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Redemption – Ruth 1

A Devotion for Women by *Stephanie Little*

Last week, we examined what it means to be transformed by studying the truth found in Romans 12:1-2. In these verses, God tells us that true transformation takes place through the renewal of our mind. Maybe you're wondering, *aren't we completely transformed at salvation?* The answer is *yes*, we are made new spiritually, but we still live in a body of flesh and we still have an old sin nature. The transformation Paul is speaking of in Romans has to do with sanctification, which is a process that begins at salvation and continues until we meet Jesus face to face when we will be completely changed into His image. This week, we'll look at a real-life example of what happens when a woman takes the first step of obedience and begins a Romans 12 journey of transformation. Go with me to the first chapter of the Old Testament book of Ruth.

Ultimately, Ruth's story is about redemption. It provides us with a picture of the promised Messiah, Jesus, coming as the Kinsman-Redeemer to pay the price of restoration for His Bride. Yet, it's through redemption that we witness ultimate transformation. Take a moment to read the first five verses of Ruth. Such a tragic beginning—we see a man and his family in dire straits making a faithless decision to go ahead of the Lord. They leave His land for a land filled with idols and pagan worship in order to satisfy their need. We also see compromise on behalf of the two sons as they marry Moabites Orpah and Ruth. Scripture doesn't tell us the length of their marriages; but we find all three men, father and sons, dead and buried within the first five verses. Such heartache! Such desolation! You may be there right now, having experienced the death of a loved one or you may feel as though you're living a life apart from God. That's right where Ruth was. She was a woman of Moab, a culture whose main object of worship was a god called Chemosh and whose main act of worship was the sacrifice of their most vulnerable; children. Yet, somehow, in the midst of all the evil of her homeland, Ruth heard the message of the One True God—Jehovah. And in her despair, He began a work in her heart. We see the evidence of Ruth's transformed heart as she steps out in faith to follow her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth speaks some of the most beautiful words in Scripture as she declares her loyalty not only to Naomi, but also to Jehovah. Ruth said, *"Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."* (Ruth 1:16-17). Bible teacher Dr. J. Vernon McGee says of Ruth's words: "She made an important decision here. It's a sevenfold decision and it's a decision for God." He points out that Ruth made a decision of true repentance. She turned her back on the land of pagan worship, looking forward to the hope and future of the Lord. She promised to go with Naomi, all the way to Bethlehem, to live with her, identifying herself with Naomi as a poor widow in the midst of a foreign people who despised Moabites. Right in the middle of her proclamation, Ruth says, "your God will be my God." She also promises to be buried in Naomi's land. This is Ruth's identification with the people of Israel and a hope of resurrection. Israelites believed they would be resurrected to live in the land of

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Israel. Ruth expressed this same hope for her future. She made a lasting commitment, an eternal commitment. Her heart, life, mind and words were changed for eternity!

As you think about where you are today in your walk with the Lord, the question is have you, like Ruth, made a true commitment, turning your back on the sin of your past and everything that represents it? Or, are you standing with one foot in "Moab" and one foot on the road to obedience? Maybe it's not your foot that's in Moab, but your mind is still there. Maybe you're remembering some things in the past and wishing you could go back. Sometimes, it seems the past was easier; but, believe me, there's nothing back there for you. Your hope, your future can only be found in God, His way and His plan. Take the step to follow the Lord in faith and obedience today. True repentance, true transformation requires turning your heart and mind away from sin and turning them completely toward the Savior. Will you take that step today? Why not spend some time alone with God in prayer, asking Him to show you any area in your life where you're looking over your shoulder. Then, stand up, follow Him and never look back.