

Series: Ruth

Title: The Confession of Faith

Text: Ruth 1: 7-18

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Naomi left Bethlehem with her husband, Elimelech, and their two sons—due to a physical famine. They went to live in the idolatrous land of Moab where there was no way they could worship God together with God's people. By trying to provide themselves natural bread, they left the spiritual bread. That is what we do when we lean to our understanding in anything. The moment we try to provide for ourselves, we cease trusting Christ and his provision. The moment we look to our wisdom we cease trusting Christ our Wisdom. The moment natural bread becomes our focus we cease feeding upon Christ the Bread from heaven.

So following their father's example of disobedience, Naomi's two sons married Moabite women in disobedience to God. Ten years passed. God removed Naomi's husband and her two sons by death. Naomi was left a poor, widow in a godless land, with two daughter-in-laws, also widows. Then God sent someone to Naomi with the good news that God had visited his people in Bethlehem by giving them bread. "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." (Ru 1: 7)

In order to follow Christ, we must depart from Moab—from this world—we cannot serve God and this world.

1 John 2: 15: Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16: For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17: And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Those who truly repent and believe on Christ break ties with this world giving praise to the strength and righteousness of the Lord alone.

Psalm 71: 16: I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only.

True believers do not boast of our strength or that our faith is our righteousness—repentance and faith is the gift of God and our righteousness is Christ alone. Now, we come to our text.

Ruth 1: 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. 10: And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. 11: And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? *are* there yet *any more* sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12: Turn again, my daughters, go *your way*; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; 13: Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. 14: And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. 15: And she [Naomi] 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 [Naomi] saw that she [Ruth] was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Only the grace of God makes a sinner steadfastly minded to follow Christ, together with his people, unto the end. Only God can give a true heart for Christ. Only God can give true faith in Christ. Only God can make us forsake all and follow Christ. Only those called by God's grace let nothing deter them from following Christ, together with their brethren. That is what we see in Ruth.

FAITH'S FOLLOWING

True faith confesses we are following Christ by God's grace and by God's grace we will not turn back.

Naomi urged these girls to go back. She did not want them following her simply because of her or because of their emotions. She wanted them following Christ. The first time she urged them to go back this is what happened—"They lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." (v9-10) Their emotions were running high. They loved Naomi and no doubt wanted to please her. They confessed "Surely, we will return with thee unto thy people."—not only to dwell but to worship with thy people.

But the second time Naomi urged these girls to go back she gave even stronger reasons. This is what happened—"And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her." (v14) They all wept again. Emotions are involved in following Christ. But not emotions only. Orpah thought about these things. She could not leave her mother's house and her people. So she kissed Naomi goodbye and went home. Orpah's kiss showed she had affection for Naomi. But she had more affection for Moab.

Many see the value in Christ and may even have an affection for him. They get excited and follow Christ for a season. But those who profess faith in Christ only because emotions are high—only in order to satisfy someone else, only because of a trial where they fear death or only for some other natural reason—make a profession for reasons other than Christ and his irresistible grace. These always end up being false converts. The natural man cannot and will not forsake this world and follow Christ alone.

Ruth wept too. But her weeping was not only emotions. True God-given faith does what Ruth did. She clave to Naomi as Naomi clave to Christ. Notice, what Naomi said as she urged them to go back—"And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house." (v8) Then in verse 16, listen to how Ruth answered this—"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go." (v16) Ruth was made willing by God to forsake, not only her land, but her own mother's house. Ruth took Naomi to be her mother because Naomi followed Christ her Lord and Savior. She was not merely following Naomi. She followed Naomi as Naomi followed Christ. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor 11: 1)

This is the heart of true faith toward Christ which only God gives. Only Christ gives his people this willingness. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." (Ps 110: 3) Wherever Christ has begun this work he will finish. "He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Php 1: 6) Wherever Christ has given this desire in the heart, his everlasting covenant promise is, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb 13: 5)

Therefore, true faith confesses we are made willing to follow Christ by his grace and by his grace we will not be turned back.

FAITH'S LODGING

True faith confesses our rest and our lodging is Christ our Husband in his house.

Naomi urged them to go back saying—“The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each *of you* in the house of her husband” (v9) Then once more she told them she was too old to have a husband or to have a husband for them. But when Ruth heard her speak of rest in the house of her husband, Ruth answered—“and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.” (v16)

Naomi no longer had an earthly husband. But through faith, she had Christ her Husband. So did Ruth. Naomi's rest—her lodging—was in the house of Christ her Husband. Through faith, so was Ruth's. So she says to Naomi—“where thou lodgest, I will lodge.”

Christ our Husband is Head of the church and the Savior of the body. Christ loved the church of God's elect and gave himself for it that he might make her the righteousness of God in him. Christ sanctifies and cleanses his bride with the washing of water by the word. At last, Christ shall present his bride to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but holy and without blemish. (Eph 5: 23-27) As we pass through this world, Christ our Husband nourishes us and cherishes us because we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. (Eph 5: 23-30) Therefore, with the whole church of God, true faith confesses we are in subjection to Christ our Husband and we find all our rest, all our lodging, in him.

When Orpah heard Naomi speak of finding a husband in Moab, she returned because she could. But not Ruth! She said, “I have found rest in my husband's house the same as you Naomi, and where you lodge I will lodge.”

True God-given faith confesses, by the grace of God, that we are in submission to Christ our Husband, finding all our rest and provision in him.

FAITH'S ONENESS

True faith confesses we are one with Christ and his people.

Naomi urged them to go back, saying—“it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.” (v13) But faith answered—“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 ought* but death part thee and me.” (v16-17)

Naomi said “the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.” She warned Ruth that faith in our God will not always be sunshine and roses. Some people follow him for what they can get out of him. Some seek health and wealth and prosperity from God. But scripture says “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but to suffer for his sake.” There is a cross to bear. There are afflictions and trials to endure. Our faithful Father chastens those he loves and his hand sometimes feels like it is against us. Naomi lost her husband, her sons, everything; she is going back to Bethlehem without a penny to her name. But even after all this, the irresistible grace of God makes the believer to see God all-wise as all our salvation so that faith answers “Thy God shall be my God.”

Naomi warned that loved ones will leave you—“And she [Naomi] said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.” (v15) Ruth and Orpah confessed faith in Christ together. Both left Moab together. Both confessed to believe Naomi's God together. Now this dear sister-in-law she loved had gone back to her people and her gods. What happens when your dearest

loved one forsakes Christ and return to their people and their gods? Will you go away also? We must confess that it is only by the keeping hand of God's grace that faith answers—"thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God." As Peter answered for every believer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (Jn 6: 68-69)

By the grace of God, true faith confesses that we are one with Christ and one with his people.

FAITH'S CALCULATION

The faith God gives counts the cost and cannot be turned away. Christ is the believer's all and in all. Faith confesses Christ is my redemption from the curse of the law. Christ is my Righteousness and my Holiness. He is my Reconciliation and Restitution. The GodMan is my Keeper, my Husband, my Provider, my Fullness, my Acceptance with God, my All! God is My God! He is my rule of faith and practice. He makes the decisions in what I can and cannot do. I am lead of his Spirit, not my own. I am directed by Christ the Bishop and Shepherd of my soul, not by my fleshly desires. I must submit to Him and obey Him in everything as he enables me by his grace. And must I give him all the honor and praise for all these things.

And faith also confess Christ's people are my people. My people are no longer my people if they are not his people for Christ speaks into the heart by his irresistible power and says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Mt 10: 37-38)

When we are baptized believers confess publicly before all, "I am stedfastly minded...to forsake all for Christ and be not turned back, to look to Christ my Husband and find all provision and rest in him, to obey my God according to his word and to be one with his people as I am with him! To God alone be the glory!"

Amen!