



A CUP OF FAITH

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THE COMFORTS OF GOSPEL REDEMPTION FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH

Written by Dawn Darby

"Have you ever known someone who, by human calculations, would never become a believer in Jesus Christ—someone who was outside the covenant and had no hope, humanly speaking, of getting in?"


I think of my own mother, raised in a pagan household with parents who were alcoholics, a mother who wanted her daughter to be a drinking buddy and a father who beat his wife and son and scared his daughter until the day he died. How could this girl obtain the promises of God for salvation?

In the book of Ruth we read the story of a woman and a foreigner to God's people; someone who never, in human imagination, would become part of Israel. But God's redemptive plan includes women and extends to Gentiles.

These were not good times in Israel. It was in the days of the judges when "there was no king in Israel [and] everyone did what was right in his own eyes," (Judges 21:25). Yet we see God at work in remarkable ways. We are told of coincidences: Ruth *happens* to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz (2:3). And *behold*, Boaz came from Bethlehem (2:4). God is at work here.

Then, though we see few godly people during the time of the judges (even some of the judges weren't very godly) we are introduced to Boaz. The first thing out of his mouth reveals his character. "The LORD be with you!" (2:4), he greets his reapers. Boaz is described as a worthy man. (2:1). Things are looking up in this story.

Boaz blesses Ruth when he meets her, "The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge?" (2:12).



This blessing is reminiscent to us of the prayers of David found in Psalm 61:4b, “Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!” And the cries of Jesus in Matthew 23:37b, “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings ...” (Who is this David? Who is this Jesus? But I get ahead of myself.)

The story progresses much too quickly for our liking. Wouldn't you love to know more details of the interactions of the characters in this story? Emboldened by Naomi, Ruth asks Boaz to be the answer to his own prayers—“I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer” (3:9). And Boaz recognizes that Ruth is what we now call a Proverbs 31 woman—“all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman” (3:11). Hmm, they seem quite suited for each other.

In Ruth we see ourselves: outcasts, in poverty, exiles, bereft of resources—no hope of redemption. In Boaz we see a type of Christ who redeems those who are incapable of saving themselves. Remarkably, Boaz is not only a type of Christ, but he is the great-grandfather of that David quoted above, and the great-great ... grandfather of Jesus Christ himself! And worthy Ruth is the grand mother of them all.

The comforts of the gospel here belong to us. “Ruth is a fitting symbol of every believer, and even of the church itself— redeemed, brought into a position of great favor, endowed with riches and privilege, exalted to be the Redeemer’s own bride, and loved by Him with the profoundest affection. That is why the extraordinary story of her redemption ought to make every true believer’s heart resonate with profound gladness and thanksgiving for the One who, likewise, has redeemed us from our sin” (Twelve Extraordinary Women, John MacArthur).

My mother obtained redemption from the Lord, just as Ruth did. As it *happened*, my mother had a neighbor named Lois Johnston who invited her to church. And the rest is gospel history.



The author's mother, Jessie Schum, pictured right, and Lois Johnston, left.

THOUGHTS OF A PEDIATRIC NURSE

Written by Anita McNeely

Did you know what it meant, Lord?...
To slip into that empty room
And turn to lean my head against the wall...
Only to find that I was resting my head-
Not against the wall-
But upon your shoulder!
Did you know that so swiftly
All of the clatter of ringing phones,
The crying of sick babies,
And the anxious looks of parents
Ceased to parade across my mind...
And all became quiet.

Oh, just to lean there against you...
And to know the sureness
And comfort of your arms
Upholding my tired weakness!

A second of time passes so swiftly-
But can be filled so fully!

Back again,
Amongst the people and pressures;
Yet, never away from you ever-encircling arms.
Back to serve and be your arms
To others who need you so...
(more than they need doctors or medicine.)

*"Oh, just to
lean there
against
you...
And to
know the
sureness
And
comfort of
your arms
Upholding
my tired
weakness!"*

THOUGHTS OF A PEDIATRIC NURSE

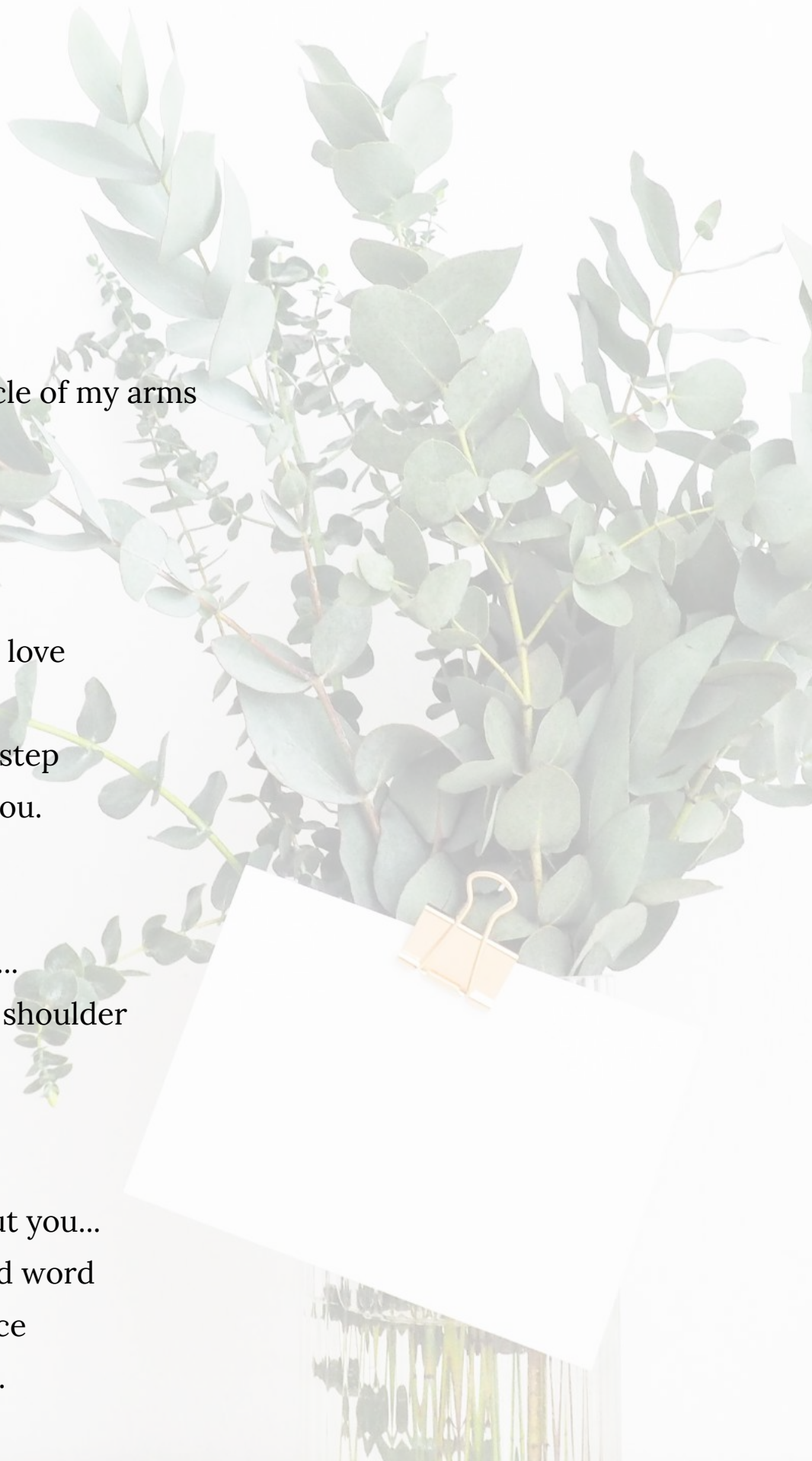
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Did you know, Lord?
Yes! You did know!
Of course you knew!
You were there!

Yes, come my child.
Come close within the circle of my arms
And lean against me...
And rest your head.

If you have time, sit down
And let the strength of my love
Put the spring back
Into the swiftness of your step
And let my words enrich you.

You say there's not time
For even a moment to sit?...
Then lay your head on my shoulder
Just now and know
My arms enfolding you
And upholding
The very hurriedness about you...
Know my gentle whispered word
Of promise and reassurance
To your whirling thoughts.





You say...

You must go back now

To the next patient-

The next cut chin-

The next boy with a hurting arm-

The next girl with a burning fever-

...yes...

To the next parent

Frantic with worry

The foreboding of possible grief...

Too much to bear

Yes, you must go back

And now, since just taking

Only that actual split-second of time

To lean toward me and

Let your heart gaze into my face...

Go back

Amongst hurrying doctors

And nurses scurrying to carry out orders

And children

Whose eyes are wide with fright and pain,

And, yes, parents

Anxious and troubled...

Go back!

Having now fresh quickness,

My tender touch felt from your fingertips;

Your eyes now clearer and steadier...

With a twinkle of hope

And your words spoken easily-

So full of comfort
And seeming to dry each brimming tear
You came to me-
Though only just to rest your head
And receive freely
Of the abundance always in store
For your every need...
And for theirs!

You're back now!
Then give again
And again
To each child
And each parent
And receive a thousand-fold joys unto yourself
For showing them,
Though unknowingly,
The sweetness of your confiding in me.



LOVING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS AROUND THE WORLD

Written by Dawn Darby

Where in the world is Eritrea? This Eastern African country of 45,000 sq miles is bordered by Sudan in the west, Ethiopia in the south, and Djibouti in the southeast. Eritrea was colonized by Italy from about 1889 to 1942, so many government buildings have Italian features. Eritrea has nine recognized ethnic groups and nine national languages. Many Eritreans do speak English. According to Wikipedia, 63% of Eritreans are Christian and 36% are Muslim. But the president has a Marxist/communist background and favors control over all the people. So, no religions are promoted by the government, but Muslims are allowed to worship, (just not overthrow the government). Christians, because they will not worship the president, are not allowed to worship, read Scripture, or sing hymns.

There was a peace deal signed between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2018 and many had high hopes for better treatment for its citizens. Sadly, Eritreans are still waiting for their freedoms.

Currently 600 of our brothers and sisters are in jail in Eritrea for their faith. Many are closing in on their 5000th day behind bars—or in shipping containers in the hot desert sun. But the Christians are full of courage and faith and many persist in sharing their faith with fellow prisoners and guards in spite of further beatings and tortures.



LOVING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS AROUND THE WORLD

Continued

How can we pray for Eritrea? Pray for a change in the government. Pray that Christians will not feel that God has forgotten them. Pray that they will have access to Scripture, for courage to share their faith with others, and for the power of God in conversion. Pray that God will give peace and grace in their suffering, which is also a testimony to others. Pray for strength and health of those in prison as well as their families suffering without them.

For more information about being a prisoner for Christ in Eritrea, read "Song of the Nightingale" by Helen Berhane.

"Pray that God will give peace and grace in their suffering, which is also a testimony to others. Pray for strength and health of those in prison as well as their families suffering without them."

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLES

This month, we're featuring several articles by a few Friendship Circle leaders who will give you a taste of their groups are doing. If you'd like to be a part of a Friendship Circle, contact Dawn Darby

Written by Christina Jimmink

Our Friendship Circle began, as many friendships do, around a dinner table. We discussed what we wanted to do with our time together—and ended with prayer and a game of shuffleboard on Phyllis Overman's dining room table. As events developed, that evening would be one of two in which we met together in person, something which none of us takes any longer for granted (when was the last time you wanted to give someone a hug and couldn't?). After the necessary wrangling with technology via Zoom (adroitly managed by our de facto technical director, Tammy Hanks), we have spent our time talking—about past shaping events, the challenges of the present and the spiritual struggles of our inner worlds. We have also spent our time listening—to hearts, not just words. I am so blessed to be included in this circle of women; they have helped to make quarantine—and life—sweeter.



Written by Marcia Brodersen

There are 6 of us in our Friendship Circle. We met twice in person before Covid-19. During those times we visited with a rather open agenda. All of us agreed that we did not want structure or the responsibility for preparing for a gathering rather we would come together for fellowship and encouragement. We have also met twice using Zoom. Basically we meet every two weeks. It is a very relaxed, refreshing time of sharing what God is teaching us and prayer requests. All of us are committed to holding one another up in prayer. It has been a very sweet experience for all of us.

Written by Sally Lethbridge

It is a privilege to write about our FFC (Faith Friendship Circle) going on its 2nd year. At our first gathering of the year we all bring our calendars and our ideas for the coming year. It's fun to hear what the ladies are expecting from the group and where their interest lies. Our first meetings have always been at my home sharing a meal together, everyone contributing. It's important to me that the ladies understand it's our group and together we decide what the year will bring. It's been very helpful for all of us to have the dates for our meetings set in advance and that is why we bring our calendars on that first get together. We meet once a month usually on Saturdays. We like to begin our meeting with an activity that allows freedom to talk and socialize. We then enjoy a light study titled "Women of the Bible" by Ann Spangler and Jean Syswerda. Every month we discuss a different woman and share what we have learned about her, explore any applications we can take from this woman, and apply to our lives.

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This makes for wonderful conversation and another great way for us to share with each other. It allows opportunities for us to help each other and greater understand of our needs. We end in prayer, ask for any prayer request for the coming month, giving God the Father all glory and praise. We have met 4x this year, two in person and two with Zoom. I'm hoping for our June meeting we all enjoy a picnic outside together at one of our homes or even Pt. Defiance. This year we have on the schedule a game night, an evening at Tacoma Musical theater, two hikes at Mt. Rainier (not difficult, surprise ending with huckleberry ice cream,) walks at Pt. Defiance and along the Ruston waterfront, nature trails. I was also going to try a Saturday morning of Pickle Ball instruction. It's a great game and so much fun! We could follow that with coffee for our discussion. As you can see ladies the possibilities are endless and though I am so grateful for Zoom, it just does not compare to the real thing. The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense. -Proverbs 27:9