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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Thursday Evening, August 29, 1974.

Lesson. Isaiah 28.

For she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Ruth 1.6.

Obviously the word that attracted us in the clause is; "The Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." It is this term of the gospel that is before us, - to visit. I shall endeavour therefore, to dilate on the word I hope we ourselves personally, collectively may enter the blessedness of; heavenly visitation.

I feel it would be wise initially to make a few observations on the Book and to remind you of salient points in the beautiful order of the Book of Ruth. It would appear that the main purpose of the Book of Ruth is to point to the Person of Christ our Saviour, for Ruth became the grandmother of David, and concerning Christ we have the word that He is "the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." So I believe with the revealing light shining on this precious portion of the Word of God, which is full of the gospel, a child of God will see Christ, and the sacred progress made by a seeking soul from the earliest days of gleaning in the field; gleaning with sweet liberty, until there was the wonderful address of Boaz to Ruth, though a Gentile. He claimed her as a daughter, and gave her perfect liberty to glean, even among the sheaves, and she was not to be rebuked. She was supremely happy in this sacred occupation. There were the handfuls of purpose, then her apron filled, and the wonderful term we have concerning the advice given by Naomi; "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." And then the holy sequel; the marriage between Boaz and Ruth, and the birth of Obed. The child of God will desire the blessed step in spiritual experience, that the marriage be complete. Then the wonderful gift of the little son, and the prophecy concerning the son in relation to Naomi. "And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age."

So shining forth in type we see the glorious Antitype, the precious Babe born in Bethlehem. The Son of God assumed holy humanity and was of a virgin born; - a beautiful gospel term; attractive to a seeking soul. And then the wonderful union between Naomi and Ruth, a Jewess and a Gentile; communion and oneness together. So this is to be sought and enjoyed by the living family of God.

We have before us what may be referred to immediately, and I hope I shall not weary you with repetition. It is clear from divine history that her husband was left to take a wrong step that displeased and dishonoured the Lord, in going from Bethlehem to Moab. You will remember the king of Moab, Balak, hired Balaam to curse Israel, yet now an Israelite had gone from Bethlehem to Moab. I feel, though this is difficult to express ministerially, there is something to bring forth concerning Naomi in Moab. That is to say, a child of God has taken a step, and as they view it in retrospect they find the whole matter shrouded in mystery. "Why was I allowed to take such a step?" It is something that will not be unfolded to human sagacity; it is shrouded in mystery, and they find themselves in distress, trouble, trial. I feel one thing should be said concerning the matter of Naomi in Moab. Obviously it was not with a willing mind she went into that idolatrous land, but she was under the authority and lordship of her husband. Also, in one decade; in ten years the Lord manifested His displeasure. His hand went out against Naomi. There was the death of her husband; then her two sons were married to the daughters of Moab, then dying, and Naomi finding herself completely stripped of all, but the Lord loved her. It was in sweet love and mercy to her soul that He dealt with her.

It would appear at first she had no realisation that the Lord was dealing with her in love. Later the truth in the hymn was brought powerfully to her spirit;

"Not in anger,
But from His dear covenant love." (758)

Obviously this is the turning point for the child of God in trouble, deep distress, sorrow, affliction, adversity, trial; when temptation, sore, distressing, overwhelming is completely dissipated. You think God is dealing with you in wrath? the Lord does penetrate the clouds and rebuke Satan by coming Himself. Extreme mystery surrounded Job in his adversity

until the day came when the Lord so shone into his soul and he saw the economy of grace in his adversity was the Refiner's fire, as Mr Gosden said here; not an oven, but to bring the third part through the fire, to refine him, and immediately he saw on the horizon his complete deliverance "But he knoweth the way that I take: ..what is this? The Lord is trying, purging, refining me. When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." There you see the effect of the love of God flowing into the soul of a poor, tried, distressed saint of His.

So I will take up this point. The devil always takes a cruel and mean advantage of the distressing circumstances the people of God come into by firing this shaft at them; "It is God's anger." and your soul is in deep distress. Naomi was in deep distress. One day the Lord will visit you with His love. He may speak this to your spirit,

"Not in anger,
But from His dear covenant love."

This is beautifully set forth by the waters of Marah, which were bitter. After the deliverance of the Israelites and their passage through the Red Sea, they came to Marah and the waters were bitter. Some may be in it now: it is the path you tread; the trials you meet in the way are bitter to you. Dear child of God, the Lord is able to sweeten the waters. He showed Moses a tree, a type of the rugged wood of Calvary's cross. Immediately it was cast into the waters they were made sweet. It is the love of God to a saint in deep trial and temptation, and not God dealing in anger.

So the whole process here, the painful process was in love, and Naomi proved it ultimately. There is one thing in the clause read, the Lord began to appear for her to deliver her. I felt before I came a strong feeling that the Lord would appear and deliver some of you who are walking a painful, distressing pathway. The Lord always appears. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." It is a beautiful couplet in the hymn; "This truth to rejoice in, the Lord will appear." That is the foundation for it. The word 'visit' means to call on one in love; to come where they are. The foundation of it is the incarnation of Christ. "Through the tender mercy of our God;

whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." Christ visited this poor, sin-bitten world; He visited His people, and He visits every heart that longs to entertain Him. So this is the foundation for it, my friends. Saintly Simeon was waiting for a visit. The Holy Ghost had visited him, and revealed to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ, So coming ~~into~~ by the Spirit into the temple, when they brought in the precious Babe, Christ visited him. "Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

So I want to emphasise three terms. The Lord will appear. He must appear. Why? Because He loves you; because Christ is risen. If the precious Person of Christ, the dear body of the precious Redeemer was in the tomb there could be no deliverance for the people, of God. But the Lord is risen; He is not in the tomb. "Fear not ye," said the angel to the women, "for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." So because He is risen, whatever grave of darkness, trouble, distress, guilt, bondage, temptation you are in, the Lord will "open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." You will remember the historic note concerning the word. The Israelites were in captivity. They had been there so long in misery and sorrow, they felt to be buried in Babylon. The Lord opened their graves and brought them out.

So I will name three blessed words. The Lord will appear. You know it needs divine unction, energy flowing into your soul. Whatever you are passing through, child of God, this will be an object lesson. A word from God in your soul and you will know the Lord has appeared and will appear. I am not here to refer to self, but I have never lost it;— the time when all the family were young and medicine was nationalised, and the axe was laid at the root of my practice. We took during the year a trial balance and we thought we should never live; it was impossible. It is not prudent to give details, but only a miracle could supply our needs. The Lord appeared. That is one reason why the little Sanctuary at Shoreham has

been precious to me for years, - forty years. The Lord appeared. You have been in paths like that, some of you. That evening at Shoreham, going to the Chapel I found it still locked. The Lord ordered it. It is well to be submissive to things the Lord orders. The Chapel was locked: that was a link in the chain. Some might have been irritated by it. "I will have come here to preach and the Chapel is locked." The Lord ordered it. So I walked on, and stood and looked over the harbour. The tide was out, and on the mud was a crust of dry bread. At first I did not notice, I was so sinking in mind concerning the future. Presently I found more than natural sight on the scene; my spiritual sight was focussed on it. A water rat was feeding on the crust, and a sea gull, and the dear Lord appeared. "My child, you view this. Your God feeds a water rat and a gull. Don't you think He will feed you?" The Lord had appeared. I never lost it. He shone into my soul; the Lord had come. My return journey was a happy one of thanksgiving and praise. The Lord had appeared. That is what He did for Naomi.

You may be so low it is as if everything will come to nothing, your experience, religion, ministry, everything; and the Lord appears. It is agony for God's ministers to come so low. If we had never been there we could never find the sweetest characters of Grace. Bless you; I could leave all my cares, soul, body, family, time eternity, all in the Lord's hands, I committed it to Him. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." It is the Lord's appearing, my friends. You will prove you are a child of God in these paths because, although the devil torments, harasses, hunts you and you come to the bottoms of the mountains, - "Out of the belly of hell cried I." - as low as that; in a powerful, efficacious, vital manner the Lord will visit you. You will know immediately He is under the roof of your soul. He visits you. You see cases in Holy Writ where the saints of God were brought low indeed, and the Lord visited them. Paul was in the ship with all the people in the storm, and the Lord stood by him in the night, and said; "Fear not, Paul." He would go to Rome and stand before Caesar, and He showed him there would be no loss of life, only the ship. Paul said; "I believe God."

This will be a simple, ragged discourse to night. If only I can get

it over to you. He will visit you, child of God, and appear for you. "They ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." The Lord had appeared. I know this is a narrative that relates to sailors and prisoners, but I am sure there is a spiritual content. You feel in your spirit the analogy of faith. All of them escaped. The Lord had appeared. Has He for you?

The next word is 'deliver'. Naomi knew the Lord had appeared although she was not brought out of her misery. She could not get out of Moab till the Lord appeared. You come into a place of trial, - you bring yourself in sometimes, and once you are in you cannot get out until the Lord appears: there is no way out. You may have advisers, counsellors who profess great wisdom, and offer solutions to your problems. There you are in trial, and you may be there a long time, - ten years, and then the Lord appears. The first thing was, she heard, - it was not anger, not wrath, not destruction it was mercy. What was it? "The Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." And you see the effect; immediately she was off. It was the purpose of God to make an opening for her. She must go back, though sorrowful. - "Call me Marah." but she is going back; it is the Lord's appearing. I wonder if you have heard? "The Lord had visited his people in giving them bread."

A beautiful word; Visited. After all, take congregations, - the preacher and people. If the Lord does not visit His people in giving them bread there is nothing. It is vapid: there is nothing to satisfy the soul. When the Lord visits His people you know His presence, power, the unction of the Spirit. Christ is there, and He is the Bread of Life: your soul is fed and nourished. If you are so poor, needy, guilty, wretched you will be thankful to know there is a place under the Table. There is room for crawling worms under the Table, and you will have one of the crumbs.

Although things look bad for the people of God, often personally, in

the family, a little community, or the Church; things look very bad: it is adversity, almost as bad as it can be, (some are in prosperity.) People are ready to bury you before you are dead, or to bury a Chapel before the end. They say there is no prospect, no hope. You never need fear where there is a saint of God, because the Lord will appear. However low a child of God sinks, the Lord will appear and visit His people. It is the work of the Spirit; it is of God, and you will know when the Lord appears.

So I leave this note with you. The Lord will appear and He will deliver you. You can be delivered in trouble; not out of it, but in trouble. You may be up to your neck in deep waters: you have two or three difficulties problems, sorrows, trials, and the Lord comes to your soul in a sermon, in the night, and your cup is filled with divine love and it runs over. You can leave it with God. You know He will wonderfully work. This must be fulfilled; "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." O the sweetness of it! The heavens are opened: the glory of God shined into your soul in the face of Jesus Christ; the unction of the Spirit begins to permeate your soul. There is light, love, liberty, joy. The Lord is there, and He visits you; He speaks comfortably to you. The Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings. He has visited you. He knows where you live; where you work; all about your journey. He will appear, and you will know when He appears. I believe when Mr J.K.Popham went to Galeed he was in terrible ^{crisis} before preaching, and the Lord responded to his anguished prayer with; "Lord, help me." and he went with that. The Lord had appeared. This is the travail of soul a child of God is in, and you will know when He appears. The tempest tosses you: suddenly there is a great calm. The Lord has visited you.

Naomi heard that "the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread" The door was open wide before her, and she was going. The Lord will appear; He will deliver. He does and He will deliver and He will visit. It is a sweet thing for the Lord to visit you. When the Lord comes and visits a soul, this endears the spot of ground, the place, the people, everything connected with it to the soul. You may be in London surrounded by multitudes, in all the traffic, and you are far happier than you can

express. You have a little of heaven in your soul. I believe I felt that going to Brixton recently. The Lord was there. The Lord visits His people and God's ministers know it. He visits them on a journey; in the middle of the night the Lord appears. In the morning, in agony of soul; you have no Text, no liberty, no light, and the Lord shines: He visits.

I wonder if you feel the Lord is preparing you for a glorious Guest? Do you feel you can say;

"We bow as sinners at Thy feet,
And bid Thee welcome to our heart."? (952)

"Lord, when Thou visitest me I will welcome Thee to my heart." O the welcome Christ has when the precious Redeemer visits a soul! O the welcome of your love to Him! You entertain Him with the graces of the Spirit in sweet exercise. So He visited, and He does visit His people in giving them bread. Bread is the staple article of diet for nourishment. It is so in Zion,- the Bread of life; the Bread of heaven by which He sustains all His people below. When you think of bread as we read in the Lesson; "Bread corn is bruised" you will think of your precious Redeemer ground in the mill in His Passion. "Bread corn is bruised" and roast. You think of His agony; of His dolourous sufferings, and so He is to us the Bread of life, and He visits His people in giving them bread.

You may come to a Sanctuary,- I hope never to this in that way. I am not cynical, but there may be a magnificent building, but there is no Bread of life for your soul; nothing. When you go by the Spirit, and there is just a humble company of people, and the Table is so wonderfully spread, He abundantly blesses her provision, and satisfies her poor with bread. To the poor is the gospel preached. "Eat, O friends; ~~yea~~, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Amen.