

Ruth is Introduced to Boaz – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Ruth is introduced to Boaz, who shows great kindness to her, a foreigner and widow
2. aim – to cause us to recognize the immeasurable kindness of God in his providence towards us
3. passage – Ruth 2:1-23

b. outline

1. The Gleaning of Ruth (Ruth 2:1-3)
2. The Introduction of Boaz (Ruth 2:4-16)
3. The Report to Naomi (Ruth 2:17-23)

c. opening

1. the **structure** of this chapter
 - a. the chapter is divisible by the individuals around whom the story revolves:
 1. first, Ruth as she goes out to glean (**vv. 1-3**)
 2. second, Boaz as he is introduced to Ruth and responds to her (**vv. 4-16**)
 3. finally, Naomi as she hears the report and recognizes the importance of Boaz (**vv. 17-23**)
 - b. so ... we will *continuing* working through the storyline (**i.e.** what is happening) verse-by-verse, section-by-section, discussing certain **theological** realities that appear along the way (**i.e.** as a running commentary)
 1. we have already seen Ruth go out to glean, and we started into the introduction of Boaz
 2. this led to a discussion of the **providence** of God = his specific work in time and space to order the events of people and things such that his sovereign will is accomplished; the *practical* outworking of God (either by his own hand or through *secondary means*) such that events lead to his desired outcome
 - a. it is by God's *providence* that Ruth comes to the field of Boaz, and that Boaz takes notice of her – eventually leading (of course) to their marriage and child together
 3. this leads (**now**) to the continuation of this introduction to Boaz, specifically how he responds when he takes notice of her ...

II. The Introduction of Boaz (Ruth 2:4-16)

Content

b. the kindness of Boaz (vv. 8-16)

1. **theme:** the **kindness** of Boaz – the application of this book often centers around this ...
 - a. it is *obvious* in the way that Boaz treats the young Moabite widow in the rest of this chapter
 - b. it is *reciprocated* by Ruth later, and seen by Boaz as such (**see 3:10**)
 - c. it is mentioned *specifically of Boaz* by Naomi in **v. 20 (more on this theme to come ...)**
2. his **first kindness** is to allow Ruth to glean ahead of the other gleaners (**vv. 8-9, 15-16**)
 - a. normally, a field owner would allow gleaners to come in and “clean” a field only *after* the harvest had been completed, and then only around the “edges” of the field
 1. **IOW:** gleaners were not allowed (typically) to just cut grain for themselves, nor follow the harvesters around during their work – harvesters were paid to collect as much grain as possible from a field, with the *exception* of some that they were required to leave for gleaners
 - b. however, in this case, Boaz grants Ruth permission to actually follow the harvesters and glean around them while they are cutting and bundling the crop
 1. **i.e.** (most likely) the reapers are “*young men*” (**v. 9**) who are cutting the field, and the “*young women*” (**v. 8**) are tying the cut grain into “*bundles*” (sheaves) and piling them up for threshing
 - a. today, the work of cutting, threshing, separating, and collecting wheat or corn is done by a single machine (**i.e.** a *combine*) – **note:** Boaz will oversee the threshing in **chapter 3**
 2. so, Boaz gives Ruth permission to actually follow the young women, collecting whatever might fall from the bundles as they tie them up (**see v. 15; i.e.** some grain would fall in that process)
 3. Boaz instructs the young men “*not to touch*” her: not in a sexual way, rather to not drive her away while they are cutting the grain (**i.e.** probably a typical response to over-anxious gleaners)
 - a. that’s probably what Boaz means in **v. 16**, “*do not rebuke her*”

4. and, Boaz even goes so far as to instruct the women to purposely “pull out some from the bundles” (v. 16) so that Ruth would have something to pick up
- c. **IOW:** Boaz puts Ruth in a position where she would be *ahead* of the other gleaners, actually able to collect the *first grain to fall* as she follows the reapers around the field (i.e. a good supply)
3. his second kindness is to invite Ruth to eat with the reapers (v. 14)
 - a. (again) this would be unusual – gleaners were often considered “pariahs” to this process
 1. i.e. they would (often) be seen as nuisances and those trying to “get something for nothing”
 - b. Boaz invites her to partake of the meal of the reapers, a great kindness not extended to others
4. her response to Boaz’s kindnesses (vv. 10-13)
 - a. **her question (and ours!):** why would Boaz take such notice of Ruth and be so kind to her?
 1. given that she is a foreigner, that she is a widow and poor, and that she is *not* the most obvious choice for a kindness from a stranger (i.e. how would he see her *without* the back-story?)
 - b. Boaz’s answer (vv. 11-12):
 1. because you have been kind to Naomi, leaving your family (and your prospects!) behind to come to Israel and take care of her (**note:** Naomi’s story has *obviously* come to his ear)
 2. because you deserve *from the Lord* a repayment for your kindness: you have sought “refuge” in the God of Naomi (i.e. you trusted in her God for an unknown future), and *he* sees it
 3. therefore, because I (Boaz) have been blessed by God, I wish to be the instrument that “passes along” his kindness – an act of grace *on his behalf toward you*, in reward for your kindness
- c. **the kindness of God pictured in Boaz**
 1. **parallel:** the books of Ruth and Esther have something in common: they are both about the work of God *in the background* (i.e. not directly of God’s action, but *implied* through the events)
 - a. e.g. Esther as queen, Mordecai overhearing a plot, Esther able to thwart the plot before the king
 - b. e.g. Naomi coming back, Ruth “happening” upon the field of Boaz, Boaz “seeing” her
 2. many commentators on this story see the kindness of Boaz as a “reflection” of the kindness of God
 - a. that Boaz (as the eventual redeemer) is a *foreshadowing* of the kindness of God in the Christ
 - b. that God shows *kindness* to “foreigners” (i.e. fallen sinners) by his grace through an individual
 - c. that Boaz is a great reminder that God’s kindness is both *in his nature* and *in his actions*
 3. kindness (*hesed*) – a word with a *wide semantic domain* (x245 in the O.T.) = (most often) love; loyalty; devotion; glory; mercy; favor; good; kindness; (*chrestotes* N.T.) = benevolence; goodness; excellence; an act of favor or mercy towards another, typically someone *undeserving* of such
 - a. clearly a character attribute of God himself (as implied in Gal. 5:21b-24)

“I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”
 - b. **the inclusion of kindness in “the fruit of the Spirit” (as something that should flow from the life of those who have been converted) obviously implies something inherent within the nature of the Spirit himself flowing through us – it is “fruit” as his nature appears in us**
 4. **danger:** we have a tendency to become **imbalanced** in our view of the *transcendent* attributes of God (sovereignty, majesty, omnipotence) over against his *immanent* attributes (kindness, love, forgiveness, personal presence) – evangelicals focus on immanent, reformed on transcendent
 - a. **principle: a balanced view of the nature and works of God is to always keep a proper balance between a high view of God and the reality that he is also kind and compassionate**
 5. **question:** so, how should we view the kindness of God – how does God’s kindness *come to us*?
 - a. an *imbalanced* view is to only see kindness as something that *benefits us in some emotional way*
 1. **question:** why doesn’t Boaz just allow Ruth to *cut whatever grain she wants from the field*, or just give her grain directly (as he will do in 3:15)? **notice:** she remains a *gleaner*!
 2. **answer (IMO):** Boaz is being **careful** – he wants to show kindness to her, but he does not want it to appear that he is “favoring” her over the rest of the village (who will survive on this too!)
 3. **IOW:** his kindness is **tempered** by his larger vision of what this harvest means to the village
 - b. a *balanced* view is to recognize that God’s kindness may actually appear to us (in the moment) as painful and difficult to understand (see Romans 2:3-4)

“Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things [i.e. the list of evils common to fallen man in Romans 1:28-32] and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”

 1. e.g. the kindness of a parent snatching away the hand of a child before it touches danger
 - c. **principle: God’s kindness is not just to make us “feel good” about life, but to lead us to his ultimate goal *in us*, our *glorification* into the image of his own Son**
 1. what if, then, his “kindness” is to allow difficulty into our lives **in order to get our attention**?