

Trusting God with Obstacles

Ruth 4:1-12


Trusting God (Ruth)

Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

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“A measure of trials is necessary for the exercise and manifestation of your graces; to give you a more convincing proof of the truth and sweetness of the promises made to a time of affliction; to mortify the body of sin; and to wean you more effectually from the world.” – JOHN NEWTON

There is nothing which so certifies the genuineness of a man’s faith as his patience and his patient endurance, his keeping on steadily in spite of everything. – MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

pen your Bible to **Ruth 4:1-12**. We are continuing in a series through the Ruth entitled: “Trusting God.” This morning we are looking a message entitled: “Trusting God in Overcoming Obstacles.”

In this life, there are many setbacks on our way to glory. That’s the whole point of the book of Ruth. Our lives as believers are not a straight line to glory, but we do eventually get there.

William Carey

William Carey was an English cobbler that would eventually translate the Bible for the people of India. Though he was a humble shoe maker, at the age of 32 he ventured off as a missionary to India. His motto was, “Expect great things from God—attempt great things for God.” He learned several languages including Hebrew and Greek and translated the Bible into Bengali, Sanskrit, and numerous other Indian languages and dialects.

One of the greatest obstacles Carey faced was on 11 March 1812 when a fire in his print shop destroyed all of his translation of Sanskrit literature and a dictionary of Sanskrit and related languages. He had to have this before he translated the Bible. Yet it didn’t stop him! In Carey’s lifetime, the mission printed and distributed the Bible in whole or part in Sanskrit and 43 other languages and dialects.

The Test of Your Character

The test of your character is what it takes to stop you. There are many disappointments in the Christian life. None of them are designed to cripple us. They are intended to make us more reliant on God and more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Setbacks on the Road to Glory

So I’ll say it again. In this life, there are many setbacks on our way to glory. We see this in the story of Ruth and Naomi. Elimelech tried to avoid obstacles at all costs. He ran to Moab.

We see something entirely different with Boaz and Ruth. Boaz goes into the teeth of the obstacles, and deals with setbacks in a godly, self-controlled, shrewd, honest and biblical way.

We Come into the Jaws of a Crisis

The story in chapter 4 brings us into the jaws of a crisis. There was land in Naomi's family. They are in a bind. She's either needing to sell it right now so she can live, or perhaps more likely, Elimelech could have sold it before he moved his family to Moab. Either way, they are facing homelessness and being totally destitute.

Leviticus 25 is clear that a near relative, a kinsmen, needs to redeem the land for the widow and raise up a family and Deuteronomy 25 says that he has to redeem the land settle that family on the land.

So what do we do when we come to an obstacle in the will of God? It often happens. What ought we to do. This is what we'll find out today...

Outline

When facing obstacles...

- Submit to **Authority** (1-6)
- Check your **Motives** (7-10)
- Seek God in **Prayer** (11-12)

At the Gate Facing Many Obstacles

So the story opens up with Boaz at the gate. He's a self-motivated person. He's just spent a night with Ruth, and **he didn't touch her**. She proposed that he propose to her, and what happens next? There are obstacles.

- Ruth is a bit forward (for the sake of Naomi). That's an obstacle.
- We find out there is a redeemer that is a closer relative than Boaz. That's an obstacle.
- Ruth has been married before – she's now a widow. That's an obstacle.
- Ruth so far has been barren – no children. That's an obstacle.

Boaz just spent the night with Ruth. They don't have any intimate relations, they don't move in together, there's nothing like that. He keeps his hands off her and waits to be married. The next day Boaz gets up and goes into town and sits by the gate.

I. Submit to Authority (4:1-6).

Ruth 4:1a, "Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there..."

Boaz Highly Motivated

First of all let me say that Boaz is highly motivated. Ruth could have had anyone, but Boaz is glad she is interested in him.

Ruth 3:10, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich."

This lets us in on perhaps that Boaz thought he was out of Ruth's league. Boaz is so surprised

Ruth would go for him. Here we see Boaz is older. He's probably not all that good looking. He's rich. He has a job. He loves Jesus. He's single. But he's humble. Such a man does exist!

So he sits down at the gate. He wants to marry Ruth. He feels unworthy to marry this Moabite woman. That's humility! God blesses humility!

Boaz Before His Authorities, the Elders

Boaz doesn't violate her. He doesn't take her unlawfully. He is a man of integrity who follows authority and follows the law.

Romans 13:1 says, "The powers that be are ordained of God." God ordains authority. So Boaz calls a meeting with the elders of the city. He takes his case before his authorities.

Ruth 4:1, "Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down."

Boaz Meets Mr. So and So, the First Obstacle

Boaz meets the unnamed redeemer. It is translated "friend" here, but in Hebrew it is "peloni almoni" literally, "Mr. So and so."

Boaz wants to marry Ruth. But here's the complication. There's a huge obstacle. Boaz is not legally first in line with the right to marry Ruth. There's another guy who's got the right to marry her first. And so, between Boaz and Ruth and their happily ever after marriage, is a man, who we'll see this week. He doesn't get a name, because he's Mr. Nobody. But he has the right to marry Ruth, and so Boaz has to deal with this obstacle.

Obstacles to Overcome

Single men, when you love a woman and you want to marry her, invariably, almost without exception; there will be an enormous obstacle between you and the marrying of that woman that you will need to overcome that obstacle to marry her. I believe God and his Providence allow these sorts of complications.

- She may be a single mother
- She may be a widow
- She's still in College
- She lives in another state
- She's got a bunch of College debt
- She's a little older and if you get married, she wants to start a family right away
- She's a new Christian, she's going to need a lot of encouragement spiritually.

Whatever it is, there will be an obstacle that you have to overcome.

Two Reasons: Reveals His commitment to Himself and to the Woman

I believe God does that this for two reasons. One, it allows the man to settle the issue **in his own heart**, of how **devoted he truly is to that woman**. How much is he willing to sacrifice? What is he willing to work through? What is he willing to pay or endure to be with that woman?

Secondly, it then reveals the depth of his commitment **to the woman**. She knows if he's willing to go through this, overcome that, work through this obstacle, overcome this financial

difficulty or geographic limitation, he must really love me, because he is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty, because he so desperately wants to be with me.

Boaz, A Man of Honor

Here is Boaz, a man of honor. He had all night with Ruth. He loves Ruth. That's precisely why HE DOES NOT fornicate with her. He wants to do things morally, biblically, with dignity.

He sits down at the gate, and as soon as he sits down, here what we read, "Behold," it just so happens, who comes by, Mr. What's-his-face. "The redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by." Here's again the providence of God, subtly working behind the scenes. Boaz was honorable with Ruth on the threshing floor, didn't have any inappropriate physical relations. Instead, he's trying to do things honorably, biblically, legally.

Mr. What's-His-Face is a Loser

Mr. What's-his-face is a loser, because he is legally and spiritually obligated, as the closest living male relative to Naomi and Ruth, to take care of them. Deut. 25 speaks of this. He needs to make sure they're doing ok.

At this point, he has done **nothing** for these women; they're starving to death. He hasn't done anything. He probably lives a mile or two away. It's the little town of Bethlehem. This would be akin to, you're an adult male who owns your home and has a job, and your aunt, or your cousin lives a few miles away, and they're starving to death, and you don't even call. You don't check in. They're new to town. You don't even go visit, "How are you doing? Do you need any food? Your husbands are dead. Can I pray for you?" **Nothing**. This is a man who has abdicated all of his responsibilities. He has failed at them.

Sins of Omission and Commission

You might say, why are you being so hard on Mr. What's-His-Face? He hasn't done anything wrong. Actually he has. There are sins of commission where you break God's law, and there are sins of omission where you neglect to do the good that you ought. James 4:17, "whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." This man neglected his own family. It was a small town. He didn't even know Naomi had a marriable daughter!

First Sin of Adam, Sin of Omission

Mr. Nobody sins by omission, where he doesn't do anything. What was Adam's first sin? Eating the fruit? We could argue that. But I think his first sin was one of omission and neglect. **Adam didn't say or do anything to protect his wife.** And weak, cowardly, failed men don't do anything.

Naomi and Ruth are starving to death; they're at such a point of destitute poverty that Naomi is looking to sell the family land. Now, this is a big deal, because the land would have been passed on from one generation to the next. It was part of the legacy and lineage of the family.

A Legal Transaction

Boaz gathers ten elders of the city for a legal transaction. **Ruth 4:2**, "And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, 'Sit down here.'" So they sat down."

Boaz wants to marry Ruth. He doesn't just go out and marry her. Remember this is the time of the judges when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Boaz is rich and

powerful. Yet he does not feel himself to be above the law. He submits to his fellow brothers in the Lord.

Boaz grabs ten guys who were elders and says, “I need to do a legal transaction. I need to do a business deal today. You, you, you, you, you, you sit down. We’re gonna do a legal transaction here. I need witnesses.” He is leading the charge. He’s doing it right. He’s an honorable Godly businessman.

Temptation Not to Submit

Boaz really wants to marry Ruth. There is a temptation to cut corners. There is a temptation not to submit to the wisdom of others. But he does succumb to that.

Where ever you are there are always going to be things you don’t agree with. There are always going to be things you wish you could do but you can’t. That’s life in submitting to authority. We all have to give an account to God, and we all have to have a good conscience.

There have been times in my life when I didn’t agree with my authorities and mentors around me. That is always the case. We see things differently because we are made of sinful flesh. If everyone of course saw things my way the world would be a better place, right? No, God puts godly authority in our lives to protects us.

Don’t Railroad Godly Authority

In this life you can always get what you want one way or another with enough excuses. Don’t make excuses for disregarding authority. If you do that, God may take you out of the game for a season.

Example of Disregard for Authority

Think of several examples of disregard for authority.

What about **bitter King Saul**? He sacrificed as a king when only a priest had authority to sacrifice. It was costly. He thought he was going to be able to get a higher standing with the people, but he actually lost the kingdom. And what did this drive Saul to, when he didn’t get his way. King Saul got bitter when he didn’t get his way. King Saul would have been better off submitting to authority and waiting with a joyful heart on God.

What about **godly King Uziah**? He was a king and made an offering in the temple as a priest. God chastened him with leprosy. You’ve got to have a childlike attitude and be submissive to the authorities God has placed in your life.

Mr. Nobody Doesn’t Read the Details

Ruth 4:3-4, “Then he said to the redeemer, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. 4 So I thought I would tell you of it and say, ‘Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.’ If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.” And he said, “I will redeem it.”

Here we see the motive of Mr. Whats-His-Name. He gets to buy some cheap land. His motives are bad. Of course he wants to redeem it. He doesn’t know about Ruth. He doesn’t know he’d have to raise up a family (Deut. 25). He only thinks he can make a quick profit.

Now, this man, Mr. Nobody, is a fool, because Boaz comes to him and says, “Do you want to buy some real estate?” “Yeah, I like real estate.” “Great.” He doesn’t get a contract. He doesn’t survey the details. He doesn’t look at the additional expenses.

Stop the Story! Read the Fine Print!

Mr. Nobody says in verse 4, “And he said, “I will redeem it.”” At this point we are all saying: “O no! Stop the story! Don’t let this Mr. Nobody take Ruth!” If the book of Ruth ended at Ruth 4:4, it would be a tragedy. Ruth can’t marry this worthless Mr. Nobody. And just when we are about to give up, Boaz steps in with the **fine print**.

Reading the Fine Print

Now, Boaz knows exactly what he’s doing here in verse 5. **Ruth 4:5**, “Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.””

Boaz says to the nearer kinsman, “You know, don’t you, that Naomi has a daughter-in-law. So when you do the part of the kinsman redeemer, you must also take her as your wife and raise up offspring in the name of her husband Mahlon?”

He says, “Oh, by the way I forgot to mention one just little detail. You see it’s not just Naomi in this picture, it’s not just this one widow who’s past child-rearing age that you’ll always have to take of a little while there’s also Ruth. Now, Ruth is of child-rearing age, which means that if you bring her into your family then you have the responsibility to provide her with children, including an heir, a son who will then receive the inheritance of the land that you are purchasing.”

Boaz, who has no legal obligation, is the only one who knows what’s going on. He comes to this man and says, “*Legally you have this opportunity to buy the land. The women are in dire circumstances. You need to make up your mind right now, do you want to buy the land or not. And if you don’t want to buy it the land, I’ll buy the land. I’ll fix the mess. I’ll take care of things. I’ll do what’s right.*”

Mr. Nobody Can’t Redeem It

Ruth 4:6, “Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.””

So all of a sudden this land that he’s about to purchase that he had envisioned in his mind being passed down to his sons, now he’s not going to get any of that. It’s going to be passed down to this other son, by the way, a son born from marriage to a Moabite. Oh, yeah. Ruth the Moabite.

Mr. Nobody had to know the law in **Deuteronomy 25:5-6**, “If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears...” follow this closely, “...shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel” (Deut. 25:5-6).

Raising Up Babies

Boaz let’s this man know the fine print. You’ve got to raise up babies for Ruth. “Do you like babies? Do you want some babies? A lot of men are like, “No. They’re like sprinklers, fluids

come out all the holes.” Babies are a lot of work. More mouths to feed. More importantly, more hearts to train. Mr. Nobody has to walk away. (And everybody cheers)

II. Check your **Motives** (4:7-10).

Now we come to a place where Boaz has to check his motives. You have to realize he is committing to a woman with a lot of obstacles. She’s older. She’s been married for ten years. She’s not had any children. Can he even raise up a seed for her? There are a lot of questions. It becomes clear in verses 7 and following that Boaz has good motives for entering into this agreement.

Mr. Nobody Breaks His Obligation

So Mr. Nobody has to formally break his obligation to Ruth before the elders.

Ruth 4:7-8, “Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. 8 So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal.”

No spitting in the face on this one but a picture of **taking off a sandal**, it was a picture that represented yielding the right to property, **yielding the right to purchase**, to **redeem** that piece of land, that property that belonged to Naomi and her family.

Here Comes the Climax

And so he takes the sandal off and gives it to Boaz. Boaz beaming from ear to ear and this is where the crowd – it’s like in a Rocky movie when Rocky wins and the crowd just goes nuts erupting into applause. That’s the picture here. “Buy it for yourself,” and he gives the sandal to him. This is the climax of the book of Ruth. It’s like at the pinnacle of the movie when the crowd’s going crazy. All the witnesses around.

It’s happened and then Boaz calms the crowd down, orchestra music fades in the background into a nice soft lull for Boaz to give a final impassioned speech, his last words in the book. Boaz says, **verse 9**, “Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon” (Ruth 4:9). So he’s got all their property, but then verse 10, “Also Ruth the Moabite...”—he mentions her nationality—““Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day” (Ruth 4:10).

Boaz a Responsible Man

Boaz is at a station in life where he can actually afford to do this. This is one of the benefits of marrying an older, established man. He’s been building his business. He’s been making a living. He’s been investing in real estate, and he’s been investing wisely and tithing generously. And he has been conducting himself in a very responsible way, financially.

A man first and foremost must love Jesus if he is going to marry my daughter. Secondly, he needs to be a responsible man with a job. Those two things are key!

Plasma TV, Mario Brothers and Donkey Kong

Boaz wasn't worried about having the largest plasma TV on the block. He didn't care what level of Mario Brothers or Donkey Kong video games he could get to. He was a man. Single men, if you are going to marry you need to not only be a man, you need to live like a man and take responsibility.

So we see when facing obstacles, we need to submit to authority, we need to check our motives. Finally we need to seek God in prayer.

Chasing the Pursuits of Boys

Too many guys are chasing the pursuits of boys, rather than thinking, "How can this be an opportunity for me to grow spiritually, put to death sin, make some money, buy a house, learn some business skills, invest in my future, so that if and when Ruth comes along, I'm ready to execute on the deal."

III. Seek God in Prayer (4:11-12).

The elders and the people begin to have a prayer meeting about this momentous transaction. How do they pray?

Remember Ephesians 3:20–21, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

If we follow God without trying to cut corners, he can do infinitely more than our weak flesh can do. Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Paul said, "In me, that is, in my flesh dwells no good thing."

Rachel and Leah, Prayer for Ruth

Ruth 4:11a, "Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. "May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like **Rachel and Leah**, who together built up the house of Israel..."

The people pray, "God, we pray that Ruth would be like the Matriarchs who were the mothers of the 12 Tribes of Israel. She has gone from the Moabite outsider, to the highly respected Matriarch insider. The people now love her, and they have much hope for the children who will come from her.

By the way, does God answer this prayer? Does Ruth become elevated to the level of Rachel and Leah? Yes!

Renowned in Bethlehem, Prayer for Boaz

Ruth 4:11b, "May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem." They then pray also for Boaz, "May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem." What they're saying is this, "Boaz, you're a great man. We all know it. You're good in business. You love people. You're generous. You're kind. You bless everyone. Continue." Continue. Some men get off to a good start, and then get off track. You want to run your race well. You want to finish your life well, Paul says. They pray, Boaz, keep doing what you're doing. Don't mess this up.

Perez, Tamar and Judah, Prayer of Faith

Ruth 4:12, “may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

Boaz and the Bethlehemites are descendants of Perez, so this is a great honor in this prayer. How long had she been married previously? Ten years. How many children did she have? Zero. What are they trusting God to do? Open her womb and enable her to become a mother. This is faith. They are asking for something that seems impossible.

They are giving everything to the Lord. That was in the heart of Ruth. That was in the heart of Boaz. My question to you then is, are you living in such a way as to prepare yourself for marriage and family?

CONCLUSION, Seeing Jesus

Boaz shows us how our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ, takes us as penniless foreigners and provides us with security, a future and a hope.

Boaz is an amazing man, who has no legal obligation to do this. It's just pure grace. Mr. What's-his-face was legally obligated to do all of this. Boaz is doing it, not by obligation.

This union ultimately leads to the birth of a son; which eventually leads to the birth of whom? Jesus. Jesus is coming through this family. If it wasn't for Boaz you wouldn't get Jesus, that's how important it is that there's a good dad somewhere that makes a difference and a new family line.

Boaz is the foreshadowing of the ultimate redemption in Jesus. Ruth is the bride, foreshadowing of the Church of Jesus Christ, Christ's Bride.

Let me draw some parallels so you understand the Gospel out of the Book of Ruth.

1. Like Boaz, Jesus is Our Kinsmen Redeemer

The first is that Boaz was a near kinsman to Ruth and Jesus Christ, our glorious eternal God, became a man – entered into human history, took upon himself human flesh, to identify with us to become our near kinsman.

2. Like Boaz, Jesus Alone is Willing and Able to Redeem

Second thing is that Boaz was able to redeem Ruth and Jesus, alone, is able to redeem us. Boaz did it through financial wherewithal; Jesus did it through his sinless life to redeem our sinful life, and to give himself as the price for our redemption. Not only is he able to redeem us, he is like Boaz, willing to redeem us. Boaz was not forced or obligated to marry and redeem Ruth, Jesus is not forced, or obligated to redeem us, but he is willing. Boaz did it out of love, likewise, Jesus redeems out of love, and he's willing and able.

3. Like Boaz, Jesus pays the Price of Redemption

Third, Boaz paid the price for redemption. Likewise, Jesus has paid the price for redemption. It cost Boaz a great deal to redeem Ruth, and it cost Jesus his own life. He went to the cross and died, to give himself, to pay the price for our sins, which is death. That's the penalty and price. And so, at the cross, Jesus was able and willing and did pay the price for our redemption.

Likewise, the Lord Jesus redeems us, not by our participation, good works, morality, religion, purgatory, reincarnation, karma, none of those things. It's a gift. Boaz redeems Ruth, does all of the work. The Lord Jesus redeems us, his bride, the church, collectively, as a gift; he does all of the work. And Boaz takes Ruth to be his wife. He loves her, and he has an unbroken, ongoing relationship with her. So, Jesus Christ takes the church, his beloved bride, he loves her in an unbroken and unending continual relationship.

4. Like Ruth, we do nothing!

Furthermore, as we read the story of Ruth and Boaz, we see in this section, Ruth says and does nothing. Her redemption is a gift that is given to her; it is nothing that she participates in.

5. Finally, like Boaz, Jesus Brings total redemption of His Bride and the Land.

And lastly, Boaz not only redeemed the woman, he also redeemed the land. We're waiting for the Lord Jesus to return to finish and complete his work of redemption, and also to redeem the earth, which is his proverbial land. We take our cues as the church, the collective bride, from Ruth. She walked in Holiness and she trusted wholeheartedly. That's what we are to do by the Grace that God gives us. To repent of sin and to trust in our redeemer, and to trust in his finished work, and to live the new life that he gives us in relationship with him. If you're not a Christian, the big point I'm trying to drive at, you need to be redeemed like Ruth was.

Jesus is, in the words of Spurgeon, "Our glorious Boaz. He's our redeemer. He is a near kinsman. He is able to redeem!"