

# The Gospel Witness

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T. T. SHIELDS, *Pastor and Editor.*

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1: 16.

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No. 1

## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?"

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church.

(Stenographically reported.)

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"—Romans 8: 35.

The smoke of conflict so obscures the future that no informed and enlightened mind can contemplate the morrow with unconcern. And to this, in the Christian view, are to be added the ordinary besetments of our spiritual relations: the apparent and unguessed potentialities of evil which inhere in our common human nature; the malign spiritual forces which are objective to ourselves; and the circumstances of life, which in their temporal character and influence, seem to be the allies of both the evil without and the evil within.

With such a prospect observable from the natural plane, it is well that we should climb to some Pisgah summit, that we may see beyond the clouds to the golden land of promise and assured possession which is ours in Christ.

And, therefore, relying upon your prayerful attention, with this massive and comprehensive Scripture for a text, I shall try to condense a volume into a sermon, and to compress an extensive exposition into a miniature of pregnant speech. This text is an expression of a **defiant faith, a triumphant grace, and of an exultant hope.** We shall probably have time to consider only the first of these this morning.

I. Here, then, is the language of **A Defiant Faith.**

Even true faith is not without trembling in its first experience of war, and says, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee". With longer training it entrenches itself in a defensive position, and says, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves

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against me roundabout". But veteran faith grows defiant towards its foes, and contemptuous of its hardships; and, like David, goes forth to meet the giant in the open field; and, flinging down the gauntlet, cries, "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

This faith recognizes the malignant purpose of its foes, to separate the soul from the love of Christ. Outcroppings of this malign power appear everywhere. There is always waiting an extinguisher for the candle of love; a poison to pollute the stream of love; a vitriol to blind the eyes of love; a trap to entangle the feet of love; a sword to sever the arm of love; a paralysis to silence the speech of love. That love is an object of attack by invisible foes is abundantly evident. How insidiously it works among the children seeking to alienate brothers and sisters from each other! How desperately it strives to break the bond of affection which unites parents and their children! How subtly it works to rob the wife of the love of her husband, and the husband of the love of his wife! The great aim of this evil power is to separate every mortal from every other mortal's love.

All this, however, is but indicative of the deeper and ultimate design, to separate our souls from the love of God; so to deal with us that God shall cease to love us: that is the object of all the machinations of the Devil, to put an end to the love of God for you and me.

This intrepid faith dares to look into the depths of the abyss. Only the well-balanced and sure-footed may safely look over the edge of the precipice. Here faith contemplates the direst of all possibilities—separation from the love of Christ, the becoming of a loveless and unloved soul in the universe! Separated from the love of Christ! That would mean the extinguishing of the sun, the beginning of perpetual night, the annihilation of beauty, the birth of external winter! To be separated from the love of Christ would be to slip from the grip of gravitation, and, like a vagrant star, to fall into the darkness of an eternal void. There could be no more terrible hell imaginable than that, to be separated from the love of God!

And this dauntless faith defies the visible allies of the invisible foes to effect this separation. Here is a confederacy formidable enough to inspire the stoutest heart with fear. But this valiant, veteran, faith defies its adversaries, and challenges their united strength to effect the enemy's purpose to separate the soul from the love of Christ.

Let us examine the units of this mighty army: "**Tribulation**". That means bodily afflictions, physical disease and infirmity. But how shall this turn away the love of Christ? One may have to cry with Job: "My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome. . . My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body." But this cannot turn away the love of Christ. The hero may return from the war blind, or maimed, or otherwise despoiled of his beauty, only to find himself separated from the love which he valued more than life. Not so shall the love of Christ grow cold toward the afflicted soul.

But here is another battalion under General "Distress". What

power has he to put himself astride the stream of love and separate the soul from Christ? "Distress" stands for the forces which manoeuvre to bring us into a strait place, which restrict our mobility, and deprive us of freedom of action, until the mind is imprisoned within locked doors, and shuttered windows, and life is reduced to a state of siege. Shall we then be forgotten of the love of Christ? Will it then be impossible for Him to hold communication with His beloved? Faith saith, "Come, Distress, see what thou canst do to sever Love's communications." You see, therefore, how defiant faith is!

Then there is "Persecution". That represents the foes' grand offensive, the evils which pursue us, which perpetually dog our steps, which harry our spirits, and give us no rest. Can persecution drive us to such lengths that love cannot span the distance? He is thinking not only of religious persecution at the hands of men, though that is included; but of the aggressive evils which pursue us through all the relationships of life, and follow us, as Benaiah followed Joab, even into the temple, and would fain wreck our hopes, even as Benaiah shed the blood of Joab as he caught hold upon the horns of the altar. You know experimentally what I mean: that all-pervasive presence of evil, which descends like a withering blight upon all our holiest aspirations, upon all our noblest efforts, and falls like a deadly paralysis upon the hands that grasp the altar of atonement!

And can this deadly enemy press us so irresistibly as to compel us to compromise with evil; and so rob us of our virtue, and of what spiritual graces we possess, as to quench the love-light in the eyes of the Lord Jesus for our poor, pitilessly harried souls?

Faith answers: "Come on, Persecution! Do your worst; and you shall find that you cannot so despoil this redeemed soul as to quench the love of Christ for me."

But see! On they come, with General "Famine" in the van. Shall hunger and thirst, and all the pains and horrors of poverty avail to reduce the soul to the enemy's terms,—the renunciation of the love of Christ? Because the marriage is delayed and the Bridegroom tarries, will the betrothed of the Lord sell her soul to another, and forfeit the love of Christ? Faith defies also this grim warrior Famine to alienate the love of Christ from the soul.

And then comes "Nakedness". More than poverty is meant. It stands for discovery, revelation, disillusionment. And what if our souls be stripped of all covering, of all disguise, and artificial and superficial adornment?

"O how shall I, whose native sphere  
Is dark, whose mind is dim,  
Before the Ineffable appear,  
And on my naked spirit bear  
The uncreated beam?"

When driven by enemy assaults to the utmost extremity of endurance, when seeking to parry the thrusts of a horde of temptations, when our sinful natures are revealed in all their native and

naked ugliness, may not these many waters which accomplish this unhappy disclosure of our moral nakedness quench the love of Christ? Faith has no fear that the love of Christ will be subject to disillusionment. Saith she:

“He saw me ruined by the fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all.  
He saves me from my lost estate,  
His loving kindness, O how great.”

But Paul mentions two others, these twin ogres, “peril” and “sword”,—the shadow and the substance, the fear of death and the fact of it. To what moral and spiritual perils we are exposed! How near to the edge of the precipice we had come! How nearly overcome of temptation, or, being overcome, how nearly fatal was our fall! “As for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipped”. “When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up”. Thus faith survives the perils of the way, and refuses to cast away her confidence which hath great recompense of reward.

But when perils are immediate; when they take physical form; when duty points the way to paths of danger, shall an inordinate love of life, or a paralyzing fear of death; merit and receive the contempt of the self-sacrificing love of Christ? Shall our principles fail us in the critical hour? Can the perils of the moment induce a moral cowardice sufficient to separate us from the heroic love of Christ? We have often been fearful in the midst of the battle; but, blessed be God, not all the Devil’s “frightfulness” can separate us from the love of Christ.

Nor can the “sword” itself. We read of one who has the power of death, that is the Devil. But whether it be drawn against our physical frame, or unsheathed against our spirits, no sword can cut through the guard by which Love’s own supplies are safely convoyed to the soul. They said of Lazarus, “Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick”; and when Jesus knew that he was dead, He spoke of him as “Our friend Lazarus”. The power of death could not cut the bond by which Lazarus was made the friend of Jesus; and the shield of faith, and the helmet of the hope of salvation are proof against every sword.

But may not the sword separate us from the love of Christ to-day? Ah, you thought the sword must rust in its scabbard, that the alarum of war would never sound again. But the devouring sword has been abroad again; keener, more destructive, more insatiable than ever. And the sword has a fearful power of separation. It can divide nations asunder; it can separate the husband from his wife, the son from his mother, the father from his children. What fortunes it has devoured, what families it has bereaved, what homes it has wrecked—almost before our eyes! But there is one thing the sword cannot do: though it be heated in war’s fiercest fires, and tempered in blood and tears—hell cannot produce a sword whose edge is not turned, and whose blade is not shattered in any attempt to cut through Love’s golden chain by which the soul is bound to Christ!

There is still one other sense in which the "sword" fails. It is likened in Scripture to an enemy's tongue: "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow". David said: "My soul is among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."

And oh, what bands of human love this sharp sword of the tongue has severed! What havoc it has wrought in the Christian Church; what damage it has inflicted upon the nations—a Bernstorff tongue was as deadly as a Hindenburg sword. Yes, "a whisperer separateth chief friends". What hearts have been pierced, what friendships blighted, what homes destroyed, what lives have been blasted, by this sharp sword! What loves have perished at the fiery stroke of this poisoned blade, a false tongue!

And there is "a sharp sword" of which the human tongue is but the type. The apostle had such an one in mind, "the accuser of the brethren," who would, if he could, poison the mind of God against us, and alienate the affections of the divine Bridegroom from His affianced bride. But here faith challenges him to the attempt, and defies him to his face: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth", etc.

At another time I shall try to expound to you this saying of triumphant grace, by considering what it means, not to conquer, but to be "more than conquerors", to be overwhelmingly victorious. But this morning I leave this message with you, that when faith is full grown it scorns all compromise, and becomes aggressively defiant toward its foes, crying, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

And faith fills the answering silence with a song:

"I hear the words of love,  
I gaze upon the blood,  
I see the mighty sacrifice,  
And I have peace with God.

"The clouds may go and come,  
And storms may sweep my sky;  
This blood-sealed friendship changes not,  
The cross is ever nigh.

"My love is oft-times low,  
My joy still ebbs and flows;  
But peace with Him remains the same,  
No change Jehovah knows.

"I change, He changes not,  
The Christ can never die;  
His love, not mine, the resting place,  
His truth, not mine, the tie."

# EDITORIAL

(NOTE.—Dr. Shields is delivering a series of addresses in the United States, May 6th to 16th. The following lecture is published to serve the double purpose of editorial matter and Bible School lesson notes, the lesson for May 25th being "The Book of Ruth".)

## THE GOSPEL IN RUTH.

The eighth lecture of a series on "How to Study the Bible," by Rev. T. T. Shields, delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Tuesday evening, February 27th, 1923. (Stenographically reported).

OUR one object this evening, as always, must be to find our way to the Lord Jesus Christ. This whole Bible, we have said again and again, is as the King's palace wherein He is pleased to dwell; but we must come to it, not to see the palace, but to have audience with the King Himself. Many of you will remember the almost extravagantly expressed affection for his friend which Tennyson gives us in his immortal "In Memoriam"; and I should like to borrow two or three of his beautiful stanzas to make application of the principle to which I have just referred:

"A happy lover who has come  
To look on her that loves him well,  
Who 'lights and rings the gateway bell,  
And learns her gone and far from home;

"He saddens, all the magic light  
Dies off at once from bower and hall,  
And all the place is dark, and all  
The chambers emptied of delight:

"So find I every pleasant spot  
In which we two were wont to meet,  
The field, the chamber and the street,  
For all is dark where thou art not."

Thus, in our study of the Bible, it is only as we find our Beloved, as we find Him at home in these pages, shall we learn to delight ourselves always in the law of the Lord. And if it be that we lose Him, as sometimes we may, we shall do well to emulate the spouse in the inspired Song of Songs. You will remember how she says, "I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go." As we come to any particular passage of Scripture it is well for us to pause on the threshold and to assure ourselves that He is the object of our search, and the desire of our hearts. For when we seek Him in the Word of God with our whole hearts, He will be found of us.

The book of Ruth, like every other book of Scripture, is full of the Lord Jesus. Indeed, it was written for the purpose of introducing us to Him. In the seventeenth verse of the last chapter you have these words: "And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." And the book closes with a genealogical table, which carries us back to Pharez, the son of Tamar, the son of Judah. The writer to the Hebrews particularly reminds us that it is evident that our Lord came out of Judah, of which Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood. And in that great argument for the superiority of the priesthood of our Lord Jesus, the writer makes a special point of the fact that Jesus did not come of the priestly tribe; but for a knowledge of His direct descent from Judah, through his birth of the family of Pharez, we are chiefly indebted to the book of Ruth. Now do not pass over these genealogical tables; do not disregard what seems to be sometimes the drier and less interesting portions of Scripture; for if you examine them care-

fully you will find that hidden away among almost unpronounceable names, which in places crowd each other like mighty trees of a forest, or like great rocks in a weary land,—hidden away among them you will find some precious nuggets of truth, all of them linking us up in some way or another to our Lord Jesus Christ. The book, then, is a link in the record of the lineage of David's greater Son.

This book must have been written at a time when David had already become famous in Israel; for the outstanding feature of the book is that it is a story of the antecedents of David, the son of Jesse. He was already a conspicuous figure in the history of God's people when this book was written; otherwise his genealogy would not have been of any particular interest. It must have been written at a date long after the events recorded in the book occurred. In the last chapter of the book we are reminded of a custom that had formerly obtained: "Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel." But the practice had fallen into disuse at the time the story was written, and he inserts this explanatory word in order that his readers may understand why Boaz plucked off his shoe. These matters give us some indication of when the book was written; but, while written in David's day, or later, its history, as its opening verse informs us, belongs to the days when the judges ruled. Therefore, you have that problem to solve, as to how the writer obtained his information of that which happened so long before with such a wealth of detail; for certainly it could not have been written by one who was a contemporary of the events recorded. The facts probably were obtained, or knowledge of them, from other documents; but the whole story bears unmistakably the stamp of divine inspiration.

The book of Ruth is really one of the most charming idylls to be found in all the realm of literature. If it had been possible to lose this story from the canon of Scripture, and then to have rediscovered it among some old manuscripts, and to have read it, asking one's self the question, where did this come from? who wrote it? what is its purpose?—if one were to approach it almost without the assumption of its having a divine origin, there is something about the story itself, its inherent beauty, its intrinsic moral and spiritual worth, which differentiates it from all merely human productions. It seems to me it is impossible to read the story of Ruth without feeling it has its legitimate place in the canon of Scripture. It is beyond any question an integral part of the Word of God.

In passing, I just want incidentally to ask this question, which applies to other portions of Scripture as well as the book of Ruth: what is it that distinguishes the inspired Word from all other books, whether it be Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, or any other book—what is it that separates it, and differentiates it from any other kind of literature, which makes you instinctively feel as you read it, this is different from anything to be found in any other book? The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book; but no matter into what language it is translated, it remains the same book of distinction; it stands out a thing apart. It has been translated into languages which have been reduced to writing by the missionaries of the cross. Men have gone into Africa and to other parts of the world among savage tribes, and have spent years picking up words that fell from their lips, and gradually reducing the spoken word to a written language, compiling dictionaries, formulating grammars; and then they have translated the Bible into the speech of the people—in many cases the first book of the language to be so translated, and when it is thus translated, it has the same charm; the same peculiarity; there is something about it that differentiates it from all other literature.

What is that something in the Word of God which no language can disguise, which no idiom can conceal? You have observed that there are some people who seem to look well no matter how they are dressed. I mean some ladies, of course: you do not pay attention to how men are dressed. But there are some ladies who seem to have an air of distinction about them, no matter how they are dressed; whether they are dressed in the fashion or out of the fashion, it makes no difference. You know what I mean? I cannot explain it, but the plainest frock worn by some women seems to be an adornment. Someone

remarks (confidentially, to a friend, of course), "I saw Mrs. So-and-So, or Miss So-and-So, with a new dress to-day. I should like to have one like it." But when they get it and put it on they do not like it at all. They think it is the fault of the dress; they wonder what in the world is the matter; they do not understand it. But the intimate friends of that lady whose dress was so attractive say, "You know she can wear anything." I remember my mother, when mildly protesting against the careless disregard of the proprieties by certain people, saying, "They seem to think that anything becomes them." Of course, she was speaking of manners; and it is not true of manners: any sort of manners are not becoming. But it is true in the matter of dress in respect to some people, that almost anything is becoming. I suppose it is because of some distinction of figure, some grace of carriage, an indefinable something that puts music and poetry into every pose and motion; and so the dress instead of being an adornment, is itself adorned by the person who wears it.

Now there is something about the Scripture, there is something within it that gives distinction to the language in which its truth is expressed, no matter what that language may be. It is the beautiful soul of the Scripture itself; it is the divinely revealed purpose of redemption running through every book, and that is so different from anything to be found anywhere else, which gives beauty and grace and glory to the language in which that soul is clothed; it is the thought of God in this Book, and even when clothed in defective human speech, the thought of God is always glorious. The unity of the books of Scripture is both good and pleasant, as when brethren dwell together in unity: "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." The anointing oil anointed the whole person, until the fragrance of the divine approval was shed forth from the whole man. Thus, there is a savor of Christ about the whole Bible: "Thy name—says the spouse in the Song—is as ointment poured forth." Dr. Frost was speaking to us on Sunday morning about Aaron's garments being "for glory and for beauty"; and what the garments of Aaron were to the person of the high-priest, the language of Scripture is to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are but garments "for glory and for beauty"; and it is the Person of Jesus concealed and yet revealed in every page and in every verse of Scripture—the incomparable Saviour, "the chiefest among ten thousand," and the "altogether lovely" Son of God.—It is Jesus in the Bible that makes the Bible different from all other books, and it is the all-persuasive presence of Jesus in the book of Ruth that gives it its chief charm. Thus we turn to this as we turn to the gospel.

How well this lays the foundation for a revelation of Him Who was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband." What a gloomy story!—famine, poverty, emigration, death, death again, death again: three times the dark angel comes into this home. This is the foundation upon which this marvellous story is based.

She heard "that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread," and she decided to return home again, and her two daughters-in-law went with her. But on the way she bade them return to their people. Orpah kissed her and returned, but Ruth continued with her. What about Ruth? She was the grandmother of David; she was the ancestress of our Lord; her blood was in His veins; behold, she was a woman of Moab, outside the pale of Israel; she was a Moabitess, and the Moabites had given the people of Israel no reason to be kindly disposed toward them: a woman of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and yet she shows a particular quality that is to find its highest exemplification in her glorious Son Who is to come in the dim and distant future.



"Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods," said Naomi to Ruth, "return thou after thy sister-in-law." And where will you find anywhere outside of the Bible a passage like this? Oh, the music of it! You know they say that if you pick up a shell from the sea-shore and put it to your ear you can hear the sea roaring. They used to tell me that when I was a child. The echo of the music in which it was born is still within. And this is a little bit of heaven let down to earth, and if you put it to your ear you can catch the echo of the song of the redeemed, the mighty holy Hallelujahs of the sky: "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: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." There is a suggestion, a promise and prophecy of One Who shall be still more constant, and Who will never leave nor forsake those whom He loves.

I rejoice to remember that Ruth was a Moabitess; and if you go back over the long line of our Lord's genealogy you will find not only the name of Ruth the Moabitess, but of Rahab the harlot, and Tamar as well: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He was made like unto His brethren; He was one with us; He stooped to the lowest depths; He made Himself of no reputation; He came to give hope to every sinner. Yet, here, by divine grace, you have the very noblest virtue shining out of the character of the Moabitess: touched by Israel's God and by the grace of His Spirit, she had evidently been made other than she was by nature. And the tie which bound her to Naomi was fundamentally a religious tie; for she said, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

"Ah, grace! into unlikeliest hearts,  
It is Thy boast to come;  
The glory of Thy light to find  
In darkest spots a home!"

Last week I spoke about the book of Judges as a book of providence; so is this; and so is every book of the Bible. When Naomi, after her absence of ten years, returned to Beth-lehem, the people gathered about and they said, "Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest." How many people there are who talk like that!—"the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." They would change their name, and yet

"The threads our hands in blindness spin  
No self-determined plan weaves in:  
The shuttle of the unseen powers  
Works out a pattern not as ours."

"I went out full," she said, "and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." No, she came back again with Ruth, and she was to discover that she had found her fortune after all in the land of Moab. Thus the Lord blesses His people, and brings His purposes of grace to pass.

In the second chapter you will find that Ruth's poverty sends her forth to glean after the reapers. And let me pause here to say that for some reason known only to Himself, God's purposes of grace seem to have run very largely through the lives of poor people. Abraham was not a rich man until God made him so. When Jacob went away from home he had nothing, but when he came back he confessed "with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." When Joseph went away from home he not only had nothing, he was nothing; he was sold for silver; and yet God brought him to the throne. Moses became rich because he was brought up in the house of Pharaoh's daughter; but it was not until he became poor that God could do

anything with him; and he is noted in this record as having esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." And so on all the way down through the Book.

And Ruth went to glean after the reapers, "and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz." Well, what do you mean by "happen"? If you mean chance, then it is not true; if you mean that you did not know the purpose behind that ordinary occurrence, then your language is permissible. Ruth little knew what was in that apparent happening when she came upon the field of Boaz. Thus, dear friends, God leads His elect to-day. You know the sweet story of how Boaz came into the field and said unto the reapers, "Whose damsel is this?" And they said, "It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." Then Boaz began to take an interest in her, and he said to the reapers, "Do not forbid her; let her follow after you; and do not clean up the fields too closely where she is gleaning; but let fall some of the handfuls of purpose for her." And to Ruth he said, "It hath fully been shewed me all that thou has done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband. . . . The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Boaz knew why she had come, that she had come to trust under the shadow of God's wings. By the way, when you read those stories, supposed to be funny stories, about the impossibility of getting along with a mother-in-law, read this inspired story; for there are mothers-in-law and mothers-in-law; and there are daughters-in-law and daughters-in-law, let them both trust under the shadow of God's wings, and they will both be happy there.

How full of human nature this story is, and yet how full, too, of divine inspiration: "And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed." And coming home her mother-in-law said unto her, "Where hast thou gleaned to-day?" Ruth in sincerity told the story: "I went out to glean and I just happened to get into the field of a man called Boaz." "Boaz?" said Naomi, "why he is one of our next kinsmen." "Yes," said Ruth, "and he told me that I was not to go in any other field, but that I was to keep fast by his reapers until the end of barley harvest." "And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field." When Boaz reached her the parched corn she ate and was sufficed. And when our Boaz gives us a dainty bit, as we sit down under His shadow and find His fruit sweet unto our taste, there is a flavor, there is something about the meal that He provides which cannot be found anywhere else. It is a blessed thing to learn the secret of shutting yourself up to the fields of Boaz, and taking the good, sound, sane advice of Naomi, "Let them meet thee not in any other field. Let it be Boaz or nobody."

We are now come to the third chapter, and I confess it is an extraordinary chapter: it tells the story of the courtship of Boaz and Ruth. I suppose some people would regard the story as unique; they would say it is different from all other stories of courtship. It is, of course, an old world story; but the outstanding characteristic of it, and that which makes it so different from any other story of courtship that ever was known is that the woman helped a little! You see that, don't you? She did not leave it all to Boaz to do; she did a little herself. Of course, in real life, they never do that! They are such elusive creatures! That is one interpretation; but may there not be another? I wonder if it means this: that the Bible is after all the one book in the world that is a perfect mirror of human nature, and tells the truth about things; and that it is brave enough to tell the truth even about this?

That is the human side of it, but think of the spiritual application. The Lover of our souls will forgive us if we make love to Him; He will forgive us if we seek Him, when we know that He is seeking us; He will forgive us if we make a ready and willing and hearty response to the appeal of His affection: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." There is a mutuality about the relationship of the soul to Christ after all. O yes, I believe that salvation is of grace, I believe in God's sovereign electing love; but I believe the love of our Boaz is so wonderful that He has a way of wooing us and winning us in spite of ourselves, so that we become His willing slaves;

"For, ah, the Master is so fair,  
So sweet His smile on banished men  
That they who meet Him unaware  
Can never rest on earth again.

"And they who see Him risen, afar,  
On God's right hand to welcome them,  
Forgetful stand of home and land  
Desiring fair Jerusalem."

This story, as far as we have gone to this third chapter, provides a very striking illustration of what constitutes true faith. Faith; after all, is not a product of reason. Faith is a divine intuition; it is a spiritual instinct; it is something that is born in us by the Spirit of God. Yes, the Lord said, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib—speaking of the people in a state of apostasy—but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." But the soul that is really born of the Spirit of God has a kind of extra sense, analogous to the feminine sense in the material realm. Psychologically, it is a fact that women are different from men. Very few women reason. Now do not be offended by my saying that. It is true. A great many men do not reason either; but very few women reason. They do not count things up like men do; they are a sort of ready reckoner; they get the result by some mysterious means that no one on earth can explain. You ask a woman her reason for doing a certain thing, and she will generally answer, "Because,"—"Because—" with a dash after it, because nobody knows why, and she doesn't either. But in her judgment of many things she is right; she leaps to a conclusion while her slow, plodding husband lumbers along behind her, reasoning his way through. It is instinctive with a child to trust its father or mother. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Spiritual faith, that out-going of the soul which understands God and which lays hold of God, is something that is begotten within us by the Holy Ghost, that is not natural at all. He has put His Spirit in our hearts, teaching us to cry "Abba Father." We call Him Father: we know He is our Father because His Spirit is within us.

Now Naomi had been away a long time, but when she came back, and when she heard that Boaz had taken knowledge of her daughter-in-law, that he had sent her home laden with barley, and that he had let fall some handfuls of purpose for her, she said instinctively—if I may paraphrase her saying—"Now give him his full opportunity; do not go in any other field to glean; you depend absolutely upon him. He is our near kinsman, and I feel that he has a great heart and a purpose of love concerning you." Then in the third chapter when Ruth came home and told her how Boaz had spoken to her, Naomi uttered these wonderful words: "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day. I think I know Boaz, and having begun the thing he will finish it. I believe that he will make it his main business, and that he will do nothing else until he has fulfilled his purpose respecting you. You just wait and trust him."

Is not that the attitude of soul that we ought always to assume toward our Beloved? "Sit still, my soul, until thou know how the matter will fall: for your Redeemer will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day." He will save us; He will save us for ever! By a spiritual instinct we know the divine Bridegroom will never be charged with breach of promise. The Marriage of the Lamb will certainly come, and at His appointed hour it will be said, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

The last chapter is full of interest. Boaz tells Ruth in the third chapter that while he is a near kinsman, he is not the nearest kinsman. He said, "There is another nearer than I, and I shall have to give him his opportunity according to law. I shall have to give him his chance to redeem his inheritance if he wants to. And then if he does not redeem it, I will redeem it. I will stand back, and I will see if there is any other eye to pity, if there is any other arm to save; and if there be not, then mine own eye shall pity, and mine own arm shall bring salvation."

Do you see the analogy? O no! Jesus was not our kinsman; He was not our next of kin: He became our kinsman in order that He might have a right to redeem. He gave the first Adam his full chance, and he failed:

"O loving wisdom of our God,  
When all was sin and shame;  
A second Adam to the fight,  
And to the rescue came.

"O wisest love that flesh and blood  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail."

"Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: and I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the land of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." Do you see?—he had to take Ruth along—not only the farm but somebody with it: that was quite another story, wasn't it? "And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it." Then follows the passage I quoted: "Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses."

So Boaz played the part of the redeemer: he paid the price because there was none other to perform a kinsman's part. Thus are we redeemed by the precious blood of Christ in the presence of witnesses. If I had time to draw the veil and project this passage back to the foundation of things, we should find that long ago Jesus entered into an engagement—"the mediator of the new covenant," "the Lamb slain—as we have seen in other lectures—from the foundation of the world"—and Jesus entered into an engagement to purchase a Bride. Somebody asked me the other day what I thought was the meaning of the parable of the merchant man "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Does the merchant represent a soul seeking salvation? I think not. Our glorious Lord Jesus is the merchant man who went seeking goodly pearls, and His heart discerned His Ruth, a pearl of great price—the Church which He would make His bride; and in order that He might have it He sold all that He had and bought it. Jesus invested His all upon Calvary; He purchased His bride with His heart's blood. What Naomi said Boaz would do, our Boaz accomplished. He was never in rest, until He cried, "It is finished."

And so does our Lord Jesus choose His Bride from among the aliens. Oh, how wonderful that is! "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife"—a widowed soul, he enriched with all the wealth of his great affection, and of his great estate; the one from whom all hope had departed hoped again. Ruth became the grandmother of David, and was given a place in the honoured list of the ancestors of our Lord. O marvel of grace! That He should love one whose affection the world, and the flesh, have engaged.

I have made only the barest suggestions to you to-night; but I wish you would take the book of Ruth and read it over, and over, and over again, until you see Jesus on every page of it.