

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter Nine

Understanding the Value of Holiness and Commitment In Realizing the Will of God for Our Lives

“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. ² And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. ³ And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech” (Ruth 2:1-3).

In our last few studies in Ruth we have seen that the full surrender of our lives to Jesus Christ is what opens the door to power with God. We looked at Ruth’s six resolutions of commitment. We have seen the necessity of escaping the blinders of time to see the blessings of eternity. In the last lesson, we looked at seven characteristics of a servant’s heart. In this lesson, we want to look at the confidence that belongs to the person who is totally committed to the Lord Jesus as well as to a life of obedience and holiness.

In Ruth 2:3, the Word of God informs us that it was Ruth’s “hap . . . to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz.” The word “hap” is from the Hebrew word *migreh* (mik-reh’). The word means by chance, accident or fate. Certainly from a human perspective that is what happened. However that is not what happened in the foreknowledge of God. God knew exactly where Ruth would end up because Ruth had put her life into God’s hands to guide her every step.

“²³ The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. ²⁴ Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him* with his hand” (Psalm 37:23-24).

Over the years I have had many people ask me how they can know with certainty what God’s will was for some particular area of their life. What they are really asking for is a Jonah like message from God. They want God to speak to them and say, “Arise and go to Nineveh.” Then they want a map to appear in the sky telling them how to get there and a blueprint on what to do before they are willing to go. Although God has worked that way in the past, He seldom does. Throughout all recorded history there are only a handful of such instances. In the majority of people’s lives, God has not worked that way.

It amazes me how many professing Christians believe in such things as *luck* or *fate*. What they really are saying is that they are willing to leave their lives up to *chance*. They live by the slogan, “I’ll take my chances.” In this lesson we will lay the groundwork for taking chance out of our lives and putting our lives into the hands of God and His directing power.

There are two foundational principles that are absolutely essential before anyone will be able to *realize* the will of God for his life. Notice I did not say *know* the will of God for his life. This chapter is not about knowing the will of God (other than knowing the Word of God and obeying it). This is about *realizing* God’s will in our lives.

At this point in Ruth’s life, do you suppose she knew she would be in the lineage of the generations of the Messiah of Israel? I doubt if she had even considered the matter. Her thoughts were probably preoccupied with such things as what she would eat and how she would survive. She was thinking on the very basic issues of life like daily bread. Yet, Ruth had already established two foundational principles that would guide her footsteps to the field of Boaz and bless her life.

Foundational Principle #1: The just shall live by faith. This is a principle repeated over and over again in the Word of God.

² And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make *it* plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. ³ For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. ⁴ Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:2-4).

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17).

¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹ But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:10-11).

³⁵ Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. ³⁶ For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. ³⁷ For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. ³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. ³⁹ But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:35-39).

This is one of God’s governing principles for living (“shall live”), but what does it mean? First of all it is only for the “just.” Who are the “just”? “Just” is a term that refers to all those who have been justified or declared righteous as a result of their trusting in the finished work of Christ for their salvation.

“The just” are the by-products of the satisfaction of God’s justice through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ when He paid the death sentence put upon all of mankind at the fall of Adam (Romans 5:12 and 6:23). The word “just” is also a word that implies that the one justified is committed to observing the moral Laws of God (not to be saved, but because he is saved).

Therefore, this verse says that the person who is justified by a gift of God’s grace through faith in the finished and substitutionary work of Christ on behalf of all mankind (I John 2:2) “shall live by” (on the principle of) faith.” What does God mean by “living by faith”? For some people that means living in a Volkswagen bus waiting for their needs to fall out of the sky. That is a good example of what living by faith *doesn’t* mean.

The word “faith” in Habakkuk 2:4 (from which all the New Testament verses are quoted) is from the Hebrew word *‘emuwnah* (em-oo-naw’). It means firmness, fidelity, steadfastness or steadiness. Therefore, all of these verses are saying that the saved person (“the just”) is obligated to live a life of steadfast fidelity to the Word of God and the God of the Word. When that is the reality of a person’s life, that person can live with the confidence that God will direct his steps.

Another thing that amazes me about Christians is how many profess to believe in Christ, read His Word, but still seem unwilling to trust their lives into His care by complete yieldedness and obedience to His Word. *Doing* is a very large part of what faith is all about. Faith implies we trust God’s Word enough to obey it and put its truths into practice. That is what Ruth meant in Ruth 1:16 when she committed herself by saying, “Thy God shall be my God.” God is not our God until we trust Him with our lives enough to obey His Word. Any reservation in this area is not living by faith. Our lives cannot really be blessed by God until we are consumed with obedience to Him and His Word.

³ Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴ He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. ⁵ He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24:3-5).

The person who loves the Lord strives to live in continual fellowship with Him. That means a life of continual self examination for sin, a desire to live separated from the world and unto God (holiness)

and a desire to live in obedience to God's Word. That is the person who takes the *chance* out of his life (which leads us to the foundational principle #2).

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose” (Romans 8:28).

In this verse, God's gives two qualifying requirements before “all things work together for good.” First, let's understand what “all things” working “together” means. “All things” is a collective term that means you enter into a partnership with God and become an integral part of His plan and program, functioning *within* it (not in opposition to it). That is why the Word of God says, “What fellowship (co-operative partnership) hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion (common co-operation) hath light with darkness” (II Corinthians 6:14)?

The point is this, when we do not separate ourselves from anything and everything of this world that is sinful, we are not functioning *within* the plan and program of God. Instead we are living in opposition to God's plan and program.

“¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. ¹⁸ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (I John 2:15-19).

Anytime we unite ourselves with the world (in anyway), we become a part of the “all things” that are in opposition to the plan and program of God. This is what God refers to as spiritual adultery.

“³ Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts. ⁴ Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:3-4).

When we want to be part of the “all things that work together for good,” that requires the two qualifying statements in Romans 8:28. The first qualifying statement is that we must learn to love God. Love is not some ambiguous emotion. It is an action word defined by concrete realities. God says if we love Him, we will obey Him and obedience will not be a big burden to us.

“² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:2-3).

The second qualifying statement is that we must put God's purpose first in life (not just ours). We must constantly be considering what God wants in any given moment of our lives. This is an attitude of life that considers God's purpose and priorities before anything else.

When a person adopts this attitude, his life and what happens to him becomes secondary to God's purpose. Only when we love God (obedience) and when God's purpose is our main priority will all things work together for good. Only then will we become part of God's collective plan for good (rather than opposition to it).

From the perspective of this lesson, turn to Psalm 23 and read it. This Psalm is written especially for the person we have detailed in this lesson. As we all know, Psalm 23 is the Shepherd Psalm. The

Shepherd is the One in charge of the “all things working together for good” that we become part of when we commit ourselves to obedience to God’s Word (loving God) and putting God’s purpose first in our decisions.

The Shepherd Psalm is a Psalm of confidence in being right with God and in His will. It is not for the wandering sheep, but for the faithful sheep. Now read it from that perspective.

“¹ <<A Psalm of David.>> The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He maketh me to lie down in **green** pastures {**green...:** Heb. pastures of tender grass} : he leadeth me beside the **still** waters. {**still...:** Heb. waters of quietness} ³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. ⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psalm 23:1-6).

As long as the Christian remains within the circle of the Shepherd’s care (“walk in the Light”, I John 1:7), he can be confident that whatever He does will be within the Lord’s will. When the believer is living in God’s will by being obedient to the Word of God and putting God’s purpose first in every decision he makes, God will direct his steps. So many professing Christians live in open rebellion and spiritual adultery against God and still expect His protective custody upon their lives. That is a promise only for those that “walk in the light.”

“¹ My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: ² For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. ³ Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: ⁴ So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:1-6).

Within God’s will, the individual walking in the “light” (living in the center of God’s truth and will) can step out in any direction and be confident his footsteps will fall right in the middle of God’s will. He has 360 degrees of choices.

“¹⁰⁵ Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. ¹⁰⁶ I have sworn, and I will perform *it*, that I will keep thy righteous judgments” (Psalm 119:105-106).

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1. From Ruth 2:3, what does the word “hap” mean? _____
2. Do you think that God wants us to leave our lives up to chance? _____
3. What does it mean to wait for a *Jonah message* from God? _____

4. Do you think the way God revealed what He wanted to Jonah is the way God works in everyday situations of life, or was that a special event with special circumstances? _____
5. What are people really saying when they say everything is just a matter of *fate*? _____

6. What is the difference between *fate* and the sovereign plan and purpose of God? _____

7. What is the difference between *knowing* the will of God for our lives and *realizing* the will of God in our lives? _____

8. List the two foundational principles that are absolutely essential to realize the will (plan) of God for your life from the following two verses of Scripture.
 - A. Romans 1:17: _____

 - B. Romans 8:28: _____

9. According to Romans 1:17, towards who is this principle restricted to? _____
10. How can a person become one of these people? _____
11. Define in concrete and tangible terms what it means to “live by faith.” _____

12. What doesn’t it mean? _____
13. What is the action word that best describes the idea of faith? _____
14. What are the ramifications of Ruth’s statement in Ruth 1:16, “Thy God shall be my God”? _____

15. Define what God means in Romans 8:28 by the term “all things”? _____

16. How does your answer to the above question relate to the difference between functioning within God's sovereign plan or in opposition to that plan? _____

17. There are two *Collectives*: the "all things that work together for good" and the *all things that work together for evil*. From II Corinthians 6:14, what is God's warning and instruction about these two *Collectives*? _____

18. Read I John 2:15-19. When God says that certain individuals "go out from us," which *Collective* have they abandoned and which have they joined? _____

19. List the two qualifying statements of Romans 8:28. _____

20. Read I John 5:2-3. What is the concrete way in which God measures the reality of our love for Him? _____

21. What does it mean that God's purpose must be the priority of our life? _____

22. Read Psalm 23. From the context of what we have learned in this study, what is the real meaning behind the Shepherd Psalm? _____

23. What are you willing to do (and be) in order to have the confidence of knowing you are a part of God's wonderful and sovereign plan of the ages rather than live in opposition to that plan? _____