

Reading: Ruth 3:1-18

Theme: She who dares wins!

The motto of the SAS is "*Who Dares Wins*". They carry out daring, yet carefully planned and executed manoeuvres and missions to bring about success in battles. Many of their methods and exploits have not yet been made known, but many soldiers and civilians owe their lives to SAS and SBS soldiers and missions since their formation in the Second World War. I've picked up on their motto to put over this episode of Naomi's plan to get a husband for Ruth - she who dares wins. We began to look at this chapter last time and saw that it was a rash plan and yet one that had a scriptural reasoning. I want us to continue on to the end of this chapter and see 4 things:

1. Boaz the Manager, Ruth the Maid. (v5-7)

Boaz was the boss; he was in charge of his property and men. He is here shown to be involved in the work of winnowing. He was not someone who stayed at a distance, letting others get on with things, but he rolls up his sleeves and gets involved in the work. Boaz was active in the work. He is there as boss, as manager, as foreman, but also as a fellow worker. He is wisely managing his business concerns. He could so easily have left others do things, but being there he is willing to be involved in the work directly and to play his part, even releasing others to do work that he, as an older man, was no longer able to do. He is winnowing and then stayed on to guard the barley overnight.

There is provision made for himself and any others working there, so they can eat and drink and be refreshed before they turn in for the night. There has been adequate planning. Boaz shows his experience as a man of business, as a man used to dealing with others. Boaz shows his control of his business and even self

control when he is suddenly presented with a marriage proposal at midnight - he is wise and discreet at that time also.

Ruth is presented to us as an obedient maid - a handmaid. She uses the term for herself in v9 (AV and Hebrew), servant (NIV). She is obedient to Naomi's words (v5 & 6) and obeys what Boaz instructs her to do later. Ruth is a lovely picture of obedience, lowly obedience. She doesn't say "*Hold on a minute...*" She doesn't protest about what she is expected to do, or that it was inconvenient, she is submissive and obedient.

As believers, those who say that we love the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we can so often want things our own way, but the way forward in our Christian life is to humbly obey our God and Saviour who really does know what is best for us. We can sing so readily, and should mean what we sing "*Trust and obey! For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.*" [MP760] That is why it's so important for us to read God's word and listen to it being preached as we will then know what it is He will want for us and we can obey Him. As believers we are to submit to and obey the one who most definitely knows what He is doing - both for us, in us and through us. Moving on we see:

2. Boaz the Startled, Ruth the Surprise. (v8 & 9)

Boaz is fast asleep and he wakes up and is startled, was afraid, wakes up trembling or shuddering (*so the Hebrew indicates*) - perhaps he was shivering because his feet had been uncovered or it may have been shock! Whatever the reason he wakes up startled, shocked and aware that someone is there - perhaps as he turns over, he is aware of someone at his feet and this brings him suddenly awake with a shock. Maybe he sits up and makes out the shape of a woman lying at his feet. What a shock for this older man, this older bachelor - as there is no indication he'd been

married previously. So Boaz has this shock and is startled. In reply to his question "*Who are you?*" he has the surprise that this woman is godly Ruth. She tells him there in the darkness who she is and does so with characteristic humility "*I am your servant/handmaid Ruth*".

If Boaz hadn't been startled, shocked at finding out the woman was Ruth, he must have been shocked when she then surprises him and tells him the purpose of her mission - v9b. She is asking him in the picturesque language of the time, for him to take her as his wife. It wasn't just a request to be covered over for the night, but that he would take her under his care permanently. She gave him a further reason - since you are a kinsman redeemer, a near kinsman, a go'el. She links it to the biblical reasons which had probably prompted Naomi to formulate this daring plan to present Boaz with his duty.

What a lovely expression Ruth uses to tell Boaz what she expected of him - to spread his garment over her. The AV translates the word as "*skirt*" - his long flowing robes over her. The Hebrew word is used a number of times in OT and is translated garments/skirt only a few of the times. Boaz uses the same word in blessing Ruth, to express where her faith and brought her (2:12) "*May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.*" Ruth is expectantly saying to Boaz "*Cover me with your wings*" i.e. bring me into your care, your protection, your shelter and your provision. She is expressing all that it would involve to be his wife. She wanted to be covered with and take refuge in his love, care and protection. It is a tender expression and yet one that is based on hope and expectation because he is a near kinsman.

In the gospel there is the hope, the truth and reality held out to us; that the Son of God would cover us with His wings - His care, His love, His provision, His shelter and His protection. We have no claims on Him, yet this is offered to whosoever will receive Him as their own Saviour that they are assured, promised they will be sheltered safely and securely in His care. Go to Him, even if it seems darkness in your life and ask Him to cover you with His garment of salvation. You may have questions about that, then ask me later.

3. Boaz the Benevolent, Ruth the Blessed. (v10-15)

Note that Boaz was **not offended** at Ruth's request and approach in this way. In fact he was very generous, benevolent in his words, attitudes and actions towards her. He blesses her and speaks well of her and praises her. He says that she had shown greater kindness now than she had earlier. Boaz uses the lovely rich Hebrew word *hesed* – loving kindness, unending love, steadfastness. It is a rich and full word that is so often used of God and His mercy, love etc. Here Boaz says that Ruth showed that in a greater way than she had done previously. He is probably thinking of her kindness and faithfulness to Naomi - all she'd shown in practical terms and love to her. Now, he says, she had shown more kindness, *hesed* - for he realised she would have been obeying Naomi in approaching him, an older man, as the kinsman, whereas she could have gone, in her own right as a young woman after the young men - of any standing, rich or poor.

It would appear Ruth had a choice, for it would seem she was an attractive young woman and a virtuous woman, one of noble character. The end of v11 makes that clear to us as Boaz tells Ruth that the townsmen (literally *the gate*) of his people knew she was a worthy/noble/virtuous woman. She may have been a foreigner, but those of the gate of the city i.e. the rulers, elders, the wise

people, had seen clearly her worth/virtue/noble character. The word noble (NIV), virtuous (AV) is the same word is used of Boaz (2:1) and is also used to describe the wife worth more than rubies in Proverbs 31:10 *“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.”* This is an ample testimony to Ruth's character and so indicates that she, as one translator freely puts it, was *“a bride worth winning”*. People, as they'd seen and known Ruth, saw she was a catch, the one to go for as a wife!

Boaz was asked to be her husband, to fulfil his duty as a kinsman redeemer and he asks the Lord to bless her. As he does so he points out a problem, but says he will sort it out and she is to stay there by him that night - for it would not have been safe or wise to let her go home at that time of the night.

Before it was light, Boaz gets her up, gives her a great provision. Ruth is told by Boaz not to go back empty to Naomi - this is maybe a reference to Naomi's words on arrival at Bethlehem that Boaz no doubt had had repeated to him (1:21) *“I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty.”* Now Ruth has gone out empty but is coming back full and so it is a way of saying that her and Naomi's empty days are over! Then he discreetly sends her back home to Naomi. Ruth knew great blessing for this courageous, daring mission of obedience to her mother-in-law. Boaz shows his benevolence, his generosity of nature, words and substance. So what about these 6 measures of barley? They don't mean much to us in those terms. I've said they are generous gift and they appear to be emphasized by the writer – it would weigh around 80lbs, that's the weight of a sack and a half of potatoes! One writer sees a hint of Boaz's humour in this and pictures Ruth's amazement that he expects her to pick that up and says how he'd probably have put it onto Ruth's shoulders or on her head and shoulders and sent her back to her mother-in-law and to tell her

“Boaz gave me this to tell you he didn’t want me to come back to you empty handed!” In other words he was telling Naomi he understood what she intended by this daring plan and by God’s grace he’d get it sorted.

Boaz also guards his and her reputations - the order is given that no one was to know a woman had been there. Who it was said to we aren't sure - to his servants, to Ruth, perhaps even to himself? It was wise counsel – for it would prevent an unnecessary scandal and, perhaps knowing human nature, prevent the unnamed nearer kinsman making capital out of it, or even threatening Ruth's life – scandal of immorality.

When a person comes to trust in Christ as their Saviour, they come to be covered by His wings, under His care, and His love - there are no problems, no difficulties that prevent it being so and being so immediately. There are no skeletons lurking in any cupboard that prevent Him accepting us, for He knows about us completely and there is nothing hidden from His view. He knows us all completely and thoroughly - all the wrong we have said, done, desired or thought; those things no one else knows about and we're glad of that. Yet He still knows them, but they are no problem for Him to receive us as His child. His death on Calvary dealt with all our sins, all the guilt of all our wrongs. He is the great benefactor - He gives us all things richly to enjoy; as His children He heaps blessing upon blessing upon us - it may be a blessing we don't recognise, but He works all things together for good to those who love Him, those who are called according to His purpose. We, if we trust the Lord Jesus, are actually and eternally blessed - having all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. It is glorious, it is magnificent, it is beyond our complete understanding but Christians are BLESSED. Do we recognise that? Do we delight in

it? So often our problems stem not from what we do not know, but from that we fail to recognise and remember is true of us.

4. Boaz the Determined, Ruth the Dependent. (v16-18)

Ruth returns, perhaps with the faint or stronger odour of perspiration replacing her perfume of the evening before after carrying this load of barley to Naomi and Naomi asks, according to NIV *"How did it go my daughter?"* The AV and Hebrew say literally *"Who are you my daughter?"* Some say Naomi didn't recognise her in the early morning light and with this large bundle of barley upon her! I feel Naomi is asking in her question *"How did things go?"* - means *"Are you still a widow or bride-to-be?"* So *"Who are you?"* She wants to know what has been the outcome of her daring mission.

Ruth tells her all that had gone on, including the fact of the nearer kinsman. Naomi realises what must go on and tells Ruth to wait. They were both dependent on Boaz, yet Naomi points out that Boaz was, by his own words, determined to sort the matter out and knowing his character, he would not rest until he settled the matter that day. Remember Boaz himself said he was going to see the nearer kinsman and if he would not fulfil his duty, then Boaz vowed before the Lord that he would marry her.

Boaz was determined and Ruth was dependent. I don't know if you've ever viewed the gospel of the Lord Jesus and the so great salvation it proclaims in these terms. God was determined to save to Himself a people. They could do nothing to save themselves, nothing to make themselves appealing to Him. By nature we are hopeless, helpless and spiritually dead towards God. For any hope or help we are utterly dependent upon God. Our salvation would be an impossibility; for none of us would desire God, none of us would seek God in the Lord Jesus Christ; we would not want God

or His ways. We are utterly dependent upon Him. If you find you have a desire for God, a desire to have the salvation offered in God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, if you're aware of your need to be right with God, to be at peace with Him, then take heart, be encouraged and be assured it is God the Holy Spirit working in you. You are dependent upon God. Don't look inward to see what **you can do** to save yourself, to make yourself acceptable to God. **Look upward**, call on God to save you, to give you life, understanding, to give you faith to believe, to give you eternal life and bring you into a relationship with Him.

It is no wonder that we are dependent upon Him - for He is God, but it is a wonder that He should ever have been determined to rescue, save anyone of us. If we know that salvation, then glory in this wonderful Saviour, the God who saved us on purpose. If we don't know Him, then call on Him to save us, to cover us with His salvation and don't rest until the matter is settled - be like Boaz and settle it today.

If He is our God and Saviour, then live to honour His name i.e. work and person and ask how you can serve Him and His people in whatever way He would have us do so – we are saved to serve (WEC motto) and not saved to just satisfy ourselves. Yes, His salvation is wonderful as it is an amazing relationship with the living and loving God. We are to live to please Him and do all He wants us to do. As we trust and obey Him, we will find there will be joy and satisfaction known in our lives.