

We Must Live By Faith in the Lord

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning! Welcome back to the book of Ruth. We are in the first three verses of the second chapter of the book of Ruth.

And in chapter 2, we find Ruth and Naomi in dire straits with no food and no husbands. And during the Old Testament period of time, this was not a very good position to be in.

But what we're going to see this morning is that before God changes our circumstances, He wants to change our hearts.

Because if our circumstances change for the better, but we remain the same, we will actually become worse. Because our situation will become better, but we're still complainers, and we're still not trusting God.

And so we're actually worse off, because when things get better, we tend to forget God. But if God changes our hearts, and we're drawn closer to Him, and we are looking to Him for His provision, we're acting upon it, we're trusting Him for His guidance in our lives, when things do get better, our circumstances do change, then we are drawn even closer to God, because we are then a people of gratitude.

[1 : 23] And we're thanking God for what He has accomplished in our lives. Now, God's purpose in our lives is not to make... Now, this may sound counterintuitive, and it goes against the American mindset.

God's purpose in our lives is not to make us comfortable. God's purpose in our life is to make us conformable. As we see in the book of Romans, chapter 8, verse 29, being conformable to Him. Do not be conformed to this world, but we are to be transformed, ultimately being conformable to Christ and what He is doing in our lives. Christ-like character is the divine goal.

That's what He wants in our life, is for us to be living like Christ, acting like Christ, and having the same mindset, having the same attitude that Christ had.

Now, do you remember from last week, Naomi was bitter against God. And so, they've lost their husbands, they've made their way back to Bethlehem, and Naomi was looking at God as God has done this to her, and she didn't deserve it.

[2 : 35] And what did we find out last week about bitterness? Bitterness toward others and or God is corrosive, and will keep God from working through us.

God wants to work through us and shine His grace upon others, and show His love to others. But when we're unforgiving and when we're bitter, God will not be able to do that.

And bitter people are just that. They're bitter. Now, what happens when you put something bitter in your mouth? Oh, it is not fun. It's not pleasant, is it?

Neither is a bitter person. But Ruth, excuse me, Naomi, comes back bitter. Naomi, instead of being the spiritual leader of her home, being the spiritual leader over Ruth, it actually becomes the other way around.

Ruth was willing for God to have His way in her life. Ruth was learning what it was like to trust God. And so it's Ruth that begins to take the spiritual lead in the home.

[3 : 42] It's Ruth, the former pagan turned follower of God, now becomes the one who is trusting God, becoming the one who is acting upon the promises of God.

Ruth is willing for God to have His way in her life. So God begins His gracious work through Ruth. Ruth would influence Naomi.

Ultimately, Naomi would come around. And eventually, Ruth would bring the Son of God into the world. Ruth and Naomi had no idea where they were going to fit in God's plan.

But God had a plan. Remember, we found out in the beginning portion of this book, no matter where we are, if we're a follower of Christ, we're always in God's plan. No matter what we do, no

matter what choices we make, we're still part of God's plan.

And He is going to work in our life. He is going to discipline, if necessary, to bring into us and to bring about Christlikeness in our lives.

[4 : 47] So Ruth and Naomi had no idea that they were part of God's eternal plan that will fulfill, ultimately, God's promise to Abraham. Remember what God had promised Abraham? I will make of you a great nation.

And He said, in your seed shall what? All the world be blessed. All the nations would be blessed through the lineage of Abraham.

Ultimately, that would be through Jesus Christ, who would ultimately come through the lineage of Ruth. Ruth. So Ruth's story begins with the death of a husband, but it will end with the birth of a baby.

Her tears will be turned into triumph. So that's where we're going to be heading. Not this morning. We're not going to finish. That's where the end of the book.

But we're going to be in chapter 2, the first three verses. So if we want God to work in our lives and circumstances to accomplish His divine purposes, then there are certain conditions that we must meet.

[5 : 48] There are certain things that we must do, a certain mindset that we are to have, if we want God to work in our lives and we want our circumstances to accomplish His divine purposes.

And I believe these conditions are seen in the book of Ruth, and they're illustrated in Ruth's experiences in this chapter.

Let's look this morning, first of all, at verses 1 through 3 of Ruth, chapter number 2. Verse 1 says, Verse 3, So as we're looking at the book of Ruth, as we're looking at chapter 2, as we're looking at verses 1 through 3, and as we see the faith of Ruth, and as we see what God is doing in her life, and the conditions that we must meet in order for God to be able to lead us, guide us, and direct us, first of all, I believe what we see in the actions of Ruth is that faith in the Lord promotes action. When we truly trust God, we will act upon that faith. How often do we pray? We were talking about that, I believe, earlier this week.

How often do we pray for God to do something, and then when He does it, we're surprised? Well, look at that! Man, I wasn't expecting that!

[7 : 45] Well, didn't you pray for it? Do you believe in the God of miracles? Do you believe in a God who accomplishes great and mighty things when we trust Him? So faith produces action. It's like the kid who prayed for rain, and then goes out, grabs his umbrella.

His parents says, What are you doing with the umbrella? Well, I prayed for rain, didn't I? And so it is faith that produces action. Let's look back in verse number 2. So Ruth, the Moabitess, said to Naomi.

So here they are, husbandless, foodless. But there was a promise in the Old Testament that would take care of them. And there are many today who pray for God to provide.

And they sit on their backside and wait for God to provide. Am I right?

There are many who do that. Pray. Well, God will provide. God will provide. And God will. And we just, we don't do anything about it. We trust for it to just happen.

[8 : 56] So Ruth is trusting God, I believe, at this moment. But what she says is, I tell you what, I'm going to do something about it. We're hungry. We can wait for the door for a waiter to bring our food.

But you know what? That won't happen. So let's go out. I'm going to go out, and I'm going to do something about it. She says, Please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.

And she said to her, Go, my daughter. A Latin proverb says, Providence assists not the idle. Think about it.

Providence assists not the idle. You know, people say, Oh, well, it was just luck. Well, or we look at people who are a huge success.

And we say, Wow, they were an overnight success. But what we didn't see is behind the scenes, they were studying, they were working hard, they were making connections, they were working diligently, 8, 10, 12 hours a day.

[9 : 57] And all of a sudden, it seems that they are a huge success. Well, it took that not being idle, and it took that hard work behind the scenes, ultimately, one day, to reach that point.

And so, Providence assists not the idle. Since Ruth was not the kind of woman who could sit for a long period of time, remaining idle, she asks Naomi's permission to go out and glean in the fields so they would have food to eat.

Now, this was a step of faith, I believe, on Ruth's part, because it was based on God's commandment in the law. We see that in Leviticus 19, 9, 23, 22, Deuteronomy 24, verses 19 through 22, that those who were farmers had to do something in particular for those who were poor to be able to have something to eat.

We're going to see that in just a moment. So to live by faith, I believe, means to take God at His word and act upon it and do something about it.

For faith without works is what? Is dead. Let's look at James 2, verses 18 through 20. But someone will say, You have faith.

[11 : 15] I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God? You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble.

But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Look at verse 21.

And action actually makes our faith complete. Think about that. Action makes our faith complete.

Let's look at verse 21. Was not Abraham our father justified by what?

Works. What did Abraham do? What was Abraham commanded by God to do? Make a sacrifice. Sacrifice his only son. This would be the son that God gave them in their old age.

The only chance they figured that they had to have grandchildren and great-grandchildren, so on and so on and so on, for God to fulfill His promise. And so God says, Take your only son, that was the son of the promise, and go up on the mountain and kill him.

[12 : 20] Offer him as a sacrifice. And Abraham was fully prepared and was in the process when God said, Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute. Time out. I'll provide a sacrifice for you.

And he finds a ram in the thicket. They take to prepare that. And God provided the sacrifice. So it is by, he was justified by works. He acted upon his faith when he offered Isaac his son on the altar.

Do you see that faith was working together with his works? It's a package deal. We have faith. We do something about it. God says something. We believe his promise.

We act upon the promise. And by works, faith was made perfect. That Greek word perfect means complete. So when you're working on something and you work and you work and you work and you whittle away and you get it done and finally you go, it's perfect.

What do you do? You stop working because it's perfect. It's perfect. It's complete. So that's the idea that word carries there.

[13 : 21] So faith, works, completes our faith. We have faith, we act upon it, and that completes our faith. Just like Abraham, the faith that he had, God said, his faith was working together with his works.

And since Ruth believed God, loved her, and believed that God would provide for her, she sets out, goes to the field so she could find grain. And this was completely an act of faith because as a stranger, she didn't know who owned the parcels of land.

She didn't know whose property she was going to be gleaning on. Didn't know who owned them and who made up the fields. And there were boundary markers for each parcel marking off the boundaries, but there were no signs like we have today where it says, the so-and-so ranch or the so-and-so field.

They didn't have those there, so she had no clue whose farm she was on. Furthermore, as a woman and as an outsider, she was especially vulnerable.

Even though God had, as we're going to see in a moment, even though God had commanded for farmers to do a certain thing, to allow widows, to allow the poor, to allow aliens on their field, not the little green men type, but people from other countries, were to allow them on their property and to glean the corners.

[14 : 46] Well, there are some farmers, as human beings are, they said, you know what? I don't like people on my property. And they were greedy. And so what they would do is they would get anybody off their property who ended up trying to glean the wheat from their fields or the grain from their fields.

But she went out anyway. She didn't know if she was going to be hurt. She didn't know if someone was going to come and do something to her.

But she goes out in faith. God had promised to take care of the widows, take care of the orphans, take care of the poor, take care of the alien. And she goes out. She went out anyway. So faith in the Lord promotes action.

If we believe God has told us something, if we believe God's word is true, let's do something about it. If we believe that God wants all the world to come to know Jesus as our Savior, what do we do? We pray and we go out and share the gospel. And we bring them in. Secondly, what I believe we see here in the second chapter of Ruth is faith in the Lord's, faith in the Lord promises provision.

[16:01] Faith in the Lord promises provision. It not only promotes action, but it promises provision. Let's look back verse number two.

So Ruth of Moabites said to Naomi, please let me go to the field and glean the heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.

And she said to her, go my daughter. Ruth's faith, as we said, was based on the command of God in the law.

We see that in Leviticus 19, 9 and 10, 23, 22, 20 to 22. We see it in Deuteronomy. So let's look at Leviticus, just one verse. That's all we'll go.

But I believe this gives us the idea of what was going on in Ruth's mind and in Ruth's day. Here was the command that God gave to the farmers. He says, when you reap the harvest of your land.

[16:58] Now they didn't have big John Deere combines. They didn't have all the fancy stuff. They were out here with sickles and they were cutting the grains, the stalks of grain.

And what he tells them is, when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field. So don't go all the way to the corner. Leave those stalks there.

Leave them standing or at least don't pick them up. And he says, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Anybody who's farmed, anybody who has gone out, whether it's soybeans or whether it's whatever it is, and we see that when you go out west in the wheat fields, when they come through after they're done, you see a lot of, and I use air quotes, wasted grain because it ends up on the ground.

You can't get 100% of it. And so what the farmers did, they came and they chopped down the stalks, they gathered them up, and they put them in their wagons and they bring them back so they can do their threshing and take care of it.

But what's happened is, you know, there are some grains of wheat that fell on the ground. And so the poor, the widows, those who were aliens, those who didn't have a job yet were able to come and they got their basket and they picked up the heads of grain.

[18:21] And so they gleaned what was left over that the farmers did not bring in, did not reap into the harvest. So they were commanded to do so. Leave the corners untouched.

Leave the corners. Don't come in and gather your heads of grain up out of the corners because that was to feed the poor. That was early government assistance or at least farmer assistance.

Government wasn't needed. Why? Because the farmers left grain and they said, if you want to eat, you got to what? You got to work.

So if you're hungry, get up, go to somebody's field and hopefully they're going to let you gather the gleanings. So whenever they reap the harvest, God's people were to consider the poor and leave the gleanings for them.

After all, who gave the harvest? God gave the harvest. So if God says, do this for the poor, what was he going to do for the farmer? He was going to provide enough for the farmer.

[19:25] The farmer would not go hungry and he would still be able to pay his bills because God is the one who gives the harvest and he had every right to tell the farmer how to use his crop because God is the one who gave it.

So the existence of this law was proof of God's concern for the poor among his people. The nation was instructed to treat the poor with equity. Exodus 23, 3 through 6, Leviticus 19, 15, Proverbs 22, 22 through 23.

Treat the poor equitably. Do, don't, don't put any undue burdens upon them. So we need to take care of them. God was also concerned for widows, many of whom were poor, especially if they didn't have a kinsman redeemer, if they didn't have someone to take care of them.

I was, we were talking to someone this week who became a, who became a widow and she had to go, go to work in order to make ends meet. And so here we see God is taking care of widows and he told the people to care for them.

We see that in Exodus 22, 22 through 24, Isaiah 10, 1 and 2. And Ruth was not only a poor widow, but she was also an alien.

[20 : 45] She was not from Bethlehem. So she goes out and she gleans. So she had every right to look to God for provision. She was a poor widow and an alien. She fit most all those categories.

And so she goes out and she looks for the gleanings. Deuteronomy 10, 18 says, he administers justice to the father, for the fatherless and the widow and loves the stranger, loves the alien giving him food and clothing.

So, number one, faith promotes action. We believe what God says. Let's not sit and wait.

Let's get up and act upon his promise. Secondly, what we see is faith in the Lord promises provision. We see other places in the New Testament, other places in the Old Testament.

The psalmist said he's never seen one of God's own begging for bread. Why? Because God will take care of his own. If we have enough get up and go to go out and to do something about making ends meet, God will provide the rest.

[21 : 54] Providence assists, not the idol. So we've got to go out and do something about it. But also, faith in the Lord promises provision. And then thirdly, faith in the Lord provides providence.

Faith in the Lord provides providence. You know what providence means? I know it's kind of a fancy term we don't use very often. But nothing happens by accident in God's economy.

Scripture says it just so happened that Ruth ended up in Boaz's field. Not so sure about that. So faith in God provides providence.

Let's take a look. We'll go back to verse 1. We started with verse 2 and 3. Let's jump back to verse 1 and pick up another main character in the story of Ruth and Naomi. Verse 1.

There was a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech, a man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech. His name, Boaz.

[22 : 59] And so now we are introduced to this gentleman named Boaz. And he is going to be prominent throughout the rest of the book. And again, also prominent in God's timing.

So what we see in verse 3, then she left and went and gleaned the field after the reapers and she happened to come to the part.

Here's that word. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz who was of the family of Elimelech. So it's here that Boaz enters the story and we're told that he was a near relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech, who was a man of standing, a man of wealth in the community.

His name means, in him is strength. Boaz. It even sounds manly. In him is strength.

And so the Hebrew phrase used here that's translated a man of great wealth likely identifies Boaz as a wealthy landowner but also probably a member of the upper class there in Bethlehem.

[24 : 20] The phrase in the Hebrew that's translated a man of great wealth is often used to refer to warriors. Same word used in Joshua 8.3 Judges 11.1 1 Chronicles 12.8 And the phrase in the Hebrew literally means a mighty man of valor.

So what Scripture says is here was Boaz a mighty man of valor but it was also used to indicate wealth and standing.

And so the translators rather than translating literally the translators chose to translate the meaning of this phrase. So Boaz was a man of great wealth.

He was probably a mighty man of valor. He was a strong guy. He had good work ethic and so he ends up being a man of wealth with great standing. So by the providence of God where does Ruth end up?

In whose field? In Boaz's field. Did that happen by accident? I don't think so. And so Scripture says and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz to the innocent bystander or the unknowing bystander she probably just happened to come upon this field but in God's eyes he was guiding her he was directing her steps.

[25 : 50] It was no accident her steps were guided by the Lord. We're told in Genesis 24 27 I being in the way the Lord led me. And I think this is an important concept.

I being in the way the Lord led me. Is it easier to steer a moving vehicle or a parked vehicle?

A moving vehicle. once it's moving it's easier to guide it and direct it. And so in Genesis there I being in the way was already moving God was able to guide and direct.

Ruth was moving. Ruth decided to get up out of her chair and go out the door and I know she was probably still grieving.

I know she probably didn't feel like getting up and getting out but she did. She goes out to find food for her and for her mother-in-law and by God's providence he sends her to just the exact right field. [26 : 58] The same providence that led the Magi to Bethlehem is the same providence that directed Ruth to the appropriate Bethlehem field.

She was guided by grace into the place that God had provided. So faith in God provides providence. See God's providential working in our life is both a delight and a mystery. How does God do it? Don't know but God does. How does God you know sometimes hear people say well God told me to do whatever. Well sometimes it seems to be that clear but sometimes it's more of a Ruth experience.

You just so happened upon something and you look back and you say wow that had to be God directing me and guiding my steps. So to us it seems like it just happened but God was guiding and directing through circumstances through whatever maybe there were already people gleaning in the other fields we don't know so God using those circumstances is leading her and maybe I don't know I don't know what led her there aside from God's leading hand we know that God uses circumstances so she ends up in the field of Boaz God is constantly working with us we see that in Mark 16 20 he is constantly working in us we see that in Philippians 2 12 and 13 and God is constantly working for us we see that in Romans chapter 8 and verse number 28 and he's accomplishing his gracious purposes in our lives so we pray we seek his will and we make decisions and sometimes we make mistakes but it's

God who orders guides his willing children so we if we're moving and if we're acting upon the faith that he's already provided God promises provision and our faith in God will also provide providence God will move us along according to his will and we don't always understand it Ezekiel saw the the vision of the firmament that was moved here and there as a wheel within wheels we don't understand it but we thank God that he provides the way that he provides so as we come to a close how do we apply this how do we apply it to our lives so we see Ruth becoming the spiritual leader she has faith she acts upon it she goes out she finds provision and she is providentially guided to the exact field and we're going to see how she is treated we're going to see how

[29 : 59] Boaz tells his workers to treat her and ultimately we're going to see how Boaz treats Ruth personally and so God is taking care of her and she's acting upon her faith God is providentially providing for her and he is moving her around just like chess pieces upon a board God is moving her God is moving us around in our lives so how do we apply it first if we trust God and take him at his word we will act on it we will do something about it let's not just sit around waiting for something to happen like Ruth let's believe that God will direct us as we get up get out and get going his providential grace will lead us along the way just get moving do something it may be teaching a Sunday school class it may be going out to the park and and saying well God you lead me and guide me to someone I know sometimes when

I go out on Saturday mornings I really do like studying in a place like Starbucks when people say well how can you concentrate it's just unintelligible but that's when I can study also what happens is I meet people when I take a break there's probably four or five couples and another two or three people that I see on a regular basis and we've struck up conversations and we've talked about ministry we've talked about the Lord and so God if we're in the way and if we're moving in that direction God is going to bring people into our lives and he's going to give us those opportunities it might be wherever farmers market might be at who knows where on the job if we're moving in that direction God will guide us God will direct us and his mention but think about this

Ruth when they were back home in Moab was taken care of by her husband didn't have to work outside the home how does it make most people feel when you have to go out and beg and obviously everyone who was gleaning in the corners of the field were what poor a widow possibly so it took humility I believe for Ruth to go out and say you know what this may not be fun I know people will look at me funny but I'm going to humble myself and I'm going to get out there and do whatever it takes to make ends meet so we may be humbled but God will provide for his children we just trust him and then thirdly trust that

God will make things happen in our lives to direct us and to guide us so trust him God we we we we we we know God will take care of us so trust God for his provision we trust that God will lead us and guide us and direct us get moving and let him guide us and direct us to wherever he wants us to be because nothing happens by accident in God's economy it's all by providence God is in control all right let's pray father this morning we are so so very thankful for the the way you have shown us

through the lives of Ruth Naomi and now Boaz how you work in our lives how you guide us and direct us and how you care for us and how your plan spans the ages Lord we know that we may not today see your plan a year from now but we know that you're working on it we know that you are step by step leading and guiding us in that direction so the circumstances that we experience today we know

Lord God that you are working to change our hearts and ultimately we're going to see what Ruth does in the life of Naomi we thank you Lord God for what you're going to accomplish in our lives through our lives and for our lives we pray this in Jesus name amen to we to this God he we meet the we are we Buffalo go wh hats