

Sermon Notes

Series on Ruth
Ruth 2:14-23
“Blessings”

John A. Eastman
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Grace Community Bible Church

Introduction: Review: In chapter one of the book of Ruth, we were introduced to a Jewish family from the famine ravished city of Bethlehem, who moved to the neighboring country of Moab searching for food. During this family’s ten years in pagan and idolatrous Moab, dad Elimelech died leaving his wife, Naomi, a widow. Soon Naomi’s two sons married but then they both died, leaving three widows penniless and poor. When Naomi heard that the famine had ended in Judah, she decided to return home to Bethlehem. Naomi instructed her daughters-in-law to return to their mother’s home in Moab (Ruth 1:11) hoping that they would remarry Moabite men, but one of the daughters-in-law, Ruth, pledged her devotion to Naomi, to Naomi's God and Naomi's people, the Jews (Ruth 1:16-17). So Naomi and Ruth traveled to Bethlehem and upon arrival when the women of Bethlehem sort of recognized Naomi, they asked, *"Is this Naomi?"* Naomi answered them negatively; *Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me* (1:20). Naomi, whose name means “pleasantness” demanded that she be now called, *Mara*, meaning “bitterness.” But God has a way of causing us to see His hand in our lives, which is exactly what He did with Naomi and Ruth to bring them His *favor* and blessings. All the details and events of Ruth chapter two are designed to teach these two widows that God was working behind the scenes to accomplish His purposes and to provide for their every need. Onto the pages of this dramatic Old Testament love story, stepped Boaz, Bethlehem’s most eligible bachelor. As to his name, the name Boaz means “swift strength,” “in whom is strength,” or “in him is strength.” The name of Boaz is unique to the Bible so therefore the etymology of Boaz’ name is rather obscure. This Boaz in Ruth is the only one in the Bible to carry this name; however, something else will carry the name Boaz. His great-great-grandson, King Solomon, will name one of the Temple’s porch’s pillars, the left one, after him (read 1 Kings 7:21). Just for the record, if the right pillar was called, “He will establish” and the left pillar, “In Him is strength,” the result forms a statement on the porch of the Temple, reading right to left as the Hebrew text does, “He will establish...in Him is strength.” As we discovered from examining the text last week, Boaz was a very wealthy and prosperous businessman (2:1); the same Hebrew words that are translated, *a man of great wealth*, Hebrew is ‘ish gibbor chayil, are also used in Ruth 3:11 to describe Ruth in these words; *a woman of excellence!* Elsewhere the Hebrew construction for this phrase, *of great wealth*, is translated “a valiant warrior” in Judges 11:1. One writer suggests that our word, “knight” provides the force needed to understand the meaning of this Hebrew word. In addition, Barber adds, “the usage of this word in Judges 11:1 as well as in Ruth 3:11 seems to indicate that ‘valor’ is the preferable rendering.” We learned from verse 4 that part of Boaz’ wealth was derived from farming the *fields* that he owned near Bethlehem. He was a man of sufficient means that he had not only *reapers* to do the *barley* picking (Ruth 2:4) but also *field* manager who was *in charge of the reapers* (Ruth 2:5); therefore quite a few people on his payroll. What about that dinner date? Somehow these two have to meet and that’s where we read that Boaz noticed that a very attractive female stranger was *gleaning barley in his field* (Ruth 2:5-7). Now *gleaning* isn’t a concept practiced in the 21st century, but was God’s Old Testament welfare plan whereby the poor were provided the right to *glean* (the Hebrew is אֱלָקָה, *alaqat*), or to gather *grain* left over by those who reaped or picked *grain* in the *fields*. Read Leviticus 19:9-10 to discover what the Mosaic Law stated about God's welfare system. The Mosaic Law graciously

provided the poor with the right to *glean* in the *fields* and prohibited the land owners from stopping them. The Mosaic Law instructed farmers not to pick their *fields* bare during *the harvest*; instead they were allowed only one pass through the *field* as well as leave the corners unpicked for the poor who needed food—they were literally ‘cutting corners!’ In addition, if in the process of harvesting the *reapers* dropped *grain* on the ground, they were not allowed to pick it up but leave it for the *gleaners*. Therefore, *gleaning* was among God's provisions for the poor, like Ruth and Naomi, for those who had nothing, although *gleaning* was hard, back-breaking and humiliating work that generally yielded little as often the *grain* was hard to reach and sometimes the one *gleaning* had to crawl through the dirt to get it. The poor still had to go into the *field* and work hard at gathering the *grain* but it was there for them to take—so different from welfare today and what is expected by welfare recipients. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that God rewards lazy people—God’s Word makes it clear that Ruth wasn’t afraid of even hard menial work. For more information on what the Old Testament Law states about *gleaning*, read also Deuteronomy 24:19-22; & the *fatherless and widows*, read Deuteronomy 10:18. It should be noted that the events recorded in the Book of Ruth revolve around *harvest* time and the *reaping* of grain. That female stranger *gleaning* in his field, caught Boaz' attention as she was young (Ruth 2:6), beautiful (implied by Boaz' actions), hard working (Ruth 2:7) and it was apparent that she was very family oriented (Ruth 2:11). Boaz liked what he saw and heard so he decided to meet Ruth in person, which he did, and offered her not only protection but also some fringe benefits for working in his *field* (Ruth 2:8-12). Ruth was extremely appreciative of Boaz' acceptance, kindness and generosity as verse 10 records: *Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"* Ruth was simply awestruck by this man and his kind behavior! By the way men, it’s OK to be kind, thoughtful, considerate, and gentle like Boaz! Some men have the strange notion that kindness and gentleness are effeminate traits and so they go out of their way to avoid that kind of behavior. But, they are all Christ like characteristics! (Read Luke 6:35; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 1:5 & 9; 4:32; 2 Timothy 2:24 & Titus 2:5). Ruth knew that Boaz had done more than he needed to do and such grace amazed her; the word *favor* can be translated “grace” or “acceptance;” (the Hebrew word for *favor* is חֵן, chen.)

#1 THE BLESSINGS OF SATISFACTION, Ruth 2:14-16

Verse 14: Boaz finally invited Ruth to lunch! I think Boaz had fallen head over heels for Ruth! Though he’s seriously courting Ruth, he would soon learn that there’s a huge hurdle ahead for him (Ruth 3:12-13). We need to put this scene in perspective, for while Boaz and Ruth are having a dinner date, I doubt if it was very romantic in the classic sense of “romance” as we might see it. Along with Boaz and Ruth, there were others gathered at this table; all the *reapers*, Boaz' *servant*/field manager, and who knows who else at this table with them. Imagine what all these *reapers* smelled like after working all day in the sun picking *barley*? We ought not to think that they were having a romantic candlelight and wine dinner at the prestigious Bethlehem Country Club. However, this dinner date is the beginning of a budding relationship. By the way, if we might want to picture this as more of a picnic than a *meal*. Application for dating youth: Some of the wisest Christian counselors suggest that the best and safest way for Christian singles to get to know someone of the opposite sex is in a group setting! That’s good advice! Boaz' words of invitation to *dine* with him at his table are very direct: *come here that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar*. In that culture, it was a rather intimate thing for someone to invite a guest to a *meal* and hold out a bowl of *vinegar* to that person. New Testament comparison: When I read these words I was immediately reminded of something in the New

Testament as the same thing happened at Jesus' last supper although the outcome did not produce further intimacy. While Jesus and His disciples were gathered in that Upper Room—*mealttime*, Jesus extended intimacy to Judas and Judas had the audacity not only to take Jesus up on it in front of the other disciples but also used that display of intimacy to betray Jesus. (Matthew 26:20-23; notice, *he who dipped his hand with me in the bowl is the one who will betray me.*) For us, our time at the Table of the Lord, the communion table, is a time of marvelous one-on-one intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ as well as with the body of Christ, one another! When we gather the first Sunday of each month for that remembrance service, Jesus invites us to sit at His table with the rest of the redeemed, the body of Christ, you and me. Therefore, in the same way, Ruth's coming *redeemer*, Boaz, invited her to sit with him at his table. Since I've pointed out often in this series on the book of Ruth that Boaz is a type of Christ, notice that Boaz offers Ruth bread, even as our Lord is the Bread of Life (read John 6:33-52). Constable adds, "The fact that Boaz permitted Ruth to eat with his household servants was another blessing from the Lord." [Constable, Thomas, "Notes on Ruth," Published by Sonic Light, p.15.] And I'll add, that Boaz ate with the hired help—there was no elitism on his part! I'm not sure that I have a complete understanding of the *vinegar* dip that was used; (if you can enlighten me on this, please share it with me.) One Bible scholar referred to it as a sour beverage composed of vinegar, wine vinegar or sour wine mixed with oil; and he called it a refreshing drink still a favorite in the Middle East. Maybe some might call it refreshing, but I think I'll ask for a Dr. Pepper instead! The menu: The words, *and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left*, are fascinating! *He served her!* I don't think I'm reading too much into this, but Boaz chose to *serve her* rather than have his servants who had prepared the meal *serve her*, as would have been the custom for guests. Ruth was the honored guest! That act of special kindness should have given Boaz' employees something to talk about! The *roasted grain* translates the Hebrew, קִלְיָ (see Leviticus 2:14). As to the *roasted grain*, Cundall adds, "This...consisted of fresh ears taken from the new crop and roasted in a pan. W. M. Thompson describes it in this way: 'a quantity of the best ears, not too ripe, are plucked with the stalks attached. These are tied into small parcels, a blazing fire is kindled with dry grass and thorn bushes, and the corn heads are held in it until the chaff is mostly burned off. The grain is thus sufficiently roasted to be eaten, and it is a favourite article all over the country.'" [Cundall, Arthur E. and Morris, Leon. Judges & Ruth: An Introduction & Commentary. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968, p. 278]. As to the wording, *she ate and was satisfied and had some left*, we get the picture that she piled her plate high and left that table totally full and with leftovers; the blessing of being *satisfied*. There are two possible reasons as to why she didn't eat everything that was offered to her: (1) Ruth wanted to take some of these freshly *roasted grains* home to her mother-in-law to enjoy or (2) she didn't want to look like a pig in front of Boaz! After all, this was their first unofficial "date" and some of you women do/did the same thing so that your date won't think that too! I can hear Ruth asking the "waiter" for a "doggie bag!" This was God's blessing of *satisfaction* by providing sufficient food for her. Back in lesson one, I pointed out that Boaz is a type or picture of Jesus Christ; one Bible teacher makes this statement: "And when Jesus is the host no guest goes empty from the table!" Amen! I like that parallel. In addition, we ought to say that we believers are *satisfied* in Jesus Christ; cf. the doctrine of propitiation, where Jesus' death on the cross satisfied the demands of a holy God for our sin (read 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Romans 3:25 & Hebrews 2:17) Also consider the similar words in Luke 9:17 at the feeding of the '5000'—*and they all ate and were satisfied*. Barber makes this comparison as to the extra food that Ruth received from Boaz: "It calls to mind Joseph, as prime minister of Egypt, entertaining

his brothers and giving Benjamin five times as much as any of the others (Gen. 43:34).” [Barber, Cyril, J., A Story of God’s Grace, Ruth, Moody Press, p.81.]

Verse 15: From this verse, I assessed that this was a “lunch date” as Ruth left the table and went back to *gleaning* along with all the other *servants*—there was more *harvesting* to do and more time to do it! While Ruth worked, Boaz gave detailed instructions to *his servants* (in verses 15 and 16) to personally lead her to the already gathered *sheaves* of *grain* where she could *glean*; an area that would have been off limits to *gleaners* something totally not allowed!. That was much more generous than the Mosaic Law’s instructions in Leviticus 19:9-10. [Keil and Delitzsch writes, “These directions of Boaz went far beyond the bounds of generosity and compassion for the poor; and show that he felt a peculiar interest in Ruth, with whose circumstances he was well acquainted, and who had won his heart by her humility, her faithful attachment to her mother-in-law, and her love to the God of Israel, a fact important to notice in connection with the further course of the history.”] [Keil C. F. and Delitzsch F. “Ruth” in vol.2: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p.480]. Cundall’s comments are along a similar line but connect Boaz’ instructions with the Jewish law about *gleaning*: “The law gave the gleaners the right to go over the field after the reapers. But that is the point. They must do so only *after* the reapers had finished their work and had taken all they wanted from the field. Boaz was now going beyond the legal rights of the gleaners and allowing Ruth to glean before the reapers were through.” [Cundall, Arthur E. and Morris, Leon. Judges & Ruth: An Introduction & Commentary. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968, p279.] The phrase, *and do not insult her*, is interesting (the same concept is repeated in the next verse—*do not rebuke her*.) This was another blessing for Ruth. Although Ruth was from the hated Moabites, Boaz left clear instructions for no one to reproach her or shame her for being allowed to *glean* among the already gathered *sheaves* (the same Hebrew verb is used in Judges 18:7—*no ruler humiliating them*.) She was a stranger to God’s chosen people, yet she was extended *favor/grace*.

Verse 16: By making *gleaning* easier on her, Boaz gave clear indication that he wanted a continuing relationship with Ruth—a 2nd date, if you please and further blessings for Naomi and Ruth. Boaz gave further instructions to *his servants* to purposefully and deliberately let extra *grain* fall out of the already picked *bundles* (Hebrew is **הַצְּבָתִים**, *zebatim*, meaning “handfuls” perhaps *bundles* not yet tied up); the Mosaic Law did not require that of him but *grace/favor*—see comments on Ruth 2:10 is always extravagant! Ruth’s work became much easier with Boaz’ instructions—he really liked this young woman! When Ruth told the *reapers* that they had dropped a bunch of *sheaves*, Boaz had instructed them previously to simply say; “Oops;” basically, don’t correct her—the general meaning of *don’t rebuke her*. She must have thought that Boaz’ workers weren’t worth paying and undoubtedly the sloppiest workmen in the *fields*! Down to earth 20th century Bible teacher, Dr. J. Vernon McGee puts some color into the drama unfolding in this verse with these words about *grain* ‘accidentally’ falling: Now Boaz is going a step further when he said, “When you see that Ruth is gleaning immediately behind you, when nobody is looking, you just drop a sheaf back there and go on. When she gets up to it, she’ll call. ‘Yoo-hoo, you dropped a sheaf.’ You just tell her you’re sorry but you can’t go back and get it” as it would violate the Mosaic Law. [McGee, J. Vernon, McGee, J. Vernon, Thru The Bible, Vol. 2, Joshua-Psalms, p.103.] Dr. Constable adds, “By allowing her to work, Boaz preserved Ruth’s dignity, but by providing generously for her he lightened her duties.” [Constable, Thomas, “Notes on Ruth,” Published by Sonic Light, p. 15]. We ought to note that where there was once famine in Bethlehem, now there is abundance of grain; the *bundles* were a sign of a harvest of plenty.

Application: God works that way in our lives as He often drops *bundles* of blessings on us, totally undeserved, providing for us when we down and oh so needy. Hallelujah that God often goes out of His way for us! Amen! With verses 15 & 16 we learn that Boaz began to fulfill his own words of blessing from verse 12: *May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord*. Boaz decided to purposefully bless Ruth and Naomi and had the ability to make that happen and he pulled it off masterfully. There's a little bit more going on here than meets the eye as Boaz knew by this time that Ruth was the daughter-in-law of his relative, Naomi. He knew that he had a responsibility to take care of his family members and that might have also factored into his motivation as well as him falling head over heels for her.

#2 THE BLESSINGS OF SHARING, Ruth 2:17-19

Verse 17: Ruth worked *in the field* until late that night; sun up to sun down. Ruth was a super hard worker who reminds me of what Solomon writes in Proverbs 31:27: *...and does not eat the bread of idleness* (NASU) or *...and does not have to bear the consequences of laziness* (NLT). Perhaps totally exhausted, she called it a day, and *beat out*, winnowed the *grain* from what she had picked/*gleaned*. Keil and Delitzsch comment that the word "*barley* is plural in the Hebrew, the thought perhaps being that of a multitude of grains." [Keil C. F. and Delitzsch F. "Ruth" in vol.2: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 279]. So how much *barley grain* is in an *ephah*? Answer: a rather large amount, about 20-25 pounds (4-6 gallons) and Ruth had to carry that much extra weight home to Naomi (we'll hear Naomi's gasp in verse 19). That made many meals! That is grace's blessings! Constable cites from Robert Hubbard that "she had collected about three-fifths of a bushel of barley, 'the equivalent of at least half a month's wages in one day.'" And then he sets the stage for what is written in the next verse by reminding us that "Ruth took the food she had left over from lunch back to Naomi in Bethlehem." [Constable, Thomas, "Notes on Ruth," Published by Sonic Light, p.15].

Verse 18: In addition to that large quantity of *grain* Ruth gave to Naomi when she arrived home, was also her doggie bag left over from her first 'dinner date' with Boaz; this was the leftovers after she was *satisfied*—verse 14. The two women continue to receive the blessings of God's provisions. John Wesley wrote, "It is a good question to ask ourselves in the evening, 'where have I gleaned today? What improvements have I made in grace or knowledge? What have I learned or done, which will turn to account?'"

Verse 19: Ruth's mother-in-law didn't have a heart attack when she saw all that *grain*. Naomi was nothing but flabbergasted by the staggering amount of food that Ruth brought home after working just one day. Don't you wonder what these women have eaten the last few days? Anything in their pantry? Recall that Ruth filled her plate at Boaz' *mealttime* (Ruth 2:14—*she ate and was satisfied!*) Barber makes a rather interesting observation about Naomi's hunger based on that little word then in this verse: "If our sensitivity to the subtleties of the text has led us to the right conclusion, then we may say that it was only after Naomi's hunger had been satisfied and her spirits had revived that her curiosity asserted itself. He question, 'where did you glean today and where did you work?' is an example of Hebrew poetry in the form of parallelism. That in itself is indicative of an exuberant spirit. Under normal circumstances Naomi was evidently a person who loved life and whose cheerful disposition caused people to like her. And when that is added to her obvious interest in and concern for other people it is not hard to see why she endeared herself to her daughter-in-law." [Barber, Cyril, J., *A Story of God's Grace, Ruth*, Moody Press, p.88]. Naomi knew something was up as soon as she saw that amazing quantity of *grain*. The verb *blessed* is used here and then again in the next verse. Barber comments that "the verb *barak*, 'to

bles,' occurs about 330 times in the Bible. It is first used of God's blessing Adam and Eve (cf. Gen. 1:22, 28; see also 9:1; 12:2-3). It represents the essence of goodness and stands in stark contrast to paganism where power resides in the ability to curse (or bring evil upon) another. The very fact that Naomi invoked happiness upon their unnamed benefactor showed her basic disposition." [Barber, Cyril, J., *A Story of God's Grace, Ruth*, Moody Press, p.88.]

#3 THE BLESSINGS OF SONG/PRAISE, Ruth 2:20

Verse 20: By the way, up to this point, Ruth still didn't have a clue as to who Boaz' role would be, but now, in verse 20, Naomi began to disclose his identity with her response, and a key to the whole book. When Naomi heard Boaz' name, *blessings* flowed from her lips—again! What happened to the negative Naomi (from Ruth 1:20-21)? Here she was lost in song and praise to God! She worshipped Him! *Blessed* Him! *Blessed* was a new word on her lips! Sure, she first *blessed* Boaz but I believe Naomi was thinking of God. Cundall writes, "...the bulk of her exclamation is concerned with rejoicing in God. grammatically, it is possible to take *who hath not left off his kindness...* (AV, RV) with *he, i.e., Boaz*. But the whole drift of the passage shows that Naomi is thinking of God (cf. Gn. 24:27). He has not ceased His loving-kindness (the word is that used in 1:8; it denotes both kindness and faithfulness)..." [Cundall, Arthur E. and Morris, Leon. *Judges & Ruth: An Introduction & Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968, p.280]. Had Naomi had a complete conversion of thought compared to what she had spoken in Ruth 1:20-21? I'm not totally convinced; however, Ruth 4:14-15 is a declaration by *the women to Naomi* upon the birth of Ruth and Boaz' son, a true vindication of the true God and His provision, providence and sovereignty. Notice that Naomi identified Boaz' *kindness* as that very unique special love (the Hebrew is **חַסֵּד**, *hesed*, God's loyal love); Boaz was God's agent to prove His love/*kindness*. Back in Ruth 1:8, Naomi had asked God to *deal kindly*, same Hebrew word, with Ruth and Orpah for *dealing kindly* with her husband, her sons and herself. Naomi had thought of herself as *the dead* in light of all the tragedies that had befallen her back in Moab. But the wheels in her head had begun to think about the fact that Boaz was her relative. Naomi then enlightened Ruth as to what had been going on with her explanation about Boaz, *one of our closest relatives* as the text records (verse 20). Notice that Naomi clearly included Ruth in as an integral part of her family and would benefit from this *closest relative*. Those words, *one of our closest relatives*, open up the fabulous truth that Ruth is all about, the *kinsman redeemer* the **גֹּאֵל**, *go'el*. **Extended comments on the kinsman redeemer; the **גֹּאֵל**, *go'el***. This word, *relative/s* or *kinsman* (KJV) is used thirteen times in the Book of Ruth. God had given an interesting law to the Jews that required a man to marry the childless widow of his dead brother, called the law of the levirate marriage; here in the Book of Ruth we see the law of kinsman redeemer at work. There is no law in American culture to compare to this custom which might seem strange to us. This custom actually existed before the Mosaic Law; read Genesis 38:8 but as pointed out, became part of the Mosaic Law—Deuteronomy 25:5-10. The first born son of that union would bear his brother's name and inherit his brother's property according to Deuteronomy 25:5-10 (cf. also Leviticus 25:23-28). If no brother was available, a more distant relative might be asked to fulfill this duty, as Boaz will perform. But the widow would let him know that he was acceptable to be the *kinsman redeemer* the **גֹּאֵל**, *go'el*. This law of kinsman redeemer actually applied to three different areas of life: (1) the land, Leviticus 25:23-25, the right of a person to buy back the property of another person who was sold into slavery because of poverty; (2) individuals, Leviticus 25:47-48; and (3) widows, Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and the Book of Ruth is the application of Leviticus 25. Naomi had alluded to this ancient Hebrew custom of

Levirate marriage in Ruth 1:11-13. By the way, levirate comes from the Latin word, levir, which is Latin for “a husband’s brother.” In the Book of Ruth we find combined the law of Levirate marriage Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and the one governing redemption in Leviticus 25:47-49. Here in verse 20 and following we find both of these laws sort of combined in the Book of Ruth. Boaz is not, strictly speaking, the Levirate. He is not the brother of Ruth’s deceased husband. We’ve already learned that the only brother of Ruth’s deceased husband was also deceased and unable to fulfill his duties. But, under the Law of Redemption, where a close relative was able to perform the rights of the redeemer, Boaz is qualified. So, in Ruth we find both of these laws being combined and applied. These customs seem strange to us, but, if these customs seem strange to us, who are at least somewhat familiar with the Bible, how different they must have seemed to Ruth the Moabitess? Naomi was acquainted with these customs and culture, however, where they might have been taken for granted. Many Bible scholars assume that Elimelech’s and Boaz’ fathers were brothers, hence the requirement for Boaz to perform this duty of kinsman redeemer for Naomi—*the man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives*. [Barber adds that the *kinsman* redeemer the לָאֵל, go’el, “was a member of the family, sometimes a father, but more often a brother to whom fell the duty of ‘redeeming’ property (Lev. 25:23-28) or persons Lev. 25:47-55), or of executing ‘blood vengeance’—the redressing of a wrong done a member of the family (Num. 35:12, 19, 21, 24, 27; Deut. 19:6, 12; Josh. 20:3, 5, 9). As a relative of Elimelech’s, Boaz was one of their redeemers.” [Barber, Cyril, J., *A Story of God’s Grace, Ruth*, Moody Press, p.90.] The following quoted article was modified from The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Theological Wordbook of the OT, Tyndale Bible Dictionary, and Vine’s OT Lexicon and found on the www.preceptaustin.org website. ‘**Goel** is the active participle of the Hebrew verb **ga'al** which has the primary meaning of” restored to an original state” and to do the part of a kinsman and thus to redeem his kin from difficulty or danger by the payment of a price. **Goel**, the participial form of the Qal stem of the verb has practically become a noun in its own right though it may properly be considered as merely a form of the verb. Thus although technically **Goel** is a verb it is generally translated as one of 3 nouns (redeemer, kinsman or avenger) in most English Bibles, the specific noun depending on the context. **Don't be confused** if you are looking up the Strong's numbers because Strong did not assign a separate number to the root verb **ga'al** (Strong's # 1350) or the active participle form **goel** (Strong's # 1350), although for reasons unclear to me, he did assign a separate number (Strong's # 1353) for the passive participle form, **geullah**. A **Goel** therefore was one who effected restoration to an original, sometimes ideal, state. Goel means “redeemer” an English word derived from a Latin root meaning “to buy back,” thus meaning the liberation of any possession, object, or person, usually by payment of a ransom. In Greek the root word means “to loose” and so to free. The term is used of freeing from chains, slavery, or prison. The reader should be aware that in the OT, there are 3 separate Hebrew words used for redeem or redemption (of which only two are defined here) (1) **Ga'al**: This is the root verb form which has active participle, **Go'el**, (which is translated kinsman, redeemer or avenger) and a passive participle, **Geullah**, this latter used in Ruth 4:6 and 4:7 One difference between this root and **padah** (below) is that there is usually an emphasis in **Ga'al** on the redemption being the privilege or duty of a near relative. (2) **Padah**: redeem, ransom, buy and so to cause the freedom or release of a person from bondage or ownership, often implying a delivering or rescue of a person in distress. **Padah** is not used in Ruth. Vine adds that **padah** "is used of the payments required for the redemption of the firstborn (Ex13:13, 15; Lv27:26, 27; Nu3:46 49; 18:15-17) or for the release of persons from slavery (Ex21:8; Lv 25:47-49). It is also used figuratively with the meaning of delivering, whether in the cases of individuals (Ps 34:22) or of the deliverance granted

to Israel as a nation (Dt 9:26; 2Sa7:23; 1Chr17:21; Isa 29:22). It is especially associated with the deliverance from Egypt (Dt 7:8; 13:5; 24:18; Mic 6:4). In one instance it is used of redemption from sin: “redeem Israel from all his iniquities” (Ps 130:8).’ This next quite lengthy article was taken from an article by Robert L. Hubbard, “The Goel In Ancient Israel; Theological Reflections on an Israelite Institution,” Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary. I’ve extracted parts of his very technical paper with minor revisions. ‘The term *go’el* derives from the realm of Israelite family law. It describes a close relative, a “kinsman-redeemer,” who takes upon himself the duties of *ge’ullâ*—“redemption” or “recovery”—on behalf of a needy family member. Actually, at any given time, a pool of *go’alîm* stood available for duty because many close relatives could perform the tasks. According to Numbers 35, the *go’el* was to avenge the death of a relative—the so-called “redeemer of blood” (*go’el haddam*; cf. vv. 16-21). He did so by tracking down and putting the killer to death, provided, of course, that the gates of a city of refuge did not get in his way. Also, as head of his clan, the *go’el* would receive any monetary restitution due a deceased relative for a wrong committed against him (Num 5:8). Finally, the *go’el* also assisted his relatives in obtaining justice in a lawsuit. As for its purpose, the institution served one main goal—to keep tribal solidarity intact by recovering its losses, whether of people or property. Leviticus 25 falls near the end of the so-called “Holiness Code” (Lev 17-26). Literarily, it consists of Yahweh’s commission of Moses at Mt. Sinai to instruct Israel (vv 1-2). **In the book of Ruth**, we enter...the fertile fields, fragrant threshing floor, and buzzing city gate of Bethlehem. Suddenly, the stern, divine voice which lectured at Sinai gives way to a narrative about Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Immediately, two things are striking. **First**, in Ruth one sees, not abstract legislation, but actual legal principles—the application of legal background to a live situation. One may wonder whether Israel ever observed Jubilee, but Ruth leaves no doubt that Israel observed *ge’ullâ*. **Second**, one observes that God hardly seems present at all in the story. He directly intervenes in only two places—He gives Judah food (1:6) and Ruth conception (4:13). Were Yahweh not occasionally invoked by characters, one might presume Him to be totally absent from the story. Closer inspection, however, reveals that God is very much present. Though hidden behind the scenes, His is the firm hand quietly guiding events. To begin, we consider the emergence and role of the *go’el* in Ruth. Chapter 1 confronts us with the book’s main problem, the lack of an heir. Pointedly, v 5 stresses that only Naomi survived her family’s sojourn in Moab. Her bitter outcry (vv 11-13) drops a painful hint: what this story needs is a husband to produce a child (cf. also vv 20- 21). The word *go’el* first appears, however, in 2:20 where Naomi applies it to Boaz. Though ambiguous, the reference at least introduces the prospect of his future action on behalf of the two widows. Further, it occurs in a significant context, Naomi’s praise of Boaz for his *hesed*. In 3:9, it is Ruth herself who petitions the action implicit in 2:20 when she proposes marriage to Boaz as *go’el*. The point is that Ruth sought to marry Boaz in order to give Naomi the heir she needed. In response, Boaz introduced a surprise—the existence of another *go’el* with a prior right to the duty (3:12)—then promised to arrange her redemption one way or the other (3:13). The important scene at the city gate reports how Boaz legally obtained the redemption right for himself (4:1-12). Finally, 4:14 provides the last mention as her *go’el*. Now several important things emerge in this survey. **First**, like Leviticus 25, it is a tragic human crisis which eventually summons the *go’el* to action. The family line of Elimelech lacks an heir to continue itself. Hence, it teeters perilously on the brink of annihilation. As is well known, Israel regarded such an event as a great tragedy, one to be avoided at all costs. When a family died out physically, it ceased to exist metaphysically. That robbed Israel of one of her most prized possessions, her tribal solidarity. A secondary crisis, however, is the possibility that Naomi faces old age without anyone to care for her. That potential

tragedy is implicit in her angry outcries (1:11-13, 20-21), and explicit in the joyous exclamation of her neighbors (4:14-15). They rejoice that the newborn will “revive [her] spirits and sustain [her] in old age.” In short, as in Leviticus 25, here the *go’el* delivers an unfortunate Israelite, not from loss of land or lengthy servitude, but from annihilation. **Second**, the book sets this redemption in a theological framework different from that of Leviticus 25. In the latter, *ge’ullâ* formed a part of the practice of the Jubilee year. In Ruth, it forms part of what I call “the life of *hesed*,” the ideal lifestyle which the book reveres. This is evident in 2:20 where Naomi first identifies Boaz as a *go’el*. In the preceding line, she praises Yahweh for the fact that Boaz had “not abandoned his kindness (*hesed*) toward the living and the dead.” The juxtaposition of *hesed* and *go’el* here implies that, should Boaz later carry out *go’el* duties, such actions would constitute acts of *hesed*. Though *hesed* nowhere else occurs with reference to Boaz, two other evidences imply that the book views his performance as fulfilling that ideal. In 3:18, Naomi again lauds Boaz, this time for his conscientious follow-through. He promised Ruth redemption (3:13), and he will not relax until she has it. In addition, the closing genealogy lists Boaz seventh in the list, a position of honor second only to that of the tenth place. In sum, according to the book, by serving as *go’el*, Boaz performs an act of *hesed* worthy of honor. Finally, let us summarize the theological insights concerning the *go’el* gleaned from Ruth. As with Leviticus 25, *ge’ullâ* responds to desperate human need—a bitter widow facing old age alone and, worse, a permanent breach in tribal solidarity. Significantly, however, the book understands the basis of that redemption to be a cosmic one, the universal idea of *hesed*. The implication is that, in the book of Ruth, the Israelite institution implements that larger ideal. Specifically, the human *go’el* is the means whereby Yahweh, the Great Kinsman, achieves his purposes. On stage, Ruth and Boaz faithfully live the lifestyle of *hesed*. Backstage, however behind them, moves the Great *go’el*, pained by famine, death, and old age, gently acting to alleviate them. His broad, powerful wings protect those, like Boaz and Ruth, who please him.’ Therefore, Boaz, Ruth's kinsman redeemer, is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer. Dr. McGee adds these words, “...that’s the reason the word redemption is used in the New Testament rather than atonement. Atonement covered up sins, that’s all. But redemption, friend, means to pay a price so that the one who is redeemed may go scot-free.” The Book of Ruth reveals God's love for mankind as expressed in the person of Boaz. As I’ve mentioned, we will discover that in Ruth 3:12-13, there was another kinsman who was actually a closer relative than Boaz who could have performed this duty of kinsman redeemer for Naomi, but chose not to do so. That man turned it down because he didn’t love Ruth but Boaz loved Ruth! **Application:** Spiritually speaking as applied to us, God didn’t have to love us (John 3:16; Romans 8:37; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:4; 5:2, 25; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 John 4:10-11, etc.) or redeem us but He did! (Read Psalm 111:9; 130:7; Matthew 20:38; Galatians 3:13 & 1 Peter 1:18). Our redemption and salvation is God's love story for us. Give God praise for His loving kindness (the Hebrew is **חסד**, *hesed*) God’s loyal love and favor extended to us in spite of our sin.

#4 THE BLESSINGS OF SERVICE, Ruth 2:21-23

Verse 21: It’s evident that Naomi, once empty and without hope, had begun to see how God might provide for her again—to bless her. Notice that the author of the Book of Ruth still called the heroine of the story, *Ruth, the Moabitess*. Ruth had such a great time working and was rewarded so abundantly, that she couldn’t wait to go back to the fields and *glean* some more, just as Boaz must have suggested to her. Dr. Constable adds, “The beauty of Ruth's character shines forth in verse 21. She did not view her relationship with Boaz as a way out of her own responsibility to provide for herself and her aged mother-in-law. Instead she rejoiced that she

could continue to discharge her duty in safety.” [Constable, Thomas, “Notes on Ruth,” Published by Sonic Light, p.16.] That introductory word, *furthermore*, might give indication of Ruth's excitement at this juncture! Don't you get the distinct feeling that Boaz just couldn't wait to see Ruth again? He said, ‘come back to **my** field; I think there's more *harvesting* to do!’ The words, *stay close*, mean “to cling, or to cleave.” Did Boaz imply with the use of *all my harvest* that he wanted Ruth to remain in his field not just until the completion of the *barley harvest*, but perhaps until his other grains were *harvested*? The Feast of Unleavened Bread in late March or early April inaugurated the *barley harvest*. The Feast of Firstfruits seven weeks later in late May or early June terminated the wheat *harvest*, implying that Ruth might have been out in the *fields* for 6-7 weeks. Boaz had eyes for Ruth! God's grace was abundant and love was blooming! As Paul Harvey says, “now, for the rest of the story,” which will come as we finish the book. The phrase, *until they have finished all my harvest*, sounds so much like John 4:35 and Galatians 6:9, and God's desire to use us as His instruments to bring the gospel to the lost.

Verse 22: Naomi knew that Boaz was not only kind and generous but also *one of their closest relatives* (v.20). Naomi liked what was happening and gave Ruth good counsel here expressing her concern for her safety. Naomi emphasized that Ruth stay close to Boaz' *maids*, employees who were working Boaz' *field*.

Verse 23: Ruth was content to *glean* in Boaz' *field* and remain under his God-ordained protection and provision. Ruth was unaware that she would find a husband in his *field* as well as become the ancestor of the Messiah—“O Little Town of Bethlehem”. It doesn't take much to see in all the events of this chapter, a picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us: Boaz as a type of Christ who is (1) *hesed*, *kind/kindness* toward us; (2) shown us *favor/grace*; (3) provides for us; (4) protects us etc.

Note: It is my prayer that these printed notes will encourage Bible students to do further study on this passage. If you find any typos, errors or have any questions, please contact me. Since these notes are also available on our website, www.gcc-am.org, your assistance in drawing my attention to necessary corrections will be greatly appreciated. I've made every effort to give credit to quotations from other authors. Thank you. Pastor John A. Eastman.