

REST FOR THE RESTLESS

Ruth 3

There comes a moment in all the great stories when the characters must act.

In Ruth, we have seen the providential hand of God and the *hesed* of God – His steadfast covenantal love. God is the main actor in this story, and His providential love is shown toward a family. Yet Naomi now recognizes a problem that still remains – though they have food, she and Ruth need rest – they need security.

Like Naomi and Ruth, we also long for rest – a deep and abiding security. Yet we are often prone either (1) to bury our restlessness, or (2) to try secure rest on our own terms.

But what does seeking our rest in Him actually look like? Ruth 3 answers that question by showing us (1) *why we seek rest*, (2) *how we seek rest*, and (3) *where we ultimately find rest*.

We seek rest because we need it (vv. 1-5)

The word "rest" refers to settled well-being, security, and belonging (Gen 8:9; Deut 28:65; 1 Chr 6:31; Ps 116:7; Isa 34:14; Lam 1:3). We could say that rest is the *settled confidence* that you are protected, provided for, and secure in your future, something Ruth is lacking.

Boaz is a potential provider of that rest as he is a redeemer (*goel*). A *goel* is a close male relative who is obligated in Israelite law to buy back property or persons who have fallen onto hard times (Lev 25:25, 35-38, 47-49).

Because the need for rest is so great, Ruth is willing to move forward despite the risk. Verse 3 signals that Ruth's period of mourning has ended and she is available for marriage (cf. 2 Sam 12:20). We also need this rest.

"Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you." Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1.

We seek rest through living faith (vv. 6-11)

Ruth is not merely seeking rest; she is showing us how God's people are supposed to pursue rest – marked by what we might call *living faith*.

Three characteristics of living faith:

1. Vulnerable obedience
2. Bold dependence
 - "Spread your wings [corner of your garment]" is an idiom for marriage (Ezek 16:8)
3. Covenant faithfulness
 - Boaz extols her "kindness" (*hesed*) and her strength of character – "worthy" (*hayil*; Prov 31:17)

In this story, in order to secure rest, Ruth could have selfishly pursued other men. She could have attempted to coerce Boaz. Good desires do not justify every method of pursuing them (see Abraham and Hagar; Gen 16:1-11). We must pursue the rest God offers *through* the means He provides.

We find rest in the Redeemer (vv. 11-18)

Boaz responds by committing himself to Ruth's welfare and promises redemption. We see this chapter begins with Naomi seeking rest for Ruth and ends with a redeemer who will not rest until the matter is settled.

Where we seek rest matters. We all cry, "cover me," to even good things (e.g., family, work, success, money, ministry, relationships). But can these things provide the covering and rest we truly need?

What ultimately matters is not the strength of our faith but the worthiness of our Redeemer. The accent of assurance falls not on the believer but on the Redeemer who gives rest (Heb 4).

Key Point: Since God provides rest through His Redeemer, we must seek our rest in Him.

Small Group Application Questions:

Where do you see restlessness in our culture and in your own heart? Where are you tempted to seek rest apart from Christ? What has that lead to?

Which characteristic of living faith from Ruth 3:6-11 - vulnerable obedience, bold dependence, or covenant faithfulness - do you most need to grow in? How might you do so this week?

Where are you tempted to pursue good desires through ungodly means rather than trust God's timing? What would it look like to pursue those desires through godly means?

Read Matt 11:28-30. How does Christ give greater assurance of rest than Boaz could give Ruth? How does that encourage you today?