

# Handfuls On Purpose

## Studies in the Book of Ruth

### Chapter Eighteen

## The Redeemer That Cannot Redeem

“<sup>1</sup> Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.<sup>2</sup> And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.<sup>3</sup> And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which *was* our brother Elimelech’s: <sup>4</sup> And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy *it* before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem *it*, redeem *it*: but if thou wilt not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know: for *there is* none to redeem *it* beside thee; and I *am* after thee. And he said, I will redeem *it*.<sup>5</sup> Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy *it* also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.<sup>6</sup> And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem *it*” (Ruth 4:1-6).

If you were to ask most people why they think they will go to heaven when they die, they will answer that they have tried to do the best they could. There are millions of people all over this world who have been deceived into believing they will go to Heaven because they have done their best in trying to keep the Ten Commandments. Most of these people are just doing whatever someone told them they had to do. They believed what some authority told them because they thought that authority knew what he was talking about. How important is it for people to understand that keeping the Law cannot save?

Most of these people are sincere people. They want to do what is right. Nonetheless, they have been misled. These people work very hard at being moral people with the hope that one day they will have done enough good to outweigh the sins they may have committed or forgotten to confess. They think they will one day come before *St. Peter* in Heaven and he will put their good works on one side of the scales and their sins on the other side. If the good outweighs the bad, the Pearly Gates will open for them. If not, a trap door will open and they will fall into purgatory for a few million years. Christ said many will come to Him at the Day of Judgment claiming to have done the works necessary to be saved. He also tells us what His answer will be.

“<sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?<sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23).

I have all the pity in the world for these people. It is my heart’s greatest desire to see them escape their deception and come to know the truth of God’s Word about what they need to do to be saved and go to Heaven. The only way that can happen is to teach them the real purpose of the Law and to help them understand the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Again, the types in the book of Ruth are important. Boaz is a type of Christ. Ruth is a type of the Church. Naomi is a type of Israel. Now we are introduced to another type in the unnamed kinsman redeemer. He is a type of the Law as manifested by the twice repeated words “I cannot redeem” in Ruth 4:6. The Law cannot redeem. Never forget those words. If the Law cannot redeem, keeping the Law cannot redeem the person trying to do so.

**The city gate was the courthouse of this period of history (Ruth 4:1).** Boaz goes to the gate of the city and waits for the nearer kinsman to pass by. He calls the nearer kinsman to sit down near him at the city gate for the purpose of settling a legal matter (4:1). He then calls together 10 of the elders of the city to bear witness to the transaction and to offer legal opinion regarding Jewish Law, if necessary. Elders were usually men of age, well known in the community, spiritually mature and considered to have wisdom in these types of decisions.

In Ruth 4:3-4, Boaz states his case and confronts this nearer kinsman with his moral obligations under the Law. In a small community like Bethlehem, this nearer kinsman would have known that Naomi had returned and that her husband and sons were dead. He should have taken care of his responsibilities regarding this matter long ago, but did not. In stead, he allowed Naomi and Ruth to live in poverty and shame rather than show compassion and mercy on them.

The nearer kinsman was willing and able to redeem the land for Naomi. Then Boaz informs him there is more than the property in question (I cannot imagine that this nearer kinsman did not know this). There was the issue of this Gentile (Moabite) wife of the dead Mahlon who would need redemption with the land (Ruth 4:5).

Boaz is stating a legal point in that if the Kinsman Redeemer was going to redeem the property; he would also bear the responsibility of marrying Ruth with the intent of providing Elimelech and his son Mahlon a namesake. Read Ruth 4:6 again; “And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem *it*.” Why was the redemption of Ruth such a problem for this nearer kinsman as typical of the Law?

“<sup>3</sup> An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: <sup>4</sup> Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee” (Deuteronomy 23:3-4).

This restriction of God was put upon the Ammonites and Moabites due to their treachery in using a prophet of God against God’s people. This incident with Ruth was less than 100 years after the event with Balaam. Ruth was a Moabite. The Law had no place, no time, no want, no welcome and no concern for such a person. Ruth represents every person who has broken the Law. The Law simply acts in justice. There is no mercy, no love and no grace. The Law shouts out in a trumpet voice, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

God’s grace whispers in a still small voice, “He that believeth on Jesus hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” Unlike Boaz as a type of Christ, the Law has no ability to love. However, God’s love met the Law on the Cross of Calvary and God’s love satisfied the Law’s condemnation of all sin through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for all mankind (John 3:16). He took our death sentence and died in our place for our sin.

“<sup>23</sup> Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: <sup>24</sup> Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (I Peter 2:23-24).

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:” (I Peter 3:18).

**Everyone needs to know and understand that the Law has no power to redeem. The Law takes the sinner by the hand and leads him to Christ. Only the gospel has power to redeem (Romans 1:16-17).**

“<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith. <sup>12</sup> And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. <sup>13</sup> Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:” (Galatians 3:10-13).

“<sup>21</sup> Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. <sup>22</sup> But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. <sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:21-24).

People need to know that any attempt to earn salvation by trying to keep the Law is an insult against the holiness of God, which demands absolute perfection and perfect righteousness.

“<sup>4</sup> Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup> For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. <sup>6</sup> For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. <sup>7</sup> Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? <sup>8</sup> This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you. <sup>9</sup> A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:4-9).

If perfect righteousness could come by keeping commandments (the Law), why would God send His Son to die?

“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21).

You cannot read the gospels and come up with a theology that says there is salvation by keeping the Law. You cannot read the epistle to Romans and come up with a theology that says there is salvation by keeping the Law. You definitely cannot read the epistle to the Hebrews and come up with a theology that says there is salvation by keeping the Law. You absolutely cannot read the epistle to the Galatians and come up with a theology that says there is salvation by keeping the Law.

This redundancy is to establish this theological precedent for why the nearer kinsman (as typical of the Law) of Ruth 4:1-6 says “I cannot redeem.” Just as we have already read in Galatians 3:10, the Law cannot save anyone. All the Law does is curse the guilty.

“<sup>19</sup> Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:19-20).

We are all guilty (Romans 3:23) and the death sentence is upon every one of us (Romans 6:23).

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

The Law cannot redeem. Telling people that truth is as much a part of the gospel as the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is. That is why the epistle to the Romans spends three and a half chapters dealing with this issue BEFORE we are given the details of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The sinner MUST understand that the only thing he can do as he stands before the Law is to plead guilty. In knowing that reality, the only avenue before the sinner is to plead for mercy and grace.

**Handfuls On Purpose**  
Studies in the Book of Ruth  
Chapter Eighteen  
**The Redeemer That Cannot Redeem**

1. Why do most people in the American society expect to go to Heaven? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. If people are honestly trying their best to keep the commandments, will they be immoral or wicked people? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Read Matthew 7:22-23. What is Christ's pre-recorded answer (and therefore warning) to people thinking they will get into Heaven based upon keeping the Law or doing good works? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why is the only hope for these people to have someone who loves them enough to tell them the truth and teach them what Jesus has done to save them (the gospel)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the unnamed kinsman redeemer a type of in Ruth 4:1-6? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the all conclusive statement of the Law regarding the redemption of a lost sinner in Ruth 4:6? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Thoroughly discuss this whole scene at the city gate of Bethlehem from the historical context of the book of Ruth. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Read Deuteronomy 23:3-4. Discuss why the nearer kinsman as typical of the Law could redeem the land, but not Ruth. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Read John 3:16, I Peter 2:23-24 and 3:18. Discuss how God's love changes the equation: sin equals condemnation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Read Galatians 3:10-13 and 21-24. Discuss why it is so important that people understand that the Law has absolutely no power to redeem. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Read Galatians 5:4-9 and 2:21. Expand upon your above answer. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Read Romans 3:19-20 and James 2:10. Discuss the true message of the Law to all mankind. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. If the word *repent* means to change the mind or to turn from one course of action to another; how does this relate to those who believe in salvation by works? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_