

Ruth 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.

Analysis

Refusal: '**And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it**'. The kinsman refuses when he understands full obligation. His concern about marring 'mine own inheritance' means producing heir for Mahlon would complicate his estate—children from Ruth would compete with children from his existing wife for inheritance, creating family strife and diluting his children's portions. His calculation was purely financial and self-protective, lacking covenant loyalty. He transfers rights to Boaz, unwittingly facilitating God's redemptive plan. His namelessness in Scripture contrasts with Boaz's honored remembrance—selfishness earns forgetting, covenant loyalty earns memorial.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelite inheritance practices divided father's estate among sons. Taking another wife (Ruth) and producing sons who would inherit Elimelech's portion without adding permanent estate threatened existing children's inheritance shares. The kinsman's refusal showed he valued personal wealth protection over covenant responsibility to preserve brother's name and care for his widow. His choice was legally permissible (Deuteronomy 25:7-10 provided opt-out mechanism) but morally questionable—avoiding sacrifice when covenant loyalty required it. God's providence worked through this refusal, positioning Boaz for redemption and Ruth for messianic lineage.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 – Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does the unnamed kinsman's refusal teach about how self-protection can blind us to kingdom opportunities?
2. How does this illustrate that God's purposes often advance through others' unfaithfulness or refusals?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	לֹא	אָמַר	לֹגֶל:	לֹגֶל:	לֹגֶל:	לֹגֶל:
said	And the kinsman	H3808	I cannot	And the kinsman	And the kinsman	
H559	H1350		H3201	H1350		H1350

לְגָאֵל: נְחִלָּתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר יָתַח הָיָה לִי
H6435 it for myself lest I mar H853 mine own inheritance And the kinsman
H7843 H5159 H1350

לְגַאַל: אַתָּה גָּאַלְתָּי אַתָּה אַתָּה אַתָּה אַתָּה
H859 H853 **thou my right** H3588 H3808 **I cannot** **And the kinsman**
H1353 H3201 H1350