

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Judges And Ruth: Personal Blessing Amid Group Apostasy

Part IV: The Book Of Ruth - An Example Of God's Individual Blessing Amid Group Apostasy

C. Private Moral Conduct With Blessing In An Immoral Era

(Ruth 3:1-18)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We live in an era where many people have little insight on personal private moral conduct with blessing:

(1) Last Tuesday I read on the web site uconncampuscrime.wordpress.com/theproblem that "Up to 25% of women will become survivors of an attempted or completed sexual assault or rape during college years." The secular world is obviously in great need of practical divine guidance relative to personal private moral conduct with blessing.

(2) The religious realm often offers little help there, too: Pope Francis recently released a "sweeping document on family life," insisting "that church doctrine cannot be the final word in answering tricky moral questions" although he "strongly upheld the church's opposition to same-sex marriage." (Associated Press, "Pope emphasizes flexibility over rules for modern families," Register-Citizen, April 9, 2016, p. A9) Thus, millions of people in Christendom are left with no final authoritative word on a host of moral issues, not to mention gaining God's blessing in that realm!

Need: *So we ask, "What practical guidance does God offer on private moral conduct with blessing in our era?!"*

- I. Though Ruth and Naomi enjoyed Boaz's material provision and protection in their dangerously immoral world during his barley and wheat harvests, the harvests soon ended with these women still needing aid:**
 - A. As widows in a male-dominated culture, Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:1-5) had no legal means of support aside from gleaning, so they were reliant for livelihood and safety on the charity of mainly the men around them.
 - B. However, the Judges 19 concubine atrocity occurred in that area about that time, so these widows were at risk.
 - C. The Mosaic Law provided for a widow like Ruth to glean after Boaz's harvesters for grain, but his barley and wheat harvests soon ended (Ruth 2:23), and Ruth and Naomi still had livelihood and protection needs!
- II. Thus, Naomi used the weeks of grain harvests to plan how to apply the kinsman-redeemer provision in the Law to meet with so as to propose marriage to Boaz for the welfare of Ruth and herself, Ruth 3:1-5:**
 - A. We know from Ruth 2:20 that Naomi had thought all during the weeks of Ruth's gleaning work at Boaz's barley and wheat fields about the Mosaic Law's provision of the kinsman-redeemer, Ruth 2:23.
 - B. That law obligated the brother of a married man who had died childless to marry his widow and raise up a descendant through her to carry on the inheritance and name of the deceased brother, Deuteronomy 25:5-6.
 - C. If there were no surviving brothers as in Ruth's case (Ruth 1:1-5), Jewish law directed the next of kin to marry the deceased's widow, and in this case, Boaz was such a kinsman, Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Ruth 3:9.
 - D. Ruth was younger than Naomi, so the latter thought it best if Ruth would be the one to marry Boaz, 3:1-2a.
 - E. The law also "required the initiative of the widow seeking the marriage (Deut. 25:5, 7-10)," Ibid.
 - F. Thus, Naomi planned that Ruth *privately* propose marriage to Boaz to protect his reputation were he either to be unable to wed or did not want to wed her, 3:1-4: Ruth was to wait until he reclined near his threshed grain pile to protect it at the threshing floor where often whole families camped out at the time (Z. P. E. B., v. V, p. 739), and covered himself and went to sleep. Then, she was to go to Boaz quietly and uncover his feet to cause him in time to waken, then recline at his feet so that when he awoke, she might ask him to cover her with his garment edge as her kinsman-redeemer, what culturally symbolized marriage, B. K. C., O. T., p. 425.
- III. The conduct of Ruth and Boaz at this meeting exemplified sterling private moral conduct with blessing:**
 - A. Ruth exemplified genuine personal moral uprightness with blessing in how she privately related to Boaz, 3:1-9:
 1. She heeded her "parent" Naomi's instruction in accord with her culture and the Mosaic Law, Ruth 3:1-6:
 - a. The parents arranged for marriages in that era (cf. Judges 14:1-10; B. K. C., O. T., p. 424), so Naomi as Ruth's mother-in-law planned that Ruth privately approach Boaz to propose marriage to him, Ruth 3:1-4.
 - b. Ruth replied that all that Naomi had said she would do, and indeed, that is what she did, Ruth 3:5, 6.
 2. Ruth made herself personally attractive to Boaz, but with restraint in modest attire, Ruth 3:3a,b:
 - a. She washed and anointed herself with perfume to make herself attractive to Boaz, Ruth 3:3a; Ibid.
 - b. The NIV term "best clothes" is better "a large outer garment," needed to conceal Ruth's identity as she mingled on the outskirts of the harvest party group for her protection until Boaz went to sleep (Ibid.) and for her warmth in sleeping out in the night air once she reclined at his feet; Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Ruth 3:2-3.
 - c. Thus, Ruth made herself attractive, but with restraint, using modest attire for the occasion for protection.

3. In making her petition to Boaz, Ruth acknowledged God's role in providing him to be her future husband:
 - a. When Ruth asked Boaz to spread the corner of his garment over her, her word for "extremity of garment" in Ruth 3:9 is **ALSO** the word for "wing," *kanap*, that Boaz himself used when he first told Ruth in Ruth 2:12 that God's wings were spreading over her to protect and to provide for her now that she was following the Lord! (Ibid., p. 425; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 489) Ruth was thus asking Boaz as God's agent to spread his "wing" of help over her by marrying her in line with **God's** protection!
 - b. Thus, Ruth's positioning to be wed to Boaz was God's fulfillment of His Abrahamic Covenant for her to be blessed as a Gentile for becoming a blessing to her Hebrew mother-in-law, Naomi, cf. Genesis 12:1-3!
 - c. Also, here in Ruth 3:9 when she made her marriage proposal, Ruth ceased calling herself Boaz's menial female slave, *shiphah*, like she had in Ruth 2:13, to being his high-classed slave, *'amah*, a term other women in the Old Testament used in regard to being or becoming wives, Ibid., p. 51, 1046; H. A. W., T. W. O. T., 1980, v. I, p. 49-50. Ruth clearly expected God to open the door for her to marry Boaz!
- B. Boaz exemplified genuine personal moral uprightness with blessing in how he privately related to Ruth, 3:10-18:
 1. Aware of Ruth's courage as a foreigner to make such a petition, and knowing she might fear that he might not want to wed her, hurting her and leaving her to face hardship, Boaz profusely reassured Ruth, 3:10-13:
 - a. He praised Ruth for her kindness in seeking to marry him, an older and not a younger man, v. 10; Ibid.
 - b. Boaz assured her that he was willing to perform her request to dispel fear that he would reject her, 3:11a.
 - c. He also complimented Ruth for her high reputation before the whole town, assuring her that he would thus not hesitate to marry her in front of the entire Bethlehem community, Ruth 3:11b.
 - d. However, Boaz then told Ruth that there was another kinsman nearer to her than he was, but that he would speak to the other man about her, and if he refused to wed her, Boaz assured Ruth by a divine oath that he would surely marry her, 3:12-13. Either way, Ruth was to be sure that she would soon be married!
 2. Boaz also provided Ruth physical protection, Ruth 3:13a, 13d: he told her to continue to lie at his feet through the night for her safety versus sending her back to the town in the dark at great risk to her welfare.
 3. He also protected her reputation, Ruth 3:14: Boaz told Ruth not to let anyone know she had visited him by night at the threshing floor lest it lead to false gossip about her, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 425.
 4. Boaz also assured Ruth and Naomi that he would care for Naomi were he to wed Ruth, and that by sending 60 pounds of threshed barley grain home with Ruth specifically to give to Naomi, Ruth 3:15, 17-18; Ibid.
 5. Finally, and significantly in their immoral era, Boaz never physically touched Ruth until he wed her: all through their private night meeting at the threshing floor, he had her lie at his feet where he could guard but not touch her, and even when he gave her grain in the morning, Boaz had Ruth hold out her garment so he could fill it and put it on her head to take it to Naomi, and all without touching her, Ruth 3:13, 15 ESV.

Lesson: *Even in their private, all-night encounter at the threshing floor where Ruth proposed marriage to Boaz, both of them expressed their mutual devotion to the Lord, their modesty, their self-restraint, their protection and their encouragement of one another in great contrast to the apostate, immoral world around them.*

Application: *(1) May we believe in Christ for eternal life, John 3:16. (2) To function in private moral uprightness even in our immoral era, may we rely on God's power (Galatians 5:16) to follow the examples of Ruth and Boaz.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

The all-night rendezvous between Ruth and Boaz in the era of the judges stands in stunning contrast to the all-night encounter of the Levite's concubine with the men of Gibeah in Judges 19: (1) the Levite thrust his concubine out to be abused by vile men all night where Boaz kept Ruth close enough to himself to protect her all night but without touching her; (2) the vile men of Gibeah exhibited no moral restraint in their actions toward the concubine where Boaz and Ruth exhibited sterling morals; (3) the concubine ended up dead where Boaz provided for Ruth to rest through the night and sent her home at morn with 60 pounds of barley; (4) there was no mutual respect in the Judges 19 encounter where Boaz and Ruth exhibited great respect for each other; (5) the men of Gibeah selfishly abused the concubine where Boaz sacrificially promised great provision and rest for Ruth; (6) the concubine expressed great distrust of the vile men of Gibeah while Ruth and Naomi exhibited great trust in Boaz; (7) there was no thought of accountability to nor the blessing of God in the Judges 19 atrocity while both Boaz and Ruth alluded to the Lord.

Ruth and Boaz offer us hope and a pattern in how to relate to others of the opposite gender in our immoral era! **May we trust in Christ for salvation. Then, relying on the Holy Spirit for behavior control, may we relate to others of the opposite gender in sterling private moral conduct with blessing like Ruth and Boaz did.**