

Barging into the Presence of God
FALSEHOODS TAUGHT IN CHURCHES
Pictures from the Book of Ruth

Hello friends! Welcome to RadicalGrace.com. Thank you for joining us for this new episode, which is entitled "Does God meet our needs? Part 2"

This is the second part of our study of the book of Ruth, in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic which has spread throughout most of the world.

Many people are experiencing shortages of essential items, even food, for the first time in their lives!

At times such as these, we now see people who are normally not predisposed to any type of spirituality begin to pray to God for help.

So the obvious question is: Can we depend on God to provide our needs,
even during a time of crisis ?

As we saw last time, the answer is "Yes" and "No".

God does provide for all of the needs of the human race, in a general sense. This is an example of God's **common grace**. God provides enough food en masse for humanity.

And yet He does not necessarily guarantee that the needs of every human being will be fulfilled.

However, God's **special grace** promises to meet the specific needs of every person for everyone who has trusted in Jesus as his savior. For everyone who, at a specific moment in his life, has recognized that he is a sinner and has understood that Jesus' death on the cross paid the full penalty for all of his sins, God promises to meet all of his physical, tangible needs.

If you have made that one time decision to trust in Jesus as your savior, you can be absolutely certain that God will provide your needs, regardless of the shortages!

Now - It would be of great benefit to us if we grasp the reason that God provides for those of us who are believers. And the reason goes well beyond the obvious.

We begin by knowing that, in the story of Ruth, Boaz is a picture of Jesus and Ruth is a picture of the believer in Jesus.

If we understand this relationship we will understand the surprising specific reason why God provides our needs.

We have to see and understand a threefold progression in Ruth's understanding of the nature of the relationship between Ruth and Boaz.

In phase 1, Ruth begins by trying to gain Boaz's favor.

In phase 2, Ruth discovers, to her surprise, that she has indeed gained his favor.

In phase 3, Ruth discovers the astonishing fact that Boaz was trying to gain her favor!

As we remember that Boaz and Ruth represent Jesus and us, we come to a startling conclusion: Jesus is seeking OUR favor!

That is why He supplies our needs – so that we will have favor with Him!

So, why would God seek our favor?

Again, to get the answer, we go back the story in the book of Ruth and we remember that Boaz is a picture of Jesus and Ruth is a picture of you and me – believers in Jesus Christ. With that in mind, we learn a very important principle:

Boaz was seeking the favor of Ruth for her sake, for her benefit.
So we know that God seeks our favor for our welfare, for our benefit.

So the next question is what benefit does God want for us to have?

Jesus gives the answer in the Gospel of John:

John 10:10 {Jesus said} "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

God's desire is that we have an "abundant life". Now what is an abundant life? Is it prosperity, financial wealth? The answer is "not necessarily".

As we have seen, God does indeed promise to meet our needs:

Philippians 4:19 "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

As we have seen God will provide all of the needs for those who have trusted in Jesus. However, this is not what the Bible means as an "abundant life".

An abundant life is a life of joy, not necessarily happiness, but a deep seated contentment, even a sense of joy as we realize that God is in control of not only the world situation, but that He is totally in control of our lives.

In an ideal sense, an abundant life is life in which we are emotionally stable and calm. In an abundant life we do what is right, we make correct decisions, and our efforts are rewarded.

"More abundantly" means to have a superabundance of a thing, a plentiful supply which is more than sufficient. "Abundant life" refers to life in its abounding fullness of joy and strength for mind, body, and soul.

The obvious problem with this picture is, that if we are to be at all honest, it does not at all correspond to our actual lives.

So why do we not experience the life that God desires for us? The answer is that our sins and our inadequacies prevent us from experiencing that abundant life. And, to compound the problem, we have no ability whatsoever to overcome our sins or to compensate for our inadequacies.

How many times do we hear that, in order to experience the abundant life, Christians need "to live a life of obedience", we need "to turn from our sins and follow Jesus in obedience". All of this sounds right, it sounds "holy", but the problem is that we have no power to do these things. And, to make the problem worse, the more we try, the more we will fail, and our discouragement will isolate us even further from the abundant life that both we and God desire!

So, how do we experience this abundant life?

Once again, we find an analogy in the book of Ruth. We see that Boaz was seeking Ruth's favor because he wanted her to stay in his field. And the reason that he wanted her to stay in his field, is that staying with him was her only way to experience the abundant life!

The picture now is obvious: the only way for us to experience the abundant life is to stay in God's field, to have fellowship with Him.

The abundant life is not a life in which we **give** more things to God, rather, it is a life in which we **give up** trying to do things for Him.

The abundant life is a life in which we stop trying to obey God and begin to rely upon Him. In the same way that we rely upon Him for our needs, we also rely on Him for our "obedience", that is, doing what is right in our lives!

Yes, we say “I have no ability to make correct decisions. I have no ability to control my sins. I have no ability to live a life of obedience -- a righteous life.” “So I am relying on You to work those things out in my life”

That is a life of fellowship, where every day we acknowledge our inabilities but rely on Him for all of our spiritual, as well as our physical and emotional, needs

It is very important that we understand that fellowship with God, interacting with Him, is the only possible way for us to experience the abundant life.

And now we are beginning to understand why God seeks our favor! He wants us to stay in fellowship with Him – and He wants us to enjoy His company!

He knows, however, that we are reluctant to seek His company, because we fear that He will judge us. We fear that His degree of acceptance of us is contingent upon our performance. We think that, in order to have fellowship with Him we have to keep current on confessing our sins.

We believe these falsehoods because this teaching is what we hear in mainstream and even in evangelical churches.

All of these incorrect views of our relationship prevent us from seeking His fellowship, His presence. And so, to overcome our reticence at going to Him, God pursues us!

We balk at fellowshiping with Him, so God seeks our favor!

As Boaz pursued Ruth, God pursues us. Many Bible passages are intended to exhort us to come to Him without fear.

A classic example is the verse **Hebrews 4: 16**

“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

That is the New American Standard Bible version. The King James Version captures the meaning of the expression translated as “with confidence” in the original autograph: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace”

The word which is used in the original language is the Greek word “parresias” which is almost a negative word! It refers to someone barging into someone’s presence as if he owned the place.

The correct reading of the entire **Hebrews 4:16** verse is:

“Therefore we come boldly to the throne of grace,
so that we will receive mercy
and find grace for timey help.”

And that is exactly what God is trying do with us. He pursues us, and invites us to come into His presence, to His throne in heaven, just as if we own the place – which, in fact, we do!

Paul makes this point in **Ephesians 1: 3**

“Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing
in the heavenly places in Christ”

We can indeed barge in to the presence of God - where we receive nothing but mercy (that is, we do not get what we deserve) and grace (that is, we do get what we do not deserve) – because heaven is our real home. We belong there. We have the right to be there.

We cannot miss the important fact that God is emphasizing the fact that, when we go into His presence, we receive nothing but mercy and grace. That means we do not receive any judgment of any kind, and therefore certainly no condemnation or chastisement.

That is how God draws us to Him, just as Boaz was drawing Ruth into his presence.

That is the message God is presenting us through the pictures in the book of Ruth.

God will indeed meet our needs.

He meets our needs because He loves us, and so that He will have our favor!

He wants us to have His favor for our benefit – so that we will have fellowship with Him.

He wants us to have fellowship with Him so that we may live an abundant life

An abundant life is a life where we are free from any obligations toward God,
because all of the obligations were paid for at the cross.

An abundant life is a life in which we defer all obligations and debts to Him,
for Him to deal with.

Even in times of crisis, God is faithfully drawing us to Himself,
the provider of all of our needs.

Of course, the biggest need people have is to be saved, to be saved from this fallen world, and from our own fallen nature. There is nothing we can do to overcome our sinful nature. But God provided a remedy no one would have ever conceived.

God's plan was to send God the Son, Jesus, as a human being into this fallen world and to take our sinful identity upon Himself. He took all of our identity, including the sum total of all of our sins, upon Himself.

The apostle Peter succinctly describes what happened with our sin:

1 Peter 2: 24 a and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross,

So when Jesus hung on the cross, our sins were actually contained within His body.

The rest of the verse explains one of the marvelous benefits as to why Jesus had to bear our sins in his body.

1 Peter 2:24 b so that we would die to sin and live to righteousness;
for by His wounds you were healed.

Therefore, when Jesus died upon the cross, He paid the full penalty for, and paid all of the obligation for, all of our sins. At the moment Jesus died, our sins were not merely forgiven. They were not merely pardoned. They were not merely cancelled.

All of these things would have been wonderful, but the truth is even better:

Jesus' death on the cross actually erased every one of the sins of everyone who would trust in Him as personal savior.

I John 1: 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous
to **erase** our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Please note: Salvation is not automatic. A person must confess that he is a sinner, and make a decision with his will to trust in Jesus as Savior.

Just tell Jesus you want Him to be YOUR savior!

That one time decision is irrevocable. Your eternity in heaven is guaranteed, and God promises to meet all of your needs from now on and throughout eternity!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You that You have promised to provide all of the needs of those who have done nothing more than making a one-time decision to trust in Jesus as our personal Savior.

You have also promised that we have access to Your presence at any time.

We do not have to confess or clean up, we can just start talking to you and we can have confidence that You are listening and that You are ready to offer us nothing but mercy and grace.

In Jesus' name

Amen

Johnny M Tatum

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The Gleaners
Gregory Frank Harris, 1953