

Sit Still By Resting upon the Lord

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Date: 15 November 2009

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[0 : 00] He lay at Boaz's feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another.

! Then he said to those who were there with them, Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.

Also he said, 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. When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, Is that you my daughter? Then she told her all that the man had done for her.

And she said, These six ephahs of barley he gave me. For he said to me, Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.

[1 : 08] He said, Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out. For the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.

Verse 16 to 18 of Ruth chapter 3, and particularly verse 18. under the title, Sit still by resting upon the Lord.

Naomi said to Ruth, Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out. For the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.

Now when God in his word tells us to wait, or to rest, or to sit still, or to be quiet, he never means do nothing.

And we actually see in this beautiful story the importance and the dignity of work. We've been, in the earlier studies, we've been noticing how Boaz the farmer and Ruth the worker exemplify how followers of the Lord should act.

[2 : 38] How they should be industrious. How they should be unafraid of hard work. There is a rightness, a fitness in doing all we can.

There is a dignity attaching to work. I think Professor Murray in his book, Principles of Conduct, has an excellent piece on the dignity of work.

And he looks at it in the pre-fall state of things. And it reminds us that God made our first parents to be at one with their environment and yet to work in that context.

There was something right and proper about it. So, sit still, rest, wait, be quiet, never means when God speaks, do nothing.

But you see, what is here, and we were thinking about this too, is a focus on doing things in a balanced way. We saw last time in our study about the rightness of guarding the good name of our neighbour and ourself.

[3 : 55] And we saw in earlier studies that it was right to do all we can to improve the spiritual and the temporal well-being both of our neighbour and ourself.

We saw these in the earlier studies. But we have to admit, if we're honest, that sometimes in our zeal to see things happen in the work of God, we ratchet up our activity and we strive to push the work forward.

Actually, to push God forward. To make things happen in our own time. Hurrying, as it were, the Lord, to do what we want then.

And the more we have a heart for seeing people's lives changed and people brought into the kingdom, the more susceptible we are to falling foul of this problem.

It happens to me frequently. It probably happens to some of you, if not all of you. It's as if we want to push God along. We want Him to get on with it.

[5 : 09] We want to get on with it at our pace and have it done in our time. And in this passage, you see, Ruth, as we shall see in a moment, was a bit like that.

She wanted what she wanted and she wanted it then as soon as possible. But God reminds us, and He reminds us in this passage, that He will do things in His own time and in His own way.

And He requires us to wait upon Him, to sit still, to rest in Him. Not to be full of agitation and anxiety about things and pushing on.

And sometimes He just makes us stop. And we can't go forward. We just have to wait. It was, some of you know Milton's poem on his blindness, it was Milton who said, very rightly I think, there are those who serve by simply standing and waiting.

Not waiting and standing in idleness, but in a spirit of readiness to do God's bidding. And I want us, as we look at this, to think about two things in particular and then to notice some points within these headings.

[6 : 39] First of all, the biblical principle enshrined in the words sit still. That is to say, there's a fundamental, a basic truth here which we are to grasp and act upon properly.

Now you see in the context, Ruth was being told by her mother-in-law, wait, sit still.

Boaz will settle the matter. Boaz will go and get it seen to who is going to be your kinsman redeemer. Now it is abundantly clear to us in the study and in this chapter that as far as Ruth was concerned, she had weighed the thing prayerfully as a spiritual woman and she wanted Boaz to be that kinsman redeemer.

We saw that she went to the threshing floor, verse 9, and he said, who are you? So she answered, I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing for you are a kinsman redeemer.

A close relative, specifically, a goel, someone who can act as my kinsman redeemer. And it was clear that Boaz knew this was something that she had considered.

[8 : 03] She didn't opt for a young man, whether rich or poor. He says that in the next verse. And therefore, having made up her mind and having put the thing to Boaz within the framework of the law of God and not in any brash and assy-like way, we saw that, she was now eager that the will of God be settled and that soon enough she would have her kinsman redeemer and her husband.

But you see, Ruth, as we've seen, was a busy type of person. She was up and doing, having done one thing on to the next thing, on to the next thing. There was no stopping her. And so to be told to wait and sit still was not an easy thing to have to do.

I'm seeing some some wee smiles here and this is obviously connecting. Good. Because some of us are like that. We can't sit still. We have to be doing something.

Our whole life is within the framework of seeking to do our best for the Lord. And even in the little things. Yes, dishwashers, washing too. We can't sit still.

We need to be doing. And Ruth was like that. You see, there was much to be done. She wanted to get on. Perhaps she reasoned like this.

[9 : 37] Well, I can work and wait. She wanted to be going. But you see, Naomi was ahead of her. Naomi said, no, no. Sit still. Act in faith.

Wait on the Lord. Boaz will do what has to be done. And so for this faithful and diligent young woman to sit still, literally to sit still, was a difficult thing to do.

It was not an easy option for her. But you see, she had to learn. As indeed we all have to learn.

We're thinking about this recently in connection with Remember on Sunday, Ecclesiastes 3.1.

There's a time for everything under heaven. A season. God is appointed for every activity. And Ruth had to learn that.

Notice what I said. There's a time for every activity. And sitting still and waiting and waiting quietly upon the Lord is an activity.

[10 : 46] It's not doing nothing. It's waiting upon Him. It's a believing activity. It was then. It is for the Christian now.

There is a place for quiet, prayerful reflection in order to simply wait upon the will of God. for God to open the way.

And it seems to me that if you study the life of Jesus you've got it perfectly there. He was busy, industrious, sometimes exhausted with His days that He spent Himself in and poured Himself out. It's where preachers get that excuse for doing too much. The Saviour poured Himself out. all was about His Father's business.

All with an eye to glorifying His Father. And He went about, we're told, doing good, we're told by John, in the Gospel, we've got snippets snippets.

[11:57] snippets. In the four Gospels, we've got snippets of what He did. We've got a wee skim through the miracles.

We've not got them all. John tells us at the end of his book, well, the penultimate chapter, he tells us that if all the things that Jesus did were recorded, I suppose, he says, there will be no room for the books that will be written.

That's busyness. That's industry. And yet, that same Jesus who said, I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day, the night comes, that same Jesus was found long before others were opening their eyes.

He was found alone with His Father. quietly waiting upon Him, sitting still, seeking Him.

It's a most profound thing that when Jesus was to appoint His Apostles, He spent the whole night in prayer. What was that all about?

[13:18] Have you thought about it? What was it about? Sitting still before His Father, waiting upon Him in all that intense activity. And you see, He points us in the right direction.

He shows us there is a very important place for sitting still, for waiting upon God. But it's not the waiting of the sloth.

And this kind of waiting, sitting still, is not to encourage slothfulness. rather, if it's approached by faith, it generates hope and action will follow.

So then, for those like Ruth, who are eager to work and to be active, as a rule, that's the way they are. Anything that hinders that is a bit of a bind.

It's a bit of a pain. But you see, it is true that often in the life of faith and following Jesus, we are called to sit still, to wait, not to be driven by our anxieties to see something happen.

[14:35] and I know that very well. It's perhaps one of the most difficult things that the Savior lays upon us is to wait upon Him to wait His time.

We want the thing done yesterday. And you see, Ruth was a bit like that. She wanted it done and tested.

And so we are to learn with her not to be of an anxious mind, not to be driven and urged on by our anxieties, but to wait upon God to genuinely sit still, as it were, in our hearts waiting upon Him with this holy activity.

There's an interesting reference although it touches, it cuts two ways. It speaks literally of the Israelites, but it also speaks of a state of mind, of the acting of faith.

You remember when they had come out of Egypt, you find it in Exodus 14 from verse 13. You remember that they went down towards the peninsula out on the hook of the Red Sea there and as they went out there, Pharaoh's armies, his chariots, followed them and they were caught in that peninsula.

[16:13] They had nowhere to go except the sea, into the sea. And they were terrified and they began to complain bitterly. And the word that God gave to Moses for the people was, stand still and see the salvation of God.

And this is relevant to what we're looking at. There are times when we simply have to stop and wait upon God with the activity of faith. Naomi saw it that way and she encouraged Ruth to wait for God's purpose to ripen.

you see, more effort in her case would have resulted in a simple waste of energy and it would run her in her nervous system into exhaustion.

In anxious care she would have been riddled as it were with that anxious care. And so we are wise when having done our best in duty's path and she did, we saw that.

When she did her best in duty's path she simply now had to wait upon God. To sit still, to wait for the Lord to move.

[17:40] He would move things on. And I think it's good for us to remember that and probably this speaks to most of us if not all of us but when we're urgent and eager to be about the master's business and we want to see things happen and we're pushing ourselves we're straining every nerve in whatever aspect of the work we're engaged in.

It's good and sobering to remind ourselves I'm going to borrow from Milton again here. He says this he says God does not need man's works or his own gifts they also serve who only stand and wait he doesn't need our works or his own gifts in us and it's humbling and it's appropriate to remember that.

God will move and God will act according to his own holy and wise counsel and will not budge him.

And that's what essentially Naomi told Ruth. Of course she's talking about Boaz but she's talking within the framework of God at work in their lives.

After and all did not Boaz say to Ruth where is it verse 13 there but if the second part of it but if he that is the closer kinsman does not want to perform the duty of the redeemer for you then I will perform the duty for you as the Lord lives.

[19 : 42] These folks are working within the framework of trusting in God the God who acts for those who wait for him. And Naomi wisely says to Ruth wait sit still.

When we act upon this biblical principle with a spiritual understanding of the way God operates then our anxious agitation of spirit will subside.

Now that's not something we learn once and then it's finished. We learn it again and again because we are anxious to see things happen.

We get agitated in our spirits. We run hither and thither and the more we recognize the importance of understanding this principle and acting upon it the more we'll experience that calmness of spirit that readiness to wait upon God and to cast our anxieties upon him.

And that brings us to the second thing I want us to look at for a wee while and that is simply the biblical reason for waiting upon God. Well we've anticipated it a little I know but I want to look more closely at this sitting still.

[21 : 16] Sitting still is a realization that God's time is best. Ha! That's easy to say. That's so easy to say.

God's time is best.

Because we think it's long past time. We would go further than the psalmist. Lord it's time for thee to work.

For the people have made void thy law. We would say. Oh yes we would. We would say Lord it's long past time. See what I mean. No no.

We have to recognize we have good reason for waiting upon God. Because God's time is best. In serving the Lord as we've been saying we want to see things happen.

[22 : 38] The things that we want to happen we want to happen not tomorrow but we want them to happen yesterday. such is our anxiety. Such is our burden and longing.

And as we've said already Ruth was so eager to see this matter resolved that she could not easily wait. And yet Naomi says to her sit still until.

I like that. Sit still until. Until you know the outcome. Until you know how the thing will fall out.

That's how it is literally in the original. Until you know how the thing or the lot falls. The word behind this has to do with the lot.

Do you remember when Jonah was discovered in the ship in the storm and the sailors were looking for somebody to blame for the storm.

[23 : 41] It was such a violent storm. they just knew with their instinct perhaps with their superstition too but they knew somebody was responsible for this on that ship and they got lots and they drew lots and the lot fell upon Jonah and Jonah owned it I'm your problem all this has come upon you because of me and you've got to check me into the sea.

the lot fell upon Jonah and Naomi says to Ruth sit still until you see how the thing falls out till you see how the lot will fall there's a really interesting reference in this connection in Proverbs 16 and verse 33 it says this the lot is cast into the lap but the decision is from the Lord now don't get any ideas about the national lottery this is not a plug for getting your national lottery tickets it's a simple statement of fact that even in the drawing of the lot even in the casting of the lot into the lap the decision is of the

Lord such is his involvement in providence that even little things like that happen by his decision Ruth think about it how involved the Lord is in your life friend here tonight think about how the Lord is involved in your life if the lot is cast into the lap and the decision is of the Lord the decision is of the Lord who gets what well isn't it wonderful that he is so intimately involved in what goes on you remember the disciples said on one occasion on the lake when that furious storm came down master don't you care that we're going to perish what a thing to say what a thing to say to him who cares who really cares who invites us to cast our cares upon him yes the little things of life as well as the bigger things

Ruth sit still wait upon the Lord's time Boaz will do what he has to do and what we have here therefore is the reason why we can wait upon God the season of fulfillment is his I remember in

happier days John Harding sent me a card you remember John Harding was in Shettleston and when I went seconded by the free church into CWI I was given a kind of induction into the work we laugh about it ourselves I kept calling it set aside anyway I was inducted in a manner of speaking to that work and John Harding sent me a card and on it in

Hebrew was the verse the man who goes forth sowing the seed and weeping shall come shall come again rejoicing bearing his sheaves a lot of years have passed since then but do we say God has got it wrong I don't think so no we recognize his timing we recognize his wisdom and his way and more particularly his rights if our desire is God honoring he will fulfill the desire of her heart in its season Ruth's desire was God honoring to have Boaz as her kinsman redeemer and husband wasn't something that was superficial she felt a deep constraint yes the constraint of love but she felt a constraint that was deeper and her desire was

[28 : 52] God honoring and God would see that desire fulfilled we can rest on that this is the reason for waiting upon God he has his time of fulfilling what is God honoring if you think about the natural world that Ruth was involved in the gathering of the harvest she was involved in the gathering of the wheat harvest and the barley harvest but it was after long months of waiting and this biblical principle too requires those involved in seeking and winning souls to Christ to wait upon the Lord to sit still to keep calm to keep trusting to keep praying to keep working in a controlled manner not rushing and over anxious as sadly were wont to be so care ridden so filled with agitation in her spirits did not our Lord say to

Martha Martha Martha you're cumbered about with Mitch K you're fretting and anxious you're running all over the place Mary has chosen the better part Mary's got a better angle on things she sits and listens and speaks to Jesus and perhaps we need to do more of that waiting upon him waiting his time bringing our needs to him and asking him to act for us as those who wait upon him Ruth says Naomi effectively let God have his way the time is set and Boaz will do what he has to do and you'll see the outcome and you'll be glad and of course the story goes on and he did he fulfilled his task and

Boaz of course acted he's already told that how he feels about it he loves it his desire is for it to marry it he will not rest says Naomi until he finishes this business now why shouldn't we lift all that onto the higher plane surely Christ acts on our behalf he acts on behalf of his own people in their service to him he loves us he has betrothed us to himself let him then do his work in us and for us and through us and let us rest upon him sit still be rid of anxious care and let's be frank most of us are full of it concerning the work wait patiently for him do not fret said the psalmist it only causes harm and at least we can pray for the wisdom and the patience to see when we need to cease from rushing around and fretting as if everything depended upon us

God does not need man's work or his own gifts they serve who only stand and wait and it may be of course that you are here tonight and you are happy to pass that on and you are thinking well the members got it tonight good I'm not there yet so I'm exempt don't think it don't think like that rather act upon the word we've been looking at act upon this great principle wait upon God we sing it often I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear was it at the waiting of the sloth hanging upside down at length to me he did incline what he inclined oh yes my voice and cry to hear oh so you were not just waiting sitting still doing nothing oh no no no

I was praying I was pleading I was begging and at length he listened or rather he answered he had been listening all the time but he answered my voice and cry to hear what did he do he took me from a fearful pit and from the mighty clay and he set me upon that blessed rock Christ Jesus my dear friend where you are tonight fill your own mouth with these pleas for spiritual deliverance and for the grace to wait always upon his will Amen