



## SEALED WITH A SANDAL

Ruth 4:1-12

One measure of godly character is Christlike love—love that is selfless, sacrificial, and undeterred by obstacles. Boaz’s determination to do everything he had to do to marry Ruth and care for her serves as a wonderful example of the love God wants to produce in us all.

The last chapter of the book of Ruth could not be more dramatically different from the first chapter. Chapter 1 began with three funerals and three widows; chapter 4 will close with a wedding and a baby boy.

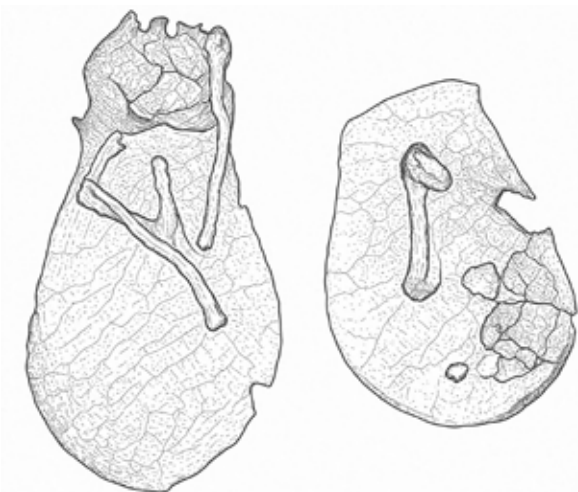
And in between we have seen God providentially bring Ruth and Boaz together. We have watched their relationship develop and witnessed that midnight proposal on the threshing floor.

We also have held our breath over a big problem. There’s another relative who has the legal right to claim Ruth as her kinsman-redeemer and to purchase

the family farm belonging to Naomi’s husband (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). He is first in line for this claim, and Boaz is second in line.

And that brings us now to the city of Bethlehem:

*Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, “Turn aside, friend; sit down here.” And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. (Ruth 4:1-2)*



Ancient Egyptian sandal

The city gate was the place where business was conducted and legal transactions were carried out. There were rooms just inside the gate where administrative offices were built. I’ve stood there at the ancient ruins of city gates in Israel and seen these areas just inside the gates where legal cases were heard.



By the way, this helps explain Jesus' promise to His disciples that the "gates of hell" will not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18). He meant that all the *decisions and plans* of the demonic world would never be able to eliminate the church.

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Now Boaz invites ten elders to sit down and hear him. That was the legal quorum for this proceeding. Verse 1 tells us that the other kinsman-redeemer *just so happened* to walk by. Obviously, the author wants us to know that God is providentially arranging these details.

Boaz then says to the man, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech" (verse 3). "Relative" in this context is a broad term; this land belonged to the extended family of Elimelech. Naomi was going to have to sell this land to make ends meet, and Boaz is rather casually reminding this relative that he has the right to purchase the land and keep it in the family of Elimelech (Leviticus 25:25).

Boaz's heart is no doubt pounding away on the inside. He says in verse 4:

*"So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is*

*no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you."*

In other words, "If you don't want it, I might as well buy it for myself and keep it in the family."

And the man answers here, "I will redeem it." Boaz's heart skipped a beat or two; but if you study his strategy here, I believe Boaz expected this man to respond with interest.

Now watch Boaz respond in verse 5:

*"The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance."*

This other man evidently had not thought about Naomi or Ruth; and Boaz just layers out the "bad news" one piece at a time. Naomi and Ruth come with this parcel of land. And who is Ruth? She's a Moabite—you know, those idolatrous people who are enemies of Israel. And Boaz adds that she's the "widow of the dead," which means whoever buys the land is required by law to marry her.

Oh, and there's one more thing Boaz just sort of throws in here: the redeemer is going to have to "perpetuate the name of the dead." In other words, he's going to have a child with Ruth, Lord willing, and this child will become heir of the land in the name of Ruth's former husband. And then he will have to give this land to that child when he grows up.

Now who would want to marry a Moabite woman and purchase a piece of property only to have to give it away later? There's only one person in the world who would want to do that—someone who happens to be in love with the widow!

And as quickly as this man said, "I will redeem it," he is now looking for the back door. He says to Boaz in verse 6: "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair



my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”

Then Boaz shouts, “Yeeeeeha!” Well, that’s in between the lines.

This decision is ratified in verses 7-8:

*Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other . . . So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal.*

The man is essentially saying, “Boaz, you can walk in my sandals—you can take my place.”

Ruth chapter 4 does not give us any details of the wedding, the wedding garments, the feasting, or the days of celebration. It simply informs us that Prince Boaz has effectively rescued this damsel in distress. The bride and groom are married at last.

Now let me ask you this: Why would Boaz be willing to marry a foreign widow to begin with? Why would a godly man like him jeopardize his reputation and have children that are half Israelite and half Gentile? His name is going to be whispered about town as the man who married a former Gentile idolater.

Well, for one thing, Boaz knows Ruth has become a follower of God and it wasn’t for money or any advantage. In fact, remember that following the Lord meant Ruth had walked away from her family and friends; everything she knew, she had left behind in Moab.

But let me tell you, Ruth reminded Boaz of someone else he loved. You see, Boaz already knew the testimony of a Gentile woman who had left her country and her idols to follow the God of Abraham. It was his own mother. We know her as Rahab, the harlot.

That’s right—the same woman who had helped the Israelite spies years earlier, the same woman who had followed after Israel when the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. Rahab had converted from idolatry to faith in the true and living God.

And the Bible tells us that later on an Israelite man named Salmon married her—think of it—a Gentile woman with a sordid past. And they happen to end up in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, in Matthew chapter 1 and verse 5.

So, Boaz was willing to do the very same thing *his* father had done years before. God had already prepared Boaz’s heart to love a Gentile bride and become her kinsman-redeemer.

Don’t forget, beloved, your Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is now redeeming His bride—the church—and every one of us has a sinful past. But let me tell you, His love for you has not ruined His reputation; it has exalted His grace as your faithful Kinsman-Redeemer.

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God’s providence worked alongside Boaz’s faith and obedience to God’s word. How does that fact affect your understanding of God’s providence in your life? What act of faith or obedience is God waiting on you to exercise in order to finish bringing resolution to a godly desire in your life?

What encouragement do you draw from God’s willingness to overlook a person’s sinful past and use their faith to include them in His plan of redemption for the whole world? How might that encouragement become fuel for your daily walk with Him?

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