



From Failure to Fulness: The Process of Restoration!

Every born-again Christian holds a special place in God's kingdom. As part of the body of Christ, they receive gifts and ministries bestowed by the Holy Spirit, which are of great significance both for their personal development and for the execution of the divine plan in the Church of Jesus and in society (1 Corinthians 12:1–14). However, not all Christians are won for God's kingdom, and only a few live in the fulness of their calling. This leads to undeveloped projects, unfulfilled promises, gaps in the local body of Christ, and a missed blessing in society.

One of the reasons for this is the lack of trust in God during adverse circumstances, followed by wrong decisions and misleading paths. The well-known theologian Charles Spurgeon once said, *"To trust God in the light is nothing, but to trust Him in the dark—that is faith."* When our trust wanes, we stray from God's plan.

This problem is illustrated in the story of Elimelech and his family from Bethlehem, Judah, in the Book of Ruth. Elimelech means *"My God is King,"* and the name of his wife Naomi means *"my pleasantness."* The names of people in the Old Testament often expressed their character and calling, as was the case with Abraham, Jacob, or Gideon (Genesis 17:5; 32:28; Judges 6:32). Similarly, the names Elimelech and Naomi express God's sovereignty and goodness over His people. But the lack of trust in God during times of need drives the family to the fields of Moab, a nation hostile to Israel, where they lose not only their possessions but also their lives. Only Naomi survives the tragedy and the consequences of their missteps. At the lowest point of her life, God has mercy on her and leads her back to Bethlehem.

Here begins the wonderful story of Ruth, the Moabite, who shows Naomi incredible loyalty and love with full determination. Despite her disadvantaged position as a Gentile in Bethlehem, she helps Naomi out of the hopeless situation and supports her in rebuilding. Ruth does not seek her own welfare but that of others. She is willing, through diligent service, perseverance, and dedication, to fulfill the divine plan and become a blessing to other people she hardly knew.

Let us now take a brief look at the background.

Background (Ruth 1:1–6)

The story takes place in a time of idolatry, godlessness, arbitrariness, and injustice in Israel. The Book of Judges aptly describes this era: *"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Due to their disobedience, Israel experiences a famine as God's disciplinary

measure (Judges 2:11, 13–14). Historically, this period can be placed during the oppression by the Midianites and Amalekites, from which God finally delivers them through Gideon (Judges 6–7).

In the midst of this distress, Elimelech flees with his family from God's judgment to Moab. Rich and full of goods, they leave Bethlehem (Ruth 1:21). But in the foreign land, they experience loss and death. Eventually, Naomi is left alone without husband and sons. Although the Book of Ruth does not explicitly point to bad behaviour by Elimelech, it can be recognised that fleeing from Bethlehem ("House of Bread") represents a great lack of trust in the God of Israel. Added to this is the spiritual aspect that Elimelech and his family seek refuge in Moab, where the terrible idol Moloch is worshipped, to whom children were sacrificed as burnt offerings (Leviticus 18:21; Jeremiah 32:35). The consequences of this lack of trust and the spiritual subjection under Moloch are clearly felt after ten years of staying in Moab.

Below are the most important steps that Ruth takes in the process of rebuilding.

1) Your Present Decisions Determine Your Future

These events clearly teach us that the decisions we make today will determine our situation in the future. Conversely, our current situation is the result of earlier decisions. When Naomi has reached the lowest point of her life, she decides to return to the place of origin.

Abandon Wrong Paths: Naomi hears that the Lord has provided bread for His people again and decides to return to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:6). The family's strategy to seek shelter in a foreign land during times of need has not worked; on the contrary, they gradually lose everything. Unfortunately, Naomi does not recognise the time for her return earlier but only when she has nothing left. If staying in Bethlehem had meant the death of the family, those who remained there would have already starved after ten years of famine. But this is not the case; rather, it is reported that Boaz is a wealthy man (Ruth 2:1).

In times of trial and distress, we often try to find

human solutions that sound reasonable but do not honour God. Only over time do we gradually realise that the once praised personal ways have brought nothing but loss and sorrow. But recognising and abandoning the wrong paths in time often requires special spiritual insight and determination. Unfortunately, in most cases, the trend of destruction continues until there is nothing left to save. Therefore, the Psalmist cries out: *"For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart..."* (Psalm 95:7–8).

Make Right and Firm Decisions: When Naomi decides to return, her daughters-in-law also want to go with her. But she confronts Ruth and Orpah with the reality that the young widowed women should acknowledge: there is neither hope nor future with Naomi. She challenges the young women to make a conscious decision. They should rather return to their mother's house and to their people, but also to their "god" (Moloch). Using her sound reasoning, Orpah follows this advice, but Ruth remains steadfast (Ruth 1:11–14).

Certainly, Ruth can also see that, humanly speaking, there is no future with Naomi. But she does not focus on the hopeless circumstances but on the God of Israel. Therefore, she assures her mother-in-law: *"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God... the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me"* (Ruth 1:16–17). This confession of Ruth, accompanied by a final decision, strongly contrasts not only with Orpah's decision but also with the decision of Elimelech and Naomi when they left Bethlehem ten years earlier. Possibly, Ruth has discerned the lack of trust of Elimelech's family in their God. In any case, she acts in faith and full trust that the God of Israel can give her a future in Bethlehem. She leaves her homeland and her gods to serve the living God. Boaz recognises her faith and says: *"The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust"* (Ruth 2:12). Against Ruth's faith and this confidence, Naomi has nothing more to object. So both go to Bethlehem, the place of their divine calling (Ruth 1:19, 22).

This process is described by the Apostle Paul when

he says: *"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord... and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"* (Philippians 3:8).

Our present decisions shape our future. If we are willing to abandon our own ways to carry out God's plans, we will have a fulfilled life, reach the goal of our calling, and thereby honour God.

2) Your Sacrifice and Faithfulness Will Open Doors for You

One of the astonishing elements of this story is Ruth's motivation. She is characterised by love, loyalty, and selfless devotion. She says to Naomi: *"Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried"* (Ruth 1:17). This unconditional devotion is described with the Hebrew word "chesed" (חֶסֶד), which means mercy and faithful, selfless love that shows itself in deeds and reflects divine goodness. Both God's "chesed" and that of Ruth and Boaz represent the central theme of this book and stand for a deep, steadfast loyalty and devotion, often in a covenant context.

Our motivation for service in God's kingdom is also tested. Accordingly, the nature of our motivation and the means applied determine the quality of our work. Paul admonishes us to carry out our service with a godly attitude: *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ"* (Colossians 3:23–24).

Likewise, the best materials should be used for building in the kingdom of God: *"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation... Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest... because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is"* (1 Corinthians 3:10–13).

Service Under Adverse Circumstances: Upon arriving in Bethlehem, Ruth is willing to serve in humility and anonymity (Ruth 2:2–3, 7). She goes to the field to glean ears of corn without seeking recognition. She works quietly and modestly, often under disadvantaged circumstances (Ruth 2:9–10). She takes on hard work to provide for Naomi, even though she is merely a stranger. As a Moabitess, she has it particularly hard, since the Moabites and Ammonites were not to be admitted into the congregation of the Lord, even to their tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:3). Thus, it would be impossible for an Israelite ever to marry Ruth. But God has a plan with Ruth, honours her faith, and grants her favour before Boaz (Ruth 2:10). Her faithfulness and diligence are recognised in her surroundings (Ruth 2:11–12).

The Apostle Paul can also identify with serving under adverse circumstances: *"Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations... But none of these things move me, nei-*



Fig. 1: Ruth in the Fields of Boaz

ther count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course... and the ministry..." (Acts 20:18–19,24).

Sacrifice and faithfulness open doors, as long as we do not give up beforehand. Let us therefore complete the task God has entrusted to us. When we serve God and people in humility, He will lead us and make our work fruitful.

3) Following the Divine Strategy Leads You to the Goal and to Life

We do not know how Ruth envisioned her future in Bethlehem and the path there. What is reported to us, however, is her willingness to cooperate in everything and to be led. It seems that God reveals His plan through Naomi, who gives Ruth clear instructions (Ruth 3:1–4). Ruth then replies: *"All that thou sayest unto me I will do"* (Ruth 3:5). This obedience of Ruth is an important condition for building in the kingdom of God and for carrying out His plan. He needs flexible and obedient people who do His will, not stubborn, self-willed "know-it-alls." God always has a special strategy ready, and it is better than all our own. It is up to us to recognise and follow it.

Connect with the People Prepared by God:

Ruth's task was to give Elimelech's family an heir who would be responsible both for providing for the family and inheriting the family property. This could only happen if a relative of Elimelech would marry Ruth, a Moabitess. For this mission, God placed Boaz in Ruth's life, a man of reputation and

integrity. Ruth goes to the fields to find some food and "happens" to come to the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:3). This leads to an exciting encounter with him, after which she finds favour in Boaz's eyes (Ruth 2:13). When Ruth tells Naomi what has happened, she realises that Boaz is a relative of her deceased husband Elimelech and thus a potential kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 2:20). A kinsman-redeemer had the duty to marry the childless widow and former wife of his brother to give her an heir and secure her provision and future (Deuteronomy 25:5–10).

In His plan for your life, God has also intended people who are to support you in carrying out your ministry. Let yourself be guided by the Spirit of God and pay attention to His working. It is possible that the people before whom you find favour will be the future helpers in your ministry. Rely on the divine strategy that will lead you to the goal, for God has prepared everything. Follow His plan, and your faithfulness and faith will soon be recognised in your surroundings (Ruth 3:10–11). The Apostle Paul expresses this: *"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity... we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward"* (2 Corinthians 1:12).

4) Rest in God and Trust Him

After unceasing work, trust in God and rest in Him. Naomi said to Ruth: *"Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man (Boaz) will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day"* (Ruth 3:18).



Fig. 2. Ruth Meets Boaz

According to the Mosaic Law and the custom of the surrounding peoples at that time, the brother of the deceased, in the case of childlessness, was to marry the widow and sire an heir with her. This law is called levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5–10). But since Boaz was not a brother but a distant relative, he was not obliged to enter into marriage with Ruth. However, when Ruth proposes marriage to him, he is willing to accept the proposal and redeem her (Ruth 3:9–13). At this point, Boaz is ready to show Naomi and Ruth immeasurable favour and faithfulness ("chesed"). The child born by him would be considered Elimelech's descendant to continue his family line. What personal gain could Boaz draw from this? None! Nevertheless, he acts generously, compassionately, and loyally towards the widow.

This attitude of heart is also evident in Ruth, who, through steadfast loyalty, tireless service, and deep trust in God, makes the impossible possible. From the marriage between Boaz and Ruth, Obed ("Servant of God") is born (Ruth 4:13–17). Ruth becomes the great-grandmother of King David, the man after God's own heart (Ruth 4:21–22), and from the royal line of David, the Messiah, the King of kings, later emerges. Thus, Ruth, once the despised Moabitess, became an example and great blessing for all of Israel. She showed the God of Israel and Naomi the faithfulness and dedication that could not even be found in her own people Israel.

Your faithfulness and tireless commitment also glorify God and will bear fruit over many generations. Paul encourages us with these words: *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain... yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"* (1 Corinthians 15:10). *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord... knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

After the work is done, we may rest in God and trust in His mighty action, knowing that our labour is not in vain.

Conclusion

The story of Ruth teaches us how our decisions influence our future and how sacrifice, faithfulness, and following divine strategies lead to restoration and life. It encourages us to place our trust entirely in God, to abandon misleading paths, and to connect with the people prepared by God. May we learn from Ruth's example and take steps not primarily to renew and enrich our own lives but the lives of others. This is the fulfilment of this life: to serve one another and to carry out our God-given mission on this earth. Jesus says: *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it"* (Mark 8:35).

Perhaps you find yourself in the "fields of Moab" and long to return to your calling? Ask the Lord for people like Ruth who can accompany you back and help you rebuild.

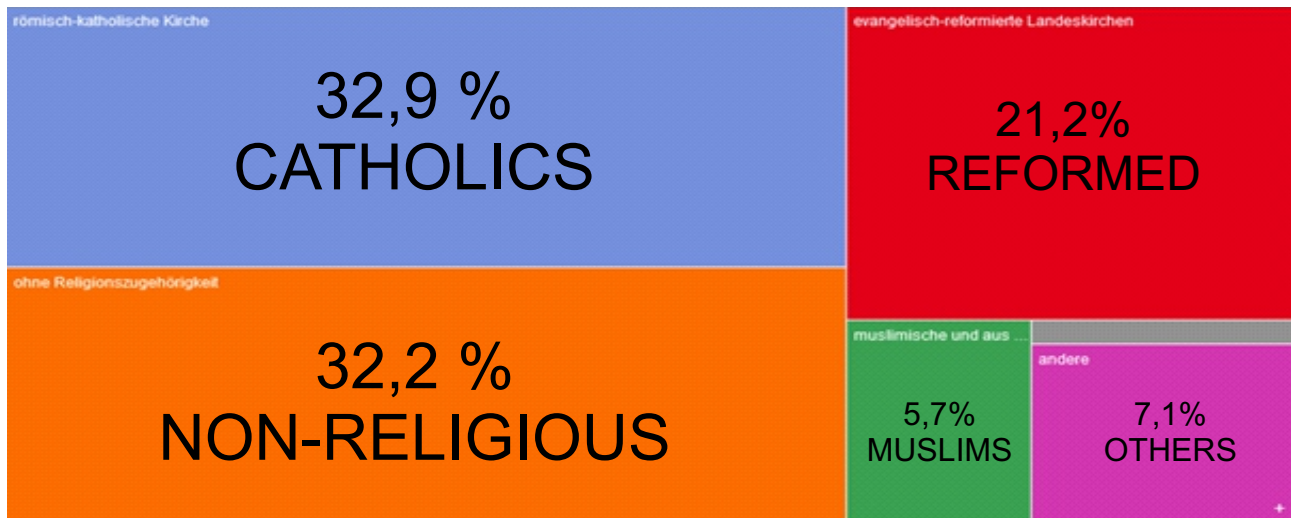
Or are you already working in the "fields of Bethlehem" and need support in your mission? Ask the Lord of the harvest to grant you favour and send you the Boaz.

But perhaps you are already in the right place and with the right people, but the work is great, and the fruits are sparse. Ask the Lord to purify your field; check your motivation, focus on the most important things, persevere, and the Lord will grant you success and multiplication.

Finally, it can be noted in this story that the kingdom of God, represented and lost through Elimelech ("My God is King"), is restored in the family through Boaz. May Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and His reign always be exalted in our lives, in our families, and in our everyday lives, and have the first place.

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Religious Affiliation in Switzerland, 2020–2022



Die Ergebnisse basieren auf drei aufeinanderfolgenden jährlichen Strukturerhebungen.

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Quelle: BFS – Strukturerhebung (SE)

Quelle: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home.assetdetail.31068982.html>

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A recent study by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) shows the religious affiliation of people aged 15 and over in Switzerland over three consecutive years, 2020 to 2022. The result of this study should be alarming for born-again Christians. The number of non-religious people amounts to 32.2% of the total population; that is 10% more than in 2014. The Catholics decreased from 38% (2014) to 32.9%, and the Reformed from 26.2% (2014) to 21.2%. On the other hand, Muslims make up 5.7% of the Swiss population, while "Others" constitute the remaining 7.1% of the population. Among these 7.1% are the following denominational groups:

- 2.7% Christian Orthodox Churches
- 1.1% Churches Related to the Reformation
- 0.6% Hindu Associations
- 0.5% Buddhist Associations
- 0.5% Pietistic & Evangelical Congregations
- 0.4% Pentecostal Congregations
- 0.4% End-Time Congregations
- 0.3% Other Christian Congregations
- 0.2% Apostolic Congregations
- 0.2% Jewish Communities
- 0.1% Christian Catholic Church

These are the consequences of a "concealment" of the good news of Jesus Christ and of being ashamed of the gospel. But Jesus Christ has commanded us to proclaim His work on the cross to all people, and the Apostle Paul affirms this:

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14)

Jesus says: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20).*

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth... to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).



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