

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
May 13, 2016**

- ✓ **Ruth 3:1-4:22.** Ruth’s blessings: more than she could have asked or imagined.
- ✓ **1 Tim. 1:12-20.** Shipwreck of the faith.
- ✓ **Psalm 73:11-28.** No one has a free will (in the sense of a will that does not seek “good”)

COMMENTS:

Ruth 3:1-4:22. In this section Naomi is the matchmaker who prepares Ruth to seek the love of her willing kinsman-redeemer, Boaz. Although the phrase “uncover the place of his feet” has been viewed as a euphemism for an illicit sexual move, there is nothing in the context to indicate that she is attempting to seduce Boaz. The meaning of what Ruth was essentially doing was asking for Boaz’s protection. It is also possible that there are hints of being open to marriage proposal, but this is only speculation. Boaz’s statement that she should stay there the rest of the night (3:13) indicates that he wants to protect her from the dangers of the night, possible encounters with thieves or men who were drunk at the harvest season. Threshing and winnowing were not women’s work, and Ruth’s presence at the threshing floor could certainly lead to a misinterpretation of her motives. Had she been detected, people would probably thought she was a prostitute. Boaz’s assurance to Ruth that he will help in every possible way is concluded by an oath in which he uses the divine name, Yahweh, the Lord. In chapter four, Boaz marries Ruth. Note how God worked things out for her. Ruth had been barren in Moab for the entire period of her marriage to Mahlon (1:4-5). She went from being a widow to meeting and marrying the fine young man, Boaz, who loved her dearly. Then, God gives her conception which is a foreshadow of the miraculous birth of the Son of God that would take place in Bethlehem when the fullness of time had come. Ruth went from a difficult or barren 10 years in Moab to rich and full blessedness within a few short weeks of returning to Bethlehem. The conclusion of Ruth contrasts beautifully with its introduction. The book starts out with deep sorrow and ends with radiant joy. She truly entered into more than she could have asked or imagined—all by the grace of God—to the point of being in the genealogy of the humanity of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5). God only knows what would have happened to Ruth if she stayed in Moab instead of following the Lord in following Naomi back to Bethlehem. *The lesson is that no matter what: WE MUST PRESS FORWARD IN THE PLAN OF GOD—NEVER QUIT!*

1 Tim. 1:12-20. “I am setting before you this instruction, Timothy my child, in accordance with the prophecies spoken long ago about you, in order that by them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience, which some, because they have rejected these, have suffered shipwreck concerning their faith” (1 Tim 1:18–19). Paul had experienced being shipwrecked multiple times in his life, and in this passage, he metaphorically ascribes his experience to that of people who turn from faith in Christ. The imagery of being shipwrecked captures the spiritual state of aimlessness that results from a misguided conscience—one that isn’t solidly grounded in true faith. Among those who experienced this shipwreck were Hymenaeus and Alexander, who were believers who became blasphemers. They had known the truth of Jesus, but were now publicly opposing it (1 Tim 1:20). Paul admits he had once been a blasphemer himself, but he was ‘shown mercy because he acted ignorantly in unbelief’ (1 Tim 1:13). In contrast, Hymenaeus and Alexander blasphemed deliberately by turning from the faith and opposing Paul,

even though they knew about God's grace through Christ. To be sure, this was a test for Paul, but *it was not sent directly by God*. God never directly tempts or tests. Following God isn't optional in either big or small decisions. Paul warns Timothy that this "fight" includes making daily choices that align with faith and a good conscience. Certainly we fail from time to time in attempting to follow Him—that's precisely why we need His grace and Word so badly. But willful acting against what we know, when we're aware of His grace, will only result in hardness and eventual being shipwrecked.

Psalm 73:11-28. As we noted in the first part of this psalm, the psalmist had confessed that he was envious of the prosperity of the wicked. In the second part of the psalm, the psalmist comes to his senses and reflects on the destiny of the wicked. Note how he concludes with the radical difference between the righteous and the wicked in the last two verses. It is a very dangerous thing to flirt with negative choices. Every negative choice, every actualization of evil or apathy on the part of a believer, makes it more difficult for him recover. The idea that everyone has an absolutely autonomous will that he can turn on or off at will is a myth. There is a sense in which no one has free will, at least in an absolute manner. Every free will is tied to its nature and its nature is to seek the good. There is no way to change this fact. It is built into the will and driven by God Himself. Whatever the will thinks is good it will seek, be it God or evil. The only solution to changing any will is to change its notion of what is good, which is contained in the intellect. Again, no one is free from the desire of every will to seek the good. When someone chooses an evil as a good, he actualizes evil, which habituates taste for evil as a good. When that happens there is no way to change the will in and of itself. It will by necessity be drawn to that evil as a good—again, it must! In a sense, it is predestined to seek out what it views as a good—there are no exceptions! None!

Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don