

Ruth 18-03-08

This is Thursday, the 8th of March 2018. I should know that because I dated a dozen transcripts today with that date, so I actually remember it. But we continue tonight our study in the book of Ruth.

We're going to be picking up in verse 1 of chapter 3. Let's take a moment, as is our custom, to dedicate our time, our fellowship, our spiritual nutrition from God's Word, as we go to the Lord in prayer. Father, it's a wonderful thing to remember that you are our strength and our redeemer, and we can dedicate the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart to you. We thank you for the Lord Jesus and for the tremendous privileges that have been conferred on us, bestowed upon us through him.

We represent ourselves directly before your throne. We enter where angels literally fear to tread, all because of the wonderful saving work of Christ. We thank you for that.

We thank you for the opportunity we have to learn more about him and more about you through him. As we study this portion of your Word tonight, we ask your blessing on us, on the presentation, and on the reception, that it will be motivation and encouragement to each heart that will be drawn closer to you through the Lord Jesus, and that as a result, we will be fit and useful in accomplishing your purposes, both now and in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. As I said, we continue tonight in the, I started to say, the Gospel of Ruth. There's so much about Christ in here that you really almost want to call it, at least I want to call it a gospel, the Gospel of Ruth.

There's just a tremendous picture of the Lord Jesus here in the person of Boaz, a wonderful picture of the church, which is us, in Ruth, and a picture of Israel in Naomi. And it's such a tremendous foreshadowing and an illumination on the relationship we have to God through Christ. And sometimes it seems we are tempted, especially as we listen to a lot of the preaching that's gone on over the last 100 to 150 years, it's a wonderful thing to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not a thing in the world wrong with it. You never grow tired of looking at His person and His work, the shadows that foretell what He's going to do that are found in the Old Testament, and what He has done in the Gospels, and looking back and seeing the theological implications in the rest of the New Testament. But we always want to remember what Jesus said in John 14.6, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes to the Father. And Jesus' mission was to unite us with the Father. He is the firstborn among many brethren.

And it's a wonderful thing to focus on the Lord Jesus, but we don't want to stop there. We want

to go through. What a privilege.

Only the high priest in Israel could go through the veil into the Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God in the tabernacle and later the temple. We have access to that innermost presence through the veil, which is His flesh. And we're invited to do so.

Let us come boldly to the throne of grace. That's something we're going to be seeing tonight as we continue our study of Ruth. You'll remember in chapter 2, that after returning from Moab, Ruth went out and peradventure, or as it happened, quote-unquote, she wound up in the field of Boaz.

And we saw that she made a series of decisions that put her in Israel, in a place where she could be benefited and where she could be blessed. And that then allows God to put her in the field of Boaz. So there is always, especially if you listen to Calvinists very long, which I have, there's a tendency to be very cautious about pointing to any sort of cooperation between man and God, that we would cooperate in our salvation or contribute to it in any way.

And we do want to be careful because as the title of Louis Barry Chafer's great book says, it is all of grace. We contribute zero. Salvation is all of God, all of grace.

But in order to confer it and to bestow it and to accomplish it, God requires a response to His initiatory grace. And we are free to respond or reject. Responding and saying, yes, I would like to be delivered from my sins, I would like to enter into eternal life, I would like to come to know God and to be related to Him and to live with Him for eternity, is not a meritorious act.

It does not give you credit. My favorite example, which I've used many times, is a military man showing up for formation or now a military woman. Either one of you.

Show up for formation. They don't hand out commendations. It's not like Sunday school or kindergarten where you get stars just for showing up.

It's expected. Nobody raises an eyebrow. Nobody is impressed.

Nobody thinks, well, there's an exceptional Marine, showed up for formation. There is no credit attached to doing what one ought to do. Jesus told a parable about servants who serve all day in the field and then come in and before they eat their own dinner, they prepare the master's supper.

And they say, we have done no more than we ought to do. We don't get special credit for being unusual servants because we do this. The master's interests come first.

That's expected. It's natural. And it is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all come to repentance.

But the condition upon which God accomplishes salvation, does the work of regeneration, washes away our sins, grants to us eternal life, gives us a measure of his spirit, and so on, is

saying yes. And the Bible is replete with examples of this, but this is a very good example because Orpah never meets Boaz, does she? She never enters into the life of Israel. She never crosses the border out of Moab.

She had the opportunity. She was on the way. She was packed.

She had company. She had encouragement. But when it came right down to the choice, she returned to her own way of life, to her own gods, to her own anonymity after that point.

We have no idea what became of Orpah from then on. She disappears from the scene. But the picture that we have here of Ruth is someone who, given the opportunity, says yes.

And in chapter 2, this relative of Naomi, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. Remember what Elimelech means? God is my king. My God is king.

Eli, same thing Jesus said from the cross. Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani. Remember that? Eli, my God.

Melech is the word for king. Eli, my God, is king. And, of course, he's a picture.

He and Naomi are a picture of Old Testament Israel. His relative is Boaz. Do you remember what the word means? What Boaz comes from? As I told you many times, the lesson is built in my head, and I can't remember if it actually came out of my mouth or not.

I don't remember if I said this last time, so I'll say it again. Boaz. Remember the two pillars outside Solomon's temple? And one of them is named Boaz, and the other one is named Joshon.

Remember that? Boaz and Joshon. That's going to be great, great, great grandson work. But Boaz, B in Hebrew, means in.

Ba. Ba-Rashit, Ba-Raha, Elohim. Remember at Genesis 1.1? In the beginning.

Ba-Rashit. Rosh is head. Rashit is the beginning.

Ba-Rashit. In the beginning. Ba means in.

So we get the first part of Boaz now. The next syllable, the O, means him. So Bo means in him.

Az, A-Z, is the Hebrew word, one of several Hebrew words for strength. In him is strength. Boaz.

Now, who was Ruth married to before? What was her first husband's name? You've got a 50% chance of being right. There was Malon and Kilion. Which one was she married to? She was married to Malon, right? Well, remember Malon meant weak, and Kilion meant sickly? She was married to weak.

What's her second husband's name? In him is strength. She starts out being married to weakling, and she ends up being married to strongman. Boaz.

So he's introduced to us here in Chapter 2. Ruth the Moabitess, notice her origin is reviewed here. Ruth the Moabitess, because it's not going to happen in our chapter tonight. Chapter 3, nowhere in the chapter is she ever called the Moabitess, because things are changing.

But here in Chapter 2, Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, Let me go to the field and glean heads of grain, after him in whose sight I may find favor. Naomi says go. Who initiates the action here? Who's the idea person for going to the field and gleaning? It's Ruth, right? Ruth goes to Naomi and she says, Let me do something to contribute.

Now, could she have just sat back and said, Well, Naomi, you brought me all the way back here. I made that wonderful speech, and your God's my God, your people are my people, and you die and I'll be buried in the same spot. So, now what? But she doesn't wait for that, does she? In the same way that she initiated coming to Israel, and she would not be dissuaded.

Naomi tried to talk her out of it. Orpah listened to Naomi. Ruth did not.

Entreat me not to leave thee, because I'm not going to do it. Your God is my God. So, she came back.

And now she has the idea to go and glean. And so, in verse 3, she left, and she went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. Happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech, were reminded again of this familial relationship.

So, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, The Lord be with you. They answered, The Lord bless you. Boaz said to his servant, who was in charge of the reapers, Whose young woman is this? He evidently was familiar with those who generally came out.

He's from Bethlehem. They're in Bethlehem. You know how it is to live in a small town.

Typically can pick out a stranger. And he already has heard tell that there's a stranger in town. And you get the idea that he's guessing who this might be, but he wants to know for sure.

He's only heard of one new person in town, and now he has seen one new person among the gleaners. The servant says, It's the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. Now, the servant in charge of the reapers, what's his take on the strange woman? What's repeated twice in his speech? What's in there two times in that one sentence? It's the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from Moab.

She's a Moabite from Moab. This is like saying he's an Okie from Oklahoma. Right? He's a Texan from Texas.

She's a Moabite from Moab. Or shall I drive her thence? You know, remember Moab? Not that long ago we were fighting the Moabites. They were ransacking us.

She's a Moabite from Moab. Boaz, wink, wink, nudge, nudge. He's thinking, Well, we'll be seeing the last of her very shortly.

And she said, Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house. Boaz said to Ruth, Notice he doesn't even respond to the servant.

He's not going to address the servant's prejudice, if it is in evidence here. But he goes directly over to Ruth, and he says, You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them.

Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, and by the way, this was a conversation between talking to the servant and talking to Ruth. We find out that he's already made arrangements before he goes and speaks with her, and he refers to it here. When you're thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.

Notice there's not a separate Moabite drinking fountain here. There's not a separate Moabite bench at the bus stop. He's not making any distinction.

She drinks where the Israelites drink. She eats where the Israelites eat. So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner? This surprises even Ruth.

Now watch Boaz's answer very carefully, because we have to keep this in mind when we go into chapter 3. Boaz answered and said to her, It has been fully reported to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel under whose wings you have come for refuge. Now the word there for wings is *kanaph*.

And you want to make a note of it. It's K-A-N-A-P-H. And have you ever heard, some of you I know have heard in the past, we talk about anthropopathisms and anthropomorphisms related to God.

Anthropos is man, right? So an anthropomorphism, morphos is the form of a thing. So anthropomorphism would be to assign to God the form of a man, God's hands, God's arm, God's eyes, and so on. An anthropopathism, pathos, has to do with the way you feel.

So anthropopathism is assigning to God human feelings or reflecting those. God is angry, God is jealous, and so on. Well, this is a zoomorphism.

What is zoos? You go to the zoo, what do you see? Animals, right? So assigning wings to God, technically speaking, this is a zoomorphism. God has wings. He's pictured as a, remember Jesus says, as a hen gathers her chicks, I would have gathered you under my wings.

When he's crying over Jerusalem, gathered you under my wings. And this same picture is in evidence here. Boaz looks at Ruth and he says, he recognizes that she has come and placed

herself under God's wings.

Kanaph is the root word here, K-A-N-A-P-H. Be sure you get that down, we're going to see that word here again very soon. The Lord repay your work, verse 12, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel.

So then she said, let me find favor in your sight, my Lord, verse 13, for you have comforted me and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, even though I am not like one of your maidservants. So Boaz said to her at mealtime, come and eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar, verse 14. Now, who is Boaz a picture of? You can answer out loud.

In our view, looking back and seeing all of this very clearly, who is Boaz a picture of? Jesus, right? He's the kinsman redeemer. Now, Boaz says, come up here and dip your bread in the dish with me. Do we ever have any notion of Jesus dipping his hand in a dish with somebody? Ever.

When did that happen? Remember in the upper room? Lord, is it I? Is it I? Lord, who is it? One of you is going to be betrayed. Who is it? And remember when Jesus tells John, the one who dips his hand in the dish with me, depending on which gospel you read, he hands a sop to Judas. So, here's the Moabite woman who is faithful and loyal and has come to God for refuge and is grateful to Boaz and comes and dips her hand in the dish with him.

You're going to have an Israelite of the Israelites later on in the upper room with the Lord Jesus having traveled with him for three plus years is going to dip his hand in the dish and it's an entirely different relationship, isn't it? One is love and covenant and moving toward unity. The other is breaking faith, selfishness, greed, ending in the opposite of life. Judas is going to hang, he's going to drop, his bowels are going to spill out, it's Akkodama, the field of blood.

But you have this point of intersection between Boaz and Ruth and you can see a little bit of what's going to happen because Judas in a way represents the entire nation. It's the Pharisees, it's the chief priests and elders and the scribes and all of those who put him up to it, who paid him for the betrayal, who mock him when he's on the cross, who are glad that he's dead and gone. They've been plotting for his death for some time and Judas is simply the representative of the leadership in Israel who reject the Lord Jesus.

Who is going to accept the Lord Jesus? What dispensation are we going to move into where there is unity and we do share, as it were, the bread and the cup of the Lord? It's the church. That's why there's such a strong tradition of communion of the Lord's table and the church because where there is betrayal and forsaking and scattering among Jesus' closest disciples on the night that he shared the bread and cup with them in the church, that fellowship is enhanced and completed and made whole. So it's an interesting detail here.

This detail didn't have to be in the book, did it? If you left these verses out, would we miss them? Would we say, well, I wonder if she went up to the table and ate with Boaz? We'd never

miss it. It's here for a reason. So in verse 14, she sat beside the reapers.

He passed parched grain to her. She ate and was satisfied and kept some back. When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded the young men.

We know the rest of this. He made sure that she got plenty and in verse 17, she gleaned until evening, beat out what she had gleaned and it was about an ephah of barley. This is also important to our understanding of chapter three.

An ephah is about a bushel. Some of you all I know living out here have actually seen a bushel basket, right? You know how big a bushel is? A bushel of wheat or grain or barley or whatever weighs between 50 and 60 pounds. So that's as much as she can carry.

Being a strong young woman, you figure she could probably wrestle 60 pounds of grain home and that's about as much as she can. Well, just bear that in mind. It's about an ephah.

So she took it, went into the city. Mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She brought it and gave her what she kept back after she'd been satisfied.

Her mother-in-law said, where have you gleaned today and where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you. Now, how does she know anybody took notice of her? Nobody gleans an entire bushel, 60 pounds of grain in one day. This is what people would normally gather in a week or two.

She did it in a day. And Naomi says, there is no way you gleaned this much out of the droppings and corners of the field. Somebody has taken notice of you.

Who was it? She knows how this works. She's an older lady. She's been around.

When you come home with 60 pounds of grain in one day's work, somebody was kind. And so she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said the man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. So Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, blessed be he of the Lord who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead.

And you really see Naomi wake up at this point. Ruth said, I'm going to go glean. Naomi says, fine, go.

Now that she has come back and the blessing of God through Boaz is evident, Naomi recognizes it and she turns a corner here in the whole story. This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives. Ruth the Moabitess, verse 21, said, he said to me, stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.

Do you remember which harvest this is, right? I just talked about what kind of grain it is. This is the barley harvest. Barley goes into the ground first.

They plant it in the fall. They reap it in the spring. It is the first crop that gets reaped.

So if you're going to celebrate this harvest, what feast in Israel coincides with it? When you first start getting in the barley harvest, it's the first thing in the spring that you reap. So what feast is it? Feast of first fruits. Feast of first fruits.

The Lord Jesus was crucified at Passover, three days and three nights. Early in the morning on the third day, He is raised. What feast has begun on that day? Feast of first fruits.

The first day is the feast of first fruits. And Paul makes this point in Corinthians. He is the first fruits of those who sleep.

Christ the first fruits. Then they that are Christ said is coming. Talking about the order of the resurrection.

Christ the first fruits. First fruits. Now the barley harvest has already begun.

They are harvesting. That's what this gleaning is. And we're coming up in chapter three to the celebration of the completed harvest, which the harvest takes about seven weeks or 50 days.

So what feast in Israel corresponds to the end of the barley harvest? Pentecost. Who is going to enter into a relationship with Boaz on the barley harvest threshing floor on Pentecost? Ruth. Who pictures what? The church.

So how could they have known when they fictitiously invented all of the events of Jesus' life and made up the gospels out of whole cloth as the atheists like to contend, that it could match at this level of subtle detail clear back in the book of Ruth? Nobody in the New Testament makes a big deal out of Ruth being a picture or a foreshadowing. It corresponds to the day with the history of the Lord Jesus in His work and on the inception of the church on the day of Pentecost when they're gathered and the Holy Spirit descends and the church begins. Well, this brings us to verse 23 of chapter 2. She stayed close by the young women of Boaz to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

Dwelt with. And you remember the first generation of the church? It's Jewish, church at Jerusalem and the church at... I'll think of it in a minute. It starts with an A and then goes out from there and pretty soon you start having Gentiles come in but initially the first generation of the church starts out all Jewish and then they dwell together before they separate and spread out.

So now chapter 3. Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, My daughter, shall I not seek security for you that it may be well with you? See that word security there in your New King James? And if you have a New King James with the little notes, look at the note. What is that word? Rest. This is the word Manoach.

Manoach. M-A-N-O-A-C-H. Manoach.

Kind of sounds like the name of Samson's father. Remember him, Manoach? Same idea. Now,

she says, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for you that it may be well with you? Shall I not seek rest? Does this sound at all familiar? Keep your finger here, but turn back a page to chapter 1. As they approached the border between Moab and Israel, verse 8, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house.

The Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find what? Rest. Exact same word.

The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband. Rest, for these young ladies, is in the house of a husband. Right? Go back home, she says, find a husband, in his house you'll find rest.

May the Lord grant it. Now, back in chapter 3, Naomi says, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for you? What do you think she's saying? The same thing she said in chapter 1, verse 9. Shall I not seek a husband for you? This is her idea. Now, just from your general Bible knowledge, what happens when people start plotting and scheming about ensuring the future of the family by working on progeny in the human realm? What happened when Abraham and Sarah got nervous because they didn't have offspring? What happened? You have Hagar, you have Ishmael.

Remember when Jacob goes up to the house of Laban and he says, I'll work for my wife. And he works seven years, and he gets the other sister, and so then he works seven more years and gets the sister he was really after. And so he spends 14 years working, as it were, to enter into that rest and security of having the marriage and the family that he wants.

And you will remember our chiasm chart for the book of Ruth. Do you remember what was at the very center of the chiasm? The chiasm typically helps us focus on the central idea. What passage is at the center of the chiasm? Our passage, chapter 3, verses 1 through 8, which is Naomi planning, plotting on how to obtain this rest.

Now Naomi sees Boaz, and she wants to cut directly to the chase. So she says, I've got to get you married to Boaz. That will fix everything.

Now, everybody look up here for just a second. Is it God's will that Boaz and Ruth get married, knowing what we know in hindsight? Yes. But how is it going to come about? Is it going to come about because Naomi engineers a rendezvous late night when Boaz is feeling happy as a result of celebrating the harvest, or is it going to happen because God is going to do it in His time and in His way? The reason I would suggest that this eight verse section is at the center of the book.

Who gets this book? Who are the addressees for the Book of Ruth? Who has it delivered into their hands? Who's supposed to learn from it? Israel, first and foremost. Us, obviously, by extension. But what is the perennial besetting problem in Israel? Paul talks about it in Romans.

They don't understand how the righteousness of God works and they are seeking to establish their own. What does Jacob do with the angel before he crosses the Jabbok and goes back to

meet Esau? He's already sent his family across and he wrestles with the man until dawn. And what does he tell him? I will not let you go until you bless me.

I will wrestle you into blessing me. I will work into my blessing. Righteousness by works.

Success by works. There is a time to work. What is that time? What does the Bible say? Remember, in my view, it's the eleven commandments, not the ten.

Because we have a double commandment, right? Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy is what we typically call it, but it's a double commandment because it says, six days thou shalt labor. It's a thou shalt. Why isn't it on the list? I don't know.

But there's eleven commandments. Six days thou shalt labor and do all thy work. And on the seventh, what do you do? Rest.

What was in Ruth chapter 1, verse 9? Return home. Find rest. What is she going to do here in chapter 3, verse 1? Shall I not seek rest for you? Shall I not seek rest? What did Boaz recognize in chapter 2, verse 12? The Lord repay your work.

The Lord repay your work. And a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel under whose wings you have come for refuge. Now, you don't work under the wings anymore, right? When you're in refuge, you're now relying for that security and that provision on the owner of the wings.

Right? Okay. Now, Boaz, whose young woman you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he's winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Chapter 3, verse 3. Therefore, wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment, and go down to the threshing floor.

But do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be when he lies down, you shall take note of the place where he lies, and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down, and he will tell you what you should do. So Naomi isn't going to wait to see if Boaz will initiate this.

Naomi's going to put Ruth there with a stratagem and hope that Boaz will be vulnerable because he's full, he's eaten and drunk, and it's late at night. I don't mean drunk in the sense of drunk, but he has eaten and has finished drinking his celebratory beverage. It shall be when he lies down, when he lies down.

She doesn't say, you know, show up and see if he asks you to dance. It's why at the feast? Why not wait and see if he comes to call? Why not see if he picks up the kinsman-redeemer idea on his own? And as we find out, Boaz already knows about this. Let's see what happens.

So verse 4, he will tell you what to do. Verse 5, and so Ruth says to her, all that you say to me I will do. So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.

And after Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain, and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled and turned himself, and there, a woman lying at his feet. So this truly is at his feet.

There's been all kinds of speculation that something untoward or illicit or immoral happened here. It did not. There's no indication here, especially when you read it in Hebrew.

There was no hanky-panky of any kind between Boaz and Ruth on this night. When it says she came softly and uncovered his feet, that's exactly what she did. He had a cloak thrown over his feet.

His sandals are no doubt off. And she just went down there and was sort of like a hot water bottle for his feet. She just got under the cloak there and waited.

So he wakes up around midnight. He's startled. He moves, and his foot strikes something, and he doesn't know what it is, and he wakes up.

And there's a woman lying at his feet, and it is pitch dark. So he says, if he could see her, he would say, well, hello there, Ruth. What are you doing here? But he doesn't.

He says, who are you? So she answered, I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing. Kanaf.

What did Boaz say in the previous chapter? You came to Israel, the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge. Now she has gone to Boaz, and she says, take me under your wing. Very same terminology, very same image and picture that was used back in chapter 2, verse 12.

Take your maidservant under your wing. And it's tragic. If you read some of the modern English translations, they say something like, spread your cloak over me.

You miss the whole link. There's a reason why the words are the same. There's a reason why Boaz says what he says in 2.12, and why Ruth says what she says here.

These people are smart. They remember verbal conversation verbatim. They are way ahead of us in this regard.

We rely on writing. We rely on so many memory aids and things. These people lived on words.

Taking an oath meant something. If somebody heard you say a thing, that was gospel. That was a contract, like it used to be in this country.

A man's word was his bond. Well, she is intentionally using the same phraseology that he used with her. Because it means something.

It implies something. She knows he's a godly man. And she is suggesting to him that she views him as an instrument of God's wings.

His wings are God's wings. His grace is God's grace. His provision is God's provision.

Think of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, if you've seen me, who have you seen? The Father. He is the fullness of deity in bodily form.

When you see the Lord Jesus, and you see his compassion, and you see his healing, and you see his patience, and you see his teaching, and you see his long suffering, and his forgiveness, you're seeing all of the attributes of God the Father in that same vein. The wings of the Lord Jesus are the wings of the Father. And the wings of Boaz, which in the literal sense probably is his cloak.

But she doesn't say cloak. Perfectly good Hebrew word for cloak. Two or three of them.

She says wings. For you are a close relative. Now, who is he a close relative of? Naomi.

She's related to Naomi. Naomi is related to Boaz. And both of those are by marriage.

Boaz is a cousin of a limeleck. So she's cousin by marriage. And then Ruth, you could not have a more tenuous relationship.

Try taking this to court and saying the property of the deceased is mine because I married the son of the woman who by marriage was a cousin of the guy who owned the property. It's very tenuous. But what does she say? You are a close relative.

What is the real nature of this relationship? She loves and trusts the Lord God of Israel, and so does Boaz. And that strengthens and actually even transcends the somewhat tenuous actual physical relationship in terms of being a kinsman. He said, Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter, for you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.

This is a highly significant statement. Ruth is manifestly a beautiful young woman. Boaz states here that she could easily and probably did have opportunities.

Remember, they've been in each other's company now for some weeks during the harvest. Other guys have seen that she's young, eligible, has had no previous children, and is ripe for the picking, so to speak. And Boaz says, You are blessed because you did not go after young men, poor or rich.

You didn't marry for love. You didn't marry for money, among the young men who might have been suitors. And there probably were a number.

What does this say about Ruth in terms of a spiritual application? She has her eye on God, on the things of God, on the ways that God can bless that do not rely on stratagem, good looks,

stimulation, eligibility, whatever it might be. You did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. This is the first thing Boaz says.

He says, You have come and you've offered yourself to me. So what does this tell us about Naomi's instructions? She knows that this is basically the girl asking the guy for a date. This is almost the girl proposing to the guy.

Boaz is very gracious. This is not done in Israel. You don't send the woman to ask the guy to marry you.

Naomi has pushed the envelope of propriety here to a very dangerous level, as we're about to see. But Boaz is very gracious about it, and he doesn't belittle or demean or embarrass or shame Ruth in any way. He says, You're blessed.

You've shown kindness in that you didn't go after young men. Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.

Notice. Very subtle hint. I will be glad to do this for you.

Everyone knows you are a virtuous woman. This particular situation right here, if somebody flipped the light switch, would destroy her reputation as a virtuous woman, and it would ruin Boaz's chances of becoming the kinsman redeemer, if there had been any impropriety. Just her being there, in the dark, at his feet, when the Bible says, Do not let your good be spoken of as evil.

The intentions are all good. Nothing bad has happened, but the appearance of impropriety here is very strong. Very strong.

How do I know that? Keep reading. It is true that I am a close relative. However, there is a relative closer than I. Why has Boaz not already proposed, or come after Ruth? The time is not right.

He has to accomplish a couple of other things first. He has to approach and find out the intentions of the nearer of kin. And whether he is willing to accomplish the requirements of the Levirate Law.

So the time isn't right. Naomi is pushing the time. It's the right thing, but it's the wrong time, and it's the wrong means.

And it actually makes this whole thing very precarious, because if Ruth were discovered, if this meeting were to come to light, everything would be in jeopardy. It should not actually be happening. It's at Naomi's behest, and it's so typical of the failing that was common to Israel to try to accomplish what is right by human strength, human ingenuity, human forms of effort.

Instead of waiting on God, wait on the Lord, be of good cheer, He will strengthen your heart.

Wait, I say, on the Lord. Why is that repeated? Because we have such a hard time waiting.

They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, bound up like eagles, running not be weary, walking not faint. And in the gospel song, they tack on the end, teach me, Lord, to wait. I love it when Rosie Roselle sings that with the statesmen.

Teach me, Lord, to wait, to wait. This is precipitous. It's too soon.

All of the paperwork has not been done. It's not the right time. How many times does Paul tell us that at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

At the culmination of the ages, the Lord Jesus came to be the kinsman-redeemer. But Israel didn't pray Him down. The church didn't beseech Him down.

God the Father determined the time and the place of the Lord's coming, of the Redeemer's coming. And this is Naomi pushing and unwittingly jeopardizing the whole thing. She doesn't evidently know that there is another kinsman.

There's something she doesn't know. She doesn't understand why Boaz hasn't already proposed. And so she basically tells Ruth, well, throw yourself at him when he's in a moment of weakness and let's see what happens.

Right? But look at what Boaz says here in verse 13. Stay the night and in the morning. If he will perform the duty of a close relative for you, good.

Let him do it. One way or another, Boaz will ensure that she is redeemed. The redemption is sure.

The only question now is whether another is going to do it or if Boaz is going to do it himself. He can't do it yet. There's something in the way.

And remember in Peter when he talks about a day with the Lord is a thousand years and people say, well, the Lord delays His coming. Why doesn't Jesus come back? Do you not know that God's patience is an opportunity for change of mind? It is an opportunity for repentance. God has His reasons for extending a problem, for delaying the answer to a difficulty, for leaving us in difficult circumstances.

God has His reasons. And in, I would say, most cases, they're unknown to us. We can't see them and this is the nature of faith.

We trust that God knows what He's doing. If Naomi had enough faith in Boaz, she wouldn't have pushed Ruth into this situation. He says, Stay the night, in the morning it'll be.

If he will perform the duty of a close relative for you, good, let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, I will perform the duty for you as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning.

Wait. Stay here. So she laid his feet until morning and she arose before one could recognize another.

This, in Hebrew, literally says, before a man could recognize his friend. This is really still dark. It's just like when she came, it was dark.

And she leaves, it's dark. Too dark to recognize a face, a familiar face. Then he said, Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.

Now, he's talking to Ruth when he says this. Because it isn't known to any of the servants. She gets up before anybody recognizes her, before anybody sees her.

The only person he can possibly be talking to here is Ruth. Now, why doesn't he say, Do not let it be known that you came here. He says, The woman.

This bears on our understanding of the danger of this. If Boaz is seen with any woman, it puts the entire opportunity for redemption in jeopardy. And he's telling Ruth, It doesn't matter if they recognize you or not.

If any woman is seen leaving my spot on the threshing floor, we're in big trouble. It wouldn't matter who it is. So, he says, Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it.

And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city. Now, I don't know what your picture of young, beautiful, exotic, Moabitess Ruth is, but six ephahs is six bushels, which is 360 pounds of grain.

And, trying to imagine her carrying the equivalent of two sleeper sofas off the threshing floor in her shawl would be excessive. This is where the wonderful feature of your King James and New King James, when they use italics, what does it mean? What does italics mean when you see it in your English? Not in the original. There is no word for ephah here.

Thank the Lord. Otherwise, this would be a miracle right up there with, you know, splitting the Red Sea and crossing the Jordan and bringing the walls of Jericho down. This little petite girl carried 360 pounds of grain in her shawl.

No, it's not ephah. And, we don't know what the measure is. It can't be ephahs, unless we're prepared to attribute a miracle.

It can't even be seahs, because that's still way too much. It just says six, six of barley. And the measure is left out.

Whatever it is, it will fit in her shawl. It's a fair amount to carry, but I doubt that it was even one bushel. Now, why does he say this? If she is seen on her way back home, and she's in her party dress, she's got her best dress on, she's got on perfume, you know, she's in attraction mode, she's in fishing for a husband mode, right? She's dolled up as nice as any woman can be.

And if she's just coming home alone in the early morning hours after a late night party, what's everybody going to think? Boaz is looking out for her reputation at one level. And they can say, well, she got too tired to make it home with the gleanings from the previous day, and here she is carrying her... There's a reason why she's out. She's bringing grain home.

But, here's what's more interesting. What did we start with? What was in Ruth chapter one, verse nine? What did she say that she hoped for the two girls? Go back home, find a husband, so that you will do what? Have rest. What did she say at the beginning of chapter three? I'm going to make sure that you have rest.

Now, what does the number six universally represent in the Bible? There's a reason why the measure isn't even given to us here, because the focus is on Boaz gave her six. Where are they? They're on the threshing floor. Who gathered this grain? We don't know.

We do know it wasn't Ruth. Ruth didn't bring it down with her, like, well, you know, here's my dowry, or, you know, just in case my looks aren't good enough, here's some grain. Boaz is responsible for this grain.

It's on his threshing floor, right? It belongs to Boaz. It's the fruit of all of his work and the work of his workers, right? Boaz gives her six. Six days, shout thou labor and do all thy work.

Boaz basically gives her the work. What happens after the six? Rest. That's the picture.

Boaz is the one, not Naomi. Boaz gives her the fruit of his work. She now has the assurance that she will enter into rest.

He is going to ensure that she is redeemed. He has made a promise. So when she came to her mother-in-law, verse 16, she said, is that you, my daughter? This is how dark it was.

But she doesn't actually say, is that you? Literally in Hebrew, it says, who are you? My daughter. Who are you? My daughter. Now, these folks, I'm telling you, we underestimate how intelligent they were.

Why would Naomi cast the question that way? Who are you? Are you a widow? Or are you a fianced? Are you engaged? Or are you a widow? Who are you, my daughter? This morning, after our nefarious plot, who are you? So, she told her all the man had done for her. And she said, these six, notice ephahs is still in italics, these six of barley he gave me. He said to me, do not go empty handed to your mother-in-law.

She said, sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will fall. This is *davar*, which is sometimes translated word in Hebrew, D-A-B-A-R. It can be word, and sometimes it is a matter, a circumstance.

Until you know how the matter will fall. It literally says, how the word will fall. For the man will not rest, notice, the man will not rest.

You will rest, the man will not rest, until he has concluded the matter this day. What did Jesus say when everybody else was getting ready to rest? He said, I am working, my father is working, I do the work of my father, right? She has the fruit of his work, and she is at rest. Even Naomi says, sit and wait.

It's all on the Redeemer at this point. This is the picture of grace. This is the picture of initiation and response.

And we don't get credit, we gain no merit, in responding to God's call to salvation. Jesus said, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men. Who responds to that drawing? Who is willing to lift up their eyes to the bronze serpent and be healed? And who just roll their face and say, that's not going to do any good? How can looking at something on a pole possibly help me with the viper bites? There are people who believe, and people who don't.

People who respond, and people who don't. But the response is required. Even in Israel, God says all day long, I have held out my hands to a disobedient and stiff-necked people.

If they were disobedient and stiff-necked because God had never given them the grace to turn and respond and be obedient, why would he hold out his hands to them? It would be silly. He holds out his hands because it is an invitation. It is a call.

It is a drawing. And that's what we see here. So, the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.

So now we're on the cusp of chapter 4. What will happen? But you will notice in chapter 3, nowhere was Ruth called the Moabitess. Now she is addressed as my daughter by Boaz. She's addressed as my daughter by Naomi.

And she is released from what the servant could only emphasize twice. She's a Moabitess from Moab. That's behind her.

Because of her work on behalf of Naomi and because of the work of Boaz, at this particular point, there is going to be a wonderful deliverance that we'll see in chapter 4. So what do we conclude from all of this? What's our point of reflection and meditation and application? As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, there is a time to every purpose. There is a season for everything under heaven. There is a time to work and there is a time to rest.

Boaz ensured that Ruth worked. He didn't say, hand her the straw. And by the way, when you take the grain and grind it and you thresh it, you grind it and all that, give her of the flour, give her of the completed bread.

He said, let her gather. She will thresh. She will grind.

She will bake. She will work and make her own way. But she's willing to do work and Boaz made it easier for her.

And he gave her rest even in the midst of her work so that it was not more than she could bear. And he paved the way for her and he blessed her with provision and with favor while she was working. But he did not take away the work until this night.

This night, when it is a picture of entering into covenant relationship, the work is all Boaz. He doesn't say, run out right quick and glean some more grain and take it home with you. He gives her the six.

And it is his work that makes her legitimate, that gives her passage and entree. And he says, don't let anyone see you. Why? She really should not have been there.

But even though the means was not that great, as with so many other episodes in the history of Israel, Judah and Tamar, David and Bathsheba, an endless list, Jacob and Leah and Rachel, Abraham with Sarah and Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac, God takes even our failures and works them together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose, who respond to that drawing. Naomi is a little out of practice in trusting God and she goofs here. And she endangers the whole future.

But God, through Boaz, ensures that it comes right. Boaz is smart enough to prevent the worst from happening. Boaz is going to dot every I and cross every T. What would have happened had they had some sort of illicit affair on the threshing floor and then the newer kinsmen had come up and said, I want to marry her.

There would be no King David, not in the way that we got him. But you think about these names, Boaz, in Him is strength. They are going to have a son.

You remember his name? We'll get to it in the next chapter. Remember Obed? The word in Hebrew that means to serve, to work as a servant, is Avad. The name for servant is Ebed, E-B-E-D.

But I've mentioned this many times in the past, if you want to put I-N-G on a verb in Hebrew, you change the vowels. Instead of Avad, it's O-E. They call it the O-E infix.

Well, Obed, it's not Ebed, he's not servant. He's the guy who is working. It's duration.

He is working. He is still working. That's what Obed means.

And the fruit of this union, I can't wait until we get to the end of chapter 4 to tell you, because we're talking about rest versus work here. And their son is going to be named Obed. He is working.

We have to know when to work and when to rest. That's the big challenge. Ruth gets it right.

Even though she gets some shaky advice from Naomi, Boaz fixes it. We might get some shaky advice from our Israelite forebears in terms of their example, but the Lord Jesus has put it right. Our kinsman redeemer has ensured that we have a clear path and that we are legitimate and

that we are qualified to enter into God's presence without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Holy and without blemish. Well, we'll pick up here in chapter 4 next time. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for this beautiful picture of the wonderful work that you have accomplished on our behalf through the Lord Jesus, the wonderful rest that we can enter into. We think about the book of Hebrews and the exhortation we have there not to fail to enter into that rest. And we know that the promise remains and that it is in and through the Lord Jesus that we are able to rest because he has done the work of our redemption, our salvation, washing us from the stain of our sin.

And we pray that as we reflect on these things that your Holy Spirit will illuminate our own life and circumstance, help us to see clearly where we can stop and rest and trust in you, where we have our work before us, where the fields are ripe for the harvest and where we can be good workers who are working and continue working right up until the day that the Master returns. He doesn't find the servants being lazy or being ineffectual or eating and drinking and paying no attention to the priorities of the Master. We pray that when the Lord Jesus returns for us, he will find us working as we should and resting as we should.

We pray that your Word and your Spirit will shed light on our path to help us accomplish these things. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.