

Winter Conference 2013

Godwin Sun

Message 2 of 4

Ruth 2:1-3

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

Ruth 2:8

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.

Ruth 2:11-12

Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

Ruth2: 17-23

So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again, Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives." Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field." So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth 3:5

She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

Romans 8:12-14

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Yesterday morning, we shared that the story of history only shows us a glimpse of the phenomena, yet behind the history itself, there is the glorious will of God that directs all of these events. Throughout the ages, God has worked according to His glorious will and blessed are they who are able to go on this way, the line of the will of God. We have mentioned the greatest value of the Book of Ruth is that these people walked on the way of the line of the will of God. In Matthew chapter 1, the genealogy clearly tells us, there is this line, this lineage. We see from it the descendants of the son of Abraham, the son of David, and that is the genealogy of the Lord Jesus. Now we know that in the Old Testament before our Lord Jesus descended, this lineage from Abraham to David is a measuring line, a plumb line, which we can see. The characters in the Book of Ruth are blessed because these individuals are ones who walked according to this line. Now we have shared that the days of the Judges is background for the story of Ruth, and the days of the Judges was an extremely dark period for the people of Israel. The people of Israel departed from the will of God and lived under the oppression of the enemy. Their condition was very sad and very chaotic.

In general, when we read the Book of Judges, we know the period of the Judges was a dark era, yet in the Book of Ruth chapter 1:1 it says that the result, the very consequences, of the days of Judges was famine. Therefore, Ruth chapter 1:1 says, "Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land."

The dreadful consequence of the entire period of the Judges was famine. The people of God had no provision. We mentioned yesterday that the family of Elimelech, because of this famine, ran away and compromised. Therefore, the impact of this famine on God's people was very great. We also mentioned that God is a full and abundant God, and His children ought not to live in such poverty. In the Old Testament, we see that whenever the children of God were living in such a desolate condition, it was when they were not pleasing God. Therefore, this famine was a judgment and a curse from God. Very clearly, we can see from the Book of Ruth, if God were to bring His people back once again into His eternal purpose, the very first simple step was that they must be filled.

If there is a famine within and there is no strength, how can God's people be able to keep and to do the will of God? We know in our generation today the external condition of the church, as a whole, is as if it is in the days of Judges. This generation which we face is an extremely dangerous one. How are we able to be delivered from such a condition? We thank our God. He places the Book of Judges before us, so that it will be a great warning for us. And the Lord places the Book Ruth before us, so that we are able to see this is the way of escape. When we understand the Book of Ruth, it will be a grave reminder for us regarding our condition today.

Brothers and sisters, we know that the Book of Ruth shows us the way to recovery. We can view it in this perspective. The Book of Judges focuses on gifts. The Book of Ruth focuses on life and living. I believe many brothers and sisters know, as we follow the Lord, we cannot depend on gifts. We have to depend on life. Gifts are good, but we cannot depend on them; as we can see during the days of the Judges, all the judges were very gifted. Of course, they were ones full of faith and were those who loved God and God's house. But we can see that in the entire Book of Judges, they were only to delay the time. It does not represent the purpose of God. It was through the hands of the gifted judges that there was a temporal deliverance of the people. Therefore, the Book of Judges emphasizes on gifts. The Book of Ruth focuses on life. And each one of us today has to return to this experience of life.

Many times, we remind ourselves we cannot depend on gifts, but we must depend on life. Now brothers and sisters, do we truly focus on life or do we focus on gifts? If today these two characters, Naomi and Samson, appeared before us, who would you pay attention to? I believe none of us would pay attention to Naomi. This older sister, this old lady, is not pleasant to look at. You look at Samson, when he appears, how lovely he is to look upon. I believe a majority of brothers and sisters would put their focus upon those who are greatly gifted. We focus on gifts. It is not that God does not regard the judges whom He has raised, but the Book of Ruth tells us, even more so, God regards these very ordinary people in the Book of Ruth. That is because the outcome of the lives of these ordinary people really brings forth the manifestation of the glory of God's eternal will.

Brothers and sisters, when we pursue after the satisfaction of the life within, this is a very important matter. We know that those in the world are unsaved. Their focus is only on the satisfaction of the body. Perhaps some who are well off may focus on the satisfaction of their soul. But we can see even though many saints who are saved for many years, they still focus their attention on the satisfaction of the body. Some would focus their attention on the satisfaction of the soul, and neglect the fulfillment of the Spirit. We focus on what we eat, what we drink, and for our body, we seek for what tastes good and what is healthy. And when something is wrong with it, just a little bit, we put so much attention to it. Some may try to satisfy the soul, the emotion, and the minds, and we read many, many books that may bring us much satisfaction. Some will pursue after the will, power, fame, and position. Brothers and sisters, the Bible tells us only when the spirit is satisfied, that is true satisfaction. We can even

say it this way, when our spirit is content and satisfied, it is all right even if we lack somewhat externally. There is no comparison. We see so many saints live in conditions where they seem to lack, yet there is much joy and contentment within. Therefore, brothers and sisters, it is extremely important to be satisfied in the Spirit. When our spirit is filled, we are the ones who are at rest.

Is there rest in our living today? When there is no rest in our living, it is because our spirits are not filled. The Bible describes us as a nursing child satisfied in the mother's bosom. There is a different level of satisfaction and fulfillment in rest. One who is hungry cannot have rest, right? When we see a child who is hungry, he screams and cries. Once he is full, he will be quiet. Adults are the same. Therefore, brothers and sisters, when we are filled in the spirit, it will bring us into a living that is at rest. And when our spirits are filled, our lives will manifest joyfulness. Last evening, our Brother shared with us the Book of James. In the midst of various trials and temptations, there is the fullness of joy. One who is strong in the spirit will be able to live this way. If we are not satisfied in our spirit, where would that joy come from? We would not be joyful. Peter also tells us there is great joy that fills us when we are in various trials and temptations. When there is strength within, in the inner man, and the spirit is satisfied, then we are able to manifest such joy. Paul, an individual, who is filled with the spirit, says in the Book of Philippians, "Brethren, rejoice! It is not hard for me to write this to you." That is because Paul was in prison when he wrote the Book of Philippians. He was in chains and in stocks when he was writing this book. He says, "Rejoice, I say, rejoice!"

Dear brothers and sisters, for those who are filled in the spirit, circumstances cannot hinder them. How important this is. We must be satisfied before we can work. We must be first filled and satisfied in our spirit before we are able to go forward with spiritual work. It is the same in spiritual warfare. You cannot send hungry soldiers onto the battlefield. If they are hungry, how can they fight? Within the church, we can see soldiers going out to battle, yet there are so many hungry soldiers. How can we fight? No wonder there is no effect, because we are not full. We can see these words from the Book of Isaiah: the Lord says to the people of Israel that the King of Syria would come with great oppression upon them, but when they were filled and fat, they would be able to break this bondage of the enemy. It is not that you are full, fat and healthy in your body, but you are full of the anointing. Therefore, as we live today the enemy places a very heavy yoke upon us. How are we able to break this yoke? We must have the fullness of the anointing, and our spiritual condition must be very strong and healthy. We must be filled and satisfied.

Brothers and sisters, we know that Paul wrote to Timothy. Especially in 2 Timothy, Paul wrote to Timothy, "May the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Why did Paul write these words? We know that Timothy was a good Christian. He was one who loved the Lord. He was one who served the Lord zealously and he suffered along with Paul. Outwardly, we see that this was a good condition but Paul felt that there was weakness in the spirit of Timothy. Paul is one with

much experience. He knows no matter how good it seems outwardly, if there is something wrong with the spirit, all is finished. So Paul said to Timothy, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” Therefore, whether our spirit is filled within and how good our condition is, have great impact upon our service. If our spirit is weak, even if we know all the Scriptures about the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, it would not be enough. So in the Book of Ruth, it tells us very clearly that in order for God to recover His people to His original purpose, the first matter is that they must come out of the famine.

Brothers and sisters, remember in the Book of Acts we saw the testimony of Stephen. Acts chapter 6 records a very unique condition of Stephen. It records that Stephen was filled, that he was full of the spirit. He faced the Jews alone. He was able to face the whole Jewish sect. We can see how strong he was in the spirit. He was full. You know what our difficulty is today? It is not that we don't have any, but it is that we are not full. We say that this person is living, but somehow he seems dead. You say that Christian is dead but there are some signs of life. That condition is difficult. We need to be satisfied and filled. The Lord has already given us life. Through drawing nearer to the life of the Lord, we can be satisfied in the spirit; through the reading of the Lord's word, we can be satisfied in the spirit.

In these recent years, the Lord led me to various congregations to serve. There were many times I encountered brothers and sisters who said this to me, “Brother Sun, I'm about to starve to death.” I know that is because they put their hope in external satisfaction. It is very sad. We do not realize we have a way back to the Lord. How rich and full and abundant is our Lord. He is so willing to feed us. He wants us to be full and satisfied; yet out of our own foolishness, we do not know how to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If we are fully satisfied in this way before the Lord, we will have strength to do the will of God.

The Book of Ruth shows us the way we can return back to the original purpose of God. First, our spirits must be full. We must have a strong spirit. This is very important. Second, chapters two and three in the Book of Ruth tell us we must have a very clear guidance. On this point, we need to have a self-denial consecration. I think we are able to see this characteristic very clearly in Ruth. Today for us to return back to the glorious will of God, we must have a very clear direction. Brothers and sisters, we are very familiar with the Scriptures. We know the word “direction” or “guidance” is very simple, yet this truth is very difficult to obey. It is a very difficult way. Why did the church go astray? It is because of wrong direction. Is that correct? This matter of direction is extremely important to us. History has proven to us, man fails more often than he succeeds in terms of following directions. If we know some church history, we can see that there was a decline in the church's condition since the end of the first century. We can see in the fourth and fifth generation the church has become Catholicism. And then there was over a thousand years of the Dark Age. Why did this happen? When we look back today it is very clear. That is because the people of God were misled. Therefore, we realize when the direction is wrong, how fearful it is.

Brothers and sisters, today we live in such a chaotic generation; we must have clear direction. From the Scriptures, we know that our God is the One who directs us. Because God has a glorious purpose, His direction for us is always to guide us back to His original purpose. When we read the entire Old Testament, it is very clear. When the people of Israel went astray, God raised up His servants, the prophets. What did these prophets do? They rose up to warn the people, “You have gone astray. You have to return. You have to once again get back on the right way.” We know these servants of God, the prophets, became a guide for the people. When some obeyed, the condition was changed. When the people disobeyed, they continued to be in a very pitiful condition. It is the same in the New Testament. As we serve the Lord, we need direction.

We thank the Lord. In the Book of Ruth, we are able to see that Ruth had received very good directions. In chapters two and three, we can see the grave importance of clear direction. In the beginning, Naomi told Ruth to go glean in the fields, and Ruth said, “I want to go”, and Naomi says, “Go.” During those days in Israel, we know those who were in need and poor gleaned from the fragments in the field. This was allowed by God. But here we can see something very interesting. We see that Ruth was a stranger to the land of Bethlehem, and she went to a field, but now it so happened she gleaned from the field of Boaz. For her, she thought it was by coincidence she was gleaned from the field belonging to Boaz. But when we look back today, we realize this is completely the guidance of God. We realize that God is always guiding us hiddenly behind the scenes. There seems to be so many coincidences in our lives, but in fact, they are all arranged by God. I have a few grandsons and granddaughters. Sometimes, they would come to visit us and my wife and I will prepare some gifts for them and we would place the gifts by the door. When the grandchildren come, they open the door and they see this great big gift there. We love to see their reaction when they come in and their eyes are wide open. They would come in with excitement and exclaim, “Wow!” and they are so excited. Brothers and sisters, our God likes to do the same. My grandchildren know that this is prepared by their grandparents, but sadly sometimes we do not realize what God has prepared for us. In fact, God has placed so much before us already. So, this “coincidence” is in fact God’s hidden provision. Of course, we know that it was God who led her to the field belonging to Boaz. When we read such a story, do we really understand what God is telling us? That is, the glorious will of God will forever directs us to His Son and the field of His Son. Let us remember in Ruth chapter 2 that God not only brings Ruth before Boaz, but very importantly, brings her to field of Boaz. Today many times, we hear brothers and sisters share that when we serve brothers and sisters, we bring them before the presence of the Lord. There are many years I considered this before the Lord. There is some lacking in these words. We must bring such an individual before the Lord and into the will of the Lord. That is the complete revelation we see here in the Book of Ruth. One who truly loves the Lord and the House of the Lord has to love the Lord and love the Church. This is the complete love we see in Scriptures. That is because the field represents the work of Boaz. Today we know God has His work in the entire universe. Not only do we love

Him, we also love His will. Brothers and sisters, we know this is the guidance of the Lord upon us today. God desires for us to know His Son and to understand the glorious eternal will concerning His Son. Therefore, even at the beginning, we see this beautiful guidance of the Lord upon Ruth.

Now from the Scriptures we see this person, Ruth, this sister, is extremely diligent. Now it is great to be diligent, but here is a very important reminder for us. Only under the correct direction our diligence will bring forth the right outcome. Today in Christianity, in the entire church, we see there are so many who are zealous. There are so many who are diligent. There are so many who are willing to work. Yet, when we see so many of our brethren put forth themselves in such a way, there is still a sigh within. If only such diligence would be led under the right direction, how beautiful that would be? But very sadly, much of that diligence cannot produce the result which God is after. Brothers and sisters, when we are misled, it will only lead us to run and labor in vain. Brothers and sisters, when we realize all of our life's work, when we run, and when we labor, it is all for naught; at the end, we will have much regret. We all realize in order to follow the Lord there is a cost, but that cost must be paid on the right things. We oftentimes encourage brothers and sisters to consecrate and pay the price. And many would answer the call, forsake all and put all their efforts on seemingly the work of God, but they are misled, and that is such waste. Dear brothers and sisters, only when there is the right guidance, there will be no regret in our labor. Therefore, it is utterly important for us to have the right direction.

Many times, when I reflect on my life, I am full of thanksgiving toward our Lord. I already shared yesterday that I am an ordinary person. I do not have much wisdom. But I thank the Lord, in my early days, not only is there clear guidance from the spirit within, but throughout my life God has placed many good servants around me. They have given me good direction. Each time I think of this, I thank the Lord. Brothers and sisters, not that I have the wisdom to choose, but it is by the great mercy of God. So many times, I shared with brothers and sisters, I am only able to be on this way because I entered into it without knowing much, but how great a mercy God has on me. I know before the Lord returns, I will go through much testing. May the Lord have mercy on me so I can run to the end of this journey and would not be led to the wrong way. But how great is the temptation along the way.

Brothers and sisters, not only did God lead us before His Son, but He also led us on into His field. Here the Scriptures give us some description of Boaz. We can see how wealthy, how abundant, and how kind Boaz was. Therefore, upon the person of Boaz, we can see some characters of our Lord Jesus. Some say he is a type of the Lord Jesus. We can see how kindly he dealt with Ruth. Boaz commanded the young men not to touch her, and also charged them to purposely leave the sheaves for her, and to have her dine with him. Brothers and Sisters, we see the way Boaz treated Ruth is like how the Lord treats us. Take note of these words Boaz said to Ruth in chapter 2 verse 8, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field;

furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.” Brothers and sisters, we have said before, this field is a representation of God’s work. Strictly speaking, God only has one field in which He works. When we read 1 Corinthians 3, Paul tells us clearly the church is the field in which God works and tills. Therefore, the field in which God works is the church. We know that God is the creator of the entire universe, creator of man, and He has prepared salvation. The greatest purpose God has is to build the church, and that is the only work that God has in time and the most important of God’s work. Dear brothers and sisters, in our experience, very easily we go off into another field. Today, we can see in Christianity there is so much work that draws us outside of the church, yet there is not much interest in the church herself. But for the work of Christianity there is much interest. We know these works easily draw us, so we need the Lord’s mercy and keeping. When I was young, there were many saints who taught us concerning this, to help us to open our eyes, to show us that God only has one work in the world. When I was called to serve the Lord, I knew clearly that God called me to do His work. Apart from the church, I cannot have any other interests. Brothers and sisters, we must hold fast to what Boaz told Ruth, “Do not go glean in another field.”

Some may say that this field is the Scriptures. We can understand it in that way. Just like our condition today, how we do not find much interest in reading the Scriptures, but we are interested in reading other books, right? We find it very enjoyable when we read spiritual books or commentaries, but we doze off when we read the Bible. When we read the Bible, it is tasteless. But let us remember what Boaz said to Ruth, “Do not glean in another field.” Perhaps we cannot get any great light from the Scriptures and we are just gleaning the little bits of fragments, but that is enough to satisfy us.

Brothers and sisters, Boaz gave Ruth a very important reminder and Ruth followed Boaz’s maidens closely in the field. She was very diligent in gleaning from the harvest from morning to evening. The servants of Boaz were very gracious to her and they even purposely left her the sheaves. How much did she glean? It was one ephah of barley. How much is an ephah? I was very curious so I went to seek out the scholars and learned from them. One ephah is quite a lot. One ephah is over 40 kilograms (88 pounds), about 9 gallons. This is how much she gleaned, and Ruth carried it all home. Now for one person to move 40 kilograms is quite heavy. Of course, in those days it was a little different. I do not know what impression we have of her when we read the Book of Ruth. Perhaps we think that Ruth is very petite, and perhaps very fair. The Bible has recorded that many women were fair, but it did not record that about Ruth. We can only see the virtue, the beauty that was within Ruth. But from this recording, we can assume Ruth was quite strong. I do not think it is a very good description of a lady when we say someone is a very strong lady. But if she was able to pick up 40 kilograms, she must be very strong. God tells us through Ruth, as a Christian, you have to be beautiful within and you have to be strong without. Now as Christians, we cannot be too gentle in that sense. I see many Christians today, perhaps more of the younger ones, are very much pampered. It seems we pamper them as we serve them. We cannot say any heavy words to them. We see the saints in

the past who followed the Lord, when they are dealt with severely, they were ready to receive rebuke. But today when we serve the Lord, we just want to be filled and satisfied; we don't want to serve. If that is the way, how can we serve the Lord?

At times, the Lord will bring us into conditions that are not what we imagined. Forgive me for sharing this small testimony. A few years ago, I visited a very remote part of China. They did not have heat in the winter. It was extremely cold. The brother brought us to the house and said, "This is where you are staying." The blankets were layers thick. When I tried to move the blankets, I could not just flip the blankets over. I had to lift them up because the blankets were frozen solid. When I covered myself with the blankets at night, I was shivering. Now Brothers and Sisters, what do you do when you are in that situation? You cannot grumble. The next day, the responsible brother came. Because they were not afraid of the cold, they said, "It's very warm today." Brothers and sisters, when the Lord leads you into certain circumstances, if you are pampered, it is very hard for you to serve. Now Ruth is not one who was pampered. She was a strong woman. In order to serve the Lord, we must be able to endure all kinds of conditions. We can see this is a very unique characteristic of Ruth. We can see that she was full, and she brought back the abundance with her. The Chinese translation may lead us to some misunderstanding because it seems like Ruth ate her portion and then gave the leftovers to her mother-in-law. Brothers and sisters, this is not what it means in the original text. The Chinese translation is not very good. If a daughter-in-law gives her leftovers to her mother-in-law, that would not be good. Ruth was not that kind of person. She has already prepared a portion to bring back to her mother-in-law. When she returned to Naomi, through their conversation, Naomi realized that Ruth had gleaned in the field of Boaz.

Many who read the Book of Ruth would use Naomi as a representation, a type, of the Holy Spirit. Yes, there are some manifestations of her work that would represent the Holy Spirit, but she is not a type of the Spirit here. Now Naomi is one who loves the Lord, and she knows full well the Law of God. Here we see Naomi has given Ruth some instructions. Here it tells us there are two types of guidance in our spiritual life today. One, it is the Holy Spirit who directs us. Another type of guidance is the guidance from the saints, who dearly love the Lord. Of course, for these individuals to lead others, they themselves must first know well the direction of God. Just as for us today, we must first be guided by the Spirit before we are able to lead others. In fact, in our spiritual living, we can see from the saints who love the Lord with a pure heart, how much help they provided for us from their spiritual writings and spiritual revelations. Naomi represents such a group of people. We can see the direction which Naomi provided to Ruth was for Ruth to know more of Boaz. And Naomi, here, was introducing Boaz. It is the same for us who serve today. We must constantly speak of the Lord Himself. Naomi spoke of Boaz, that he had not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead. Indeed, Boaz was one who was very gracious and very kind. Many times, we speak of the goodness of the Lord and His encouragement to the saints; we speak of our Lord as a gracious Lord, a good Lord, and He is rich in abundance and provides for us.

Not only so, Naomi also told Ruth that this man was their kinsman. When she spoke of this kinsman, they only have the relationship but there was no reality behind it. But for us, we know the Lord has given us His life. Our Lord Himself is the kinsman to us. We must ask this question: We know of such a relationship, yet do we have such a reality? Is it really the reality that our relationship with the Lord is the relationship of a kinsman, the closest one? Today, we can see among God's people, there are not many saints who have this intimate relationship with the Lord constantly. Forgive me for saying this, many times when I hear others pray, I can sense the Lord they are praying to is the One who is far away and up high in heaven. They bitterly plead for the Lord to come down from heaven, but in fact the Lord already abides in us. His relationship with us is closer than any other, closer than the one with our parents, closer than the one with our children. It is a relationship of life. So, we should often have this close and intimate relationship with Him. We need the Lord to give us such grace. Only in such an intimate relationship can we appropriate rich provisions from Him. At that time, Naomi only realized under the law, they had such a relationship, yet there was no true reality behind this.

Now we can see the encouragement that Naomi gave to Ruth. This encouragement was also what Boaz told Ruth. Boaz says to Ruth, "Follow my servants." These servants are the reapers. And Boaz told her to "stay here with my maids." This is also an experience we must have when we follow the Lord today. We know here, Boaz said, "You follow my reapers." We must have discernment. Today, if we have fellowship, we must follow the true servants who truly follow the Lord and have fellowship with them, because those servants will give us much help in our spiritual life. Especially when we are young in our spiritual life, we might not know how to directly rely on the Lord, so the Lord raises individuals to help us, and these helpers are very important. Not only this, but also to stay close to the maids of Boaz. These maids are our spiritual companions. When we follow the Lord, we also need spiritual companions. You truly have to follow the maids of Boaz. I think these are very important reminders for us in the Book of Ruth. Again, Naomi reminded Ruth, "So that others do not fall upon you in another field." Naomi is one that truly knows the Lord. These "others" are those not of Christ. This is a very important reminder. We thank our God. Ruth here received two very precious directions. One is the guidance of God, and the other is the guidance of her mother-in-law Naomi. I think today, in order to return to the original purpose of God, we also need such direction.

I have mentioned before, "guidance" is a very simple teaching, yet it is a truth that is hard to follow. Why is it difficult to follow? Here is this issue we have to pay attention to -- the self. When we read the story of Ruth, we can see Ruth was one who was extremely obedient. She said to her mother-in-law, "All that you say I will do." Brothers and sisters, what does this tell us? It tells us that she does not live in the self. When we are given directions, what is most difficult is the self. Because of the self, we are very individualized, we are strong and stubborn. Sometimes we pray, "Lord, lead me." But when the Lord leads us this way, we question God, "God, I don't think this is correct. I don't think it should be this way. I think You should lead me that way." You see, we are better than God. In the end God is the one who is led by us. Our

self is extremely fearful. Therefore, we can see the virtue of Ruth is that she would deny her self. You see Boaz knew. Boaz said, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know." These words tell us the fact that Ruth did not live in her self. Only one who is willing to deny himself is able to be led. Today God leads us, but many times that guidance will encounter the self, and that will bring difficulty to God. We can see this virtue of Ruth. This obedience was from a consecration of denying of self, and she was following along with the maids of Boaz.

What does the last verse of Chapter 2 say? "And she lived with her mother-in-law." Why did the Bible record it this way for us? It tells us there are many temptations. Ruth might be tempted to run along with the younger crowd and leave her elderly mother-in-law. So, the way it was recorded that she still lived with her mother-in-law, is a very important experience. She was not influenced by any circumstances or people. Today, as we follow the Holy Spirit, it ought to be the same. It is an important experience of following the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in Ruth chapters 2 and 3, we can see as God was leading them back once again back to His original purpose, they must first have clear guidance, and we must have this self-denying consecration. We thank God that when Paul wrote the Book of Romans, he brought these two matters together. Romans chapter 8 tells us that in order to be led, this is a principle we must know. First, we must learn that through the Spirit we must mortify the deeds of the body. Now in the self, there are so many wicked evil deeds and the self-life is the greatest obstacle. The Book of Judges clearly tells us, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." What does it mean "to do what is right in their own eyes?" It is according to whatever you want. If I like to do so, I would go ahead and do it. If I think it is right, I would go ahead and do it. Today, we see that in the service to the Lord, in the church, the greatest obstacle is the self will. A certain brother or sister considers things should be done in certain way and they insist that is the way it must be done. If there is some opposition or some other opinions, there would be a conflict immediately. Forgive me for sharing this -- I heard of this very sad situation in China. We know that in their congregation their spirit was very strong, when they sang hymns, they were loud and strong. When they prayed, they prayed one after another with much power. After the meeting a brother said to me, "You can see all the excitement here in the assembly, right? When we have a service meeting, it is even more exciting. Brothers and sisters would pound on the tables and chairs." I said, "Really? Is that really the case?" "It is so full of excitement that they would even strangle each other." It is very sad. Brothers and sisters, when we serve the Lord, we must learn to deny ourselves. This self is the greatest obstacle that God has to deal with.

It is not that God does not want to lead us; it is not easy for us to be led. So, we must see why Ruth is blessed before the Lord. She was one who did not live in her self-life. If the glorious will of God is to prosper today, we must mortify the deeds of the body. When we do not live in

our self-will, then we can truly follow the guidance of God. I believe we have heard this doctrine for many years. Now I say it again, that “direction” or “guidance” is very simple, but it is a way that is difficult for us to practice. That is because the self is so strong. Our decisions, our own thinking, our own ways, and our emotions, all hinder our spiritual life. We are forcing God to a dead end. If we continue to live in such a condition, what is it that we live in? It will be like in the days of the Judges and the days of Ruth will not appear. May the Lord be gracious to us, so that all these doctrines, which are so familiar to us throughout the years, will become a reality and practical to us. And regardless of the price, we will follow the Lord. Then we are worthy to speak of what is the testimony of Christ; otherwise, it is a shame for you and me to speak of it.

I confess I have much failure of me before the Lord. Even until today, the testimony of the Lord in our assembly is so weak. Often, I would kneel before the Lord and confess, “Lord, it is I who have hindered You. Throughout all these years, it is still so difficult to obey You. You have spoken to me. You have led me. This self is so hard to put to death. It has caused much hindrance to Your work.” So, brothers and sisters, I know I am not worthy to speak on such a message, but we look to the Lord for His mercy, as Ruth did, so that we would learn to obey. We know that our Lord died, the work of the cross is finished, and today the Spirit abides in us. It is not too difficult for us to mortify the deeds of the body, but we must follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we must learn this lesson. Many times, I share with the brethren who serve. Our Lord came from heaven to this world full of trouble. It is through the death on the cross He dealt with all such trouble, so ones who truly serve the Lord are those who deal with trouble. We should not be the ones who create trouble. Many times, we are the troublemakers. Not only the brothers and sisters who serve the Lord may be troublemakers, but the servants of God are also the troublemakers. How can we escape from being troublemakers? We need to learn this lesson of denying our self. Otherwise, you and I will be the greatest troublemakers to the work of God. God is willing for His testimony to be manifested in this generation; but if today, we cannot follow the Lord according to His will, all would be spoken in vain. Brothers and sisters, Romans chapter 8 tells us, “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Now those who read the Scriptures realize this term the “sons of God” represent those who are mature. If today we truly submit to the guidance of the Spirit upon us, and submit to the guidance shared with us throughout the generations by the true saints of God, it will tell us that our life now is matured. Brothers and sisters, we truly need God’s grace.

In this short Book of Ruth, it represents very important thoughts of the Lord to us. God places before us the way of recovery. Not only do we have to be satisfied in our spirit, we must have the right guidance, and we must learn this lesson to deny the self. Brothers and sisters, I say once again the will of God changes not. You and I cannot harm the will of God, but you and I may be laid aside; and we would lose the blessing that is due to us, yet the work of God would continue onward. So, in this period of desolation, when the condition of the church today is like those in the days of the Judges, may the Lord give us light through the Book of Ruth to direct our

path out of this desolation; that we would return back to the purpose of God. Then our insignificant life can hold a very different value in God's hand. We thank the Lord that God speaks to us, the most ordinary of people. He tells us the fact that each one of us is able in the hands of God.

Let us bow for a word of prayer.

Lord, we confess our shortcomings before You. Lord, we pray that You would continue to speak to our hearts so that we may have strength to repent, and once again we may return unto Your desire. Lord, there are so many obstacles to Your will on earth today. Lord, how we need Your grace. Lord, may You speak to us through the Book of Ruth, so that we may be delivered from such a wicked generation. Deliver us from desolation so that we may once again return to Your desire. Lord, we are a group of very ordinary people, yet You are able to use the ordinary. And You are able to use us. Lord, may Your words encourage us and move us onward, that we would not be discouraged and none of us would retreat. In the few days we have left, we may obey Your will, so that we may please Your heart. Lord, bless Your people through Your words. We thank you for You have not forsaken us. We pray in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.