



Correspondent's Corner

Ruth said, "Why Have I Found Grace?"

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The Old Testament book of Ruth is a tremendous account of a young lady, who, feeling her unworthiness, was compelled to ask the above question. The historical setting

is the early 1300's BC. Israel has been delivered from Egypt, wandered through the wilderness for forty years, been led into the promised land through Joshua, never really took over the land fully and now is in a period called the time of the judges. There was no king in Israel and for the most part Israel is going through cycles of obedience to God, then departure from God, then discipline from God and then deliverance from their difficulties and back to a measure of following God's ways. Then Israel would depart again from God and repeat the same cycle all over again. God sent different judges or you could call them deliverers at the times when Israel needed God's help.

The setting for one of these cycles of discipline and deliverance is seen in the book of Ruth. God had promised Israel blessing if they obeyed him but they had departed again. So then discipline came to Israel in the form of a famine. In Ruth we are introduced to a family of four named Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion, father, mother and two sons. The family seeks to avoid the famine in the land and the little family moves from Bethlehem to Moab.

Moab was not friendly to Israel and it seems a strange place to go for an Israelite but they went anyway. The two sons fell in love with Moabite ladies and were both married. At some point Naomi's husband dies and then the two sons died also. Naomi and her two daughters in law are heartbroken and needing comfort and strength to go on. The whole time in Moab was at least ten years. News eventually came to Naomi that the famine in Bethlehem was over and there was God's blessing of bread again in the land. Naomi longed to go back to Bethlehem so she and her two daughters in law, Orpah and Ruth, left on their journey. On the way Naomi spoke with her two daughters in law about coming to Bethlehem with her. Orpah eventually went back to Moab but Ruth would not go back and so she continued with Naomi and the two of them eventually came to Bethlehem.

When they came to Bethlehem we read that all in the city were moved about them and said, "Is this Naomi?" Naomi's name means pleasant but Naomi said "call me not Naomi, call me Mara", which means bitter. Naomi said: "for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi,

seeing the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?” So there was Naomi and Ruth in great need of help from the Lord and strength to go on.

Ruth started to glean in the fields to supply the two women with food. There was a man named Boaz who had fields of barley that were ripe and the harvest was under way. It just happened that Ruth found herself gleaning in Boaz’s fields of barley. Boaz came from Bethlehem to oversee the harvest and he saw Ruth and inquired about her. He was informed she was the daughter in law of Naomi. The rest is history and there is not room in this article to cover it all but Boaz shows great kindness to Ruth and Naomi and helps them. Boaz was a man who walked with God and at one point Ruth asked the question of Boaz, “Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou should take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?”

Eventually Boaz and Ruth were married and the former property of Elimelech and Naomi was restored to the family name. Boaz and Ruth had a son whom they named Obed who is in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus and the grace of God is magnified by this story in the book of Ruth.

I close this article with just one verse from the Bible “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

Sincerely, *John Eggers*

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