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### **Genesis 19:30-38; Deuteronomy 23:3-6; Ruth 1-4**

**"You have chosen me? Have you any idea of my family history?"**

When one thinks of the story of Ruth, words such as commitment, love and devotion quickly come to mind. Some find her words as recorded in the King James Version of the Bible especially touching. They read: *And Ruth said. "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for 'whither' thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God."* Ruth 1:16 These words paint a picture of purest devotion.

When these words were spoken, Ruth was still a relatively young woman, a widow, probably in her thirties. The Bible tells us that Naomi, along with her husband and two sons, moved from Bethlehem in Judea to Moab to escape a terrible drought and the famine. It was here Ruth met and married her husband, Mahlon, Naomi's son. As time went by, all three of the men in Naomi's family died. After a time, the famine ended and she decided to move back to Bethlehem to be among relatives. Both daughters-in-law accompanied Naomi as she left Moab on her return to Bethlehem. Naomi, however, told her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab with their families. Orpah agreed to her request, but Ruth responded with the beautiful words recorded in the Book of Ruth.

The story then continued with Ruth's encounter with Boaz in which marriage was proposed and consummated. Ruth became an important figure in the ancestry of King David and eventually the earthly life of her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

But, when looking at Ruth's family history, it seems strange God would choose one who has a history which is suspect in many ways. One could easily think her history an impediment to God calling her to service in His kingdom. Ruth's people, the Moabites, were direct descendants of Lot...not Lot and his wife, but Lot and his daughter. Ruth's history has its beginnings with a shameful, incestuous relationship, considered by God to be an abomination. Genesis 19:30-38 The Moabites were long-time enemies of the Israelites, God's chosen people, following their encounter on the way to the Promised Land under the direction of Moses. During this time the Moabites called on Balaam, a heathen prophet, to curse the Israelites. The Moabite king feared that the huge number of people traveling through his country would pose a terrible danger to his land. The king thought that he would be safe if Balaam would curse this great people of God. God, of course, did not let that happen, and Balaam's curse was turned into a blessing for the Israelites. Deuteronomy 23:3-6

As a result of this encounter with God's people, no Moabite was allowed to enter into the assembly of the Lord. They were permanently banned from worship and were hated by the Jews.

Yet God chose Ruth, this remarkable Moabite woman, to be part of the earthly history of Jesus. Many people might use their backgrounds or their family history as excuses not to serve the Lord or become involved in the work of the church. God doesn't look at it that way. If He did, would He have chosen a woman who came from a shameful background to be part of the ancestry of His beloved Son? Would He have chosen a woman whose people were permanently banned from the house of God to be part of the genealogy of Jesus?



The story of Ruth, a woman whom God chose to be part of the family history of His Son, leads us to believe that God wants all, even those with a troubled past, to serve Him. Often their experiences enable them to communicate God's grace and forgiveness more clearly than others who would be unable to empathize with those having similar life experiences.

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Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You that You use all of us in Your service. You look at the hearts of Your people and call them to serve You. Do not let our past sins or things over which we have no control hinder us in serving You. Forgive us all our sins for the sake of and in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

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