

CHOOSING OUR FUTURE
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For most of us, the day of our marriage is the greatest day of our lives. God knew what He was talking about when He proclaimed it was not good for man to be alone. All of our plans and efforts to merge two separate paths into one course through life come to fruition on that day. Loneliness ends for two detached souls. After the day of marriage, there will be no more separation.

Ruth probably had dreams of a long life of happiness, together with her husband. Then death took Chilion away. We are introduced to her situation in **Ruth 1:1-5**. Famine had occurred in the land of Judah and Naomi, her husband, and their two sons traveled to Moab in search of a better life with more food in it. There her two sons met and married women from the tribe of Moab. Chilion married Ruth, but soon shortly thereafter, he died as did Naomi's other son and husband. Naomi found herself alone in a strange land with two widowed daughters-in-law. Ruth found herself, newly bereft and grieving, sharing a home with her sister and her mother-in-law, and all three were lonely.

Ruth could look at her sister and mother-in-law and see the same broken dreams. But Ruth had also seen something in Chilion she knew she wanted to share for the rest of her life. Naomi was going to return back to the land she had come from. Back to her kinfolk, back to the land and the God that she, her husband, and children had come from. Ruth's sister Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and stayed there in Moab and we never hear of her again. We can probably safely assume she died in the midst of idolatry and in the midst of a people cursed by God. Ruth was a different story. Ruth's past in Moab contained hurt and disappointment. She decided her best chance for a future lay in leaving her home and family behind and going with Ruth to the land that had produced a man like Chilion. She went to glean in the fields of the Promised Land, living in Bethlehem, the house of bread.

Many leave pain and disappointment behind when they come to worship and come into God's presence. They come, not to the place where Christ was born, but to the place where God dwells, in the midst of the praises of His people. Some leave their losses and hurts in the past and come looking for a new life. Some, as Ruth intended to, find their future just gleaning in the fields and getting by with a handful of blessing now and then. Others take the next step of marrying the owner of the field and join their lives to that of their master. The gleaners only get the scraps, but the owner's wife gets the harvest.

Ruth married Boaz, the grandson of a harlot. He had descended from Rahab, who left Jericho and her people behind. She narrowly escaped the destruction of both, deciding to come and live with the people of God. God richly blessed her and her descendants after she became one of the people of God. The Messiah was descended from her bloodline.

Some realize the potential of leaving their old lives and people behind to join a life with God. In fact it is very difficult to serve God hanging with the same people with whom we used to enjoy sin. According to **Proverbs 10:22**, life with this God is a very good life. Some come into God's promises because they have caught a glimpse of the potential blessing involved through a chance encounter with someone from God's world. They met someone who was a stranger in their world, but hinted at a better life elsewhere. Curiosity draws them closer till they make a decision to leave and go with that person to a land where God is worshipped. There, they either become a gleaner, or marry the owner of the field.

The closest kin to Boaz had the first right to marry the new widow if he so desired. In the process, he would gain the right to redeem the land that had previously been allotted to her husband, Chilion, before he departed. The near kinsman did not avail himself of the opportunity to marry Ruth, so Boaz did. Sometimes our churches on this Earth have trouble understanding why they should accept us and make us a part of their family. If they will not take advantage of their opportunity, God still says, "I will take you."

God used circumstances to bring Ruth into the life of Boaz. The Messiah came through that marriage and through it the whole earth was blessed. Sometimes He uses circumstances to bring us to the place where we meet a God interested in joining His life to ours. He wants us to join Him and share His life and blessings. If we are not fully committed to Him and content just to live near Him, He will let a handful of blessings drop now and again. He would much rather we marry Him so we can own the field.

We spend so much time pointlessly regretting our past. We fail to realize that if we are now living in the Promised Land, we got here directly as a result of that past. The choices we made, especially the painful ones, are what steered us and prompted us to leave our old way of life behind. Few would trade their present blessings for a chance to reduce a little of the hurts of the past. God said in **Romans 8:28** that all things work together for the good of them that love God. All things include both the joy and the sorrow.

We seldom agree to change until circumstances force us into it. Like her sister, Ruth could have remained alone, worshipping false gods, and regretting the past. God had more in store for her, better plans for her life that never would have come to fruition without a push. First she had to lose something she truly held dear. That hurt is what cleared the path for a better future. That is why in **Ephesians 5:20**, we are told to give thanks in all situations. We may never know till the end, God was working things together for our good.