

## THE UNFOLDING OF GOD'S PLAN!

Ruth 2:14-23

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The version for this sermon is the New American Standard Bible*

The last message ended with the last word in Ruth 2:14—"Left." After having a meal with the other reapers supplied by Boaz, Ruth ate until she was satisfied. There was still some roasted grain left. This sense of abundance was a remarkable display of all that was to follow.

Such an experience recalls the words of the Apostle Paul who speaks of the believer's inheritance. All that was experienced of God's grace is only an earnest, or a down payment of that which is to come. Originally, this word likely came from Phoenicia, referred to "earnest-money." It was a deposit by a purchaser and if the purchase was not completed, the earnest was forfeited. In time, an earnest denoted a pledge. In the New Testament, it is used only as assurance by God that the giving of the Holy Spirit is a pledge of future blessedness, (Ephesians 1:14, II Corinthians 1:22, 5:5).

Once Ruth had landed on the field of Boaz and had been properly introduced to Boaz, you would think that the intention of God would be fully realized—that she would step into the full purpose of her life, into her full inheritance. But that was not intended to be. Why do we imagine that when God begins to work with us, we expect to arrive immediately at the destiny of God's purpose? Instead, there are many winds and turns, twists and troubles, but little by little you enter more and more into your spiritual inheritance.

The New Testament term "entrance" (*eisodos*) speaks of the believers access into God's presence, (Hebrews 10:19) and into the full supply of God's provision. II Peter 1:11 says, "*For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.*"

The plan of God for your life unfolds a step at a time. It has been said that the great doors of God's guidance swing on small hinges. It was the happenstance of Ruth landing on Boaz's and becoming acquainted with him, that started the process that would ultimately bring her in the fullness of God's plan.

The unfolding of God's plan for your life, not only begins when you begin to move in the direction of God's purpose, but as you realize that moving into the goal comes a step at a time. That is why I Peter 4:10 is so practical. It says, "*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*" What is the "manifold grace of God?" The word "manifold" could be translated "variegated." That is, they are various folds in God's grace and they become unfolded to us a single fold at a time. All that God provides for the believer is far more than what can be grasped or understood in this life. That explains why the Apostle Paul says, "*that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus,*" (Ephesians 2:7). It will take eternity to unveil the magnificent grace He provides for Christians!

## THE UNFOLDING OF RUTH'S PATH

Where did it all start with Ruth? The guidance of God began when she made a commitment to follow God, (Ruth 1:16). That commitment was multifaceted—a commitment to a new people, a new life style, a new country, a new place to die—a complete make over!

The next step was to obey that Laws of God as she understood them. That is what caused her to one day, get up early and go and glean in a field during harvest time. It was a provision afforded to her by the law.

The third step was that she just accidentally landed on the property belonging to Boaz. What appeared to be accidental was actually providential. It reminds us that if you keep your heart right before God, He will certainly guide you along the way—even though each step may not seem to be His direct intervention.

### THE NEXT STEPS, (Ruth 2:14-16)

Once Ruth became acquainted with Boaz, she continued to move into the place of God's design and purpose. Trace the next few steps:

1. A place of fellowship, (Ruth 2:14). Boaz's invitation to join him for dinner, suggests not only a means of provision for providing for Ruth's physical needs, but a way of becoming better acquainted with Boaz. Boaz invited her to take a place of honor.
2. A place of provision, (Ruth 2:15). When Ruth returned to the field, Boaz gave specific instructions to the young field servants. "Boaz commanded his young men," which recalls how the older men of God are for counsel while the young are for work. He told them, "*Let her glean even among the sheaves. . .*" The poor were very likely to get up to where the grain was excellent. You understand then why the owners of the field would insist that the poor gleaners would always kept behind his reapers. But in Ruth's case, Boaz told his labor force to allow Ruth to push into the good grain.
3. A place of abundance, (Ruth 2:16). The handfuls on purpose were an additional supply given to Ruth without her knowledge of it. The deliberate scattered of more grain was designed to enrich Ruth more.

For the believer, God gives "handfuls of revelation on purpose." The term knowledge in the Hebrew (*nakar*), is used both in verses 10 and 19. It means "to discern or make a distinction." As the events of Ruth's life unfold, there is a detection of what God is doing.

When Ruth returned to her mother-in-law, she returned with an ephah (originally an Egyptian measurement) of grain. When God gave manna, a day's supply per person was "an omer," (Exodus 16:16). An omer was a measurement—of a sheaf (5.1 pints)—that is, an ephah was ten omers which was enough food for two women for nearly a week, (five days). Ruth also gave Naomi some food that had been left over from lunch, (verse 18).

## **FAITHFUL COMMITMENT, (Ruth 2:17-23)**

Many make commitments, but do not remain faithful to her commitment. Ruth was faithful three ways:

1. She worked thoroughly till evening and performed all her work, (verse 17-18). Not only did she spend the day gleaning, she ended her day threshing the grain with a stick to separate the grain from the chaff. No one knows how humble the work of gleaning is. It requires that you are on your knees. And is this not the posture where you find the richest of grace stooped in prayer and waiting before an open Bible? Then, the task of threshing is even more humbling. It must be a dirty job and tiring. But if you are going to get into the depths of God's storehouse, it demands a commitment to diligent work. Ruth was a woman who has a commitment each day to do all the duties her commitment required.
2. Taking notice of your blessings, (verses 19-20). Not only must the believer feel blessed when he is blessed, but at moments of blessing ought to be times when special recognition made to God for what He gives.
3. She stayed faithful for the entire season, (verses 21-23). The term used to describe Ruth's staying close to the servant girls is the same verb used in verses 8 and 21 (to stay with) is the identical term used for the marriage bond, (Genesis 2:24). A commitment started well continued on well. She stayed throughout the harvest season—about a six week period. I Corinthians 4:2 says, "*It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy, (or as the KJV says, 'faithful.')*" Nothing prepares you for greater depths in God than being faithful with what God gives you to do!

The reward of Ruth's commitment will concern a kinsman-redeemer. This topic, which is the heart of the book of Ruth, will be for a future message.