

Grace abounds much more

What is grace? How do we in our christian-ese lingo define grace? - audience participation.

Bottom line up front - God's grace extends to man kind. Like it or not, believe it or not, deserve it or not. That is the nature and purpose of grace as we understand through God's word.

This Grace, God's undeserved favor, kindness, love, is provided without limit to us wretched sinners despite our inability to do right and irrespective of any "good" we have managed to fabricate.

One may be offended by that characterization and assert that they do not belong to my particular tribe of wretched stinky sinners and say, "I'm actually a pretty good person"

Leaving the dubious details of that matter aside, grace extends to "good people" as well! It's glorious. Grace stretches both ways - to the seemingly good and the downright evil.

God's favor towards us is not because He is deaf or blind or ignorant to our condition. What makes God's grace so incomprehensible at times is that He knows our condition fully - better than we do ourselves! AND PROVIDES HIS LOVE AND KINDNESS TO US ANYWAY!

That message is hard to receive for some people. Here's one reason why. We have an innate sense of justice. In some ways we, "good people" believe that when we mess up, we OUGHT TO BE PUNISHED. You do the crime, you do the time. We feel like we should repay the debt we have incurred. This is especially true of "good people" I believe.

Now let's take a look at a Biblical example of Grace, and Ruth, who many would consider a "good person," receiving that grace.

Ruth 2.

v.1-3

There's a man of great wealth - Boaz.

Boaz represents the spirit and character of Christ AND incidentally he has great wealth (God's riches at Christ's expense).

Boaz, like Christ, has plenty to spend.

v.2 - Ruth the Moabitess - Born outside of God's covenant. Part of a people group that had been in conflict with Israel and would continue to be! These people were enemies to Israel - outside of the covenant - heathens.

Ruth was brought into this blessed kingdom by marriage - much like you and I are when we are born again and become part of Jesus' bride, the Church.

Ruth was poor! She was on welfare. The law allowed for provision through social welfare programs.

Lev 23:22 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I [am] the LORD your God. (*teaches about God's character*).

v.3 - the divine intersection of poverty, hardship, death, losing a husband, travel, heart ache, and this man of great wealth, Boaz. But she doesn't meet him just yet - she finds herself in His field, alongside His workers, gathering to sustain herself from crops she didn't plant, relying on the kindness and provision from a Man who was unknown to her.

Look inside - sound familiar?

v.4 - Boaz interacts with His people. They know Him and He knows them, and they are in unity with one another.

v.5 - But there's something different, there's a stranger in the field, this woman, apparently by herself, gleaning as was permitted by the law - just trying to survive.

Boaz says, "Who's that?" - Boaz' eye is upon her. He sees her, takes notice of her, is concerned with her.

Christ's eye is upon us! He sees you. You've been in his field for a bit, you've maybe even chatted up a couple of his servants. You're surviving, you're making it, you don't know the master of the field - but He sees you and inquires after you. His heart leans toward you.

v.6-7 The servant's report

They knew who she was, they had spoken with her, they knew where she came from.

Ruth demonstrated a desire and asked to work - let me just work - let me feed myself. She has a pretty good reputation for working.

v.8-9 - Boaz talks to Ruth directly - no hearsay, no go between, He addresses her directly - Christ addresses us directly, no go between.

And what he says to her is an invitation to partake of His riches liberally.

First, you will listen, won't you? Of all that Boaz is going to offer to her, Ruth has a choice to listen, the freedom to flee or obey, she is not pressed into service but rather moved by GRACE and invited to partake.

This a lovely picture of our relationship with Christ.

We are invited to glean, in the Master's field - the custom of allowing the **poor** to follow the reapers in the field and collect the fallen spears of grain.

We are warned not to wander.

We are encouraged to stay close to His people, that's where we find safety.

We are bidden to drink from our Lord's vessel, from His cup. [Jhn 7:37] ... Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."

v.10 - Ruth knows who she is, where she's come from, AND she sees sees this for what it is, GRACE - completely undeserved favor that found her in her poverty.

v.11-12 - This looks a whole lot like kindness in exchange for being a good person. Boaz says, "Ruth, I know that you're a good person, with a soft heart."

BUT don't get it twisted, the next verse really brings this home.

"The Lord repay your work, and a FULL reward be given you"...there were some things in Ruth's life that ought to be accounted for. She wasn't necessarily a saint.

Wait a second, I thought Ruth was a good person!?

Ruth was a pitiable person, who made some kind decisions regarding her mother in law. We don't know if Ruth was a good person.

As a matter of fact, we know that Ruth was a Moabitess. There are some deductions we can make from that fact.

Decended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham through incest, The chief deity of Moab was kemosh; who was worshipped by human sacrifices (2Ki 3:27)...AND he was not the only god of Moab...they had other male/female deities as well.

Boaz is even gracious in his speech towards her BUT if Ruth were to receive a full reward for the fullness of her life, her former idolatrous faith alone warrants the death penalty.

What she received was love and kindness.

THIS IS GRACE as described by Paul in Eph 2

[Eph 2:1-9 - 1 And you [He made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in [His]

kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Ruth received grace from Boaz, as we receive grace from Christ not because she was awesome but because He is awesome!

Our pasts don't preclude us from Christ's grace, any more than our futures. His eye is upon us. He knows us deeply in our poverty and His hearts desire is that we should glean in His field.

v.13-14 - God's grace is demonstrated to each an every human being BEFORE we are saved! While we are not His servants, but enemies. That's what makes it grace!

Christ says, pull up to my table.

That's what pushes us over the edge into God's family. If you are here and you haven't recognized or received grace then you're not ever going to be full. The Lord Jesus Christ bids us to pull up to His table, to look Him full in the face, and hear His words - come eat, be my special guest, come and dip the bread you've received from my hand - let's have fellowship, communion, oneness.

So here we see a brand new recipient of Grace, Ruth, as part of the family. I want to point out that the other workers were kind to her, they passed the

food to her, they didn't require much of her at all, but to eat and get filled up.

It was so much that she kept some back, she had a reserve to spare, smart girl.

v.15-16 - grace on top grace, or grace for grace - [Jhn 1:16 NKJV] 16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

Ruth is allowed to gather, even from that which has already been bundled up for harvest. This was more than what the law required, and outside of tradition. It was a special kindness paid to her. Grace on top of grace.

AND, SERVANTS go ahead and purposefully let grain fall from your hand.

Everyone was in on it! God's grace is beautiful when everybody is in on it. Hasn't he commanded us to allow those outside of the covenant to partake of His GRACE!

We are supposed to be inviting them to do so! AND we are to be purposefully distributing grace in our labor, letting it fall from our hands, that Christ's grace would be gleaned by others.

v.17 - what was the result of dispensing such GRACE?

Did Ruth get fat, and spoiled? Did she get skeptical - what's the catch? Did she say, I'm good - I've got enough - I don't have to work anymore?

No, she worked! Sometimes people make a distinction between grace and works. As we see here the two are not contradictory but complimentary. Grace precedes the most meaningful and productive work. Sure, Ruth labored before hand, just to survive, to keep herself fed, but the most meaningful work she did came after she received grace.

For those who point back to Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Don't forget verse 10! For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ruth's experience is a beautiful picture of Paul's doctrine on how grace and works come together.

v.18 - At the end of it all, the grace that Ruth had received, the work she had put in was to the benefit of somebody else. Remember that doggy-bag from dinner? That special reserve that she kept back? It wasn't for her. It was for somebody else, she was able to feed somebody else from the grace she received.

Same goes for us. We have received immeasurable GRACE and FAVOR from our Lord. More than we can eat! Feed somebody else! Pass that

grace on to somebody else. Show them how great our Lord is, how kind the Master of our field truly is.

v.19-22 The end of the day recap. So how was your day?

v.23 - Endurance - let Grace be your engine, drives you. How long? The rest of the harvest. By God's grace you will endure, and by God's grace alone.