

GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

Ruth 2

April 16, 2006 – Grace Covenant Baptist Church

I. God's Providence Displayed (2:1-7, 17)

1. Introduction to Boaz (v. 1, 4)

We immediately see that things were not as bleak as Naomi might have imagined at the end of chapter 1. While we saw her trust in the Lord who brought her back to Bethlehem last week, I am sure that she had some anxiety over how she would be provided for on her return.

In v. 1, we are introduced to a man named Boaz before the events of Ruth's and Naomi's meeting him. We are given sort of a split screen look at the events of the narrative. The author's letting us in on the person of Boaz emphasizes that Boaz is a person to be focused on. This will become apparent as the narrative unfolds in the remainder of the book.

What does the author tell us about Boaz?

a. Kinsman of the family of Elimelech (v. 1, 3)

The importance of this will become clearer as we look further in the book of Ruth. For Boaz to properly fulfill his role, this kinship with Elimelech is important. Remember, God's purposes are still hidden to Ruth and Naomi. The author provides us with this information to show us God's providence in bringing Ruth and Boaz together. He reiterates in v. 3 the fact that Boaz was of the family of Elimelech. So the author stresses the importance of this familial relation in order for us to see God at work behind the scenes that play out in the narrative.

b. Man of great wealth (v. 1)

In Scripture, while "**wealth**" often refers to riches, it can also mean "valor," "virtue," or "moral worth." All of these describe Boaz. He was a man of financial prosperity as is evidenced by him owning the field that provides the setting in this chapter. But he was also a man of moral worth, a man of integrity as is demonstrated in his actions towards Ruth and Naomi. He was a man that was above reproach. So in Boaz, we have a man of moral integrity, a man of influence in the community, and a man of financial resources.

c. Man of God (v. 4)

In v. 4, we have recorded this exchange between Boaz and the workers of his field. At the end of chapter 1 we saw that this was the time of harvest. This is an important key for us in understanding these greetings. In Psalm 129 the psalmist describes a time of persecution and famine in the life of Israel. In times such as these the psalmist remarks that one of the indicators of times such as these is "those who pass by do not say, 'The blessing of the LORD be upon you; We bless you in the name of the LORD'" (Ps. 129:8). By contrast, these blessings indicated a time of harvest and the nation's understanding that their dependence was on God. Remember the stipulations that God had in His covenant with Israel, "If you obey, I will bless you. If you disobey, I will curse you." When Israel disobeyed, there was a famine. When they obeyed, there was harvest.

By these blessings in v. 4, we see that the nation as a whole and Boaz in particular were living in obedience to the covenant. The covenant blessing, "May the Lord be with you... May

the Lord bless you” demonstrates that God was at the center of their thoughts. Boaz’ greeting to his workers shows that he was a man that was faithful to God.

2. Ruth in the fields (v. 2)

The author takes us to the other side of the split screen and returns to the story of Ruth and Naomi.

a. Initiative to care for Naomi (v. 2)

We have a widow and her foreign daughter-in-law returning home and there is the pressing issue of what to eat. Ruth shows her love for Naomi in taking the initiative to provide for them. **“Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.’ And she said to her, ‘Go, my daughter.’”**

Provision was made by God in the civil law of Moses to take care of the poor by gleaning in the fields. We see this in Lev. 19:9-10, “Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the *needy* and for the *stranger*. I am the LORD your God.” We see similar language in Deut. 24:19, “When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” It almost seems as if God anticipated the story of Naomi and Ruth! The widow and the foreigner were both to gain sustenance from these leftovers. Ruth somehow knew of this provision and initiates providing for Naomi. This gleaning was hard work; and it was not necessarily safe work, especially for a foreigner. All that would be gleaning in this manner were hungry and I am sure that there was no small competition involved.

b. Not looking for handouts (v. 7, 17)

Upon arriving at the field, the workers report to Boaz that Ruth said, **“Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.”** Ruth was not looking for handouts. She was willing to work for everything she received. She demonstrated this in her working from morning until evening with little break time. When she was through gleaning, she **“beat out what she had gleaned”** and made her own barley. Ruth was quite an industrious young woman.

We could learn a lot from Ruth in this regard. Our culture is defined by those who seek to do as little work as possible yet expect a greater return than they deserve for their work. Many do not look at work and compensation as a gift from God. They are more concerned about what is fair than they are providing a service. Ruth was a hard worker. She was not looking for handouts. Whatever she received she received joyfully, understanding that she deserved nothing. The only reason she was getting anything, the only reason she was allowed to glean in the fields, was the goodness of God.

c. Noticed by others (vv. 5-6)

Because of her commitment to work, Ruth was noticed. **“Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, ‘Whose young woman is this?’”**

3. Divine happenstance (v. 3)

II. Kindness to a Foreigner (2:8-16)

- 1. Kindness displayed (vv. 8-9, 14-16)**
- 2. Purpose for the kindness (vv. 10-12)**
- 3. Thankfulness for kindness (v. 13)**

III. A Testimony of grace (2:18-23)

- 1. Abundance of grace (v. 18)**
- 2. Source of grace (vv. 19-20) Kinsmen-redeemer**
- 3. Community of grace (vv. 21-23)**

Conclusion

- 1. God providentially brings His children to Him in His time and in His way**
- 2. “Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should take notice of me, a foreigner?”**
- 3. Do you know the kinsmen-redeemer, Jesus Christ?**
- 4. Do you value the work that God has placed you in?**
- 5. Do you value the protection from the world provided by the people of God?**