

Attitude Adjustment

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[0 : 00] So tonight we will finish chapter 2 of the book of Ruth by looking at verses 18 through 23.

! In last week's passage we saw Ruth gleaning in Boaz's field. We haven't heard much from Naomi since a couple of lessons ago. And the end of chapter 2 will return the focus back to Naomi after Ruth brings home her haul of grain that she got last week.

The previous times we've seen Naomi, we've seen a bitter woman who's been feeling sorry for herself. Naomi even described herself as bitter. She's asked to be called Mara, which actually means bitter.

And for a reminder of just how bitter Naomi is, look back at chapter 1, verses 20 and 21. Chapter 1, verses 20 and 21 record Naomi's first words to the women of the town when Naomi and Ruth first arrived in Bethlehem.

They say, So can you hear the bitterness in her words? Look at that last part again.

[1 : 30] Unbeknownst to Naomi, God actually would bless her immensely and he would start blessing her soon.

God really was getting her and Ruth to the right place at the right time. Ruth was the first one of them to see the circumstances changing for the better.

We saw that last week when we looked at the part of chapter 2 where Ruth was gleaning in Boaz's field. Boaz promised Ruth protection. He told her to avoid going anywhere else.

He even fed her lunch himself. But he did more than that. Look at verses 15 through 17 of chapter 2. 2, 15 through 17 say this.

When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves and do not reproach her. And also pull out some of the bundles for her to glean and do not rebuke her.

[2 : 38] So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned. And it was about an ephah of barley. We talked last week about how much an ephah is.

With just one day's work, Ruth brought home somewhere between 29 and 50 pounds of grain. Or several weeks worth of food for the average worker. And the bag she brought home actually was probably the size of a colossal bag of dog food.

If you want to visualize that in Walmart today. 55 pounds. 55 pounds is the biggest bag. So that is about right then for a 50 pound.

So in tonight's verses, we'll see that bitter Naomi is going to get an attitude adjustment when Ruth gets home with all of that grain. So let's read verses 18 through 23.

They say, Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, May he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

[4 : 06] Naomi also said to her, The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers. And Ruth the Moabite said, Besides, he said to me, You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.

And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted. So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, leaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvest, and she lived with her mother-in-law. Our story so far has been concerned with the plight of two widows and the commanding presence of Boaz, but we'll miss one big point of this book if we neglect to see God's hand at work behind the scenes.

In the law, he promised to be the defender and sustainer of widows and orphans. He called himself their helper and supporter in Psalm 68. He promised to visit retribution and the severest of penalties on those who deprauded and oppressed them in the Psalms and also Ezekiel and Malachi.

And in caring for the needs of widows and orphans, God chose to work through the people. The Israelites were to be his instruments in providing for the widows and orphans, and the leaders were responsible for defending them.

[5 : 26] In Ruth and Naomi's story, Boaz was the one through whom the Lord worked in order to alleviate Naomi and Ruth's extreme poverty. Boaz knew the law and he lived out what it said.

Listen to Deuteronomy 14.29. Deuteronomy 14.29 says, And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

We're going to break tonight's text about Naomi's attitude adjustment into three sections of two verses each. We'll start with verses 18 and 19. And in those verses, we see the examination. So the examination is your first blank. Naomi examines or questions Ruth about where all of this food came from. And here are verses 18 and 19 again.

So visualize the scene in your mind.

[6 : 56] It's not too hard to imagine what's going on here. Ruth has worked hard all day. And so with a sense of satisfaction, she beats out the grain into a bag and hurries up the path into the city.

We have no way of knowing who sees her as she gets closer to Naomi's house. But no doubt she's hot and tired as she's carried all of that grain the whole way. And as she enters Bethlehem and gets closer to Naomi's humble cottage, we know now that Naomi has been waiting on her.

And when Naomi hears Ruth approaching, she doesn't know what to expect. But she opens the door to let her in. And then Ruth comes through the doorway with her bag filled with barley.

And she makes her way to the table in the center of the room. We know that her burden was a heavy one. And she opens her bag and she shows Naomi what she's gleaned. And the text also tells us that Ruth gave her mother-in-law the leftovers from the lunch that Boaz fed her.

Not surprisingly, the grain that Ruth brought home sparked conversation between her and her mother-in-law. So what does Naomi ask her? She's got a couple of questions there, doesn't she?

[8 : 04] Where did you get all of that? Exactly. That's how we would phrase it. Where did you get all of that? She knew that wasn't normal. You know, the way it's translated, it says two questions.

Where did you glean today and where have you worked? And so the order and the redundancy there really combine to reflect the amazement that Naomi has about Ruth's productivity. But really, we can tell that Naomi isn't interested too much in the geographical location of the field.

Because before Ruth can even answer, Naomi breaks out into an utterance of blessing upon whoever had taken notice of her daughter-in-law. Ruth then follows up with a detailed report of all that had happened in the fields.

And she provides the name from whom she got all of that grain. She says it's Boaz. And his name is presented there at the very end of the verse. So it really is the climax of that verse.

And so we have some suspense there. Of course, all of us have known from the very beginning who the man is. At least from the opening verse of this chapter anyway. And Ruth is known by working in his field.

[9 : 12] But this is the first time that Naomi hears about his identity. And that brings us to the second section of the lesson. In the next two verses, we see the exclamation.

So the exclamation is what comes next. Naomi makes that exclamation in verses 20 and 21. They say, And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

Naomi also said to her, The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers. And Ruth the Moabite said, Besides, he said to me, You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.

After she hears that the man's name is Boaz, Naomi breaks forth into great praise there. For a second time, she calls for Boaz to be blessed.

In the first blessing, the man was anonymous. But in the second, she now knows who he is. Naomi also adds to the second blessing by asking for the blessing to come from God, who is the covenant God of Israel.

[10 : 21] Naomi also says in her blessing that God's kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. The term, who's there, when he talks about whose kindness is ambiguous, could refer to either God or Boaz.

But it's not really hard to figure out who it is if we look back a little earlier in Ruth. Because in 1.8, Naomi calls for God to deal kindly with Ruth.

So by bringing Boaz into the picture, the Lord is dealing kindly with Ruth. She's the living there in that blessing. And perhaps Boaz then will also serve as a kinsman redeemer for her.

So notice how Naomi is starting to sound differently than the bitter woman we discussed at the beginning of the lesson. She's gone from saying that the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me to saying that God's kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

Think about something for a minute, though. Other than having a rather large amount of food to eat temporarily, had Naomi's circumstances really changed? Other than the food, not much had changed at all.

[11 : 35] But what had changed was her perspective. She'd gone from focusing inward and looking at everything that was wrong in her life to focusing upward and realizing that God was working in her life after all.

She still was a widow, and she still had lost two sons. She continued to be poor, and life was hard. And at this point, she had no idea where food would come from after this food ran out.

But she had a hope-giving experience from the Lord's kindness there. And the tangible evidence of God's love and favor toward her and Ruth gave Naomi confidence as they faced the future.

Their problems still remained. After all, they were still penniless. But Naomi's former despondency had now turned to an assurance. She praised God that God had not forsaken her and had kept his kindness going to her and even, in a sense, to her dead husband since God was taking care of her. I put this quote from Samuel Cox in your notes because the English is a little awkward there. And he said,

[13 : 37] Really, what we see here is that the antidote to worry is trust.

Naomi had only recently returned to the place of blessing. Now her trust was in the Lord, and he assured her of his favor by blessing Ruth's efforts.

And out of a heart filled with gratitude, she praised God for his kindness to her. And after Naomi takes in the news from Ruth, Naomi then gives Ruth another piece of information that sets up what we will see in chapters 3 and 4.

The end of verse 20 says, Naomi also said to her, The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers. The concept of a redeemer, or more precisely a kinsman redeemer, is important to understand.

So let's take some time to talk about what the scriptures say about the kinsman redeemer. So turn backward to Leviticus 25. We're going to look at several verses in Leviticus 25.

[14 : 52] And the first verses we will cover in that chapter talk about the redemption of property. So look at Leviticus 25, 25 through 28.

They say this, Then if you skip down a few verses to verses 47 through 55 of Leviticus 25, you'll see the law related to people who had sold themselves into bondage.

Starting in verse 47, it says, If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you, or to a member of the stranger's clan, then after he is sold he may be redeemed.

One of his brothers may redeem him, or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him, or a close relative from his clan may redeem him, or if he grows rich he may redeem himself.

He shall calculate with his buyer from the year when he sold himself to him until the year of Jubilee, and the price of his sale shall vary with the number of the years.

[16 : 37] The time he was left with his owner shall be rated as the time of a hired worker. If there are still many years left, he shall pay proportionately for his redemption some of his sale price.

If there remain but a few years until the year of Jubilee, he shall calculate and pay for his redemption in proportion to his years of service. He shall treat him as a worker hired year by year. He shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight, and if he is not redeemed by these means, then he and his children with him shall be released in the year of Jubilee. For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants.

They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. And I read that far in the cross reference just to show you that those words came directly from God, of course, there in Leviticus.

From Ruth, we can't tell exactly where Boaz fits in the family relationship. We can tell from verse 20 of chapter 2, though, that he's a close relative like those referenced in Leviticus 25, 49.

[17 : 39] We have no specific laws in our modern culture similar to these, but we have some that are a little bit like that that we're familiar with, because after all, an item that has been pawned, usually because of poverty, may be redeemed by the lawfully prescribed means, either by the original owner or his lawful representative.

And we're all familiar with mortgages. The word mortgage actually is derived from two words meaning death pledge. So a mortgage actually is a death pledge, and that which is mortgaged becomes dead or entirely lost by the original owner's failure to pay.

But when we talk about a redeemer, what exactly do we mean here? Actually, the word redeem means to buy again or buy back or to take possession of.

And the one who redeems evicts and dispossesses all those who've held his purchased property or his relatives during the time of their bondage. And the redeemer takes personal possession of that which has been bought back.

Redemption presupposes dreadful calamity. It presupposes something terrible that has happened to them. Redemption by a near kinsman also presupposes personal inability.

[18 : 58] We have that here. Obviously, there was the terrible calamity with the death of all of their men relatives, and we know that they had no way to buy back what had been theirs before.

And we get the sense from verse 20 in chapter 2 that Naomi is having a difficult time comprehending all the good things that have happened in just one day. I almost titled this, What a Difference a Day Makes, and we could have called it that too.

But as we see in verse 21, the good news actually keeps on coming. It says, And Ruth the Moabite said, Besides, he said to me, You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.

The plentiful food that they have today is more than a one-time thing because now Ruth and Naomi know that Ruth is going to be able to glean with Boaz's people until the harvest is done.

So they have the assurance of plentiful food for the foreseeable future, and that has to give them another great sense of encouragement there. We can take a lesson from that ourselves too because just as God used circumstances to encourage Naomi and Ruth, sometimes God uses circumstances as a means of encouraging us.

[20 : 13] They may be the result of prayer or may be connected with the more mundane things in life like having schedules somehow adjust to meet our needs or having a chance encounter result in the solution to a dilemma.

And when these things happen, we should see that they're more than chance encounters. They're actually God's hand behind the circumstance. And when we realize that, we should be appropriately thankful. Naomi is starting to realize the truth about being appropriately thankful, and the bitter woman has turned into a model of thanksgiving.

The attitude adjustment that Boaz's kindness brought about also should be a good lesson for us too because God can and does use us and other believers to reveal his kindness toward others.

The flip side of that also is true. If we are indifferent to others in need, particularly other believers, we inadvertently can reinforce their misguided belief that God no longer will show favor to them.

Here's another quote from Samuel Cox that I put in your handout. He said, When Naomi arrived in Bethlehem and saw her neighbors indifferent and apathetic, however curious and inquisitive they were, she concluded herself to be shut out from the mercy of God.

[21 : 48] It was only when Boaz showed a little kindness to her daughter-in-law, such kindness as we may show a neighbor any day, that she felt the door of mercy was once more thrown open to her.

So think about that last sentence again. It was only when Boaz showed a little kindness to her daughter-in-law, such kindness as we may show a neighbor any day, that she felt the door of mercy was once more thrown open to her.

And that should remind us that the importance of displaying godly kindness places a solemn responsibility on every one of us who are believers. So far in tonight's passage, we've seen the examination and the exclamation.

In our last two verses, we see the evaluation. So the evaluation is the third item. Naomi takes in all that she's heard, and she makes her evaluation of Boaz's invitation to keep gleaning in his field.

Look at verses 22 and 23. And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.

[23 : 01] So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvest, and she lived with her mother-in-law. In her final comment in verse 22, Naomi approves of Boaz's offer, but not just because of the food it guarantees Ruth and her.

Or concerned about Ruth's welfare, she changes Boaz's reference to young men in verse 21 to young women there in verse 22. We can tell now that Naomi had been worried about Ruth as she sent her out of the house in the morning, and she was relieved to see her return safe and sound. It really kind of shows you just how much in despair Naomi was, but now she reveals that she was concerned that Ruth may have been assaulted while she was gone, and yet she still didn't go with her to glean in the fields as well.

And actually, the chapter ends with the summary of the results of all that has transpired in this chapter. It says that Ruth clung to Boaz's female servants, according to Naomi's advice, presumably intending to scavenge Boaz's field not only in the barley harvest, but also to the end of the wheat harvest, as we see there too.

Obviously, Ruth was comfortable with Boaz's generosity and the crew of women workers he had in the field. And based upon the agricultural calendar of that region, Ruth must have been out in the field for six to seven weeks from late April until early June, by our designations of the month.

[24 : 33] The narrator doesn't indicate whether there was any further contact between her and Boaz during that time. Meanwhile, in the fulfillment of her commitment to Naomi in chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, Ruth settled down with her.

And the note brings the chapter full circle there in verse 22, and it also creates the impression that they had settled into a regular routine there in Bethlehem. As we're stopping right here, we're left to wonder what has happened to the kind and gracious man who is qualified to rescue her.

The dream actually seems to have died an early death, perhaps, because Boaz has disappeared from the scene for now. He's helped Naomi and Ruth economically, but he's doing nothing about the real crisis in the family, which is the crisis caused by the deaths of all of the male family members.

And only time will tell us how this situation will be resolved. So you have to stay tuned for the next few weeks or read ahead to begin finding out if Boaz does anything about the real crisis.

For tonight, though, let's see that we have some other things to consider from this. You know, the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 4.19 that my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

[25 : 54] Sometimes it doesn't seem that way to us, though, does it? Sometimes it can seem as if God has turned his face away from us and closed his ears to our prayers, and it may even seem that he stopped showing his faithfulness toward us.

And yet the book of Ruth is a glorious testimony to Paul's statement that God will meet all our needs. In her grief and confusion, Naomi had misunderstood God and misjudged and forgotten that he is the shepherd who does not stop showing his covenant faithfulness to the wandering sheep. She'd failed to see that the Lord still welcomes the outsider. And she doesn't seem to remember that he's the father who waits with open arms to welcome back the prodigal. And we who live in the New Testament era should see the constant faithfulness and glorious grace of God even more clearly than Naomi did.

Because in all of the scriptures we have written down for us the rich history of God's long-suffering patience with his rebellious people. We know more fully now than Naomi and Ruth did that God stands with open arms scanning the horizon for the returning prodigal to come home.

And he's eager to welcome him or her home. He doesn't just allow us grudging admission to glean in his field. He invites us to his table to partake in his feast.

[27 : 15] We spent quite a bit of time tonight talking about redemption. So let's consider how that redemption applies to us. Remember how we talked about that the redemption presupposes a dreadful calamity.

For us, that calamity was our sin and the fall of the human race. And we also talked about how redemption by a near kinsman also presupposes personal inability.

The Israelite who was incapable of redeeming himself had to be redeemed by another and that portrayed the fact that the sinner can't redeem himself from the hands of divine justice.

Only the Son of God in human flesh could ransom us from the curse of the law. And none but Christ could give complete satisfaction to the justice of God by the sacrifice of himself.

Listen to Galatians 3, 13 and 14. Galatians 3, 13 and 14 say, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

[28 : 17] For it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

Jesus has redeemed all of God's elect from the penalty of sin by his atoning bloodshed at Calvary. And he redeems each one from the reigning power and dominion of sin by his spirit's irresistible grace and regeneration.

And he will redeem believers from the very presence of sin and all the evil consequences of sin when we go to him or he returns for us. And in the book of Ruth, Boaz, as the kinsman redeemer, typifies and portrays the Lord Jesus Christ who is our kinsman redeemer.

And here are seven characteristics of our kinsman redeemer, seven characteristics of the one who has the right to redeem. The first one is that redemption by a near kinsman is a matter of divine appointment.

The kinsman redeemer must be a divinely appointed redeemer and only one who is appointed by God has the right to redeem. We saw that when we were looking in Leviticus chapter 25 verse 55 when it was God who actually prescribed the rules and regulations around the redeemer.

[29 : 36] We see that again in John 10, 16 through 18 when Jesus talks about how he is the divinely appointed redeemer. And here are John 10, 16 through 18.

Jesus said, And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

For this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again.

This charge I have received from my Father. So we see here that Jesus was a divinely appointed redeemer in addition to being divine himself. The second thing we see about a kinsman redeemer is the one that has the right to redeem must be a near kinsman.

So the one that has the right to redeem must be a near kinsman. Hebrews 2, 10 through 13 explains how Jesus meets this requirement.

[30 : 44] The writer to the Hebrews said this in 2, 10 through 13. He said, For it is fitting or was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist in bringing many sons to glory should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

For he who is sanctified and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.

And again, I will put my trust in him and again, behold, I and the children God has given me. The third thing we see about the kinsman redeemer is that the kinsman redeemer must himself be entirely free of the debt.

So the kinsman redeemer must be entirely free of the debt. Looking at Hebrews again, Hebrews 7.26 reminds us how Jesus was free from the debt by being free from sin.

Hebrews 7.26 says, For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

[31 : 58] The fourth thing we know about the kinsman redeemer is that the one who has the right to redeem must be able to redeem. He must be able to fully satisfy all the demands of God's law and justice for all the kinfolk that he represents.

The fifth thing we see is that the one who has the right to redeem must be willing to redeem. So the one who has the right to redeem must be willing to redeem.

No one could be forced to redeem, and we'll actually see that in the coming chapters in Ruth. The Lord Jesus Christ was God's willing bond slave because of his love for us.

And we saw that even in Old Testament times because in Isaiah 50 verses 5 through 7, it's actually the Messiah speaking. And in these verses we see the Messiah's willingness to redeem.

These verses are Isaiah 50 5 through 7, and the Messiah said, The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheek

to those who pull out the beard.

[33 : 09] I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting, but the Lord God helps me, therefore I have not been disgraced. Therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

So even in Isaiah we see the prophecy of how Jesus was going to be the willing Redeemer for us. The sixth thing about the Redeemer is that the redemption was made for specific people and obtained a specific inheritance.

The kinsman Redeemer restored that which was taken away, even though the kinsman Redeemer wasn't responsible for taking it away himself. And our Lord Jesus Christ, by his glorious work of redemption, secured for us a vast innumerable and multitude of riches, and he did that for not only us, but a multitude of sinners.

And of course we know that from Revelation 7-9 among other places. And the seventh thing we see about the Redeemer is that the one who has the right to redeem must raise up a seed.

And even so the Son of God, our kinsman Redeemer, is going to raise up a seed. There are some people in this world that are still being chosen by God in an eternal election, and they are redeemed by special redemption, and they must and will be saved by God's grace.

[34 : 28] We skip this seventh characteristic of the Redeemer tonight. We haven't seen that in Ruth yet. We'll look at it more as we get into the later chapters of Ruth. For now, though, the amazing thing for us is that God lets us and other believers participate in bringing God's chosen people to him.

Until next time when we start to see the seventh characteristic unfold in Ruth's life, listen to this quote and hold on to its promise when you face difficult times. It says, The Jesus, our kinsman redeemer, who commits himself to be with us in the midst of our trials, knows what it is to suffer. As a result, he is able to be our refuge in the storm, the one under whose wings we may come and take shelter. He is our redeemer from and through all kinds of difficulties.

Follow the path he sets before you, holding firmly to your faith and knowing that his covenant faithfulness will never leave you nor forsake you. His kindness never ceases, his mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning and will accompany us every step along the hard road of life until our faithful God welcomes us into our heavenly home. The last part of that quote is a reference to Lamentations 3.

[35 : 46] So listen to Lamentations 3, verses 21 through 24. Naomi got her attitude adjustment when she saw these words becoming a reality in her life.

And Lamentations 3, 21 through 24 say, But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore, I will hope in him. So the challenge for us is can we really say that last verse and mean it, where it says, The Lord is my portion, says my soul.

Therefore, I will hope in him. With that, let's close in prayer. Dear Lord, we thank you for the reminder that many, many years ago you were already looking out for your people, and you still look out for your people today.

When we face difficult times, let us hold on to that hope, and let us find our hope through you, and let that compel us to help bring others to you, and give us the privilege to bring your people to you, so that they can have that hope as well.

[37 : 02] Be with us as we go through the rest of the week, and bless our services on Sunday. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thank you.