

A Field

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[0:00] Take your Bibles tonight and open them up to that very small little book in the Old Testament, the book of Ruth.

! Small book, of course, four chapters. That's pretty small as books of the Bible go. And I'm endeavoring to take a chapter each week. And we're ready for chapter two, so you can go ahead and find chapter two of the book of Ruth.

Now, as I did last Sunday, I believe, I'm not going to read the entire chapter here at the beginning, but the approach is going to be kind of a read it along the way as we go along through our study tonight through this chapter.

So you can just have your Bibles open there and be looking at the second chapter of Ruth, and we'll kind of get to it as we go along. Now, these sermons, really, I guess the four chapters have been organized under four headings to kind of help us remember.

And really, it's pretty simple. The four headings kind of spring from the kind of the places where the events are unfolding for us in the various chapters.

[1:28] I think I could say at least about the first three chapters. The fourth one is a little bit different. But here are the four headings. The famine, that's where we began. That's chapter one.

The field, that's where we're going to be in this chapter, chapter two, at least the major part of what takes place in the chapter takes place in a field, Boaz field.

Third chapter will be a floor, because that's where the events take place there primarily. A floor, the threshing floor there in chapter three. And then the final chapter is all about a family.

Family, and that's where this is ultimately going. Not just the family of Ruth and Boaz, but kind of the introduction to or the basis for an understanding concerning the family of our Lord, the Messiah, out of the lineage out of which the Messiah will come.

So a famine, a field, a floor, a family. Now, last week we looked at the famine, chapter one, or what I called a providential famine.

[2:37] And just to put it in short terms, God moved in the events of history, in the history of his people as well as other people. He moved in the events of Israel, as he often did and does, to ultimately move a young Moabite girl named Ruth from Moab to Israel so that she could marry into the family of the Messiah.

That's putting it real short, but the providence of God. We see it very clearly in chapter one. Now, tonight we're going to be looking at the field.

The field, or what I want to call the field of grace. The field of grace. Before we get into it, there is quite a contrast between chapter one and chapter two.

Just to kind of highlight this for you, it's rather interesting. Chapter one begins with a famine. And that's where it begins. And then chapter two begins with a harvest.

And that's very fitting for what's going to be revealed to us in chapter two and indeed throughout the rest of the book. Chapter one takes place in Moab, not Israel.

[3:57] Chapter two, on the other hand, takes place in Bethlehem, in Israel, in Judea. Chapter one is filled with death.

A big part of chapter one is very sad, very sad. God's providence is working through these things, but the events of chapter one, at least initially, are very sad.

Death of Elimelech, ultimately the death of his two sons and the destitution, kind of leaving Naomi and her two daughter-in-laws, kind of destitute.

So chapter one is filled with death. Chapter two, though, is filled with life and the introduction of life and also the potential of an exciting and wonderful life that will ultimately take place.

All right. So in contrast, the two chapters in that way, and it's rather interesting and also fits with the way the book is moving, moving us from Moab to Bethlehem, from death to life, from a famine to a harvest.

[5:15] And all of this, of course, being the work of God. Now, let me divide this chapter. Chapter two into three parts. And I will submit to you that this chapter, chapter two, is all about God's grace.

It's all about his grace. In fact, we could argue that the entire book, the book of Ruth, is all about the grace of God. Chapter two is clearly, clearly is introducing to us the grace of God operating in the life of Ruth and with Ruth, Naomi.

Clearly is all about that. And it is about maybe more specifically. Ruth's responding to God's grace in three important ways.

Number one. Number one. We'll just name it this way. It may sound a little strange, but number one. Here's Ruth's response to God's grace.

And it is expecting grace. And expecting grace. This is how Ruth responded. Here in verses one through three is where we see this.

[6:37] Expecting grace. And here is what Ruth is teaching us in these verses. That we must live by faith. And he said, I thought we were talking about grace.

Now you're talking about faith. You can't separate the two. In fact, I would make this a very bold statement that to live by faith is to be in constant expectation of God's grace.

Have you ever thought of it in those terms? In a sense, we're equating the two. Making them synonymous. To live by faith is to be in constant expectation of God's grace.

Trusting Him for everything. Relying upon Him for everything. Knowing and acknowledging for Him that it's not possible for us to even live apart from His grace.

And so therefore, our faith is an expectation of His grace. His unmerited favor toward us. Let's read verses one through three.

[7:43] We'll just kind of move through this kind of step by step. Verse one. It begins this way. There was a relative of Naomi's husband.

All right. So we've moved from chapter one. You know the events that took place there. The famine. Death. The moving out of Israel. The death. And then ultimately Ruth joining, you know, with Naomi.

Embracing Naomi and her God. And then moving with her back to Bethlehem. And so verse one of chapter two begins this way. It begins with hope.

There was a relative of Naomi's husband. A man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech. That was Naomi's husband.

His name was Boaz. That's how the author introduces chapter two. Even before he gets into the things that begin to transpire. He's kind of introducing it by letting his readers know that, hey, all is not lost.

[8:47] All is not hopeless. There is a relative of Naomi's husband. A man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech. And his name is Boaz. All right. So here we're, if nothing else, and it's more than this, but we're introduced to the, for the first time, to Boaz, the third and final principal character of the book of Ruth.

All right. We know Naomi and Ruth. I mean, some other people have been introduced to us as well. But now the key character is Naomi, first then Ruth, and now Boaz.

All right. Now, Naomi is going to continue to be a principal person in the rest of the book. Ruth more so and Boaz more so. In fact, it's going to begin to focus on Ruth and Boaz.

And then ultimately, of course, seeing them come together. So Boaz is introduced to us here in the book of Ruth. And I'll just go ahead and say something about Boaz, though you probably already know this.

That Boaz is a type of Christ. He's a type of Christ. He represents Christ in this story. The story of Ruth is a true story.

[9:58] It's not fictional. It's not an allegory. And so we're not just simply ascribing, you know, spiritual things to the people of the book of this story.

Boaz was a real live person. But as was the case with a number of characters, key characters in the Old Testament, Boaz was a type. In fact, maybe one of the most vivid, most profound types of Christ himself in this book.

You may already, you probably already know that. And we see that, what we see this, him being the type of Christ, we see that in what Boaz does for Ruth.

All right. Now, we're going to have to save that for the third chapter because that's when that very clearly comes into play. But I'm just telling you that here. Now, let's read on.

So, our author writes, Ruth the Moabitess. Now, let's stop right there. Ruth the Moabitess.

[11:01] Now, folks, this is not a title of honor for Ruth. The author means this to be very, very poignant.

It's not a title of honor for the Jews, certainly. Ruth the Moabitess. You can almost say it just like that. The Moabitess. Now, I want to very quickly add, though, the author is not trying to be ugly here.

This is not the author telling you what he thinks about Ruth. He is calling her, and he's going to use that title a number of times throughout the book.

He's using that title to prepare his readers for something that's going to come in this chapter, but even more profoundly in the next chapter.

He's preparing his readers for something quite amazing. In fact, we might even call it the surprise of grace. That's what he's preparing us for.

[12:06] When he calls Ruth the Moabitess, then he is making sure that when the time is right in the unfolding of the story, we're going to be surprised by something.

Because she's Ruth the Moabitess. We'll be surprised by grace. Let's go on. So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, Please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.

And she said to her, Naomi said to her, Go, my daughter. Then she left 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 family of Limelech.

So our author tells us, once again, this connection between Boaz and Limelech, Boaz and Naomi.

All right, now let's stop right there.

Ruth, let's understand, Ruth went out expecting grace. She went out expecting grace.

[13:17] She went out expecting God to take care of them. She went out expecting God to bless, even though she was undeserving.

And there was never any debate in her mind about whether or not she was deserving of God's blessing, God's grace. She knew she was not. She went out expecting grace.

And we could say it this way as well, and it would still say the same thing. She was acting, Ruth was acting according to faith. Now, I'm saying to you that that's the same thing.

She went out searching for food. And she and Naomi certainly needed that, didn't they?

I mean, they've come back from Moab. They, you know, two widows. And Naomi, at least at this point, has no inheritance of Limelech. She's lost all that when Limelech died.

[14:18] They are very close to destitute, you know, and so they needed food. So she went out needing food, in search of food.

And she willingly worked for it. We understand that she was willing to do that. A little bit later, we're going to discover she certainly did work for it. She worked all day for it.

So this was not, you know, some presumptuous kind of faith or a lazy kind of faith. She was willing to get out there and work for the food that she needed.

And but understand that she did go out searching for favor as well. Now, notice the two things that are said here.

Please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him. I think referring to the harvesters, although him is in italics, not in the text.

[15:19] After someone. And so we just have fill in the blank. That's either the harvesters are going along or maybe the the boss, the the one in charge, the supervisor of the harvesters.

She's going to glean in after them and hopefully get something of what they've left behind. So she's willing to get out of the work. This is not presumptuous. And then she says. In whose sight I may find favor.

I may find grace. This is expecting grace. Expecting grace. And and here's what we should understand. It was an expecting grace that Ruth had.

She apparently knew the heart of God. She also apparently knew the word of God. By the way. Even though she's not a Hebrew, not an Israelite.

She knew the word of God. Whether Naomi taught her or she found this out on her own. And I'll refer you to Leviticus chapter 19 verses 9 through 10. Let me just read it to you.

[16 : 27] And when you reap, this is the law of God. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field. All right.

So leave the corners unharvested. Neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard.

Neither shall you gather your grape, the grape of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and the stranger. And who was Ruth?

A stranger. A foreigner. And then the passage ends. I am the Lord your God. I am the Lord your God. Sovereign God.

See, this was expecting grace. She went out in search of food. And not presumptuous. She was going to work for it. But she went out hoping for favor.

[17 : 25] For grace. Expecting grace. Now, before we move on from here, there is a wonderful statement of God's providence here. And this connects, I think, with this expecting grace.

This living by faith. There's a statement of God's providence here. It's in verse 3. And you noticed it, I'm sure. Because it's just right there.

So easy to see. Verse 3 says, And she happened to come. That's a statement of the providence of God. In fact, in the Hebrew text, it would read literally, She chanced a chance.

It's kind of a redundant word. Both the same word. A little different form. But it's, She chanced a chance. She happened to come to the part of the field belonging to who?

To Boaz. Just happened to. Who was of the family of Elimelech. There again, we understand who Boaz is. All right. So, really?

[18 : 36] She happened to come? The author is not lying about that. This is a statement of the providence of God.

God's hand in this thing. Moving Ruth. He's been doing that all along. And so, this is the providence. The author of Ruth has already identified Boaz as a kinsman of Naomi's dead husband Elimelech.

He's already identified him as such. And he has not told us why he introduced him at this point. He's going to do that eventually. He's kind of setting the stage.

It's the masterful way that the author is writing this. And it's also clear that Naomi and Ruth had no idea about Boaz. You need to understand that.

They didn't have any idea about Boaz. In fact, later in the chapter, we understand that. Even throughout the dialogue that Ruth is going to ultimately have with Boaz, she did not understand at any point there that Boaz was a near kin.

[19 : 38] It was only after she reported to Naomi a little bit later about this conversation, about this kindness of this man in his field, and after she mentions his name that Naomi says, Well, bless God.

He's a near kin. They didn't have any idea he was a near kin and could therefore be their kinsman redeemer. And it's equally clear that Ruth is trusting in the providence of God here by going out and saying, Then I might find favor.

She's trusting in the providence of God. God is working all of this out. See, here's what we need to understand. We need to get this fortified in our mind. Expecting grace is a kind of grace or kind of expectation that lives by faith in the loving, providing, providential hand of God.

That's what it means to live by faith. We don't understand the various turns of life, do we? Do you? All those different turns of life that we face, some good, some not so good, some downright terrible, do we understand all those turns of life as a believer?

No. Do we understand the seasons of want that we may experience in life? The seasons of need? The seasons of loss?

[21 : 12] Maybe even great loss in life? Do we understand those? No. Can we find answers for those? Here in this life? Some of them maybe.

Some of them God is gracious to allow us to see later on. We can look back and say, Oh, now I see why God led me this way. Most of the time we can't find answers for them.

We don't understand the hard times of life that take place in our life. We don't understand them. But we are to live in expecting grace.

We are to live by faith in a God who works all things out according to His providential will. Whether we understand it or not.

Expecting grace. Second, we see in Ruth's life experiencing grace. Her experience of grace.

[22:12] Experiencing grace. And here's what Ruth teaches us in this particular part of the passage. Verses 4 through 17. That we must live under grace.

We must live under grace. Ruth left home. That particular day, wherever they were living, there in Bethlehem, left home in search of God's grace through the kindness of someone.

Someone out in the fields of Bethlehem. She left home looking for favor. That someone might express favor. She was expecting grace. She didn't know who it was going to come from.

It didn't matter to her who it would be. She was expecting the grace of God. And here's why the author, again, repeatedly refers to Ruth the Moabitess.

Grace. Grace is always some favor extended to a person who does not deserve it.

[23:19] Otherwise, it's not grace. Grace, let me say that again. Grace is always some favor that has been extended to a person who does not deserve it. A person who cannot ever deserve it or earn it.

Or it's not grace. Grace. Now, let's walk through this part of the text. We're talking about experiencing grace. And see how Ruth experienced the grace of God.

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

That's kind of an interesting dialogue between a boss and his employees or servants, you know. I think it's a testimony to who Boaz was. Here he is. He's got quite a relationship with those who are working out in his fields.

The Lord be with you. And they liked him. They said, The Lord be with you. The Lord bless you.

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

[24:25] Referring to Ruth, of course. So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, It is the young Moabite woman. You know, the one who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

And she said, Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.

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, but stay close by my young women.

Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.

This is Ruth experiencing the grace of God. Through Ruth. Boaz, rather. Through or expressed here by Boaz.

[25:38] She is a, remember, she is a Moabitess. That makes her outside of the covenant people of God. That makes her a Gentile.

She is a woman. She is a widow. She is a Moabitess. She is outside of the covenant. But God has graced her. This is a beautiful picture. And don't fail to notice that in Boaz, God took the initiative to show His grace to Ruth.

Boaz took the initiative. It's God taking the initiative here. And let's just make the comparison. In Christ, God took the initiative to show His grace to me.

And to you. Now, how did she respond? So she fell on her face. Verse 10. She responded in absolute humility.

Utter humility. She fell on her face. Bowed down to the ground. And said to him, said to Boaz. Why? Why have you found favor?

[26:52] I found favor in your eyes. That you should take notice of me. Since I am a foreigner. Stranger. Why? That's what it means to live under grace.

To live always under the grace of God. In acknowledgement of the grace of God. We never, ever come to think that we are deserving of His grace. We never, ever come to the place where we think that we are deserving anything.

Deserving of anything from the hand of God. Living under His grace. We never see ourselves as meriting God's grace.

And I want you to notice. That Boaz does offer an answer to her question. Or what's the question? Why have I found favor in your sight?

I mean, I'm a foreigner. Stranger. Moabite. And Boaz offers an answer. Verse 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.

[28:07] And how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth. And have come to the people whom you did not know before. That's kind of like Tony out here. The father and mother and the country.

And she's living here. But she knows the people now. But here's his answer. I know all about you. I know what you've given up. I know how you've been a blessing to Naomi.

And so forth. Alright? And then he says, The Lord repay your work and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel under whose wings you have come for refuge.

Now let's think about this for a minute. Honestly, just on the face of it, Boaz responds to Ruth's question concerning why he has graced her is somewhat troubling.

Just on the face of it. Just at a first glance. It sounds like the writer wants us to make a conclusion. A certain conclusion. About the grace of God.

[29:22] It sounds like, on the face of it, that he wants us to conclude that God's grace is a result of some meritorious work. That we have done.

Sounds like that. I mean, she asked, Why have I found favor in your sight? And he says, Because of this and this and this that you've done.

It sounds like Boaz is saying, Especially as he ends it, The Lord repay you for your work. It sounds like he is saying that Ruth's kindness to Naomi was the reason for God's favor and grace.

But that's not the case. Let me point out a couple of key elements in what Boaz said to Ruth. First of all, Notice that Ruth asked Boaz, Not God, For an explanation as to why he, Boaz, Was being so gracious to her.

That's what we ought to notice right off. And Boaz gave the answer. Because I have had it fully reported to me. And I know this and thus and such about you.

[30:37] And that's why Boaz graced Ruth. Alright? Just in the immediate sense. But second, You ought to notice. Notice what Boaz said next.

Verse 12, He said, The Lord repay your work, And a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel. Now, Boaz is talking about God's grace.

He said, This full reward. A full reward of grace. On what basis will God grace Ruth? Her willingness to leave father and mother.

Her willingness to leave her home country, Moab, Where she was born, Where she grew up, Where all her friends are. On the basis of her kindness to Naomi. Will, Are these things the basis upon which God will grace Ruth?

The answer is no. No. Not on the basis of any of these things. On what basis then? Faith.

[31:56] Faith. Notice the last thing Boaz said here in verse 12. Under whose wings you have come for refuge. Why should God grant, Extend grace to Ruth?

Faith. Because she sought refuge under His wings. She had placed her faith, Her trust, In the grace of God.

For all of her provision, For her protection, As a young woman, Away from her hometown, In a foreign country. Her provision, Not only for herself, But also for Naomi.

She had sought refuge under the wings of God. Her faith, Was the basis, Upon which God graced her.

By grace, Through faith. I like how John Piper commented on this in his book, A Sweet and Bitter Providence. I think we have that in our library now, By the way, If you want to check that out and read it, If it's not already checked out.

[33:10] Here's what John Piper said. Listen, Very close, Because He can be a little wordy Sometimes. Now listen, Ruth has esteemed God's protection, Superior to all others.

Esteemed His protection, As superior to all others. She has set her heart, On God for hope and joy. And when a person does that, God's honor, Not the value of our work, Is at stake. And He will be merciful. If you plead God's value, As the source of your hope, Instead of pleading your own value, As a reason for God's blessing, Then His unwavering commitment, To His own glory, Engages all His heart, For your protection.

When you place, Again, God's value, As the source of all hope, Above, Above, Your value, Your works, Or, Any other thing you think may merit God's grace.

The rest of this section, In the chapter, Is meant to just simply, Illustrate the fullness of the grace of God, To kind of, Embellish, Kind of, As an illustration, Of God's lavish, The grace that He lavishes upon us.

[34 : 53] In fact, It kind of reminds me of Ephesians 3.20, Where Paul said that he is able to do exceedingly, Abundantly above, All that we ask or think, According to the power that works in us.

But notice verse 13, How like God Boaz is. Then she said, Let me find favor in your sight, My Lord, For you have comforted me, And have spoken kindly to your maidservant, Though I am not like one of your maidservants, I am not like them, I am a foreigner.

Again, Ruth's utter humility, But the highlight is, How Boaz is just pouring his grace out upon her.

Again, As a type of Christ, As an illustration of God's grace.

Verse 14, Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, Come here and eat of the bread, And dip your piece of bread in the vinegar. So she sat beside the reapers, And he passed parched grain to her, And she ate and was satisfied, And kept some back.

And he allowed her to. And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, Saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves. Not just after the harvesters, But even before the harvesters.

[36 : 09] Have gone through. Let her glean there too. This is grace. And do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles Fall purposely for her.

It's wonderful. Leave it that she may glean, And do not rebuke her. So she gleaned in the field until evening, And beat out what she had gleaned, And it was about an ephah of barley.

Quite a bit of barley. Is this just exemplifying, Illustrating for us, The God who does, And able to do exceedingly, Abundantly, Above all that we should ever ask or think, According to the power that works in us.

Alright, so here's Ruth. Expecting grace, She lives by faith. Experiencing grace, She lives under the grace of God. And one more quickly, Expressing grace.

Verses 18 through 23, Through to the rest, End of the chapter. And here is what Ruth teaches us, In these final verses in chapter 2.

[37 : 22] We must live, In hope. So, Ruth, Lives by faith, Expecting grace.

She lives under grace, Experiencing God's grace. And she lives in hope. In hope.

Folks, The expression of grace is hope. Not a hope so. But an assured hope.

That's the expression of grace. It's hope. Verse 18, Then she took it up and went into the city, And her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned.

So she brought out and gave to her What she had kept back after having been satisfied. She ate everything she needed. And then took this to her mother-in-law.

[38 : 25] And her mother-in-law said to her, Where have you gleaned today? I mean, She's surprised by all of this grain. Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.

So she told her mother-in-law, With whom she had worked, And said, The man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, Who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead.

And Naomi said to her, This man is a relation of ours. One of our close relatives. I'll give you kind of a heads up. We're going to see this word in the Hebrew again in chapter 3.

And it's a very significant word. It's translated close relative or kinsman. It is the Hebrew word ga'al. You can spell it in English.

G-A-W-A-L. Ga'al. And it is the kinsman redeemer. This is what we're going to see when we get into chapter 3. Verse 21. Ruth the Moabitess said, He also said to me, You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.

[39 : 37] And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women. And that people do not meet you in any other field.

So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz to glean until the end of the barley harvest and wheat harvest. And she dwelt with her mother-in-law. Now, both Ruth and Naomi express the grace of God.

They're giving testimony, expression to the grace of God. And the expression of the grace of God is to live in hope. To live in hope. Both Ruth and Naomi live in hope.

Why? Because of who Boaz was. A near kin.

Wealthy. Powerful. Also because of what Boaz did. They are living in hope because of what Boaz did.

[40:48] He showed kindness to Ruth and by extension Naomi. In fact, all that he's going to do for Ruth, ultimately, he's doing for Naomi.

They were living in hope because of what Boaz did for them. And because of what Boaz said. They live in hope because of what Boaz said.

His words, and we've read them. They reveal compassion, kindness, love for Ruth, the stranger, the foreigner. And a care for Naomi.

All right? Now, that's Boaz. And he being the reason for their hope. Because of who Boaz is.

Because of what he did. And because of what he has said.

That they could trust and bank on. Their hope was solidly anchored on Boaz. And here's the lesson.

[41:49] We can live in hope as an expression of grace. Because of who Christ is. He's our near kin.

He left heaven. Clothed himself in human flesh. Became like us and dwelt among us and died for us. He's our near kin. Wealthy. Beyond comprehension.

Powerful. Supreme. We can live in hope because of who Christ is. And we can live in hope because of what Christ has done for us.

Right? He has showed us kindness. Grace. Bought our redemption.

And we can live in hope because of what Christ has said. What he has said. His word. Which reveals his love.

[42:51] His love for us. His love. More about that. Next week. Thank you.