

I Will Not Go Back To Moab

Ruth 1:14-18 KJV And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. [15] And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. [16] And Ruth said, Intreat 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: [17] Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me. [18] When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

I. INTRODUCTION -- THE STORY OF RUTH

A. Elimelech and Naomi

-The story in Ruth is a tragedy and a triumph tied up in four short chapters. Ruth was from Moab and she was an intruder who had no business breaking into the greatest plan of history.

-In the days of the Judges, the Bible states that a famine came to the nation of Israel. Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, took their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion to the land of Moab in search of food.

-Historians indicate to us that this famine very well could been related to raiding by the Philistines and the Ammonites and not a factor of drought and heat. Just as soon as the crops begin to be ready for harvest and enemy would swoop in and steal the crop from Israel. All of their hard work in plowing, planting, cultivating, and irrigating would literally come to nothing because of the work of their enemies.

-Having established themselves there, they found the food they needed. They found the job security necessary to support them. In addition to this, both of the sons found wives among the daughters of Moab.

-From all appearances, Elimelech and Naomi begin to have some measure of success in their exodus from Israel. But after a decade, disaster would soon visit

this family. First, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi as a widow in a strange country. Adding seeming insult to injury, Naomi then watched as both of her sons died in this strange nation.

-Amidst all of her pain and grief, Naomi began to turn her eyes, ears, and heart back toward her native land. She heard of the prosperity that was just beginning to present itself again in Bethlehem. She decided that it would benefit her to go back to her homeland and try to put what remained of her shattered life back together again.

B. Naomi Tries to Discourage Her Daughters-in-Law

-Her two daughters-in-law decided at this point that they would return again with her. On the trip back to Judah, Naomi began to attempt to dissuade and discourage Ruth and Orpah from going with her.

-When Naomi first began her discouraging remarks, neither daughter was willing to go back to Moab. But the Bible indicates to us that the more difficult that Naomi painted the picture that Orpah began to relent on her commitment. But to Ruth, this only increased her desire and determination to carry on.

-That is the way it is with some people who walk into an Apostolic setting. You are going to gain some things but you are going to have to give up some things too! This doesn't seem to discourage them at all. . . In fact, I have noted that there are some who respond to this call to commitment with fervor and desire and instead of it turning them back it simply stirs a deeper place in their heart for God.

C. Can You Ever Really Go Back To Moab?

-It was not long before Orpah turned back and went back to Moab.

-What does Moab hold for Orpah? In Ruth 1:15, one finds that she is returning back to her gods. Her gods of idolatry who will soon have a rule over her life once again. It is absolutely imperative that those who have experienced revival not return back to the "gods" that ruled, controlled, and dictated every move of your

life. God has a greater plan for your life than going back to the dregs of what used to be.

-Moab is ultimately a land of wanderers. It is a common story in the Word of God and in human nature. There is a spiritual wandering from God, from His Word, and from His Spirit, from the Church and from the Sanctuary that provides safety. It is a wandering that is sad and fatal, because in the words of Naomi, she went full and returned back full of bitterness in spirit. That is what Moab held for Orpah.

- To go back to Moab means a constant discontent. . . always looking for another country.
- To go back to Moab means you walk by sight. . . not by faith.
- To go back to Moab means you live in a state of instability and double-mindedness.
- To go back to Moab means continuing in Moab, dying in Moab.
- To go back to Moab means that there will be no returning to life.
- To go back to Moab means that one will live under the rule of self forever.

-When Orpah turned back to Moab she placed herself in with a company of men who were exposed to true life but never had the ability to turn in the right direction.

- Felix trembled.
- Herod gladly heard.
- Balaam prophesied.
- Judas sat at the Last Supper.
- Eve lost Paradise for a taste of the forbidden fruit.
- The Gadarenes lost the Christ because of their concern for their pigs.

-This will happen every time when one goes back to Moab.

From The Preachers Homiletic Commentary, Volume 7, Section on Ruth, p. 20:
It was said of Athens, that it was a good place to pass through, but a dangerous place to linger in. To the faithful Israelite, Moab could have been no more than this. But it was written of Elimelech, 'He continued there.'

As you value your souls, beware of the world: it has slain its thousands and then thousands. What ruined Lot's wife? The world. What ruined Achan? The world. What ruined Haman? The world. What ruined Judas? The world. What ruined Simon Magus? The world. What ruined Demas? The world. And what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Joshua 24:15 KJV And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

-Then there are others who have never backslidden but this revival has opened up new commitments and a deeper walk with God. . . . Please do not turn back to the way that you were living before the first weekend in May.

- We still need you in the house of God for Church.
- We still need you living up to your energized prayer life.
- We still need your boldness at witnessing to people.

-I can *never* go back to Moab! That ought to be the heartbeat of every single one of us in this house!

II. RUTH'S DECISION

-What was it that made Ruth so different from Orpah? It was all a matter of desire! The self-denial that caused Orpah to stumble was like a winking diamond to Ruth. As the lights of heaven played on the treasure, Ruth began to determine in her heart that she would be radically different.

-When Ruth determined to go on to Judah and leave Moab forever behind, she stepped into the very greatness of the halls of history. The decision that she made on that day bears out some lessons for us.

A. It was made in the teeth of difficulty.

-Ruth's decision was a much harder one for her to make than was Orpah's. Orpah's simply was turning around and going back to her own country. This decision that Ruth was making was going to change the entire landscape of her life.

- Her origin was against her. . . . She was from Moab.
- The past was against her. . . She was a widow.
- Her religious tradition was against her. . . She was an idolater who worshiped Chemosh.
- Her own sister-in-law was against her. . . She was alone in this decision.
- Her future was against her. . . She was going into a nation that had no room for Gentiles.

-Stand here right now and count the cost. Add it all up. Consider what you are leaving. Think through who you are leaving. But in the end, where else are you going to go?

-Her decision was not made out of impulse but rather of conviction. I would rather have five who make decisions based on conviction than to have 500 who make decisions based on impulses.

-Sometimes God will hedge up the path and the only gate that is available to us is the crude, rusty, cantankerous gate of self-denial. It is a true and very real test to us.

Heaven's gates are not so highly arched
As princes' palaces. They that enter there
Must enter on their knees.

B. It was made with entire surrender.

-Ruth made her decision and there were no strings attached to what she was going to do. She determined that whatever that Naomi did that was exactly what she was going to do.

-Even though Ruth made her decision with entire surrender, let me encourage you to know that when you make a decision where entire surrender is present,

then something accompanies it: You have a steadfastness of heart that will not escape you.

I will never forget coming home from a Wednesday Bible study in Niceville, Florida sometime around 1975-76. I had no clue why I was tossed out of my bedroom and had to live with Mark for the next few months. I had no idea why my mother would run Mark and I out of the kitchen when she would be talking with Melissa. But if I thought my life was being disrupted, Melissa's life was being turned upside down.

Melissa was a student at Niceville High School and had been invited to church during a revival by some of the youth group in Niceville. Not only did she come to church but she received the Holy Ghost and was baptized in Jesus Name. This is what caused such upheaval in her life. She left on that Wednesday night and had informed her parents that she was going to be baptized. They promptly informed her that if she did then she would have no place to live.

So after the service that night, Melissa went home and found that her things had been put out on the front porch. That was where she entered my life. My mother and dad loaded up her things and she lived with us for a little while. During that time, her relationship with God grew and her relationship with a young man in the church grew. Before it was over with, my mother and Melissa had made a wedding dress, she had married Danny Harrison. Danny ultimately began preaching and is currently one of the lay ministers in Lake Charles Louisiana's largest United Pentecostal Churches. That was thirty years ago. Out of that great chaotic situation came a Ruth who would not let her circumstances stop her.

-Always remember that when you make a decision to entirely serve the Lord with all of your heart that you will help others. Deciding for yourself will help others to make a decision that will stand for eternity.

-A lot of the hindering points of life are not necessarily meant to impair and disrupt us but rather to elevate us to the highest point of life and service in the Kingdom of God.

III. RUTH'S REWARD

-It just so happened that Ruth's story doesn't end with that decision. The Bible informs us that she married Boaz. From that marriage came a son named Obed. Obed would have a son whose name was Jesse. Jesse would have a son whose name was David. Out of that lineage would be the descendants of Jesus Christ.

-I am certain that at some point in Ruth's life that there were some misgivings, especially on the day that she made that decision in the country of Moab. But that very difficult decision that she made on that day was what set her above the whole nation of Moab.

-Serve the Lord with all of your heart! We can never go back to Moab!