

Turn & Cling

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[0 : 0 0] Ruth. So about once a month we'll get to go to a totally different genre, a different point in redemptive history, and we get to see the same glorious plan of salvation.

Thanks for your patience. I put my bookmark in the wrong spot. All right, Ruth chapter one. Today we're going to read verses one through fourteen. Ruth chapter one, verses one through fourteen. In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi. And the names of his two sons were Malon and Chilion.

They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabites wives. The name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other, Ruth. They lived there about ten years. And both Malon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. And she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab. For she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. So she sat out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. Verse 8, but Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, go return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you, in the house of his husband. She kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, no, we will return with you to your people. But Naomi said, turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters. Go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me. Verse 14, then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

Let's pray. Father, we confess that you are eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in your power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth, that nothing happens except through you and by your will. And we pray that you will teach us, Lord, once again today from the book of Ruth, that you are the sovereign God who is so patient to call sinners to repentance. And we thank you that your spirit is calling those who are far away even now and that that strong hand of the Lord is with your people through every circumstance. Help us to trust in you, Lord. From your word we pray. Amen.

[4 : 1 1] Amen. All right, you may be seated. Well, today I want to show you from these first 14 verses in Ruth how God has always had one desire for his people. And it's this, it's that sinners would turn to God and that having found God, you would cling to him. So that's what, that's the message for today. It's why a true believer will turn and cling to Christ. And it comes to us from the tale of the prodigal and the convert. These two women, Naomi, I see her as a prodigal and I want to show you why.

And then Ruth, she's the convert. And it's wonderful to be able to behold together the gospel of Jesus Christ. I hope you'll even be seeing hints and similarities to what we've seen in the gospel of John. When the Lord gives us a story, like this beautiful story in Ruth, which some have called the book of Ruth the best short story ever written. It's, it's so rich. Every word is meaningful. And it's Hebrew narrative that just opens up depths of truth. And when God gives us a treasure like that, this story that reveals who he is, the purpose is to train us and to teach us what his kingdom is really about. And think about, that's what Jesus did as well. In Luke chapter 15, Jesus came to

earth and he wanted to reveal the kingdom of heaven on earth so that all would believe in the goodness and the kindness of the Father. In Luke chapter 15 especially, he gives us a number of parables and he walks through with the disciples the reality of the kingdom of heaven. The first parable, Jesus tells, is of a lady who had lost a precious coin. And he told this parable that she found the coin and brought it back and she invited everyone, rejoice with me for I have found the coin that I had lost. And then he says, here's what that parable relates to the kingdom of heaven. Just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. And he followed that up with another parable of the prodigal son. And I believe that that's what we see again in this story with Naomi and Ruth.

Only the hungry turn to get bread from God's hand. You realize the father had laid out a banquet feast and he had two sons. The proud son did not enjoy the feast with the father. It was the prodigal who was hungry. God had made that prodigal to become hungry so he could feast with his father. What a glorious promise. Only the hungry turn to get bread from God's hand. Well, let's walk through our text today. Beginning first with the prodigal, Naomi. And the question I want you to think about in the first nine verses is this. What makes a prodigal turn? And kids, maybe you've never heard that word prodigal. What does that mean? A prodigal is an ungrateful, reckless, or wayward child who is still loved by the father. So every one of us is a prodigal until the father shows us his love in

Christ. Like that wonderful little song we sing, I love kids, how you sing that so loud. Jesus said that when I'm lost, he will come for me. And I believe that's what we see in this story. Naomi is lost in the father with his good strong hand. He comes for her, his prodigal daughter. Well, why was Naomi lost? Let me try to show you that from these verses. First, I think she was lost, number one, because of the sin that her leaders had brought on to make the whole country miserable. So the sin of her leaders made Naomi's life hard. Look at verse one. We're told in verse one, in the days when the judges ruled.

Now, if you were to plot out the history of redemption, this is a very specific time period when the judges ruled before the first kings are introduced. It's about a 200-year span.

[8 : 35] And this book of Ruth is most likely written by Samuel. And you could even say if Samuel was that prophet who anointed David, who would be the great king, the picture of Christ to come, the reason he's giving us this story, it's almost like an origin myth. You know, this is the backdrop, the backstory for how King David came to be anointed. So it's a wonderful story that he gives us.

But we're told this in the book of Judges during this time period. There was no king in the land. Now look at verse one, Ruth one. There was also a famine in the land. This is not just a little record of agriculture. This is saying there was severe hunger and famine so that everyone, no matter what part of the country you're from, you would be having to take desperate measures. And it was pervasive over the entire country. Why did the people of Israel, when there was no king, have famine in the land?

Well, it's because God had told them that if you fail to keep my law on the principle of works, God had called Israel his adopted son and entered into this relationship where he will be their king, their Lord. And if they disobey his law, which they agreed to follow, not only at Mount Sinai, but again in Deuteronomy chapter five, that next generation that goes into the land, then they would be bringing on the curses for lawbreaking, which is exactly what they did. In Judges 21 verse 25, we read that everyone in this time did what was right in their own eyes. Why would this family of Naomi be any different? Everyone going around doing what seemed right in their eyes? Kids, can you imagine what your school would be like if every kid got to go around doing what felt right in their eyes in that moment? Or if traffic were that way, it would be a scary, chaotic place to live, wouldn't it? Well, that's the land of Israel when God is not their king. So their apostasy is what brought on this famine, this curse in the land. Proverbs 28 13, whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper. How could Israel, unrepentant transgressions, you know, putting their middle finger up to heaven, how could they expect to prosper and to be blessed by God?

There's no way. Well, look at verse one again now. So within this land of famine, there was a man of Bethlehem in Judah. See, Judah is the tribe you want to be from. This tribe is very well established.

They had driven out their enemies better than most. They had the fortified city. And the town of Bethlehem was like, you know, the best of the suburbs around Jerusalem that you could be in.

[11 : 12] But the curse was so bad that even Bethlehem in Judah was experiencing this famine. And Bethlehem means house of bread. So you think Bethel, you know Bethel, it means house of God. And Bethlehem means house of bread. In other words, if there's going to be a drought and famine, Bethlehem should be one of the last places to run out of food. That's the house of bread. And even there, this man was in such poverty and hunger that he had no option. In Exodus chapter three, verse eight, we're told that this would be a land flowing with milk and honey when God is their king. And look at where they've gotten themselves now under the misery of sin and rebellion. Well, not only did the wickedness of the nation and the rebellion of the leaders make Naomi's life hard, we also see that the decisions of her own family made her life even harder. Look at the last part of verse one. Her family, being so desperate, went to sojourn in the country of Moab. If you have heard anything about Moab from the Bible, none of it will be good. Moab began as a place founded on the incest of Lot with one of his daughters.

It was the place where that Jabba the Hutt, that fat king, was stabbed by the judge Ehud and the dung came out. It's the place that worshipped fertility gods because as much as Bethlehem was a house of bread, if you were to look out across the Jordan, you'd be able to see the green of Moab. So the grass was literally greener on the other side of the Jordan, outside of the land of God's kingdom.

And because they valued so much and they worshipped their crops and their fertility, this would have been a big part of their worship. It would have most likely included forced prostitution, and sensuality. So this family walks away from the kingdom of God. They turn their back on Bethlehem, on the place where God ruled over Jerusalem, and they sojourn. They went as pilgrims to live in tents and camp as those in extreme poverty in the wickedest, darkest country nearby.

That's why the decisions of Naomi's family made her life even harder. Well, in verse one, we're told he and his wife and his two sons, and then we're given their names. And I think this solidifies the point. Look at verse two. The name of the man was Elimelech. Elimelech means God is my king. So Naomi's husband's name was God is my king. Naomi's name means pleasantness. You can picture a kingdom where it's at rest. There's no threats. You can finally enjoy all that you have. Pleasant, relaxed, restful. So do you see the connection when these two together, when God is your king, you enjoy rest? And then the names of their sons show us how they've actually got the opposite of us in this point in their lives. The names of the two sons were malon, which means sickness, and chileon, which means pining, wasting away, finished. So instead of having God as their king and enjoying the pleasantness of blessing in Christ, or I'm sorry, in the Lord and God their king, they are pining away, wasting, they're finished, they're in sickness, they're in misery. That's the condition of this family.

I want to draw a few parallels here first. Do you see in this little family some reminders of other themes we know throughout the Bible? Think of Adam and Eve in the garden. When God is their king and they're walking in obedience with them, they enjoy blessing and abundance. When they rebel against God, their creator, they're banished to the east, again, traveling outside of the promised land, and they're in misery and death. Now the truth for us, everybody, is that we are also under a cursed nation and a cursed king. Our first king was Adam. We are born under the sin and the misery that Adam brought by his fall into this world, and you feel that still today, don't you? We feel the pain.

[15 : 33] We feel the shadows deepen because this world is cursed by Adam's sin. He was our first representative head. But then maybe on top of that, you feel pain and suffering in your own life because of your own decisions, because of even decisions of your family, maybe your parents or your kids.

So we can understand that Naomi's life could feel extremely heavy and hurtful and miserable away from the rule of God over her life. But I want to encourage you, this is not the end of the story, and it's not the end of the story for you either. If God has brought hardship into your life, if he is making you walk through a wilderness time, or if it feels like you're so deep in the worldliness of this age and the sin and there's no hope, just remember it's because he loves you, that he will never take his hand off of you even through that darkness.

It's only the hungry who will turn to get bread from God's hand. And yes, Jeremiah, we're told God lets his people hunger. He lets them to feel the hunger without him so that they will feast once again on his covenant grace. So if God is making you hunger, even in this season of life, it's because he will sustain you and he will feed you with the bread that only he can bring. Well, for Naomi, before

she turns, before she turns away from Moab and begins to see how God's sovereignty will sustain her, first God does one more thing. He has to strip away from her life all these other false sources of security. First, I want to show you how her own heritage had to be stripped away. Her heritage, her parents' faith, could not save her. Look at verse 2. We're told that this family, they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem and Judah. What does it mean to be an Ephrathite? Well, it's really the same as being from Bethlehem, but why give us both? I think it's to show what a rich heritage Naomi enjoyed.

In 1 Chronicles 4.4, we're told it was Caleb's wife who was named Ephrathah. And their firstborn, her was the firstborn of Ephrathah, and he was called the father of Bethlehem. So you just go back. Okay, the people were standing really in Moab, and they're looking out across the Jordan, and God brings them into the promised land, and they go and they conquer, and every tribe has their section. Caleb was one of those mighty men against the majority who stood along with Joshua trusting in God against the giants of the land. And as they come in, Caleb is given this very favorable portion of land as a blessing for trusting God. And it was Caleb's son then, her, and his mother was Ephrathah. So Caleb, the man of God who trusted in God, and his wife Ephrathah were the ones who got to have Bethlehem, the house of bread. And that's the heritage that Naomi came from. But we're seeing she had to give all that up and walk away now and show up as a nobody, as an unknown foreigner in a distant, dark land. The previous blessings of the previous generation, their sacrifices, their faith, they had dried up for her. She needed to know, do you have a faith of your own? In verse 2, we read that they went into the country of Moab and remained there. Remaining there means it wasn't just a temporary measure just to survive for a couple months. It was setting up camp. We were giving up everything we had in the land that God promised to bless. This would be our home now. And then we see what follows in verse 3 is that her own family could not save her either. Her heritage wasn't enough to save her, nor her own immediate family. Isn't it so easy to make our families an idol and to put our hope and trust in our families? Look at verse 3. Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. God is my king. Elimelech is dead. God was no longer the king of

[19:47] Israel. They had rejected his lordship, and now God was not the king apparently of her home anymore. She had lost not only her husband, but also now she will lose her two sons. Now these two sons, they were told in verse 4, they took wives. The name of one was Orpah, the other was Ruth.

Ruth. Orpah means the back of the neck. So picture, you're having a conversation with someone, you're looking each other in the eyes, and that person ends the conversation, turns their back to you, and walks away from you. You're not seeing their eyes anymore, you're seeing the back of their neck. So Orpah's name means that. It really means to turn around figuratively. And Ruth means companion or friend. It also means compassion or grace. And they lived there about there in Moab about 10 years without the husband. So here's a widow, an immigrant, very poor, as a foreigner in a very dark, oppressive land with her family and no husband. And then both, look at verse 5, both Malon and Chilion, her two sons, died so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. The darkness got darker.

The emptiness of this widow, who I'm sure thought of her husband every day, got even emptier. Sinclair Ferguson helped me to see how by setting this beautiful story up in such a dark backdrop, it really underlines that the saving purposes of God ordinarily begin in the hidden and sometimes dark providences of God. But God's hand is near his people in the darkness in order for his grip to take hold of them in the darkness. If you're in a dark room, you can't see anything and you need to find a way out of there. You can't go fumbling around, you'll hurt yourself. You need God to grab your hand in that darkness and take hold of you and lead you out of there. And I agree with Sinclair Ferguson. Isn't that so true? In your darkest moments of your life, those moments when you felt the most empty and hopeless, God once again shows himself faithful. He takes your hand in the dark. When you can't see anything else, no way out, and he leads you one step at a time. We'll look at verse 6 next.

We're told, then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return. If you have a pencil, underline that word, return. This is the Hebrew verb shub. And just in the span of the next six verses, the author will be using this same verb six times. He's hitting it over and over. Turn, return, go back, turn back, return. He uses this verb to show you this is really what this chapter is about. It's about returning. And why is that so important? Well, one scholar pointed out, in the Hebrew Bible, in the Old

Testament, there is one word, the main word used for conversion in the Old Testament. And it's this verb right here, to return. It means to turn back to God's covenant of grace.

It means to repent, to be brought back around, to go on the right path. So do you see what is happening beneath the surface? This is a narrative of a surprising conversion. The prodigal is being brought back home. What makes a prodigal turn back? She had to be stripped away of all those things that were false sources of hope. Her heritage could not save her. Her family could not save her. And there's one more thing that cannot save her. Look at verse six. She had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. Now, this verse doesn't give us many details, but seeing the theme here is conversion. And knowing that Moab worshiped these pagan gods of fertility. Their idols were all about the crops and fertility. She was in the fields of Moab. She was in the darkness, the midst of that idolatry, that worldliness of Moab, when the Lord witnessed to her. Look again at that verse.

[24 : 12] Verse six. She had heard. She had heard that the Lord had visited his people. Isn't it true that the Lord loves to visit his people? He loves to be near them. And when his people get to be and enjoy the Lord, what do they do? You witness. You share about it. You see the similarity with John chapter one?

The Lord visits his people. And his people tell everyone they can about it. Well, that's Naomi. They witnessed her. She heard once again the Lord is showing his favor to sinners like us. And it's for you too, Naomi.

Come back. You can be part of it. This is not who you are. You're not of this world. You don't belong here. You know that's not who you are. So she's in the fields and they witness to her. And she returns.

She returns. See, there's an application. When you come to the end of yourself, when God has stripped everything away, you hear the good news that the favor of God is for you, yes, a rebel like you too, it's for you, you respond. How could you not respond? That's what we call the effectual call. The Holy Spirit draws you. He shows you God is so gentle and kind and generous. How could you not want to be under his rule, under his kingdom? It's for you. Well, verse seven, I think, is confirming this, that she was repenting. Verse seven, she sat out from the place where she was. And if Moab represents worldliness and sin and idolatry, she got out of there. This is not where I need to be. I do not belong here.

Verse seven says, with her two daughters-in-law, they went on their way to return. There it is again, to return to the land of Judah. So now do you see that picture? It's been reversed. Naomi now has her back turned to Moab, the picture of darkness and worldliness and idolatry. And she is facing once again the land where God rules. He's calling her back. By the way, to get from Moab to Judah, you cross the Jordan River, and you're going to go near Jerusalem as you enter Judah. It's the exact setting of John chapter one, where John was baptizing in the Jordan River. Jesus, as he went out into the wilderness, we don't know exactly, but it might have been this exact land. And do you remember, children, what little town was Jesus born in? Oh, little town of? Do you see the beauty of the gospel?

[26 : 53] You see how it's there? It's everywhere. It's everywhere we look. I want to tell you this quick little illustration, because here we are, Parker, Colorado, 2022. Ruth, I mean, ancient, archaic, you know, Hebrew narrative. But it's everywhere in the world where the gospel goes forth.

We talked to some missionaries in the Amazon area. It was an unreached people group. And some missionaries labored there for years and years and years, brought them the gospel. We're working to get them a Bible that they could read. Some of them spoke Portuguese so they could help. And then because of family sickness and lack of supplies and stuff, that missionary family left. Years later, another missionary family got called to go to that same tribe. And God, by his word, and that initial witness of the gospel to that tribe, he had began to grow this little seeds of faith and understanding.

And they needed to be taught and disciplined. But they had a word that they used to describe conversion. And it was for them, like picture, see this carpet right down the middle of the pews? For them, if you're going to go hunt, all the men and the young boys, you go out to go hunt and bring back food.

And so you go on this trail through the thick jungle. And then everybody kind of disperses, you chase stuff down. But someone would always stay on the main trail, on the main path. And they had a special call they would do to call you back to the trail. And this tribe said, that's conversion.

It's when you hear the call back to the trail that leads you home. Isn't that amazing? The same gospel from Ruth to John to a tribe in the Amazon jungle. And you know why? Only the hungry, only the prodigals who are humbled and who are no longer proud or self-sufficient, it's only the hungry who turn to get bread from the hand of God. Hercules Collins in our Orthodox Catechism says this, what is involved in genuine repentance or conversion? Answer, two things. Dying away of the old self, forsaking Moab, turning away from the world and sin. That's number one. And the coming to life in the new, the new self that's being recreated by God himself. So what is dying away of the old and what is coming to life in the new? Well, dying away of the old is to be genuinely sorry, repentant, hating sin.

[29 : 18] To desire God more and more is the way of life. To wholeheartedly enjoy God through Christ. And then to delight in living in his kingdom, letting him bear every good work in your life. What a glorious gospel we get to enjoy. I want to show you a psalm. And if you remember nothing else, I hope that you'll go back and read this psalm for yourself as your prayer. Psalm 118. Please turn there in your Bible.

Psalm 118. Although this psalm was written much later, many of the psalms were likely organized under the rule of King David, pulling in a lot of musicians and poets and with the blessing of the Spirit, they were all arranged to be a prayer book and a song book for the church. And if it's the same Holy Spirit, which it is, that was drawing Naomi back, that same Holy Spirit inspired these words, even though it came much later, I can just see this being the cry of her heart, even if she couldn't put words to it. Psalm 118. Look at verse 14. Verse 14. So picture Naomi, maybe even after she has crossed the Jordan River, climbing back up the slope into the land of Judah. Verse 14. The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord exalts.

The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. Now look at verse 17. After all she's gone through in her miserable life, I shall not die, but I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord. The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. May that be your prayer in a hard time as well. Your comfort is in the strong hand of the Lord who does valiantly for his glory. Well, that's of the prodigal, the tale of the prodigal, but there's one other tale, one other story, and it's the story of the convert. And I want you to pay attention to this. It won't come to the very end. What does a true convert do? If Naomi was the prodigal, that person who was still loved by the father even though she was far away, and he would draw her back, Ruth, I believe, is a picture of a convert. Look at verse 8. What does a true convert do? Number one, a true convert sees the way of life.

First, God has to open the eyes of the blind. You can't walk with God until he's shown you this is the way of life. Look at verse 8. Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, go, return, underline that word again. Return each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. Verse 9, the Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. What Naomi's saying here is this. She's saying, if you go this direction with me, you leave everything behind. It's going to mean no security, no safety, no guaranteed work or income. You have my blessing. I will graciously bless you to just stay right where you are. Verse 9, Naomi kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, no, we will return with you to your people. Now, how many ladies, how many daughters-in-law said this? You can answer. Yeah, right now in verse 9, two said, right? They said that. They both said that. So, we're going to find out only one of the two was a true convert. Even if God was letting both of them see this is the way of life, only one of them would truly walk in that way. Well, the second point is this. Number two, a true convert counts the cost of walking in the way of life. Not only do you have to see it, you also do have to count the cost. Look at verse 11. Naomi said, turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters. In verse 13, she says, would you therefore refrain from marrying for my sake? No, my daughters. See, she's helping them assess.

[33 : 52] You walk in this way. You could be a widow forever. I can give you nothing. There's nothing I have to give to you to make this worth it for you. There would have to be some deeper calling for you to do this.

So, to me, I believe Naomi is now witnessing to Ruth. Remember, Ruth would have grown up in Moab. She would have known nothing about the true Lord except that this family would have taught

her and perhaps preached it to her to the extent that they still believed. You could even say it was for Ruth that God drove this family to such misery. They were missionaries. They didn't, maybe not willfully, it was more like a Jonah, but they were sent there by God to bring Ruth back. Ruth was to be really the one that God would use and bless. See, the promised seed of the Messiah would not come from Naomi at all.

It would come from this Moabitess. And you know where the story goes. If Boaz is a picture of Christ because he's the kinsman redeemer, he's the one who becomes like you, your kin, in order to redeem you and save you, that's Boaz. And Boaz marries Ruth. So Ruth, therefore, is a picture for us of the global international church. She's from Moab. No national blessings coming her way, but God, in her darkness, finds her. Jesus said that he will come for me. Ruth could sing that song. God came for Ruth. What a wonderful gospel. Well, here's why I think Naomi was witnessing to Ruth. I think that not only did Naomi have to see the way of life, not only did she have to count the cost of following, a true convert also has to learn a high view of the sovereignty of God. Look at verse 13. Naomi says, it is exceedingly bitter for me, to me, for your sake. Now, underline this part, that the hand of God, the hand of God has gone out against me. In our songbooks, and we prayed moments ago, that God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything, and that nothing happens, nothing happens, except through him and by his will. I believe Naomi, right here, is preaching this high view of God's sovereignty to Ruth. In Joshua chapter 4, listen to all the similarities of language. Joshua chapter 4, verse 23.

For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.

Why does the Lord dry up the waters? Why does the Lord put his strong hand, his sovereign hand, among his people and work in their lives in these mighty ways? It's so that all the peoples of the earth may fear the Lord forever. So I believe Naomi is witnessing to Ruth. Ruth is learning now to have a high view of the sovereignty of God, and she says, I want to walk in this way of life with such a God.

[37 : 37] So look at verse 14. They lifted up their eyes and wept again, but then we see a difference in the response between the two women. We're told Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. So Orpah, after seeing the way of life, to an extent at least, and assessing the cost, she took Naomi up on the offer. Don't do this for me. You have my blessing. You go back to a place where you have security, where you can get a husband, a home, a family. You can actually survive, and I bless you in doing that. And Orpah graciously accepted that and said her goodbyes. But look at the next few words. But Ruth clung to her. Well, the verb we've emphasized so far is to turn, repent, return. But you need to also circle now this verb, because this verb is for you.

If you are walking with Christ, you need now to do like Ruth and cling to her. See, Ruth was compelled, maybe by an unexplainable reason. We know it's the Holy Spirit drawing his own to cling to Naomi. And here's the encouragement, because maybe you're feeling like you've been a prodigal. Maybe you're feeling like you've wasted years of your life, and you want so much for God to use you now. How can you use me, Lord? Here's the encouragement. If you're like Naomi, a prodigal that God has brought back, when God turns a prodigal back to himself, he draws a new convert along with him. If God is drawing you back, your repentance, your returning to God, it proclaims the gospel and the sovereignty of God to all the nations. And he will draw others in, maybe your own family, maybe your children. What a wonderful promise. But that verb, to cling, like Ruth, I couldn't let it go. I did a little study. And in the Old Testament, the verb to cling, to cling on to something like that, I believe it's always used when the person is in a life or death situation. That's when they cling on. And the ironic thing is that for Ruth, going with Naomi was the way of death by worldly standards. It means like you're dying. It reminds me of when Jesus said, whoever will come after me must take up his cross. This is the way of death to the world. And that's what Naomi, that's what Ruth clung on to by following Naomi. Take, for example, 2 Samuel 23. We're told that among the mighty men of David, there was a man named Eleazar. And we're told that Eleazar's hand clung to his sword.

You see that life and death situation? He's surrounded by the enemies and he's clinging to his sword. And the Lord brought about a great victory that day. And the men returned after him only to strip the slain. So life or death, trusting in God, the Lord gives a victory and the army of God returns.

You see the similarity? He's clinging and they return. I'll give you another example from the Old Testament. 1 Kings 11, 2. This is King Solomon and it's a negative example. He'd come from this line as well. King Solomon, we're told he loved many foreign women, including Moabitess women who had not repented and become part of the blessed people. And in verse 2, we're told that from the nations, which the Lord had said, you shall not enter into marriage with them, neither they with you, for surely, listen to this, surely these other nations, these other women will turn away your heart after their gods. You will start putting your hope and trust in false gods, not in the true God. But Solomon clung to these in love. He's going to control the kingdom. It's life or death in his mind. He has to be in charge.

And he had 700 wives who were princesses and 300 concubines. And listen to what happened according to 1 Kings. His wives turned away his heart. So what you cling to, your heart follows. [41 : 46] Well, I want to give you one example of clinging in the New Testament. It's the only one I could find in Acts chapter 3. There was a blind man sitting at the beautiful gate of the temple asking for alms.

And we're told that when the Lord made this blind man to see, all the people were surrounding him in amazement at what had happened. And this blind man who could now see clung to Peter and John.

And the blind man would not let go of them. And the conflict escalates even more. And you go down to verse 19. Listen to what Peter does next. As this man's clinging to them for life and death, Peter stood up and preached to the crowd, repent, therefore, and turn back that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord because he has sent Christ the appointed one for you. Only the hungry turn to get bread from the hand of God. And if God is letting you hunger, it's because he wants you to cling to the bread of life that he sends from heaven for you.

Turn back to Psalm 118. If you're a convert and you were clinging to sin and to the world, but now God has given you a new heart like he did to Ruth. And if you want more and more to cling to Jesus, then you too can pray from Psalm 118.

Look at verse 19. And now I want you to picture Ruth now. All she's known is the land of Moab, of darkness, of idolatry. And she now gets to be in the presence of the Lord from where refreshment comes. When God is the King, there is blessing and pleasantness. And this can be your prayer as well.

[43 : 41] Psalm 118, starting at verse 19. Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord. Who is the gate, Jesus said? Jesus, I am the gate. Enter through me. The gate is open wide to you. Enter through it. Verse 21. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

Not just the salvation for your people or for Naomi or for Ruth. Christ is becoming your salvation as you enter the presence of God through him by faith. Praise him for the salvation we enjoy. Verse 22.

If you had any doubt if this is talking about Christ, verse 22. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. See, Jesus is now the foundation. He is the one upon whom the kingdom of heaven is built on earth. And this is the Lord's doing. Naomi does not get any glory for returning. Ruth does not get any glory for being saved or for being the one through whom the seed would come. This is the Lord's doing. And to all whose eyes have been opened, you can behold, this is marvelous in our eyes as well, isn't it? This is the day. Yes, even today, dear church, this is the day the Lord has made. He's the creator of heaven and earth and our help is in him.

[45 : 17] So let us rejoice and be glad. Save us, we pray, oh Lord. Are you hungry for Christ today? Cling to the bread of heaven and let Christ nourish you every day. Take him in. Let him change you. Let him sustain you through those darkest hours. Let's pray from 2 Thessalonians 2.

O God, I give thanks to you for your church who you have said is beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you as the first fruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

And to this you have called us through the gospel that we may obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. So then help us, Holy Spirit, to stand firm and to cling, to hold on to the truth, the body of biblical doctrine that you have taught us through Jesus Christ so that we can enjoy life in Christ as our King, we pray. Amen.

We'll take a few moments to prepare yourself for the Lord's Supper. Amen.