

COMMUNICATED.

Ruth Married to Boaz.

CHAPTER VIII—CONTINUED.

Then said she, sit still my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day.

Ruth had just returned to her mother-in-law from the threshing-floor of Boaz. The threshing-floor was the place where the husk or chaff was beat off of the grain, and where it was also winnowed. The fruit of the field was gathered together there, threshed, winnowed and heaped together. And Ruth returned to her mother-in-law with her desires inflamed with six measures of barley. Hitherto she had only entered into the field of Boaz, but now she had even gone to his threshing-floor; but she did not venture there presumptuously; the fact that she might have been taken for a harlot forbade that, which to a woman of her chaste spirit would have been worse than being stoned to death, especially to have been spurned as a harlot by Boaz, whom she loved. It would have been easier to Ruth to have borne reproach from all the world than from Boaz, and having his good opinion and love, the reproach of the world could be easily borne. It was her love and great respect for him, coupled with the knowledge of her own unworthiness and her origin, that made the cross so heavy in getting down to his feet and asking so great a favor of him. She did not ask that favor of him as though he would be glad and feel himself honored in granting her request; she did not feel that she was conferring the favor on him, in giving him an opportunity to make a sacrifice for her, but she was prompted by her necessity to make this appeal to him, in the spirit of the Syrophenician, ready to confess that she being a Moabitess, was therefore unworthy of it, but still was not the less in need of it—therefore she could have borne denial without murmuring and charging Boaz with injustice; and could have received his favors as a grace by which she would be humbled, which would manifest that unity of spirit to be found only in the regenerated people of God.

Ruth learned something that night in the threshing-floor, that she had not thought of before, at least she had not felt it, if she knew it; and that was, that there was a nearer kinsman. She learned more of Boaz

too, and the more she knew of him the better she loved him, the worse she dreaded failing to get him. She learned that night, his high respect for the laws of Israel as well as his respect for his own character and hers. Her love was subdued, not lessened, by her high regard for his character and exalted state, so that she was held in check, that she might not approach him presumptuously, but as an inferior approaches his superior, ready to take a low seat, and therefore prepared to accept a higher one with fear and trembling, lest he should be lifted up in his own spirit and not in the spirit of his benefactor—a harlot would not have these feelings—she would be ready for a reward upon every corn floor. The closer one is allied to Christ in spirit the greater is his reverence for His word; the more he loves Christ's doctrine, the stronger is his desire to adore and bring forth the fruits of it. It is these who walk in the pure word or doctrine—clear of chaff, whose works build up the house of the dead. The pure doctrine yields good fruits, it sends forth the reapers to the field, it drops handfuls for the poor stranger, it gathers the wheat into the garner, it gathers the poor to the threshing-floor, it brings Ruth to Boaz and joins them together—and whom God hath joined together let man put asunder. How dare any of us divorce works from faith! Can the church be built up by faith alone? Is it enough to believe in election? Does it answer for baptism to believe in baptism? Is it enough to believe it to be our duty to support the ministry—will *that* support them? Is it enough to believe that we ought to preach—is *that* preaching? Is it enough to believe that we ought to be just—that the debtor ought to be subject to the lender? This is divorcing works and faith; there will be no fruits in the field, no wheat upon the threshing-floor, no child born to Naomi. The house will not be built up, Israel will be in league with the flesh, there'll be no armory in Israel, not even a blacksmith shop; they'll have to go to the Philistines' shops to sharpen their coulters, and beat out their wheat by stealth, for fear of the Midianites.

Boaz in telling Ruth of the nearer kinsman, did not do it to evade "raising up the name of the dead upon his inheritance," himself, but

that it must be done according to the laws of Israel, and not in violation of these laws. As the church does not object to preaching the gospel everywhere and to everybody, to evade the sacrifice incident to it, or because she has less love for the human family, or less pity for those in darkness, but she objects to the unlawful systems devised for that purpose, as she does to fornication and adultery, knowing that they gender to bondage and the flesh, rather than to building up the church to the glory of Christ. And hence however ardent her desires for the growth of the church—she dare not transgress the laws of Israel to attain it, either in making preachers or members. A man said, from a pulpit recently, that Jesus Christ was a Missionary, but if he was, it was not according to the modern meaning of the word. I should rather say, according to my understanding of the word in these days, that Judas would come nigher being a Missionary—with all due respect and with no ill feelings to that large and respectable body of my fellow creatures. The church "hath done what she could"—she has at least honored Christ in her doctrine. It was not therefore to evade the sacrifice that Boaz referred to the nearer kinsman, but that the law should be sustained intact; not a lack of love to Ruth, but because he loved her too well to violate her chastity. As brethren now are charged with a lack of love to their brethren and to the welfare of the church, who maintain that Baptists should be subject to their plighted word and their contracts to men of the world, because they are unwilling that the church should be prostituted to the world, her chastity would be violated and become but as a harlot by the wayside.

Ruth did not love the nearer kinsman, and could not therefore have been in rest in his house, but she did not know that it was because she was a sinner (a Moabitess) that she was safe from him. It is from the fact that we are sinners, that none will take pity on us but Christ; but we are uneasy, lest there should be a hindrance in our lack of fleshly righteousness, when that very lack itself is the reason why we do not stop short of Christ, why we are united to him, and why we rest when we come to him either in faith or works. We fear lest our works be not right; when we go to

the church we fear that Christ will not accept us—we desire to be right not only in word but in spirit; not only desire to go to the church, but to be a true comer; not only to be baptized in word, but in spirit; not only to be a member outwardly but inwardly; not only to gloryfy him in our bodies but in our spirits. Because we know that if we fail of the spiritual joys, our outward inheritance is nothing; and we know also that the outward works alone will not bring us to Christ; that that inheritance is not of the law, but of grace; and whilst the outward works are a cross, they are in a measure made so from fearing lest we are not prepared by the Spirit to do them, and if not, we can have no rest in them, for our rest in them would be the rest we would receive by knowing that Christ accepted them. We fear lest He would not, and yet we have been emboldened from his kindness to us before, and from a sense of our needs to venture upon him; and, we want no one else to help us but him.

But Naomi told her to "sit still, for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day." It all depends upon him, you can do nothing, he can do all. If he loves you—and he does love you, he will finish the thing this day. "Love is as strong as death, many waters cannot quench love, though a man would give all the goods of his house it would be utterly contemned in comparison with his love." Who shall say then, that the work shall not be finished? That Ruth shall not come to rest in the bed of Boaz, and bring forth seed to build up, not the fleshly house, which was cut off, but the spiritual house; and not by the nearer kinsman and by the old covenant, based upon works, but by Boaz, by the new covenant or marriage, based upon love. *The man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day.* Because he loved her. Though his threshing-floor was burdened with grain, and he could eat and drink, and lie down and rest, yet his couch would be uneasy with penitent and seeking Ruth at his feet; how much less could he rest, knowing that she, whom he loved and who had sought his feet, was suffering hunger and nakedness! Ah! how could he rest! How could you rest, knowing that your loved one was an outcast, though you were surrounded by all