

# Finding Favor

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[ 0 : 00 ] In our last lesson in the book of Ruth, we left Ruth out in the field hoping to gather some leftover grain. So let's reread verses 2, 1-7 to set the context.

And they say, Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose side I shall find favor.

And she said to her, Go, my daughter. So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and he said to the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered, The Lord bless you. Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, Whose young woman is this?

And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, She is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.

[ 1 : 19 ] So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest. To this point, nothing has been done by anyone in Bethlehem to make Ruth feel accepted.

And as a foreigner, she probably has been subjected to proud and scornful looks and a skeptical attitude. She eventually will win the hearts of everyone, but for now at least, and until now, she's had the struggle on her own.

We can see, though, from the verses we just read, that Boaz apparently is impressed with the report in verses 6 and 7. And he observes how diligently Ruth is picking up the ears of grain that have fallen to the ground.

And he's filled with admiration for her, knowing that she's working hard to be able to support Naomi. And he calls her to him, and he tells her that she's welcome to glean in his field.

And in fact, he will go a step further and kindly say that she's not to go to any other field. And we'll see these things and more in the verses that we'll cover tonight. So let's go ahead and read verses 8 through 17, because in these verses we'll see Ruth finding favor.

[ 2 : 27 ] So starting with chapter 2, verse 8, it says, Then Boaz said to Ruth,

And at mealtime Boaz said to her, So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain.

And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. 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, and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her. So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Finally, we'll break tonight's passage into four sections. Verses 8 and 9 are the first section, and in those verses we'll see the acceptance.

[ 4 : 25 ] So the acceptance is the first thing to note tonight. Specifically, we will see Boaz's acceptance of Ruth. And as we read verses 8 and 9 again, keep in mind that these are the first words that Ruth has heard from Boaz.

So here are verses 8 and 9 again. They say, So how does Boaz address Ruth there?

He calls her, My daughter. And his address of My daughter is remarkable, because for one thing, it's reminiscent of how Naomi perceived Ruth.

And it's also remarkable because of Boaz's intention to break down the barriers that naturally separate him from her. The expression reflects the age difference between them, and it arises out

of a genuine sense of responsibility that Boaz feels for Ruth.

Despite the fact that she's a Moabite, he's going to offer this foreigner protection, and he's going to offer her his resources. The formal part of Boaz's speech has four basic statements.

[ 5 : 54 ] First, he says that Ruth is not to go and glean in any other field. He's telling her that she has no need to leave at all. Second, he says that Ruth is to attach herself to Boaz's regular female servants.

And like the previous piece of advice, this point is made more than once in his speech. And actually there, the verb translated keep close is the same that had been used earlier way back in chapter 1, verse 14, when that verse talked about Ruth clinging to Naomi.

Then in verse 10, Boaz explains specifically what he means. He says that Ruth is to keep her eyes on which fields Boaz's people are harvesting, and she's to follow them. The third thing he says is that Ruth is not to worry about harassment from the male workers, because Boaz is commanding them not to bother her.

Normally the verb there means to touch, but in this case it really is functioning more generally. It can mean to strike, harass, take advantage of, or mistreat. And then finally, Ruth is told that she may drink freely of the water that is provided for Boaz's regular field workers.

And in our culture, where water is plentiful, we can overlook the significance of Boaz allowing Ruth to drink the water. But when this exchange between Ruth and Boaz took place, the offer of water was extremely significant.

[ 7 : 22 ] In that culture, normally foreigners would draw for Israelites, and women would draw for men. So when Boaz authorizes Ruth to drink from the water that his men had drawn, it's really an extraordinary invitation there.

And Boaz's actions can teach us some things about how to deal with people in need. Think about what he did. He was kind without being condescending. And without causing Ruth to feel any loss of respect for herself, or without producing any undue dependence on him, Boaz assured Ruth of his willingness to help her, and in doing so, he didn't deprive her of the dignity of honest work.

But yet he did assure her of his acceptance of her working in his field. Often in our desire to help others, we try to do everything for them.

We can make them feel dependent upon us. And when this happens, we actually can erode their sense of self-esteem, that God-given right to derive satisfaction from honest labor.

Then they begin to feel inferior, and resentment starts to develop. And with that resentment comes a hostility. So later on, we're surprised that someone whom we've helped might have turned on us a little bit.

[ 8 : 41 ] We tried to do the right thing in the wrong way, and they were actually perceiving it as being patronizing. But Boaz easily could have been patronizing, but he wasn't.

He was wise enough to be helpful without robbing Ruth of the right to work. We talked about how Boaz removed any feeling of isolation by encouraging Ruth to stay close to his young women.

And this gave her that sense of acceptance we talked about, or of belonging. And of course, people who are in need of help desire the same feeling of acceptance and belonging.

And by giving Ruth protection and access to water, Boaz showed that he was considerate of Ruth's well-being. He treated her like a person instead of a problem.

And when we have the opportunity to help someone, that may be the most important thing to remember. The most important thing is to be sure to treat that person as a real person instead of a problem.

[ 9 : 42 ] Verse 10 by itself is the second section of the lesson. It records Ruth's initial reaction to Boaz's kindness. And Ruth reacted with astonishment that Boaz would be so kind to her.

And so that's why astonishment is your second heading. So we'll see the astonishment as we read verse 10. And listen for that astonishment as we hear verse 10 again.

It says, Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found favor in your eyes that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner? Ruth is deeply touched by Boaz's generosity.

If you think about it, her intentions that morning were just to try to glean enough grain for herself and Naomi to get by. And now she's been shown remarkable kindness by a man she only just met.

She knows nothing yet of Boaz's relationship to her deceased father-in-law, but she's curious and inquires why he has shown her such favor. Boaz's goodness didn't make Ruth arrogant and

presumptuous, though.

[10:52] It had just the opposite effect. It actually humbled her. She was completely overwhelmed by a sense of Boaz's goodness and her own unworthiness of that goodness.

She knew that she was a stranger, a Gentile even, without any covenant promise, without any rights, without any merit, and without anything to plead before Boaz except her need and his greatness.

And that really shows something we should keep in mind, and it shows that gracious souls are always astonished by grace. So once again, gracious souls are always astonished by grace. Boaz had dignified this poor widow from a foreign land and treated her as a significant person, on par socially with his hired and presumably Israelite workers. Ruth obviously is extremely self-conscious about her alien status, and she can't believe Boaz's indifference to the fact that she is a Moabite.

So that's why we see the astonishment there. And so far in this passage, we've seen the acceptance and the astonishment. Our next section comes in verses 11 through 13.

[12:02] That's where we see Boaz's answer to Ruth's question in verse 10. And we'll see Ruth's response to that answer. But the answer is our third lesson heading. So let's look at that answer.

Here are verses 11 and 12 again. Starting with verse 11, it says, But Boaz answered her, All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land, and came to a people that you did not know before.

The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. Boaz continues to dignify Ruth in his answer to her question, and he begins by explaining why he has shown her such favor.

The reason is he has heard all about her. These words represent the first cheerful thing recorded as happening to Ruth since the death of her husband.

Boaz explains that he's been fully told all that she's done for Naomi since Malon died, and he's aware that as with Abraham before her, she's left her home and her country for an unloved land, and he prays that God will reward her fully.

[13:22] So here's some encouragement that she needs, and here too is the promise of hope for the future. The reports that Boaz has heard have emphasized two details about her in particular.

One is her extraordinary kindness to her mother-in-law, and then the second is her extraordinary courage in accompanying Naomi back to Bethlehem. Her kindness is referred to simply as all that you have done for your mother-in-law.

And Boaz goes on to explain what has particularly impressed him in the reports about her treatment of Naomi after the death of her husband. In chapter 1, verses 8 and 9, and in 12 and 13, remember that Naomi had released both Ruth and her other daughter-in-law, Orpah, of any legal and moral obligation toward Naomi.

Orpah's response, if you remember, was natural and rational. She accepted that release and returned to that which was familiar to her. She went back to her own land, her own people, and her own gods.

But Ruth's response was radical and, by our standards, even irrational. She preferred the unknown world of her mother-in-law, like Abraham had preferred centuries before.

[14:40] And she abandoned her own father and mother and her native land and cast her lot with the people whom she'd not previously known, as the passage says there. And of course, as the daughter-in-law of Naomi, she learned to know one specific Israelite, and she will have certainly heard about Naomi's people, but the expression there means that she didn't have first-hand experience with the people of Israel.

So like Abraham, she left the security of the familiar and committed herself to the unknown. Then as we look into the latter part of those verses, Boaz introduces one of the most beautiful pictures of divine care in all of Scripture, because he pictures God as a mother bird who offers her wings for protection of her defenseless young.

And in perceiving God as a bird, Boaz draws on an image that was common throughout the ancient Near East. Boaz is probably thinking primarily of the day when Ruth transferred her allegiance from the God of the Moabites to the God of Israel, but her actions represent a specific application in general, and that is that she's looking to God for protection.

She had come to Boaz, and he had offered her his protection, but he was personally functioning as the wings of God. Boaz was offering her asylum, and because he was offering her asylum, he was also honoring God.

Listen to Proverbs 14.31 as a cross-reference for that. Proverbs 14.31 says, Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

[16:22] Then going back to our text tonight, we see Ruth's response to Boaz's answer. Verse 13 says, Then she said, I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.

After Boaz's kind words, some people might have responded with something like, You know, you're actually right, Boaz. I've done a lot of nice things for my mother-in-law. It's about time something went well for me.

But Ruth responds a lot differently here. Her response is one of grateful recognition. She knows she's not one of Boaz's handmaidens, and she places herself below even those of Boaz's household who do the most menial work.

So we really see Ruth's true humility here. In other words, we see the kindness of Boaz matched by the graciousness of Ruth.

He was prosperous, but he didn't allow his good fortune to cause him to forget the poor. And she had been reduced to poverty, but she had not permitted a reversal of fortune to make her hard and cynical.

[17:37] Actually, in spite of difficulties too numerous to mention, Ruth flourished amid circumstances that would normally discourage other people. Boaz lived among a people of privilege in times where everyone did what was right in his own eyes, but Boaz refused to let the social conditions of his day squeeze them into their mold.

So both Boaz and Ruth display a unique trust in the Lord. They actually prove that outward circumstances neither make nor mar the children of God.

Faith is still the key to appropriating the blessings of God. And that faith is what is going to carry both of them through. And obedience to the revealed will of God is what God uses to make us part of a plan that exceeds our own ability to imagine things.

We have one more section of Scripture to review tonight. We've already seen the acceptance, the astonishment, and the answer. In the last verses of this section, we see the abundance.

So the abundance is the last thing. By just about any standard, Boaz has already done more than enough for Ruth. In verses 14 through 17, Boaz's generosity goes beyond what we might expect.

[18:59] So let's read just verse 14 first. It says, And at mealtime, Boaz said to her, Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.

So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her a roasted grain, and she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. In the ancient Near East, eating together had great symbolic significance.

Meals were put on by host as an expression of hospitality, to celebrate special occasions, to climax treaties among treaty partners. And then social realities were also expressed at mealtime too.

Religious groups met over meals, and people ate and drank together just for a good time. So the fact that Boaz ate with his harvester says something unique about Boaz, but his actions here must have caught everyone by surprise.

They wouldn't have been expecting him to invite Ruth, an outsider and a Moabite, to join him and his workers. And the verb there suggests that as a stranger, Ruth had deliberately and appropriately, according to the custom of the time, kept her distance from them.

[20:16] But Boaz encourages Ruth to share the food prepared by his workers. The narrator doesn't tell us whether or not she brought her own lunch, but it seems unlikely given her own economic circumstances and the uncertainty with which she left Naomi that morning.

Boaz also tells Ruth to dip your morsel in the wine. Boaz couldn't allow her to eat dry bread while he enjoyed more pleasant food. Then when Ruth had taken her seat beside Boaz's harvesters, he served her roasted grain himself.

Boaz gives her food enough to satisfy her and to have some left over. And this last observation is added to emphasize Boaz's generosity. He performs the duty of a host by serving Ruth himself. And in this, we see his special kindness. Such action as serving someone would be noticed by his servants. And out of respect for such a kind employer, they would be more inclined to treat Ruth

nicely too.

The joy of having enough to eat is a hard concept for us to grasp in our own culture. You know, we're accustomed to satisfying our appetites three times a day with snacks in between.

[ 21 : 33 ] But for a foreign widow to eat to the point where she was full and still have some left over to take home, that was a real feast for her. Obviously, the lunch break had to be very welcome and enjoyable for Ruth, but she knows she has work to do and she's ready to get back to it.

Even with all of Boaz's charity toward her, she gets up from the meal to glean. She doesn't take advantage of his kindness. She knows that she still has to provide sustenance for Naomi and for herself in future days, and so she's going to be diligent about that.

For his part, Boaz doesn't stop her, but he gives orders to his workers concerning how to treat her. Look at verses 15-17. They say, 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 and leave it for her to glean and do not rebuke her.

So she gleaned in the field until evening, then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And this is another gracious act on the part of Boaz.

According to Hebrew law, as we saw during our last lesson in Ruth, the poor could go after or behind the reapers and gleaners and pick up the remains that had not been harvested. Boaz is saying that Ruth can glean right in the areas where his young men are currently laboring, and she'll not merely get the leftovers of the crop.

[ 23 : 08 ] She's going to get some of the very best pickings. Boaz then orders his men not to reproach her, and this is a general term that can have a physical application like molest and also a verbal application.

So the reapers are not to humiliate her in any way, either through their action or through their words. Human nature is such that people often take advantage of those who are less fortunate, and we tend to look down on others and to oppress them easily.

Boaz is not going to allow that to happen, in his field. But really, there's more because the opening words of verse 16 are, and also.

An additional grace is going to be bestowed on Ruth here. Boaz tells the workers to leave bundles of grain on the ground on purpose so that Ruth can easily pick them up and bind them.

And in Hebrew, this command is a double verb for emphasis. In the original, it literally reads, pulling out, pull out. So this is a grammatical device for emphasis.

[ 24 : 14 ] Whenever the Hebrews repeated something, it was meant to emphasize the importance of that. So the workers are clearly to obey this command. Then finally, Boaz orders the men do not rebuke her.

The negative here is an emphatic no, which is one of the severest forms of a negative in Hebrew. The men are simply not to menace with this woman. They're not to mess with her at all.

And Boaz's servants cooperate so well that by evening, Ruth has to beat out what she's gathered so that she can take it home. So no wonder we will see next week that Naomi was astonished at what Ruth had gathered.

It says she brought home a whole ephah. So to put that in our terms, Ruth brought home somewhere between 29 and 50 pounds of grain or several weeks worth of food for the average worker.

Maybe to paint another picture, she brought home a bag that was the size of an extra large bag of dog food, all full of food for her and Naomi to eat.

[ 25 : 21 ] So we've already touched on some of the things that we can learn from this passage. The passage actually illustrates how we should treat others in need and how we have been treated ourselves.

Let's remind ourselves of how we should treat others in need. We talked about how one of our most basic needs is for a sense of acceptance or belonging.

We all need to feel wanted and accepted and to be part of a community and never is this more true than when we're hurting. And those of us who want to be used by God to lift up the hurting must therefore begin with acceptance of the hurting individual.

And such an attitude will encourage those who are experiencing the struggles of life. Helpers accept others but they also uplift the other person's worth.

Anxieties over safety or questions about whether life holds any promise can reduce a person's effectiveness. Boaz obviously knew the risk associated with harvesting crops and he took immediate steps to ensure Ruth's personal safety.

[ 26 : 28 ] To him, she was a person of worth not the member of a despised race. And once he ensured her safety, then Ruth was able to put forth her best effort.

The sense of being valued by another for who you are rather than for the work you do is something that's sorely needed in business, education, and politics, the church, and society in general. Then recognizing the importance of acceptance and personal worth, helpers take a third step. They actually assist others, maximizing the needy's own efforts.

The ministry of helping others essentially is a ministry of encouragement. And that ministry of encouragement is open to every one of us.

Just think about the examples of the encouragement ministry in the Bible. We'll just mention a few here tonight. Jonathan engaged in a ministry of encouragement when he sought out David at Horesh and strengthened his hands in God.

[ 27 : 32 ] Jonathan there encouraged his friend to look away from himself to the one who is a very present helper for those who are in trouble. Then the apostle Paul exhorted the believers to constantly be encouraging to one another and build one another up in the faith.

Back in the Old Testament Isaiah spoke about encouraging those who are exhausted with life's conflict and strengthening those who feel that they can't go on anymore.

Paul knew how much we all need a lifting up of our spirit and elsewhere he talked about the encouragement that comes to our hearts as we meditate on God's word. Through our studies in Acts with Pastor Mike we've seen how Paul himself was encouraged by Barnabas shortly after Paul's conversion.

So encouragement like that will enable those who are cast down to enjoy a measure of happiness and contentment regardless of their current circumstances. But now let's talk about how this passage illustrates how we've been treated.

Similar to how Ruth accepted Boaz, God accepted us when we had no right to expect it. Listen to Romans 5 verses 8 through 11.

[ 28 : 43 ] They say, But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation.

We hear Romans 5.8 so often that we can forget how astonishing it is that a perfect and holy God accepted sinners like us. Boaz seems to have gone out of his way to make Ruth feel welcome at home and comfortable.

Boaz spoke to his young men about her in her presence and he spoke directly to her for her comfort and that's the same thing that the Lord does as well. Listen to Isaiah 40 verses 1 and 2 for just one example of that.

God tells Isaiah, Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she is received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

[ 30 : 07 ] also compare the title that Boaz gave to Ruth with the title that God gives to us. Verse 8 recorded Boaz's first words to Ruth when he said, Now listen, my daughter.

And this title placed upon her the footing of highest privilege and the greatest blessedness of the household. All of us who come to God by faith in Jesus Christ are also the children of God.

All the rights and privileges, all the possessions and prospects of the house of God belong as fully to the youngest and weakest member of the family as to the oldest and the strongest.

The title daughter also indicates a permanent relationship and when we talk about the family of God, we're talking about a family circle that will never be broken. God will never disown his own. He will not leave us and no enemy can carry us away, not even the worst enemy. And Boaz's next words to Ruth indicate what our God requires and expects and also deserves from all of his children.

[ 31 : 18 ] Boaz told Ruth to stay in his field, to stay with his people, and to avoid going elsewhere. And similarly, we who are born of God are to separate ourselves from the people of the world, particularly from their ways and their false religions, and devote ourselves to the people of God.

As she gleaned in the fields, drank at Boaz's wells, and followed his maidens, Boaz promised Ruth all the protection of his wealth and all the power in his house.

The passage tonight gives us a picture of the superabundance of God's grace to us. Boaz invoked upon Ruth a full reward from God for what she had done, and the Lord Jesus Christ invokes upon every believer a full reward from the Lord.

The passage also shows us something about the relationship between faith and works. We understand that faith is a gift of God, and faith is worked in us by the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power in his saving grace, and faith is the work of the operation of God in our hearts. And if I believe God, it's because of his grace. Yet, faith produced in us by the power of God by the Holy Spirit is not just a passive experience. Faith is a living principle or a grace that works.

[ 32 : 41 ] You know, from James 2, verses 14 through 26, that true faith actually does something, and God will not forget the work of our faith and the labor of love that we do.

When Boaz showered his grace upon Ruth, she refused to just sit back and enjoy it. She got back to work so that she could provide for Naomi back home.

And Boaz's and Ruth's actions are an Old Testament picture of Ephesians 2, 8 through 10. Of course, we know those verses say, for by grace you have been saved through faith, and it is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ruth was the beneficiary of Boaz's grace, and she responded to that grace by doing good work. Ruth represents us, sinners who are saved by grace, God's elect who are all converted by the power and grace of God.

[ 33 : 47 ] This woman had come to trust God. Naomi and Ruth had taught Ruth and Orpah the things of God, and no doubt Orpah believed Naomi's words and was prepared to go with her to Bethlehem until she realized what it would cost her.

And when she realized that, she went back to Moab. So even though she believed Naomi, she didn't trust in the Lord. But Ruth had come to trust in the Lord God of Israel himself.

She believed God, and in other words, she had come to trust under his wings. So she obtained something to which she had no natural claim. And in Christ, God's elect have obtained an inheritance to which we have no natural claim either.

Our reward from God is a heritage of grace given to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord God gives chosen sinners free forgiveness for all sins. He gives every believer the blessedness of a peaceful conscience, quietness from the fear of evil, the blessed assurance of all good, the confidence of a merciful, divinely ordered providence, and communion with God himself and the fullness eventually of eternal glory.

God will reward his own elect for the perfect righteousness of Christ, just as he punished Christ as our substitute in strict justice for our sins which were imputed to him. God is going to reward every believing sinner in strict justice with heavenly glory because of the perfect righteousness of Christ that's been imputed to us.

[ 35 : 23 ] So God's saints will possess all the fullness of heavenly glory because in Christ they are worthy of it. We're not worthy of it ourselves, but through Christ we become worthy of it.

And as Boaz invoked a full reward for Ruth, the Lord Jesus Christ has earned and purchased a full reward for his people and he gives that reward to all who trust him.

So how should we respond to God's lavish grace and kindness toward us? Well, tonight's passage gives one example of a proper response and that came back in verse 10.

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

In reality, that's what every sinner who comes to faith in God says. And that should be the same thing that we say too. With that, let's close in prayer.

[ 36 : 24 ] Father, we thank you for the reminder of your grace. We thank you how you have accepted us and how you have poured out your abundance on us.

And we'll continue to do so and even more so as we move beyond this life into eternity. Help us to always be astonished by your grace and help us motivate, help that motivate us to share your grace with others.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen.