

T. Austin-Sparks:

And so it says "They went of the country of Moab." Why? They had heard good news of the resurrection, and believed it, and acted upon it. They didn't say, "Oh, that's all talk; don't believe that's true. That's only a rumor."

No, they believed the report. There was resurrection. And they put their faith into action, and they went in that direction, embraced it by faith, and found it to be true.

The thing that you and I are called upon to do many times in our lives is to believe in the God who raiseth the dead and lay hold of that resurrection by faith and commit ourselves to it in definite acts, to prove our faith by our works. And on that ground we inherit the fruits of His resurrection. The curse is removed. You see, Moab lay under the curse. It remained under the curse. It was an accursed country and people. And in itself, Moab was still under the curse; but they left the ground of the curse because of resurrection.

You see the doctrine, can you, of the New Testament in that? Yes, the curse, it's over all this creation as it is. But because Jesus has been made a curse for us, and has suffered the judgement, and has risen for us as justification, on the ground of resurrection we leave the ground of Moab, the place of the curse, and come into the fruits of His resurrection! And how rich they are!

Beware of getting back into the land of Moab. That is, because of the earth touch. Touching in your spirit the realm that still lies under the curse. And this world is still under the curse. Beware of a voluntary touch, in spirit, in life, with that which lies under judgement. For it means depriving you again of your spiritual life, and of your fruitfulness, and of your joy and your peace. Beware of the earth touch.

Note, then, God's action in resurrection is to make His place what it should be. You see, it's Bethlehem, and Bethlehem means "House of Bread." And when there's a famine that covers Bethlehem, that's somewhat altogether contrary to its very name.

Another line unfolding, running through this book, may be seen in several fragments.

Chap. 2:1 "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz."

Vs. 20 "And Naomi said unto her: "The man is near of kin unto us; one of our near kinsmen."

Chap. 3:9 "And he said, "Who art thou?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, thine handmaid. Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman."

Vs. 12 "And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman; howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I."

Chap. 4:1 "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, "Oh, such a one, turn aside, sit down here!" 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 add the ties, or to disclose unto thee, saying "Buy it before the inhabitants that sit here, 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 fields at the hand 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."

And the kinsman said, "I cannot redeem it myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou my right to thyself, for I cannot redeem it!"

Romans 3:24 "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"

1 Cor. 1:30 "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God was made unto us redemption"

Eph. 1:14 "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of His glory."

So we proceed with our meditation in the Book of Ruth.

This wonderful book comprehends within the small compass of its few pages the whole of the principles and the properties of God's complete plan of redemption. The book has many things, as we have seen, of real value to our Christian lives in our course here on the earth; it also has these greater aspects of the great doctrine of salvation. That we shall see again as we proceed this afternoon, and undertake to cover in this present meditation this phrase which we have just read from Romans 3:24 "In the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Ruth presents to us vividly, clearly, strongly, our own lost state. Take her birth: what a hopeless beginning her birth represented. You know perhaps, the origin of Moab. Moab was the product of incest, Lot's incest with his own daughter. That's not a very propitious, promising beginning. And then later, the curse pronounced upon Moab collectively, as a nation. That curse which we have recorded in Deut. 23 "The Ammonites and the Moabites shall not come into the congregation of the Lord forever" represents a fairly hopeless situation into which to be born. Without God, and without hope in this world.

And then, by those tragic results of the conditions which we find in the book of Judges, the leaving of the land of covenant by Elimelech, his wife and two sons, and all the sequence of trouble and disaster which overtook them in Moab the father-in-law is dead, her husband is dead; without helper or protector. An inheritance of death. That describes our state by nature, in every detail. Born in sin, shapen in iniquity. There's a curse resting on the very world into which we are born, and upon the very race to which we belong, by nature. And truly this New testament phrase applies "Without God and without hope in the world." That's the state of the sinner and that's the state of every one of us by nature; and we have no helper here. Paul says "dead, through trespasses and sins." Dead.

That's the background, very clearly set forth in this book: No human loss and hopelessness, leading to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

And we saw this all, that the good news reached Moab, somehow; that there was resurrection, the barley harvest. Resurrection was on, and the news reached these desolate souls far off, and they left Moab, the place of desolation, the curse, and judgement, the place of utter hopelessness, and went to Bethlehem, the place of resurrection; and through resurrection the whole glorious work of redemption was wrought out, as they entered into it. Redemption through resurrection. That's the gospel "Begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." On the ground of His resurrection, full redemption.

Of course that doesn't stir any of you. It's quite obvious, because you're so familiar with it. You know all about it. But do you? God have mercy upon us if ever that loses its charm and its freshness.

But not only on the ground of resurrection was there redemption, but on the ground of union with the Redeemer. That's an extra step. Resurrection union with the redeeming kinsman. That is the next stage. And let us remind ourselves that that is the heart and the sum of the gospel. We break the gospel up into fragments and speak about forgiveness, atonement, justification, and so on. But they are all parts of the One Thing. The sum and core of redemption, of salvation, is vital union with the Redeemer.

Redemption is not a thing, a doctrine, a truth; redemption is a relationship with a living Person.

That makes Redemption so full of possibilities and potentialities. You see, Ruth might have been saved from her deplorable condition, and might have come into the land and, or, a little patch of it, and come into certain personal benefits, but look how much more accrued to her by union with Boaz. Not only then, but look at the last words of the book, and look through the last words of the book right on, down the ages. We'll look at that again, presently.

But this redemption was not just something that saved from. It was something that saved unto. It was not just something for the time being, or for her life, personally, with certain advantages and values. It was someone who comprehended all, and carried her into a tremendously full heritage.

Yes, redemption, salvation, is union. It's living union with a living Person.

And so we are led by that union to the inheritance which is ours in Christ.

Now note carefully the details, Ruth's lost inheritance, or the loss of the inheritance was due to union in a first marriage. It was because she had been married to Elimelech's son, that this whole question of inheritance arose, and the whole question of the difficulty of this inheritance arose. Indeed she had no connection with this thing only by reason of that marriage union. It brought the whole thing up into meaning. But it was lost by that union in the first marriage.

And I think that that first marriage has a side light thrown upon nearest kinsman. Not Boaz, but the other one. The nearest kinsman.

Who is our nearest kinsman by nature? The Old Adam; and we know he's a very near kinsman. Indeed, he's far too near. He is always imminent, always on the spot. He is never very far off.

Boaz said "There is another kinsman nearer than I", and that is very true. We need not work at it, or try to explain it, for we know how true, by nature, it is. There's a very near kinsman.

It's very interesting, isn't it the unfolding of this thing. You can see very much more in it than I'm saying, if you know your New Testament, and especially the letter to the Romans. I think it's wonderful. It's almost fascinating. Boaz, the to-be-Redeeming-Kinsman. There is a nearer, and the responsibility rests with him in the first place; and responsibility does rest in the first place with Adam the first. Responsibility for this situation, and responsibility to do something about it. We're not talking about ability, but responsibility.

Therefore, Boaz says "Let's put this thing on him, and see what he can do about it." You see, that opens up that whole realm of whether man can find in himself, in his own natural life, in his own heredity, his redemption in the nearest kinsman, the old Adam. And is it not just the working of that principle which the Lord follows out when He convicts a soul of a lost condition, and then, so often for a time lets that soul go through an experience by which it is coming to know more and more that salvation is not in itself? The fact is that our great Redeeming Kinsman does that sort of thing. He says, "Alright, if you can save yourself, save yourself. I'll stand back. I'll give you a chance. I'll give the old Adam a full chance, a clear way. I'll give all that humanism a full scope. Let's see what it can and will do." And look at the world that has said it can be its own savior, that there's every good and possibility and power in human nature to redeem itself and change itself. Well, what's the answer?

Yes, the Lord brings this home to one whom He is going to bring into the good of redemption. He lets that one know that the nearest kinsman, the old man, the old Adam, is absolutely impotent. He leads up to the point where He and He only is the Redeemer, and He'll not share this thing with anybody.

And so, in His own way, He does put the responsibility there where it first of all belongs. He says, "Now then, do it if you can." And I venture to say that there is no one who ever really comes livingly into the good of redemption who has not come beforehand to the place of absolute hopelessness as for themselves or anybody else saving them. And I'm not sure that the Lord doesn't press that more and more after we are saved to make us know that really after all there is no kinsman but Himself who can do this business either in us or outside of us.

"Well," says Boaz, "there is a nearer kinsman, and let's see what he can do about it." And so he, in a way, stands back for the other man, to give him a chance.

Dear friend, if you are still struggling to save or sanctify yourself, struggling and striving to in some way bring about redemption, at the beginning or at any other point in your Christian life, the Lord's going to leave you to it. He's not going to do anything about it until that court of appeal says "No, we can do nothing about it;" until the resource is proved utterly impotent. The thing for Christians to remember, as well as unsaved people - and you will realize that I am keeping closely to the letter to the Romans, because it was written to Christians, and it's about the two Adams, isn't it?

Well, it takes some of us a long time, even to get there, where we have once and for all closed the door of hope upon the old Adam, upon the nearest kinsman. Boaz puts the responsibility upon him in the first place, and challenges him and says "Now then, what are you going to do about it? Here's the situation, the responsibility lies at your door. What are you going to do about it?"

And it is found, inevitably, in the long run, that he can't do anything about it. Oh, he makes a first gesture

and response, and says "I'll do it" "I'll do it." But when there is that which rises up and says "I can deal with this matter; I can save this situation; I can save myself" "that is because the whole implication of redemption has not been recognized.

And so Boaz just let the man know that there's something more in it than that; a great deal more in it than that. It is not only just doing this legal thing; but he has got to raise up an everlasting testimony in the House of Israel. A testimony of resurrection.

The Old Man can't do that; and when the real implications of this thing are presented to the Old Man he says "I can't do anything about it."

And why is he unable? Why is this disability upon him? Look at it, "Lest I mar mine own inheritance."

I confess that I don't altogether understand what that means, but I think I can get somewhere toward its meaning by interpreting in the light of the New Testament. You see, the Old Man is just tied up "just tied up, with his own interests; his own matters; and he can't do anything about this because he is so personally tied up. This nearest kinsman was like that. His disability was that he'd got all that he could do to cope with his own situation; all that he could do to look after his own inheritance. What could he do about redemption?

That's true to life, isn't it? It's true to experience. This other thing keeps us too much occupied, and too busy, to be able to do anything about heaven, and eternity, and the things of God. And if we begin to think of God "well, it's going to spoil our little bit down here in this world; it's going to upset things down here for us. Yes, that's the thing up against which souls come so often when there is presented to them the whole matter of salvation in Christ Jesus and their eternal well-being. They say, "Yes, but, oh, see what it means giving up; see what it costs; see what it will involve in terms of friends, and my position, etc. I'll mar my inheritance if I begin to take on this other matter of the eternal affairs. If I begin to consider the whole matter of redemption, it's going to spoil the fun for me in this world."

Of course, that's all wrong, but people are so tied up, aren't they? In their own affairs; and the old man is so tied up like that, in looking after himself, that he is just not free to entertain this matter. And his disability lies there, in his bondage to the world. And his bondage to it's king, it's overload. He just can do nothing about it.

Very well, when that is established, and proved, and settled, then Boaz steps right in. That Old Man must give it up and get out of the way.

Well, there, Christians. It's your trouble, as much as the sinners, this trying to effect your redemption; this trying to find something that will please God in yourself; this struggle and striving of the Old Man to in some way redeem or save himself. Oh, that Old Man must give it up and get out of the way before the Lord will do it. And He never will until we get there. Get out of the Lord's way! When we come to that position, then the Redeeming Kinsman, our Greater Boaz, will step in and take over.

But note this, and I think it's something about Boaz really to be noted "He never forced or asserted himself. He stood back, so to speak, and waited and waited. There's no asserting, no forcing.

If there's anyone here this afternoon who is not really the Lord's, the Lord Jesus is not going to force Himself on you, to be your Redeemer. He is not going to assert Himself to take over. He'll wait until you come to the place where you say, "He's the only One who can do it; He is the only One."

So Boaz did not put his hand on this and assert himself to possess. He will give ample opportunity to any other course that we may think could do the thing. And He'll wait until all other resources have been exhausted, and we come to the place where we realize that He is able, and He is the only one who is able. Boaz was able to do it. But more than that, while waiting, He was perfectly willing to do it.

I confess to you, and probably, as you have been reading this little book, that when I got to that place when Boaz said to Ruth, "There's a kinsman nearer than I, and we must let him have his chance" "a flutter took place in me, so we find here "Here's a man desperately in love with this woman". He wants her, but he's hiding it all, and giving the other man a chance. Oh, supposing the other man, supposing he does. Poor Boaz.

Yes, the Lord Jesus is full of concern, full of love for you and for me. He is desperately anxious to have us. But

He knows quite well we shall never appreciate Him until everybody else is out of the way. And so Heâ€™s not going to have a half allegiance. Heâ€™s prepared to let go all, rather than have only a half, and take second place. Heâ€™ll run all the risks. "If you can find another Savior, then, alright find Him. You must come to the place where I am everything before Iâ€™m going to do anything about this." He is jealous to have such a place. He is able; He is willing; and He is anxious, though itâ€™s hidden, perhaps; and He is untrammelled. He is free. He has no other pre-occupations or interests. He is unlike this other man; nothing of interest with Him. Heâ€™s free from all such things.