

The Waiting Dame

Ruth 3:7-18 November 2, 2025

What do you do when Hannibal invades your borders with his army? Many in Rome's government believed the answer was obvious: Meet him head on with aggressive military action. But Quintus Fabius, the man elected as dictator in 217 B.C., had a different plan. Step one: Get right with the gods. Step two, keep to the high ground. Step three, do not engage the enemy head on.¹

His tactics earned him the nickname Fabius the Hesitator. The people often became impatient with his strategy and would look to other generals, who were then pulverized by Hannibal. And so, they would go back to Fabius, who *kept* waiting and thereby avoided all the traps Hannibal set for him.

It was Fabius' patient waiting that provided the opportunity Rome needed to ultimately defeat the Carthaginians. When it was all over, he was given a *new* nickname: Fabius Maximus - the *greatest*. A contemporary poet wrote about him, saying, "one man restored the state to us by hesitating."²

Ruth and Naomi are besieged by trouble. If no one sweeps in to rescue them, they'll have no future. One day, Naomi could no longer wait. She rushes Ruth out into a flurry of activity - a scheme to try to *force* the plot of their lives forward on a more positive path.

In the end of our text we'll see what they needed to do was *wait*. God was already changing the future for them. He was already working many things together for their good and for His glory.

This is the same thing He does for *us* as we walk with Him in faith and obedience. Now, if you are a Christian, you are called to live out your trust in the Lord. We are commanded to *exercise* our faith. But the movements of our lives should always flow from the leading of God, not the leanings of our emotions. To be led by God, we must keep our eyes on Him, our ears open to Him, *wait* for His word and direction for what *He* desires us to do. He *is* working and we're to follow Him in it.

That is why in Proverbs, in Isaiah, in Lamentations, and *over and over again* in Psalms we are told to *wait* on the Lord.

Lamentations 3:25 - The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the person who seeks him

Psalms 130:5 - I wait for the LORD; I wait and put my hope in his word

Psalms 37:34a - Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you

¹ <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/fabius>

² <https://engelsbergideas.com/portraits/quintus-fabius-cunctator-a-general-who-stands-askew-in-the-pantheon-of-roman-heroes/>

In her hour of need, Boaz made it clear to Ruth that *he* would do everything to save her. Her part was to trust, to rest, to wait, and to respond to what Boaz did for her. It's a beautiful love story, and an important foreshadowing of what Christ does for *us*, as He redeems us.

We pick our story back up as Ruth has crept into the shadows of the threshing floor, waiting for Boaz to fall asleep.

Ruth 3:7 - ⁷ After Boaz ate, drank, and was in good spirits, he went to lie down at the end of the pile of barley, and she came secretly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

Boaz is a great type of Jesus Christ, the One Who would redeem the whole world. But he was also a faithful man whose example we can learn from.

First, we see that he found satisfaction in his work. Verse 7 doesn't mean he's drunk,³ but his heart was cheerful. He enjoyed life as a gift from God. He saw the joy and dignity of a normal life.

But not only did he find satisfaction in his work, he also knew his life and work had purpose. He opened his field to those in need. He kept employing people, even when other Bethlehemites cut and run. He did not consider his barley to only be a product for his own enrichment. It was a way he could be a part of God's activity. He's no Ebenezer Scrooge. In fact, *this* very barley pile would be used to nourish Ruth and Naomi, to bless them, and help buy them out of their trouble.

Ruth 3:8-9 - ⁸ At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman! ⁹ So he asked, "Who are you?" "I am Ruth, your servant," she replied. "Take me under your wing, for you are a family redeemer."

Naomi sent Ruth to the threshing floor all dolled up, covered in perfume. But Ruth doesn't present herself as a trophy. She says, "I'm your servant and I need refuge." Her focus is on *redemption*.

When she said, "Take me under your wing," she was repeating back the very words *he* had said to her when they first met. Back in chapter 2, Boaz said:

Ruth 2:12 - ¹² May the LORD reward you for what you have done...under whose wings you have come for refuge."

And now it's becoming clear that, yes, God was going to give her refuge, but it was under *Boaz's* wing. God accomplishes His work *through you*. *That* is the channel He uses to show His love, His grace, His power, His faithfulness. *Your* life. *Your* relationships. *Your* circumstances. *Your* barley.

We also get a sweet glimpse of the Redeemer, Christ Jesus here. You see, Ruth said "cover me with your garment."⁴ And, what had she done? She took the hem of Boaz' cloak and folded it up.

³ Frank Gaebelin, et al. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 3: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*

⁴ Daniel Block *The New American Commentary, Volume 6: Judges, Ruth*

Doesn't it remind you of the woman in Mark 5, in such trouble, in such need, saying to herself, "If I could just touch the hem of His garment..." And through that act of faith she was made whole. Despite the fact that she was unclean, despite the fact that it seemed hopeless, she *believed*.

Ruth, despite the fact that she is a Moabite, bows before the throne of Yahweh, accepting His terms, His framework, His arrangement, believing that she will find a future by obeying His word.

Ruth 3:10 - ¹⁰ Then he said, "May the LORD bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before, because you have not pursued younger men, whether rich or poor.

Several scholars believe the language here indicates that Ruth actually received *other* marriage proposals.⁵ If she had only cared about marrying for passion or for status or for money, she could've gone elsewhere.⁶ Boaz was considerably older than her. There were, undoubtedly, better looking young men around. But Ruth was fully committed to the covenantal ideas her Israelite family had told her about. She believed that *this* is what God says should happen in this situation, and so she would submit to that. We see that what she wants most of all is to be faithful to Yahweh.

Now, Boaz says something interesting. He says, "You have shown more *hesed* now than before." Who did Ruth show *hesed* to? To Naomi. Ruth demonstrated a real, loyal, compassionate love to Naomi, *even when* Naomi wasn't acting very lovable.

Ruth's actions were motivated by a Godly love. And we've seen how Boaz has *already* shown Ruth *hesed* love. It reminds us that God's relationship with us is built on and sustained by *love*.

General Fabius believed he needed to *appease* the gods to get their help. We don't *appease* God, we *believe* Him. Believe that He loves us and is ready to be loved *by* us in return.

In both Testaments we see the love of God poured out for us and how our response is to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In 1 John we see a long discussion about God's love - how He loved us first and how we are to love Him back. *That* is how our lives are made complete. We are to *go after* the Lord in a devoted, obedient, abiding love, recognizing that He loves us.

Ruth 3:11 - ¹¹ Now don't be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you say, since all the people in my town know that you are a woman of noble character.

This is a significant Biblical moment. Proverbs has a long passage devoted to the "woman of noble character." You could also call her the "ideal wife," or a "dynamite gal."⁷ Ruth is the *only* woman in the Bible who holds the title. She was the real deal. But what made her that way?

⁵ Edward Campbell, Jr. *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*

⁶ Block

⁷ Miles Van Pelt *Survey Of The Old Testament - Ruth*

We don't know much about Ruth, really. All the author shows us about her is that she had *faith* to leave Moab and come to Bethlehem - faith in Yahweh, no turning back. And *that* faith is what sustained her and fueled her and enabled her to do the other things we see her doing in the book. Her *faith* is what got her out of bed and into the barley field. Her faith is what helped her overcome her sorrow in widowhood. Her faith is what gave her peace when facing an uncertain future. And that faith made her into what God and His people would call a woman of noble character.

Now here's another interesting layer: Boaz is called a *man* of noble character back in chapter 2. In a sense, *her* faithful Godliness has her like *him*. He was described that way first.

As we walk with God, He conforms us into the image of His Son, *our* Redeemer, Jesus Christ. We are *not* ideal right now. We've got a lot of warts, weakness, and wickedness. But sanctification and glorification are part of redemption. We are made like Him. Noble. Undeified. Washed. Lovely.

Two more quick notes. First, notice that Boaz has been talking about Ruth. He knows about her. He discusses her. He's mindful of her. Second, notice his promise: No matter *what* happens in the days ahead, she did not need to be afraid. He would make sure she was protected and provided for. He offered her *heart* rest, even if the circumstances were still difficult or undecided.

Ruth 3:12-13 - ¹² Yes, it is true that I am a family redeemer, but there is a redeemer closer than I am. ¹³ Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, that's good. Let him redeem you. But if he doesn't want to redeem you, as the LORD lives, I will. Now lie down until morning."

"I *am* a redeemer." He takes on that title and responsibility with honor. And notice: He hasn't only been chatting about Ruth, now we learn that he has already looked into the situation enough to know exactly what was going on. He had been acting on her behalf *before* she ever asked!

That's exactly what the Lord has done for us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He loved us first. While we were strangers, while we were rebels, He made the way so we could be saved.

But there's a problem - a serious obstacle that would have to be overcome. And there was *nothing* Ruth could do to fix it. There was this *other* guy who had first claim to her.

As modern readers, we might say, "Who cares! These two *love* each other!" But Boaz would not break the Law to get her. Just as Jesus fully kept the Law, perfectly, on our behalf.

There were *great* obstacles for Christ to overcome in order to save us. Not just another cousin who was first in line, but suffering and death. But Jesus was *willing* because He loves you.

Isaiah 53 tells us about the terrible suffering the Redeemer would have to endure. The rejection, the pain, the horror, the wounds. And in the final verse of that chapter it reminds us that He *willingly* submitted to death so He could bear our sins away and make us His own.

God has been active on your behalf since eternity past and every day of your life, up to and including today. He loves you *that* much. Enough to die for you. Enough to dwell with you.

Ruth 3:14 - ¹⁴ So she lay down at his feet until morning but got up while it was still dark. Then Boaz said, "Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor."

His promise was good enough. She *believed* him and rested in his word. Meanwhile, Boaz was ever concerned for her. He did some damage control to protect her reputation *and* to make sure there wouldn't be a problem in the upcoming legal proceedings. Naomi's plan jeopardized all of that.

Ruth 3:15 - ¹⁵ And he told Ruth, "Bring the shawl you're wearing and hold it out." When she held it out, he shoveled six measures of barley into her shawl, and she went into the town.

On top of all he promised, he immediately provided for her out of his own pocket. Linguists tell us that what he said here was, "Bring your shawl and get a good hold on it."⁸ And then he started pouring in barley.

If it was the usual unit of measuring, this would be between 175 and 285 pounds.⁹ That's too much for her to carry on her own. We don't know how much it was, but whatever it was, it was *generous*.

God is *generous* to us. He is a gift-giver, Who loves to lavish spiritual blessings on His people.

Ruth 3:16-17 - ¹⁶ She went to her mother-in-law, Naomi, who asked her, "What happened, my daughter?" Then Ruth told her everything the man had done for her. ¹⁷ She said, "He gave me these six measures of barley, because he said, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

Naomi thought she and Ruth had to get this thing done. In reality, the story was about all Boaz had done for them already and was *still* going to do for them. In this situation, the ladies were powerless to do anything but *receive* mercy. But, they would have to receive it actively, by faith.

Meanwhile, the gift Boaz gave Ruth was really for her mother-in-law. God gifts us to bless others. To build up the church. To accomplish His purposes. He is generous *to* us and *through* us. And so, this begs the question: What gifts has God given me and for what purposes?

Now, do you remember what Naomi said back in chapter 1, verse 21? "I went away full but the Lord brought me back *empty*." The *exact same word* is used here when Ruth says, "Boaz wants to be

⁸ Campbell

⁹ *ibid*.

sure that you're not empty-handed." You see, God was not only reaching out to rescue Ruth, but to *restore* Naomi. He has *hesed* love for her, too. Despite her anger and her bitterness and her accusations, the Lord was showing Naomi Who He really is. He was going after her with His love.

Ruth 3:18 - ¹⁸ Naomi said, "My daughter, wait until you find out how things go, for he won't rest unless he resolves this today."

Her advice is the *total opposite* of what she commanded just one day ago!¹⁰ Yesterday it was, "Get moving. Put on your best clothes. Cover yourself in myrrh." A flurry of desperate spasms. Confront our problem head on! Plunge into the dark and make it happen.

Now? "Wait." The term means, "sit still," or, "abide."¹¹ Ruth just needed to *wait* for her redeemer to do his work and all would be made right. Wait for Him to do what needs doing and then to call you to His side. Wait for the moment when he clears the way and then says, "Now come and join me."

You see, it was the *redeemer* who would resolve things. That term *resolve* means to complete or finish something. It can refer to a toll or a tribute that must be paid.¹² Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, *finished* the work. He cried out on the cross, "It is finished." He paid the price. We can do *nothing* to buy ourselves out of sin and death. He alone could and He *did* because of His love for us.

And now, like Ruth, we are invited to *wait* on Him. To abide in Him. To exercise a restful trust in His promises. Psalm 46 gives us the famous phrase: Be still and know that He is God. An active waiting where we watch, we listen, we *follow* what the Redeemer is doing in *our* situation.

Quintus Fabius waited because he knew he couldn't out fight Hannibal. He waited because he knew his enemy. *Our* waiting is different. It doesn't focus on the *problem*. We wait not because we know our enemy, but because we know our Savior. A God Who is always mindful of us, Who is always full of love and compassion toward us, Who is always working on our behalf to accomplish *His* good plans for us. He is the One Who knows exactly what needs doing and we do not.

Our part is to *wait*. Now waiting doesn't mean doing nothing. It means that we rest in the faithfulness of our Redeemer. That we watch Him, listen to Him, wait for Him to *lead* us into what's next. *As we wait*, what Has he asked me to do? Who has He sent me to bless and to serve? What gifts has He given me to use for His purposes? What is He developing and unfolding in my life? That's the waiting Ruth is doing, here. And that's the waiting we're called to. One that hopes in Him, seeks Him, keeps His way and is led by Him.

¹⁰ Block

¹¹ *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*

¹² *DBL Hebrew, TDNT*