



Judah. Their sons married Moabish women, and died in the Moabite country. Elimelech also died, and Naomi, left utterly alone, returned to her own land. Orpah, one of her daughters-in-law, gave her the kiss of farewell; and our lesson opens with Ruth's answer to Naomi's entreaty that she would follow Orpah back to her country and her gods. Her answer shows a mingling of decision, love, whole-heartedness, and self-sacrifice. For the very reason that Orpah had left because Naomi was old, childless, and poor, Ruth clung to her.

(1) *We should choose for the good that we can do, not for the gain that we can get.* Entreat me not, As Fuller says: "God wrestled with Jacob with desire to be conquered; so Naomi, no doubt, opposed Ruth, hoping and wishing that she herself might be foiled." So Elijah entreated Elisha to leave him, as a test to his fidelity, yet rewarded him for staying. 2 Kings 2. Naomi desired Ruth's companionship, but she would not take advantage of her sympathy and earnest feeling. *Whither thou goest, I will go.* For Naomi's sake she would go to a land which she had never seen, against which there was a prejudice among her own people, and where she must meet the same prejudice against herself. *Where thou lodgest, I will lodge.* Naomi was poor and could promise no worthy home to her adopted daughter, yet for her sake Ruth would dwell in the lowliest cottage. *Thy people shall be my people.* She would renounce citizenship in Moab and become an Israelite. In a spiritual sense Moab represents the world, and Israel the people of God. Every Christian should make Ruth's resolution and take God's people for his friends, no matter how lowly they may be, nor how exalted worldly associations may appear. Notice the choice of Moses in Heb. 11. 24-26. (2) *God's people in poverty are richer than the world's people in luxury.* *Thy God my God.* Probably this did not mean the same fullness of experience with Ruth as with us; yet it was a renunciation of the idolatries of Moab and a putting on of Jehovah, of whom she had doubtless received much knowledge during ten years of married life in an Israelite family. It is this which draws people to Christ now. They see what Christians are, and through them they are led to their God. (3) *May we so reflect Christ's character as to draw men toward Christ.*

17. *Where thou diest, will I die.* She turns her back upon Moab and its associations, and turns her face toward Israel and its promises. Though by blood a descendant of Lot, who clung to the world, and of Lot's wife, who wavered and turned back to Sodom, Ruth shows herself in heart a true daughter of Abraham. *There will I be buried.* A desire to be buried among one's own people was strongly characteristic of the ancient world, and still characterizes the Oriental world. Note the dying wish of Jacob (Gen. 49. 29-32), and of Joseph (Gen. 50. 25, 26). The Chinamen, who come to America require a contract that in the event of death their bones shall be taken back to their own land. But Ruth chooses Israel for her home, living and dead. *The Lord do so to me.* This is the first instance of a peculiar form of oath found often in the Old Testament invoking the judgment of heaven upon the non-fulfillment of a vow. It may have been spoken

with some expressive gesture accompanying the words, "The Lord do so to me." (4) *Let us break every bond that attaches us to Moab, and fasten every link united us to Israel.*

18. *When she saw.* Naomi's advice was sincere, for she knew the hardships awaiting Ruth, from poverty, toil, and the scorn of narrow-minded Israelites. Yet she was, no doubt, more glad at her refusal than at Orpah's consent. *Steadfastly minded.* This is the mind for every follower of Christ to have, the steadfast, determined mind. It silences opposition, puts away doubt, and quells temptation. (5) *It is really easier to be earnest in God's service than to be lukewarm.*

19. *So they two went.* They journeyed down from the mountains of Moab to the valley of the Jordan, passed the head of the Dead Sea not far from Jericho, and ascended the mountains of Judah. *Bethlechem.* This village is situated six miles south-east of Jerusalem, and is distinguished as the birth-place of David and of Jesus Christ. All through Bible history, it was a small village of a few hundred inhabitants. See Micah 5. 2. It is still a prosperous town of much better appearance than most in Palestine, containing two or three thousand people. *All the city.* The term "city" is applied in the Bible to all places, large and small, having walls. *Was moved about them.* As is usual in small towns, the coming of a new resident and the return of an old one attracted general attention; and all the more as Naomi's family had once enjoyed high social position, being descended from Nabalson, the prince of Judah at the exodus from Egypt. *They said.* In the Hebrew, "the women said." *Is this Naomi.* In surprise at her altered appearance and lonely state.

20. *Call me not Naomi.* A name meaning pleasant, beautiful. *Call me Mara.* A word meaning bitter; in allusion to her troubles—widowhood, bereavement, and poverty. *The Almighty hath dealt.* She had a measure of faith to see that God ruled in her afflictions; but a small measure, since she could not trust him fully, though she called him the Almighty. *Dealt very bitterly with me.* The word bitterly in the original is *mara*, bitter. "Call me Bitter, because God has been bitter toward me." (6) *How feeling are earthly blessings, when ten years turn Naomi to Mara!* (7) *How great our need of faith to trust God at all times!*

21. *I went out full.* That is, rich, with husband and sons, in happiness. *The Lord hath brought me home.* The going was by her own will, the returning by God's constraint. (8) *Often sorrow brings back to God those who in enjoyment have wandered from him.* Testified against me. God had borne witness against her by his dispensations, and in appearance was turned to be her enemy. It was the ancient belief that afflictions were sent in punishment for sin; in the clearer revelation of the New Testament we see that God gives us discipline and training here, and reserves penalty for the hereafter.

22. *Ruth the Moabitess.* This is the name by which she was generally known among the people of her adoption. It was a name of honor, for it represents the first-fruits of the Gentile world brought into God's true Israel. The blood of a Gentile woman ran in the veins of Jesus of Nazareth, thus giving him kinship not only with Jews, but with the Gentile world. *Barley harvest.* This fact is named to introduce the narration of the next chapter. In southern Palestine the barley harvest comes in the middle of April.

HOME READINGS.

- M. Ruth's choice. Ruth 1. 16-22.
Tu. Preceding narrative. Ruth 1. 1-10.
W. Ruth finds favor. Ruth 2. 1-12.
Th. Kindness of Boaz. Ruth 2. 13-23.
F. Jonathan and David. 1 Sam. 20. 11-17.
S. Leaving all for Christ. Luke 18. 18-30.
S. An inseparable Friend. Rom. 8. 31-39.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Ruth 1. 16.

LESSON HYMNS.

- No. 72, Dominion Hymnal.
O happy day that fixed my choice
On thee, my Saviour and my God.

No. 127, Dominion Hymnal.

Nearer my God to thee,
Nearer to thee.

No. 63, Dominion Hymnal.

My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;
For thee all the pleasures of sin I resign.

TIME.—B.C. 1312.

PLACES.—The land of Moab. Bethlechem.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The love of Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. *The Voice of Love.*
Who are the characters who appear in this lesson?
Where is the scene of the story laid?