

What Changes When God Is At Work

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Date: 22 January 2016

[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, I want to ask you to turn with me to Ruth chapter 3. Ruth chapter 3. Before we go there, I'd like to point out a truth in the New Testament. Paul says in Philippians chapter 1, verses 6, he says, He says, Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus.

Then later on in Philippians chapter 2, verse 13, he tells this truth again. He says, For it is God which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure. God is at work.

He's at work in you. He's at work through you. If you're one of his child or one of his children, he's working through you. And I just want to remind you of that truth. And I think we see that in this passage here in Ruth chapter 3.

And I'm not going to lie. It's been one of those things I was like, what am I going to talk about this? I mean, here we have this woman going up to this guy at night. And she uncovers his feet and lays down at his feet and then covers it up.

And I'm like, what does all this have to do? Has anyone else read Ruth and just wondered, like, what is going on here? I have no clue what's going on here. This seems kind of borderline inappropriate. What is she doing?

[1 : 10] I have no clue. Well, I want to go at a different angle. I want to talk from the life of Naomi. If you guys have got your Bibles, we're going to read the chapter of Ruth chapter 3. We'll start in verse 1.

It says, Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee. And now, is not Boaz our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast?

Behold, he went with barley tonight in the threshing floor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor.

But make not thyself known unto the man, Interesting. Until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie.

And thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down, and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me, I will do.

[2 : 16] What a virtuous woman Ruth is. And she went down to the floor, verse 6, and did all according to her mother-in-law, bade her.

And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went and lied down at the end of the heap of the corn, and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and he turned, and behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth, thy handmaid.

Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman. And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter, for thou hast showed more kindness in the latter than at the beginning.

And as much as thou hast followed, followest not young men, whether rich or whether poor or rich, and now, my daughter, fear not, fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest.

[3 : 27] For all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. Verse 12, he says, And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman, howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

Terry this night, just wait here this night, and in the morning, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of kinsman, well, let him do the kinsman part. But if he will not do the part of the kinsman unto thee, then will I do the part of the kinsman unto thee.

As the Lord liveth, lay down until the morning. Verse 14, And she lay at his feet until the morning. Very, very submissive lady right here.

Very, very obedient. Not only to Naomi, but also to Boaz. And she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came unto the floor.

And he said, Bring the veil which thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and he laid it on her.

[4 : 37] And she went into the city. And she came unto her mother-in-law. She said, Who art thou? My daughter? My daughter? She told her all that the man had done to her.

And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me. For he said unto me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law. Then she said, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall.

For the man will not be in rest until he hath finished the thing this day. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for this day. Lord, I ask that you would just give me clarity of speech. Lord, I ask that you would help me to communicate this truth to your people.

Thank you for allowing me to preach your word, Lord. And thank you most of all for giving us your word. Lord, I ask that you would impact us today. Help us to see what you did in the life of Naomi, Lord.

And Lord, if there's a person out here that's hurting, that doesn't understand the circumstances that they're going through, Lord, I ask that you would just work mightily in their life, and see that you are God, and you still work, and you still reign, and you still are in charge, and let them see what you're doing.

[5 : 46] And Lord, I ask this would cause us, this would motivate us to work for you, and we'll give you all the praise. In Jesus' name, amen. I'd like to point out the fact, a couple things about Naomi. Because when Pastor preached on it, I mean, chapter one, when we heard about the story of Naomi, she was a pretty, pretty bitter woman.

Was she not? I mean, she was a woman that was self-focused. She was always blaming her circumstances. She was changing her name. She didn't seem like that type of lady you want to hang out with. Actually, Naomi, it seemed like I said it before, she was only focused on what she could do.

You remember in Ruth chapter one, verses 11? Ruth chapter one, verses 11, the Bible says this, and Naomi turned again. This is after her, just a reminder, just to get some context, her husband's just passed away, her two sons have passed away, and now her two daughter-in-laws are trying to follow around.

She's like, I can't take care of you. But she says in verse 11, she says, Turn again, my daughters. Why will ye go with me? Are there yet any more sons in my womb? That they be your husbands.

Turn again, get away. My daughters, go your way. For I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I hope. And if I should have a husband also tonight, and also to bear sons, are you going to wait for me?

- [6 : 55] Man, Naomi was consumed on what things she could do in her life. During this difficult situation, she was saying, Ruth, other daughter-in-law, which I forget your name, okay, leave me alone.
- Go back to your place. I can't give you a husband. I can't do anything for you. You need to leave me alone. Not only does she do that, but she also blames God.
- She lashes out against God. Look at verse 13. Would you tarry, she's talking about those sons that she was going to have. Would you tarry for them until they were grown? Would you stay for them, having husbands?
- Nay, my daughters. For it grieveth me much for your sakes. What's grieving her? That the hand of the Lord has gone out against me. Man, she goes through these horrible circumstances.
- I mean, who would want their husband to die? And then to add on top of that, to have both of your sons pass away, and be in a land where you don't know, you're your stranger. But during that time, she does something, and she does something so wrong, that she begins to lash out against God, and say, man, the hand of the Lord is against me.
- [8 : 04] He's against me. And that changed her whole attitude. She became bitter. She became bitter. Remember in Ruth chapter 1, verse 19, when she comes back to Bethlehem, comes back to the town, and says, so the two, that was Naomi and Ruth, they came back to Bethlehem, and it came to pass, that when they were come to Bethlehem, all the city were moved about them.
- And they said, is this Naomi? You get this story? Ruth and Naomi pick up, and they move back to Bethlehem, and they get in town, and this big, huge stir goes throughout the entire little town.
- And they come up there and say, hey, isn't this Naomi? Aren't you Naomi? And look at Naomi's response. And she said unto them, call me not Naomi. Call me Marah.
- For the Almighty hath dealt weary bitterly, very bitterly with me. Man, she had a poor, poor, poor attitude.
- Verse 21, she says, I went out full. I had sons. I had a husband. I went out full during the famine. And the Lord hath brought me home empty.
- [9 : 12] Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? What a horrible, horrible attitude.
- What a horrible, horrible attitude. I understand you've got bad things happen to you, Naomi. I understand that your husband passed away. I understand both your sons died. But don't blame God. Don't say it was God that was afflicting you.
- Don't you say that the giver of every good and perfect gift was afflicting you. Don't you say that. Don't you say that. It's safe to say that Naomi right here was self-centered. And she was overwhelmed with pity.
- And she was looking at her circumstances. I think it would be extremely easy for us two to fall in this trap of being overcome with ourself. But I want to notice something, what happens in chapter 2.
- Something totally changes. Something changes in chapter 2. In chapter 2, verses 2, Ruth, the Moabitess, saith unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace.
- [10 : 21] And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. You see, Ruth sets out on a mission. You have her mother-in-law staying at home, probably just pouting around, having that bad attitude.

No one wants to be around her. She doesn't want to do anything. She wants to close the curtains. She wants to be in dark. She's in extreme depression. She has a bad attitude. Like I said, keep on going over the bad attitude. And Ruth says, Is it alright if I just go out in the field?

Just so we get something to eat? She had a mission. She wanted to provide food for her and Naomi. Ruth was going to be like the beggar. She was going to benefit from God's system. You guys remember, back when we went through Leviticus, in Leviticus 19, verses 9-10, how God set up a system?

The Bible says in Leviticus 19, 9-10, And when you reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy fields, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest, and thou shalt not glean the vineyards, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard.

Thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger. I am the Lord your God. See, God had set up a system, whenever the farmers would go out to harvest, that they wouldn't get the corners, they wouldn't get the sides, and they would just leave certain areas for the poor and the beggars, and those that were strangers.

[11 : 28] And Ruth looks to Naomi and says, Do you mind if I just go out in the field and just get something to eat for us? See, you would think that the Jewish woman, the Israelite woman would be saying, Hey, Ruth, there's a system that God set up to take care of us.

But somehow, overcome and overwhelmed with her grief, it was the Moabite woman that said, Do you mind if I go out into the field? And you know what happens out there.

Ruth was setting out, she was looking for grace, a way to provide for her mother-in-law. It was Ruth that God would use to influence her mother-in-law and give her some hope.

Isn't that amazing? A Moabite, a woman, and I don't want to sound bigoted here, but it seems like the world, when they view the Bible, that the Bible doesn't really elevate a woman's role.

When they view other people that aren't Jewish, the Bible doesn't really seem to elevate it, but in the book of Ruth it does. In the book of Ruth it does, because it was Ruth that was out there seeking help.

[12 : 36] It was a woman, it was the Moabites that was going to influence the Jewish people by her example and her care for others. I'd like to also make a point that the meeting between Ruth and Boaz, that was a providential meeting, meaning God set it up.

It was God at work and orchestrating it. And you could see that, absolutely. But I'd like to remind you of the fact that it was brought about because of the fact that Ruth went out into the field.

Do you understand that? God brought about Boaz to meet Ruth because Ruth was out in the field working. I want you to make sure that you're clear on this. Thursday night we had Scott Newton come up, right?

And he gave us a testimony of what went on in Barcelona, Spain. He talked about how he went out to Spain and he tried to learn the language right and he said that he was just trying to look to start a church. And out of nowhere he was just looking for places.

Some guy came up to him and said, I have this building for free. Have it. Ruth was out in the field working and God brings somebody along to help her out.

[13 : 45] You see what I'm saying? Scott goes out there and he goes to this building and he begins to clean it out and then they have a, what did he say? It was a fire extinguisher salesman come by and ask what type of building this was.

Do you not see God working in all this? Do you not see that our God is still at work in all this? Do you not see him working throughout all the world? That's why we have these updates. That's why we have our missionaries come up there and say, look what God's done to influence us, to show that there's still a God out there.

He's still at work. And then Scott tells about the story when they had that barbecue and they sent out flyers all over. And that one family, only that one family came that had been praying, what did he say, for seven and a half years for a church?

That wouldn't have happened if Scott didn't go out to the field. You understand that? It seems like God's providence does not find the idol, but it finds those that are working for him.

And that's what he does with Ruth. That's what he does with Ruth. I want... It was after Ruth was in the field that God set up that meeting.

[14 : 52] God was clearly able, I just want you guys to know this, God was clearly able to have Naomi and Ruth sitting on the front porch and then have Boaz walk by and then maybe Boaz catch a glance at Ruth, but that's not the way it played out.

Those are called fairy tales. And they very rarely happen. I haven't heard many of these stories, but I have heard and see that God is at work with those people who are trying to attempt things for him.

And that's what God did in the story of Ruth. And it was after this encounter, Ruth's encounter with Boaz, that she was able to go back to her mother-in-law and encourage her and give hope to a woman that seemed like she was helpless.

To say, hey, guess what happened to me? I was out in the field and I was picking up stuff. And as I was picking up stuff, the guy that owned the field, he noticed me.

And he had me over and he had me eat with the workers. And I don't know why, but it seems like every time those harvesters, they're not really good. They didn't pick up a whole bunch because they kept on dropping stuff and they weren't allowed to pick up stuff.

[16 : 03] But I got a whole bunch of stuff back. And when she came back and she testified to Naomi, Naomi just has this 180 change. You know what I'm saying? She has this 180 change.

And if you look in Ruth 2, verse 20, you see this totally different change, this totally different encounter, this totally different attitude with Naomi. And Ruth 2, verse 20, and it says this, And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord who hath not left us, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.

And Naomi said unto her, The man is near kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. You see what happens when hope comes into someone's life that seems like there's hopelessness, there's just no help?

Just a little gleam. She sees that and she says, God, he didn't leave me. It wasn't him that was afflicting me. Bless him.

You see, God could have given Ruth to Boaz in the beginning, but it wouldn't have changed Naomi's heart. God could take you out of your situations. He could take you from your difficult situations that you're facing right now, but it wouldn't change you.

[17 : 14] It wouldn't conform you into his image. That's why he uses trials in our life. That's why he uses those things to make us more like Jesus. Maybe Christians, Christians, maybe you're here and you're facing some difficulty, but can I tell you that difficulty is often known as grace.

You know what grace is? Grace is doing something in you that you can't do in and of yourself. Could we get saved? Could we go to heaven? Could we obtain God's righteousness in and of ourselves?

Could we do that? Absolutely not. We needed God to step in. And maybe right now, the difficulties that you're facing right now, the stuff that you can't handle, the stuff that you can't face, and you can't have victory over, maybe that's just God's grace saying, hey, I'm going to work in you and I'm going to do something in you and by the end of it, I'm going to get all the glory and everyone's going to be saying, wow, what an incredible God.

What an incredible God. If you're here and you're in a hole and it seems like there's no reason to go on and God's left you, I hope, I hope this story shows that He's working in you.

He's putting some stuff to will inside you. He's putting some stuff to do inside you. He gave His only Son. What makes you think that He's going to withhold anything from you? To Ruth, it might have just been an all happenstance.

[18 : 34] But Naomi was much smarter. She knew that there was a God and it was her God that did it. Maybe today you're in a hole. Maybe you need to realize that there's a God.

There's still a God and He still sits on the throne and He still cares for you. You see, Naomi realized that God was at work and that's what thrusts Ruth chapter 3.

You see, Naomi realized that God was doing something and it put her into action. In Ruth chapter 3, it's a totally different scenario. Instead of Ruth seeking out to seek help for her and Naomi, it's now Naomi looking out for Ruth.

Look what it says in Ruth chapter 3, verses 1. Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee?

What a totally different woman. What a totally different woman. Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? My daughter, don't I need to, I need to help you.

[19 : 39] You see what just happened? The woman that was staying at home and saying, Hey, don't call me Naomi. Call me, God is, He has afflicted me. God's done so many bad things. I lost my husband.

I lost my two boys. I'm back in here. I don't have, I don't have a, I don't have a, I can't keep on the seat. I can't keep on the family name. I'm just, I'm hopeless. Now is taking ownership and she's taking, she's making a plan.

She's like, Ruth, don't I need to help you out? I need to, I need to get you a husband. Wait a second, Ruth. Maybe, didn't you say back in chapter 1 verse 11, you said you can't find him, you can't give him a husband?

Now she's out there, she's, now she is playing the dating game. What is going on with this woman? She's changed. She's changed. Don't you see what happens when, when someone encounters God and there's some hope in there?

Don't you see what happens? Work starts to follow after. These ladies, from Ruth chapter 3 verse 1 through 5, they start seeking their kinsman redeemer.

[20 : 37] And now Naomi begins to prepare Ruth. Naomi is seeking a suitable husband for Ruth. One that will give her rest and security. Shall I not seek thee rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

Naomi seems to find a suitable match for Ruth. Obviously it's Boaz. So Naomi sits down and she devises a plan that's, that was customary for the people in that day.

Look what she does in verse 2. She says this, and now is Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, when he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor, wash yourself.

I want you to go down there. But before she does that, she tells him to do, Ruth's to do some things. She gives some instructions. She tells her to wash herself. That sounds like, okay, that's normal, right?

Well, maybe for us that has, you know, indoor plumbing, but back then, I mean, we're talking about people that, there wasn't a lot of water in the Middle East, if you haven't noticed, okay? All right? But what happens is, this is right after harvest season, right?

[21 : 38] And this woman's been out in the field and she says, okay, you need to clean up. You need to wash. Now, to the Jews, they used to wash up whenever they had special occasions, like a ceremony where they would go to offer things.

So this was a special occasion that Naomi was preparing Ruth for. She says, I want you to wash yourself. Then I want you to go anoint yourself. I want you to go get some oil. Get some fragrance.

Pour it on you. That's stuff that's supposed to help your skin. That's stuff that's supposed to help you, that's supposed to help you, make you smell a little bit better so whenever people around you makes you a little more standable. I want you to anoint yourself. That's what she's telling her to do. That's what she's telling her.

You know when they anointed people back then? When they were getting married. This is a special occasion that she's telling her. She says, I want you to anoint yourself. I want you to wash yourself. I want you to put on some new raiment.

Go change your clothes. I don't know what Ruth was doing. I don't know what she was wearing. She might have been wearing some of the stuff that widows used to wear when they were sorrowing, when they were sad. She says, I want you to change your clothes.

[22 : 34] I want you to, there is a special occasion that you're going to do. And I want, you've got to get changed. You've got to, we're taking you to the ball, Cinderella. Come on, you've got to get shaped up. Come on, let's make you presentable for this guy.

And then she tells her how she's supposed to act. Now this is the part that I didn't understand, but after reading it, I'm like, what am I going to teach on this? She says, in verse three, she says, but make not thine self known unto the man until he hath done the thing, hath done eating and drinking.

And it shall be, when he lieth down, thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, uncover his feet, and lay thee down, and he will tell thee what he shall do. There was a custom back then.

Okay? Okay, there was actually a law. Before we get to the custom, let's go to the law. If you have family, and that husband dies, and there is no seed, you're supposed to provide a seed so that family's line can keep on going.

And Ruth didn't have that seed. And the person next in line would be the next kinsman. And so what Ruth was about to do, she was about to say, hey, this is your job.

[23 : 47] You're supposed to provide a seed for me. You're the next in line. But I want you to notice, when Boaz sees her, he says, you are a virtuous woman.

Man, you have been nicer to me than ever before. And I'm like wondering, like, what is all this stuff going on? Because Ruth does exactly what she's told by Naomi. Naomi devises this plan, and Ruth does it.

She follows it to a T. And I'm wondering, what's going on? Why is she doing it at night? Why is she not doing it in front of other people? She was trying to save Boaz's face.

Because if she was going to go in front of Boaz and say, hey, will you be my kinsman, redeemer? Would you give a line? And Boaz says, no, there's a lot of shame that comes with that. And so that's why Ruth was called virtuous.

That's why Ruth was called, hey, you've been nicer and kinder to me than I've, you could have went after richer or poorer guys, but you chose me. And Ruth did exactly what she was told to do. And at the end of it, Boaz tells her these things.

[24 : 48] He says, hey, I'll be true to it. I'll take care of you. There's a guy before me. I'll go ask him. If he'll do it, then, well, he's next in line.

There's a guy that's closer to me. If he'll do it, he can do it. But if he won't, hold me to it. I'll take care of you. We could see a lot of imagery in there.

We could see a lot of things. And she goes away with six measures of barley. She goes back to her mother-in-law and her mother-in-law says, praise God, why don't you just sit here and wait? But I want you to see this truth that I saw in the first part.

You see, Naomi was a changed woman. She was bitter. She had problems with God. She was blaming Him.

She was focusing on herself. But it was a trip to a field that changed it all. God came out and He did something. And it changed her attitude.

[25 : 49] And now, Ruth might have a chance for the line to go on. And we all know that, I don't know if we all, but most of us here knows what happens. Can I tell you something?

Naomi plays a role in bringing forth the Messiah. Did you get that? Naomi plays a role in bringing Jesus Christ to here on earth.

God allows Naomi to play, even though it might be a small part, she plays a part in the line of Jesus. She was bitter.

She publicly talked bad about God. She didn't care about Him. She was upset with Him. She said, He did this to me. He did this to me. But hope was brought into the equation.

Hope was brought into the picture in a field. And it totally changed everything about her. And the same things happen to you. God came to you, and you were saved, and He's working in you, and He's allowing you to do something great.

[26 : 58] You just got to let go of that bitterness. He's at work right now. Don't you realize, don't you know that He that begins, that He that begins with the good work will continue with it?

Don't you know that He's working in you both the will and the do of His good pleasure? He was at work in Naomi. It was God. So tonight, you might be here, you might be facing some difficulties, you might be facing some trials, you might even be bitter.

But can I remind you, if you're born again, you have the greatest hope of all. You have Jesus Christ. Tonight, look what God did through the life of Naomi. He can do it through you too.

It doesn't matter about the past. She's a totally different person in chapter 3. She's a totally different person. And she plays an instrumental part in seeing Ruth married off to Boaz.

And she plays a little small part, even though her name might not be written in Matthew, she played a part. And everyone's going to know it. God's a great God. And He allows us, even after we mess up and even after we lash out at Him, to do something great for Him.

[28 : 08] So tonight, let this truth work in you. You have the Holy Spirit. You have God. You have Jesus Christ working in you. And He wants to do something great. Don't be sitting back.

Be like Naomi. Let that truth motivate you to get to action and do something for Him.