

I Will Redeem You

An Expository Journey Through the Book of Ruth

Ruth 2:1-23

3 The Light of Sovereign Grace Breaking Through the Hard Hand of Providence

July 30, 2017

Ruth 2

1 Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

3 So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the Lord be with you." And they said to him, "May the Lord bless you."

5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

6 The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

7 "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.

9 "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.

12 "May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.

15 When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.

16 "Also you shall purposely pull out for her *some grain* from the bundles and leave *it* that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

18 She took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took *it* out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.

19 Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives."

21 Then Ruth the Moabite said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'"

22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that *others* do not fall upon you in another field."

23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

To the Glory of God

Now one of the hallmarks of biblical Christianity is the disposition that we have toward the weakest members among us. The world teaches us that *"greatness begets greatness"*, and so, to the world, how we relate to the strong and the mighty and the wealthy and the politically connected, determines our success in this life.

But the God, Who is revealed in Scripture, measures greatness with things like humility and with self-denial, and with us striving to become lowly in our own minds. And so, how we treat the poor and the aged and the widow and the orphan, our disposition toward the weak and helpless and the voiceless, determines whether our conversion was genuine or not.

Our faith, our belief in God, compels us to not only worship Him in Spirit and Truth, but to be honest and to have compassion and to show mercy and to give and to treat others, *not* in the way they treat us, but we are told by the Lord Christ to treat others the way we would *want* them to treat us.

And I would suggest that, in many ways, we face a much harder struggle with these things in our day than did the people of the Bible. Because of massive Government intervention and programs designed to feed the hungry and cloth the naked and take care of children and the sick and the aged, we struggle to find our way in being obedient to the Call of God to remember the poor. And in a day when foreigners and strangers have become fodder in the right-left political debate, I think we struggle with verses like:

Exodus 22:21

You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:34

The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

7 "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother;

8 but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need *in* whatever he lacks.

Now we are on a "journey" together to examine every single verse of the Old Testament **Book of Ruth**. And, in the first Chapter, we met a woman by the name of "Naomi", which means: "*pleasantness*". And Naomi was a Jewish woman, a woman of the daughters of Zion, a chosen woman of God, who was married to a Jewish man, and who had been blessed with two Jewish sons.

And through the hard Hand of God's Providence, we saw blow after blow come to this woman of faith. And she found herself in a pagan land, totally destitute, because God had chosen to drive her family *away* from the Promised Land by a famine, and take her husband and her two sons. So, Naomi was left only with a pagan daughter-in-law, a woman named "Ruth".

And because of the abundant afflictions that Naomi knew came from the Hand of God, she said at the end of verse 13:

... the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me.

... and in verses 20b-21:

20... "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara [bitterness], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

21 "I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

But precisely *because* of the harshness, God had blessed Naomi with an extraordinary daughter-in-law. Ruth was a superb example of godly womanhood who was moved on by God the Holy Spirit to say to Naomi:

Ruth 1:16b-17

16 ... "Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me."

And this statement by Ruth is all the more amazing when you consider that all that Ruth knew about the one, true, and living God was that He had been very hard on Naomi. Neither Ruth nor Naomi knew what God was going to do so, as they came back to Bethlehem. Ruth anticipated nothing more than to work very hard to eke out a meager existence as a widow, and that she would care for her mother-in-law until she died. But I want you to notice that she didn't resign herself to that harsh life reluctantly. No, Ruth *volunteered* for it!

And the Prophet Samuel was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to write down this in the opening verse of Chapter 2:

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

Now here we meet a man named "Boaz". And in this one verse, we learn several things about him:

- ✓ He was a close relative to Elimelech (Naomi's husband)
- ✓ He was a man of "great wealth"

Now the name "Boaz" means: *in God is strength*. And according to **Matthew 1:5**, Boaz was a direct descendant of Rahab, the prostitute, who helped Joshua win the Battle of Jericho. Now the phrase that was translated here as "**great wealth**" was translated in **Judges 6:12** as "**valiant warrior**". This Hebrew phrase was also as used to denote someone who was "honorable", "noble", and "godly".

English translators don't quite know what to do with this description of Boaz. He doesn't physically fight anybody, but instead seems to spend his days reviewing the laborers on his extensive lands. The KJV gets the closest to the original Hebrew with its "mighty man of wealth," while the NKJV has "a man of great wealth". The NIV has "a man of standing," while the ESV goes for "a worthy man," and the NASB says "a man of great wealth" in the text, while acknowledging in the margin that the phrase *could* mean a "mighty or valiant man."

But, in addition to his vast land holdings, we know that Boaz was a godly man by his disposition to the slaves who worked in his fields. Samuel tells us in **Ruth 2:4**:

Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the Lord be with you." And they said to him, "May the Lord bless you."

If you want to know a man's relation to God, you need to find out how far God has saturated into the details of his everyday life. Evidently, Boaz was well taught in what God had revealed to Moses about how to treat the stranger and the foreigner and the poor and the weak. And the fact that his ancestor was Rahab may have factored into his disposition toward the foreigner as well.

So, those who knew Boaz the best, his workers, loved him. They respected him and they admired him. Boaz was such a God-saturated man that he greeted his workers with God. And they knew him well enough that they returned the greeting. And this tells us volumes about the man, that the lowliest man in the field wished a blessing on Boaz.

So, not only was Boaz a man of great wealth, he was also a man of great godliness. And in many ways, Boaz was the most eligible bachelor in Israel. He was the kind of man that mothers pray their daughters will find, a strong and wealthy man, a man of high moral caliber, and a humble man.

So, as this Story unfolds, we begin to realize that things are *not* nearly as bleak as Naomi had thought. And after all the examples of the hard hand of Providence that we saw in Chapter 1, Boaz begins to represent the Light of Sovereign Grace breaking through the bitterness that had consumed Naomi.

Now in verses 2-7, we see some character traits of Ruth that lets us know that she, too, was a godly woman:

Ruth 2:2-7

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

3 So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the Lord be with you." And they said to him, "May the Lord bless you."

5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

6 The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

7 "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

So, from this Passage, we learn several things about Ruth.

1. Ruth's Initiative to Care for Naomi

First, we see Ruth's initiative to care for her mother-in-law. Notice in verse 2, Naomi does not command Ruth to get out and work. Ruth is the one who says:

Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.

Ruth is resolute in taking the initiative in caring for her mother-in-law. She has committed herself to Naomi with amazing devotion and now she takes the initiative to work and provide for her.

2. Ruth's Humility

Ruth knows how to take the initiative *without* being presumptuous. And this is one of the most important keys in being a godly woman. And it is in very short supply these days. Look at what the Apostle Peter was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to say about this from **1 Peter 3:1-6**:

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

- 3 Your adornment must not be *merely* external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;**
- 4 but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.**
- 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;**
- 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.**

Today, women all over our nation, both in and out of the Church, are following the teaching and the leading of the most worldly and ungodly women on the planet. And so, more than ever before, we need real life examples, like Ruth, to help us know what it means for a woman to be creative without being domineering, what it means to take the initiative without belittling men, and how to be productive without sacrificing the best parts of what it means to be a woman.

And God has blessed this Church with godly examples that we can look at and emulate. Examples like Sister Coleen, who has devoted herself to care for her dying mother. Examples like Sister Paula, who walked away from a medical career to be the mother and wife that God called her to be. Sister Charlotte, who many times, can't be here because she is tending to her sick husband. Sister Lynn, who devoted herself to, not only her own mother, but her step-mother as well. And Sister Lynn Webb, who not only cares for her mother-in-law, but, also, heard the cry of children, who were not hers, but who needed a mother.

We are blessed to have godly women in this Church, who put their children and their husbands *above* themselves, and they are the *real* heroes of our day. They are the ones who walk in the path set for us by Ruth. And these are the women that should be honored and admired, and young women should seek these women out for counsel and wisdom.

We need to understand that regardless of what direction our nations goes, God has *not* called women to become like men. The Goal of God is *not* gender equality, but holiness. God has *not* called women to *abandon* the gift of their femininity in order to thrive in the 21st Century. In the beginning, God made them uniquely male and female on purpose. And that means that gender distinctions are God-given. And that means that the biological and emotional differences between

men and women, and the differing roles that God has ordained that men and woman should submit to in this life are very Wise and very Good. And these are the things that should be *emphasized* and *taught* and *celebrated* rather than *thrown down* and *minimized* and *ignored*.

And so, all godly women in the 21st Century must strive by the Power of the Holy Spirit, guided by sacred Scripture, to find how to live in this world without casting aside all that God has told women to “be” and to “do”.

Now in verse 7 the servants report to Boaz how Ruth had approached them that morning. She had said:

'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'

Notice that Ruth does not demand a handout. She does not even presume the “right” to glean. All she wants to do is gather up the leftovers after the reapers are done. And she asks permission even to do that! She is like another foreign woman who came to Jesus and said:

Matthew 15:27b

... Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

... to which Jesus responded by extolling her faith. Ruth knows how to take the initiative, but she is not pushy or presumptuous. She is meek and humble.

3. Ruth's Amazing Work Ethic

Ruth is an amazing worker. Verse 7 continues as the slaves tell Boaz what kind of worker Ruth is:

... Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now...

... and verses 17-18 say:

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

18 She took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took *it* out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.

So, Ruth labored from early morning without resting even for a moment. She gleaned until evening, and then before she quit, she beat out what she gleaned, measured it, and took it home to Naomi. What a worker!

Now there is no doubt in my mind that Ruth's godliness was discussed and taught down the line for centuries. So, it is no wonder to me that Solomon, the great, great grandson of Ruth was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to illustrate this kind of work ethic when he said:

Proverbs 31:10-31

- 10 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.**
11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain.
12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.
13 She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight.
14 She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar.
15 She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens.
16 She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard.
17 She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong.
18 She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night.
19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle.
20 She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy.
21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet.
22 She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.
23 Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land.
24 She makes linen garments and sells *them*, And supplies belts to the tradesmen.
25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future.

26 She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

27 She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband *also*, and he praises her, *saying*:

29 "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all."

30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *But* a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

31 Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.

Now there is no doubt that the Prophet Samuel wants those who read this Book to both admire and copy Ruth. She takes the initiative to care for her destitute mother-in-law. She is humble and meek and does not put herself forward presumptuously. And she works hard from sun-up to sundown. Initiative. Lowliness. A great Work Ethic. These are all worthy traits. And they will help you in this life. But they are also traits that honor God as well.

Now look at how the Prophet Samuel shows us the breakthrough of Sovereign Grace in the midst of the hard hand of God's Providence in verse 3:

So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

Samuel says that Ruth just so happened to come to the portion of the field that belonged to Boaz, who just so happened to be of her dead father-in-law's family. What a coincidence, right? I mean, if you didn't know any better, you would think that God was moving here.

Well, yes, God is moving here. And He has been moving all this time. He was *very busy* back when the famine caused Elimelech to move his family to the pagan land of Moab. God was *moving* when Naomi's two sons married pagan wives. And no telling how much God was actively preparing Ruth, a woman who knew nothing of the God the Jews, to first marry a Jewish man, and then upon his death, be compelled to *abandon* her own family, *abandon* her own nation,

abandon her religion, and *abandon* her people to go back to Israel and live in what she thought was going to be abject poverty.

And, at the same time, God was raising up a young man, who was the ancestor of a pagan prostitute. And God made him able to be wealthy. And God moved upon him to open his blind eyes and unstop his deaf ears and take out of him a stony heart so that Boaz could believe. And the result of his saving faith was that Boaz pursued godliness and holiness and humility and kindness, even to those who worked for him.

It is absolutely breathtaking to even try to imagine all of the variables that God was "working together" to bring this Moabitess hundreds if not thousands of miles so she could arrive at this particular field at this particular time. This account is truly one of the best illustrations in all the Bible of what the Apostle Paul meant when he said:

Romans 8:28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

And guess who sees it all? That great Jewish theologian, named Naomi, who had this sweeping understanding of God's Sovereignty as it pertains to sorrow and afflictions. Naomi, who just yesterday, said that God had forsaken her, gives the answer in verses 19-20:

19 Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives."

The answer Naomi has for how all of this happened is: *God*. So, yes, God *brought* the famine. Yes, God *compelled* Elimelech to leave the Promised Land. Yes, God *allowed* the sin of Elimelech's two sons to marry pagans. Yes, God had *sovereignly killed* Elimelech and Mahlon and Chilion. Yes, God had *afflicted* Naomi with a hard hand of

Providence. Yes, Naomi was *bowed down low* as the result of God causing and allowing blow after blow of bitterness to come her way.

The devil didn't do that. Man didn't do that. God did that. God did *all* of that. But that's not *all* that God did. God was *also* working in the famine. God was also moving *in* the sinful marriages. God was also *asserting* His Divine Will in the sudden deaths of the men. And God was also *assuring* that everything He had determined, before the world was, would come to pass *exactly* as He willed it through all the hard bitterness of Naomi.

So, had it not been for the famine, Elimelech's family would not have moved to Moab. And if they had not moved to Moab, Elimelech's two sons would have never met and married pagan women. And if the sinful marriages had not taken place, Ruth would have never known Naomi. And if God has not killed the men, Naomi would not have been compelled to return to Bethlehem. And if God had not joined Ruth to Naomi, Ruth would not have come back with her. And if the women had not returned, Ruth would have never gone out that day to glean in the fields. And if Ruth had not gleaned in the fields that day, she would have never met Boaz. And if Ruth had never met Boaz, they would have never married. And if they had never married, King David would not have been born. And if David had not been born, Jesus Christ would not be the Messiah. And if Jesus was not the Messiah, we would be forever lost. And if we were forever lost, then the Glory of God's Grace in saving unworthy rebels would have never been manifested, and God's Plan for Himself to be glorified and for us to have the fullness of Joy would have been defeated.

So, this Love Story has *eternal* consequences, not only for our eternal Redemption, but for the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in saving all of God's elect.

So, if not for the hard Hand of God's Providence against this one single family, all of the souls that have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb would have perished in a devil's hell, and the pinnacle of the Glory of God, the Glory of God's Grace, would have never been displayed so all the world would marvel after our God. *That* is how important the suffering of Naomi was.

So, do not begrudge the Hand of Providence, dear friends, when it comes at you with blow after blow of affliction. Do not faint and be weary in your minds. The **Book of Ruth** is in the Bible to tell us that it

is at *that* moment, at the very moment that you think you will break in two, that God is moving on your behalf the most. And the Glory that your suffering will bring to God and the eternal and astounding Joy that you will possess at the end of the trial will make all of the hardship and all of the suffering and all of the trouble seem like nothing by comparison. The Apostle Paul agrees with this when he said:

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The meeting of Ruth with Boaz on that day is the breakthrough of Sovereign Grace in the very midst of God's hard Hand of Providence. Now look again at verses 8-9:

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.

9 "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

Now look carefully again at the middle of verse 9. Boaz said:

... Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you...

Now this tells us about what kind of man Boaz was. Boaz *respected* women. *All* godly men respect women. Boaz was a man and knew full well that women were in danger around a bunch of men out in the field. So, he commanded that they not touch her. Why? Because men are bad. Men do bad things. Good men are bad. And Boaz knew this

6,000 years of human history tell us that almost all crime, almost all murders, almost all violence, almost all wars are caused by men. Fallen, sinful, arrogant, and prideful men *assert* themselves in this world. And lost men assert themselves through violence and through intimidation, and through financial and sexual power.

Bad men created almost every false religion and heresy throughout history. Evil men perpetrate ongoing injustice to the poor and the weak and the aged and infirm. Every day in this country, old people are robbed and beaten and stolen from by wicked men. So far this year (2017) almost 400 human beings have been murdered in Chicago alone, almost exclusively by evil men.

Men impregnate women that they do not love, and they either put pressure on the woman to murder her baby or he abandons her to raise the children by herself. Men take pictures of women to satisfy their corrupted lust while forgetting that every woman they look at is some other man's daughter. Rich, conservative, Republican men, who publicly espouse "family values" help destroy countless men, women, and even children as they engage their perverted proclivities with them for money.

Bad men drove many women into the arms of lesbianism through their abuse and neglect. Evil men *created* feminism. And men *finance* feminism. And sinful, weak, and emasculated men help perpetuate the myth that as long as women abandon their God-given roles, they will be happy and fulfilled. Yes, men are bad. And women and children and the weak and the sick and the poor suffer the most when men are bad.

But this reality also means that the *answer* to crime and violence and drugs and murder and illegitimate children and abortion and homosexuality and war and injustice is for God to move upon men. It is for God to be merciful and send us a revival in men, to fear the Lord. The answer is for men to repent and grab the horns of the altar, and to weep between the porch and the altar. The answer is for men to fall on their face and cry out to God for Grace to quince the fires of lust and anger and violence and bitterness that rages within them. The answer is for men to return to God and to bow their knees and to learn humility and to love purity of heart and to respect women. And to lead women. And to honor women.

Listen, if you really want a change in the culture of this nation, you must turn your eyes *away* from Washington, and *away* from politics, and *away* from financial wherewithal. And you need to look to men. Until men become godly and loving and strong, there will be no rescue of our culture. Until men assume the position of "priest" and "prophet" of their homes and lead their families spiritually, the family unit will continue to crumble. Until men rise up and become the

“fathers” and “husbands” and “sons” and “brothers” that God called them to be, we have no hope. So, pray for men. Pray that God will be good to visit them and change them and empower them and enable them to walk this world in white.

Boaz looked at women with eyes that revealed a pure heart and a right spirit. And that is a sovereign Work of God’s Spirit.

Now, in whatever time I have left, I want to get into a very important issue that verses 10-17 bring to the forefront:

Ruth 2:10-17

10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.

12 "May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.

15 When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.

16 "Also you shall purposely pull out for her *some grain* from the bundles and leave *it* that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

So, I have a question. *Why did Boaz show Ruth Mercy?* Ruth wanted to know the answer to that when she asked this in verse 10:

Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?

Ruth *knows* that she is a Moabitess, a foreigner. She understands very well that the social order of that day did not allow for a pagan woman to be accepted in Jewish society. And that was *especially* true seeing in how Ruth was a daughter of the despised people of Moab that God himself had cursed. So, from a natural viewpoint, Ruth has at least three or four strikes against her.

But notice that she does not resent this. She accepts it. And as a non-Jew, a Gentile, a pagan, Ruth does not expect any special treatment. And yet, Boaz treats her with kindness. And Ruth's response to Boaz's kindness is absolute astonishment.

Now truly, Ruth is vastly different from most people in our day. We *expect* kindness, and we are astonished and resentful if we don't get what we think we deserve. But Ruth is astonished because she is *receiving* kindness. And she expresses her sense of astonishment and unworthiness by falling on her face and bowing to the ground.

Now proud people don't do that. Self-righteous people respond to even the tiniest slight by becoming offended. In their human arrogance, they feel *diminished* if others don't see how glorious they really are. So, proud people usually don't say thanks. And they don't say thanks because they're not grateful. Self-righteous people think they *deserve* special treatment, and so, when they get it, it is only what they're entitled to.

But humble people are made even *more* humble by being treated graciously. And this tells us something very profound about the Grace of God. Unlike what you will hear from the pied-pipers on the Hay, Wood and Stubble Television Network, God's Grace is *not* intended to lift us out of our lowliness. God's Grace is *not* deigned to exalt us or to make us feel better about ourselves or to relieve us of suffering or help us to have a better life down here.

God's Grace is designed to make sinners to delight in God. God gives His Grace to rebels so that they may be able to see Jesus as the Treasure of the Universe. God moves upon fallen human and gives them Grace so that they will find the fullness of their Joy in Jesus Christ.

Now if we're reading this Book correctly, we will see Jesus in the Book of Ruth. And so, if Ruth represents us and Boaz represents Jesus, then the kindness of Boaz toward Ruth is an example of how the Grace

of God comes to us. But when Ruth asks Boaz why he has issued the grace to her, what was his answer?

11 ... "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.

12 "May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

Now it *looks* like Boaz is saying here that he has issued kindness (or the Grace of God) to Ruth (or us) because of how Ruth has treated her mother-in-law and as a result of her faithfulness. But, if that is true, then the Grace of God would be a "payment" for the "good works" that we perform. In that scenario, Grace would be God *responding* to what we do *first*. We *initiate* good works and then God *responds* to our good works by issuing Grace. So, if Boaz is saying that the *reason* he has been good to Ruth was because she did all that she did *first*, then Grace would be a "reward" or a "payment" for Ruth's efforts.

And that would mean that the Romans and the Mormons and the Muslims and the Jehovah's Witnesses are right, and Salvation is *not* by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone, but Salvation is by works. It would mean that we have to *earn* God's Grace, that we have to *deserve* Grace by what we do first. It would mean that we have to *work hard* to put God in a position to be *obligated* to give us His Grace. So, is that what the Prophet Samuel is trying to tell us here? Did Boaz believe that? Did Ruth?

No, no, and no. If Ruth has *earned* the favor of Boaz, then we must think of her as a kind of "employee", rendering service to her mother-in-law, so that she could *earn* Boaz's favor. And that means that all her efforts, all her labor, and all her working to be kind to her mother-in-law is what *caused* Boaz to give her his favor.

So, in that scenario, Boaz would be in the position of being *obligated* to favor Ruth because she had *earned* it through her labor toward her mother-in-law. And the implications of that, in regards to how God deals with us, are frightening.

You see, dear friends, if we have to *earn* God's Grace, precisely what should we "do" to earn it? All the labor in the world would not be

enough. If my Salvation is nothing more than God *responding* to something that I did *first*, what is it that I must “do” that would get the attention of the Almighty and make me attractive to Him?

But even more importantly, if God gives Grace to us in *response* to something that we do *first*, then how is it “Grace”? How is it not a “payment” or a “wage”? If Grace is to be Grace, then, by default, it must be “free”. Grace, by definition, *cannot* be “earned”, it *cannot* be “deserved”, and it *cannot* be “owed”.

If Grace is “unmerited favor”, then the “unmerited” part means that it is *not* a response to something I did *first*. And this is *exactly* what Paul’s argument was in **Romans 11:6**, when he said:

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Boaz says in verse 12 that *God* is really the One Who is rewarding Ruth for her love to Naomi. And that means Boaz understood that he was *not* the source of this favor, he was only the instrument of God. And I think that the key to understanding this lies in what Boaz said in verse 12:

May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.

This verse does *not* encourage us to picture Ruth as an “employee” of God providing needed “labor”, which God then, as the “Employer”, rewards with a good “Wage”. The picture here is of God as a great winged Eagle, and Ruth as a threatened little baby eagle coming to find safety under the great Eagle’s Wings.

And the implication of verse 12 is that God *Himself* is the One Who will reward Ruth. And God is *not* rewarding her for her labor toward her mother-in-law. God is rewarding Ruth because He has sovereignly empowered her to seek refuge under His Wings!

Boaz, somehow, understood the Truth that God’s Grace empowers sinners to take refuge under God’s Wings. And evidently, he passed this Truth down to his children and their children, until, one day, King David-, Boaz’s great-grandson, wrote this in **Psalms 57:1**:

**Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes
by.**

Now notice the word "**for**" in this verse. This word means "*because*". So, David was praying, "Be merciful to me, O God, **BECAUSE** my soul takes refuge in You." So, the *source* of Grace for David was *not* because he had done something to earn it. No, Grace is free. David is saying here that God's Grace was given to Him so that he could trust in God. So, Grace *enabled* David to take refuge in God. God had moved graciously upon David to the degree that God Himself had become David's Refuge.

Now if that is true, we have to ask just how Ruth's love for Naomi and her leaving her own family relate to her seeking refuge under the Wings of God. And the answer is that Ruth was empowered by God's Grace to *leave* the refuge of her father and mother in Moab because she had *already found* a Refuge under the Wings of God that was infinitely superior to *anything* that Ruth's parents or her nation or her culture or her religion could offer!

So rather than thinking that it was Ruth's "actions" that *initiated* God's Grace, we need to understand that it was God's Grace that *initiated* Ruth's godly and self-sacrificing "actions". So, godly and loving works that flow out from us are *not* what "causes" God's Grace to come to us. It is God's Grace already working in us that "causes" the godly and loving works that we do.

God already loved Naomi before Ruth ever met her. And God was working, secretly, behind the scenes, through the hard Hand of Providence, to not only bring Himself Glory, but to bring Ruth into Salvation, and to bring both Ruth and Naomi into the fullness of Joy as well.

So, God, the great Eagle, moved toward Naomi. And in order to continue to enjoy the Refuge that she had found under His Wings, Ruth moved toward Naomi as well. And so, Ruth's amazing commitment to *abandon* her former life and care for Naomi was simply the normal and natural human response of *already finding* Refuge under the Wings of God. And Boaz recognized that.

So, the relation between taking refuge under God's Wings on the one hand and leaving home to care for Naomi on the other hand is that

being under God's Wings is what *enabled* Ruth to forsake human refuge and give herself in love to Naomi. Another way of saying this is that leaving home and family and culture and false religion, and loving Naomi is simply the result and the evidence and the proof of taking refuge in God.

This is *exactly* what happened to Peter and the others as they met Jesus.

Matthew 4:18-22

18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

19 And He said to them, "**Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.**"

20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

21 Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.

22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

When God calls your name, you respond by *immediately*, *abandoning* everything, and you fully and forever embrace Jesus, because the Grace of God has already empowered you to take Refuge under God's Wings. So, now, back to Ruth's question in verse 10:

"Why have I found favor?"

And the answer is that the Grace of God has empowered this pagan daughter of Moab to take Refuge under the Wings of God. And this is what gave her the power and the freedom and the desire to immediately leave home and love Naomi.

Ruth did not *earn* Mercy from God or Boaz. She is *not* their "employee". They are *not* "paying her wages" for her labor. On the contrary, Ruth has honored Boaz, and, by extension, God Himself, by admitting her great *need* for what they could supply to her and by taking refuge in their generosity.

This is the clear Message of the Gospel in both the Old and the New Testament. God will have Mercy on anyone (Palestinian or Israelite or American) who has been graced to humble himself like Ruth

and who has been sovereignly empowered to take refuge under the Wings of God.

And that means that God is *not* an “Employer” looking for “employees”. God’s Grace is not designed to empower you to become great and mighty and strong. God is an Eagle, and God’s Grace empowers wicked rebels to take refuge under His Wings. God is not in business to make much of you. God is in business to so radically transform you (by what He alone does for you) that you will gladly and immediately leave father and mother and homeland and false beliefs and anything else that may hold you back from a life of radical and risk-taking Love under the Wings of Jesus.

Now let me end by getting back to Naomi. Boaz gives Ruth all she can eat for lunch. She works till sundown. She returns to Naomi and gives her the leftovers from lunch and all the grain (vv. 17–19). She tells her what happened with Boaz, and in verse 20 Naomi’s theology of God’s absolute Sovereignty serves her well. She says:

May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.

So, Naomi is saying that Boaz is blessed by God to not withdraw his kindness to the living (Ruth and Naomi) and the dead (Elimelech). And this means that the Light of God’s Love has finally broken through all the “night” of God’s hard hand of Providence for Naomi to see. And she exults that the Lord is *kind*. And He is Good to all who take Refuge under His Wings.

So let us fall on our faces and bow before the Lord. Let us quickly confess our own unworthiness. And by God’s Grace, and to God’s Glory, and our own eternal Joy, let us take Refuge under the Wings of God, and be astonished at His Grace.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.