

THE STORY OF PETER

And

THE STORY OF RUTH

Aunt Hattie's Bible Stories

Moody Colportage Library #214

by

Harriet I. Fisher

Copyright @ 1952

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Ruth Makes Up Her Mind

WHERE did you pasture your sheep today, Mahlon and Chilion?"

"Do not ask, Father, for all is burned and brown. There is not enough stubble to feed the asses, let alone grass for the flocks."

"Yes, sons, I know the grain was blistered with the heat before it headed out and the grass lacked the help of the spring rains; but I saw some travelers today, from Moab, over east of the Salt Sea (Dead Sea). They reported fine weather and plenty of food for man and beast. What do you say we move over there?" That is about the way the Bible story would read today. Let us carry it through.

Elimelech, father of Mahlon and Chilion, had no sooner finished speaking than Mother Naomi said, "Husband, your name means, 'My God is King,' and mine means 'Pleasant'; our home city is Bethlehem, 'House of Bread.' Shall we leave the land of our fathers and our father's God to go into a strange land?"

"Well, Mother, God, as King, seems to have failed us. The land is not pleasant and there is no bread in the House of Bread. Our flocks are dying and we have little left for ourselves. The boys and I have searched weary miles for food and wherever we go there's nothing, for the famine reaches throughout the land."

"Very well, I will go with you, but it does seem that we should trust God and look up. The promises God made to Israel are not good in Moab country."

The Bible says:

“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 Bethlehem-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 was Naomi, and the names of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.”

This family left the land of promise and went to live in Moab. It was not long until Elimelech, the father, died and Naomi and her two sons were left alone in a strange land.

Boys are boys wherever they live and these two made new friendships with the people of the land. Perhaps one day they came home unusually happy and told Mother Naomi about two girls they had met. Maybe Chilion said, “Oh, Mother, you ought to see Orpah. She is so nice and is good looking, too.” But Mahlon said, “Yes, she is fine, but she is very plain compared to Ruth. She’s the one for me. And is she beautiful! Oh, Mother, you must see her to know how truly lovely Ruth is.”

Mahlon and Chilion married Ruth and Orpah and all went well for about ten years. Then, we do not know whether a scourge of some kind came or what was the cause, both of the young men died.

Naomi, left alone, mourned greatly for her husband and her sons, also for her people in Bethlehem-judah. About this time some travelers came who reported that prosperity had returned to the land of Canaan and that there was plenty of food there.

Naomi decided at once to return. As soon as Orpah and Ruth heard of her plan they said they would go with her. She must have been very much loved by her daughters-in-law for they showed her great kindness.

I wonder if they journeyed together until they came to the “Fords of the Jordan,” and if it was at that place that Naomi said to the young women,

“Go, return each to her mother’s house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of your husband.”

By this, she meant that they should go back home and marry again men of their own race.

She kissed them both, and they cried at the thought of parting. They said they would go all the way with her and live among her people, but Naomi said:

“No, go back home, my daughters. Why do you want to go with me? I will never have any more sons to be your husbands. And if I should, you would not want to wait the years for them to grow up. I feel very sorry that the hand of the Lord has been so against me.”

Orpah then decided to return home and bade Naomi goodbye; but Ruth was not willing to be refused the privilege of going with the one she loved so much.

“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you; for where you go, I will go; and where you stay I will stay; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die, I will die and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts us.”

When Naomi saw that Ruth had fully made up her mind to stay with her, she consented and the two went on their journey to Bethlehem.

The whole city was stirred with the news of Naomi’s arrival. They looked one to another and said, **“Is this Naomi? And she said, Call me not Naomi but call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home empty.”**

When Naomi went to Moab during the famine, she thought she didn’t have much. Now as she remembered her husband and her stalwart sons they seemed to her to have had everything. Experiences had changed her viewpoint.

I think we should for a minute or two consider the children of Israel, nationally.

The first verse of Ruth which we have already quoted says that the story of Ruth occurred while the judges ruled Israel. If you have read the book of Judges it tells much, for more than three hundred years after Joshua died the Bible says that:

“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

When men follow their own standards and do not look to God to direct and lead them, they fall into sin, and so it was with Israel. When some great calamity seemed about to destroy them, then God raised up a deliverer, called a judge, one of their own nation, who, under God, led them out of trouble.

Living as they did, away from the God of their fathers, brought days of sin and wretchedness to Israel. From a dreary, miserable background this story of Ruth comes forth like a diamond, brilliant and scintillating.

In every age, no matter how dark and sinful, God has never left Himself without a witness, or without someone to honor and love Him. We find in this short book of Ruth the record of faithful, loyal hearts, true to God.

~ end of chapter 16 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
