

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter Three

Removing the Blinders of Time to See the Blessings of Eternity

“⁶ Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. ⁷ Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. ⁸ And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. ⁹ The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each *of you* in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept” (Ruth 1:6-9).

Most people live and think in a temporal way. Our plans for the future are locked into temporal thinking. The whole book of Ecclesiastes reveals we are “under the sun” (this life only) thinkers. We are blinded to the reality of another existence above and beyond the existence known by human senses.

“⁹ But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. ¹⁰ But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (I Corinthians 2:9-12).

In Ruth 1:7, Naomi is ready to leave Moab (God’s boiling cauldron for cleansing, Psalm 108:9). She went to Moab with her husband (Elimelech) because there was famine in the land of Judah due to the chastisement of God. In Moab, the family of Naomi tried to escape that chastisement.

In reality they were running away from God’s appointed place for them (Bethlehem). They ran away from home like rebellious teenagers not wanting to live under Dad’s and Mom’s rules. God wanted them to change the *way* they live. They only changed the *place* they lived. While at Moab they would learn to fear the Lord. To fear the Lord is a reverentially trust of God accompanied by a hatred for evil.

To review the types, Naomi represents Israel under chastisement and restoration. The name Elimelech means *God is my king* and represents the destroyed testimony of Israel due to her spiritual unfaithfulness in idolatry and disobedience. In Ruth 1:3 Elimelech dies. Mahlon and Chilion represent the next generation of the children of Israel and the affect the unfaithfulness and idolatry the preceding generation had on them. Their names mean *sickness* and *consumption*. The same principles continue through all generations, even to today. In Ruth 1:4, that generation dies in Moab.

Naomi (Israel) is left alone in the middle of a Gentile nation unscripturally united by illegitimate marriages to Gentile women. Israel had lost her distinctiveness as a people of God due to her failure to live according to the statutes and commandments of God. In Ruth 1:6 we find the story expanding beyond the failure in Moab to God’s restoration in Bethlehem. This is the fourth phase of the sin cycle. Israel under chastisement cries out to God for deliverance. God answers. The famine is over.

Once again there is bread in the House of Bread (Bethlehem; Ruth 1:6). This may typify the coming of Messiah. It is certainly true that God’s intention in redemption is to redeem both Jew and Gentile alike.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek {or Gentile}” (Romans 1:16).

“¹² For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all

that call upon him. ¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:12-13).

In Ruth 1:7 we find a Jew and two Gentile women joined together through marriage due to compromise. They begin to head to the House of Bread (Bethlehem) in the Land of Praise (Judah) because the “Lord had visited His people” in giving them bread. This is another reason this may typify the coming of Messiah.

“³² Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. ³⁴ Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. ³⁵ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. ³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴¹ The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven” (John 6:32-41).

On the journey (Ruth 1:8) to the Land of Praise, Naomi begins to tell her Gentile daughter-in-laws what they will have to give up if they go with her. Naomi knew what awaited her at Bethlehem: poverty, servitude and difficulty. In this time of great difficulty she seems completely ignorant of the overwhelming love of God intent on her restoration. She had been touched by His hand of correction.

In such times people are blinded to the love and grace of God behind it all. She was filled with discouragement, hopelessness and despair. She was without hope (Ruth 1:12). It is from that perspective she speaks to her two daughter-in-laws (Ruth 1:12-13).

When Naomi says, “For it grieveth me” she reveals that she is filled with bitterness because of the “hand of the LORD” (referring to her chastisement). Naomi is still seeing her situation from a *this world only* perspective of life. She just can’t seem to see beyond her own circumstances to see God’s eternal working in her life. As a result, each misfortune of this life increases her bitterness toward God and the hopelessness of her situation. Like many people, Naomi is making decisions in life based upon a fatalistic view of God’s workings.

These kind of difficulties often rise like a mountain range on the horizon, blocking our view of God’s eternal workings. Paul (the Apostle of hope) helps every Christian to look beyond the inconveniences of this life into the eternity beyond the mountain ranges of pain and suffering. We must learn to keep our vision fixed upon the eternal.

“If in this life only {“under the Sun”} we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (I Corinthians 15:19).

You only have one life to live. Live it to the fullest. This seems to be Naomi’s philosophy of life. Solomon possessed this same “under the sun” perspective for the majority of his life.

¹ The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. ² Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity. ³ What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? ⁴ *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever” (Ecclesiastes 1:1-4).

In these verses God reveals to us a man locked into a box called time, who cannot seem to see out of it. The result of this restricted vision is a life of selfish pursuits ending in cynicism, bitterness and self-

pity. God gives him a glimpse into eternity, but he just cannot seem to see beyond the walls of the box he has put himself in.

For the Christian the answer is simple. **It's the Book. It's the Book.** Learn to look at life through the eternal truths of the Word of God. Until we learn to do so, we (like Solomon and Naomi) will continue to make bad decisions based upon what we see with our physical eyes, but not the spiritual reality available only to those with eyes of faith.

“¹² I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised {or, to afflict them} therewith. ¹⁴ I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit. ¹⁵ *That which is* crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. ¹⁶ I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. ¹⁷ And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18).

However, even though it took a lifetime, Solomon got a new perspective on life.

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth *it*, that *men* should fear before him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

“¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. ¹⁴ For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

You and I are eternal beings. You and I will spend eternity somewhere. When we get our vision locked into a *this life only* (“under the Sun”) perspective, we will begin to define God by what happens to us in this life. We even begin to define ourselves by what happens to us in this life. The spiritual reality is that God completely transcends this world and all that is in it (along with our souls). Satan does not want our vision of life to escape this world to see beyond this life into eternity.

“³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

Your life is but a small parenthesis in a short sentence in a never ending volume of a novel called eternity. When we cannot (or when refuse to) look beyond the parenthesis of our life to see the whole of what we are a part of, Satan will defeat us there. When we do not keep our vision focused on God and eternity, we will end up wallowing in bitterness and self-pity just like Naomi. We will end up giving the kind of counsel that Naomi gave to Orpah and Ruth. From bad testimonies, there will always be the Orpahs who will abandon Christ and the difficulties of the Christian life to return to the world of comfort and convenience (which were really her old gods, 1:15).

Christ never said the Christian life would be easy. In fact He said it would be just the opposite. The Christian must learn to cultivate a perspective of life that transcends this life and this world.

“¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow (literally: *hard*) *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

The Christian must learn to make choices and decisions in this life based upon a foundation of truth that transcends this life. Every decision and choice we make in this life affects eternity. Not just for ourselves, but for thousands of others living now and in the future. I am not talking about *pie in the sky*. We need to understand we are already living in our eternity. Just as the choice you made to get an

education determined the job you presently have and the life you provide for yourself and your family, the elementary decisions we make everyday in our present life will determine the eternal destiny of hundreds (perhaps thousands) of people including yourself.

The first and foremost question of life is what have you decided to do about Christ and your need of salvation? Are you saved and sure of it? If not, when you finally step outside of your box called time (by death) and see your eternity for the first time, you are going to be in for quite a shock. That eternity will never change from that point forward.

The second question is, "If you are saved ("born again"), what have you decided to do with your new life in Christ?" The decisions you make are eternally important. You have just one life to live. You can invest it in this doomed world, or you can invest it into eternity by investing your life in truth by living that truth and by sharing the gospel with others. Then, when you step out of this box called time into your eternity, you will find familiar faces of friends and family. That eternity will never change for forever and ever.

Those decisions are up to you. Is your Christianity real enough to invest the only lifetime you have left into eternity? The time to decide that is *now*!

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1. From Ruth 1:7, what was “the place where she was” and why was she there? _____

Review Question

2. What was Naomi’s husband’s name and what does it mean? _____

3. While under chastisement in Moab, what was God teaching Israel? _____

4. What does Naomi typify in the narrative of the book of Ruth? _____

5. What does Elimelech typify? _____

6. What do Mahlon and Chilion represent? _____

7. What two verses from the book of Romans show us God’s desire to redeem both Jew and Gentile equally?

A Romans 1: _____

B. Romans 10: _____

8. From Ruth 1:8, where specifically does this all take place? Is it in Moab, in between Moab and Judah, or at Bethlehem? _____

9 What kind of life did Naomi expect to have, once she returned to Bethlehemjudah? _____

10. From Ruth 1:12 and 13, what was Naomi lacking at this point in her life, that is the direct cause of her counsel to Orpah and Ruth? _____

11. What is her perspective on life and eternity from which her counsel flows? _____

12. What was the result of Naomi’s perspective on her attitude toward God and toward life in general?

A. Has that ever been in your perspective on life and caused you to have similar attitudes toward God and your life in general? _____

B. Do you think that perspective allowed you to be fair toward God and toward life? _____

13. Paul was an Apostle of many things. Paul certainly was the Apostle of _____

14. What does Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 15:19 by; “If in this life only we have hope in Christ”? To what point in this life must we constantly be looking beyond in order to maintain a healthy eternal perspective? _____

15. From Ecclesiastes 1:1-3, what is an “under the Sun” perspective of life? _____

A. What was the *box* that Solomon’s mind was locked into that blocked his vision of eternity? _____

B. How do faith and trust in God help us escape that box in our present life? How do faith and trust change our perspective? _____

C. How should that change in perspective change our decision making process? _____

16. When we are locked into a *this life only* (“under the sun“) mentality, how does that affect the way we define God? _____

A. From that same perspective, how do we begin to define ourselves and our self-worth? _____

B. Do you think that perspective can give an accurate definition of God or ourselves? _____

C. If not, how important is it to change that perspective in our lives? _____

17. What does Satan want to keep your vision (perspective) fixed on? _____

A. and away from? _____

B. How must we learn to *see* in order to broaden the horizons of our vision beyond the temporal things of this life? _____

18. At this point in Naomi’s life, was she wallowing in bitterness and self-pity? _____

A. How does this affect her counsel to Orpah and Ruth? _____

B. Do you think your life may be having the same affect on others that Naomi’s life had on the eternal decision of Orpah? _____

19. The Christian must learn to cultivate a perspective that _____ this life and this world. The Christian must learn to make choices and decisions in this world based upon a foundation of truth that _____ this life and this world.

20. When does a person begin his eternity? _____

A. What do you expect to discover, once you step out of this *box* called time into your eternity? _____

B. How will your present day decisions about life and priorities affect what will await you in your eternity? _____