

## Mission Impossible? Not With God!

Ruth 4:1-22

**Introduction.** 1) One of the finest and most wonderful person's I've ever known grew up in a children's home. She was born into a home of an alcoholic dad and mom who divorced when she was about 7 years old. After moving around from one home to another, she, along with her brother and sister, was placed in a Children's Home where she would live from the time she was 10 until she was 18. During those years she never saw her mother. After one or two visits in the first few months, she would not see her father again until after she was married. All of this had the ingredients for sadness and tragedy except for one thing. At about the age of 11 or 12 this confused and brokenhearted little girl gave her heart to Jesus and Jesus gave His heart to her. God became a Father to this little girl and she suddenly became a beautiful trophy of His grace, a trophy that is more beautiful and radiant than ever. You ask, "How do you know so much about this little girl?" The answer is simple: that little girl is my wife, Charlotte.

2) There is another wonderful woman who also is a trophy of God's grace. Her name is Ruth. At one time she was a penniless, young pagan widow with little or no hope for the future. "Mission Impossible" to turn her life around? The Bible has a simple and direct answer: **Not With God.** **Transition.** Ruth has proposed marriage to Boaz and he said yes. It appears that the maiden from Moab and the bachelor from Bethlehem are going to wed. However, a closer relative than Boaz has the first right of redemption and therefore can marry Ruth. Boaz is determined to settle the issue ASAP (cf. 3:18) and so the stage is set for our seeing "the rest of the story." If nothing is impossible with God, how are we to proceed? What are we to do? How should we act? Chapter 4 provides 3 lessons we should learn.

### I. **God May Use You To Answer Your Own Petitions.** **4:1-12**

- In Ruth 2:12 Boaz prayed that Jehovah would protect and provide for Ruth. God is about to answer that prayer through Boaz himself. However, God can answer the prayer through Boaz because of 2 aspects of Boaz's life, a life worth emulating.

### 1. **Be Devoted To Being The Right Person.** **4:1-8**

- V. 1
  - Gate –the normal, public place to transact business and legal proceedings.
  - Behold –"just then, suddenly, out of no where!"  
The other *goel* (close relative, kinsman redeemer) comes by (providence again)
  - Come aside friend (lit. *peloni almoni*, "so and so") –this is a nameless *goel*, a hint of his character and things to come.
- V. 2
  - 10 men –constituted a quorum, a duly constituted forum to rule on a legal issue.
- V. 3-4
  - Naomi sold the piece of land –When they left for Moab, Elimelech apparently sold the land use rights to someone outside the family. Naomi has no means to purchase it back, so she agrees to transfer that right/obligation/opportunity to her nearest kinsman. Naomi, through Boaz, is calling on the nearer kinsman to repurchase (redeem) the field from its present possessor/user.

Leviticus 25:25--"If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold."

- Note the word “redeem” appears 10 (11 counting “buy it back,” v. 4) time in vs. 4-7.
  - Boaz says he will do it if *peloni almoni* will not. Tragically he says “I will redeem it.” Until this time he has done nothing, taken no initiative to help Naomi or Ruth. Younger notes, “In all probability, he knows about the plot of Elimelech. So, if he ignores his voluntary family responsibility...without a descendant of the line of Elimelech, the field will simply become a part of his own family inheritance. The amount that he would pay to redeem it (and perhaps care for the elderly widow involved) would be offset by the value and produce of the field. With such self-interest in mind, the nearer redeemer quickly consents to redeem the field when Boaz draws his attention to it.” (p. 476)
  - V. 5
    - However, the obligation of levirate marriage was linked to the redeemed estate. Buy the land and you also obligate yourself to marry the girl (Ruth) and perpetuate (lit. “raise up”) the name of her dead husband.
    - Remember: neither man is legally obligated by Deuteronomy 25:5-10 to marry Ruth. It is voluntary and moral. Boaz will gladly do it? What about “old so and so?”
  - V. 6 “Old so and so” has neither the character or desire now to step up to the plate and rise to the occasion. He is not concerned about anyone but himself.
    1. He will not agree to redeem the field, marry Ruth and raise up an heir for Elimelech/Mahlon. If he does this he must pay for the land, marry a foreigner, and see the property eventually go to maintain the name of Elimelech. What future is there in that?
    2. He cannot redeem the land and refuse to marry Ruth. There will be only shame and disgrace in that.
    3. He can, however, release his right as kinsman-redeemer to the next *goel*, Boaz. This is the way to go. This is also the way to historical oblivion as well!
  - V. 7-8
    - Boaz seizes the moment and there is an exchange of a sandal (“so and so” giving it to Boaz) to publicly formally seal the deal.
    - Boaz keeps his word, he is the right person (cf. 3:11, 13, 18). His name will become great. God will see to it.
    - *Peloni almoni* refuses to restore and perpetuate the name of the dead. He, himself has no name, nor will he ever!

Proverbs 10:7—“The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.”

    - The name of *peloni almoni* will remain hidden, unknown forever. Mr. “whoever you are” vanishes from the pages of history. He refused to raise up the name of Elimelech and Mahlon and in the process loses his own.

Proverbs 22:1—“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.”

Ecclesiastes 7:1—“A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth.”

    - *Peloni almoni* decided not to be the right person. In contrast Boaz determined to be the right person. We should follow Boaz, not *peloni almoni*.
2. **Be Dedicated To Paying the Price.** **4:9-12**
1. Levirate Marriage

The term is derived from the Latin word “levir” meaning “brother-in-law.” Levirate marriage takes place when a man dies with no male children. His brother (or another relative) is to marry the widow and father a son for the deceased brother. It is the practice of raising up a son for a deceased relative.

There are only three places where this practice occurs in the Old Testament: Genesis 38, Deuteronomy 25:5-10, and Ruth.

The purpose of the law is to raise a son for the dead brother. If a man dies without sons, in a sense he dies entirely. In the levirate marriage the first son born is considered to be the son of the dead brother. When this son grows up he will inherit the property of his deceased father. Now the Law was not compulsory. A brother or relative could choose not to fulfill his duty. If he did refuse, he would be encouraged to change his mind and if he still refused he would be shamed with the ceremony of the sandal and the spitting in the face. It was not compulsory to fulfill the levirate duty but it was disgraceful not to.

2. The *goel* (kinsman-redeemer)

“Kinsman-redeemer” is the translation of one Hebrew word: *goel*. The kinsman” is who the man is. He is a relative. The “redeemer” is what the man does.

There are three basic things a kinsman-redeemer does. The first two are found in Leviticus 25.

i. Redemption of Property. Leviticus 25:25-28

The kinsman acts on behalf of an impoverished relative to purchase and return the land the poor man was forced to sell. He, the kinsman, redeems or buys back the land.

ii. Redemption of Person. Leviticus 25:47-55

Here we see that the kinsman redeems a relative who was forced to sell himself into slavery. He buys him out of slavery and sets him free.

iii. Redemption of Blood. Numbers 35:16-21, 31

Here we see that the *goel* is an avenger. When a relative of his is murdered, as the kinsman-redeemer, he is to avenge the death. It is his duty as *goel* to protect the honor of his family and exact vengeance.

• V. 9-10

- Boaz keeps his word (3:11) and fulfills the role of the *goel* (kinsman-redeemer). He, a blood relative: 1) willingly pays to redeem the land of Elimelech (v. 9); 2) agrees to marry Ruth honoring the principle of Levirate marriage; 3) pledges to perpetuate the name of the dead men.

• V. 11-12

- The elders and people of at the gate bear witness to what has occurred (“witness”, 3 times in vs. 9-12), and they also proclaim a 3-fold blessing on Boaz.
  - 1). Like Rachel and Leah—fruitful in building a family as these 2 women did for Jacob.
  - 2). May you prosper (NIV “have standing”) and be famous. Literally it says “may a name be called/given.” May people “call you a name,” may your name be known, famous (unlike that of *peloni almoni*).

- 3). Be like Perez...(found in Genesis 38). In spite of the character deficiencies of both Judah and Tamar, Perez, their son, proved to be a blessing from God (cf. 4:18; Matt.1:1, 3). Do not miss:
  - Contrast of Judah/Tamar with Boaz/Ruth
  - “The Lord make” (v. 11)/ “The Lord will give” (v. 12)

**Transition.** God has used Boaz to answer his own prayer. He could do so because he was the right person willing to pay the right price. But God is not through with either Boaz or Ruth.

## II. God May Bless You Beyond Your Expectations. 4:13-17

Boaz married Ruth. The long anticipated love story is complete, or is it? God has been gracious to Ruth, but...what about Naomi? What about the rest of her story?

### 1. Trust the Lord To Bless You. 4:13-15

- V. 13—Boaz and Ruth marry, come together and immediately (that is the impression) she is pregnant and has a son. Note the text says, “The Lord gave her conception,” a reminder that God is the author of life. Months are compressed in a simple verse.
  - V. 14-15—The women speak to Naomi (not Ruth; interestingly Ruth never speaks in chapter 4) as the focus of attention moves back to her. Their words are words of thanksgiving, celebration and hope.
    - The close relative is Obed (v.17).
    - “His name be famous” –a prayer wish God will fulfill (v. 11b).
    - “Restorer and nourisher in your old age” –something grandchildren actually do.
    - Ruth has been better to you than a perfect number (7) of sons. She loves you. Leviticus 19:34—“The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”
- It is ironic. This stranger from Moab showed Israel what this verse truly means.

### 2. Let Others Rejoice With You. 4:16-17

- V. 16
  - Naomi is a fulfilled/ “full again” grandmother enjoying and helping in the care of her grandson. Ruth sees joy in her mother-in-law’s eyes again.
- V. 17
  - The women of Bethlehem continue to rejoice as well (they probably did not literally/actually name him; rather they explain his significance in Naomi’s life and the meaning of his name: Obed=servant).
  - Obed will be famous (v. 14), for he will have a son named Jesse, and he will have son named David. The rejoicing of Bethlehem is just beginning.

## III. God May Do Through You What Transcends Your Imagination. 4:18-22

Verses 18-22 contain an abbreviated 10-person genealogy. Perhaps the 10 names stand in contrast to the 10 infertile years in Moab. In this kind of genealogy, person 7 and 10 occupy the most important position. Number 7 is Boaz (cf. v.11b). Number 10 is David.

### 1. God May Raise Up A Great Leader. 4:18-22

- This genealogy provides the royal ancestry of King David, the greatest king in Israel’s history.
- Think about it: No Ruth...no Boaz and Ruth...no Boaz and Ruth...no David! Through common, faithful servants, God raised up a great leader.

### 2. God Did Send Us A Great Redeemer. Matt. 1:1, 5-6, 21

- No Boaz and Ruth, no David, no David, no Jesus! Oh but have you seen the portrait between the lines?
- Jesus Christ: our Kinsman Redeemer.  
(The kinsman-redeemer of the Old Testament foreshadows our kinsman-redeemer, Jesus Christ).

**Redemption** is a key word which describes our salvation. What is redemption?  
 “The payment of the price of sin by the sacrifice of Christ whereby He purchased the believer out of the slave market of sin and set him free.” (Ephesians 1:7-8)

There are three things that are necessary for the kinsman-redeemer to fulfill if he is to redeem.

1. The Kinsman-Redeemer must be related by blood.  
 The kinsman-redeemer is someone who is blood related. He is a part of the family. In Jesus, God became a man. He became related to us. He is God, but as our kinsman redeemer he is human. (John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:14-15)
2. The Kinsman-Redeemer must be able to pay the price.  
 The kinsman must have the required funds to be able to redeem the property or the person. He must have the necessary means. Jesus was able to redeem us from the slave market of sin because He was able to pay the price. That price was His own blood. (1 Peter 1:18-19)
3. The Kinsman-Redeemer must be willing to redeem.  
 As we saw in the Deuteronomy law and in Ruth it is possible for the kinsman to refuse to redeem. So if someone is going to be redeemed it will require a willingness on the part of the kinsman. Jesus was not only able to redeem us by paying the price through His death, He was willing to do so. He voluntarily gave up His own life (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 10:15).

### **Conclusion.**

- Ruth was a blessing to Naomi.
- Ruth was a blessing to Bethlehem.
- Ruth was a blessing to Boaz.
- Ruth was a blessing to Israel.
- Ruth IS a blessing to the world!

Mission Impossible to redeem Ruth and Naomi? Not with God.

Mission Impossible to redeem you and me? Not with God.