

NAOMI'S SACRED TRUST

A STORY OF THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES IN ISRAEL
By the "Highway and Byway" Preacher

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Scripture Authority—Ruth 4:13-17.

SERMONETTE.

The Messianic Line — This beautiful story of Ruth traces for us the genealogy of David, who established the kingly line from which sprang the Christ, the promised Messiah of the Jews. Note the large part which faith plays here. Faith which stirred in the heart of Naomi in the far country of Moab and drew her back to her God and her people. Faith bringing to Ruth's heart a vision of a better life, and giving her the courage to forsake all that she might find a place with God and God's people. Faith making them both faithful and patient during those early days of bitter trial and poverty after their return to Bethlehem. Faith leading each step of the way through the darkness of their loneliness and grief. Faith reaching out so hopefully, so delicately, and yet so boldly and laying hold of the right to the claim of kinship. Faith inspiring to modest and gracious acceptance of the exalted position to which the alliance with Boaz lifted them. Faith finding its ultimate and joyful triumph in a son and heir whose coming was to add its link to the Messianic line around which the thought of every devout Hebrew parent centered.

And let us contemplate how this pathway of faith led step by step in so wonderful and beautiful a way up to the coming of the Christ, who came not only as the perfect exemplification of the purity and holiness of God, but as the perfect exponent and expression of that faith which was to win the ultimate and glorious triumph over sin and death and the grave. All that this world has ever had from God has come along the pathway of faith, yea in the very beginning it was the faith of the son of God, the second person of the Trinity, which brought the universe into being and created the earth and all that is therein. This pathway of faith can be traced through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It has been the slender thread on which has hung the fate of the human race, and it is still the only medium of access to God and the one element which, if absent from the human life, makes all other virtues and attainments of none avail.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It was faith which could lift a Moabitish woman from the midst of an alien and heathen race to become the great-grandmother of David, the ancestor of the Christ. Think of the Divine honor which thus came to Ruth because of faith, and then consider how much of God's blessing may be yours through faith in the Son of God.

THE STORY.

"GOD hath been good to us, indeed," responded Boaz, to the happy words of gratitude which Ruth, his wife, had just spoken. "Yes," continued Ruth, "He hath given me thee"—looking up with loving glance into the face that bent over

her—"and now He hath given me a son—and thee, too," she added, eagerly.

A sound came from the other side of the room, where the aged Naomi was busy about the household cares, which sounded much like a sob, a I caused Ruth to look in that direction.

"And thee, too, mother," she added, hastily, while a shadow passed over her face, and was gone again as the baby cooed and reached up its little hand and touched her cheek. She buried her face in the little one's clothing, as she pressed him to her breast, and when she lifted her face again she said, appealingly, to her husband:

"And I want our son to be named after thee, my husband. Cannot it be so?"

Again the half-suppressed sob sounded from the other side of the room, followed this time by a choking voice, which said:

"Is not Naomi to be consulted in the naming of the child?"

"Why, mother dear, I had not thought to shut you out. I had not thought that you cared," and again the troubled shadow crossed her face.

"Will not the Lord, who hath given us the son, also in His own good time give us a name for him?" asked Boaz, hastily, anxious that no suspicion of disharmony should exist between the two women who had been so close to each other in love and sympathy, and who had rejoiced together over the coming of the babe and had planned so earnestly for his future.

"Yes, we can wait," both women responded in the same breath, and there the matter rested for the time being, but in the heart of each the troubled thoughts which had been there since the coming of the babe remained. Neither knew just how the feeling arose, for there was no spoken word, but each became conscious of a jealous solicitude over the child; each was utterly consumed with love and ambition for the child, and each felt a personal pride and triumph in him. And as the days had passed, Ruth had lavished her love and attentions upon the child, had talked of her plans for the child, and, without realizing it, had scarcely given Naomi chance for a share in it all. How the old woman's heart yearned for a sense of ownership and proprietorship in the child. How her eyes feasted themselves upon the face and form of the babe, and followed with a great hunger in her eyes every move that the little one made. The mother became conscious of this and the thought had flashed through her heart: "She wants my baby for her own." And then had come the climax, as indicated in the opening conversation of our story.

From that moment, when the whole situation was revealed to the heart of Ruth, there began a great struggle in her heart. It was her baby. Yes, her heart welled with gratitude and love as she remembered how it was through the loving, helpful influence of Naomi that she had come to know the true God and had found entrance to a new life that now had opened up to her seemingly in all its rich fullness and blessing, and yet, as she hugged her baby close, she would say over and over to herself: "He is mine."

And Naomi, as she hovered about mother and child, and sought in tender solicitude to minister to them, by quick intuition became conscious of the state of Ruth's heart and it came as a great and cruel stab at her own heart. This babe that had come like an answer from heaven that the name of her dead husband might not be cut off in Israel, and forever shut her family from hope of being in the favored line of the promised one who should be a leader like Moses; this babe whom she felt belonged to her in a peculiar way; this babe whom she felt instinctively was destined to become great in Israel—was she not to have special charge of him? Was she not to have the direction of his mind and life as she alone, a devout mother in Israel, was able to give it? How she wanted to pour the wealth of her devotion to God into that little life as

it unfolded, that it might prove a life pleasing unto God.

Thus in the hearts of these two women the struggle went on.

But with Ruth the conflict was especially fierce, for the natural inclinations of the mother heart were pitted against the higher and better self. She was conscious of Naomi's peculiar claim upon the child and of her special fitness to have the care and training of him. But how could she yield the place she wanted to occupy to her son, even though it was to one whom she knew could fill it better? So she asked herself over and over again, and was still asking the question on the day appointed when the neighbors and friends had been summoned to the presentation of the child before the priest Eli. In fact, after all the guests had arrived, the question was still unanswered. The baby was still in her arms, where, with feverish solicitude, she had kept him, as though fearful that to put him down was to lose him. All through the ceremonies she held him, and now has come the time when he shall be named. It is her right to name him, and she can call him Boaz, as she had expressed her wish to do. Silence has fallen upon all the glad, expectant company. All eyes turn to Ruth and wait for her to speak.

The conflict rages fierce within her breast. Will she speak, or will she give her baby up? What shall she do? She must do something. They are all waiting. Shall she let the selfish claims of her own heart dictate; or shall she yield to the dear Naomi? She rises to her feet, the precious baby still in her arms. She advances across the floor, the baby still hugged close to her bosom. She turns, when in the center, and moves swiftly towards Naomi. She reaches the old woman's side. She stoops and, opening her arms, she places the precious baby in the arms of the mother-in-law, while a great and glorious light illuminates her face.

A glad note of approval sweeps over the company, and the women said unto Naomi:

"Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him."

And they called his name Obed, and Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom, and she became nurse unto it.

Consecrated by Royalty.

The emperor's great bell in the Cathedral of Cologne was consecrated with great pomp. Twenty-two cannons taken from the French were assigned by the Emperor William for its manufacture. It was cast by Andreas Hamm Frankenthal, and more than 5,000 pounds was paid for the casting.

It bears an inscription, recording that "William the most august emperor of the Germans and king of the Prussians, mindful of the heavenly help granted to him whereby he conducted the late French war to a prosperous issue, and restored the German empire, caused cannon taken from the French to be devoted to founding a bell to be hung in the wonderful cathedral, then approaching completion." A likeness of St. Peter, the name patron of the church, is on the side, beneath which is a quatrain in the style of the medieval conceits, praying that, as devout hearts rise heavenward at hearing the sound of the bell, so may the doorkeeper of Heaven open wide the gates of the celestial mansion. On the opposite side is inscribed a sextet in German.—Sunday Magazine.

Fish Welcome Coming of Storm.

The weather has a noticeable effect on fish of all kinds. Fishermen will tell you that trout become electrified with energy before a storm. As if in joyful anticipation of a feast, sharks disport playfully about ships before a hurricane rises.

Ducks Prey on Swallows.

This curious story of ducks and swallows is related by a correspondent: As he was passing a farmyard he saw the ducks catching and eating swallows. One duck was swimming in the pond and caught a swallow skimming above the water. With considerable struggling and holding the swallow under water the duck ate the bird. Another duck that was on soft mud also caught a swallow and eventually ate it, but only after a longer struggle, as it could not hold the swallow under water.

An Ambassador's Butler.

The practice of tipping is not entirely bad; the recipients at least derive some benefit. A former butler of Mr. Choate, American ambassador to England before Mr. Reid, has built a large hotel on the coast on the tips he received from visitors to the American embassy, whose servants make more money than those attached to other embassies, chiefly because of the number of wealthy Americans who visit the ambassador and scatter tips with traditional generosity.

THE NEW INSURANCE AGENT.

He Comes in With the New Law—Paul Morton on His Opportunity.

The new insurance law of the State of New York has opened up a promising field for both men and women with brains and energy in the sale of life insurance. The law now provides standard forms of policies, each of which practically bears the hall mark of the State of New York, and this new order of things has established the sale of life insurance on a correct basis.

The prohibition against rebating and extravagant allowances to agents has driven out of the business the old type of insurance agent, who in many cases virtually bought business, with large rebates, instead of selling it. His place is being taken by professors, lawyers, school teachers of both sexes, and others, who find that being a life insurance agent under the new system offers greater reward than their previous vocations. The law has reduced commissions but all of the commission now goes to the agent. Life insurance is something that everyone needs and under the present system its sale is being conducted with becoming dignity and propriety.

Paul Morton, president of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, has taken the lead in building up an agency organization that is in keeping with the demands of public sentiment, and the standard he has set for his company. He says: "We want new agents, both men and women, but none except energetic, able and truthful people need apply. For such there is a splendid opportunity."

Mr. Morton's policy of injecting new and vigorous blood into the agency force of the Society is meeting with success in all parts of the country.

Her Answer.

"Now, children," said the kindergarten teacher, "I have explained to you how many trees give us food, in the way of fruit, and in other ways. You remember that I said man taps the maple trees to get maple sirup. Where does the tapioca come from, then?" "I guess," said Olive, after a pause, "that you tap the oaks, don't you?"—Judge.

Starch, like everything else, is being constantly improved, the patent Starches put on the market 25 years ago are very different and inferior to those of the present day. In the latest discovery—Defiance Starch—all injurious chemicals are omitted, while the addition of another ingredient, invented by us, gives to the Starch a strength and smoothness never approached by other brands.

A Counter Irritant.

"Have you made arrangements to prevent fraud in the election?" "No," answered Senator Sorghum; "I couldn't quite manage that. But I've done the next best thing to defeat the opposition's iniquity. I've made arrangements that'll make their fraud so insignificant by comparison that it won't be noticed."

No Time for Extras.

Tiny Sister (rushing into big sister's room)—Please hurry, Lulu; Mr. White is downstairs. Lulu (very grandly, while she dabs her face with the powder puff—Very well, dear; I'll be down. Tiny Sister (nervously)—Oh, please don't wait to shave!—Woman's Home Companion.

SAHARA GROWING DRYER.

French Observer Says the Oases Are Shrinking and Will Disappear.

C. F. Gantier, a French explorer, is authority for the statement that the Sahara is continuously becoming drier to such an extent that the oases are perceptibly drying up and will disappear altogether in a relatively short time. He quotes historic records and physical signs to show that springs were at one time more plentiful than now, and that the extent of the patches where vegetation flourishes were much greater even 50 to 100 years ago.

As the climate of the region has undergone no change in perhaps thousands of years, he believes that the disappearance of the water must be due to purely mechanical causes. He considers that it is due to the continual advance of the great sand masses to the north, thus forming an impenetrable barrier against the watershed of the Atlas mountains.—N. Y. Sun.

Laundry work at home would be much more satisfactory if the right Starch were used. In order to get the desired stiffness, it is usually necessary to use so much starch that the beauty and fineness of the fabric is hidden behind a paste of varying thickness, which not only destroys the appearance, but also affects the wearing quality of the goods. This trouble can be entirely overcome by using Defiance Starch, as it can be applied much more thinly because of its greater strength than other makes.

An Artist.

"The man who painted that spurious picture was an artist, at all events," said the connoisseur. "I don't know about him," answered Mr. Cumrox, ruefully, "but the dealer who sold it to me was."

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THEY'RE MOSTLY LIKE THIS.

Beautiful Faith of Woman in the Man She Loved.

"People think that because I am a woman," said Mrs. Hetty Green, "I can be imposed on; but usually they find out their mistake."

She was talk'g about a lawyer wherein she had disputed her lawyer's bill, and this topic naturally led her to the topic of women's trustfulness.

"There's a case in point," said Mrs. Green, smiling grimly, "about a young and pretty school teacher. She once asked her class for an original definition of the word 'wife.'"

"'A wife is a rib,' said one little girl.

"'Wives are gilding stars,' said another.

"'A com'uter,' said a third.

"'An inspiration,' said a fourth.

"'Altogether the definitions were rather prosy and commonplace, but finally a child of 11, smiling archly, said:

"'A wife is a person for a man

to find fault with when things go wrong."

"'Good!' cried the pretty teacher, laughing. 'Good! That is the best definition of all. The best, the truest!'"

"But that afternoon on the way home from school, the little girl whose definition had so pleased, tripped demurely up to the teacher and said:

"'Are you not going to marry that tall, handsome young man I see you with nearly every night?'"

"'Yes,' said the teacher.

"'Well, then, if my definition of a wife was true—'"

"'Ah, dear, with us nothing will ever go wrong. He says so himself.'"

Cause for Indignation.

The little fellow Arvid is the son of our coachman and is so unwelcome a caller around Jennie's kitchen that the other day the girl slammed the door in his face. A few minutes afterwards the tiny Swede was heard telling the incident to a neighbor, indignantly exclaiming: "Why, she shut the door right in my looks!"—Chicago Tribune.