

SERIES: BOOK OF RUTH
“The Romance of Redemption“
Ruth 4: 2-10

Romance stories and chick flicks are enormously popular. Most men don't like to admit to being interested in such things because they make us cry and we don't want anyone to see us cry. Movies such as the *Sarah Plain and Tall*, *Marrying Leah*, and even *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and a whole bunch of others, all have a romantic theme running through them and are watched by both genders.

A good romance story goes through certain stages: 1) a man and a woman, of course; 2) a series of trying events; 3) a developing love that slowly grows and matures because of those trying events; 4) a final massive hurdle that looks like it will destroy the relationship or prevent it from happening, and finally 5) a glorious climax where love triumphs and everyone lives happily ever after, except in real life.

We have been studying the romance of Ruth in our OT. TURN TO RUTH 4. We have seen how the man and woman were brought together, worked through some trying events, and have watched the love between them grow, mature, and wait. In chapter 3 we were introduced to step 4, that massive problem that may prevent this relationship from completion. See **Ruth 3:12** *Now yes, it is true that I am a guardian, [a goel] but there is another guardian [goel] who is a closer relative than I am.* (NET) Boaz told Ruth she had to wait until morning to find out how this hurdle would be cleared and we had to wait until chapter 4: 1-10. Boaz wasted no time in tackling this hindrance. In chapter 2 the key word was *favor*, in chapter 3 the key word was *rest*, now in chapter 4 the key word is *redeem* in various forms. It occurs 9 times in this chapter. *To redeem* has a variety of meanings, but the ones that are important to us are: to free from what distresses or harms: as 1) to free from captivity by payment of ransom; 2) to extricate from or help to overcome something detrimental, and 3) to release from blame or debt. What motivates one person to pay a ransom price for another person? What would motivate a person to pay all the debt for someone who had gotten themselves deep in debt? That is what we will discover in this section of Ruth 4. Let's follow Boaz and see what happens.

I. THE COURT IS CONVENED. This first thing that happened is he convened a court. Boaz grabbed ten men of the city and said to them, “sit down here” and they sat down. I had a crazy thought from this text. “Here, “ I thought, “is an aggressive form of evangelism.” If we each went out and grabbed 10 men in our city and brought them to church and said, “sit down here” we would have a full house.

In convening this court we get another good look at the character of Boaz and an excellent example to follow. Matthew Henry writes: *Boaz might have said, "My money is as good as my kinsman's; if I have a mind to it, why may not I buy it privately, since I had the first proffer of it, and say nothing to my kinsman?"* No, Boaz, though fond enough of the purchase, would not do so mean a thing as to take a bargain over another man's head that was nearer a-kin to it; and we

are taught by his example to be not only just and honest, but fair and honourable, in all our dealings, and to do nothing which we are unwilling should see the light, but be above-board.¹ Boaz convened the court so the redemption would be in the light, legitimate, and legal.

II. A “CLEAR TITLE” IS SOUGHT. The second thing Boaz was after was a clear title to the land and the lady. When we buy a house, a car, or anything else, the day we look forward to is the day we get a clear title. This was what Boaz wanted. Note the...

1. **The Circumstance**, v. 3 Once everyone is seated and “court is in session”, Boaz gives his opening statement. He states the case as succinctly as possible: “**Naomi, who has returned from the region of Moab, is selling the portion of land that belongs to our relative Elimelech.**” (NET)

For those of you who want a little more in-depth information, the phrase about selling has generated some interesting commentary. Boaz’s use of the perfect form of the verb here describes as a simple fact an action that is underway (cf. NIV, NRSV, CEV, NLT); NAB “is putting up for sale,” or as others say, *Naomi...is selling* or as the NASB, “has to sell”. The nature of the sale is uncertain. Naomi may have been selling the property rights to the land, but this seems unlikely in light of what is known about ancient Israelite property laws. It is more likely that Naomi, being a woman, held only the right to use the land until the time of her remarriage or death (F. W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* [WBC], 202-4). Because she held this right to use of the land, she also had the right to buy it back from its current owner. (This assumes that Elimelech sold the land prior to going to Moab.) Since she did not possess the means to do so, however, she decided to dispose of her rights in the matter. She was not selling the land per se, but disposing of the right to its redemption and use, probably in exchange for room and board with the purchaser (Bush, 211–15). If this is correct, it might be preferable to translate, “Naomi is disposing of her rights to the portion of land,” although such a translation presumes some knowledge of ancient Israelite property laws.² Boaz then continues to put this opening statement into a little broader context.

2. **The Context**, v. 4. Boaz uses a colorful idiom. Literally it says ‘I uncover, open, or reveal your ears’. This is the graphic Hebrew way of saying “I want to tell you about it”. The NIV dresses it up a bit: **I thought I should bring the matter to your attention.** When someone says “I thought you should know about this” it doesn’t take long to figure out they have something in mind for themselves. They usually have something to gain by your knowing about

¹Henry, Matthew: *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody : Hendrickson, 1996, c1991, S. Ru 4:1

NIV The New International Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Version (1989)

CEV *The Contemporary English Version*

NLT New Living Translation

NAB The New American Bible

WBC *Word Biblical Commentary* (a commentary series)

²Biblical Studies Press: *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible*. Biblical Studies Press, 2006; 2006. Also this note: The Hebrew verb translated *wants to sell* is normally read as a participle “is selling.”* The form of the perfect tense (which is the form occurring in the Hebrew text) would normally be translated as “she had sold the field.” This would seem to imply that the land had already been sold and that it would need to be bought back from the actual owner. But in verse 9 Boaz buys the land directly from Naomi. It is not necessary, however, to understand the perfect tense in Hebrew as expressing some past event; it can indicate the fact that a decision to sell and the actual act of selling take place at the same time.* An appropriate translation in such a case would be “she wants to sell.”

the situation. The NET Bible translates the phrase into the legal setting of this verse by saying **So, I am legally informing you....so that you can buy the property if you want it. But if you don't, let me know, so I can buy it.**

Mr. No-name saw an opportunity for a bargain, so he responded, **"I will redeem it"**. Umph, not the response Boaz was hoping for. Boaz now faces what in legal circles is called "cloud on title".

3. The Cloud on the Title, v. 5. This is the legal description for trouble with the title. There is another phrase that is sometimes used. It is *Terra transit cum onere*—*The estate passes with this incumbrance...*³ Ruth was the encumbrance. This was too much for Mr. No-name. He defaulted at this time.

4. The Clear Title, v. 6. **"The closest relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.""** (NASB95) Now we are getting somewhere! This is the response Boaz was fishing for. V. 8 shows us how the transaction was finalized. The man took off his sandal, indicating he has given up his right to walk on the property or do anything with it.

III. THE CUSTOM IS FOLLOWED, v7. This verse was added to explain to the later generations who would hear or read this story the essence of the "sandal contract". **"Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel."** Both of these men were from the "old school". They knew how to keep things simple. They honored each others word and they lived up to theirs. The deal is now done!

IV. THE CONTRACT IS MADE, TITLE IS CLEAR & TRANSFERRED, v. 10. Boaz now makes the announcement in a clear, concise, and conclusive statement. There can be no questions about this deal later. He declares:

1. I have bought the land
2. I have acquired Ruth as wife
3. You are my witnesses.

The whole system of levitical marriage presupposes that the title of the deceased husband's property vests in the widow. When a man dies childless, leaving a widow, the brother, or next closest relative, of the deceased is to marry her, in order "that the first-born may enter upon the name of the dead," *i.e.* that the name of the dead may continue to be connected with the *inheritance* which he has left behind, for in no other sense can the expression "to raise up the name of one" have any meaning in Israel; and, accordingly, in ver. 5 the words of the law, "to raise up the name of the dead," are supplemented by the addition, "upon his inheritance."⁴

³Henry, Matthew: *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody : Hendrickson, 1996, c1991, S. Ru 4:1

⁴Lange, John Peter ; Schaff, Philip ; Cassell, Paulus ; Steenstra, P. H.: *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures : Book*. Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2008, S. 46

WHAT IS HERE FOR US? Here are some of the things:

1. Ruth gained legal status as the wife of Boaz. In a like manner, when Jesus redeemed us, **we were given a legal standing with Jesus Christ**. Sharene sang about this earlier this morning.

2. What motivated Boaz to redeem the land and the lady? Love! Just as Ruth, **we are loved by choice**. Jesus has chosen to love us. The Father loves us (Jn 3:16). This is the romance of redemption. It is a legal issue motivated by love. Redemption is like the man going to the courthouse and paying the price for the marriage license. Just as Boaz went to court to obtain the marriage license for Ruth, so Jesus has gone to court and paid the price to marry us. All because He loves us. When you feel unloved, reread this paragraph and be reminded this is what Jesus has done for you.

3. Ruth and Naomi were no longer “on their own”, they were now under the legal and loving care of Boaz. He had purchased the right to provide care for them. Likewise, **We are not our own, we have been purchased by another**. The NT says: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NET)

And again, “You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed – not by perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ.” 1 Peter 1:18-19 (NET)

4. It wasn't long after this transaction that Ruth became a bride. It wasn't long after Jesus had completed the redemption of His Church that the Church is called a bride. **We who make up the Church of Jesus the Christ are His bride**.

5. **We will also have a new land to live on**. Just as Boaz redeemed both property and a person, so Jesus redeemed property, this world, and a person, we humans. 2 Peter 3:10-14 says ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief; when it comes, the heavens will disappear with a horrific noise, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze, and the earth and every deed done on it will be laid bare. ¹¹Since all these things are to melt away in this manner, what sort of people must we be, conducting our lives in holiness and godliness, ¹²while waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God? Because of this day, the heavens will be burned up and dissolve, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze! ¹³But, according to his promise, we are waiting for **new heavens** and a **new earth**, in which righteousness truly resides. ¹⁴Therefore, dear friends, since you are waiting for these things, strive to be found at peace, without spot or blemish, when you come into his presence. (NET)

We are also reminded that the OT saints looked forward to this new land. Hebrews 11:8-10 says, ⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he would later receive as an inheritance, and he went out without understanding where he was going. ⁹By faith he lived as a foreigner in the promised land as though it were a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city with firm foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (NET)

6. v. 5 gives us a sad reminder: **There will be many who refuse the offer**. As long as it is just religion or being and doing good, many are interested. But when Jesus enters the equation and claims to be the only way to a right legal standing before God, many lose interest and turn away

from the only things that can give supply that for them. Or when they understand that Jesus puts a claim on their life to live holy and righteous, they fear marring their own inheritance in this world. Heaven they could be glad of, but holiness they can dispense with; it will not agree with the lusts they have already espoused, or decided on, they turn away.⁵

7. Boaz and Ruth adored each other. They lived in simple devotion to each other. This is the way we are to live with Jesus. Paul wrote: For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, because I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2-3 (NET) Cf. Rev. 19:7) This relationship affects our bodies (Jesus is Lord of our bodies, 1 Cor 6), minds (Rom. 12:1-3 renew your mind), and all that we do (1 Cor 10:31).

There is a scenario near the end of the movie *Saving Private Ryan* that illustrates the effect redemption should have on us. As Private Ryan is being rescued a vicious battle erupts. Captain Miller is fatally wounded. Ryan rushes to his side. With his dying breath, the captain strains to say: "Earn this." Captain Miller charges Private Ryan not to waste the sacrifice made on his behalf---to live in a way that recognizes the tremendous price that was paid so that Ryan could live. What motivates such sacrifice as this? The bottom line is LOVE.

At the end of the movie, the now seventy-year-old Ryan visits Captain Miller's grave in France. We get the impression that not a day has gone by over the last fifty years during which he didn't think about Captain Miller's sacrifice for him. Here's the point! That another person gives up his life on behalf of Ryan redirects his life and adds a compelling dimension of seriousness and earnestness about how he is to spend his remaining years. It no doubt affects his priorities and how he spends his time. It impacts his marriage, how he raises his children, and how he works. It gives his life purpose and direction⁶ and significance.

We can call it the romance of redemption! Amen.

⁵Henry, Matthew: *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody : Hendrickson, 1996, c1991, S. Ru 4:1

⁶Tim Irwin, *Run with the Bulls without Getting Trampled*, Nashville, TN, Nelson Business, p. 30.