

Boaz is Able to Be the Kinsman Redeemer

Ruth 4:1-12

Ruth 4:1-12 - *“Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, “Come aside, friend, sit down here.” So he came aside and sat down. ² And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. ³ Then he said to the close relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. ⁴ And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.’” And he said, “I will redeem it.”*

⁵ Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.” ⁶ And the close relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it.” ⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel. ⁸ Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself.” So he took off his sandal. ⁹ And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi. ¹⁰ Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day.”

¹¹ And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman.”

Background Notes

Naomi’s plan for getting Boaz and Ruth together worked, but there was one problem that had to be resolved. There was another kinsman who was a closer relative to Elimelech than Boaz, and therefore he must first decline his responsibility as “kinsman redeemer” before Boaz could marry Ruth. Boaz was determined to get the matter settled immediately, so he went to the gate of the city and asked ten city officials to join him there.

Why the gate of the city? In ancient days, the city gate was like the town hall. Official transactions were carried out there. The city gate was a large, well-defended area. The whole area sometimes had several actual gates, with rooms and chambers attached where records were kept. There were seats for city officials to sit while they debated legal affairs and transactions and legal documents were signed, and so forth.

Well, it “just so happened” that the other man who was eligible to be the kinsman redeemer passed through the gate just then! Perfect timing! Again we see God working behind the scenes here. So Boaz confronted the man and told him of his responsibility to redeem back the land for Naomi.

We have to do a little research to understand what’s going on. It seems that either Elimelech had sold their land before they left for Moab, or Naomi had sold the land when they returned because of her poverty and her desperate need for money. We don’t know for sure. In any case, the responsibility of the kinsman redeemer was to buy back that land in order to keep it in the family. The other relative said (v4), *“I will redeem it”* -- but that was before he learned about the “Ruth connection.” When the other kinsman redeemer learned about Ruth and his obligation to marry her and raise up an heir, he changed his mind and said (v6), *“I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”* I’m sure Boaz breathed a sigh of relief at this point!

Why did the other kinsman redeemer change his mind? At first he probably thought he had a good deal. Since Elimelech had no heirs, the property would come to him when Naomi died. But now with Ruth in the picture, he would not only lose the land, but he would lose the money that he paid out for the land as well. Furthermore (and this may have been his main reason), he may not have wanted to marry a foreigner, a woman from Moab.

So, the other kinsman redeemer took off his sandal. This meant that he “relinquished his right to walk on that land” – in other words he gave up his right to purchase and own the land. Thus, the door was opened for Boaz to buy the land and to marry Ruth. Boaz stated his intentions officially before the elders of the city, and they (along with all the onlookers) gave Boaz their blessing.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Law cannot redeem anyone.

The Law cannot redeem anyone -- where do we find that taught in Ruth 4? Remember the spiritual picture we find in the book of Ruth? If Boaz, the kinsman redeemer who was willing to redeem, represents Christ our Kinsman Redeemer, then whom is the other kinsman redeemer in the spiritual picture? I think this other man represents the Law of Moses. In fact, the ten city elders who administered the legal action that took place enhance this picture – they may represent God’s moral law as focused in the Ten Commandments. God’s moral Law cannot be overlooked. The Law cannot be bypassed in redemption, but the Law cannot redeem!

Notice what the other kinsman redeemer said (v6), *“I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance.”* And at the end of the verse, again, *“I cannot redeem it.”* It’s interesting that the man used that word “cannot” rather than “will not.” The Law cannot redeem anyone. If the Law could redeem, it wouldn’t be the Law. The Law cannot redeem anyone.

Galatians 3:11 says that, in the sight of God, no one is justified by the Law. Well, you might say, then why did God give the Law to Moses? Romans 3:20 says that the Law gives us our knowledge of sin. Without the Law, we wouldn't understand that we are sinful! It was through the Law that God showed us our sinfulness. The Law was our tutor, or our teacher, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by Christ and by faith in Christ (Galatians 3:24).

The Law is like a mirror. A mirror can show you that your face is dirty, but a mirror cannot wash your face! In the same way, the Law shows us that we are sinners and that we need to be redeemed -- but it cannot redeem us. Only Christ can redeem us! The Law cannot redeem anyone.

I hope you're not thinking that somehow you can get yourself to Heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments as best you can. Forget it! The most the Law can do for you is to show you that you are sinful and you need to be redeemed. The Law cannot redeem anyone.

2. Christ can redeem everyone.

In the spiritual picture in the book of Ruth, Boaz represents the Lord Jesus, our Kinsman Redeemer. The other kinsman redeemer was unwilling and unable to be the redeemer, but Boaz was both willing and able to redeem. He was not in debt or entangled in any way. Boaz pictures our Lord Jesus who came to redeem us, by His gracious action alone. The Lord Jesus was sinless, so He was able to redeem us, and He was willing to be the sinless sacrifice that was necessary to redeem us! We, like Ruth, were too poor to do anything for ourselves. We were helpless -- "dead in our trespasses and sins." The Lord Jesus came to earth and reclaimed all that mankind had lost because of the Fall. He redeemed us, and He "married" us.

In verse 10 Boaz said: *"Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate."* Apart from Boaz, Ruth had no hope for a secure future. Apart from Jesus Christ we have no way to escape the consequences of sin and the claims of death. The Law cannot help us out of our predicament, but in His grace the Lord Jesus has purchased us and redeemed us. In Ephesians 1:14 we read that we are "His purchased possession." Acts 20:28 says that believers are "purchased with His own blood."

Notice, by the way, in the spiritual picture Naomi (who represents restored Israel) also came into blessing because of Boaz, the willing and able kinsman redeemer. Thus we see again in this wonderful picture that the Law was not bypassed. Boaz satisfied all the claims of the law. Boaz was able to free Ruth from the prior claim of the law so she could be married to Boaz. In the same way, Christ, our perfect Kinsman Redeemer, settled all the claims of the Mosaic Law, and we are now free from the Law and can become the bride of Christ. Romans 7 says that by grace Christ has purchased us and freed us from the Law. John 1:17 says, *"the Law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*

The Law cannot redeem anyone -- but Christ can redeem everyone! However, that doesn't mean that everyone is redeemed. Jesus Christ is able and willing to redeem everyone. When He died on the cross, He met all the claims of the Law, and as our perfect sacrifice He died for the sins of the world. That atoning work was sufficient to save everyone - it was unlimited and universal in scope.

1 Timothy 2:6 says that He gave himself as a ransom for all, so that means that Christ can redeem everyone. But not everybody is saved -- only those who believe in Him are redeemed. The saving work of Christ is only effective for those who believe in Him and trust in His sacrifice to atone for their sins.

Have you believed? Are you redeemed? If not, do you want to be redeemed? Do you want to be free from the claims of the Law? Remember -- Christ can redeem everyone, but you must believe!

Practical Application

Remember the women in the genealogy of Christ!

In Matthew 1, four women are named in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Two of them are mentioned here -- Tamar (v12), and of course Ruth. The other two women are Rahab and Bathsheba. If you study the biblical account of each one of these women, you will be encouraged as you see the grace of God at work!

Rahab and Tamar were Gentiles, and they were prostitutes. Bathsheba committed adultery with King David. Ruth was a Gentile foreigner from a pagan culture. But in spite of all of their faults and shortcomings, in His grace God worked out His plan for the coming of the Messiah using these women. All four of these women are in the genealogy of Jesus Christ!

So if you're ever discouraged and think that God can't accept you or use you in His service because of you have been too sinful -- be encouraged! Remember the women in the genealogy of Christ! And if ever you're counseling someone who is discouraged because of their past sinful life, and they think that they're useless and "on the shelf" -- encourage that person by turning to Matthew 1, and reading about the women in the genealogy of Christ.

A practical way to be encouraged and to remember the grace of God is to remember the women in the genealogy of Christ!