

## FIRST STEPS IN FINDING THE FULL MEASURE OF GOD!

Ruth 2:1-14

*This message delivered at Lincoln Christian Life Center, Sunday evening, May 6, 2007  
The version for this sermon is the New American Standard Bible*

Ruth was utterly impoverished and it must have been completely embarrassing to be reduced to such destitution. Yet, she had come to Bethlehem, the house of bread. How was she to enter the provision and the fullness of God?

In the same token, how can a person come into the fullness of God's provision as mentioned in Ephesians 3:19—“*that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*” Where do you start? It has been properly stated that God changes circumstances when your heart is changed.

The Bethlehem story starts with verse 1—“*Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.*” This verse offers immediate insight into the possible provision God will have both for Naomi and Ruth. The provision centers on Boaz. The phrase “*a man of great wealth,*” can be interpreted in various ways—such as, a man of valour, a brave warrior, a mighty man, and a man of standing. Evidently, he was a man of the finest manly traits. His name means “in him is strength.”

The verses before us, are filled with exciting insight and spiritual instruction—the pathway of understanding.

### **SHE DID WHAT SHE COULD, (Ruth 2:2)**

Ruth recognized and stepped into what the Law said was available. As an impoverished person, Ruth has the legal right to glean in the corners of the harvest fields, (Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22, Deuteronomy 24:19-22). What she could do, she did do. There is a Latin saying which goes, “Providence assists not the idle.” “It was God's way of taking care of the poor people of that day,” says J. Vernon McGee. “He didn't put them on relief; he didn't get them in a bread line: He didn't make them recipients of charity. He gave them something to do. They had to work for what they got.”<sup>1</sup>

That is the first step for anyone who wants to be enriched by God. Take Him at His Word.

### **SHE DETECTED WHAT SHE MUST DO, (Ruth 2:3).**

When Ruth secure Naomi's permission to “*go now*” to the field, the term “field” is not in the plural form. At the time there were no fences, family signs or natural barriers to distinguish one owner's property from another. Stones were used as markers that separated boundaries, (Proverbs 22:28). That she happened upon a given land that would later be her husband's, or that she would become a woman in the line of King David and ultimately, the Savior, is altogether astonishing. How did she know into which field she should go?

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<sup>1</sup> J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible, Volume 2, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), p.96

Dr. Harry Ironside, in reviewing his life, claims that about 80% of his decisions were made without knowing at the time they were God's will. Yet, there is a more definite plan!

As Ruth approached the field of Boaz, she knew that all the landowners would not welcome her, particularly a stranger from Moab. She desperately needed to find where she could find favor. So she watched to find where the favor of the Lord would be. That is a key element in guidance. To see where God is blessing! Though it might seem she just happened to get to the right place, she first put herself in the right position by taking God at His word and then looking for where the favor of the Lord was occurring.

How do you sense the favor of the Lord? There may be an inner prompting that this is the way, walk ye in it. Or there might be a "good impression of God," that where you are right. "*The favor of the Lord*" is often the guiding indicator in the lives of the godly. According to Hebrews 11:5, Enoch "*obtained the witness (that) he pleased the Lord.*" Noah, says Genesis 6:8, "*found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*" "*The Favor of the Lord*" was a key issue in for Ezra to find God's direction for his life, (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28).

It may seem like happenstance, but as Genesis 24:27 (kjv) says, "*I being in the way, the Lord led me.*"

### **SHE SUBMITTED TO THE ENTIRE AFFAIR TRUSTING GOD FOR DIRECTION AND PROVISION, (Ruth 2:4-7)**

We are not told why Boaz was detained from going to his field early in the morning. Perhaps he had business to attend to in town. However, when he came to his field and saw the crew at work, he greets them. His greeting invokes a returned greeting from the working crew. It is a remarkable exchange—of mutual respect. It was a form of blessing—"*The Lord be with you,*" said Boaz. And the reapers' reply, "*The Lord bless you.*" The greeting on both sides was an acknowledgment of their complete dependence upon the Lord.

As Boaz approached his field, he immediately recognized a stranger. Her dress and appearance were different. When Boaz asks the crew leaders about her, he seems almost rude.

Ruth had three recommendations—she had come with Naomi, she had asked permission to pick grain with the other reapers, and she was ever so persistent as she steadily worked.

Even when she carries a brief time in the house—likely a temporary hut for rest and recovery, Ruth spends only a short time as a break from her work.

Why should she be so favored? Of course, her reputation had gone before her. Boaz has already heard of Ruth and her exceptional qualities. Likely, Bethlehem was like any small town where gossip has spread about the "little foreign girl from Moab." Here was a woman who was loyal to her mother-in-law, who would never desert her. Ruth, it must have been reported, was a charming woman as her name means—"of a beautiful or glamour personality." She was an attractive woman!

We dare not miss the spiritual significance of the “unnamed servant” who was “*in charge of the reapers*,” (verse 6). Genesis 24:2 speaks of the eldest servant that Abraham sent out to find a wife for his son Isaac. Then, Joseph’s “*ruler of his house*” was the servant who prepared a meal for Joseph’s brothers when they are reunited, (Genesis 43:16-17). The nameless figures are always a reminder of the Holy Spirit who does not draw attention to himself, but exalts the Lord. He provides for Christ a bride, brings them into unity with gifts and graces as in the story of Ruth suggests and finally, brings them into the Marriage supper of the lamb as represented by Joseph. Much a due may be spoken about the manifestations of the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit never mentions Himself. He always and only magnifies the Lord, (John 16:13-14).

### **SHE EMBRACED THE FULL CAPACITY OF HER PROVISION AS SHE UNDERSTOOD IT, (Ruth 2:8-13)**

There is a subtle shift in the story, which is a remarkable change. Till that moment, Ruth is spoken of as “damsel” or “woman.” Then, Boaz calls her “daughter,”—“my daughter.” The welcome is friendly and personal.

Boaz gives Ruth good advice—not to seek to glean in another field, but to abide here. She is to continue on with the godly people that she has come to know. He says to her, “*Let thine eyes be on the field.*” She is not to dream or think of anywhere else to go. That is a commitment to stay where God has started you growing.

He offers her protection and provision. Boaz tells how he has warned his young men not to touch, reproach her but to be kind to her. That is a taletell sign of the day in which they lived. Wickedness was everywhere and she needed to stay where she could be safe and secure.

He tells her to “*go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.*”

Ruth is overwhelmed and “*she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,*” (verse 10). She does not understand the wonderful grace bestowed to her. Boaz explains his part—that “*it hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done,*” (verse 11). In the word “answered” in verse 11, it means literally, “raised his voice.” He wants her to know clearly and deliberately how valuable her commitment had been!

Boaz then expresses a key to Ruth’s entire redemptive story. He said, “*May the Lord repay you.*” He was suggesting that because of her commitment to God she might be richly and fully rewarded. Boaz uses a figure of speech common in Israel—that of God’s protection as a bird that spreads its wings over her chicks, (Psalm 17:8, 36:7, Matthew 23:37).

The heart of the story is found in verse 13—“*I find favor in thy sight.*” She looked for someone who would show her grace. Verse 2 and 10 tell how Ruth sought a field where she might “*find favor.*”

The word “favor” is from the Hebrew word “*chen*” which is the same Hebrew term for grace. A little search will uncover why Boaz is so full of grace for Ruth. He knew what it was like to be an alien—to be an outcast. Boaz was the son of Rahab who received spies in Joshua’s day during the destruction of Jericho, (Joshua 2:5). Rahab then became part of the lineage of Jesus Christ and part of the commonwealth of Israel.

Two lingering images remain. In verse 14, it says, “*She sat beside the reapers.*” The word “sit” implies that the work is finished. Recall, when Jesus drove out the legions of demons from the demoniac, Luke 8:35 says that he was calmly “*sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.*” The book of Hebrews speaks of Jesus “*After he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God,*” (Hebrews 10:12). That means that Ruth entered a realm of rest with God, that the work of her redemptive recovery was already accomplished.

That may explain the second image conveyed in verse 14. Boaz served her roasted grain “*and she sat and was satisfied.*” She had found the place where her soul was satisfied.