



Session 13

REDEEMED AND SECURE

God can surprise us with those whom He chooses to bring about His purposes.

RUTH 3:8-13; 4:13-17

^{3:8} At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman! ⁹ So he asked, “Who are you?” “I am Ruth, your slave,” she replied. “Spread your cloak over me, for you are a family redeemer.” ¹⁰ Then he said, “May the LORD bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before, because you have not pursued younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ Now don’t be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you say, since all the people in my town know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹² Yes, it is true that I am a family redeemer, but there is a redeemer closer than I am. ¹³ Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you,



that's good. Let him redeem you. But if he doesn't want to redeem you, as the LORD lives, I will. Now lie down until morning." [...] ^{4:13} Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he was intimate with her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Praise the LORD, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel. ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." ¹⁶ Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and took care of him. ¹⁷ The neighbor women said, "A son has been born to Naomi," and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Notice the promises made by Boaz. How would these promises offer Ruth hope and security?

FIRST THOUGHTS

Sometimes, life situations make us feel helpless and hopeless. Abandoned children often become victims in systems that fail to meet their needs. Widows spend long hours alone facing uncertain futures. Sudden illness interrupts an otherwise seemingly normal life. Financial and family problems force students to drop out of school. Spouses often suffer great emotional stress as they watch their marriage crumble.

Each of these scenarios plays out every day around the world. Even the most faithful followers of the Lord can be shaken, becoming disoriented in their spiritual walk and filled with despair. If left to themselves, they often make bad choices in an effort to cover the pain. These bad choices further complicate the problems.

The surprise twists of life can make us wonder if unexpected crises and catastrophes derail God's plans and purposes for our lives. If we search, we find that God can restore us and bless us again. In the process, He can surprise us with those whom He chooses to bring about His purposes.

Looking back over the hard times of your life, how did God use an unlikely person to advance His purposes through your difficulties?

In this week's session we see how God used Boaz, a "family redeemer," to bring help and hope to Naomi and Ruth. When Ruth vowed to stay with Naomi (1:16-17), she had no idea what would become of the two of them. Naomi described her life as having been made bitter by the Lord (1:13,20). Like Naomi, Ruth was a widow with no visible prospects of support. Yet, Ruth put Naomi's welfare above her own, a sacrificial act of love that would factor into God's plan (2:10-12).

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

RUTH 2:1–4:22

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest (1:22). Ruth took the initiative to help provide for Naomi by going to the nearby grainfields and trailing the harvesters to gather left-behind grain (2:2). Boaz, "a prominent man of noble character" (2:1) and one of Naomi's relatives, noticed and befriended Ruth. He immediately took action to provide for the two widows.

In last week's session we looked at the custom of levirate marriage. Levirate marriage required that when a married man died childless, his brother or next of kin had to marry the widow and father a son who would carry on the family name (Deut. 25:5-10). Naomi knew that Boaz, as a relative of her husband Elimelech [ih LIM uh lek], could be a suitable husband in a levirate marriage. She helped Ruth understand how to approach Boaz. Ruth followed her advice and asked for Boaz's help as a family redeemer (3:12). A family redeemer had responsibilities in addition to fulfilling the levirate marriage. One was to seek vengeance if a wrong was committed against a family member. (This role does not play a factor in the story of Ruth.) Another responsibility of the redeemer was to assure a deceased man's estate stayed in the family.

Eventually, Ruth married Boaz and became pregnant. They named their son Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse and a grandson named David. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus informs readers: "Boaz



fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered King David” (1:5-6). God chose a non-Israelite woman to be included in the lineage of Jesus, our Redeemer.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INQUIRY (RUTH 3:8-9)

VERSES 8-9

⁸ At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman! ⁹ So he asked, “Who are you?” “I am Ruth, your slave,” she replied. “Spread your cloak over me, for you are a family redeemer.”

Ruth worked in the fields until the end of the barley and wheat seasons, staying close to Boaz’s female servants (2:23). The fact that Ruth still had no husband pained Naomi (3:1). Realizing the potential of Boaz as a husband for Ruth, Naomi presented a plan.

At night, harvesters protected their grains from thieves and animals by sleeping in the threshing area. On this particular night the responsibility fell to Boaz. Following Naomi’s directions, Ruth went to the Boaz’s threshing floor. As Boaz slept, she positioned herself at Boaz’s feet.

Imagine Boaz’s alarm and puzzlement to wake up at midnight and discover Ruth ***lying at his feet***. It is important we emphasize that both Boaz and Ruth were people of the highest moral and spiritual integrity. Ruth is called “a woman of noble character” in 3:11. Boaz was described earlier as a “man of noble character” (2:1).

Boaz inquired of Ruth: ***“Who are you?”*** Notice the lack of any pretense from Ruth. After giving her name, she referred to herself as Boaz’s ***slave***.

No doubt Naomi believed that Boaz would initiate the conversation regarding Ruth’s intentions. When Boaz hesitated, Ruth took the initiative. With ***spread your cloak over me***, Ruth made her objectives clear. This was a request for protection. The phrase was especially associated with marriage. In essence, Ruth proposed marriage to Boaz.

When Boaz first encountered Ruth, he invoked a divine blessing on her that God might reward her since she sought refuge under the Lord’s “wings” (see 2:12). The Hebrew word for “wings” translates here as ***cloak***.

Ruth was requesting that Boaz be instrumental in his previous blessing. Whereas Boaz had recognized that Ruth sought refuge under the wings of the Lord, Ruth now wanted Boaz to know that God intended to protect her (and Naomi) under Boaz's cloak.

Ruth told Boaz: ***you are a •family redeemer.*** The Hebrew word translated *family redeemer* delineated the responsibilities of the next-of-kin in crisis situations such as that of Naomi and Ruth. In the case of the death of a husband without a son, the redeemer concept became operative. The law (see Deut. 25:5-10) stipulated that the next-of-kin (eventually Boaz) would marry the widow (Ruth) in order to provide a male descendant for the deceased (Mahlon and, by extension, Elimelech). This insured the perpetuation of the family name and inheritance. Family redeemers were obligated to buy back land if the family had had to sell it or to redeem family members from debt-related slavery. We can easily parallel Boaz's redemption of Ruth (and Naomi) with Christ's redemption of sinners. Boaz's role as family redeemer was fulfilled in greater measure by Christ, our Redeemer.

How would you characterize Ruth's approach to Boaz? How does her approach to Boaz compare to how we should approach Jesus, our Redeemer?

BIBLE SKILL: *Review additional passages to gain a clearer understanding.*

Review the following passages: Exodus 6:6-8; Leviticus 25:24-28; Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Job 19:25; Psalms 19:14; 69:18; Isaiah 43:1; Acts 7:35; Revelation 5:1-5. How would you describe a family redeemer based on these passages? How does this give you a greater understanding of the role Jesus plays as our Redeemer?



INTEREST (RUTH 3:10-13)

VERSE 10

¹⁰ Then he said, “May the LORD bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before, because you have not pursued younger men, whether rich or poor.”

These verses clearly indicate that Boaz did not misconstrue Ruth’s intentions. Boaz voiced his willingness to marry Ruth, thus redeeming Elimelech’s name and family. ***You have shown more kindness now than before*** referred to Ruth’s initial kindness to Naomi. Initially, Ruth committed herself to Naomi (see 1:16-17). Now Ruth committed herself to Boaz as a potential wife. Boaz responded positively and immediately. He voiced his elation that Ruth had chosen him. He knew that Ruth could have ***pursued younger men, whether rich or poor***. The phrase *rich or poor* speaks volumes to Ruth’s character. In essence, Boaz knew Ruth could have had practically any man of her picking.

VERSE 11

¹¹ Now don’t be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you say, since all the people in my town know that you are a woman of noble character.

Even after Boaz communicated his willingness to marry her, Ruth undoubtedly experienced fear and hesitation. Perhaps Boaz sensed her anxieties and attempted to ease those feelings with ***don’t be afraid, my daughter***. Consider for a moment all Ruth had experienced: the death of her father-in-law, brother-in-law, and husband; separation from her sister-in-law; childlessness; living in a foreign land with only her mother-in-law and foraging for food. Boaz attempted to reassure her.

VERSES 12-13

¹² Yes, it is true that I am a family redeemer, but there is a redeemer closer than I am. ¹³ Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, that’s good. Let him redeem you. But if he doesn’t want to redeem you, as the LORD lives, I will. Now lie down until morning.”

While willing to assume his redeemer responsibility, Boaz informed Ruth of the existence of another potential redeemer ***closer than I am***. Ruth

and Naomi appear to have been unaware of this person. Although the Bible does not say, Boaz could have been a second cousin to Elimelech, while this unnamed redeemer was a first cousin. We do not know the specifics.

Boaz's words must have been discouraging to Ruth. She knew Boaz's character. He had treated her kindly and honorably. He had demonstrated his generosity to her. Ruth must have thought: What might be the character of this nearer relative? Kind? Caring? Abusive? Neglectful? Aloof?

Boaz had no option. He knew the closer redeemer had the initial responsibility to redeem Ruth. Boaz told her: ***if he wants to redeem you, that's good.*** Was he trying to encourage her? Boaz and Ruth both knew that her redemption by someone else might not be *good*. Boaz offered a supportive word with ***but if he doesn't want to redeem you ... I will.*** Regardless of the outcome, Boaz promised to tend to the issue in the morning.

Boaz gave Ruth one final gift of "six measures of barley" (3:15). Ruth returned to Naomi and "told her everything the man had done for her" (3:16).

What feelings have you experienced as you began to realize the Lord was working things out in a positive way for you?

INHERITANCE (RUTH 4:13-17)

VERSE 13

¹³ Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he was intimate with her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

Ruth 4:1-12 records Boaz's meeting with the closest redeemer. Boaz gathered 10 men of the city to serve as witnesses to whatever decision the closer redeemer made. Boaz made the man aware of the availability of property that belonged to their relative, Elimelech. He reminded him that, as the family redeemer, he had the opportunity to purchase the property. The man said, "I want to redeem it" (v. 4). Boaz then informed him that when he bought the property he also acquired



Ruth, the wife of the deceased man. The phrase “to perpetuate the man’s name” (v. 5) is a reference to levirate marriage. (See p. 133.)

At the mention of Ruth, the closer redeemer insisted he could not serve as the kinsman-redeemer lest he “ruin” his own inheritance (v. 6). The Bible provides no explanation as to why a marriage to Ruth would jeopardize the closer redeemer’s own inheritance. Regardless, the closer redeemer forfeited his right to Elimelech’s property and relinquished his right to redeem Ruth. This provided Boaz the opportunity to take on the role of Ruth’s redeemer. He **took Ruth and she became his wife**. God caused Ruth **to conceive, and she gave birth to a son**.

As Boaz willingly became Ruth’s redeemer, Jesus willingly took on the role of our Redeemer when He took our place on the cross.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Humanity*

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God.

VERSE 14

¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, “Praise the LORD, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel.”

Naomi’s friends celebrated with an enthusiastic **“Praise the LORD.”** The entire community had reason to rejoice. The women delighted in the fact that the Lord did not leave Naomi (and Ruth) **without a family redeemer**. Boaz’s action redeemed Elimelech’s family, perpetuated the family name, and saved Naomi and Ruth from potential lives of adversity. The women voiced a prayer that the name of Ruth’s child might **become well known in Israel**. Boaz indeed perpetuated Elimelech’s family name in that we know this child as the grandfather of King David.

VERSES 15-16

¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” ¹⁶ Naomi took the child, placed

him on her lap, and took care of him.

The jubilation of Naomi's friends continued with the fact that this child would **renew** Naomi's life and **sustain** her as she aged. No one could deny the love that Ruth had for Naomi: she **is better to you than seven sons**. One can visualize the proud grandmother Naomi as she **took the child, placed him on her lap, and took care of him.**

VERSE 17

¹⁷ The neighbor women said, "A son has been born to Naomi," and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

When the women of the community stated that "**a son has been born to Naomi**," they recognized the importance of the child in redeeming Naomi's life. Boaz and Ruth named the child •**Obed**, meaning "servant of the Lord." Perhaps Boaz and Ruth chose the name as their prayer that this baby might grow to become a servant of Yahweh. Obed met and exceeded all expectations as he, in the lineage of Jesus, served all humankind.

Take a moment to scan the genealogy of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 1. Many readers will recognize the names of prominent individuals, such as the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Other prominent names include the kings David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah. The fact that God used these men in such a way comes as no surprise. Other names in Jesus' genealogy might be surprising. For example, other than the fact that we read their names in Jesus' genealogy, what do we know about Shealtiel [shih AL tih el], Abiud [uh BIGH uhd], and Azor (Matt. 1:12-14)? The answer: practically nothing. A closer reading of the genealogy reveals the names of four women, including Ruth. The record of these women, as well as the record of the relatively unknown men, demonstrates the fact that God can surprise us with those whom He chooses to bring about His purposes.

What does the inclusion of Ruth in His redemptive plan reveal to us about God? What are the implications of Ruth being included?



IN MY CONTEXT

- Living with integrity leads to finding favor with God and others.
- Believers can face trials and challenges with confidence, knowing that God can use these for His honor and glory.
- God is always at work, making His redemptive plan known.

Discuss as a group the value of integrity in relation to our witness. What actions can the group take to foster integrity?

What opportunities is God placing in front of you that come out of trials and challenges you have faced? How can God use those trials and challenges for His honor? Ask Him to help you honor Him in the trials and challenges.

What role do you play in revealing God's redemptive plan to others? How can you use the information on the inside front cover to reveal that plan to others?

MEMORY VERSE

Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the LORD, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers." —Ruth 2:20