

Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz is a Close Relative

Ruth 2:17-23

Ruth 2:17–23 - *“So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸ Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied. ¹⁹ And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.”*

²⁰ Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!” And Naomi said to her, “This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.” ²¹ Ruth the Moabitess said, “He also said to me, ‘You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’” ²² And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field.” ²³ So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.”

Background Notes

Once again, a few background notes. Ruth had about an ephah of barley when she came home from gleaning. That would be about half a bushel. That might not seem like much for a whole day of gleaning, but in actuality it was quite a bit. Remember, this measurement was made after Ruth had beaten, or threshed, the stalks of grain and then winnowed it so that the stalks and chaff were eliminated, so half a bushel of pure grain was not too bad for one day’s gleaning! It certainly would have provided food for two women like Ruth and Naomi through a good part of a week. Of course, we need to remember that Boaz had “sweetened the pot” – he had helped Ruth out by his kind treatment!

At this point in the story, Naomi learned that Ruth was gleaning in the fields of Boaz. Naomi then told Ruth that Boaz was a close relative of Elimelech -- and therefore a relative of Ruth as well. We already know this because the inspired writer already told us these facts back in the beginning of Ruth 2. But Naomi and Ruth were not aware of these facts until this point in the unfolding drama.

When Naomi heard that Ruth had worked in the fields of Boaz, she exclaimed: *“Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!”* And Naomi said to her, *“This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.”* When Naomi mentioned the Lord’s kindness *“to the living and the dead”* she meant the Lord’s kindness to Ruth and Naomi who were living, and by extension, kindness to Elimelech, who had died. It was at this point Naomi realized that God had been working all along the way in their lives. God had not forgotten them!

Naomi's statement *"this man [Boaz] is a close relative to us, one of our near kinsmen,"* was a very significant statement because of the role of the "kinsman redeemer" in the Old Testament. The same Hebrew word is used for *kinsman* or *relative* and **redeem** in the Old Testament, because of the responsibilities of the close kinsmen to help out and "redeem" the impoverished relative at the time of loss and need.

In our doctrinal points we'll talk more about the responsibilities of the "kinsman redeemer," but first one further background note. Throughout this chapter we read of men and women working together in the fields. Normally the men would cut the stalks of grain, and then the women would follow and bind the stalks into bundles or sheaves. The men would then load the bundles or sheaves on to carts and take them to the threshing floor. Then it was the gleaners' turn, and they were entitled any take as much as they could glean of the leftover crops.

Doctrinal Points

Our two doctrinal points for this section of Ruth 2 have to do with Boaz as a spiritual picture or type of Christ.

1. Boaz is a picture of Christ in his kindness.

Throughout this chapter we've seen the kindness of Boaz to Ruth. In verse 13 Ruth remarked about his kindness: *"Let me find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and encouraged me and spoken kindly to your maidservant."* Also, in verse 20, Naomi mentioned the kindness of the Lord shown through Boaz.

We've already mentioned that Boaz is a wonderful picture of Christ in his courageous character and in his knowledge, care and protection of Ruth. Now let's look at the kindness of Boaz. Back in verse 9 Boaz said to Ruth, *"And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."* Boaz provided water for Ruth -- as much as she needed and wanted. This reminds us of what our Lord said in John 7:37-39: *"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive."*

In verse 14 we saw that Boaz provided food for Ruth. *"Now Boaz said to her at meal time, come here and eat of the bread and dip your bread in the vinegar, so she sat beside the reapers and he passed parched grain to her and she ate and was satisfied."* Not only did Boaz invite Ruth to the meal and provide food for her, but he personally passed the roasted grain to Ruth and ate with her. This is a wonderful picture of the communion that we enjoy with Christ through his kindness to us. In Revelation 3:20 we learn that the Lord wants us to dine with Him, a picture of close fellowship: *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."* In his kindness, the Lord not only provides the spiritual food that we need, but He wants to have a close relationship and fellowship with us! He wants to commune with us.

In verse 15 we read that Boaz instructed his men to let Ruth glean among the sheaves before they were taken away for threshing – not just find and pick up the leftovers! And then in verse 16 he actually told his men to purposely let some grain fall from the sheaves! Perhaps as they were loading the sheaves on the carts, some of it would fall to the ground, and – “Oops! I dropped a half a bundle of grain! But that’s all right – we’ll leave it for Ruth!”

I love the character of Boaz, don’t you? It’s a great picture of the kindness of Christ. Did you ever “count your blessings and name them, one by one”? I’m sure if you did you would some unexpected sheaves – not just a few stalks, but bundles of grain that “just happened” to be given to you to make your life a little easier! Boaz is a wonderful picture of Christ in his kindness.

2. Boaz is a picture of Christ in his position.

The position of Boaz was that of “kinsman redeemer.” That’s what Naomi meant when she said, *“The man is a relative of ours, one of our near kinsmen.”* Under God’s Law, the kinsman redeemer had several responsibilities. According to Leviticus chapter 25 and verse 25, the kinsman redeemer had the responsibility to buy back or “redeem” back what an impoverished relative needed to sell. In addition, when a married man died without heirs, the nearest unmarried kinsman was responsible to marry the widow to raise up an heir for the relative who had died, and the “redeem” the dead man’s place and inheritance in the family. You can read about that in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

There were three prerequisites necessary for a man to be the kinsman redeemer. First of all, he had to be a close relative. Second, he had to have the means to redeem. He had to have enough wealth to afford to redeem. And third, he had to be willing to redeem. As our Kinsman Redeemer, the Lord Jesus fulfills all three prerequisites perfectly.

First, the Lord Jesus is a close relative. In fact, that’s precisely why the eternal Son of God became Man – so He could redeem us! Hebrews 2:14 and 15 says: *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”*

Secondly, the Lord Jesus has the means to redeem us. Did our Lord have sufficient means to pay the price required for our redemption? In 1 Peter 1:18-19 we read: *“...you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ...”* These verses emphasize that Jesus Christ was the only One whose “precious blood” was sufficient to pay the infinite cost of our redemption.

And thirdly, the Lord Jesus was willing to redeem us. Mark 10:45 says that the Son of God gave his life as a ransom for mankind. And the Lord Jesus was not only willing to redeem us, but He loved us enough to “marry” us as well! As believers, we are the beloved “bride of Christ.” (Read Ephesians 5:25-27 in this connection.) Do you see this in the picture? Certainly, we see the willingness of Boaz to marry Ruth, and we’ll cover that marriage in the next two chapters.

Boaz is a picture of Christ both in his kindness and in his position.

Practical Application

Let's glean only in "the field of Boaz"!

In verse 22 Naomi said to Ruth, *"It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field."* In verse 8 Boaz said to Ruth, *"Do not go to glean in another field nor go from here."*

If Boaz represents Christ in the spiritual picture that God has given to us in the book of Ruth, then the field of Boaz would represent the field of the Lord. Gleaning in the field of the Lord would mean being separated from the various unsafe and unprotected "fields" of this world. It would mean being busy in the interests of the Lord and being occupied with His Word.

As Boaz instructed Ruth to glean only in his field, so our Lord asks to us to glean only in His field. Don't stray away to glean in other fields -- the fields of this world -- even though it may appear that the gleanings are better there! 1 John chapter 2 verse 15 and 16: *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."*

If we stay in the fields of the Lord and glean there, the Lord will care for us and provide for us, just as Boaz cared for Ruth. We will be protected and fed and satisfied. If we choose to stray into the fields of this world, we won't be satisfied. If we try to "glean in other fields," we can't expect the Lord to fulfill our needs in the same way as He would if we had chosen to stay in His fields.

Why do you think so many Christians are unfulfilled and dissatisfied? It's because they have chosen to glean in the fields of the world rather than to glean in the field of the Lord. Is that your situation? Are you unhappy and dissatisfied you're your life? Where are you gleaning?

Remember -- gleaning is not easy. Ruth had to pick up the stalks of grain and then she had to beat out, or thresh, what she had gleaned. Gleaning from the Word of God is like that. It's work. You must read it and then "rightly divide" it, or interpret it correctly. It takes work -- but it results in food for the soul! Let's glean only "in the field of Boaz"!