

(Danger Lines in the Deeper Life) 10. OUR KINSMAN REDEEMER; LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

"Thy Maker is thy Husband, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 64: 5. The Book of Ruth is really a part of the Book of Judges. It is a sort of vignette inserted on the background of that mingled picture of the dark ages of the Old Testament, and is thus a sort of companion picture to the one last given us, the story of Micah. Both are incidents gathered out of the same period of Hebrew history and illustrating the life of the people; the one on the dark, the other on the bright side.

There is another dark picture on the canvas which we have passed over. It is the shocking series of incidents recorded in the last three chapters of Judges, all growing out of a single unholy relationship. It is the story of a licentious woman destroyed at last by the very wickedness that she had herself pursued; and of a sinful man who allowed her to draw him into her wicked life, and who, through her influence, became unfaithful to his high calling as a priest of the Lord. Out of their relations grew, at length, a frightful crime which involved in a destructive civil war all the tribes of Israel -- a war which did not cease until three armies had perished and one whole tribe in Israel had become almost extinct. So fearful are the consequences of even the slightest sin. How solemn and how true is that little verse in James which gives the pedigree of sin: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death!"

But we pass over this dark picture, and we come to the story of Ruth. It is like a little oasis in a desert. Goethe has called it the finest poem in human language; and yet how few of the children of God really understand its beautiful meaning and teaching. It is said that a literary man once read it in an English drawing-room to a select company of cultivated people, slightly changing the principle names and the style of the story, but reading it substantially as it is given in the Bible, and his audience was delighted with this new and wonderful literary production, and eagerly questioned him about its authorship and origin. They retired, with significant silence, when they learned that it was one of the books of their neglected Bible.

It is scarcely necessary to recall the incidents of the story -- the famine in Bethlehem, the emigrant family, Elimelech and his wife Naomi, with their two boys, Mahlon and Chilion. Then came the death of the father and the marriage of the two boys to two maidens of Moab, named Ruth and Orpah. And then, in due time, they died and the three widows were left alone in a foreign land. Then Naomi turned homeward, but with unselfish consideration, she tried to dissuade her daughters-in-law from the journey which promised so

little for them or her. Orpah, the more demonstrative of the two, expressed great affection, and went home; but Ruth clung to Naomi with those ever memorable and noble words, which have been inscribed with the point of a diamond as the loftiest expression of loyal affection and devotion: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

And so two lone widows came back to Bethlehem and began to seek a livelihood in the humblest way. Ruth took upon herself, as a loving daughter, the support of the home, and went out, like Jewish maidens, to glean in the wheat and barley fields. It was there that she met Boaz, the rich farmer, who had heard of her kindness to her mother and her maidenly modesty and who became attracted to her, and showed her special kindness without sacrificing in any way her own womanly independence. Naomi, meanwhile, kept watching with motherly intuition the whole situation, looking constantly to God, in whose wings they had come to trust. At length, Naomi found that Boaz sustained to her and Ruth the peculiar relation of the Goel, or nearest of kin, whose duty it was to redeem her husband\

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