

### The Kindness of Boaz Toward Ruth

#### Ruth 2:8-16

Ruth 2:8-16 - *“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. <sup>9</sup> 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.” <sup>10</sup> So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?”*

*<sup>11</sup> 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, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. <sup>12</sup> 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.”*

*<sup>13</sup> 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.”*

*<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. <sup>16</sup> Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”*

#### Background Notes

In verses 8 and 9, Boaz speaks to Ruth for the first time. The fact that Boaz referred to Ruth as “my daughter” may be an indication that Boaz was a number of years older than Ruth. In verse 2 Naomi, Ruth’s mother-in-law, referred to Ruth as “my daughter.” It may, however, have been a term of the kindly concern a father would have for a daughter. In any case, Boaz treated Ruth with kindness, and Ruth was very thankful.

In the book of Ruth, Boaz is a spiritual picture (a “type”) of Christ. Here in chapter 2 certain of Boaz’s characteristics enhance his portrayal of Christ. In verse 1 we learn that Boaz was a man of great wealth. The Hebrew term translated as “a man of wealth” would be better translated as “a mighty man of valor.” Chances are he was wealthy, too, but this phrase has more to do with his character than how much money he had. Remember, the story of Ruth took place during the times of the Judges. So, Boaz was probably known for his courage and his willingness to stand up to any foreign invaders and protect the people of Bethlehem in their homes and fields.

Isn’t this a wonderful picture of our Lord Jesus, who is the ultimate Mighty Man of valor? He has fought the enemy, Satan, and defeated him!

Now our Lord protects everything that is rightfully His. Notice that Boaz was concerned about Ruth's safety and protection. He made sure that Ruth would not be molested (v8-9). Remember again -- this was the time of the Judges when moral standards had declined, and women were treated poorly. In the spiritual picture, our Lord is concerned about our safety and our protection. We can entrust ourselves to Him and His care.

Notice that Boaz knew all about Ruth, the foreigner from Moab. In the same way, the Lord knows all about us: our backgrounds and our attitudes, as well as our actions. Ruth's humble response to Boaz showed her attitude of faithfulness and gratitude. In the same way, we should humbly thank the Lord for what he has done for us. We were outside of God's covenant promises and estranged from God, but He graciously took notice of us, and showed kindness to us, and saved us! Surely we should respond in humble thanksgiving!

## Doctrinal Point

### The Bible teaches the "Boaz method" of encouragement.

Let's look at what the Bible teaches us here about encouraging fellow believers. Boaz greatly encouraged Ruth. In verse 13 she said, *"For you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant."*

You can just imagine how discouraged Ruth would have been if Boaz had taken a different attitude towards her. She was a foreigner – a Moabite, from a pagan background. She was doing the humble and menial job of gleaning, or picking up the leftover crops. This was hard backbreaking work in the hot sun. It would have been very easy for Ruth to become discouraged, especially if there wasn't much left over to glean. So Boaz encouraged Ruth in her work and her faithfulness to Naomi.

We can learn some lessons here about how to encourage fellow believers. The Bible teaches the Boaz method of encouragement. As I see it, there are 3 steps to the Boaz method of encouragement: accept, animate, and assist. We could call it the "Triple A Method"!

**Step 1: Accept.** We are to accept fellow believers as they are, with all of their differences. Ruth was a poor foreigner from pagan Moab. She was totally different from Boaz as to background and culture, but Boaz accepted Ruth as she was. Boaz was no respecter of persons. We too must accept people as they are -- even though we may consider them uncultured or even rude, or their clothing is not our style, or their words and mannerisms grate us! We are to accept fellow believers as they are – that's the first step in encouragement.

Recently Margie and I returned home from 2 weeks of ministry in Korea. Korean believers are wonderful people, and they were unceasingly kind and generous to us. But they don't eat the way Americans do – occasionally it was a bit of a "culture shock" for us. Korean food was different, of course, and many times we sat on the floor to eat – no problem. But at church meals, we noticed that many of the people ate from their chopsticks and then dipped their chopsticks into the community bowls on the table. We Americans could have considered this Korean cultural norm as "double-dipping"! But at the same time we were committing social no-no's from their perspective! A number of times I forgot to take off my shoes when I entered a home, and that's a **huge** no-no in Korea! Many times I forgot to cover my mouth when I used a toothpick, which is the polite Korean custom. How gross could I be?

Here's the point of the story – the Korean believers graciously accepted us, with all our many cultural faux pas and our complete ignorance of their polite behavior norms! We accepted each other, with all our differences -- and we had a wonderful time together, getting on with the job of encouraging one another in the Lord! Step 1 is Accept. Accept fellow believers, as they are, with their differences.

**Step 2: Animate.** Animate means to give spirit and support. It means to stir to life and move to action. It means to get a person going! Now notice – that was exactly the result of the conversation between Boaz and Ruth.

When Boaz finished speaking to Ruth, Ruth was excited about gleaning. She was motivated to glean! She was animated and greatly encouraged. What was the key? Boaz not only accepted Ruth as she was, but he made positive comments to her. In verse 11 he commended her for her kind and responsible care of Naomi, and in verse 12 he commended her for her faith in the God of Israel.

Nothing works better than positive comments to animate a fellow believer who is discouraged or at a standstill! Again and again I find this to be true as in my relationships with my students. When a student who is not doing too well academically comes to me and tells me how discouraged he or she is, the first thing I do is to try to find something positive to say about his or her performance. When something positive is mentioned, many times I literally see the student become animated! Discouraged students are motivated to work again. They're encouraged!

Notice that at this point Boaz did not give Ruth a theological quiz to see if she was totally freed up from her pagan religious roots! No -- what Ruth needed at this point was encouragement. Boaz encouraged her, and her spirit was animated by his positive comments.

There is nothing that encourages me more in the ministry than positive feedback. When someone writes a letter because of the radio ministry, for example, and tells us how they've been blessed, I get animated! I'm greatly encouraged and motivated to go on with the job of preparing and recording messages from the Bible.

So, animation with positive comments is a very important step for encouraging one another. Don't forget to commend fellow believers when they do something positive. Don't just notice their negative traits, and don't just make negative comments to and about your fellow believers! Encourage them -- and thus animate them -- with positive comments and feedback!

**Step 3: Assist.** Boaz not only accepted Ruth with all her differences, and he not only animated Ruth with positive comments -- he assisted her in her work of gleaning. This is another important step in encouraging fellow believers.

Notice that Boaz did not tell Ruth that she didn't have to glean, and he didn't do the gleaning for her, but he did assist her. He made sure that she had water to drink and food to eat, and he made sure she wasn't hindered in her work (v9, v15). He even assisted her in the hard work of gleaning by having his men purposely drop some grain out of the bundles or sheaves!

Recently Mark Woodhouse, a Christian brother, took 20 years of Devotions for Growing Christians, the devotional essays that I write, and he put it on the internet. I'd been thinking and praying about this for some time, and Mark came along and voluntarily helped us out. What an assist! What a great encouragement! Step 3—assist—is a very important step in the biblical method of encouragement.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 exhorts us to encourage one another and edify one another. The "Triple A Method" of encouragement is biblical: accept, animate, and assist. The Bible teaches the Boaz method of encouragement.

## Practical Application

### Have you found refuge under the wings of the Almighty?

In verse 12, Boaz commended Ruth for having taken refuge under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. What a beautiful and wonderful picture of security! It reminds us of God's protection expressed in Psalm 91:4, *"He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge."* It also reminds us of the longing words of our Lord to the people of Jerusalem: *"How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37).*

The Jews of Jesus' time refused the refuge that was offered to them, but Ruth found refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. Have you found refuge under the wings of the Almighty?

This concept could be applied to Christians or non-Christians. If you're not a Christian, the Lord offers you the refuge of salvation from your sin and the penalty of your sins. Receive Christ as your personal Savior, and you will find refuge under the wings of the Almighty!

If you are already a Christian, the Lord offers you refuge and peace from all of your worries and anxieties under the wings of the Almighty. Philippians 4:6-7, written to believers, says: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Have you found refuge under the wings of the Almighty?