

“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..” Ruth 1:16 (NIV)

Today I have chosen to look at one of the powerful women of the Bible. Ruth hasn’t exactly had a life that is easy. Widowed and childless, her mother-in-law, Naomi, tries to encourage her to return to her own people and to find a new husband. On the surface, there appears to be no hope for Ruth if she decides to stay with Naomi, but Ruth’s deep devotion to her mother-in-law is enough that she is even willing to worship a different deity to her custom. She doesn’t care if she sleeps in the street, her family and the God of the family she married into comes first.

Read the entire story of Ruth and we see she gets her happy ending - though it is hard work, even with the favour of the land owner protecting her.

So why have I decided this verse for today? Simply put its that intense devotion that Ruth shows. For a person to be willing to change their faith to a new god shows they either deep down knew that the god they were following wasn’t real or at the very least is not interested in their people. In this case Ruth has changed her faith to worship the one true God. But that intensity puts most of us to shame. How many of us are willing to give up everything for a family member? Taking the risk of homelessness and uncertainty in a strange place I have never been over the higher chance of creating a new life with the people she grew up with? I’m not sure I could do it! Yet Ruth does without any hint of hesitation.

Ruth follows Naomi into the unknown and sometimes God will call us to do that. God doesn’t promise His children a perfect life full of ease and everything the heart desires. Sometimes our reward is to bring others into His kingdom by enduring faithfully through whatever life throws at us. It is our devotion to the One True God that is the single most important thing in our lives that we should cling on to. We have to maintain faith that God will see us through whatever trials we need to endure - whether that be illness, injury, watching ones we love going off the straight and narrow or being childless in a church culture designed for families and sometimes alienating to those without children (whether by choice or not) who should equally be included in God’s kingdom. All of us have something to endure - a thorn in the flesh as St Paul puts it (2 Corinthians 12:7) - some of us even have multiple of these to endure patiently. Believe me, it isn’t easy...I have fallen off the wagon multiple times while awaiting answers to prayer, but I know deep down to come back and rest in God as even if some of the things I have been praying about for nearly 10 years and others just days, I know that my hope can only be in God. I feel closest to Him when I write and so I know that I should do more of it, but this doesn’t pay the bills and often takes a back seat in my life. May I encourage you, at whatever stage of your faith journey you are on, and whatever you may be going through...whether I named it as an example or not, don’t give up on the Goodness of God. Sometimes He will talk to us through the smallest of things to remind us He is there, still listening. Sometimes just a fleeting glance at something that makes us smile or a quick discovery of a lost item after a quick arrow prayer can be reminders that God is still watching, even if we are still awaiting that answer to the larger prayers.

Pray;

Lord, Ruth was devoted to Naomi, regardless of what the future held for her and became faithful to you through her devotion to her family. We know we are rarely as devoted to you as we ought to be. We admit that the troubles of life sometimes keep us away from the one place we should be finding comfort; in your loving embrace. Please help us to always see you in the small things you do for us and let us endure patiently, all the while trusting in you, for the answers to the big prayers to be answered. Forgive us for the times we turn away when life gets tough. Amen.