

I. Introduction

- A. The exact and precise meaning of the word GRACE ought to be crystal clear to every child of God. Grace is more than a word. It's more than just a way of saying that God is nice or kind. It's more than another way of speaking of God's love. Grace is more than a good feeling.
- B. Grace is the all-purpose, all-sufficient, every-ready, blood-bought unmerited favor and love of God.
- C. As a case study in grace, we're turning to the Book of Ruth. Ruth puts flesh on grace. This book is like fireworks; it begins slowly, but finishes with a finale that takes your breath away.
- D. Today is part 5 in our series called **Resting in the Love of God**.
- E. My message today is called:
 - 1. **Grace is Waiting For You**
- F. Previously in this book, famine happened. This is what drove Naomi's family to Moab.
- G. But famine wasn't the end of their tragedy. While in Moab, death claimed both Naomi's husband and her two sons. Of course, Naomi was devastated on multiple levels. So were her two daughters in law—tragedy all around.
- H. Some time later, Naomi hears that the famine is over back home. So she returns to her home town of Bethlehem. Much to her surprise, and against her wishes, Ruth goes with her.
- I. Ruth is her daughter-in-law, also a widow. Ruth has made an epic commitment to Naomi to stay with her and help take care of her. It's really beautiful, powerful, and self-giving.
- J. When they finally get back home, Naomi is very bitter. She blames God for everything. But Ruth stood by her side, believing for the best and ready to do whatever it would take to care for Naomi.

II. Gleaning

- A. So we'll pick it up in the next verse, Ruth 1:22, and then in chapter 2. Here is a literal translation from the original Hebrew language:
 - 1. *"So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law with her. They returned from the land of Moab, and came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Now Naomi had a relative of her husband, an outstanding man, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go my daughter.'"* (Ruth 1:22-2:2)
- B. Gleaning
 - 1. The first thing I'd like to say is that Ruth states her intention to glean. Yes she does. And yet I'm say she doesn't glean... how can I say that? Stay with me.
 - 2. The second thing I'd like to say is about gleaning. What exactly is this thing called gleaning?
 - a) **Gleaning was a form of compassion for strangers, travelers, the needy, and widows in ancient Israel. The laws of gleaning are in: Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22, and Deuteronomy 24:19-21.**
 - b) **The law required farmers to be very inefficient at harvest time.**
 - (1) **Dropped**
 - (a) They were not allowed to pick up any grain they dropped as they harvested; they were to just leave it.
 - (2) **Corners**
 - (a) Nor could they harvest the corners of their fields.
 - (3) **Second pass**
 - (a) Plus, when they passed through a row to pick it, they couldn't pass through a second time.
 - (4) **Forgotten**
 - (a) Any areas, bundles, or grain they forgot when they left the field, they couldn't go back and get it.
 - c) **When harvesting was over, the fields would still have plenty of grain left on them.**
 - d) **When the whistle blew (so to speak) and the reapers knocked off for the day, then widows, impoverished people, orphans, and resident aliens were permitted to go onto the fields and pick up the leftovers for themselves.**
 - 3. This was called gleaning. It was a legal requirement from God to the people.
 - 4. And the fact that gleaning was required was actually a very gracious and merciful gift of God. The Old Testament is full of requirements like this.
 - a) God literally embedded GRACE into the way of life of his people.
 - b) So much so that when Ruth announced her plan, she said she wanted to go out gleaning:
 - (1) *"After one in whose sight I may find favor [literally grace]."* (Ruth 2:2)
 - c) This is the second time that a vocabulary word for grace is used in this book. And the words used are the two greatest grace words in the Old Testament Hebrew language:
 - (1) **Hesed emphasizes grace as the abiding and undeserved heartfelt love of God.** Hesed is used in Ruth 1:8 and will be used two more times (2:20; 3:10).
 - (2) **Hen emphasizes grace as the kindness that normally flows from a superior rank to an inferior rank.**
 - (a) "An action from a superior to an inferior who has no real claim for gracious treatment" [Theo' Wordbook OT].
 - (b) Hen is blessing that flows from someone in a position of power to someone in a position of powerlessness, a favor.
 - (c) And it is a favor gladly done, with no strings attached.
 - (3) That is what Ruth is after.
 - (4) Ruth says that it is her goal to pursue grace. And notice that she doesn't know who the source of that grace will be.
 - (a) She says "after someone in whose eyes I may find favor."
 - (5) All she knows is that grace is out there, waiting for her to go get it.

- (6) That's called faith. Ruth just has to get by the spout where the grace comes out.
5. So this is gleaning, and Ruth said, I'm going out gleaning.
6. So far so good. Now, prepare to be surprised because I have yet to read a book or hear a sermon where somebody actually understands that in the next paragraph, Ruth doesn't glean.

III. In the Field of Boaz

- A. *"So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers! And... it just happened to happened she came to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech."* (Ruth 2:3)
 1. This wasn't her plan. This wasn't her intention. It just happened that way. It was random.
 2. Which means that sometimes you have to wonder if there isn't somebody who loves you watching over you.
 3. I'm just telling you you're going to see some of the most awesome grace in your life only through the rearview mirror.
- B. *"Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, 'May the Lord be with you.' And they said to him, 'May the Lord bless you.' Then Boaz said to his foreman who was in charge of the reapers, 'That young woman... who is she?'"* (Ruth 2:4,5)
 1. Why did Boaz notice Ruth? There must have been something that made her stand out.
 2. The foreman says why:
- C. *"And the foreman whom he set over the reapers said, 'She is the Moabite woman who came from the fields of Moab with Naomi. And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has waited from morning until now... and she's only been in town a little while!'"* (Ruth 2:6,7)
 1. So Boaz shows up on his field. It's lunchtime, the middle of the day. The reapers—these are the harvesters who work for Boaz—are about to go on lunch break.
 2. Gleaning doesn't happen till sundown. So it's way, way too early for gleaning. She's the only one there.
 3. Plus there's something else very weird here.
 4. Why's she waiting around? If Ruth just wanted to glean, she wouldn't have to ask. She doesn't need to get permission; she already has it. No asking needed.
 5. But she goes to the foreman and asks a question. It's right there. He says what she asked, and I'm telling you it isn't gleaning.
 6. It's right there on the screen.
 7. The foreman doesn't know what to say. So he basically says, "I'm sorry ma'am, I can't give you permission for that. You're going to have to wait for the boss."
 8. So Ruth waits.
 9. Do you see it yet? Ready for this? Here it is: **And she said, "Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves."**
 10. Ruth makes two special requests that go way beyond gleaning.
 - a) **She wants to glean on the heels of the reapers.**
 - (1) That's what she means by "after the reapers" or "behind the harvesters."
 - (2) This wasn't how gleaning was done.
 - (3) The reapers were employed by the farmer. The gleaners were not.
 - (4) The gleaners had to wait for the reapers to go home for the day, and only then could the gleaners move into the fields.
 - (5) But Ruth wants something more. She wants to be out there in the fields right with the reapers, on their heels, picking up grain the second it drops.
 - (6) This would give her first shot at the good stuff.
 - (7) Talk about bold! Talk about audacious! She can't do that; not without permission. It's not gleaning; it's something else.
 - (8) But that's only part of it.
 - b) **She wants to glean among the sheaves (bundled grain).**
 - (1) When grain was harvested, it was put into big sheaves and bundles.
 - (2) The sheaves were brought to a winnowing floor, by the storage area, and stacked to wait for the next step in the process.
 - (3) Naturally, there would be a major concentration of fallen grain around where the sheaves were stored.
 - (4) That area was off limits to the gleaners.
 - (5) Ruth has the nerve to ask to glean not only on the heels of the reapers, but also among the sheaves.
 - (6) She can't do that either. It's not gleaning; it's something else.
 - (7) All she wants is to be by the spout where the grace comes out. And in this case, that is after the reapers and among the sheaves.
 - (8) And so determined was Ruth to get her special requests answered that she stood around waiting all day long for the boss to return.
 - c) There's even more evidence that this is more than gleaning, because when we get to how Boaz responds, we're going to see that he doesn't give permission for this; not at first. It's going to take some very shrewd and respectful conversation before Boaz also gets with the grace-program. And when he doesn't, because she does, the results are so overwhelming that Naomi is blown away by a record level of grain ever collected by one person on a day of gleaning.
 - d) But I'm getting ahead of myself.

IV. In the Arena of Your Life

- A. Here, Ruth joins an elite squad in Scripture—women and men who didn't just tip-toe toward grace and love; they chased it down with both hands wide open.

1. **Elite Champions of Grace: They weren't content with a sprinkle of grace; they wanted the flood.**
2. Like Rahab, who looked at those spies and said, "Show me grace—pour out that steadfast love on me" (Joshua 2:12).
3. Like Jacob, wrestling in the dark, declaring, "I won't let go till You bless me" (Genesis 32:26).
- B. The Bible calls it "grace upon grace" (John 1:16)—piled high, overflowing, more than we can carry.
- C. When we step into heaven, I don't think God's going to shake His head and say, "Whoa, you really pushed Me too far with your faith. Ouch, that hurt."
 1. No way. I think we'll see a stack of beautifully wrapped gifts—blessings that could've been ours right here on earth if we'd only dared to ask.
 2. You're going to find that all life long, God was...
 - a) Ready to give more than you asked.
 - b) Ready to love more than you consented for.
 - c) Ready to bless more than you trusted for.
 - d) Ready to win more than you fought for.
 - e) Ready to provide more than you believed for.
 - f) Ready to Father more than you hoped for.
- D. Christian, ask big. Be bold. Pray big prayers worthy of a great God. Don't water them down with "ifs" or "maybes." Don't edit them down because you're afraid of failure.
- E. Dive into the deep end of His grace—because with God, there's no limit to push, only measureless oceans of goodness to discover. He's "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20), so why not swing for the fences?
- F. And you do have to swing the bat.
 1. **It's a giant mistake if you think that grace makes you passive.**
 - a) Or that grace makes you sit back doing nothing, waiting for all the good stuff to come to you.
 - b) Ruth had to go get it, and so do you.
 2. **Grace isn't a delivery service... it's the wind in your sails.**
 - a) It isn't the muscles on your body; it's the health and time and ability to work out.
 - b) It isn't a marriage partner knocking on your door; it's the great people around you and the faith to get to places where you can get to know each other.
 - c) Noah received grace, and he built the ark.
 - d) Abraham received grace, and he journeyed to the promised land.
 - e) Paul received grace, and he said, "I worked harder than anybody else" (1 Corinthians 15:10).
 - f) Ruth received grace, and she set her sails to catch the gale-force wind of the Holy Spirit and she went on the ride of her life.
- G. God Himself urges us to explore the depths of grace, to come and get it and to come running:
 1. *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16).
 2. For Ruth, the throne of grace wasn't an altar or a temple. It was a farmer's field loaded with grain.
 3. **Where's your throne of grace?** A career? Training? Schooling? A marriage? A family? Sobriety?
 - a) **Take massive action in that direction with every kind of faith that your Father is ready to deliver more abundance and victory and triumph and love than you could ever imagine in your wildest dreams.**
 4. Don't sit back and wait while nothing happens... run to where the grace is at, and don't be shy about it.
- H. Do you know what God says in Isaiah 30:18? God says he's ready waiting to be gracious to you. You don't have to twist His arm.
 1. He's already got his arm outstretched for blessing, grace, love, kindness, protection, comfort, provision, victory, triumph, abundance, mercy, and joy.
 2. He's already got his arm outstretched to meet your every need (Philippians 4:19).
 3. I hope that one by one when we all get to heaven, that of all people, the people of this church find that the mighty angels break out in a standing ovation—not because you played it safe, but because you trusted your Father with a big, nervy, brash, audacious faith.
- I. No. Ruth didn't glean. She Super-gleaned, and she went down in cosmic history as the poster-child for what it means to consent to be loved by God *to the max*.
 1. Actually, wait till I explain next time how much food she's going to bring home. You have no idea.
- J. I am trying to tell you...
 1. There is no limit on what you can ask of your Father in heaven.
- K. Will you get everything you ask for?
- L. Wait a minute... don't answer that... answer it once you're in heaven.
- V. The Prodigal Son
 - A. Some of you know the famous parable Jesus told about the Prodigal Son. A father had 2 sons.
 - B. The younger son took his share of the inheritance, ran away from home, and blew through every penny in sex, drugs, rock and roll, till he had nothing. Whatever love he once had, he threw it all away. In desperation, he dragged his sorry soul back home, just hoping to get a meal and a bed way out back in daddy's shed.
 - C. His father saw him coming... ran to him, embraced him, covered him with kisses, and threw a party, complete with prime beef on the spit. My son's come home! Let's party!
 - D. Meanwhile there's the older brother. He hears about the party and he's ticked off. His dad comes out and literally begs him to go to the party.

- E. The older brother refuses. He complains. It's not fair. The prodigal son isn't worthy. He's not worth it. The dad is out of line for so blessing his son.
- F. There are two big lessons that exactly parallel what grace is telling us.
 - 1. First... when the son goes away, Jesus says,
 - a) *"He wasted his substance with prodigal living,"* (Luke 15:14)
 - b) Prodigal means over the top and out of bounds. It is related to the word "prodigious." It means massive, great, and huge.
 - c) One of the most mind-bending, soul-healing lessons you will ever learn is that...
 - (1) **If prodigal means over the top, without boundaries, and excessive, then the most prodigal person in the universe is your God.**
 - (2) To us, he is extravagantly wasteful.
 - (a) It is wastefully extravagant to give anything to the prodigal son when he goes away.
 - (b) It is wastefully extravagant to throw a party for him when he comes home.
 - (c) It is wastefully extravagant to spend one minute begging the older brother to come to the party.
 - (d) It is wastefully extravagant to invest time, resources, and energy on a person who barely responds... and in case you didn't get it on a lot of days, I'm talking about you.
 - d) But thank God... it wasn't the prodigal son only who wasted his substance with out of bound living. It was the Prodigal Father who does the same thing every single day with hard cases like you... And this leads to the second parallel with grace.
 - 2. When the father tries to argue the older brother to come into the party, the father says:
 - a) *"And he said to him, 'My child, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.'"* (Luke 15:31)
 - b) I wish you had the eyes to look up into heaven right now. Eyes that could see past the ceiling, see through the skies, see through the reaches of cosmic space, and see right into the throne of heaven where the angels fly and the glory of God shines. I wish you had ears to hear through the commotion and din of life on earth... ears tuned into heaven where your truest Father speaks to you.
 - c) Because if you could look at him to see him today, and if you could listen to him to hear him today, you would find that he is saying the same thing to you he's been saying to you every day of your life with Jesus:
 - (1) *"My child, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours."*
 - d) And you stand there doubting him. Or neglecting him. Or forgetting him. Or running away from him. Or literally arguing with him.
 - e) What is wrong with your head?
 - f) What is wrong is that you are a stranger to grace... and you are a stranger to grace because you will not consent to be loved by God.
 - g) And look at who he is! Look at who is trying to love you. Look, look, look at this one who literally says, "all that I have is yours..."
 - h) Look at what he has. Look at it.
 - (1) He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. The wealth in every mine. He owns the rivers and the rocks and rills. The sun and stars that shine.
 - (2) He owns the galaxies. The cosmos. The heavens and the heavenly realm.
 - (3) He owns it all... only to say, all that I have is yours.
 - (4) Staggering. Overwhelming. Prodigal.
 - 3. And here comes the heartbroken, impoverished, out of town, new believer of a widow who finds out there's this thing called grace from the God called Father... and in her deepest psychology, she concluded:
 - a) **"Grace is waiting for me... I'm going after it... no limits..."**

VI. Grace is Waiting

- A. Every core piece of your new identity in Christ will give you permission and authority to boldly pursue grace.
 - 1. You label yourself NOT WORTHY, but God labels you QUALIFIED... and yes you can go after a great life through grace.
 - 2. You label yourself a SINNER, but Christ labels you a SAINT, so yes you can enjoy the blessings of heaven.
 - 3. You label yourself ADDICT, but Christ labels you FREE, so yes you can get back to sobriety, sanity, and love.
 - 4. You label yourself WORTHLESS, but Christ labels you PRECIOUS (Isaiah 43:4) so yes you can be somebody in this world and rise with dignity and grace.
 - 5. You label yourself VICTIM, but Christ labels you VICTOR, so yes you can overcome your chaotic past with a destiny to dazzle the angels.
 - 6. You label yourself LOSER, but Christ labels you MORE THAN A CONQUEROR, so yes you can reach the top of your craft.
 - 7. You label yourself a FATHERLESS child, and God labels himself FATHER to the fatherless and makes you his child (Ps 68:5, In 1:12).
 - 8. You are worthy.
 - 9. You are blessed.
 - 10. You are richly blessed, highly favored, and deeply loved.
- B. Faith is consenting to be loved by God, and mountains of love are already waiting for you.
- C. Do you think this is for you?
- D. Will you believe?
- E. Will you go after it? Let's get going!