

Ruth 18-03-29

This is Thursday, the 29th of March, 2018. We continue our study in the Book of Ruth. We're picking up today in Chapter 4, where we left off last time with the pitching of the shoe, the identification of the Redeemer, and we'll be picking up in the vicinity of verse 10 and 11.

Let's take a moment as we begin our time of fellowship in God's Word to go to the Lord in prayer and ask His blessing on it, and cultivate the presence and power of His Holy Spirit so that we can make sense of it and remember it in the days ahead. Shall we pray? Father, we're so grateful for the redeeming power and the cleansing grace that comes to us through the work of Your Son, the Lord Jesus on the cross, on our behalf. We have a standing before You.

We have the privilege of representing ourselves and coming before Your throne and expressing our gratitude and our desire to be made mature and more complete in all of those things that the Lord Jesus has made possible for us. We pray that tonight as we study this portion of Your Word, Your Holy Spirit will be our teacher and use the truths of Your Word to help us to grow in grace and in knowledge so that we can be useful servants and growing Christians, both now and in the days to come, to prepare us for that ultimate day when the Lord Jesus comes back and takes us to Himself and presents us before Your throne. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, you will recall that at an early point in our study, we looked at a diagram of the book that showed its chiastic structure. Chiasm just means chi, which is the Greek letter X. And it has a symmetry.

The outside portions sort of match, and as you come in toward the center of the book, these things correspond. And I want to draw your attention to that one more time because you'll remember that back in Chapter 1, after the death of her people and the conversation with the two daughters-in-law, the two of them in verse 19 of Chapter 1, that would be Naomi and Ruth, went until they came to Bethlehem. And it so happened when they had come to Bethlehem that all in the city were excited because of them, and the women said, Is this Naomi? She said to them, Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara, because the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

So she has this conversation with the women, and it doesn't get any more specific than that. All the city is astir, and then the women ask this question, and she gives them a reply. Well, just so you kind of know where we are in the symmetry, if you have that diagram and refer to it, you'll find that that would have been in the vicinity of point B. The first point A in the symmetry of the book was that Naomi is too old to conceive, and then it moves to Chapter 2 where the potential redeemer, Boaz, is introduced.

But in between point A and point B, you have this conversation, and it's another point of symmetry I didn't include it on the chart there, but it's this conversation with the women. And I

just want to remind you of that, because we're going to see these same women appear again. Just when you think the women are out of the picture, here they come.

So be watching for them now, because very quickly I'm going to read the first portion of Chapter 4 that we covered last time. You remember, Boaz went to the gate, and he waited for Polonyi Almoni to come by. Oh, watch his name.

And his name is left out on purpose. He's the nameless relative. His name was known in those days, but purposely left out of God's Scripture.

He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, Sit down here. So the men sat down. Now, who did we just talk about that met Naomi and Ruth when they came in? The whole city came out.

It was the women, right? So here are the men. The men are sitting in the gate. The women are on the social side of things.

The men are on the judicial side of things. So these ten men are in the gate. They all sit down.

And then they transact this business. Boaz says, I thought to inform you about the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. And in verse 4, I thought to tell you, Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people.

If you will redeem it, redeem it. If you will not, then tell me that I may know. For there is no one but you to redeem it.

And I am next after you. And he said, I will redeem it. You remember, redeem is in there a whole bunch of times in that one.

It's probably a record in the entire Bible for the word redeem to occur in a single verse. And you'll remember, this is the major theme of the book, is this redemption. So Boaz said, on the day you buy the field from Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth, the Moabite, the wife of the dead.

Perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance. And you have all three elements of the redemption that we talked about last time. You have the redemption of the land, the possession in the nation.

You have the redemption of the name and the continuation of the name. And this happens specifically through the marriage to Ruth, which will produce an heir. And the close relative said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance.

And he's thinking back to the time of Judah, where sons who married the woman in question died. And he's concerned about that. So this was the custom in former times, verse 7 of chapter 4. The custom in former times in redeeming and exchanging to confirm anything.

One man took off his sandal and gave it to the other. We looked at this back in Deuteronomy last time. And the man who would not step up and perform the duties under the Levirate Law, the woman would, since he has a threefold redemption that he is eschewing, she has a threefold humiliation that she perpetrates on him.

And she basically spits in his face, she takes off his shoe, and she gives him a name that is he who has a loose shoe. So he has a threefold rebuke, so to speak. And really this was kind of what they used to call it in the Cold War, mutual assured destruction.

It was a preventative. It was designed to discourage anybody from not fulfilling this. And I doubt that there were very many cases where someone did not step up because it was just too humiliating.

But the close relative works it out with Boaz so where Ruth does not have to appear. She doesn't spit in his face, she doesn't take the guy's shoe off, and she doesn't say, your name is now the man who has a loose shoe, the man who has his shoe taken off. Instead, they sort of have this gentlemanly procedure where he takes off his own shoe and hands it to Boaz.

And this is the token, this is the pledge that records the transaction. It's like a wax seal or a signature on the bottom of a document. Anytime in the future there's any question about whether this took place, they have ten witnesses in the gate.

And if all of those guys decide to change their testimony, well, where did I get this sandal? That's my tangible evidence. So Boaz said to the elders in verse 9, All the people, you are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's and all that was Chilean's and Malan's from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Malan, I have acquired as my wife to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.

The word dead there is singular. And what you essentially have here is everything of Elimelech that would have come down through Malan and Chilean, because Elimelech is dead and both Malan and Chilean are dead, it's all consolidated in one inheritance. There's nobody going to claim Chilean's portion of the estate.

It all comes down through Malan. So the name of the dead subsumes under that singular word everything that was in Elimelech's estate, regardless of whether it would have gone through Malan or Chilean. And this name now is the Elimelech Malan name.

The name is not cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. Interestingly though, the name of Malan is not going to be listed in the genealogy. He is remembered through this story, and his name is not cut off the way Poloniy Almoni's name is cut off.

But neither is he legitimately listed in the genealogy. So the name is perpetuated in one way, the inheritance and the posterity and the possession of the land is accomplished another way. And the name of the Redeemer is the name that sticks.

Now, when it comes time to stand before God who will judge the living and the dead, do you want to claim your own name, or do you want to claim your Redeemer's name? How do you want to be accounted before God? I don't know about you. Actually, I do know about you. You're going to claim the same name I'm going to claim, and that's the name of our Redeemer, right? So even though our old name is not forgotten, there will be a new name, and we will carry, remember that one of the promises of the overcomers, they will bear my name, the Redeemer's name.

So this makes a wonderful kind of sense in the ancient Near Eastern mindset. So now look at verse 11, and you remember my introduction. Who did I mention in the introduction? Who did I go back and reach into chapter 1 to talk about? The women.

So, verse 11, All the people who were in the gate and the elders said, We are witnesses. The Lord make this woman who is coming to your house, like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel, may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this woman.

Because of the offspring, it is the new life that comes out of death. In Moab, there was death. The famine threatened death, trying to escape it by human means, they fell into death.

The nearer kinsman redeemer, in trying to perpetuate his name and his line, loses it. Naomi almost messes this whole thing up by human ingenuity, instead of trusting God and waiting on the Lord. But look at verse 13 now, and we'll come back, there's a couple of things I want to revisit there, talking about Rachel, Leah, and Tamar.

But verse 13, Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife, and when he went into her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women, verse 14, this is the other side of our symmetry, and if you don't think there's symmetry in this book, just go back and review these points of contact. The women were in chapter 1, here they are in chapter 4. The women said to Naomi, now the first time, what did the women say? They asked a question, right? Is this Naomi? There is a lot of questioning who's who in here, in this story, right? The women say, are you Naomi? I think you might be, you look like an older version of the woman who left a decade ago, but the question is asked, are you Naomi? They don't say, hi Naomi, long time no see.

They say, are you Naomi? And then in the next chapter, when Ruth went gleaning, and in verse 5 of chapter 2, Boaz said to his servant, who's in charge of the reapers, whose young woman is this? To whom does this woman belong? Well, she belongs to the dead. And so they say, this is the young Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And you remember then that Naomi sends her to the threshing floor, and she takes the cloak that he's thrown over his feet, lifts it up and crawls underneath it.

There's nothing untoward happened there, but the appearance is bad. Middle of the night, woman alone on the threshing floor with an unmarried man. She's a widow.

If she had been seen, this could have spoiled everything. But when Boaz wakes up, in chapter 3 verse 8, at midnight the man is startled, turned himself, and there is a woman lying at his feet. And what does he say? Who are you? Who are you? And she says, I'm Ruth, your maidservant.

Take your maidservant under your wing, under the same word that was used for the cloak, for you are a close relative. So then, remember, when Boaz makes sure that her reputation is not spoiled, he ensures that she leaves in the dark of night when a man can't even recognize his friend. And she goes home with the grain, and the grain gives a reason.

If anybody encounters her coming back from the threshing floor, well, she was there getting grain, not importuning somebody for marriage. And so that's the ephes of barley. And you remember, those measures of barley correspond to the measure of barley that Boaz initially sent her home with at the beginning, the eph.

And this is not ephes, this is six unknown quantities, but it's something she can carry. We know it's not bushels, because she wasn't, you know, the incredible hulk from Moab. She was just a girl.

And so in verse 16 of chapter 3, remember when she returns, and dawn is just breaking, and what does Naomi ask her? In your English, it says, is that you, my daughter? But what did we see from the Hebrew? What does it literally say in Hebrew? What question does Naomi ask? Who are you, my daughter? This is so fascinating. I took another look at it after we talked about it last week, and the wording here is identical, identical to what you have back in Genesis chapter 27. Keep your finger here and turn back to Genesis 27, just so you don't think I'm making this all up.

You will remember a story, I think, about the guy who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and so when the time came and Isaac thought he was on his deathbed, and it turns out Isaac's going to live just more than a decade after this. I think he lives another 15 or 25 years. I forget, but it's quite a long time when you go add it all up.

But he thought he was going to die. And so he says, okay, it's time for me to bless my son and pass on the inheritance. And so Rebecca and Jacob engineer this deception where he straps on the sheep hair onto his arms and so on.

And so in verse 18, after Rebecca has made up the kind of savory food that Esau typically brings back, she gives it and the bread which she had prepared into the hand of her son Jacob. That's verse 17. So we're in Genesis 27, 18.

So Jacob went to his father Isaac and says, my father. And he says, here I am. Who are you, my son? And it's properly translated here.

Who are you? This is the masculine version. In Ruth, obviously, it's the feminine version, but the grammatical construction is identical. Naomi asks the same question of my daughter that Isaac asks of my son back in Genesis.

It's a perfect match. Only the gender of the words changes. And so you have ata for my son and you have at for my daughter.

You have beni for my son. And in Ruth, you have the feminine equivalent. But it's exactly the same question.

And we know that there was uncertainty in Isaac's mind as to actually the identity of the person coming in to claim the blessing. And you get the same idea over here in Ruth. So the two ideas we've looked at so far tonight are, first of all, the women.

And the first question that gets asked is, who are you? You've come back from a distant place, so who are you? She has come back from the threshing floor, Ruth has. Naomi has come back from Moab, and the women say, who are you? Ruth has come back from the threshing floor, and Naomi says, who are you? And Boaz has already asked, who are you? So there's a lot in a name. And we see that the name issue is resolved.

The name for Naomi, the name for Elimelech and for Malon, the name for Ruth, the name for the family and the inheritance is resolved here in chapter 4, when Boaz declares in verse 10, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Malon, I have acquired as my wife to perpetuate the name of the dead, singular. Not the names of the dead ones, but the name singular of the dead, singular. Through his inheritance, that the name of the dead, singular, may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate.

You are witnesses this day. So all the people affirm it, and then they mention these four women, Leah, Rachel, Tamar, and the woman who is coming to your house, which is Ruth. So Ruth is put in the company with Rachel and Leah and Tamar.

So verse 13, Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and when he went into her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. This is also a really interesting verse in Hebrew, because it is a series of ands. It's very linear, if you will.

It says, verse 13, it starts with a while. We translate it, and, now, so, then, but, for. It's a very multi-purpose little mark.

It just looks like a shepherd's staff. It's just a vertical mark with a little crook on the top, a little tilde shape. But it says, and Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went into her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.

All of these things are tied together with that shepherd's staff conjunction. But notice who the subjects are. First of all, Boaz took Ruth.

That's the first thing that follows an and. Boaz took Ruth. Secondly, she became his wife.

She assented, she consented. So, Boaz initiates, Ruth responds. Some of you will recognize that initiation and response pattern, motif.

We've seen that before. Boaz initiates, Ruth responds. Thirdly, it says, he went into her.

So, once again, this is the normal result of a marriage. And so, Boaz returns to being the actor. Then, fourthly, the Lord gave her conception.

The Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. So, it's fascinating to look at the sequence. There is initiation on the part of the redeemer.

There is a response on the part of the redeemed. There is fruitfulness on the part of the redeemed. There is a blessing from the Lord on that action on the part of the redeemer.

The redeemer initiates. The redeemed responds. The redeemer initiates further, and God blesses that union of the redeemer and the redeemed, and there is fruit.

If that all makes sense. So, now you have the women in verse 14 who initially said, is that Naomi? Now they say, blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be famous in Israel. His redemption was ostensibly to raise up the name of the dead, but the dead are raised up in his name.

You see how that works? The dead are raised up in his name, and you can't get a clearer statement of what Christ is going to do. May his name be famous in Israel. May his name be renowned in Israel, and may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age.

They're talking to Naomi, who at first, they weren't even sure who she was. Now, blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be famous in Israel. Naomi is raised up and restored, but they're not saying, now your name is truly Naomi once again.

They're saying, it's the redeemer's name that counts. May he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age. And if you look at your text note in your New King James, you see that an alternate translation of that is sustainer, a perpetuator, if you will.

For your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him. So Naomi took the child, laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor woman gave him a name, saying there's a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed.

So who named the child? The village. It takes a village to name a child. But it's interesting that the community names him Obed.

Do you remember? There's a little pop quiz from last week. What does Obed mean? Worshiped. It comes from Ebed, which comes from Avad.

Avad means to serve. Obed means the one serving, servant. Obed means not just servant like Ebed, that would be a simple noun, but it's the O-E infix.

Remember that? It's like putting I-N-G on a Hebrew verb. So what is he serving to do? He is

serving to nourish your old age, to have a name that is famous in Israel. So Boaz's name, remember what Boaz means? Later on his great-great-great grandson is going to name one of the pillars of the temple after him.

What does Boaz mean? Strength. Strength. It's the strong one.

It's the dominant one. It's the greatly admired and seen from a distance strength. And his son's name is Ebed.

And both of these names are going to be linked and tied together, Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Then it tells us in verse 18, now this is the genealogy of Perez.

And amazingly we have Perez mentioned twice in the space of half a dozen verses here, because he was mentioned back in verse 12. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah. Now think about this, because it tells us that this is the line of David.

Obed is the father of Jesse, the father of David. This is the genealogy of Perez. Perez begot Hezron.

Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amenadab. Amenadab begot Nashon.

Nashon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz. Boaz begot Obed.

Obed begot Jesse. And Jesse begot David. So Jesse is Boaz's grandson.

And David is Boaz's great-grandson. But notice that we don't have a return of Malon or Elimelech here. We have the name of Boaz and the name of Obed here.

The father and the son who accomplish the perpetuation and the sustaining of that name. Now think about this. There is this list of women here back in verse 11 and 12.

And implicitly there is another woman. I initially said four and then I amended it to say that Ruth is associated with these three. But Ruth is from what country? Moab.

And where did Moab originate? I want you to think about the way in which a child comes into the world, starting with Moab. Lot was married to a woman who turned into a pillar of salt. And his daughters get him drunk.

And as a result, each of them have a son, Moab and Ammon. So Moab is the product of an unlawful union. We've been talking about such an unlawful union in 1 Corinthians where Paul addresses a situation where a man has his father's wife in the Corinthian church and he says you need to separate out, let Satan destroy the flesh and so on.

But this story's earliest point of contact with biblical history is Moab who there would be no Ruth if there was no Moab. Not the Ruth the Moabitess and we've been repeatedly told she is a Moabitess. She's associated with Moab and Moab came into the world through no fault of his

own by a completely illicit means.

So in its earliest wrinkle, if you will, the line of David has in it Moab. Then you come down to the days of the conquest and who do you have in that line? Rahab, she's the wife of either Nashon or Salmon. We think it was Salmon or Salma if you read the Hebrew.

And this is where Boaz comes from. This woman is a Canaanite. She's from Jericho, right, Rahab? And this is in Boaz' direct ancestry.

So that's unusual woman number two. In between there you had Tamar. We know that story well.

But in the sense of somebody having relations with somebody else and producing a child in a, shall we say, unorthodox way, you start with Lot and his daughter. Then you come down to Tamar and her father-in-law. And in each case there is trickery involved.

There is deceit involved. Lot isn't fully cognizant when he ends up fathering Moab and Ammon. Judah is not cognizant when he fathers Perez.

Rachel and Leah, there is a huge amount of manipulation and deception that goes on. When Jacob spends his first honeymoon night, he thinks he's with Rachel and he's really with Leah. And a total of six of his sons are going to come through Leah.

The first four are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. And of course Reuben knocks himself out because he beds his father's concubine. One of the other mothers there.

And so he gets knocked out. Simeon and Levi go because Dinah is bedded by outsiders. Remember they trick them into getting circumcised so that they can legitimately marry Dinah.

And then Simeon and Levi go and slaughter those guys. And so you have this theme. It goes back to the days of Lot.

It carries through to the time of Judah with Tamar, not to mention Judah's sister Dinah. She's not in the direct line, but Judah certainly is. And then you come down to the almost perpetrated unknown woman situation on the threshing floor.

But Boaz being the redeemer that he is and being the exception to this sort of familial pattern makes sure that everything is done on the up and up and there is nothing untoward. And Ruth doesn't become besmirched, shall we say, or have her reputation or her character tarnished, even though I think Naomi may have had that in her mind. So what is the upshot of this? Through this comes David the king, and through him ultimately comes the Lord Jesus.

Now, continuing that theme of strange methods by which offspring come along, when you get down to David's day, how many wives does David have? Michael, Bathsheba, Ahinoam. He's got several, right? But down to the line of Christ and to Jesus himself, how does that line proceed? David himself has a son through a marriage that did not begin like it should have. The murder

of Uriah the Hittite, the first son from that union dies.

The second son from it is Solomon. But in the meantime, there are all of these other contenders. You have Absalom and Adonijah and Nathan and other sons that are in the mix there.

But Solomon is declared the heir. But that idea of two things to represent a single coming Savior, and we talked about Azazel, the one goat is slain and the other is led into the wilderness. We talked about Leviticus 14, where you have two birds and the cleansing of a leper, and one is slain, the other is dipped in its blood.

And two things identify with one. We have the two redeemers in this story. The nearer redeemer who is cut off but not for himself, so if I quote Daniel 9, and then there is the redeemer who lives and is the restorer and the sustainer of life and produces that fruitfulness.

And as you continue down to David's day, the first son dies. Remember David is just distraught, and then as soon as the son dies, he gets up and washes and bathes and dresses himself and says, he cannot return to me, I can only go to him. But Bathsheba is the mother of Solomon, through whom descends the legal right to the throne to the Lord Jesus.

More about that in a moment. But he is not the biological ancestor of Jesus. He is the biological ancestor of Joseph and Joseph's father Jacob.

There is a Jacob and Joseph right before Jesus, which, you know, what are the odds? Joseph being a picture of Christ and being cut off and yet ending up being the savior. But that's the line of Solomon. The biological line from David descends through Nathan, David's son Nathan, who is sort of a stealth son.

We don't hear a lot about Nathan. He's not Absalom, he's not Adonijah, he's not Solomon. No real stories about him in the Bible.

And yet, the quiet son, the stay-at-home-and-do-right son, who doesn't get into any trouble and nor does he ever sit on the throne, he is the ancestor of Mary. So, since he's not, you've watched enough British Crown dramas to know that it doesn't count if you're the little brother. You've got to be the heir.

You've got to be Prince Charles. You can't be somebody else. You've got to be the senior guy.

And how they work all that out is beyond me, except the oldest, if he lives, takes the throne. Well, Nathan was not in line. So, how does that work? Since Jesus is not the biological descendant of Solomon.

But here's the wrinkle, and I am weaving a thread through all of these stories going all the way back to Lot, and through Tamar, through all of these stories I've just mentioned, all the way down to the Lord Jesus himself. How does it work that Jesus is the son of David and the rightful

heir to the throne, the rightful Messiah? Well, look at what God does. In Jesus' case, Mary has no brothers.

So, when she marries Joseph, he is now the heir of Mary's father, Heli, H-E-L-I. Remember him? Heli. And that's where the Mary genealogy ends.

But because Mary has no brothers, and she marries Joseph, Joseph becomes the adopted son of Heli. Heli is a biological descendant of Nathan. And so, both biologically and legally, Jesus, on the kind of paper that God writes on, is descended from David on both sides of his family because Joseph becomes the adopted son, and it is through the father that these things are counted.

And so, there's a sense in which Heli, being left without male issue, has his name extended through Jesus and through Joseph because Joseph sticks with Mary. But you think about Mary herself, all of these strange ways in which babies came into the world, well, none stranger than Mary. And the cloud that surrounds Moab and Ammon, the cloud that surrounds Perez being the father-in-law and daughter-in-law offspring, the cloud that surrounds Rahab the prostitute, the cloud that surrounds Bathsheba later on, well, you come all the way down.

And couldn't God have done it a different way? This is my point. If you think about all of those, here's the main idea. Why did God let things get so messy? And He seems to overcome these really bad situations.

There's a sense in which Moab is redeemed in Ruth. She's in the line of the Lord Jesus Christ. She's in the line of King David.

And so are the Canaanites represented in Rahab. And it's not a nice, neat package. If God was operating in His divine sovereignty, why wouldn't He just make sure that there was a pristine, unbroken line of good marriages all the way down to the Lord Jesus? But there's all of this human frailty and human failure and deception and trickery and outright fraud that takes place, substituting one daughter for another for poor Jacob.

And he's Israel. He's the father of the nation. They're named after him and he got fooled.

And he ends up having some of his sons, some of the tribes of Israel, come from maidservants. Bilhah and Zilpah are not... Who knows where they came from? But that's where you make up your 12 tribes. But God declares them all tribes.

And they have standing in Israel. They have inheritance in Israel. They have a future in Israel when you get to the Millennial Kingdom.

So I say all that to say this. We often look at our lives and say, you know, I am no Billy Graham. I am no great saint.

I have made a lot of mistakes. I have taken wrong turns. I have been victimized.

And I have... Some things were my own fault. Some things were the fault of others. But I've had a very diverse and bendy and twisted career.

And so I don't think that God is going to have very great plans for me. He's going to save that for the straight arrow people who have just trod the path without deviation and without scuffing their knees or tearing their pants or having any other problem. God's got a coterie, an inside group of really pristine individuals.

They're going to ride the white horses. They're going to rule with Him. They're going to have the white stone and the new name.

If you look at what the Bible records, God uses us just as we are. The one common denominator of all of these people going down through the line of Christ is not that they were as pure and unsullied with mistakes as Daniel. One of the few characters in the Bible you can't find doing anything wrong.

There's a couple of them. Joshua is one. Daniel is another.

You can't find Joshua ever being charged with error. Moses' successor, Joshua. Do you think he did something? Joshua, son of Nun? Joshua? Yeah.

Well, the Gibeonites. But he does right when it happens. He was deceived.

He didn't knowingly break God's law. They tricked him. Probably if he had cast lots or prayed or done something.

But he took them at face value and he did get tricked. But he's never charged with error. God never comes back and says, because you have done this thing, there's no penalty.

And this, by the way, is a useful... I'm glad you brought that up because it's a useful principle of biblical interpretation. People have speculated that Malon and Ruth had no children and Kilion and Orpah had no children because it was a judgment from God. Or that Elimelech died in Moab because it was a judgment from God.

But if the Bible does not say that a happening like that is a judgment or that because a woman is barren, because they had no children in Moab, that this was a judgment from God, the Bible doesn't say it's a judgment. And you have to be careful because was it a judgment from God that Sarah had no children until she was nearly 100 years and she was 90? Was it a judgment from God that Hannah had no children? Was it until she talked to Samuel? Or actually Eli. Was it a judgment from God that she talked to Eli and had Samuel? Was it a judgment from God that Ruth had not had children in the land of Moab? The Bible doesn't say it was a judgment.

And so we have to be conservative in charging biblical characters with error unless Scripture does, unless God does in some fashion. It doesn't mean that there aren't instances. I think the Hagar thing is a pretty clear mess up.

But in any case, the point here is God uses us in spite of those things. What is the common denominator with Tamar and with Rahab and with Ruth and with Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, Hannah and these others, Bathsheba? What is the common denominator? Although mistakes may have happened either of their own making or involving others, or there is a cloud of disrepute even when it's undeserved, they are women of faith. The men who messed these things up, Abraham, should not have done the Hagar and Ishmael thing.

Look at all the historical consequences of that. But Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness. And one of the reasons that he is not judged or charged over the Hagar deal is he repented.

He acknowledged and he was obedient. And he trusted God when it counted. And your faith and my faith can move mountains.

And some of those mountains are mountains of error and mountains of circumstantial detritus that occur when we screw up or when people around us mess up. God's grace overcomes human failure. The key to being on the positive side of God's grace is faith and obedience.

When you review your life and say, well, God can't use someone like me or I've messed up too much or I'm too flawed to count in God's plan and purpose, that is not biblical. In fact, it is anti-biblical. It is not whether we are flawed or whether we have fouled up.

It is whether we pick ourselves up. David is still the father of the Lord Jesus Christ. If he is son of David, what does that make David? His father.

And how many times did David mess up? Several. What is the key? How come God was still able to use him and say he's a man after my own heart? How can God say that? Because he was a man of faith. He was a man of repentance.

Read the 91st Psalm. He was an obedient man. First to last.

It doesn't mean we won't have colossal, galactic, catastrophic bad decisions and failures in our life. But if we let that set us back, if we let it deflect us and divert us and give us an excuse to not be faithful and obedient, we have missed the biblical message. And it's a big part of this book of Ruth.

There's a lot that you can find wrong in going to Moab and a famine and not coming back when the famine is over and being put out with God and saying I'm not pleasant, I'm bitter. There's a lot you can say about Naomi and her machinations. There's a lot you can say about the first Redeemer not stepping up.

But God works these things together for good. And what a fantastic story it is. What a great reminder it is to us.

They used to have that string of letters P-B-P-G-I-N-F-W-M-Y which stands for please be patient,

God is not finished with me yet. Please be patient. God is not finished with me yet.

If you are alive and you are breathing, God has a plan and a purpose that calls for faith and calls for obedience and there is nothing that God cannot overcome. Ruth versus Lot and his daughters. Rahab, a prostitute in a Canaanite city.

Naomi, a backslidden, as the Baptists would say, she's a backslidden Israelite lady. Bathsheba, co-conspirator in murder and adultery. On and on.

It isn't what we have done, it's what God has done. It isn't what we are guilty of, it is what Christ has freed us from that counts. So as you think about this latter part of the book, the first question the women ask is, are you pleasant? Are you Naomi? Is this Naomi? But at the end it is a declaration of blessing.

And in between the first question and the last answer to their own question, really, who is Naomi? Naomi is the one who has a house like the house of Perez. Naomi is the one who has offspring that is going to be a sustainer of life, restorer of old age, has a daughter-in-law who loves her. Verse 15, Don't miss the fact your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons.

That's the importance of observing the symmetry here, because this is the answer to the question in chapter 1. Who is Naomi? This is who Naomi is with the Redeemer. What was she without a Redeemer? Marah, a widow with no prospects, no future. With the Redeemer, it is the opposite.

And so the neighbor women say there is a son born to Naomi, and this is the outside of our bracket. If you remember, she tries to dissuade Orpah and Ruth by saying, Is there any hope for me to have a child? Would you wait around until he grew up? There's no way I can have any offspring. But at the end, the women say there is a son born to Naomi.

They call his name Server, the one who serves. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now this is the genealogy, and you have these individuals mentioned.

And at the end, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David. And it doesn't need any further comment than that. You can tell that this story was finalized after David had become king and had probably established peace.

And Solomon and Bathsheba were probably on the scene at the point that this story was finalized. And with all of that, this is the heritage. This is the memorable family history.

So it's a wonderful reminder to us. And the thing to remember above all is don't underestimate God. Circumstances may seem impossible.

Our failures may seem overwhelming. Don't underestimate God. It kind of sounds silly when you say it, Well, who would underestimate God? But we can effectively do that when we think

that there is not grace greater than all our sin.

When we think that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. But who qualifies for grace? We have to trust, we have to come in faith and obedience to qualify for God's grace. God's grace is available to all.

Christ is the propitiation not only for our sins, but the sins of the whole world. Whosoever believes in Him does not perish, but has everlasting life. But they have to believe.

God will not force His grace on anyone. But it is ours for the claiming. Tamar claimed her rights in the community with Judah.

Ruth claims her right when she marries Boaz. It is a response to an initiation. She didn't have to marry Boaz.

She could have gone for one of the young men. Boaz blesses her because she made a good choice. And the same is necessary for us.

We have to make a good choice. So that's the key. It's not enough to say, Well, God is gracious and it will all turn out right in the end.

There is something required of us. There is a response required. And with that response comes the power of God unto salvation.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the powerful illustration we have of the lengths to which you can go to overcome what we think are impossible circumstances.

We think of the letter of the law that kills. But as the Lord Jesus reminds us, it is the Spirit that gives life. We think of David eating the showbread which was reserved for priests, and yet because he was Your anointed, he was qualified.

And in the same way, the Lord Jesus, when His disciples reaped the grain, He was Your anointed, and those who were with Him were able to partake. And being the Lord of the Sabbath and the Lord of our rest, we're so grateful that we can enter into that rest. We pray that as we spend time and thought reviewing what we've learned in the book of Ruth, that these things will live and breathe in our souls, motivate us and encourage us and equip us so that we can fulfill all of those good works that You have ordained that we should walk in them.

We pray that we can reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus in the process and be pleasing in Your sight. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.