

The Reward of Loyalty and Ruth's Example for Believers

Simon Stefanus^{1*}, Djone Georges Nicolas²

¹IKAT Jakarta Theological College

²Katharos Indonesian College of Theology Bekasi

Corresponding Author: Simon Stefanus simonbaitanu@sttikat.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: The Reward of Loyalty, Exemplary, Ruth, Believers

Received : 13 September

Revised : 14 October

Accepted: 15 November

©2022 Stefanus, Nicolas : This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

Loyalty is always interesting because it is an essential part of human life, including spiritual life. However, finding faithful people is not easy since the creation of man until now, including in the lives of those who believe in Jesus Christ. This study analyzes loyalty's rewards and Ruth's example for believers. The approach in this research is descriptive and hermeneutic qualitative methods, and data collection through various sources such as the Bible, journals, and books. The result: First, God made Ruth liked and respected by humans. Second, Ruth is recorded as an example of faith in the Bible. In conclusion, believers in the journey of their lives must remain faithful to God as evidence of faith in Him because the faithfulness of believers is not in vain. Behind their faithfulness, there is an unexpected reward from God.

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs 20:6 says that people in large numbers call themselves kind, but people who are loyal are very hard to find. This fact shows that there is a crisis in the matter of loyalty. Finding loyal individuals in an ever-expanding world and the growing greed of human ambition is complicated.

Loyalty which comes from the root word loyal, is defined as determination and obedience, as well as obedience according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (<https://kbbi.web.id/setia>). Loyalty is also understood as loyalty, generally defined as people's loyalty to particular products or organizations to which they contribute (Heru, n.d., 2014).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Loyalty is needed and becomes a necessity in all areas of life, whether in family, social, political, educational relationships, including in the area of religious beliefs known as matters of faith. According to (Pranoto, 2015), loyalty becomes real when someone in the exam process approaches someone because humans have a loyal tendency when experiencing exceptional and pleasant circumstances and situations. According to (Kapojos & Wijaya, 2018), loyalty is one of the things emphasized theologically in the book of Ruth regarding the example of loyalty that Ruth shows consistently to her mother-in-law Naomi, from difficult moments to happy moments because of the love she has.

(Rombe, 2020) states that Ruth, who is a foreigner or not a descendant of Israel because she comes from Moab's descendants, has demonstrated her loyalty in following YHWH. So (Maiaweng, & Ukung, 2018) reveals that Ruth, in her existence, has proven her faith through her loyalty as a person who worships God through words and attitudes of daily living by observing the Torah. But on the other hand, according to (Tandong, 2021), Naomi as Ruth's father-in-law, has responded to God for the tragedy that she has allowed to experience as a form of testing her faith.

For Roop, who was taken from (Kok, 2019), Ruth, through her decision to follow her mother-in-law Naomi, has shown an attitude of disobedience to Naomi's direction. According to (Daniel, 2015), Ruth faced a dilemma between staying in her homeland or following Naomi because the stigma attached to her had a negative connotation, so it might be difficult for her to get a husband and continue his life in Moab, as a widow of someone who was not from Moab and without children.

Based on the data described above, it can be observed that although Ruth is a foreigner and comes from a nation that is, in fact, famous for worshipping idols, in contrast to the views of Roop and Carroll, the author thinks that Ruth's firm decision to follow her in-laws was not due to disobedience. Nor because of despair because of the difficulty of continuing his life in his people, because Orpah, Naomi's son-in-law's example, has returned to her people. However, Ruth's decision was purely because of her loyalty and sincerity to follow Naomi's God, whom she already trusted and loved. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the rewards of faithfulness and Ruth's example for believers.

METHODOLOGY

The approach used is a qualitative method, namely hermeneutics with narrative criticism, which explains various parts of the narrative in terms of conversation, plot, keywords, scenes, structure, atmosphere, characterizations, and choice of material. The method with a narrative interpretation approach is used in this writing based on the characterizations that will focus on the person of Ruth. The advantage of hermeneutics compared to other methods is the ability to make understanding historical texts easier with all the components contained in them, by paying attention and by studying the meaning of the text and also the literal context from the point of view of the author, the reader and the text as well as the context associated with it become a research study.

RESULTS

Background of the Book of Ruth

The book Ruth narrates the story of the journey of one of the central female characters from the land of Moab named Ruth. The name of the author specifically does not appear in the writings of the Book of Ruth, so it is difficult to determine who wrote it. Scholars have varying views about who the book's author was when it was written and what the author's goal in writing it was. The prophet Samuel in the Talmudic tradition, is considered the author. Still, some scholars or scholars believe that David was the author, and others consider the royal secretary, who is also known as the person who wrote the historical records of the kingdom. However, the exact identity of the person who wrote the Book of Ruth is unknown, and thus the date of its writing is uncertain. According to (Bhanu, 2021), the Book of Ruth has the purpose of fostering faith both for those who read and hear it so that they continue to try to follow the example of the figures recorded in it by sticking to their belief in God and walking in His will. Because their names have special meanings: Elimelech, which means 'my God is king,' Naomi, which means 'my sweetness,' Mahlon, which means 'sickness,' and Kilyon, 'weakness.' Ruth means 'friend,' and Boaz means 'strength.' Orpa, which means 'turn around.'

God's Reward for Ruth's Faithfulness

1). God Made Ruth Liked and Respected by Humans

a. Ruth Receives Love from Naomi

Ruth's loyalty was not without results. Naomi as a mother-in-law, must have known and valued Ruth during her ten years of marriage with her son Mahlon, so after her husband's death, Naomi advised her daughter-in-law to leave her to have a promising future in the land of Moab, and even Naomi prayed for the blessing of love. The Lord came down with him (Ruth 1:8-9; 11-13). Thus he showed his love for Ruth, who had been loyal to him and his dead son. The same thing can be seen when Naomi worries about her daughter-in-law's safety in the fields by encouraging Ruth to be close to the female workers to avoid being disturbed by the men (Ruth 2:22). Even more than that, Naomi thinks about the future, protection, and happiness of her daughter-in-law, thus making a very

detailed plan, to betroth her to Boaz who was both a wealthy person and his family could redeem him (Ruth 3:1-4).

b. Ruth Received Redemption from Boaz, Praise, and Prayers of Everyone

Ruth's loyalty to her husband Mahlon, her mother-in-law Naomi, the nation of Israel, and YHWH has earned the praise of those around her. First, because of his faithfulness, Boaz decided to be a redeemer for himself and took her as a wife (Ruth 4:9-10). The basis starts from the news of Ruth's loyalty to Mahlon, and also her loyalty to Naomi after Mahlon's death, and her decision to leave her nation and belief and rely entirely on the God of Israel, and from the testimony of all those in the city (Ruth 2:11-12; 3:10-13). On the other hand, the elders of Israel prayed for Ruth to be as impactful as Rachel and Leah as Boaz's wife and to have offspring like Perez, who was from the line of Judah (Ruth 4:11-12). Furthermore, the women prayed for the child born to Ruth so that her name would be famous in the land of Israel. Also, they praised Ruth by stating that she was more valuable than seven sons (Ruth 4:13). As stated in Proverbs 31:30, it is evident through the story and life of Ruth that beauty and grace are not the main thing but are in vain, but a woman as a wife who has a fear of God will certainly receive praise.

2). Ruth is Recorded as an Example of Faith in the Bible

Ruth's faithfulness led to more trust in God than she thought. Through the redemption of Boaz for her, she gave birth to a son named Obed, to whom Jesse was later born who was the father of King David, and then it was from the descendants of David that according to God's promise there would be a Savior of the world and a redeemer of sinners: Jesus Christ the Lord (Ruth 4:13-22). Ruth was a foreigner (of pagan descent) and not a native Jew who was God's chosen nation, but her name is recorded in the Bible as a hero of the faith because of her proven loyalty and love. He has been faithful to YHWH and has proven his loyalty to humans so that God's grace and intervention through him as an instrument lead to God's eternal plan: salvation is manifested in his descendants, Jesus, the Son of David. Therefore, (Rombe, 2020) said that Ruth indicated that there were still people who persisted in loyalty to God because they truly loved Him and also loved others. So that even though Ruth was a Gentile, her faithfulness in following YHWH Ruth made him one of the female characters who succeeded in entering the line of the Messiah as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. Ruth is living proof that the fruit of faithfulness is sweet and that salvation is available to all, including those not of Israel's original descendants.

DISCUSSIONS

An Evidence of Ruth's Loyalty and Example

a. Ruth's loyalty to her husband, Mahlon

Based on the data in the Book of Ruth, for ten years, Ruth had faithfully married Mahlon, a foreigner who tried his luck in the land of Moab to earn a living (Ruth 1:4). Although not told in detail about the journey of her household. Still, the fact that Ruth has been with her husband until the last moment of her

life strongly indicates her loyalty to her husband during her life. So (Sarongallo et. al., 2021) are of the view that Ruth is an example of a wife who deserves to be an example because Ruth lived her marriage according to the teaching of the Bible as the word of God. Ruth 1:8 confirmed this fact when Naomi herself, in her blessing, said that God's love should be shown to Ruth because she had shown faithful love to her husband and father-in-law, who had died during their lifetime, including Naomi herself.

b. Ruth's Loyalty to her Mother-in-law Naomi

By following Naomi back to her hometown, namely the land of Judah, Ruth faces her challenges and struggles because she has lost her father-in-law and her husband. So humanly, there is no hope and a clear future, binding Naomi herself, who wants to be followed, does not have a better condition, is old, and cannot be productive (Ruth 1:11-13). The difference between Ruth and Orpah is seen when after Naomi's encouragement and urging to return to their people and try to build their future repeatedly, namely in Ruth 1:8-15, Ruth maintains her intention and decision to continue to follow Naomi. At the same time, Orpah said goodbye and returned to his life. His people (Ruth 1:14). What Ruth said to Naomi in their conversation was a commitment not to let and leave her alone but to show her determination to continue to be faithful and stay with her in-laws in all circumstances and everywhere (Palele Novelia, 2018). The place. The same thing was conveyed by (Kapojos & Wijaya, 2018) based on what was expressed by Ruth; it illustrates her complete commitment to becoming one with Naomi as her mother-in-law in living a continuation of life and uniting herself in the beliefs she holds. Because Ruth has a determination and belief that nothing can separate her from her mother-in-law other than death (1:18). Ruth 1:16 is a description of Ruth's strong desire to follow Naomi without any coercion, but actually because of her desire as a form of theological loyalty rather than honest loyalty (Linaleft, 2010).

Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi has been proven by the words she has conveyed, and the concrete actions shown. Because even in the next journey, Ruth remained obedient and submissive to Naomi, even determined to maintain Naomi's life in daily needs. -day by offering himself to work in the fields as a gleaner of ears of barley (Ruth 2:2, 5, 17-18). Ruth's motivation for doing so was simply because of her love for her mother-in-law, so her loyalty could not be doubted. Ruth followed suit without consideration when her mother-in-law came up with a scenario to appeal to Boaz (Ruth 3:1-6). Even Boaz's testimony of what has become public news about Ruth's love for her loyalty to Naomi is clearly explained in Ruth 2:11, and women in Israel acknowledge and praise Ruth's love for Naomi (Ruth 4:15).

c. Ruth's Faithfulness to Naomi's God

Ruth was faithful to her husband during her lifetime and to her mother-in-law after her husband's death. She also unexpectedly showed her loyalty to the YHWH God that Naomi trusted. When her mother-in-law urged them to return to her family and people, she uttered a very profound word to ponder in

Ruth 1:16 (NIV), where Ruth not only vowed to follow her mother-in-law but declared her faith in the God of Naomi by saying, "...your people are my people. and your God is my God." He thus affirmed that he not only left his people but also abandoned the beliefs of his people to turn to the God of Israel. So confirming that view, Walwood and Zuck were taken (Budhi Setia, 2020), seeing Ruth's declaration as an affirmation of a commitment of great loyalty not only to Naomi but also to the nation and the God she trusts, the God of Israel. (Karman, 2014) views Ruth's determination as a strong desire to adhere to Naomi's religious beliefs. Ruth followed Naomi and her God because she probably spent ten years on the ark of her household, had learned to know YHWH from her husband and in-laws, and saw the difference between YHWH and the other gods she had worshiped before. Because without personal experience with YHWH, it would be impossible for Ruth risked his family and homeland to step into uncertainty. Ruth's reckless move gave an indication that the certainty that came from YHWH underlies her decisions and steps. Boaz also signaled Ruth's faith in God by telling her that the God of Israel, the LORD she followed and made as a Protector, would give her a proper reward (Ruth 2:12). The knowledge of Ruth's God became the basis of her loyalty to Him so that the God of Israel became her focus and priority, not her husband or anything else. In contrast to Orpah, who, after considering that Naomi had immediately changed her decision and had returned to the nation and the gods Her God, Ruth had kept her faith in Naomi's God (Ruth 1:11-17).

d. Ruth's Faithfulness in Garden Work

Ruth's arrival as a foreigner in the land of Judah was not easy, but it was a problem of its own that required adaptation to her new environment. When she decided to offer herself as a field worker, there was a good testimony of Ruth to Boaz from her servants that she worked non-stop from the morning of her arrival until the time of Boaz's arrival (Ruth 2:7, 17, 23). This means that through her faithfulness in her work in the field, Ruth has shown loyalty to Boaz, the owner of the field, as well as showing that Ruth, being honest, is a hardworking woman.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Believers, in the course of their lives, must remain faithful to God as well as to humans because the faithfulness of believers is not in vain, and behind their faithfulness lies an unexpected reward. Ruth's loyalty to God and humans bore fruit: first, God made Ruth liked and respected by humans. Second, Ruth is recorded as an example of faith in the Bible. Ruth's faithfulness reminds every believer that loyalty to God is a high value in their lives. For it is through the faithfulness of the faith of each of God's people that it is proved, and through His people, the glory of God is sure to be revealed.

FURTHER STUDY

To follow up this research, the author plans to further study loyalty as an act of love and gratitude to God concerning the salvation He has bestowed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author humbly thanks God and expresses his deep gratitude to every party who contributed from near and far, morally and materially, so that it has allowed this scientific work can be completed properly.

REFERENCES

- Bhanu, V. R. . (2021). The Role of Ruth's Women in Mainstreaming Multiculturality in Post-Babylonian Exile Jewish Society.
- Budhi Setia Samgar. (2020). Light in the Darkness: An Analysis of Ruth's Literature 1. Integrity: Journal of Theology, 2(2), 140–158.
- Carroll R. M. Daniel. (2015). Once a Stranger, Always a Stranger? immigration, Assimilation, and the Book of Ruth. International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 39(4), 186.
- David Susilo Pranoto. (2015). The Principle of Faithfulness in Serving the Apostle Paul: An Exegetical Study of Acts 20:24. Manna Raflesia, 1(2), 141–157.
- Hamzah, A. (2020). Research and Development Methods. Journal of Undergraduate. Social Science and Technology.
- Heru, S. (2014). The Influence of Service Quality and Organizational Culture on Congregational Loyalty with Satisfaction as a Mediation Variable: A Study on Pentecostal Churches in Indonesia Immanuel Purbasari Congregation.
- Kapojos, S. M., & Wijaya, H. (2018). The Manifestation of God's Loyal Love for Ruth's Faithfulness. Evangelicals: Journal of Evangelical Theology and Congregational Formation, 2(2), 99–104.
- Karman, Y., & Bible, T. (2014). Book of Ruth. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Kok, S. S. (2019). Living as a Stranger Based on the Book of Ruth, Journal of Theology Aletheia. Journal of Theology Aletheia, 21(17), 1–21.
- Lelono, J., Sarongallo, R. R., & Salmi, V. (2021). Implications of Ruth's Loyalty for the Life Relations of Son-in-Law in Pre-Marriage Guidance. Skenoo: Journal of Theology and Christian Religious Education, 1(1), 23–36.
- Maiaweng, P. C. D., & Ukung, C. (2018). Was Ruth the Moabite Woman Worshiper of God? Jaffray Journal, 16(2), 161–174.
- Osborne, G. R., & Gani, E. (2012). Spiral Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Bible Interpretation. Momentum.
- Palele Novelia, L. T. (2018). Family-Based Education in the Book of Ruth for S2C Services at GBI Kelir Samarinda. Excelsis Deo: Journals of Theology, Missiology, and Education, 2(2).
- Rombe, A. P. (2020). A Woman's Faithfulness: An Analysis of the Book of Ruth. SOPHIA: Journal of Christian Theology and Education, 1(1), 53–62.
- Tendean Vani Mega Rianna Tandong. (2021). Naomi Complains or Sues God for Loss?: An Interpretation of the Narrative Ruth 1:1-22. KENOSIS: JOURNAL OF THEOLOGICAL STUDY, 7(2), 203–218.