

# The Weight of Grace

*Ruth, Pt. 2*

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## I. PRAYER

- i. Help us to be people who can recognize your grace and your faithfulness in every single circumstance of our lives.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### a. This morning, we will be continuing in our study of the book of Ruth together.

- i. Last week, we studied Ruth 1 and we talked about this idea of faithfulness.
  - And we marveled at the faithfulness Ruth displayed to God and her mother-in-law, Naomi, even when it seemed like Ruth had every excuse not to be faithful.
    1. And I really encourage you to listen to that sermon on our website if you missed it so you can stay up to date with the series.

### b. But this morning, I want to talk about the idea of bitterness.

- i. If you remember from Ruth 1, there is this Israelite woman named Naomi who was living in Bethlehem with her husband Elimelech and her two sons.
  - They decide to move to Moab because Israel was experiencing a famine.
    1. But while they were in Moab, Elimelech dies making Naomi a widow.
  - But, Naomi's sons take Moabite women to be their wives, Ruth and Orpah.
    1. 10 years later, both Naomi's sons die!
    2. So, now, Naomi is a widow living in a foreign land, with foreign daughters-in-law who are also childless widows!



3. As we saw last week, this was a patriarchal society, so this was a very scary, hopeless situation for these women.
- Well, Naomi hears that the famine in Israel is over, so she decides to go back to Bethlehem.
    1. Orpah stays behind in Moab but Ruth clings to Naomi and remains faithful to her.
- ii. **But, because of all this tragedy that Naomi had experienced in her life, she had become very bitter.**
- When she returns to Bethlehem, she makes this very clear to all the people who recognize her.
    1. **Read Ruth 1:20-21**
- iii. **What does it mean to be bitter?**
- Well, let me give you a definition of bitterness.
    1. My definition: ***Bitterness is being angry that you're not in control.***
    2. We are experiencing some circumstance that we can't control, and this settled anger and cynicism develops inside of us because if we were in control, things would be much different for us.
  - So, maybe you've experienced bitterness at work.
    1. Your boss is making decisions that you don't agree with. Or some policy has taken effect that is inconvenient. Or the expectations upon you are unrealistic.
    2. So, it's easy to get bitter because you're not in control.
    3. If you were in control, you wouldn't make those decisions.



4. But since you're not in control, you have to live with these circumstances.
  5. So, bitterness takes root.
- Or maybe you experience bitterness in your home.
    1. Your spouse keeps doing or not doing certain things.
    2. And because they are stubborn and will not change, bitterness can take root.
    3. Because you're not in control and of course things would be better if you could control your spouse.
    4. Same with your kids!
    5. If you could have full control, your kids would have the emotional and moral maturity of Jesus Himself!
    6. But they don't, and we get bitter.
  - Maybe you have chronic pain, health issues, financial struggles, or something else that you didn't ask for and you can't control.
    1. If you were in control, you wouldn't have these problems.
    2. But you do, and that's frustrating, and bitterness can begin to infect the heart.

**c. Last week, we compared the faithfulness of Ruth to the bitterness of Naomi.**

- i. Ruth displays extraordinary faithfulness and we learned last week that her faithfulness was motivated by her belief in God's faithfulness to her.
  - Remember, it's this important Hebrew word we learned last week – HESED – which is the steadfast love of God.
    1. A word that will appear again in Ruth 2.



2. It refers to how when we come into a relationship with God, he is perfectly faithful to us, he will never leave us, he will never forsake us.
3. Even if we are experiencing hard circumstances, God has not left us and he is working for our good.

- Ruth was faithful because she trusted in God's faithfulness to her.

ii. **But, Naomi displays bitterness because she has begun to believe that God is opposed to her.**

- That there was a point where she was within the love of God and He was for her...but now something has happened, and she thinks God is opposed to her.
  1. God has stopped being faithful to her.
  2. And this is why she is experiencing all of this tragedy.
  3. These circumstances that are out of her control.
- And so she is bitter now, because God is bringing calamity upon her, and there is nothing she can do about it.
  1. She is angry and cynical because she's not in control.

**d. But can anyone really blame Naomi?**

i. **She is walking through insanely difficult circumstances.**

- She has lost a husband and two children!
- She is facing poverty and most likely a strong threat of being abused and raped.
  1. She was a widow with no son in a man's world.



- And maybe one could say that it was sinful of Naomi and Elimelech (her late husband) to leave Israel and go to Moab.
    1. That they didn't trust God during the famine.
  - But that probably just fuels Naomi's belief now that God is opposed to her.
    1. That he has withdrawn his steadfast love from her.
    2. That he is punishing her.
- ii. **Have you ever been bitter at God? Questioned God? Yelled at God?**
- God, why don't you heal body?!?
    1. You can do it! Why don't you?
  - God, why don't you just help me get a job, help me get the money I need, make things work out!
    1. God, why did you let that happen to me.
  - I've been bitter at God. I've wondered if God was opposed to me.
    1. I've yelled at God before challenging Him that if he was really in control, things should have gone differently.
    2. I've said to God: "God, you knew my heart when I make that decision and it blew up in my face!"
  - Maybe you're in that place right now. You have bitterness in your heart towards God or other people because you think things should be different.



- iii. Last week, we saw that Ruth and Naomi had polar opposite views of God.
  - One led to faithfulness and the other led to bitterness.
    1. But let's not scoff at Naomi, because we all have been there and one day we might be back.
- iv. And as we look at Ruth 2 together this morning, we're going to see something happen that is going to melt away Naomi's bitterness.
  - And my hope is that we'll learn what really is the true cure to bitterness.

### III. RUTH 2

a. **So, let's look at Ruth 2 together. Justin read the chapter for us earlier in our service so allow me to paraphrase what we've read so we understand what is going on here.**

- i. When Ruth and Naomi are back in Bethlehem, Ruth asks Naomi if it is okay for her to go and glean in someone's field.
  - Let me explain this. In the Old Testament, God had laws about how one was to reap their harvest that were designed to provide aide to the poor.
    1. Leviticus 19:9-10 - *"**9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor***



*and the resident alien; I am the Lord your God."*

2. So, if you owned a field. When it was time to harvest your crop, you were not allowed to harvest all of the crop straight to the edge and you also couldn't gather your gleanings.
  3. Gleanings were crops that had fallen out of your stack, crops leftover that were not harvested.
  4. You couldn't harvest your crop, then go back over and pickup everything left behind.
  5. The crops on the edge of the field and all the gleanings were to be left for the poor to gather for themselves.
- So, Ruth is asking Naomi if she can help provide for them by going and gleaning in someone's field.
  - And Ruth 2:3 tells us that she "so happened" to come to a field owned by a man named Boaz.
    1. The Hebrew is written in a way that tells the reader that this was random. It was not planned by Ruth nor Naomi that she would glean in Boaz's field.
    2. Boaz was related to Naomi's late husband, Elimelech.
- ii. **And Boaz comes to the field that Ruth is gleaning in and immediately asks his servants who are reaping the field, who this young woman is gleaning in the field.**
- Now, understand, Ruth is in a dangerous situation here.



1. She is a young, foreign, single woman gleaning by herself and we get multiple indications here in Ruth 2 (v.9 & 22) that a woman in this situation would have most certainly been assaulted or raped by other men.
- But when Boaz arrives, we see that he greets his servants by saying in v.4 “The Lord be with you!”
  1. This is the author of the story telling us the readers that Boaz is a man of God and can be trusted.
- And we see Boaz treat Ruth with utmost respect and care.
  1. Not only does he continue to allow Ruth to glean in his fields, he ensures she is protected from anyone that would harm or abuse her.
  2. He ensures that all of his servants treat her with respect and as an equal...not someone who is inferior.
  3. He instructs his servants to leave extra crops on the ground from the harvest so she can collect more than you would normally glean.
  4. He invites her into his home and feeds her a full meal – who knows how long it had been since she last had a full meal.
- iii. **And so, Ruth gleans all day until the evening, she then beats out the grain (knocks off all the loose chaff and husks so she can collect the edible grain), puts it in a bag...and heads home to Naomi.**



**b. And when Ruth arrives home to Naomi, something happens that begins that process of melting away all of that bitterness.**

- i. Naomi is stopped in her tracks by the weight of God's grace on her and Ruth.
  - Because right here it says in v.17 that Ruth brought home an ephah of barley.
    1. Now, ephah sounds like one of those Bible words that we can't really relate to so we just assume it was a normal amount of barley to bring home from a day of gleaning.
    2. But this is what Ruth brought home...
  - **[GO AND GET BAG OF RICE]**
    1. This is as close as a visual as I could get of an Ephah of Barley.
    2. This is a 50lb bag of rice.
    3. This is a 5-6 week supply of food for these women.
    4. This is not a normal amount of food to get from a day of gleaning!
    5. 1 day of work...5-6 supply of food.
    6. How much money would you need to make in one day to cover you for 5-6 weeks?
    7. This is overwhelming.
    8. She DID NOT see that coming.
    9. This is a sign from God that he has not forgotten Naomi That he is not opposed to Naomi!



- ii. And when the weight of God's grace comes to bear on Naomi's life, the bitterness melts away.
  - Look at what Naomi says:
    1. *Read Ruth 2:19-20a.*
  - The weight of God's grace on her reminds her that even though she has been walking through a very hard season of life, God has not left her and God never left her!
    1. Even though she has struggled with being faithful like Ruth has been faithful, God has never stopped being faithful to Naomi.
    2. And in this moment, Naomi is reminded that the steadfast love of God endures forever.

#### **IV. THE GRACE OF THE CROSS**

##### **a. So, let's just stop talking about Ruth for a second and talk about you and me.**

- i. We've all been bitter before. Maybe some of us are stuck in bitterness right now.
  - And what melts away bitterness is when the weight of God's grace reorients our entire perspective like Naomi.

##### **b. Let me tell you about the weight of God's grace in your life.**

- i. God is a God of justice. It is true, that because of our sin against God he has justly opposed us.
  - We love ourselves more than God and other people.



1. We care more about our own well-being than the glory of God and the well-being of others.
  2. We, by nature, rebel against God's greatest commands on us...to love God and love our neighbor.
  3. We get bitter when we don't get our way and we think God ought to submit his resignation of being Almighty God and we should get promoted to his position because we can't stand not being in control.
- And so God opposes us. He pronounces judgement upon us.
    1. And that judgement is death.
    2. That judgement is living in a broken world where we suffer.
    3. That judgement is hell.
- ii. **But God is also merciful, gracious, and kind.**
- And God is not gracious by just looking past our sin.
    1. He's not gracious because he sets up some religious system where you do your confession and say your prayers and you'll be all good.
    2. He's not gracious because he allows excuses for our sin and bitterness.
- iii. **No, the weight of God's grace is that God says to us:**
- I'm not just going to forgive your sin...
    1. I'm going to pay the just penalty for your sin at the expense of my Son, Jesus.
    2. I'm going to credit to you the righteous life that my Son Jesus lived.
    3. I'm going to raise you up out of the grave like I raise Jesus from the grave.



4. I'm going to make you one of my children just like Jesus!
  5. I'm going to declare over you my faithful, steadfast love. Which means I am going to make a covenant with you, a promise, that I will never break.
  6. A promise that says you will never be opposed by me ever again.
  7. A promise that says you will live with me in my kingdom for eternity.
  8. A promise that says I am going to transform your life and give you a new heart.
  9. A promise that says even though you will suffer in this broken world, it will not be in vain because I have a plan for your life.
  10. It's a promise that radically reorients every single situation that you will face, good and bad, for the rest of your life!
- This is the grace of God!
    1. Do we deserve it?!? NO!
    2. We deserve hell.
    3. But that's the weight of God's grace.
  - This is why Paul says in the beginning of Ephesians...
    1. *"Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ."*
    2. God has not withheld one blessing from any of his children!
    3. He has MORE THAN provided for our every need.
    4. His love is faithful, steadfast, unbreakable, it will never end.



iv. **Has the weight of God's grace come to bear on your life?**

- Have you fallen on your knees before God convicted of your sin, repenting of your sin, and begging God for this grace that only comes through Jesus?
  1. If you haven't, what's stopping you?
  2. What's stopping you from receiving the love of God and beginning to live a new life?
  3. What is stopping you?

**c. Because this is what melts away bitterness in our lives – let me show you how.**

- i. When the weight of that bag of barley made a thump on the ground in front of Naomi, a bunch of things clicked for her....
- ii. **First, Naomi was reminded that God is Good.**
  - Look how God never removed his love to her but has always been faithful.
  - Look how good he has been to her. Look at how he has provided for her needs.
  - And not only that, look how God led Ruth to Boaz's field!
    1. Later in Ruth, we'll learn why this is going to change everything for them.
  - But look at the kindness of Boaz. This is an illustration of the kindness of our Father in Heaven.
    1. How he cherishes us.
    2. How he gives us more than we could every ask or expect.
    3. How he protects us.



- God would have every right to kick us out of his presence just like Boaz would have had the right to kick Ruth out of his field.
    1. But when we come to him humbly because we know we need him...we find a Savior that says:
    2. Matthew 11:28-30 - *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*
- iii. **Naomi was also reminded that God is in control, and she isn't.**
- Everything that happened that day could only be an act of God.
    1. This doesn't mean that Naomi understands why God allowed her to lose her husband and sons.
    2. Sometimes it haunts us that God is in control because that means he has allowed some things that we don't understand or like.
  - But when we trust that God is good in his control, then we don't need to understand.
    1. Because if God really is good and if He really is in control...
- iv. **That means that wherever we are, at any given moment, is exactly where God wants us.**
- And this is what Naomi realized and this is what began to melt away her bitterness.
    1. That where we are is not a result of God's punishment.
    2. It's not a result of a misunderstanding or carelessness.



- But God is up to something and our job is not to evaluate his performance, or question his goodness, or demand that he give us control.
  1. Our job is to live under the security of God's faithful, steadfast love.
  2. To cry out to him in our pain. To ask why like a child asks her parents.
  3. And to live faithfully in the moment knowing that God is perfectly faithful to us.
- If God is good and God is in control, then there is nowhere else you want to be than where you are now...even in the hurt and pain.
  1. Ruth and Naomi have no idea what God is about to do in ch. 3-4...but they don't want to miss it.

**d. And so, where are you? Are you struggling with bitterness today?**

- i. Let me first encourage you, just like Naomi, your bitterness has not caused God to remove his love from you.
  - God's grace is still upon you.
- ii. **But, is your bitterness causing you to ignore the weight of God's grace in your life.**
  - That where you are right is now is exactly where he wants you, his faithful love is upon you, and you have no idea what he has in store.



## **e. This is where we need to learn from Ruth again.**

- i. Because Ruth lived faithfully in the present, exactly where God had her, because she was transformed by the weight of God's grace in her life.
- ii. Look how Ruth is praised in chapter 2.
  - She is commended for her work ethic, her faithfulness to Naomi, her kindness and humility...
    1. Gleaning in that field was hard work that was not fun and not glorious.
    2. It was just faithfulness.
    3. She wasn't using it as a bargaining chip to God...like, I'll be faithful to glean and you make good things happen, okay.
    4. She was living faithfully in the moment.
- iii. **Many times, our bitterness can cause us to ignore the weight of God's grace in our lives and then begin to use faithfulness as leverage with God for him to make things happen for us.**
  - We tell God...I'll love my spouse how you've called me to...but you have to make them change too.
    1. I'll keep going to work, but my good attitude better be recognized by others.
    2. I'll stop being bitter, but you make the situation easier.
    3. I'll get up and pray and read my Bible every day, but you solve this problem I have.
  - All we've done is turn faithfulness into a way that we exercise our bitterness.



- iv. See, there is a difference between living faithfully so God will change things in our lives and give us joy...and living faithfully because we believe there is joy in the faithfulness.
- The weight of God's grace shows us there is joy in the present because we have been given every blessing!
    1. That God has us where he wants us.
  - There is joy in your work right now if you'll trust God's faithfulness to you.
    1. You don't know what's coming next.
    2. You don't know how God will use your quiet faithfulness.
    3. You don't know what co-workers your impacting.
  - There is joy in your marriage right now if you'll trust God's faithfulness.
    1. It might be hard. It might be inconvenient.
    2. But you have no idea what God can do in a marriage when one person decides to allow the grace of God to melt away the bitterness and trust God to live faithfully a day at a time.
  - There is joy in your singleness right now.
    1. It might be lonely. But you have no idea what God has in store for you.
    2. There is more joy in being faithfully single than bitter.



**f. Grace Hill look at the weight of God's grace in your life.**

- God is good.
  - God is in control.
  - God's love never fails.
  - He has you right where he wants you.
- i. Trust Him for today. Be faithful in the present, today.

**g. Then tomorrow, get up, ignore your phone, grab your Bible and look at the weight of God's grace in your life.**

- God is good.
  - God is in control.
  - God's love never fails
  - He has you right where he wants you.
- i. And trust Him for that day. Be faithful in the present.

**V. PRAY**

