esteemed so throughout all ages by

God's people we said this is the way keep my commandments this is the way then we can come to sitting down and breaking bread which follows afterwards as we read in Acts that there were so many thousand baptized and then they broke bread thy people thy God my God all this would satisfy her completely to know that the God of Israel was her God now she's going to put that to the test we have to put it to the test we have to take that step to prove that this God is our God that this God is able all that Ruth had heard from Naomi about the God of Israel that he can do the impossible she was going to begin to prove it as she reached

[ 40 : 27 ] Bethlehem because the necessity was laid upon them that they must eat but the scripture said if a man will not work he shall not eat and that was the rule in the land of Israel that a person who wouldn't work shouldn't eat so she said to her mother in law let me now go to the field and gain ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace and she said unto her go my daughter so she went forth to glean in the fields and what a harvest she began to reap she reaped and gleaned in the sight of one and she found favour in his sight she had to confess so I'm not like I maidens and you may feel safe and so my spot is not the spot of the

Lord's people as one in the song of Solomon said I am black I've labelled in the vineyards and the sun has made me black I'm not like the others and you may say I'm not like the Lord's people I'm a stranger from a strange land I'm not one of them but he said the Lord bless thee the Lord bless thee go not to be in another field neither go from hence but abide here fast by my maidens what a gracious invitation that was to this dear woman wasn't it to be spoken to so kindly like that and she noted it she said why have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldst take knowledge of me seeing I am a stranger there has spoken friendly unto thine handmaid though

I be not like one of thine handmaids here is what they feel in their hearts that they are strangers being brought to trust under the shadow of the wings of the God of Israel and they speak kindly and friendly to her as if she already was one of them the tie was to be made closer yet her days and mourning were now first coming to an end in a very short space of time there was going to be that union of marriage that union which would bring her again into the family of the people of God that union that was going to make her one of them in same as the ordinances of the house of God they do make a union my dear friends they bring you together and that you are as one you're one of the family and all the blessings of being in the family of

God come to you therefore she was able to go on to say where there dies will I die there will I be buried she was willing to die there she wasn't concerned like we read of some of old they wanted their bones carried back to the land of their nativity to where they were born seeing she'd now become part of the family of God she wanted she wanted her bones even to be laid where their bones were laid she wanted to be so fully a part of those people of God that she was willing and ready to die with them whatever should be whatever the end of the matter should be she wanted to be like them to die like them it is quite possible the Moabites practiced cremation a lot of those old countries did

I'm not certain about it but there are certain scriptures that give one to think that they did practice it but we remember that one of the kings of Moab burnt his son as a burnt offering in a certain case of extremity because he had no God to go to and no God to go to but Ruth wanted to be buried she wanted to die in the land where she had been adopted into the family of God she wanted to live amongst them die amongst them that their hope of eternal life was her hope of eternal life that's it she saw her mother in law and the people of Bethlehem I'm speaking spiritually now had a hope of eternal life they could look forward to a life after death so she was willing that where they died there she would die to and be buried like them in the hope of a sure and certain resurrection of exceeding great joy with the

[ 46 : 06 ] God of Israel her Lord and her Saviour who had drawn her with the cords of love out of Moab into the land of Israel into the land of the people of the God of Israel to spend her days there to be blessed there and to be made a blessing to her mother in law first you see her mother in law was made a blessing to her now in the end Ruth is made a blessing to her mother in law she's a source of her sustenance she is her provider and at last she came into her home and dwelt with her not Ruth dwelling with Naomi in her home but Naomi dwelling in Ruth's home being nurse made to her child from which came the family from which our Lord sprang for it is very evident that he sprang from the tribe of

Judah from the family of David oh how wonderful are the works of the Lord beyond our understanding and comprehension that Lord we have this same love toward this God this same desire to ever be found with them and desiring no other people but that people of God then we shall be blessed in time we shall be blessed to all eternity 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 thy God my God where thou diest will I die there will I be buried the Lord do so to me in mor also if a death part thee and me so close was the union

God made God kept God provided for the glory of his name and the comfort of his name and the comfort of his name and the glory of his name and the glory of his name and the comfort of his