

The Book of Ruth – Ruth 2 – Faith, Favor, and Faithfulness – Lesson Summary

I would describe myself as a linear thinker. I like outlines, bullet points, and structure. My undergraduate degree was in Business Administration. My wife however, is someone who's more artistic and freer flowing. She colors outside the lines, majored in literature, and minored in poetry. We both have different perspectives but they often provide a clearer understanding of the situations and circumstances we experience. Scripture is no different. There are passages and books that are intended to be more linear in nature. Theological instruction, historical accounts, and pastoral directives often function this way. However, there are also riveting stories and beautiful passages of poetry. Together these literary styles provide a more complete picture of the character of God. As we continue to study the book of Ruth it's important to understand that while it's a historical account, the author's intent is to take us on a journey. Ruth is a beautiful story of faith, favor, and the faithfulness of God.

The book of Ruth begins with tragedy after tragedy. Everything seems to be unraveling for all involved. It's only the conclusion of Ch. 1 that suggest that hope is on the way. It's no coincidence that the author informs us that Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. The reality of a harvest suggests that God's wrath and judgement has been lifted. It appears that faith has returned to Israel. A time of famine has led to a time of feasting. Ch. 2 suggests a similar reality when Boaz is described as a man of noble character. During the days of the judges we are told that everyone did what was right in their own eyes but now we see a man of noble character. As the story continues, we see those harvesting grain allowing widows, orphans, and sojourners to gather from their fields. This practice was instituted by God as a picture of His care for His people. The return of faith has led to a return to obedience in Bethlehem.

As we see the evidence of faith's return in Bethlehem, we also see evidence of Ruth's personal faith. Having declared her commitment to Naomi's God in *Ruth 1:16-17*, she now begins to live out her faith in Ch. 2. Ruth asks permission from Naomi to go glean from the fields. Her understanding that this practice was instituted by the Lord suggests that she's been studying, or listening to, God's Word. Not only does she understand God's law, she is expectant on her finding favor as she follows it.

The theme of favor runs consistently throughout this chapter. We witness the favor of the Lord as well as the favor of Boaz. God's favor is evident in how He provided a way for Ruth to come to Bethlehem. If her husband was still alive, she wouldn't be in Bethlehem. His disobedience would have led to his separation from Israel for ten generations. His death actually paves the way for her to come. God determines the field in which Ruth will glean, her "chance" encounter with Boaz, and Boaz's relationship to Elimelech's family. The Lord is showing favor to Ruth all along the way. We see Boaz extending favor toward Ruth as well. Ruth acknowledges this truth twice in Ch. 2. (*vs. 10,13*) He takes interest in her, provides access to his resources, assures her protection, commends her love for Naomi, invites her into his family, and sends her away with an abundance of provision. The favor shown by both the Lord and Boaz should remind us of the favor we have experienced from God as well. Ultimately, we experience His favor because He is faithful.

The story of Ruth reminds us of the faithful hands of God. Ruth experiences the visible hand of God as He provides immediate evidence of His blessing. Her interactions with Boaz, his provision, and her protection as a foreigner are all visible signs of God's faithfulness. Ruth also experiences the invisible hand of God as He works behind the scenes to orchestrate a beautiful story of restoration and redemption. Along the way, God has been weaving seemingly insignificant experiences and significant tragedy as He brings Ruth into the lineage of Christ. God does the same for you and I through Christ. We witness the visible hand of God, but more often, we experience the invisible hand of God working behind the scenes to accomplish His purposes for His glory and our good. Be encouraged. Allow faith to remind you of His favor and Christ's faithfulness.

Discussion:

- 1) Ruth's faith led her to trust that the Lord would show her favor, but she still took the necessary steps to pursue it. How have you taken steps of faith in the Lord?
- 2) Can you recall times when the Lord has provided visible blessing in your life and times in which they've been invisible until hindsight? If so, what/when were they?