

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON THIRTEEN: RUTH 1:8-9a

"And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband...."

As Naomi urged Ruth and Orpah to turn back she offered up a blessing for them. She asked that God would show the same kindness to them that they had shown to herself and her sons. Specifically, she asked that His kindness take the form of providing husbands for Ruth and Orpah. Marriage was the only security available to women at that time.

The Hebrew word "hesed" is translated as "kindly" in verse 8. Hesed indicates loving-kindness, mercy, favor, good deeds. It involves grace, and can be extended to individuals who don't deserve it as well as those that do.

Ruth and Orpah were worthy of the favor Naomi requested of God. They had treated their husbands kindly while they lived. They were unselfish and loyal to their mother-in-law when they were widowed. They deserved to have the protection afforded them by marrying a second time. We know that God honored Naomi's request where Ruth was concerned. The Bible is silent on Orpah's fate, but I like to think she found another husband among her own people and had a good life. If so, both women were rewarded for their kindness.

But hesed - kindness, favor, grace - can be extended to individuals who have not earned it, too. In fact, that is what the grace of God is: unmerited favor. Goodness extended to people who did nothing to merit such favor. Jesus' death, resurrection, and the free offer of forgiveness to the sinner is the ultimate demonstration of grace. None of us has earned or deserves the many blessings God has freely bestowed on us. He saved us by grace. And, He will give us our daily dose of grace so that we can meet whatever challenge arises.

The grace of God is present even in the midst of tragedy and loss. It is manifested in limitless ways, customized to fit each individual personally. It may come in the form of new friendships, financial assistance, opportunities to help others, insight into Scripture which brings comfort. Whatever the need, God's grace meets it. How has God demonstrated His grace to you in your time of need?

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11