

RUTH 2:8-16 (BREAD AND GRACE IN THE FIELD OF BOAZ)

Introduction: There is a lot of truth in the saying "The Lord helps those who help themselves." We live in a time where Christians have been taught that we can claim our way into prosperity or that being a Christian implies that we should automatically be blessed with overflowing abundance.

Quite often, those promises come along with hints that these blessings will be even bigger, better, and more lavish if you give money to the person who tells you this stuff, but that's besides the point. The Bible never teaches these things. There is, even among the greatest figures in Scripture, hardship, trial, sadness, and death. Just ask Jesus about the cross when you get the chance.

But there is also the truth that those who are industrious, hard-working, dedicated and honest, and who rely on God's already- granted blessings of life, health, and ability, will inevitably be further blessed. This truth is seen clearly in the main figure of the book of Ruth... a gentile woman who bears that name.

She has already proven herself faithful, dedicated, hard working, and caring. And today we will see more noble qualities demonstrated by her - humility, a subservient attitude, and a person willing to keep right-on working without complaint.

We'll also see that her honorable attributes didn't go unnoticed by a well-to-do and likewise noble person. Because she was willing to reach out and work in order to support herself and her mother-in-law, Ruth will be blessed for her efforts. It should be a lesson to us that we should be about our business as well, working hard, acting honorably, and doing so without complaint.

These things will not go unnoticed by the Lord and they will be repaid in due time. So let us trust this, not claiming worldly wealth and prosperity as if it was our expected due, but working for what we desire and honoring God in the process.

Text Verse: "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities have passed by." Psalm 57:1

We are not promised a life of ease. Calamities can be expected, but we need to keep working through them, honoring God as we go, and serving the King, even if it involves tiring labor which seems to be unrewarded. It isn't. The reward is coming and it will be astonishing when it does so. This truth is found in God's superior word, so let's turn to that wondrous book once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Grateful Ruth (verses 8-10)

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not?"

We begin today with Boaz' first recorded words to Ruth. Instead of asking about how she likes Israel, or why she came with Naomi to the land, or any other type of small talk, the Bible records words of grace, exactly what she sought after back in verse 2 when she said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after *him* in whose sight I may find favor."

His words are, *ha-low shamaat biti* (1:29) "Will you not hear, my daughter?" They are a fatherly expression which would be used by an elderly man towards a younger woman. And his admonition is...

^{8 (con't)} Do not go to glean in another field,

After her first day of gleaning, she might have decided to go into another field so that she wouldn't appear annoying or troublesome to the people around her by gleaning continuously in the same place. Boaz is telling her this is not a problem.

In turn, his care for her is perfectly evident. She is undoubtedly of interest to him as his words indicated to us last week, and she is also the daughter-in-law of his deceased relative and his widowed wife. It is his desire to show attention and care to her and thus to Naomi as well.

8 (con't) nor go from here,

His words now are *v'gam lo taaburi mizzeh*. He says "and also not go from here." This is not a repetition of what he just said. His previous words applied to moving to someone else's property. These words apply to the movement of those cutting the sheaves.

He is directing her, probably with hand motions, to go and glean directly behind those who bound the sheaves. She had probably been staying further back from the reapers and binders, but by being closer to the hired hands, she would have much better chances of finding more food among the other gleaners in the field.

His directions allow her to stay, to feel welcomed during her stay, and to take full advantage of everything the law allowed for her without keeping back and letting others work ahead of her. He is giving her an equal standing with any Israelite who was also out gleaning.

8 (con't) but stay close by my young women.

The word Boaz uses here for "stay close" is *dabaq*. It is the same word which was used when she *clung* to her mother in law, refusing to allow her to return to Israel alone. It is also the same word used in Genesis 2:24 when it says that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

He is asking her to not depart from being near them as they work binding the sheaves that were cut by the reapers. This was probably a way of ensuring that she would begin to make friends with others as they worked together as much as for anything else. He is tending to both her physical needs as well as her need for human interaction.

⁹ Let your eyes *be* on the field which they reap, and go after them.

His words here though seemingly obvious are actually intended as a careful protection for her. As she was gleaning, she would be looking down and not really paying attention to where she was going. If you've ever picked blueberries on a mountain side, you might have picked yourself off a path and found yourself lost.

Time can slip away and the mind can become inattentive, except to the task at hand. If she were to do this, she could actually wander off Boaz' field entirely and find herself on the property of someone who was far less sympathetic to gleaners.

And so he is ensuring that she pay attention and go directly behind the reapers while staying close to the women who bundled the sheaves. The words in these verses switch back and forth between the reapers and the women doing the bundling so that it seems the women are the reapers. But that's not the case.

Instead, the reapers continue working in steady progression, but the women would be coming back and forth behind them, gathering sheaves and carrying them to a central place. Each has a set task which isn't noticeable in the translation.

^{9 (con't)} Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you?

These words are a euphemism. To touch someone implies to hurt them, but instead he says it this way to show that she will be completely safe. Not only will she be unhurt, but the reapers will leave her literally untouched as well. This form of speech where touching implies hurting another is found in the 105th Psalm -

"When they went from one nation to another,
From *one* kingdom to another people,
¹⁴ He permitted no one to do them wrong;
Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes,
¹⁵ *Saying*, 'Do not touch My anointed ones,
And do My prophets no harm.'" Psalm 105:13-15

With such an assurance from the owner of the property, she would not fear in coming closer to where the fallen grain would be more abundant rather than staying back where it would have already been mostly gleaned.

^{9 (con't)} **And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."**

This is an exceptionally kind gesture in itself. Water is heavy and drawing it from a well takes effort. After that, it is poured into containers and would have to be carried from the well to the field. Because of all the effort, the heat of the sun, and the fact that water would have to be carried in quite often, it is unlikely that gleaners would normally be allowed to have something which took such laborious effort.

The old saying "time is money" would ring true in the value of the water. All of the time and effort it took to bring it to the field would be considered a part of what the owner would calculate into his profit and loss statement at the end of the day. Allowing Ruth to drink this water was truly a privilege of distinction.

It would allow her to come to the field without carrying her own water and it would make her entire day much, much easier to bear. As a side note, the well

where this water was drawn was probably the same well which her great-grandson longed after during his time fighting with the Philistines which is recorded in 2 Samuel -

"David *was* then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then in Bethlehem. ¹⁵ And David said with longing, 'Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which *is* by the gate!'" 2 Samuel 23:14, 15

¹⁰ **So she fell on her face,**

To fall on one's face is the humblest form of reverence that one can show. If to another person, it is considered high civil reverence. If it is to God, then it is the highest of religious reverence. The face is literally pressed to the ground, almost as if acknowledging that "from this I came, and to this I deserve to return."

In her case, she was intimating that the kindness shown to her was far above the lowly position she possessed. Her immense gratitude is seen in the act of assuming such a position.

^{10 (con't)} **bowed down to the ground,**

This literally reads "'and' bowed herself to the ground." One can bow to the ground without falling on their face, but she did both at the same time. In a delicate and reverential way, she completely submitted herself to him in gratitude and thanks. The two actions, though described separately, form one united movement of astonished humility.

^{10 (con't)} **and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes,**

The amazement in her words shows how astonished she was. She was probably pondering a thousand possibilities all at the same time. Once again, the translation of the NKJV lacks the force of the word *khen* which she uses. They translate it as "favor," but rather, it means "grace."

It isn't just favor, but unmerited favor that she is acknowledging. In what she says, the words of Kris Kristofferson from his song, *Why Me Lord*, come to mind -

Why me Lord what have I ever done
To deserve even one of the pleasures I've known
Tell me, Lord, what did I ever do
That was worth lovin' you or the kindness you've shown

Anybody who has ever come to the foot of the cross and been cleansed by the blood of Christ must certainly have asked the same question. "Lord, why have I found such favor in Your eyes?" After many years, the question still perplexes me. "What is it that would make You look down in favor on one such as me?"

^{10 (con't)} **that you should take notice of me, since I *am* a foreigner?"**

From a biblical standpoint, to "take notice" of someone means to show any form of kindness or respect, including affection. She not only acknowledges his grace towards her, but that it is grace towards a foreigner. As a Moabite, she was entitled to glean from the fields, but nothing more could be expected.

Instead, he has lavished upon her grace in abundance. Even more than she could have imagined possible. Once again, the picture between Ruth and Boaz and us and Jesus should be painfully clear. As gentiles, we are not even of the same covenant line as the people from whom He came.

But the apostle Paul explains that despite our foreign-born status, Christ also has lavished His grace upon us. Here are his words from Ephesians 2:11-13 -

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

As we progress through Ruth, we should be able to see ourselves represented by her because we have been shown such great favor and unmerited kindness and grace from the Lord Jesus.

In this verse there is an interesting paronomasia in the two words which are translated as "take notice of me" and "foreigner." In Hebrew, they are *nak_har* and *nak_hri*. Because she is a foreigner and thus unknown, she is actually all the more noticeable.

*Therefore remember that you, as you realized
Once Gentiles in the flesh, by birth and not decision*

*You who are called the Uncircumcised
By what is called the Circumcision*

*Made in the flesh by hands, this rite
A sign which is perceived by eyesight*

*That at that time you were without Christ
Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*

*And strangers from the covenants of promise
Having no hope and without God in the world, destined for hell*

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away
Have been brought near by the blood of Christ, your debt He did pay*

II. The Lord Repay Your Work (verses 11-13)

¹¹ And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband,

His words, translated as "fully reported," form an antique idiom - *huged hugad* - "showed, showed." Somewhere along the line since their return to Israel, and most probably from Naomi herself, Boaz heard that Ruth had come along with Naomi and of her tender care and love for her. It wasn't just a passing comment, but it was a tapestry of a fine description concerning her as his words indicate.

Though humble and willing to endure trials, privation, and an obscure life, notice was taken of her and her commendation has come. It is reflective of the words of Jesus from Matthew 6 -

"But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." Matthew 6:3, 4

Ruth now receives open praise for deeds which were quietly done in a corner and without the sound of any blowing trumpets.

^{11 (con't)} and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth,

In respect and in love for Naomi, Ruth was willing to give up all of her childhood memories, her family, and the sweet smells and tastes which accompany life on home soil. This shows a depth of character far different than the vast majority of people on earth.

Instead of self gratification and the certainty of what would be a much easier life, she was willing to accept whatever her lot would be as she ventured with Naomi to the Land of Israel. Her character is known by her actions.

11 (con't) and have come to a people whom you did not know before.

The phrase from which the word "before" is translated is *temowl shishowm* - or literally "yesterday and the day before" - it is a primitive way of representing time past. Not only was the land different, and not only would the cherished memories of her youth slowly fade away, Ruth had come to a people whom she had no knowledge of at any point in her life.

Her knowledge of Israel was limited to that of her dead husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law, along with that of Naomi. They had left Israel in a time of famine and hardship. So, for her to return with Naomi after knowing all this showed that she was willing to accept the people of Israel in a manner far differently than other foreigners would.

Boaz understood that she was determined to be not a foreigner in a foreign land, but she was willing to be a foreigner in a new home-land. Though not an Israelite, she was willing to accept life as one.

12 The LORD repay your work,

This phrase brings to mind the words of Jesus from Luke 18:14 which said that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will

be exalted." Ruth has humbled herself, but Boaz asks for her to be exalted and repaid by the Lord Himself for her noble deeds. And the use of the word "repay" doesn't mean that the Lord is in debt to her. Rather he is calling for the grace of the Lord to be upon her.

^{12 (con't)} **and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."**

It is almost certain that Boaz had Abraham in mind when he said this. First in Genesis 12:1, we read this -

"Now the LORD had said to Abram:

'Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.'" Genesis 12 :1

Abraham left his country, his family, and his father's house and because of his faithfulness, we read this later in Genesis 15:1 -

"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'" Genesis 15:1

Boaz's words to Ruth reflect this same sentiment that is seen towards Abraham. She had left her country, family, and father's house and has acted faithfully toward Naomi. Because of this, he is asking for the blessing and reward which Abraham received to come upon her as well.

However, it is not a general blessing which Abraham received, but a specific one. It was a blessing which transferred to but one son, Isaac. And from Isaac, it transferred to but one son, Jacob, who is Israel. For this reason, Boaz asks for the reward to be "by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

This is a specific blessing upon a foreigner who has come to participate in the covenant line and with the covenant people. Ruth has come for refuge under His wings. This is a sentiment repeated several times in the Old Testament, including this verse from the 36th Psalm -

"How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings."
Psalm 36:7

Interestingly, the very blessing that Boaz pronounces upon her now, is a blessing that will be fulfilled by the Lord through him in a detailed way in the time ahead. It is an exceptionally nice touch to be found in the book of Ruth.

¹³ Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord;

Many translators say, "I have found favor in your sight" instead of "Let me find favor in your sight." This makes more sense because she then explains what she means in the rest of the verse. But the NET Bible does a great job of saying it in a way that is more understandable to the modern reader. They simply translate it as, "You really are being kind to me, sir."

She isn't *asking* for favor, she has already found it. But, she isn't bragging about it either. Rather, she is acknowledging it in a grateful way. And the reason is found in the continuation of the same verse...

13 (con't) **for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."**

His words have given her a new light of hope. Other than Naomi, she was alone and probably wondered what source of joy she could ever expect. As a foreigner and a poor person, there was no true solace in dreaming about great things to come. But then this stranger, through his comforting actions, had shown her an affection that she had not yet encountered.

Likewise, she said that he had "spoken kindly" to her. The term she uses is *al lev*, literally meaning "to the heart." His words had transformed sadness to joy. They had given her rays of hope instead of thoughts of sadness or despondency. Her heart was comforted because of him. And she felt none of it was deserved.

Unlike his maidservants, she was a foreigner. They were hired hands, she was one who gleans. Their language was familiar, hers probably sounded awkward. Their customs were known to him, hers were strange and unknown. And yet, he had spoken to her and treated her as if she were like them in his eyes. The heart of Ruth was encouraged by the owner of the harvest field.

When you do a charitable deed as you're going

Do not let it be that your left hand will know

What your right hand is over there doing

Keep it a secret, yes even so

That your charitable deed may be in secret

And your Father who in secret sees

Will Himself reward you openly

Because your actions Him they did please

*This is the mark of a humble and gentle soul
One who is willing to do what is just and right
So keep your pride always under control
And you will be ever-pleasing in God's sight*

III. The Gracious Hand of Boaz (verses 14-16)

¹⁴ Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar."

When it was time for the reapers and gatherers of the sheaves to eat, Boaz made sure that she was included in the meal as well. Therefore, not only is he fulfilling the law by allowing her to glean and also showing kindness to her through his words and actions during working time, he is also tending to her at mealtime as well.

Interestingly, According to John Gill, "The Midrash [the ancient commentary on the book of Ruth] gives an allegorical sense of these words, and applies them to the Messiah and his kingdom, and interprets the bread as the bread of the kingdom, and the vinegar of the chastisements and afflictions of the Messiah." They then equate this meal with Isaiah 53:5 which says -

"But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

There is no reason to not see this either. Jesus Himself said that He is the Bread of life. And at His cross, as is recorded in all four gospels, He was given the same type of sour wine which is mentioned in this verse here in Ruth.

Ruth's meal with Boaz is prefiguring the Person and work of Christ in no small way. Especially we can discern this because after the bread and sour wine we see the continuation of verse 14...

14 (con't) So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched *grain* to her; and she ate and was satisfied,

There is a requirement in the Law, recorded for the Feast of Firstfruits, that says this -

"You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." Leviticus 23:14

First came the bread and sour wine and then they partake of parched grain. Understanding that the Feast of Firstfruits is a picture of the resurrection of Christ is what brings sense to the order of the verse. First came Jesus the Bread. Then came the cross which is connected to the sour wine, and then came the resurrection. Only after this do we partake of the benefits of the harvest.

14 (con't) and kept some back.

The parched grain that was passed to her was more than enough for her to eat. Boaz was being extra-abundant in generosity to her, knowing that she would need the meal if she hadn't eaten well of late and also giving her enough for leftovers, which she carefully kept back for a special purpose.

An obvious connection to us in this is that Christ has given us all that we could ask for and more. We have, whether we acknowledge it or not, been given an abundance, in life, in His word, and in His spiritual blessings. And so, the obvious question for each of us is, "What will we do with the excess?"

Ruth has kept some back for a special purpose which we will see in next week's verses. It is to give it to Naomi, a poor and deprived Jewish woman. Are we willing to do the same for the spiritually deprived around us? Will we tell about Jesus or keep it quiet?

¹⁵ And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.

As an additional hand of grace, Boaz tells his servants after her departure that Ruth should be allowed to glean even among the sheaves. This is an extra benefit that was being granted. If others were to do this, they would be carefully watched, or simply told to move away from the reaping.

The grain is first cut and then gathered together into bundles which would be tied together. These are the sheaves. In this area, there would be an especially large amount of extra grain lying around because as the bundles were combined and as they were carried off, individual stalks would fall out.

If gleaners were allowed around this area, it would be easy for them to steal right out of the sheaves. So normally, they would be kept back until the sheaves were removed and then they could pick up the abundant amounts of grain left on the ground.

But in the case of Ruth, Boaz had enough confidence in her to know that she wouldn't steal out of the bundled up sheaves. It is a true vote of confidence in her character and integrity.

***¹⁶ Also let *grain* from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave *it* that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."**

And as we finish today, this is a final demonstration of his care for Ruth and Naomi. She's been instructed to stay in the field of Boaz and to follow close behind the women who gathered the stalks into sheaves.

She had been granted protection from any harm which could come from the laborers. And she had been granted all the water she needed from the laborer's supply. She was also granted the right to sit among the reapers, to dine with the laborers, she had extra food to take home, and special permission to glean among the sheaves.

And along with all of that, Boaz adds this final blessing upon her that she is unaware of. The reapers have been given instruction to purposely let some of the stalks that they have in their hand fall to the ground for her. It would be like intentionally dropping money on a sidewalk that a poor person was following along on.

As the reapers cut, they would continue to grasp the stalks until their hand was full and then take that to where the sheaves were being bundled. In the midst of this process, they were to deliberately, not accidentally, drop some for Ruth.

The entire scene that we see is a picture of the grace of God in Christ towards the gentiles. He keeps us safely in His field of harvest, allows us to work alongside his own people, grants us protection from harm, supplies us with the water of life, bestows upon us a seat among his people at mealtime, gives us an overabundance at the meal so that we are never hungry, and allows us access to the riches of heaven itself with all of its superabundance.

We have been granted exceptional care and many tender-mercies by the Lord who loved us enough to go to the cross for us so that we could partake of heaven's meal together with Him. God personally selected the details in today's verses to show us a minute glimpse of the immense care He shows for those He loves.

And it is all available to us by a simple act of faith. Ruth showed faith in the God of Israel by clinging fast to her mother in law and in turn joining herself to Him. We, by a mere act of faith in Jesus Christ, can likewise be joined to this wondrous God.

Closing Verse: Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! 1 John 3:1

Next Week: Ruth 2:17-23 (Gleaning Through the Harvest Season) (6th Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. He knows your trials, troubles, and woes and He is there with you through them. So cling to Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Bread and Grace in the Field of Boaz

Then Boaz said to Ruth

“You will listen, my daughter, will you not?

Do not go to glean in another field

Nor go from here, not from this spot

But stay close by my young women here

You will be safe and shall have no fear

Let your eyes be on the field which they reap

And go after them, this you shall do

Have I not commanded

The young men not to touch you?
And when you are thirsty
Go to the vessels and drink the water
From what the young men have drawn
Do this too, won't you my daughter?

So she fell on her face
Bowed down to the ground, and to him said
“Why have I found in your eyes this grace?
Such wondrous favor and not sternness instead?

That you should take notice of me
Since I am a foreigner, and thus unworthy

And Boaz answered and said to her
“It has been fully reported to me
All that you have done for your mother-in-law
Since the death of your husband, that calamity

And how you have left your father and your mother
And the land of your birth also
And have come to a people, yes another
Whom you did not before know

The Lord repay your work
And a full reward be given you too

By the Lord God of Israel
Under whose wings for refuge have come you

Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight my lord
For you have comforted me
And have spoken to your maidservant a kindly word
Though I am not like one of your maidservants, but unworthy

Now Boaz said to her at mealtime
"Come here, and eat of the bread

And dip your piece of bread in the vinegar
Come, and feel free as I have said

So she sat beside the reapers
And parched grain to her he passed
And she ate and was satisfied
And kept some back, feeling full at last

And when she rose up to glean
Boaz commanded his young men, saying
"Let her glean even among the sheaves
And do not reproach her, this to you I am relaying

Also let grain from the bundles
Fall purposely for her from your hand

Leave it that she may glean
And do not rebuke her, this please understand

Boaz' care for Ruth is but a mere reflection
Of Jesus' care for us, gentiles by birth
In Him there is a spiritual reconnection
So that now we have new and eternal worth

Thank You O God for the wondrous love You have lavished upon us
And for the surety of life for eternal days
For You have sent us Your Son, our Lord Jesus
And so to You we extend all of our praise!

Yes! Now and forever hear our praise, O God
From our hearts and souls as in Your presence we trod

Hallelujah and Amen...