



Daily Devotionals

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RUTH 1:15-18 TOTAL COMMITMENT

Written by Rev. Dr. Charles D. (Chuck) Alley, Ph.D., Rector of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Va.

¹⁵ "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Ruth announces her total commitment to Naomi in the most thorough terms. I will go with you; I will stay with you; I will become one of you; I will die with you; I will be buried with you, so even death will only separate us for a time; and your God will be my God. In fact, it is on the name of Naomi's God that Ruth takes her oath. Ruth's faithfulness is legendary, but why did she have such faith? Was it an inherent trait of Ruth or was it something about Naomi?

How would Ruth have known about Naomi's God if Naomi had not revealed his nature to her? If Naomi had turned her back on God when she left Bethlehem, she certainly would not have shared an attractive portrait of God in the midst of all the trauma and disappointment of her years in Moab. The faith that Ruth has in Naomi's God could only have come from Naomi's faith in her sovereign and reigning Lord even under the most trying and difficult circumstances. And we know that Naomi never gave up on God since her decision to return to Bethlehem, even alone, was stimulated by the news that "*the Lord had visited his people and gave them food*" (Ruth 1:6b). Even when Naomi was dismissing her daughters-in-law she repeatedly petitioned the Lord, first for his mercy on them (v.8) and then to grant them each a husband (v.9).

Few people can say that they came to faith in God without the witness of the life of another human being. And many times the most powerful testimony to the power and goodness of God comes from those who endure adversity and suffering in a godly manner. Like Job, Naomi is not shy about laying responsibility for her plight on the shoulders of God, but she also joins him in standing firm in her faith in God throughout her desperate season. We too, are inspired by the cancer patient who never ceases to

praise her God or the family that at the funeral of a loved one proclaims the love and mercy of God. A God who sustains the sufferer in his affliction is a God who can be relied upon in times of peace and prosperity.

Father God, in the hour of my doubt when you seem so distant, remind me of the suffering saints who stood fast in their faith in the face of overwhelming affliction. May I be encouraged by their witness and my faith strengthened so that I too might stand firm when tested by adversity or prosperity. And as I am tempted to waiver, remind me of my neighbors' need to see and know you, so that I might serve you and encourage my neighbor. Amen.

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