

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter Twelve

The Security of God's Protection in the Center of His Will

⁴ And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD *be* with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. ⁵ Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel *is* this? ⁶ And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It *is* the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: ⁷ And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. ⁸ Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: ⁹ *Let* thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn. ¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I *am* a stranger? ¹¹ And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. ¹² The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust" (Ruth 2:4-12).

Apparently, from the question of verse 8 ("Hearest thou not, my daughter?"), Ruth had not taken the dangers of her situation seriously. Perhaps she had wandered into another field (which appears to be the case). Ruth was saved out of extreme and perverse paganism in the country of Moab. Now she lived in a land where the people professed to believe in and live for the One True God. Ruth was just a spiritual infant. She did not understand that not everyone that professed faith in God lived that faith.

Ruth was an unprotected woman and that was a very dangerous thing to be during this period of history. Without a father or husband to protect them, women live in constant danger of being victimized, assaulted, raped and even kidnapped and sold into slavery. The Pharisees often prayed and thanked God that they were not born a Samaritan, a woman or a dog.

Ruth lived in a society where war was a normal way of resolving problems. The Philistines frequently raided the area killing people, stealing harvested crops and taking women and children as slaves. It was a dangerous period of history for everyone, let alone an unprotected woman. Strength and the ability to protect one's household was an important commodity.

Ruth is a type of Gentile believers. She (like all believers) needed a Protector. Boaz is a type of Christ. He volunteers to be Ruth's Protector. Yet, according to Ruth 2:8-12, his protection is conditioned upon Ruth obeying his instructions. Boaz could insure Ruth's protection only within certain boundaries.

As we study this text, it is important to understand this is not a salvation application. Ruth is already saved. The application is for believers and what believers must do to avoid the pitfalls that lie in wait for us outside of God's will. To understand the historical and cultural context, we need to go back to Ruth 1:9.

"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 1:9).

The word "rest" is a key word to understanding the purpose of the book of Ruth and the believer's position in Jesus Christ. It is the Hebrew word *m@nuwchah* (men-oo-khaw') and simply means a place of rest or security. It is defined as existing "in the house of her husband." Essentially it refers to a safe shelter or place of security and protection as the result of the ability of a husband or father. That is the context that follows through the book of Ruth.

“Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee” (Ruth 3:1)?

Redemption would bring Ruth into that place of “rest” (security and protection). It would be Boaz (a type of Christ) as he takes Ruth for his wife that is the force behind her security and protection. That is the position all believers have in our relationship as the espoused bride of Jesus Christ.

“The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower” (Psalm 18:2).

However, many Christians are like Ruth. They are either ignorant of the dangers that surround them or they are just too spiritually immature to be aware of them. Yet those dangers are there and they are real.

The believer lives in constant spiritual danger (I Peter 5:6-9). The spiritual infant knowledge of spiritual truth and spiritual dangers is almost non-existent. These are exactly the type of individuals Satan preys upon.

“⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: ⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. ⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: ⁹ Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (I Peter 5:6-9).

The word “care” in I Peter 5:7 is from the Greek word *merimna* (mer'-im-nah) and it refers to the things that cause us concern or worry. Concerns exist because of our weaknesses and inabilities. God has no weaknesses or inabilities. God genuinely cares for His children and wants to handle their concerns.

It is an act of humility to come before God and honestly accept the fact there are situations in your life that you have absolutely no means of dealing with, but you believe God can handle them. He wants to. That does not mean you can go through life with a care less attitude of irresponsibility. When it comes to the practical aspects of everyday living, the believer has to learn to make responsible decisions that keep him in the center of God’s will. The believer has a powerful “adversary” (I Peter 5:8). He is no where near as powerful as God, but he is far more powerful and cunning then the believer.

Boaz had a security system in place. As long as Ruth remained within the confines of the boundaries established for her, she was safe. God has a similar security system in place. As long as the believer remains in God’s will, he is safe from the Adversary. I Peter 5:8 defines the believer’s responsibilities.

1. He is to be “sober.” It is from the Greek word *nepho* (nay'-fo) meaning to stay calm and collected.
2. He is to be “vigilant.” It is from the Greek word *gregoreuo* (gray-gor-yoo'-o) meaning to be extremely cautious.

The idea behind these two words relates the constant danger the believer lives in. If the believer does not maintain his spiritual composure (“sober”) and is not extremely careful (“vigilant’), his carelessness might cause him to stumble into a situation that he will not be able to escape from. Satan lays spiritual traps everywhere. Satan will spring one of his traps when a believer is at his weakest moment.

According to I Peter 5:9, in order to remain in God’s protective custody, the believer is required to personally participate with God. In other words “casting all your care upon” God is not a passive, non-participatory act. It is a partnership with God.

“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (I Peter 5:9).

Christians must learn that there are protective boundaries within God’s will (Ruth 2:8-9).

Ruth 2:8 tells us, “Go not to glean in another field.” God has exact boundaries of absolute truths for us to live in. God’s moral laws are for our protection and to keep us from wandering into areas of sin that will destroy our lives and the lives of our families. There is great freedom and security within those boundaries of truth. When we step outside of those boundaries, we place ourselves in grave danger. The Adversary sets his traps just outside of the boundaries of truth.

“Abide here fast by my maidens” (Ruth 2:8). Ruth (like all new believers) did not know all the boundaries. So Boaz directs her to follow those who knew the boundaries. That is one of the reasons God has ordained the local church. The right kind of local church provides a multitude of spiritually mature people able to give counsel and to be examples.

“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is safety*” (Proverbs 11:14).

“Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap and go after them” (v 9). We need to be careful to not only keep our bodies under control and within the boundaries of truth; we must also keep our wants and desires (“eyes”) within those boundaries. What we fix our eyes on will become the objective of our desires.

“Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee” (v 9)? There is safety and security in God’s family, because all of his servants are held directly accountable to Him. Secondly, there is safety and security in God’s family, because His children are covenant people who are committed to live together under certain moral standards and obligations.

That is why a local church is an exclusive organization that requires a believer to agree to certain beliefs and to live by certain moral standards. That is why when a believer falls in sin he is put under church discipline. It is a probationary period where that individual proves his willingness to bring his life into alignment with the beliefs and practices of a covenant people. The safety and security of every individual in a local church is at risk when one member decides to break covenant.

Ruth’s response to Boaz’s instructions should be the response of all Christians to God’s moral laws and commands (2:10). What would have happened to Ruth had she not obeyed Boaz? Would she have benefited from the safe shelter of Boaz’s protection if she chose to live outside of his established boundaries?

The “why” question of Ruth to Boaz is an important question for which every believer should seek an answer. Why does God “take knowledge” of us? Why should God even care? Why should God want to provide us His protection? Obviously it is not because of who we are, but because of Who God is.

The answer is that God responds to the believer’s faith (2:11). Ruth showed real change in her life. She had joined herself to God’s “people” (v 11) and became one with them in a common faith. She had accepted their laws, customs and policies and agreed to live by them and put herself under them. It was evident to Boaz that she was making every effort to do so.

Far too many Christians think they can go anywhere and do anything they want while claiming independence and spiritual liberty. That is not the way covenant people think or live. “Trust” (v 12) is to obey the instructions of the One you trust. You trust your life into that person’s care.

When Boaz gave Ruth the instructions of verses 8-9 for her protection and provision, I doubt very much if she complained that his instructions were too limiting and restrictive. Why? Because she knew and understood there were real dangers outside of those fixed perimeters and she could not be protected if she wandered outside of them. God’s protection and provision is found under His “wings” (v 12). That means within His will. Move outside of God’s will and you are on your own.

“¹⁵ And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. ¹⁶ Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; ¹⁷ Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. ¹⁸ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. ¹⁹ If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: ²⁰ But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*” (Isaiah 1:15-20).

The protection and provision of God is conditioned on obedience (v 19). Refusing (v 20) God’s instruction by rebelling against His will assures the believer of being devoured by the “roaring lion” of evil destruction. It is not that God cannot protect you when you live in sin, but that He won’t protect you.

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1. What can we presume Ruth was doing by the question Boaz asks her in Ruth 2:8? _____

2. Discuss the political environment of Bethlehem in the days of the Judges and why Ruth would have been in constant danger. _____

3. What do Ruth and Boaz represent as types? _____
4. Discuss why it is important to understand that Ruth is already saved and the context is not about salvation but the benefits of salvation. _____

5. Read Ruth 1:9 and 3:1. Discuss the meaning of the word “rest” and its significance to the book of Ruth. _____

6. Read Psalm 18:2. Who is the force behind the provision and protection of the obedient believer? _____

7. Why is it that so many Christians remain unaware of the extreme dangers to them that exist outside of the circle of God’s will? _____

8. Read I Peter 5:6-9. Does Satan pose any real danger to the believer who remains within the circle of God’s will? _____ If not, why not? _____

9. What does God mean in I Peter 5:8 when He says Satan is the believer’s adversary? _____

10. Discuss the meaning of the word “sober” from I Peter 5:8 and its spiritual significance. _____

11. Discuss the meaning of the word “vigilant” from I Peter 5:8 and its spiritual significance. _____

12. Discuss the spiritual significance of the statement “resist steadfast in the faith” especially the difference between this being a passive act or a cooperative effort with God. _____

13. How would you describe the degree of intensity implied in the command of I Peter 5:9? _____

14. Detail the significance of the following statements from Ruth and apply them to your life.

A. "Go not to glean in another field." (2:8) _____

B. "Abide here fast by my maidens" (2:8) _____

C. Compare Proverbs 11:14 to your above answer. _____

D. "Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap and go thou after them." (2:9) _____

E. "Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee" (2:9)? _____

15. Discuss the spiritual significance of Ruth's response to Boaz's statement (2:10) and why it should be every believer's response to God's provision of protection. _____

16. Discuss the concept of "trust" from Ruth 2:12 and what is involved in trusting God. _____

17. Read Isaiah 1:15-20. Discuss the conditions of God's provision and protection from this portion of Scripture. _____

