

PREFACE

“Thank God for bringing me to the house of bread in Bethlehem today. I know pastor will not give this book of Ruth a miss and it was doubly confirmed by the call to worship on Ruth 2. I saw pastor enjoying the delivery of the message and I believe he also enjoyed very much the preparation of it. The message came with fresh perspective. Though pastor said his focus was not so much on the characters in this book but yet as pastor gave a profile of each of them, I felt there were so many rich lessons therein. As pastor said, the principal characters therein speak of the power of effectual grace working in each of their lives. From Naomi, I learned that in all situations especially when providence is against me, I must honestly acknowledge the hand of God that is gone out against me and to quietly consider and bear the judgments of God. In such critical times, Naomi was not so much taken up by her troubles and problems, she was concerned for the welfare of her two daughters-in-law. I was intrigued by the question pastor asked ‘Who took care of whom?’ Is it Ruth who took care of Naomi or Naomi, Ruth? In either case, Naomi was really a sisters’ keeper. Such grace and selfless love is really attractive and that virtue was also seen in Boaz who was fully aware of the affairs of Jerusalem. Pastor also dedicated the message to the youth to show the importance of discerning character and to know what character is as seen especially in the choices made by Ruth. The verse Ruth 1:14 has always been my favourite verse but I see that often I had used it flippantly without meaning it nor understanding its full implication with my whole heart. Ruth knew that when she followed Naomi, it meant sacrifice and hardship but having known who Naomi was, her manner of life and doctrines, she was fully persuaded to follow her till death. I felt very blessed to have followed pastor, the Naomi of our times. I desire I would be a Ruth to follow my spiritual Naomi, like Antioch Buminaang prayed, that I will cleave unto pastor, like Timothy cleave to Paul, that his God be my God and his Gospel also be my Gospel. The negative example of Barnabas is also a warning to me that if I do not know who my Naomi is, it is to my detriment. I pray for God’s grace to really appreciate my spiritual Naomi. The most beautiful part of the message is when pastor compared the book of Ruth to the book of Judges; when he asked the question why Ruth was placed separately after the book of Judges? Pastor so wonderfully showed us God’s preservation over Israel as a whole in the book of Judges whereas in Ruth, it showed God’s special love upon His elect abroad. In the darkness of apostasy as painted in the book of Judges, there was the handful of the godly whom God has preserved and kept in His tender care. It was a very beautiful picture of the Gospel. It was stunning to hear pastor said that the lives of three men were sacrificed to bring in a Moabitish woman! That was the sacrifice it takes to seek out a sinner and God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son! At that point, I saw the wicked unbelief of the hyper-Calvinists to deny the free offer of the Gospel and doubt the sincere love of God towards sinners. This scene of God seeking out Ruth through Elimelech’s family, just like Christ Yeshua went all the way to seek out the woman of Canaan (Matthew 15), is very moving. I am reminded that it is not so much Ruth who has found the God of Israel but it is God Who found her and brought her under the shadow of His wings. Thus she was satisfied in her soul. God did not despise the outcasts of Israel. Pastor kept the theme of the message to the last and finally unfolded to us the purpose of God in this book of Ruth. This was the final gem! This book of Ruth has great historical significance as it provided the link from Abraham to Judah to David and down to Christ Yeshua. I was encouraged when pastor said that Ruth (a Gentile woman) found herself a niche in the Jewish history, in the Scriptures and above all, in the genealogy of Yeshua Christ. Thank God for His love towards the Gentiles. What a blessed portion Ruth has! I pray for a portion of that blessedness to be found in Christ Yeshua. But first, I need to have a portion of her spirit which is also appropriately depicted in Psalm 131 (the psalm before the sermon today)—the spirit of quiet resolve and faith to wait upon God, a deep sense of unworthiness and the spirit of humility like that of a weaned child. May God have mercy on me.” Rhoda Soh’s vespers in response to pastor’s exegesis of the Book of Ruth, John Bunyan House, Johor Bahru, Malaysia; 3 April AD 2011