

People of Promise
Naomi and Ruth
607 words

A Timely Promise

Naomi and Ruth:
Widows-in-Law in Need

Ruth 2:20

Today the promises of insurance, pensions, and government programs attempt to rectify the plight of the needy. But the idea of redeeming the needy out of trouble is not a modern one. It springs from promises made by God thousands of years ago and beautifully fulfilled for two widows in a particularly dark hour in Israel's history.

It was the period of the judges in the promised land--a time of moral and spiritual anarchy. Seven times Israel fell into degenerate practices, seven times God judged her, and seven times God raised up leaders to repel her oppressors and lead Israel into spiritual revival. In this dark period, there were lights of faithfulness--one of them was named Naomi. Because of a scarcity of food in Israel, she and her husband and two sons moved to neighboring Moab. There, her husband died, her sons married Moabite women, and then both her sons died as well. So there was Naomi, a Hebrew widow, living in Moab with two Moabite daughters-in-law who were also widows. What were they to do? How would they survive?

While most people today do not find themselves in straits as dire as Naomi's, it is easy to *feel* like we are. Perhaps you have been in an insecure place like that in your life. You wonder who will take care of you when you are old or if you should become ill, or if you find yourself alone in life. The times may change, but fears and feelings are timeless. Naomi is the mother of all who wring their hands at the thought of the future.

Naomi decided to leave Moab and return to Israel. She knew that God had made promises in his law for the care of widows, though she had no idea how they might be fulfilled. She encouraged her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab with their people. One did, but the other, Ruth, was so faithful to Naomi that she chose to make Naomi's people her people, Naomi's God her God (Ruth 1:16). She became a daughter-in-heart-and-soul to Naomi.

God had promised widows in Israel that someone in the widow's husband's family would "redeem" the widow out of her poverty (Lev. 25:25-28; Deut. 25:5-10). Perhaps marry her, or purchase property that she owned to keep it in the family--whatever it took to make provision for her (Ruth 4:1-10). A godly relative named Boaz--another point of light in those dark days--stepped forward and redeemed Naomi, and the widow of Naomi's son, Ruth. As a result, a promise God had made to widows like Naomi years before became her salvation. She never imagined she would be in need of being redeemed by a kinsman-redeemer. But the promise of God was there for just such a time as Naomi's and Ruth's.

God sent another Redeemer, Jesus Christ, to save us out of our own poverty of soul. He redeemed us (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7), and gave us his promise that he will be with us until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). So the next time you are tempted to be fearful of the future, think of Naomi and Ruth:

- How can I avail myself of God's promises?
- How should I live daily until God's provision is revealed?
- Since no one knows the future, isn't it best to trust in the only One who does?

God never promised to alleviate all human suffering, even for Christians. But his promises do let us know that Someone bigger than life itself is watching over us. His promise that he is with us forever means we will never approach the future alone.