

## CLEAVING TO NAOMI

***Ruth 1:14** And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.*

I wish today with the help of the Lord to use Naomi as a symbol of the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ in which he commands “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19,20). There was something in Ruth that recognized the value of Naomi, Naomi’s God and Naomi’s people, Israel. Ruth somehow knew that, despite the woes and apparent fruitlessness of Naomi’s life, God would bless the world through Israel. This was the great gift which Ruth possessed – to know where the blessings of God were located and cleave to this blessing. Ruth’s sister Orpah only kissed Naomi and said farewell but Ruth clave to Naomi and refused to let go. There are many who have kissed the Lord and said goodbye, but we, like Ruth, have determined to cleave to Jesus. This faith led Ruth to utter one of the most celebrated declarations in the Bible.

***Ruth 1:16** And Ruth said, Intreat 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:*

***Ruth 1:17** Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.*

The Gospel is in some ways like Naomi. It came from somewhere else, and it is always on the move. Like Ruth we must be able to recognize its worth and sacrifice all to move with it. “And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matthew 4:19,20). Jesus came from elsewhere but the apostles recognized his identity and left all to follow him. Allow me to speak candidly: are we allowing the Gospel to lead us as it wills, or are we determining where and how far the Gospel will lead us? Ruth had never met the people of Naomi, but she determined that they would be her people. The Gospel has its own people, so to speak. We cannot know who they are – all we need to know is that we love the people of Jesus. We live in an increasingly polarized world. When God divided the world, he only used language, but now we are divided by race, culture, class, politics and an endless list of new issues. Few individuals understood the value of the Gospel as did the Apostle Paul. Let us carefully consider his words:

*1Cor 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*

*1Cor 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;*

*1Cor 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

*1Cor 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

God expects us to die twice: the first time to the self and the second to our communal/national identity. This is especially the case in the present world where- the prophecy in the Boo of Daniel about global migration has been fulfilled. “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4). Why will people run to and fro, and why will the seed of humans mingle in the last days? “And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay” (Daniel 2:43). There can only be one reason: the Lord Jesus Christ is about to return. God wants all to hear the blessed Gospel and be saved. What is this Gospel, you may ask? In short: there is only one God. This God was manifested in a body and gave his flesh and blood to save us from our sins on the Cross of Calvary. He rose the third day and poured out his Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. What shall we do with this understanding? “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

Ruth died first to herself. She gave up plans for herself – a husband, a house and children etc. Next, she died to her country and community. Her people were the enemies of Israel. Her people were a result of incest between Lot and his daughters, but this daughter of Lot would bring great honor on her great ancestor. Isn't it interesting that the moment Ruth determined to go to Israel with Naomi God visited Israel with abundance of food! “Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread” (Ruth 1:6). Go with the Gospel, cleave to it and it will command blessings ahead of you! Ruth became the great grand-mother of King David. She became a part of the international blessings promised to Abraham. “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:18). May we cleave to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and may all the nations of the earth be blessed through you!