

Ruth 3: Wait on the Lord

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[0 : 0 0] verse 9 Ruth chapter 3 and verse 9 he said who are you and she answered i am ruth your servant spread your wings over your servant for you are a redeemer so over the last few weeks we've been looking at the book of ruth and we've been on a journey with naomi and ruth we journeyed with naomi and elimelech from bethlehem to moab we saw that they were going to moab which was a forbidden land for the israelites and we saw in chapter 1 a chapter of wasted years we saw the dire consequences of of disobedience in the lives of ruth sorry in the lives of naomi and elimelech we stood at the empty graves of naomi's two sons malon and kilion who died in moab and as if that tragedy wasn't enough she also lost her husband elimelech we saw the dreadful consequences of rebellion against god we journeyed again with the three widows orpah ruth and naomi and we came to a crossroads where there was a lot of weeping and we saw orpah turning back to moab and we saw ruth clinging cleaving to naomi and we have that famous great testimony in ruth chapter 1 for where you go i will go and where you lodge i will lodge your people should be my people and your god my god and then in chapter 2 we saw after seeing the wasted years we saw a chapter all about working we saw that ruth was instructed to go and glean in the field we saw that there are no accidents with god and we see this word she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to boaz and we said last time that these happenstances as we called them there are no accidents with god she didn't just happen to go into the field of boaz these things were all ordained by god and we saw how ruth came under the shadow of the covenant god there in chapter 2 god's wings of refuge and we also saw that she was offered a place at the table with the reapers this woman who had no people she had no family she had no home she was offered a place at the table and there was the offer of kindness and kinship at the end of chapter 2 so we've seen a chapter about wasted years and had lots of weeping we've seen a chapter that's all about working and when we eventually hopefully at some point get to chapter 4 chapter 4 of course is the great wedding chapter so the great question for us tonight is what is chapter 3 all about not an answer that comes easily surely what chapter 3 is all about is waiting we see at the end of chapter 3

that neome says to ruth wait my daughter until you learn how the matter turns out for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today ruth chapter 3 is about neome's rashness neome the great matchmaker trying to match boaz and ruth too quickly and what we see at the end is the need to wait on god literally as the old verses say to sit still and wait so we want to notice four things in the passage tonight we want to see how neome seeks rest for ruth and then secondly how ruth requests a covering and then thirdly how boaz is we want to notice boaz's righteous response and then just in a word at the end ruth's willingness to wait so first of all let's notice neome seeks rest for ruth neome seeks rest for ruth says in verse 1 then neome her mother-in-law said to her my daughter should i not seek rest for you that it may be well with you and we notice under this heading first of all a place of permanency neome is seeking a place of permanency for ruth she wants her to find rest now this is a very unusual word for rest in the bible it's not the usual word it's only used seven times it's the same word that is used in genesis chapter 8 when Noah sends out the dove it says in verse 9 but the dove found no place to set her foot literally no rest this word means a place of permanency a fixed place and that's what neome wanted for ruth she wanted somewhere that was fixed and permanent a place of rest and refuge it's the same word that's used in psalm 116 verse 7 return oh my soul to your rest for the lord hath dealt bountifully with you in psalm 16 the psalmist had been buffeted and he says return oh my soul to your rest to the rest and refuge of god the ultimate fixed and permanent place you see ruth had been through years and years of trauma and tragedy and bereavement and what neome wanted for her was protection and security she wanted her to have hope for the future she wanted her to have children and she wanted her ultimately that it would be well with her or as the old version says that she would prosper and that word literally means to be accepted she wanted ruth to be accepted by the covenant people of god at the moment she was an outsider she had no people she had no family but neome was desperate for her to be accepted by the covenant people of god and of course one of the main ways she could do that was through marriage the ultimate way that she would be brought in to the covenant family now we might not agree with arranged marriages today but surely those of us who are bringing up kids we can say that one of our great desires is that our own kids would marry well in the lord

we want them to find marriages where they will find rest and security rather than conflict and tension and pain and perhaps we've all known periods in our own marriages when there's been conflict and pain but I think what we have here in Ruth chapter 3 is a great picture of what a Christian marriage should look like it should be a place of rest and refuge not a place of tension and conflict and pain and that's what we should be praying surely isn't it for our own marriages that they would be places of refuge and places of security the bible never paints a utopian picture of marriage when two flesh become one there is always going to be difficulty and pressures and tension but we see here surely a beautiful picture of what Christian marriage should be a place of rest a place of security but then we also notice under this heading that Naomi seeks rest for Ruth a relative and a redeemer this whole first section in Ruth chapter 3 is Naomi pointing

Ruth towards Boaz she's pointing Ruth towards Boaz we have a wee glimpse of Boaz in chapter 2 we're told in Ruth chapter 2 by Naomi that he is one of our redeemers this man is a close relative of ours one of our redeemers but in chapter 3 it becomes much more personal in verse 9 Ruth says you are a redeemer and we look briefly in our last study about the kinsman redeemer what is this concept of the kinsman redeemer that we just touched on in our last study remember we said that the Mosaic law provided for the safeguarding of family members when they faced tragedy or distress and this was particularly around the two central themes of the Abrahamic covenant the continuation of family and the enjoyment of the promised land and if somebody fell into need a close family member was expected to volunteer to help them to become that person's goel that person's redeemer and a kinsman redeemer had three primary functions they were to seek justice if a near relative was murdered if a person was in so much debt that they were sold into slavery the kinsman redeemer would buy them back and if family property was sold the kinsman redeemer would buy it back but there was also another law in the Old Testament and that was the Levirate law it comes from the Latin word lever which means brother-in-law and when a woman died it was expected that her brother-in-law would continue the family line the brother-in-law would step in and as we see in the story of Ruth that sometimes this law was wider than just the brother-in-law

Boaz wasn't Ruth's brother-in-law but he was still expected if the nearer relative wouldn't come in he would come in and be a kinsman redeemer and what we must remember with every law in the Old Testament is there is always a deeper moral principle attached to that law and you see what was the deeper moral principle with this law was God's covenant promises extending from generation to generation that a family line would not die out but that the brother-in-law would keep the covenant line going by having children and you see what Naomi saw in Boaz was somebody who could be that kinsman redeemer to her you see as we said in our last study this kinsman redeemer points us forward to the Lord

[12 : 42] Jesus Christ the ultimate kinsman redeemer and as we get to know more of Boaz in this chapter we see that he was a man of honour he was a man of integrity and of course he was a man filled with loving kindness towards Naomi and Ruth and this of course points us towards the Lord Jesus Christ the ultimate one who could say come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest so we see just in our first point there that Naomi seeks rest for Ruth but then secondly we come to the heart of the story and we see that Ruth requests a covering Ruth requests a covering in verse 9 now some of the commentators particularly in Ruth chapter 3 they over spiritualise almost every point and every verse in Ruth chapter 3 and there's a great danger in doing that but I do think in one aspect we are perhaps being shown a spiritual principle and that is where

Naomi asked Ruth to go and that was to the threshing floor and that's our first point under this heading the place of separation Naomi encourages Ruth to wash herself to put on perfume to put on some clean clothes and to go down to the threshing floor at midnight well what is a threshing floor well a threshing floor is a place of separation remember in the old days people would they would thresh the corn and then they would use sieves and all the corn would be blown into the air and the husks would be blown away and the corn could then be used to make food it was a time of separation the good from the bad and we're told here of course it was also a time of festivity it was the end of the harvest so there was festivity and there was eating and there was drinking and of course there was considerable risk to Ruth going into that environment with all these young men of course the bible quite often talks about the threshing floor it's a theme that's threaded throughout the bible we can think of

David on the floor of Ornan in 1 Chronicles 21 remember when David numbered the people of Israel when he was explicitly commanded not to do that and God dealt with them on the threshing floor of Ornan you remember Gideon in Judges 6 he was at the threshing floor when God met with them and called them and Gideon remonstrated with God and of course there's that famous passage in Luke chapter 22 when Peter is on the threshing floor of Satan and Jesus says to him Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat remember Jesus wanted Peter to minister to his people to encourage and strengthen them but first Peter had to be emptied of all his self reliance and his self confidence and of course the New Testament represents the final judgment as the great threshing floor where the wheat and the tears will be separated so what does the threshing floor represent well it represents surely a place of decision a place of separation a place where God definitively deals with men and women and I don't think it's an accident that this place where

Ruth finds redemption is a threshing floor and surely it's not over spiritualizing to say that it reminds us of the great threshing floor that we are being pointed towards that place that place of the cross where Christ was threshed and where the great separation took place where God forsook Christ on the cross surely it reminds us that the only place where we can be redeemed is the cross but then secondly under this heading we also see a place of humility we see a place of humility humility how does Ruth come into the threshing floor well she comes in great humility we're told that she went in softly she came in softly and uncovered his feet we've seen at various points in the story of Ruth how beautiful

Ruth's character is and again we see the beauty of her character and the humble way in which she approaches Boaz as we've said on several occasions Ruth is not an expert in systematic theology she knows very little about the covenant she knows very little about the law but what she has seen in Naomi and Boaz is enough for her to follow the God of the covenant Naomi knows that she is too old to have children and she encourages Ruth to go in and to make this veiled as it were marriage proposal to Boaz so that she can claim that leverite custom of a kinsman redeemer we see how softly she sits at Boaz's feet and far from being a scene of seduction or anything of a sexual nature it is a scene of innocence

[19:10] Ruth gently lies at Boaz's feet and again we see her humility in her response to Boaz when he asks who she is she says I am Ruth your servant or as the older versions say your handmaid Ruth has put herself in this very vulnerable position with a man several men perhaps in this barn and yet she approaches it with great humility and great trust in the Lord and then we see this great verse Ruth's plea for covering I am Ruth your servant spread your wings over your servant for you are a redeemer what a beautiful image we have here of Ruth asking Boaz to cover her to redeem her she's asking this older man this old older richer business man to cover her to protect her and to love her and of course this language is very reminiscent of

Ezekiel chapter 16 verse 8 you remember Ezekiel chapter 16 when Israel is compared to a baby that's left out in the field to die and God saves the baby and raises them up to flourish and he comes back when the child is older in verse 8 and he says when I passed by you again and saw you behold you were at the age for love and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you declares the Lord God and you became mine you see in the same way that Boaz is redeeming Ruth God is claiming his people he is offering them safety protection and covenant love and this is what Ruth is looking for in Boaz you'll see the use again of the word wings we saw it back in chapter 2 in verse 12 again we see the same word spread your wings over your servant and it's amazing isn't it that when we saw back in chapter 2 how

Boaz was talking about he's rejoicing how Ruth had come under the wings of the God of Israel and now in a very real sense Boaz is fulfilling that verse Boaz covering of Ruth is the implementation of the Lord's protective covering offer Boaz becomes the mediator of that covenant love and surely just like Ruth we need that covering for ourselves don't we as sinners we need a covering as Romans 7 quotes Psalm 32 blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered do we tonight know the blessing of our sins being covered by the wings of God's mercy we need to be covered as Ruth was covered by Boaz and we need to be covered by a greater than Boaz the Lord

Jesus Christ so we see Ruth plea for covering but then thirdly we see Boaz's righteous response Boaz's righteous response and we see firstly that he was a man of integrity and mercy we're told at the start of Ruth chapter 2 that Ruth was a worthy man he was a worthy man a noble man and we see that time and time again don't we throughout the book of Ruth and we see it in his response here to Ruth's plea for redemption I don't know what you're like when you're walking in the middle of the night for some of us it's not a pretty sight but Boaz is walking in the middle of the night and he has this attractive young woman lying at his feet and as the old fortune cookie says never mistake temptation for opportunity

Boaz was a red blooded sinful man who was woken in the middle of the night and what's at the forefront of his mind well God and God's law is at the forefront of his mind St.

[24 : 12] world of Ferguson and he remains calm and a man of poise his first thought is not sin his first thought is how he honours Ruth he can think we can see that a number of times in scripture can't we we can think of Paul in the middle of that Mediterranean storm how he took charge with all these soldiers around him we can think of Jesus himself in the storm in the sea of Galilee how calm he was and we can also think of Peter in prison awaiting potential execution and yet he is so calm their hearts and their minds were guarded by the peace and the love of God and you see grace was so woven into the life of Boaz that his first response in the middle of the night was complete and absolute integrity and you see the gracious respect that Boaz has for

Ruth in verses 10 and 11 this guy had as it were almost every right to say what are you doing here don't you understand that my integrity could be ruined by the fact that you are here instead what we see is we see complete and absolute integrity and gentleness and now my daughter do not fear I will do for you may be blessed by the Lord my daughter you have made this last kindness greater than the first and that you have not gone after young men whether poor or rich his response is so gentle and kind he could have exploded in anger he could have crushed this new believer but instead he responds with gentleness Alexander white the 19th century

Scottish minister said there is such a thing as sanctification by vinegar and sometimes we meet Christians like that don't we Christians who have been sanctified by vinegar they're a wee bit like the conkers that we used to use in the old days when we used to soak them in vinegar hard shelled and excluding a metallic unyielding correcting spirit who wants to pour their heart out to somebody sanctified by vinegar and what we see in Boaz is the gentleness and the loving kindness that each one of us should display as Christians a Jesus like gentleness as he dealt with this young vulnerable woman let me see secondly under this heading a willingness to redeem in verse 11 a willingness to redeem and now my daughter do not fear

I will do for you all that you ask and all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman you see we're beginning to see the prayers of chapter 1 answered aren't we when we go back to chapter 1 verse 9 when Naomi in her great distress said the Lord grant that you may find rest each of you in the house of her husband that prayer never went unanswered did it and now we're beginning to see it being fulfilled here in chapter 3 and ultimately in chapter 4 you see Boaz isn't just able to redeem but he is willing this word in verse 13 when it says willing to redeem it's the word for pleased or delighted he's asking the question if a nearer kinsman redeemer is delighted or pleased to redeem you but if not then

I will do it he's not just an able saviour or redeemer but he delights in redemption he delights in redemption you see how quickly Boaz responds to Ruth's request for redemption remain tonight and in the morning if he will redeem you good let him do it but if he is not willing to redeem you then as the Lord lives I will redeem you before the day is out Boaz is determined to redeem Ruth he is determined to do all that she asks Boaz totally understands what's going on here Ruth has triggered the Levirate institution and he was honoured and privileged to be asked now the question is why did Boaz not take the initiative why did Boaz not approach

[29 : 39] Ruth well of course the answer is in the verse we've just read because there was a closer redeemer than him there was a redeemer closer than I and you see this is what makes the story of Ruth all the more beautiful because Boaz had no obligation to save Ruth he went way beyond any obligation to show loving kindness to this young widow Ruth and Naomi could expect nothing by right nothing by law it was all of grace it was all of love and you see they believed that they could trust themselves to his loving mercy and compassionate generosity and they were rewarded and we see lastly under this heading from plot to plenty what does the chapter start with chapter 3 starts with a plot by Naomi to get her daughter in law married but it ends with plenty

Ruth goes home with six measures of barley she goes back with more barley than she can carry we're told in verse 17 that Boaz had said to her you must not go back empty handed to your mother-in-law I think that Boaz understands his mother-in-law his future mother-in-law very well I think he understands her plotting and her scheming but I think he deals very gently with her and I think he's sending her a token of esteem and love he understands that she was a bit rash in sending Ruth into this fevered environment in the threshing floor but he extends the hand of grace and love with these six measures of barley and you see what we've got here is we've got a bitter and broken and empty widow that walked into Bethlehem at the end of chapter one

I went away full and the Lord has brought me back empty and now we have this widow with more than she can carry she went away full she came back empty and now under God's loving kindness she's full to overflowing the covenant God has answered her prayers more than she could ask or even think and you see what we have in Boaz is we have a Christ like figure full of grace and gentleness is there any wonder that one of the pillars of the temple of Solomon was called Boaz Boaz will become a very significant figure in God's overall plan of redemption because as a kinsman redeemer he is pointing us ultimately to Jesus

Boaz is a man of integrity he's a man of honour he's a man of gentleness and he's a man of grace one who is trustworthy one who is able and willing and quick to save and that points us to the Lord Jesus Christ and then just lastly we see just in a word Ruth's willingness to wait Ruth's willingness to wait we said that chapter one was the wasted years we said that chapter two was the working years chapter three is the waiting years and chapter four will be the wedding the chapter comes to an end with these intriguing words wait my daughter until you learn how the matter turns out for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today what's

Ruth all about well as we've said on many occasions it's about God's hesed God's loving kindness God's covenant faithfulness and mercy and as we'll see when we come to chapter four perhaps at some point that hesed that loving kindness it stretches way beyond Ruth to the throne of David and ultimately to the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ and you see in Boaz we have the pattern that points to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ which would be the embodiment and the final mediator and you see the love story that we have in front of us between Boaz and Ruth is meant to be a love story about God's love for his people that's why we're singing Psalm 45 beautiful quote from Sinclair Ferguson if anyone in Bethlehem wanted to explain to a stranger how Yahweh the covenant

[35 : 23] God has loved his people in the covenant in which he betrothed Israel to himself all they would need to say was four words as Boaz loves Ruth if you want to understand God's love for his people you see it in this love story between Boaz and Ruth this helpless vulnerable young widow who can't save herself and this kinsman redeemer who stretches out in love and grace and redeems her and as we come to the end of this chapter chapter 3 we have to acknowledge that Naomi did act rashly she was a bit of a matchmaker she didn't allow things to take the natural course she could have taken a more prayerful disposition about the single status of her daughter but now she counsels

Ruth to wait she counsels Ruth to wait you see there's nothing more they can do redemption has to come to them the old version says then said she my daughter sit still until thou know how the thing will fall wait sit still it's the last thing that we want to do we want to burst in we want to solve the problem ourselves but so often God says wait wait on the Lord sit still so often we want God to answer our prayers now we want him to intervene in our situation so often we're in a greater hurry than God is with regard to his purposes and we need to learn in the book of

Ruth that God is trustworthy his timing is perfect and his wisdom plans for our good Psalm 37 says oh rest in the Lord wait patiently for him and he will give thee thine heart's desire you see Ruth 3 is all about waiting for God to act and we need to learn that in our lives we need to learn to wait to sit still and to let God act we don't understand why things come into our experience but we need to learn to wait on the Lord we need to trust in his loving kindness but the thing we can rejoice in tonight is the one thing we don't have to wait for is our redemption because our redemption has come our redeemer has accomplished our salvation on the cross and the great story of Ruth is that one greater than

Boaz has come one who is plenteous in redemption and if you are outside the family of God tonight he invites you to come in you say well I'm an outsider I'm a sinner you've got no idea what I've done well that's what the whole story of Ruth is about God redeeming an outsider a pagan from Moab someone who didn't know anything about the covenant God is brought in and is showered with loving kindness by the covenant God and Ruth points us to this great kinsman redeemer Boaz is just a type but the great kinsman redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ and in the book of Ruth we see all the time it is pointing forward to that great redemption to that great kinsman redeemer the

Lord Jesus Christ and we don't have to wait any longer for our salvation because it has come in Christ and it has been offered to us freely in the gospel tonight and if you don't know the Lord tonight you can trust in him as Ruth did yes she went through tragedy she went through trauma but she trusted in the Lord and the Lord redeemed her in such a beautiful way and if you want to have any reassurance about the love of God tonight we see it in the love story of Boaz and Ruth as St.

[40 : 54] Ferguson said these four words as Boaz loves Ruth if you want to see how Yahweh loves his people look at the story of Ruth tonight see how much God is willing to redeem the outsider and the stranger and how quick and willing he is to save that's the God who we trust in tonight and if you don't know him please put your trust in him for time and for eternity may God bless these thoughts to us let us pray Lord we thank you that we have a kinsman redeemer in the Lord Jesus Christ we thank you for this beautiful story of Ruth and Boaz we thank you oh God for your great love for your church we thank you oh God that you are a God who is patient with your bride for Lord we are anything but perfect we thank you that we are covered in the righteousness of the

Lord Jesus Christ and we thank you oh Lord that as we will sing in a moment that we are all glorious within we thank you oh God that we are being prepared for that consummation one day when we will be with you in heaven and we ask oh Lord that you would beautify us here on earth by your grace give us that Boaz and that Christ like gentleness and kindness in our lives we pray that oh Lord like Boaz grace would be interwoven into our lives so that all our reactions would be Christ like Lord bless this great story to us we pray and may we know it not just as a story but may we know in a fresh way Lord your precious loving kindness in our hearts hear our prayers and forgive our sins for Jesus sake Amen so let's finish with another few verses in Psalm 45 in the

Scottish Psalter we'll sing verses 6 to 11 this time Psalm 45 in the Scottish Psalter on page 269 we'll sing from verses 6 to 11 my royal seat O Lord forever shall remain the scepter of thy kingdom doth all righteousness maintain and down to verse 11 the beauty to the king shall then delightful be and do the humbly worship him because the Lord is here one of the great beautiful things that the Lord sees in his church is our humility as we humbly worship him so let's sing Psalm 45 the second version and we'll sing verses 6 to 11 he