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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday Evening. April 17. 1983.

Lesson. Ruth 1. vv.16-22. & 2.

Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Psalm 84. 3.

As a very beautiful demonstration and illustration of the sparrow and the swallow in the text, we have named earlier in the day the case of Ruth the Moabitish damsel. Therefore by His Spirit and grace and in summary we shall endeavour to speak of her case, and how it is exemplified in the beautiful language of verse 3 in Psalm 84. Two things are supremely obvious in the Book of Ruth, especially in the portion now read as our Lesson, because the language here is, "and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God." The first is, Ruth obviously had a profound, wonderful, spiritual revelation to her ransomed soul of the sweet Person of Christ her Saviour, and of all that is set forth by the altars of the tabernacle. For the monumental word spoken by her is indeed in the annals of the Church of God, one of the precious jewels many of His dear people have felt the rich, sacred fulness of in their spiritual experience. As you will know, we have preached from this Scripture as in relation to Naomi, but the Lord has deepened His work and granted further heavenly light, to show clearly that she not only addressed her beloved mother-in-law, but the word has a far deeper, greater meaning and interpretation. She delivered the word primarily to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and no doubt she saw Christ in Naomi. So I will quote, and see if you are able to find acquiescence with it. It appears profoundly mysterious that Naomi should want to influence Ruth to go back when she deeply knew the wondrous union in Christ that had been formed between them, and the impossibility of her going back to Moab.

Ruth had a word for her, and you will love, as influenced by the Holy Ghost to address it to your beloved Saviour Jesus Christ. She said,

"Intreat me not to leave thee. Would you wish to leave Christ? "or to return from following after thee." Peter said to the Lord, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." So, "Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee." Think of it now in relation to the Lord Jesus. "for whither thou goest, I will go" That is a true disciple and follower of the Lord Jesus. You will follow Him by grace through dark paths, sunshine, temptation. You will follow your blessed Saviour.

"Through floods and flames if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes."

"for whither thou goest, I will go." This will be an important consideration to our dear younger friends who fear God. You will never want to take a step unless the dear Lord goes before you, so you feel comfortably assured that the dear Lord is with you, and in this place. "for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge." You lodge in His House. You will find Him in the means of His grace. "and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." What a blessed, comprehensive, loving, gracious, vital testimony dear Ruth gave to her beloved Redeemer, and to Naomi. You see why she is like a swallow. "Where thou lodgest, I will lodge," where the dear Lord especially granted His presence. She had a goal, Bethlehem, so as a swallow her ransomed spirit flew in love and adoration and worship to Bethlehem.

One other thing I will say before I go deeper into the truth. When she reached Bethlehem, what is a perfect description of her case? We were reading this afternoon in our Lesson. The Lord was saying to her, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past." The dark, black season of heavy trial is past. A wonderful day it will be for those who know Winter when the Lord says the Winter is past. All dark, gloomy, distressing things are past; things that chilled you to the bone. The Lord had showed you hard things, and made you to drink the wine of astonishment. He says, "The winter is past." In some things

we know what this is. The dark, trying, anxious period is behind you; you will never go through it again in those matters. The Lord says it is past. Isn't it wonderful in the cycle of the seasons of this planet, one morning you realise the Winter is past. The wonderful resurrection season, the vernal season is with you and the Winter is over. I would speak a word of encouragement to the tried children of God. It is not a permanent season you are in; it will not last for ever. Beloved Job had a lengthy Winter. I suppose everything possible was affected. It was not only the severe loss of property; that was a great grief. Most distressing to him as a father was the loss of all his family. We have never walked it: some may have in measure. What agony to think that all his glory as a father had departed. A great wind smote the four corners of the house and his sons and daughters were gone. You might say surely that is sufficient. If a poor human being stands under such a strain it will be a sheer miracle. If you think of your weakness and your heart, it is a miracle that your heart stands the strain and does not break. There was more: he was smitten in his poor earthly frame. Poor dear Job! The rendering is 'sore boils', believed to be ulcers, 'from the sole of his foot unto his crown'. If you have known what it is to have one boil or carbuncle - he was covered with them. You might say, "Was he a swallow?" Yes. His friends came and sat down with him and were astonished. When they spoke to him they used logic, and they came to an assumption: this man must have sinned grievously against God, so they falsely accused him. His poor dear wife (I am not being cynical) said, "Curse God and die." So he was clean stripped of all on the earth. He was a swallow. One day he saw the light through the end of the tunnel, and he said, "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." He came forth, and was he in flight? Not to fly from God, but to enjoy. The Winter was past and the day came when "the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." The word of encouragement is, in various ways you ^{may} come into Winter: now the Winter is past. It was with Ruth from Moab. She was sadly, sorely bereaved of Mahlon, a kind man. Now the Winter was past. She knew a precious Redeemer, and she was on her way to, and nearly home. She flew as a swallow to the tabernacle of God. The word perfectly

describes her condition: the Winter is past. I wonder what your reaction is? You will classify before God and say the Winter is past in relation to some things, others remain. One day the Winter will be past because Christ is risen. He is not in the tomb. The rain of adversity, trial, distress, affliction, sorrow is over and gone. That is where she was. "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone: The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come." She was one of the birds. Her state as a swallow was the time of the singing of birds. It is wonderful in the morning to hear the song of the birds. You may say, "I do not know if I shall ever come to that." You will. There will be music, praise, gratitude to the Lord, and your soul will be tuned to sing His everlasting praise. That is how she as a swallow came to Bethlehem, and the flowers were appearing on the earth, and there was more. "and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." It is Christ, the turtle dove.

I will emphasise another section of the subject. It is remarkable how profound the knowledge of Boaz was concerning Ruth. When he addressed her he claimed her. It is wonderful when the Lord claims you as His. If He comes to you and says, "Beloved" He has claimed you. If He says, Son, or Daughter, that is a claim, and if He claims you, you may claim Him. He will give you faith to. It will break your heart if He says Beloved! What a sweet, wonderful claim. When Boaz spoke to her he said, "Hearest thou not, my daughter?" Wonderful word! She was from Moab, yet he called her - no hesitation - my daughter. The time of the singing of birds had come. Her heart was full of gratitude, love, praise, adoration to the Lord. The swallow had reached the land of sunshine, liberty, peace, consummation, where the Lord would fulfil His divine purpose in her life. It is not all sorrow. He says, "I will see you again." I have thought sometimes life seems to be all sorrow, but the Lord comes. Impressed on my spirit is the well known language of Cowper, and I will address it to you in your path. In mysterious things, matters so hard, difficult, things that bring you into a dilemma and you can no deliverance see, remember this. God does move. Things are not static; they will not remain as they are. God moves, and not only in relation to you and yours, also in relation to others. "God moves in a mysterious way," a way you never anticipated, you never

dreamed of. He moves in a mysterious way to perform ^{His} wonders. May that be a solace to your spirit. You see how the Lord works, moves. Things are not stagnant, not static; things move. He moves things, deals with them. It means it is God's way of relieving you, comforting you and delivering you. You never thought of such a thing. I do not know if you will tell me concerning moves in mysterious ways to relieve and deliver you. It is how the Lord works.

So Boaz claimed Ruth, and the time of singing of birds had come. She was poor: that did not disturb her, with all her riches in the Lord's fulness and in store for her. She did not mind that she was a gleaner. She was happy to be. She had got Christ. The time of the singing of birds had come, and for the flowers to spring up. I believe there are among the dear younger friends a few of these flowers to appear on the earth. I believe when the time comes those who hear their testimony will know that God began with them in childhood, and the work of the Spirit has been in their hearts for several years. It may have been concealed, they may have had a few slips and been brought to repentance. The flowers you have been praying for will appear on the earth. Look at the infinite varieties, smell the fragrancy. You can smell the work of the Spirit. "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." It is Christ coming. Ruth knew it all at Bethlehem. See the wonder of the swallow. Boaz said to her, "It hath fully been shewed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: 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," and this is the vital thing, "under whose wings thou art come to trust." She knew what a nest was; what a place of safety was under the wings of the Lord Jesus. It seems to lead me in this concerning the swallow. She flew because of the navigator; ^{faith} her spirit flew to Bethlehem. Your spirit will fly to the place you love, and one day to Heaven.

What about the nest? I will make a few comments on it. I have said what a wonderful nest the dove makes and builds in the clefts of the rock, in Christ, in His ~~river~~ riven side - reverently I utter it - she

built her nest in His atonement, His dolorous, vicarious sufferings and His infinite merit. With her every step of Boaz' was a little encouragement. Taking notice of her he called her 'daughter', and he "commanded his youngmen, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley." It seems to me, as we see the birds taking twigs in their beaks as they make their nests, so a child of God gets an encouragement, a token for good, and it goes in the nest. All he did for Ruth and all he said to her came back to the nest. It was in the altars of the tabernacle, in a precious Christ. It is a sweet nest, until at last the widow's veil is filled and taken home, and the swallow had found a nest for herself, and soon she will be in it. Naomi said, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well for thee?" and later, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day." I have no need to reiterate the divine history concerning the nearer kinsman who could not take her, lest he mar his own inheritance, so the elders witnessed that Boaz had taken Ruth to be his wife. There is the nest: they are one. Can you say,

"Jesus my Boaz is;
My strength and portion too."?

"The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself." I almost hesitate to name to you the consummation. There was a little boy born to them, Obed. They said to Naomi, "He shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age." He was in the direct line of the birth of the Saviour, so Ruth herself with her husband became a progenitor of the sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus. I wonder if she had an inkling of it when she flew swiftly as a swallow to Bethlehem? The time of the singing of birds had come. She was happy as to her status; she had Christ. She was happy as to her prospect; the happiness of what is unfolded concerning the birth of a Saviour. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Amen.