

Into the Arms of...

Gabriel L. Mancino



Two men in the Bible come to mind. They lived at different times, but each left home. **One was pursuing something passionately. The other was being passionately pursued.** What a contrast!

Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, had left his parents and home for fear of being killed by his twin brother. Due, at least in part to his craftiness, Jacob had secured the unique rights of inheritance that belonged to his brother. The family rights of the "first-born" were Esau's only because he was the first one out!

Their mother, Rebekah, overheard Esau's plan to murder Jacob after their aged father was deceased. She advised Jacob to run for his life. His craftiness made him a man on the run, in fear for his life, and ending up in the middle of nowhere. It was there that God met him, while he slept with stones for a pillow. He awoke startled, and said, **likely with an increased heart-rate,** "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" "Wherever and whenever we hear from God, it is "awesome!" That was the beginning of Jacob's walk with God. His life is full of lessons for us. His brother provides some lessons for us, as well! But Jacob ran from death and into the arms of a loving God who was watching and waiting to offer His Plan of hope, blessing and God-guided usefulness.

Balaam may be the strangest person in the Bible! He was not a descendant of Abraham, so was outside the circle of "God's people...well, not entirely! God was obviously talking to him, but he was outside the loop of the best and the correct spiritual information. But as with others like this, God will help and guide them, if they will listen closely and carefully.

The problem arose when Balaam was tempted along the line of his greatest weakness. **Satan knows our weakest link. Very often, we do, too.** The process of temptation is sometimes subtle, but sometimes right in your face, daring you. James talks about that horrible, but certain and deadly process (James 1: 13-16). For Balaam, the weakest link was love of money, so he went head-long after rewards from a king who wanted him to curse God's people. **First of all,** God told him to go with those people, but always remember, God tests the genuineness of our love and commitment to Him. **Secondly,** though Balaam started well, he ended up fighting on the side of God's enemies against God's people, and though he had said many great things, spiritually. Balaam rode his donkey...perhaps like Jacob, **with fast heartbeat**...but directly in the path of an angel with a sword, ready to take him out of this world. That donkey tried everything, but in vain, to stop his master from certain death. Balaam was so absorbed and determined to get what he wanted, that he was unable to pick up God's signals to him anymore. Jacob ran from death to love and life. Balaam ran from God's special help to him as an "outsider," and ran right into the arms of danger, death and damnation.

Here are two men running from opposite things, and **into** opposite things from each other. What are you running toward?

THE GREATEST LOVE...AND THE PERFECT TIME. Jesus invites us, saying "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30). He invites again at the close of the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). Run to HIS loving arms!



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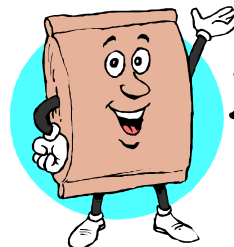
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A Real Package Deal

Gabriel L. Mancino

Remember the famous Godfather quote: "I'll make him an offer he can't refuse"? In the "Love Story" of the Old Testament, the *Book of Ruth*, the opposite took place. A man was offered a great deal, hoping that he would turn it down!

Due to famine, a couple immigrated with their two sons, apparently out of the reach of starvation. In relatively short time, the father died. The boys married, but not so long afterward died as well, now leaving three widows. Hearing that famine had ended at home, "Mum" decided to return, but earnestly tried to convince her young, widowed daughters-in-law to remain and remarry there in their own country.

Both young ladies were of a culture and religion different than "Mum,"

but *one* refused to leave her, saying "Do not urge me to abandon you, or to turn back from being with you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you live, I will live; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and even more, if anything but death separates you and me" (Ruth 1: 16, 17).

Back in "Mum's" country, her devoted daughter-in-law, Ruth, began working in the fields, along with other young females. It so happened that the field belonged to a **close bachelor relative**, named Boaz. According to the custom and culture at that time, such relatives were expected to marry family widows and raise children for the dead husband in order to preserve his name in the country.

Boaz, however, knew that **there was a closer relative than himself, who was to be given first chance** at marrying Ruth. As could be expected, Ruth had inherited property through her deceased husband. Upon marriage, Ruth's new

(continued inside)



THE MEAL THAT'S "A STEAL!" A man, having eaten much, was offered more food, but replied: "I can chew it, but I can't swallow it!" An ill lady went to Florida years ago to recover. She died, surrounded by the lovely climate, plants & the luscious fruit, writing her friend: "I have no appetite." One could eat no more. The other could no more eat. No appetite. The song, "Come & Dine," is based on Jn. 21: 12. I wish there was room here for the lyrics! Even more, I hope London...Britain makes room & develops a hunger for Christ...the true Christ, & the salvation from sin He brings. He also brings repeated assurance that He can keep you safely walking with Him all the way to heaven. **WHAT A MEAL! Come & Dine!** (Lk. 24:32; Ps. 34:8; Isa. 55; 25:6; Matt. 22:1-14; Dan. 1:8).

A Real Package Deal (continued from front page)

husband would own the property.

With witnesses on hand, Boaz told of the property which was connected to "Mum's" deceased husband. He said that he would buy it, but that he knew the other man, being a closer relative, had first opportunity to buy it. **The nearer relative said OK!**

Then, Boaz added that when the closer relative would buy the property, he *also* had to marry Ruth, and raise children in the memory of her deceased husband, who was "Mum's" son. You could likely have heard the proverbial needle drop. **You could likely as well have felt the chill in the atmosphere**, as the nearer relative "froze-up" to such an idea.

He excused himself by saying that he was already married, and that taking on Ruth would mess up the inheritance of his own original property for his own family. He then added that bachelor-Boaz could take his place! Boaz was ready, glad and willing to marry Ruth. **He wasn't interested in the property; just Ruth!**

You need to realise that this story is a fact of Israel's history. A *shocking*, yet *blessed* and *glorious* fact of this whole story of Ruth marrying Boaz, is that they eventually became the grandparents of David, Israel's greatest king. The "*shocking*" aspect is that **Ruth**, like Boaz's own mother, **Rahab**, were "outsiders" who not only gained entrance to the circle of "God's people," they are even direct descendants of the Messiah-Saviour, Jesus Christ *Himself!*

Perhaps MORE shocking, Rahab is reputed to have been a **former prostitute!** Even if that is true, it did not hinder Boaz, *and better still*, it didn't hinder God! Love never hinders God, when it is done properly, for "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). Boaz and Ruth did

things properly, though Ruth was totally unfamiliar with God's holy way. This "**drama in real life**," teaches us that no "outsider" should feel that God does not love them or welcome them. The story should encourage *everyone* not to allow *anything* or *anybody* to keep them from finding God. It also tells us that *everyone* has a place to fill in God's plan and God's family. Finally, it shows us that God works circumstances and events to help us to find Him. **All because of love!**

Let's get back to that nearer relative! It *appears* he may have had a legitimate reason for turning down Boaz's offer. In most people's cases, there are things that *seem* "legitimate," like the relative, but are the cause or causes of a person turning back to the old ways, as Ruth's sister-in-law did. **No one criticised this relative.** According to the custom, Ruth could have spit in his face, for not fulfilling the obligation to the family. This didn't happen; *possibly* because they accepted his excuse. It didn't matter, anyway, for there was someone who loved Ruth much more, just waiting for him to refuse the offer! Many seem to be "good moral people;" people that "help others" and "do more good than bad." They don't deserve a spit in the face from anyone. Shouldn't God accept them? Well, a direct ancestor of Christ married Ruth instead! That is no sin for that other relative in the story, but Rev. 3:11 says to us, "*Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown!*"

This "good" man was unwilling to take the whole package. He only wanted the land and any houses and buildings that were on them. I dread to think how many people turn away from Christ for the same reason! They admire various things about Him, but are unwilling to take Him *entirely*—**The WHOLE Package Deal.** Jesus wants to be our Friend, Guide and Example, but demands and deserves to be our Saviour, Lord and King.

God offers *His Real and Whole Package Deal.* **Don't Turn It Down.**



While We Look

Gabriel L. Mancino

Our five senses are such a blessing—well, most of the time. **One prolific author removed his hearing aid** so the phone or doorbell would not interrupt his writing! "**Blessed Quietness!**" But let's just "focus on the eyes," not the ears. This article *should* inspire us to focus our *spiritual* eyes!

We are encouraged to endure with a well-founded hope amid life's difficulties by such Bible verses as this: "**while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal**" (2 Cor. 4:18). **I put that verse in a positive way in the title above.**

It can *appear* that the Bible has too many *negative* things. *Some* people are quick to emphasize and criticise this. Actually, the so-called *negative* things in the Bible have a very clearly *positive* object in view! That's a fact. In some Bibles, like the one quoted in the above paragraph, the verse says "**while we do not look,**" which sounds negative. The old King James Bible says "**while we look not,**" which sounds positive! Just like a car battery, we *must* have both negative and positive, or the car won't operate! **God wants to use it ALL** to get us to heaven, to keep us "in victory" over sin, self, and Satan, and also help us to be an effective witness to others along the way.

A Bible passage that has stuck with me since I started truly following Jesus, focuses our attention upon Him in a special way. It reads as follows: "**looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at**

the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Heb. 12: 2, 3). The words, "*consider Him,*" speak of unswerving concentration upon, and personally applied study of the object—in this case, Christ!

2 Cor. 3 and 4 contrasts the ministries... **even the very faces...** of Moses and Jesus. Read it!! It makes the point that we can be changed into the very image of Christ by God's Holy Spirit...**IF we keep gazing into the mirror!** In that "mirror" we are not to see so much *ourselves*, as see *Christ*. As we do so, "*we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Cor. 3:18 w/ James 1:22-25).

Moses wore a veil to cover his face so the people wouldn't see that the shine was fading. In contrast, we are to remove any "coverings" that block people's view of us, for they are to see "*Christ in you, the hope of glory!*" (Col. 1: 27). **People hide behind all sorts of "veils," and I do not refer merely to burkas!** 2 Cor. 4 makes abandoning all sin, cover-ups and deceit *imperative*, so Christ may shine through us to a world of people heading for hell. Seeing *Him in us* may be their greatest hope of salvation! (Jn. 12:21; 2 Cor. 3:2).

There is simply too much on this subject to share here. It is a rich treasure that will bless *you*, and thereby be a potential blessing to *others!*

As paragraph two says, amid life's difficulties and world chaos *of all sorts*, we need a solid, unmoving point of reference...an "*anchor for the soul,*" (Heb. 6: 19, 20). God Himself has given us One, as Heb. 2:9 says— "*But we see Jesus!*"

There will come a time, as the Bible makes clear, **when most people's gaze upon Christ will come too late** (Zech. 12: 9-11; Rev. 1:7). Yet, in that fearful time—and it *will* be *that* for those who are *unprepared on God's terms*—those who are walking with the Lord will feel the touch of His almighty hand, and hear His tender voice saying: "**Do not be afraid!**" (Rev. 1: 13-19). **Keep Looking!**

We meet at Christ Church on the corner of Brent Street and Heriot Road in Hendon (NW4) at 5:45 pm Sundays. Nearest Tube: Hendon Central.