

Winter Conference 2013

Godwin Sun

Message 1 of 4

Thank the Lord for the opportunity to gather before Him once again. The brothers have arranged for me to share four sessions at this Winter Conference. I wished very much that Dana would share four times because my brother is much more gifted than I am. But he said that because I am a little older than he is so he shows his respect by letting me speak four times. Actually, I am only one year older than him. Since he has placed this heavy burden on me, by the grace of the Lord I will share with brothers and sisters.

When I was praying before the Lord, the burden I received was to share on the Book of Ruth with brothers and sisters. I believe brothers and sisters are very familiar with this book. This is a very important book. May the Lord speak to our hearts through this book in these last days.

As we begin, let us read the word of God together.

Ruth1:1-6

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.

Ruth1:14-19

And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. So they both went until they came to

Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”

Ruth1:22

So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Matthew 1:1

The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham

Matthew 1:5-6

Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king.

We know the Book of Ruth is a short story recorded in the history of the Israelites. If we want to understand the spiritual meaning behind this short story, we need to understand the principles of studying history. We know that history is only a phenomenon. Behind the phenomenon, there are some controlling factors. We know that the controlling factor behind the development of history is the will of God. Therefore, when we study history, we need to have spiritual insight. We need to be able to see the controlling factor in the background. This would help us understand the true meaning behind the stories. For example, in modern day science, there are theories that are different from classic science. In old-day physics, they use the method of induction. Modern-day physics uses the method of deduction. Those who study physics know about some important laws of Newton. They used the method of induction. Even little children know about this story: One day Newton was sitting under an apple tree and an apple fell down from the tree. He questioned why the apple would fall down instead of going up and through this, he discovered the universal law of gravity. I don't know if that was a true story, but at the very least, it tells us that Newton used outward observations to look for laws that directed such phenomena. If we look at modern scientists like Einstein, through the study of mathematics, he first discovered some laws and principles. Then he uses these laws to view the phenomena. We now understand this approach is more accurate than classic physics. Regarding spiritual matters, we also need to be like this. Throughout Christianity today, most people are trying to find principles by first looking at the phenomena and therefore, we find many inaccuracies and even errors. Spiritual matters need to first begin with principles, then the phenomena. Therefore, if we have spiritual insights and are able to see what is behind all the phenomena, then we can understand all the external phenomena.

Brothers and sisters, if we look at the development of human history, especially the history of Israel, we can see behind it is the government of God's glorious will. Therefore, even though the Book of Ruth is only a short story, we can see behind this story, there is the government of

God's glorious will. When we speak of the will of God, I would like to remind brothers and sisters once again on some important characteristics because this is very important. We know before God created the world, God already used His perfect wisdom to devise His perfect will. This will of God is absolutely perfect. It is out of His perfect wisdom. This wisdom is flawless, without a hint of flaw. We need to have this basic understanding regarding the will of God. Not only is His will flawless, the will of God is eternal and unchangeable. There is no need for any change or amendment. Regardless of the age, the will of God never changes. If we are not able to have this clear understanding of God's will, we will easily make mistakes. Therefore the apostle Paul told us we cannot be God's counselor, we cannot give God any suggestions on His will, and we cannot make any amendment. God does not need help from you and me.

Brothers and sisters, when we talk about God's glorious will, we need to have a reverent heart towards God, otherwise, we can easily make the same mistakes as those in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. We know that God has set this glorious will. As God does His work on earth, He has never changed this glorious will throughout all generations. History has proven to us, if in a particular generation God has gained a group of people who understood God's will and were willing to submit to it, then God's glory could be manifested in that generation. Even if God is unable to find such people in a generation, let us be clear -- the will of God will continue to go forward. We know man will fail, but God never fails. On earth, it may seem God's work has come to a halt, but in the heavens, the work of God continues to go forward.

Maybe we will have this question: Why is it that in the Old Testament period, when the Israelites failed, God's heart would be grieved, even angry, and He would rebuke the people severely through the prophets? Why would God have such actions? Brothers and sisters, we must have this understanding: God loves His people on earth very dearly. God treats His people as His children. God does not want His people to lose the blessings within His will because of their foolishness. They are supposed to receive blessings but because they disobey, they lose God's blessings within His will. This will cause God great anger and pain. For those of us who are parents, we should understand this. Oftentimes, we wish to give our children blessings, but sometimes they are disobedient. They should have been able to receive blessings, yet they were not able to. That pains our heart and we are angry. Brothers and sisters, God treats us the same way. Therefore, if God can gain a group of people in a generation who understands His heart and enters into the blessings of His will, God will be exceedingly joyful. These are the principles in history.

At the same time, history also proves this: There is nothing in time that can hinder the completion of God's will, whether this force comes from the enemy or from the foolishness of man's flesh. No power can hinder the completion of God's will. We can see any force that tries to hinder God's purpose will only result in judgment from God. It will fall in God's hand. We know the Devil is also called Satan. Satan means "to oppose." The greatest opposing force to God's will comes from the Devil. We also know that the end for the Devil is very horrible. Any power that opposes the will of God will end up falling under the judgment and curse of God. It is the same in man's history for any power that opposes the will of God. Brothers and sisters, it is impossible to oppose the will of God. Any such attempt will only cause man to suffer loss. It is utterly foolish for a man who does not understand the will of God to oppose God's will. Of

course, the love of God towards us never changes and His holy calling is irrevocable, but man can be forsaken in the matter of God's testimony and lose God's blessing. When we read the history of the Old Testament and the New Testament, whether it is an individual or the corporate body, as long as they do not obey God's will, even though they may be saved and not go to hell, God will put them aside from His blessing. They will be forsaken in the testimony of God. Brothers and sisters, if we have some knowledge of the church history and the history of the Old Testament, you can see clearly this is the revelation from the Bible. Today, as far as the glorious will of God is concerned, we must strive to understand and we must submit ourselves under it. Apart from these we cannot do anything.

In recent years, we often speak about God's recovery work. We know this is the great mercy of God. God is to bring those who have gone astray and those who have fallen back to His original purpose. Even though this recovery work is not easy, God has never given up. Brothers and sisters, when we return to the Bible to study the history, if we can understand the principles of history, it will help us greatly when we read these historical stories. We hope that through such principles, God will give us a broader understanding of the Book of Ruth.

Even though the Book of Ruth is only a short story, behind this story we can see the government of God's glorious will. Amazingly, it is through this short story God reveals His glorious will. So what is God's glorious will behind this book? In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus was the Word became flesh and He came to this world. He has fulfilled the meaning of Christ. Today we understand clearly God's glorious will is His Son, that is, Christ. In the Old Testament time, what was this will of God? We can understand this in the genealogy recorded in chapter one of the Gospel According to Matthew. The genealogy is a clear illustration of God's glorious will. Starting from Abraham, to David, and then to our Lord Jesus, you can find a very clear line. In the Old Testament, our Lord Jesus did not come yet. And this line goes from Abraham to David. We know Abraham is an important starting point and David is an important concluding point in the Old Testament. So the type used in the Old Testament illustrated the importance of this line in God's glorious will.

We are very clear that the revelation of God in the Old Testament begins with Abraham. On the surface, we see that God wants to establish a household on earth and it begins with Abraham. During David's time, God established Israel as a nation. Therefore, from Abraham to David, God gave a very clear revelation. In the Old Testament, from Abraham to David, there is a plumb line of God's glorious will. The will of God is from Abraham to David. Whoever walks in this line or those who have a connection with this line are in the will of God, and will be blessed by God. We can see the Book of Ruth follows this line. The reason why the Book of Ruth is important and the people recorded are blessed by God is because they are walking in line of the will of God. Even though the story in the Book of Ruth is very simple, it reveals to us the important principles of how to walk in the line of God's will. Not only does God show us the way, He also manifests this line through the lives of those people. This is something we can experience today. Brothers and sisters, the Book of Ruth tells us the reason of blessing and a way of recovery.

There are only four chapters in the Book of Ruth, but in these four chapters we can see four very important principles. We know very well that the Book of Ruth takes place during the times of the Book of Judges. The Book of Judges is the background for the Book of Ruth. When we read the Book of Judges, we know that it was the darkest, most painful, and most terrible history of the Israelites. It was a period of great desolation. It was also a period where people had gone astray. Many who study the Book of Judges feel that the church today seems to be living in the time of the Judges. So the Book of Ruth is an important reminder for the saints who live in this period of great desolation.

The Book of Ruth tells us how to get out of this desolation and how we can be corrected before God. When we read the Book of Judges, we know the reasons for their failure. There are two important reasons we need to pay attention to. Chapter one of the Book of Judges and the beginning of chapter 2 tell us the Israelites were going downhill from a glorious position. The first reason of their failure was that they were unable to cast out their enemies and they even made covenants with the inhabitants of the land. Because they were unable to cast out the enemies, they used man's way to compromise: Since we cannot cast them out, we might as well live in peace with them. So they used man's way and idea. What is the best way to keep peace with our neighbors? First, we can worship their gods. We can worship the Lord and we can also worship their gods. This would make them happy. To go a step further, we can intermarry with them. When we become in-laws, they will not attack their in-laws. This was completely man's thinking. These were the ways the Israelites used to survive in a hostile environment. From man's point of view, we might think this is reasonable.

The second reason of their failure is even more frightening: Their second generation did not know God or God's works. I doubt they truly did not know the name of the Lord. Using today's terms, they knew the doctrine and had knowledge, but they had no experience of God whatsoever. So this is the other reason why they failed.

Therefore, in the first few chapters of the Book of Judges, the word of God clearly tells us the reasons why God's people failed. What does the last sentence of the Book of Judges say? "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." In their lives, they had lost a governing power. Everyone did what pleased him. Brothers and sisters, consider this: Is today's Christianity under such condition? No one wants to be restrained. We go wherever we want. Whatever we think of we do. This is a very dangerous thing. So the time of the judges brought great darkness and pain to the people of Israel. The power of the enemy had been elevated much at that time.

When we read the Book of Judges, all we can see is that the people were oppressed by the enemy and were suffering much pain. But when we read the Book of Ruth, what does chapter 1 verse 1 say? "Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons." We thought the Book of Judges talks about the darkness, oppression and suffering brought on by the enemy, but the Book of Ruth tells us the very end of the period of the judges brought along famine. Dear brothers and sisters, you may say, "What is so extraordinary about a famine?" But let's not look lightly at a famine. The reason why the Israelites

compromised, ran away and suffered was because of a famine. We know that our God is a God of abundance. He likes to see His people have food and live in abundance. In God's blessing, all of God's people are strong. This pleases our God. Brothers and sisters, for those of us who are parents, we like to see our children to be this way. Every time when I see that my little grandson refuses to eat and looks so thin, it saddens me. And it makes me envious to see other people's grandchildren have a good appetite and be chubby. God does not like to see us being sickly and thin. Brothers and sisters, if you read Deuteronomy 28, you will see clearly both abundance and famine are in God's hands. Moses told the Israelites, as long as you are obedient, the blessings of God will be upon you. And the blessing is more than abundant. Whether it is the herd and the flock in the field, the harvest of the crop, or the flour in the house, they will all be abundant. When the enemies see you, they will flee. Whenever you are disobedient, you will immediately fall into famine. Therefore, we can see famine is a discipline from God to His disobedient children. Whenever you are disobedient, God will curse the land. The land will not yield its crop. As a result, the people of God will not have food. Therefore, brothers and sisters, being filled represents the acceptance and pleasure of God. And famine represents God's displeasure.

The Book of Judges brought in famine and the Book of Ruth took place in the time of the Judges. So the entire story is a sequence of events that happened during a famine. The Bible recorded that there was a man, actually it was not just this man, but there were many others like him. They lived in Bethlehem, supposedly the House of Bread, a place full of God's abundant blessings. Now it became a place of famine. When the famine came, we see that the family could not bear it. So they began to compromise, they began to run away. The Bible says the name of the man was Elimelech. Elimelech was a common name and his reaction was very normal. In order to keep the family alive, what shall he do when there was no food? The only way was to leave God's promised land. They knew Moab was a land cursed by God. But because of famine, they would rather go to a land that was cursed by God. Brothers and sisters, how we need God's warning! Today many of God's children are the same. When they are not satisfied within, they rather go to places that are cursed by God. How tragic that is.

It seemed that they were only there to sojourn for a short time. But this was truly a heart of compromise and escape because they had lost faith in God. They only sought after temporary satisfaction. But could this truly satisfy them? Because of their compromise and escape, death came as a result. This is a very tragic result. In the land of Moab, Elimelech died. Ten years later, his two sons also died. This family was completely under the attack of death. Brothers and sisters, in spiritual matters, the dissatisfaction in the spirit and the famine in the spirit are the reasons for us to compromise and to run away. And we can see this is common among God's people. Today we truly live in a time that is like the time in the Book of Judges. God has indeed given us an important reminder through the Book of Ruth.

Thank the Lord, in the Book of Ruth, a simple story, there were a few very ordinary people. We know in the Book of Ruth, the story mainly revolved around these three people: Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. And also there was a field. But brothers and sisters, God can speak to us through the simplest story. We know that these few individuals were very ordinary people. They did not have any gifts, any special talents, nor were they very intelligent. We can say this was a group of

very ordinary people. But we thank the Lord. Behind these ordinary people, there were extraordinary stories. I don't know how you are, brothers and sisters, but when I read the Bible, I like to read about these ordinary people. Why do I like to read about ordinary people? It is because I am an ordinary person. So whenever I read about their stories, I am much comforted. When I read about Moses, I would say, "It is impossible." When I read about Paul, I would say to myself I would never be able to measure up to him. But when we read the story of Naomi and the story of Ruth, we are much comforted because they are like us. Thanks be to God! In the Bible, God often uses ordinary people. These three people then became very important people in God's hand during that time period. According to God's principle, every single child of God should be a vessel in God's hand, yet not everyone can be used by God. God has been looking for vessels fit for His use throughout all generations. Regardless of who you are, your educational background, where you are from, God is only looking at whether you are fit for His use. Therefore, in the time of the Judges, even though God had used some judges, God found there were some other people who were more fit for His use here. God looked at Naomi and said, "I can use her." He saw Ruth and said, "I can use her." "I can also use Boaz."

Brothers and sisters, it does not matter how much money we have, or how highly education we are. All that matters is whether God can use you. We thank our God. He can use these ordinary people. I am greatly moved by this. They were just living their lives according to God's desire and they had no idea how great an impact they had on the history of the Israelites. They did not see this in their lifetime. David was the great grandson of Ruth. He was the fourth generation. I believe Naomi had died long before David was born. Boaz had also died. Even Ruth had died. Within their lifetime, they had never known there was a David in their descendants. They did not know that one day David would establish the Israel nation. They only knew how to live according to God's will. This is such an encouragement to us! Today when we serve the Lord, do we hope for immediate results? When we serve, we hope we can bring about a great revival of the church or we can all become famous. Many people today go after these things. But those few never had these kinds of thoughts. The only thing they knew was to live according to God's will. As a result, they became a group of people who had an immense impact in the history of Israel. What an encouragement to us! Brothers and sisters, we do not need to long to do great things. Today if we walk in line with God's will and to live before the Lord according to the leading of life, we will see the glory when the Lord returns. We are all just ordinary people. Are there any extraordinary people among us? Thank the Lord we are all ordinary people. God is able to use us who are ordinary.

From the Book of Ruth we can see among these three people, Naomi was indeed a key person. She was married to Elimelech. In the Old Testament, wives were completely submissive to the husbands. Under that great famine, the husband was not able to provide for his family. So he compromised. He failed. Unwillingly, Naomi followed him and went to Moab. From the story, we can see even though the circumstances were harsh and the family seemed to have compromised, but we can feel that Naomi never compromised. It was not by her choice that she followed her husband to Moab. But the Book of Ruth tells us Naomi was one who knew God and she was a very kind person. Her two sons took Gentile women as their wives, but you can see these daughters-in-law had an excellent relationship with their mother-in-law. From this, you can tell how kind this mother-in-law was. Not only did her two daughters-in-law love her,

they also respected her. This is not an easy matter. We Chinese often say that mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are born enemies. This is not easy. But we can see in Naomi's family, under such a difficult circumstance, Naomi was able to keep her normal relationship with God. Even though she was very ordinary, the characteristics in her caught God's attention. Not only was she a very kind person, from the story we can also see she had become a very beautiful testimony in this family. From the words of Ruth which expressed her desire to follow Naomi, we can see it was through Naomi that Ruth came to know God. Very likely not only did Naomi tell her two sons stories of Jehovah and had taught them about Jehovah from when they were little, but she had also taught her two daughters-in-law. So in the end, Ruth was able to say, "Your God will be my God." And, "Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." We can thus see Naomi had a beautiful testimony in her family. She had kept the position of a child of God in her family. She was steadfast in her faith toward the Lord. She was someone who loved God.

At the same time, we see even in such a long period of desolation, she did not lose the appropriate response to the matters of God. Her husband died, and, ten years later, her two sons died. All that was left was a very sad family: an old widow and two young widows. It seems like such a sad family. But Naomi was not discouraged. The Bible recorded "She had heard." She had heard that God had begun to bless the Israelites. This hearing is the leading of life. At any time, as long as the children of God do not lose the leading of the inner life, they will always have a chance to return. In my past service, I came across those who had left the Lord for decades, thirty or forty years, at the end they returned. How did they return? It was because they have touched the leading of life.

We truly thank God who loves us so much. As soon as you believe in the Lord Jesus, God places His life in you. We may neglect, reject, and pay no attention to this life, and we live our lives as usual, even living a sinful life, but once the life has entered into you, it stays within you. Until one day, you have become so weak you are at the end of your rope, then you touch this life and you repent. So you see it is so important that this leading of life is our key to return.

After such a long period of time, perhaps many Jews had gone to the Gentile nations and have long forgotten their own country. But one day when Naomi had heard the news, she did not just stop there. Immediately, she had this thought that she needed to leave the land of Moab and return. So brothers and sisters, submission to the leading of life comes with action. She was willing to return. Return meant she did not lose faith in God. She had faith in God. In the beginning, she planned to take her two daughters-in-law with her. But later she thought she did not want them to suffer with her. Naomi was indeed a very kind person and thus she said to her two daughters-in-law, "Don't go with me. Return to your family and to your gods." Brothers and sisters, there is an important principle here. This is a test with good intention. This is a principle by which God works. In spiritual matters, God never forces anyone. From the creation of Adam and Eve, God never forces us to do anything. God wants us to follow Him willingly and gladly. So we see Orpah and Ruth represented two different reactions. Very kindly Naomi gave them advice. What does Orpah represent? She represents those who have feelings for the Lord but are not willing to follow. Sometimes, we are so moved by the Lord in a meeting, yet go back to our old ways afterwards. She had feelings, but there was no following. She was very

good to Naomi, but she was not willing to pay the price. So brothers and sisters, this is very sad. Ruth, on the other hand, represents those who have love and are willing to follow.

The Chinese Bible translation says that Ruth could not bear to leave Naomi. In English it says that Ruth clave or clung to her. The Chinese translation is very descriptive. No matter what, it is good as long as you have a little bit of feeling of not wanting to leave the Lord. Now Ruth clung closely to Naomi. This clinging or following is a spiritual secret. When our Lord Jesus was on earth, He had chosen His disciples. These disciples were only capable of fishing and did not have many other strengths. But later they took hold of this secret: no matter where the Lord went, they followed. Remember in John chapter 6, after the Lord spoke some words, many people left Him? The Lord turned to His disciples and asked, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." And he followed. It was this "following" that turned them from being fishermen to being the Lord's apostles. Brothers and sisters, when we follow the Lord, we have to go through tests. Perhaps when we first believed, we followed the Lord, but as time goes by, we find that this person is good and we follow him, or we find that the world is good and we follow the world. We see that when the disciples were following the Lord, there were many temptations along the way. Today we need to ask the Lord to give us a heart like Ruth that we would cling to Him to the end. We follow Him until death do us part. At the end, Ruth said, "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried." This is so beautiful. So we see from Ruth the important meaning of this "following". "Do not urge me to leave. I have already decided. I will follow you until death." The Bible says, "So they both went." It is indeed a beautiful spiritual living. So they returned to Bethlehem. From their shame and emptiness, now they returned to abundance.

We know from the stories in the Old Testament, there are often deep spiritual experiences that are hidden. From the standpoint of spiritual understanding, there is an Elimelech in each one of us. From Elimelech, we beget Mahlon and Chilion. These are not good names. They mean sickly and weak. After Elimelech died, we say this was a good death, his two sons also died. I am speaking according to the spiritual principle, because if he did not die, Naomi would not have her freedom. And this story encompasses the principle of resurrection from death. Now they returned emptied-handed, but they were returning to God's abundance once again. As they returned to Bethlehem, as recorded in the last verse of chapter one, it was the beginning of barley harvest. There began an abundant harvest and the beginning of God's pleasure.

Brothers and sisters, if we want to walk in God's recovery in a time as the time of the Judges, the first important matter is for us to walk away from the famine. God loves us and the Lord Jesus said that He is the Bread from Heaven. He is the true spiritual food. If we abide in Christ, we should be filled and satisfied. We should lead a healthy life. We should not stay under a condition of famine for a long period. Brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves: Are you filled and satisfied in your spiritual life? Or are you living in famine? Of course the food is the Lord Himself and there are many ways we can gain food. When the Holy Spirit opens up the Lord's word and releases the abundance of Christ, this will satisfy our spirit. Therefore, we need to read the Lord's word and to be filled by the Lord's work. That means you need to eat the Lord's word. Sadly, we see the conditions of the churches on earth today, often the pulpit has become a classroom, a place to preach doctrines. Some pulpits have even become stages, and there are all

kinds of performances, or pulpits have become where talk shows take place, for everyone to showcase their eloquence. Today many of God's children pursue after these things. In order for us to come out of this kind of desolation and to return to God's glory, we must reject all that is not food. Brothers and sisters, it will only do you harm if you eat that which is not food.

Today we are truly living in a time of crises because all the food of the world is contaminated. It is to a very dangerous level. Even for us who live in the United States, we live in worry and fear. I never heard of organic food when I was a child. Now everyone is trying to find organic food because there are many foods that we can no longer eat. They will endanger our lives, even putting the existence of the human race into danger. We are so careful when it comes to our physical bodies, but why is it that you do not pay attention to your spiritual life? Today, it is even worse in our spiritual lives because we let so much that is not food enter into us. Brothers and sisters, we need to know that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Bread that came down from heaven. We will never be filled and satisfied if we have not gained our Lord Himself. The reason we compromise and the reason we run away is because we are not satisfied. We look for food elsewhere. So when others give us something fake, we take it and eat it. Amos 8:11 was very familiar, "Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord." We know the heart of God is to have His children be filled and satisfied. So only when we are filled and live in abundance, then we can please God. It does not depend on how much work we do for God or how much we run to and fro for God. If you are well fed and strong, God will be pleased. If you are living in famine, God's heart cannot be satisfied. It is very sad that often we are like the people living in the time of the Judges, and the enemy is doing much work among God's people today. Often when we go to a meeting, we want to feel emotionally stirred. But we must understand emotion passes quickly. Many seek after excitement. Others seek after satisfaction with knowledge. Especially for the young people or those who are educated, they like to pursue after knowledge. But we know knowledge is also temporary. Therefore, today we are seeking after spiritual food. If it is only for the satisfaction of the soul, you will discover you will still be hungry in the end.

Dear brothers and sisters, we realize the main reason for all the compromises, deviation, and running away in individuals as well as in the church is famine, so we need to be supplied by God in our spirit. Your individual time spent with God can bring you satisfaction. And the church should be like Bethel. It should be a place with an abundant food supply. In church history, during the days when the word of God was opened up widely, when the light of truth came forth, how satisfied were the children of God! When we were young, we truly felt that God had richly provided for His church. We were able to say what David said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" Often at the Bread Breaking meeting, we were so satisfied with the abundance and the presence of the Lord we could hardly express ourselves in words. When we left the meeting, brothers and sisters were singing as they walked. Even after we went home and we lied down in our beds the feeling of satisfaction still had not ceased. Brothers and sisters, when we look at today's conditions, how many Christians do we see are living under this condition? Our God is a God of abundance and He is willing to bless us. So brothers and sisters, let us be like Naomi and Ruth, and return to God's abundance. We need to pay attention to our inner condition. Whenever we return and to listen to God's words, God's blessing will naturally come upon us. It is true.

Sometimes I will gain satisfaction in a meeting. But more often I gain satisfaction through my personal fellowship with the Lord. This satisfaction cannot be replaced by anything on earth. Only when we live in such satisfaction can we not follow the trends of the world. Only when we live in such abundance can our living not be a compromised one and we need not run away. So brothers and sisters, in the Book of Ruth, God reminds us through this short story that we need to return to God's abundance. I hope that brothers and sisters can pray well. May the Lord once again bring us back to Bethel, to return to the abundant food supply of God's household, so we can be filled, satisfied and strong in our spirit and live joyously before God. This is only the beginning of a testimony. May the Lord bless His words.

Let us bow our heads and pray.

Lord, how we thank You wholeheartedly. Not only have You redeemed us, You have also given us Your abundance. In Your life, there is Your complete abundance. Help us learn how to fellowship with our Lord in this life and how to live within this abundance. Lord, save us from this generation of desolation and help us to be like Naomi and Ruth so we can once again return to Your abundance. Lord, may You be the spiritual fullness in every brother and sister, so when we live in a time with great spiritual tests, we can stand by the grace of our Lord and not live a life of compromise and a life of running away. May we be able to glorify Your name on earth. May You continue to lead us. Bless these words. May You listen to our prayer. We pray in our Lord Jesus Christ's name.