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MEDITATIONS  
on  
THE BOOK of RUTH

by J. Hudson Taylor  
(1832-1905)

"And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done... and [how] thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD GOD of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Ruth 2:11,12

In this interesting narrative we have another instance of the way in which the HOLY GHOST teaches by typical lives. We have dwelt on some precious lessons taught us of our KING by the account of the coming of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. There we were specially taught how our hard questions are to be solved, and our hearts to be fully satisfied. Here a still higher lesson is given us: How to serve so as to obtain "a full reward," while as to the nature of that full reward no little light is given us.

To us these lessons are of special interest, as bearing on missions to foreign nations, and perhaps they somewhat explain why He who delights to bless, and is able to bless the obedient soul, said so emphatically, "Go, teach all nations;" "Go ye into all the world." The service of GOD is a delightful privilege anywhere. Those who stay at home, however, need to become as strangers and pilgrims there. This is not always easy to do in the present day; and many fail, and forget their true position. To those who are permitted to labor in foreign lands, there is a lessened danger in this respect; and hence many obtain a fuller joy in present service, and look forward to a fuller reward by-and-by, than they anticipated ere they left all for JESUS' sake.

Ruth was by nature a "stranger to the commonwealth of Israel," but by marriage with an Israelite was brought amongst that people. On the death of her husband, she still cleave to her mother-in-law and to her GOD, the GOD of Israel. She so esteemed her privileged position that for it she left her native land and all its enjoyments; left parents, relatives and friends, and all those attractions that led Orpah to return to Moab. To her it was better to be the companion of her mother-in-law, poor and desolate as she was, than to enjoy for a season what in Moab might have been hers.

This sacrifice was so real that Naomi, much as she loved her daughter-in-law, and desolate as she

would be without her, felt she could not wish it for her own sake merely; but when Ruth said, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy GOD my GOD," she had no further obstacle to put in her way. If companionship with one of GOD'S poor servants is so precious, what shall we say to Him who exhorts us, "Go!.. and, lo, I am with you"? Is He not saying: The good SHEPHERD must seek the wandering sheep until He find them. Go ye, too, and seek them, and in so doing you shall find My companionship ensured? Shall we decline this fellowship with Him, and leave Him, so far as we are concerned, to seek them alone?

We next find Ruth toiling in the burning sun as a gleaner, and there she meets for the first time the Lord of the harvest. The beauty of the narrative of Boaz saluting his reapers with, "The LORD be with you," and their reply, "The LORD bless thee," must delight every reader. And poor Ruth, too though not a reaper — only an gleaner — is made most welcome, and encouraged to remain in the fields of Boaz until all the reaping is done. With touching simplicity and humility the grateful gleaner replies, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" Then the Lord of the harvest responds in the words we have quoted at the head of this paper, "It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done," etc.

Let us then turn from Boaz to the true LORD of the Harvest. Does He meet us there, toiling in the heat of the summer's sun? Knowing fully all we have done, does that knowledge bring joy to His heart? and is it a joy to us to know that He knows all? Our risen and glorified LORD, so wonderfully described in Revelation 1., still walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Can He say to us, "I know thy works," with no word of rebuke? or do we feel the blush of shame as the eye as "a flame of fire" rests upon us? "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

Let us all leave the fatherland of the world, and at least become strangers and pilgrims in it. Let us all toil in some way or other in the great harvest-field, and if we may lawfully do so, let us not be slow to obey the command to "go, teach all nations." Where the need is greatest let us be found gladly obeying the MASTER'S command. For it is in the harvest-field, it is among the reapers, that we shall find Him.

There is no Christian service in which faith must not be in lively exercise. At home, abroad, connected with this branch of GOD'S work or that, without faith it is impossible to please Him. Paul may plant, Apollos water; GOD only gives the increase. Every true minister of GOD, every true missionary, every true Sunday-school teacher and Christian worker is a faith-worker. But in the foreign field workers are peculiarly cast on GOD. There are special dangers and difficulties, special weaknesses and needs that bring GOD very near — nearer than most of the workers realized Him to be while they remained at home. And to those who have gone out without human guarantee of support, who do not know when the next help may reach them, nor its amount, this is an additional link with the great loving heart of our FATHER and our GOD that is unspeakably precious and welcome.

May we not say that in every position of life when we are weak in ourselves, our friends, our circumstances, then are we strongest in Him? And when in our great needs, for ourselves or for the souls around us, we lay hold on GOD and say, "My soul, wait thou ONLY upon GOD; for my

expectation is from Him," what rest and security and certainty come into the waiting soul. And ah! when laboring in this spirit how words like those of our heavenly Boaz come home to the heart. "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD GOD of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Happy toiler in China! Happy toiler at Home! if it is sometimes dark, the shadow is but the shadow of His wing, under which thou art abiding, under which thou art come to trust. We will not prolong this meditation. He who comforted and blessed the lonely gleaner while the harvest lasted, became her husband when the harvest toil was past. It was thus the LORD recompensed her work. Israel was not blessed apart from her, for David the deliverer, and Solomon the glory of Israel, were born of the seed which Boaz had through her. Soon shall come the glorious day of the espousals of CHRIST and His Church. With her He will come to deliver Israel and to judge the world and even the angels. Ruth little knew the honor and happiness awaiting her when she left all for GOD and His people. We know the purpose of GOD'S grace and the glories in store for us. What manner of men, then, should we be; and how earnest and faithful in the little time which awaits us before we are called to our reward, and to meet Him in the air? When He says, Go! shall we reply, No? When He asks us to continue in His harvest till the reaping is over, shall we say Him, Nay?

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