

# The Longest Day

When Fairytales Come True – Part VIII

Ruth 3:18

## Introduction

This past February, news at yahoo.com carried an article about a woman who was pretty upset that her desires were going unmet. A twenty-seven-year-old woman in Fort Pierce, Florida, walked into a McDonald's restaurant to order a 10-piece McNuggets meal. After standing in line for some time, she finally made it to the counter and delivered her order. The McDonald's employee took her order and received her money. It was only after this that he discovered they were out of McNuggets – those tasty, low-sodium, low-fat treats (I added this part!).

The employee told this customer that they had run out of the McNuggets and she would have to choose something else from the menu. She refused and said, "Just give me my money back."

The employee told the woman that he was sorry, but all sales were final. However, he did tell her that she could get something else off the menu, even if it cost more.

"No way," this woman insisted, "give me McNuggets or my money back." She did not want a Big Mac, a McRib, or a Quarter Pounder. According to the news, she became so frustrated that she pulled out her cell phone and called 911. Apparently the police did not take her seriously because she had to call 911 three times.

This is an emergency!

This woman never got her McNuggets, but she did get a ticket when the police arrived for misusing the 911 emergency system.<sup>i</sup>

When I read this, I wondered how many people treat God like an employee at McDonald's. They want something and have gone to some effort to get it, and then, God does not come through.

Worse yet, the person has to wait and wonder.

Worse still, the Christian has to wait for God to respond with no indication that He will, and with no guarantee, and then, accept whatever He offers, no matter what!

In this, ladies and gentlemen, is a key test of a Christian's growth: patient surrender to the sovereign plan of God.

We can more easily identify with Margaret Thatcher, a former Prime Minister of England, who once said, "I am extremely patient, provided I get my own way in the end."<sup>ii</sup>

We would all be, would we not?!

In the convicting little book of Puritan prayers called the *Valley of Vision*, one church leader of generations ago admitted in his prayer, his struggle with patient surrender. He prayed:

*When Thou wouldst guide me*

*I control myself.*

*When Thou wouldst be sovereign*

*I rule myself.*

*When I should depend on Thy provision*

*I supply myself.*

*When I should submit to Thy providence*

*I follow my own will.*

*When I should honor and trust Thee*

*I serve myself.*

*Lord, it is my chief desire to bring my heart back to Thee.*<sup>iii</sup>

This is the honest confession of a heart that admits how hard it is to wait and how difficult it is to surrender with no guarantee from God.

Without a doubt, the longest day in the life of Ruth is about to begin. It will be a day that requires patient surrender, with absolutely no guarantees from her redeemer.

We have watched as Ruth expressed her love for Boaz, and he responded in kind – saying that he would do everything in his power to become her kinsman redeemer. According to Old Testament law, the kinsman redeemer was the one to buy her family's estate and take her and her mother-in-law Naomi into his care.

However, there is a catch, right? Boaz informs Ruth that there is another man more closely related to

Naomi's family. This man has first "dibs" on the land that belonged to Naomi's late husband; he also has first "dibs" on Ruth – he has the first right of refusal in redeeming and marrying Ruth and taking care of her and her mother-in-law.

This is not only about love – this involves the law. Both Boaz and Ruth, in a remarkable demonstration of character and honesty, have effectively revealed they are willing to submit to the law of God.

## Boaz Makes a Promise

Let us turn again to Ruth chapter 3 and notice Boaz's words of promise to Ruth, whispered at the threshing floor on the night when they revealed their love to one another. Look at verse 13.

*Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he [the other relative] will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But, if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the Lord lives. . . .*

I love the little closing comment that reveals the passion and emotion of Boaz.

*. . . I will redeem you, as the Lord lives[!] . . .*

This is literally, "by the life of Yahweh".

Boaz is making an oath, or a vow, to Ruth that he will redeem her at all possible costs, and that she can believe his promise with the same assurance that she can believe in the existence of Yahweh.<sup>iv</sup>

We add little addendums to our promises which give them a sense of gravity as well.

Kids say things like, "Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye." This is about the worst thing a kid can imagine. Actually, I am still there – getting stuck with a needle anywhere, frankly, would add gravity to my promise!

We say, "Cross my heart . . ." to mean, "I'm telling you the truth." Or we say, "I promise you on my uncle's grave."

Boaz is claiming the ultimate foundation for his oath when he says, "As God is alive, I am making this promise to you."

In other words, "Ruth, if that other relative doesn't want you, as God is our true and living God, I will redeem you."

## Boaz Makes Provision

Boaz not only makes a *promise*, he makes *provision* for Ruth as he gives her enough grain the

next morning to meet her needs and Naomi's needs for at least two more weeks.

Perhaps Boaz was thinking this relative might be away or at his own threshing site. He does not want Ruth to have to go out and forage for grain, with the additional risk of being put in harm's way. So, he loads her down with grain.

Early the next morning, Ruth heads for town and her home with Naomi, while Boaz heads for the city entrance where his plan will soon play out.

## Naomi's Question

Now notice what happens when Ruth arrives home, in verse 16.

*When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" . . .*

Translated literally, the Hebrew reads, "Who are you?"

This really seems strange, and it does not mean that Naomi does not recognize Ruth in the early morning light. It is the idea of, "Who are you now?" This is the number one question.

In other words, "Now that you've met Boaz at the threshing floor and told him your desire, are you now the future bride of Boaz or what? In what state are you now in?"

Our translators try to translate this to give us the best sense of the Hebrew language, so in my translation it reads, "How did it go?"

Your translation might read, "How art thou?" or "How did you fare?"

Naomi is basically asking, "Did he say, "Yes!"?"

She is ready for wedding bells. Naomi is already picking out the flower arrangements.

Continue further in verse 16.

*. . . And [Ruth] told her all that the man had done for her.*

In other words, Ruth explained everything that Boaz had promised her and the vow that he had made to her. We can only imagine how they went over every word; every expression on Boaz's face; every nuance of tone and attitude.

There was no confusion about this – Boaz wanted Ruth to be his wife.

## Naomi's Counsel

Then Naomi said to Ruth, in verse 18,

*... "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."*

"Wait." Your translation might read, "Sit still."

Is she kidding? Sit still?!

There is no doubt in my mind that this will be the longest day in Ruth's life.<sup>v</sup>

It will be the longest day in Naomi's as well. She and Ruth probably drove each other crazy that day – peeking out the window; jumping up at the sound of every passing cart; looking out the door for any sign of a messenger or a relative coming to deliver the news.

"Wait!"

Do not miss this. Ruth can do nothing. She is powerless to redeem herself. The law can only reveal to her the condition she is in and the total dependency she must have upon her redeemer.<sup>vi</sup>

What a powerful picture this is of the believer – the bride of Christ.

Like Ruth, all that we ever do is tell Christ we love Him and want to be taken under His authority and care; want to come under His wings. When we do, we discover that Christ loved us first.

Christ alone is capable of meeting the conditions of the law that bind us to another family. He alone can pay the price of redemption – take upon Himself our debt – and bring us into His family as His chosen bride.

"Wait, Ruth. Sit still."

Does anyone like to sit still while they wait for something important? Are there any patient people hearing this? I did not think so.

I hate missing the elevator. In fact, here at church, I have discovered that when I get on the elevator to go up to the second floor, if I push the number and then, immediately push the "close door" button, the doors close at least two seconds earlier. Of course, other people trying to get on the elevator get smashed, but that is their problem – they need to learn patience!

I always dreaded the comment section on my report card in elementary school. The grade was in one column and then, there was another section in which the teacher could make comments. My parents took this section more seriously than the grade section, so it was a no-win situation for me. The

comments were always, "Stevie needs to sit still; Stevie talks too much in class; Stevie disturbs his classmates."

How does a person wait patiently when they know recess is coming, or lunch, or gym class, or Christmas morning? There is exciting stuff ahead.

The frustrating thing is that I really have not improved. Well I have a little – do not ask my wife. I am telling you the truth, "Cross my heart . . . stick a needle . . ." Never mind.

Frankly, this is my ongoing challenge in life. Perhaps it is yours as well!

Wait; surrender – while our Redeemer goes to work.

The imperative form of this Hebrew verb "sebi" also conveys the idea of "stay put," and even "stay calm".<sup>vii</sup>

Now this is really pushing it!

This verb is used of a farmer who awaits the growth of his crops. In other words, what good will it do a farmer to pace out in the cornfield? It is in the hands of God.

So the issue boils down to trust – surrender to whatever the hand of God delivers. And in this surrender is the strength to patiently wait.

The basis for Ruth waiting, according to Naomi's counsel in this verse, is in the last words of verse 18.

*... for [Boaz] will not rest until he has settled it today.*

Ruth can rest because Boaz is not.

Ruth can wait because Boaz will not.

Ruth can sit still because Boaz is doing anything *but* sitting still. He is arranging for the redemption of his bride.

I found it interesting this week to go through the Bible looking for phrases that included the word "still" – "s – t – i – l – l".<sup>viii</sup>

This text in Ruth 3:18 can be translated "sit still".

I found not only the expression "sit still," but "stand still".

You may remember the fascinating scene where the Israelites exited from Egypt following the final plague which took the lives of the first born throughout the land of Egypt. The people of Israel rushed out in freedom. However, Pharaoh had a change of heart and in a violent rage, he commanded six hundred chariots under his own direction, as well as every available chariot in the land and every soldier to march out after Israel.

Israel was camped out on the edge of the Red Sea. This is not the Reed Sea, as the liberals love to say, which can be waded across. This is the Red Sea, which feeds off the Indian Ocean and is on average, 1,700 feet deep.

This is the reason we call this a miracle.

It is further proven by the sheer panic of the Israelites, who knew they were stuck.

Then, God says to the people of Israel through Moses,

***“. . . Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today . . .” (Exodus 14:13)***

The phrase “stand still” appears in Job 37 when Job is told,

***“. . . Stand still and consider the wonders of God.” (Job 37:14b)***

Deeply discouraged and desperately ill, Job is told to patiently surrender to the sovereign will of God. And while he is standing still, he is told to consider the glory of God’s creation.

“Sit still . . . stand still . . . be still.”

Be still.

When the people were troubled over their national sin during Nehemiah’s revival with them, the Levites calmed the people with the truth of their forgiveness by saying,

***. . . “Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.” (Nehemiah 8:11)***

When tempted to sin, the Psalmist David advises the believer,

***“. . . be still.” (Psalm 4:4b)***

When troubled by the corruption of the world and the seemingly long delay of God to do anything on behalf of the believer, David writes,

***“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways . . .” (Psalm 37:7a)***

Of course, the classic passage that you have probably already thought of is when David quotes the counsel of God, who says,

***“Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psalm 46:10)***

In other words, the story of God’s provision, power, and glory is not over. The best is yet to come!

I love the way David ties his ability to be still to the prayer he makes in Psalm 83:1.

***“O God, do not remain quiet . . . and, O God, do not be still.”***

This is the same as the idea in the mind of Naomi.

The believer can sit still, stand still, and be still because his Redeemer does not stand still, does not sit still, and will not be still. Christ is, even now, unceasingly:

- interceding *for* the believer (Hebrews 7:25);
- at work *in* the believer (Philippians 2:13);
- arranging all things together for His good purposes on behalf *of* the believer (Romans 8:28).

“Sit still . . . stand still . . . be still” – because God is not.

“Ruth, wait . . . rest . . . trust – your redeemer is at work.”

One author wrote about the early days in his life when, as a little boy, he would curl up in the back of his family car as his father drove back to their hometown through the night. He said, “I felt so safe, tucked back there, with Dad in the driver’s seat.”

However, sometimes his grandmother would be with them. She would sit on the edge of the front seat, instructing about every five minutes. Every car that came their way, she would say, “Watch the side of the road there . . . Be careful of that driver coming up next to us . . . Don’t drive so fast.”

Some of the guys are thinking, “Man, that sounds familiar.” Be careful!

This author went on to write, “I’m convinced my grandmother *never* enjoyed the ride. Why? Because she didn’t trust my father. And, because she couldn’t trust his driving, she couldn’t rest in the journey.”

I love the way this author summarizes his story. “Grandmother and I both reached our destination, and at the same time. But one of us got there with frazzled nerves, while the other arrived happy and rested. I was learning to rest in my father’s care.”

Naomi did not give Ruth this counsel because it was easy to apply or obey.

Frankly, this advice is never easy, but it is possible. It is possible to stand still and to sit still and to be still. Our response to the difficulty of our circumstances is directly related to the depth of our confidence in God’s work in us and for us.

Nothing under His control can ever be out of control.<sup>ix</sup>

How are you at waiting – for that phone call; that acceptance letter; that doctor’s report; that invitation; that contract; that delivery; that surgery; that arrival; that resolution?

We need a fresh vision of the care, concern, management, and ministry our Redeemer accomplishes without our help.

This does not mean that we do not do anything for Him. There are things that He may want us to do and there are things that He alone can do – and the way to know the difference is when we come to the point that we cannot do anything. This is when we must stand still, sit still, and be still and know that He is God.

It occurred to me that every Christian is going to arrive at the creation of the new heaven and the new earth at the same time. Even those of us who drive faster will not get there quicker. I wonder how many of us will have gotten any joy out of the journey; any sense of peace in God’s abilities and timing.

So let us pull up a chair with Ruth. Perhaps for you, the most poignant verse in this entire book is chapter 3, verse 18.

. . . ***“Wait [sit still], my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out . . .”***

Rest assured, our Redeemer is at work today.

To me, the great lesson in this beneath the superficial and the temporary, is this truth: we need fresh confidence; a fresh vision of our Redeemer’s abilities.

***“Be still”*** – is related to – ***“knowing that I am God.”***

The length of Ruth’s long day, and your long day as well – perhaps well beyond twenty-four hours now; the length of her time waiting, and yours, only deepens the sense of joy when the Redeemer finally arrives to take us home, or brings resolution, or provides insight and maybe even an answer.

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;  
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.  
Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son,  
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.  
High King of heaven, my victory won,*

*May I reach heaven’s joys, O bright heaven’s Sun!*

*Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,*

*Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.<sup>x</sup>*

With this vision, we will have fresh confidence to sit still, stand still, and be still and know that He is God.

<sup>i</sup> “Florida Woman Calls 911 3 Times Over McNuggets,” 3/3/09, [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090303/ap\\_on\\_fe\\_st/odd\\_mcnuggets911](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090303/ap_on_fe_st/odd_mcnuggets911), Associated Press.

<sup>ii</sup> Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson’s Complete Book of Illustrations* (Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 600.

<sup>iii</sup> *The Valley of Vision*, quoted by Charles Swindoll in *Intimacy With the Almighty* (Word Publishing, 1996), p. 70.

<sup>iv</sup> Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Ruth* (Eerdmans, 1988), p. 219.

<sup>v</sup> Stanley Collins, *Courage and Submission: A Study of Ruth & Esther* (Regal Books, 1975), p. 33.

<sup>vi</sup> M. R. DeHaan, *The Romance of Redemption* (Zondervan, 1958), p. 119.

<sup>vii</sup> Hubbard, p. 227.

<sup>viii</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Committed* (Victor Books, 1993), p. 49.

<sup>ix</sup> Swindoll, p. 72.

<sup>x</sup> Anonymous Irish hymn, c. 8<sup>th</sup> century, “Be Thou My Vision,” translated by Mary E. Byrne (1880-1931).