

Real Love Perseveres In Hope

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. How are you doing? Cool, cool. Hey, before we jump into the sermon, I need to do something because I feel like God's dropped into my heart to do it. And if I do it, I think I'll be disobeying him.
- But I want to give honor to whom honor is due. And Alan, would you come up here? Yeah. Yeah, I just, yeah.
- For whatever reason, yeah, man, God's just... I've been, like, just overwhelmed this morning with just thankfulness for you. And Alan's one of the pastors, and we serve together.
- And, man, he is, yeah, man, just an amazing guy on so many fronts. He's a good friend for one. But even today, we just had a meeting, and I so needed to hear his voice.
- I so needed to hear his faith, his perspective, his thoughts, his wisdom into something. And, like, if I had to do this alone, it would be really, really hard. And I don't think I would have made it three and a half years.
- [0 : 5 9] But I just wanted to honor you. And I feel like the Father just wants to honor you as well. I mean, he, I think, just what I was feeling is just, man, he so appreciates the way you love his bride, his people, the way you want to see people set free from bondage to things like addiction and all kinds of addiction.
- And you're just going after it, man, and you're doing it. And he works a full-time job, and then he gives an extra amount of time to the church as well. I mean, you put in hard work and a lot of hard hours, and we wouldn't be the church today without you and your sacrifice and your love.
- And so I just want to let you know how much I appreciate that, how much I think this church actually appreciates that, but how much the Father just, like, wants to honor you in this moment. Okay? All right. Love you, man.
- Thanks, Fred. All right. So good morning, everybody, again.
- My name is Jesse, one of the pastors here. Like I said before, if you're listening to this online, hello. And if you're new with us, glad you're with us.
- [2 : 0 8] We are continuing in our Ruth series. If you've got a Bible with you or on your phone, go ahead and turn to Ruth chapter 2. We're going to be starting off in verse 17 today. And if you're joining us for the first time, I just want to, like, give you some background here.
- Ruth is this story that gives us this picture of what real love is. And it shows us what real, it's this God-like love.
- The word that we see throughout this book in several occasions for this love, this loving kindness, is this Hebrew word called hesed. And it can be translated into, it's just a word with layers.
- It just doesn't mean love. It means love, loving kindness, faithfulness, mercy. If you translated it into the Greek, it would include grace.

It's all these things. It's sacrificial. And it not only shows us what real love looks like and encourages how to love one another and how to live out this hesed-like love in life, it also shows us how God loves us.

[3 : 14] And that's a beautiful thing to behold and to reckon with. This story is beautiful. This story is helpful because it takes real love and it puts skin on it.

It grounds it in the drama of life. And this isn't a fairy tale story. This is a real account of real people that faced real suffering. And that's the thing. Real love isn't just in the happily ever afters.

It's actually often most vividly seen in the tension of our trial as we wait for resolution. But it's in that tension. It's in that waiting where real love calls us to sit and calls us to endure.

And the title of today's message is Real Love Perseveres in Hope. That's what we're going to look at today. And we are in part of the story where Ruth has gone to glean in the fields of a godly and generous man named Boaz.

Now remember, she's a widow and she's a foreigner. She's like the lowest of the low. She's at the bottom of the social strata. She has zero connections. She not only has to work hard for herself, but also for her mother-in-law, Naomi, who can't support herself.

[4 : 22] Naomi can't go out and pull her weight and go out into the fields and glean. And Ruth's love and service and what we've seen is that her support for Naomi and all that she's doing has been uneven.

She is giving more than she is getting. But that's what real love does. And so without further ado, let's start in verse 17. Of chapter 2. So she, Ruth, gleaned in the field until evening.

Then she beat out what she had gleaned and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied.

And her mother-in-law said to her, where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you. What Naomi is seeing, if you remember from a couple of Sundays ago when Brian Hart was here giving the message, like, Boaz was abundantly generous and kind toward Naomi.

Like, he gave her a little bit more grain. Allowed her to glean a little bit more than everyone else. So Ruth has come home loaded. Unusually loaded with grain.

[5 : 33] And so Naomi is seeing this. She's like, whoa, whoa, whoa. Like, this blew away my expectations. How did you pull this off? Blessed be the man who took notice of you. So she told her mother-in-law, Ruth did, whom she had worked for and said, the man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz.

And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, may he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. Naomi also said to her, the man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.

And Ruth the Moabite said, besides, he said to me, you shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest. And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, it is good.

It is good, my daughter, that you go out with this young man, with this young man, lest in another field you be assaulted. Kind of gives you insight into the danger Ruth was facing in that day.

There was real danger of her being assaulted, possibly raped, even worse. So she kept close to the young man of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvest.

[6 : 38] And she lived with her mother-in-law. This is God's word. So this is what persevering in love looks like. This is a really, really good picture. Ruth gleans, which is like gathering leftover grain.

She's going behind the harvesters. And she's like, she is like, look, she's scavenging for what's left over. She's finding the bits of barley and wheat that haven't been picked that were meant to be left over.

God commanded the Israelites, you're not supposed to glean everything in your field for the sake of the poor, that they can come and they can gather for themselves and be fed as well. And so that's what's happening.

She's coming behind and she's doing that hard work. And that work was, it was a long day. You started in the morning and you went all the way until evening. Most scholars say it's about a 16-hour work day.

That's the amount of time they worked during the harvest season. And then after she gathers all that, what she does is she has a shawl on and she takes down her all-purpose shawl.

[7 : 38] She lays it on the ground and she takes all her bundles and she puts it on there. And she's got to beat it all down with a stick to separate the grain heads from the actual stocks. Because the stocks were worthless and the grain heads were where the food could be had and the nutrients were.

And so she's got a little bit more work to do. And all in all, after she beats it out, she beats out and she has this grain, she ends up, it says, with an efa, which is about six gallons. Right?

And we're like, okay, that's interesting. So, well, that equates to about a half a month's supply of food for one person. So, when one day she gets about a half a month's supply, that's an enormous amount for one day's work.

As Hubbard, a commentator on Ruth, points out, this startling quantity of grain testifies both to Boaz's generosity and Ruth's industry.

And now that she has this done, she's got to wrap this up in her shawl and she's got to haul those six gallons of grain back home. Right? And six gallons of grain is roughly about 30 pounds.

[8 : 44] Right? And so, just to give you an idea, like scholars today where they think Boaz's field was in relation to Bethlehem was anywhere between one to two miles. Right? Right? So, could you imagine being like Ruth's children in the future?

If they start complaining, she has a pretty good, like, oh, really? Well, guess what? I had to walk two miles uphill in the mountains with 30 pounds of grain. Have you ever done that?

So, anyways, Ruth's got a pretty good first day under her belt. But it's also a grueling 16 hours of hard manual labor. And this is just the beginning of the harvest time.

When Ruth committed to Naomi, this is the life she committed to. Eyes wide open. And it shows us this. It shows us that loving people for the long haul is really hard.

It's not always going to be easy. It's not the happily ever afters. New relationships, friendships, new friendships, man, they're fun. They're invigorating. But you hang around long enough, you start to notice the problems, the quirks, the blemishes, the irritating habits.

[9 : 56] I'm weird. You're weird. We're all weird, guys. All right? That's the reality. You may not think so. Your mom may have told you different. Your grandma had told you different. I'm going to give it to you straight.

Yeah, you ain't perfect. All right? We all got stuff. That makes it hard for people to love us. And if that isn't hard enough, every relationship is going to be tempted.

We're going to have significant differences. We're going to experience betrayal and hurt. We're going to have misunderstandings. We're going to disagree. We're going to quarrel. We're going to fight. And after a while, you can start to wonder, man, is this worth it?

Is this relationship worth it? Man, I want to get out of this. When can I quit? And what counterfeit love tells us to do is says, man, take those thoughts, take those feelings, and it says, you know what?

It is time to get out. Man, you're unhappy. You need to go. Why? Because counterfeit love that our culture pumps to us today says your happiness and your happily ever after is the most important thing.

[11:00] You need to go after it, and you need to go get it. You know, there's a story. I don't know if you guys remember. This is a few years back. And I'm not proud to say that I was watching an award show, a movie award show, but I was.

And Ben Affleck got up there, and he got some award, and in his thank you speech, he said this to his wife at the time. It was Jennifer Garner. He says, man, I love you. It hasn't always been easy. It's been hard work at times, a lot of times, but you know it's worth it.

And you think like, man, that is awesome. You know what? He got blasted for saying that. People were saying, how dare he say that about his wife, about that their relationship was hard.

Actually, that wasn't loving. That was unloving. Counterfeit love doesn't make room for the possibility of pervasive problems in your relationship. It demands happily ever after.

It says, no, no, no, good relationships should have no bad days, or at least very few. Counterfeit love doesn't see problems as something to push through. They actually see it as a signpost to get out.

[12:07] But Ruth shows us real love's superior quality here. Day after day, she went and worked her tail off for 16 hours, bringing home the barley, right?

And she did that for a mother-in-law that didn't pull her own weight. Real love is proved by patient perseverance. For three months, Ruth goes to the field.

She goes to the fields and works from sunup to sundown. That's real love. Naomi can't give her anything but companionship when she gets home.

But for Ruth, that is enough. The little meager little bit she can get from Naomi, she's like, man, that is enough. Her just being there, her being Naomi, and loving her right where she is at.

And man, Naomi's going through it too. She's got some bitterness issues, right? She's having a tough time, like, being a fun person to be around. But Naomi loves her right where she is at.

[13:07] I can't imagine being Ruth in this protracted, difficult season. You'll notice, actually, you know, when she comes home from the fields that first day, that Naomi never offers her a thank you.

She doesn't say, blessed be you, Ruth, for the grain that you brought home. She says, bless the man that took notice of you. She doesn't say, man, Ruth, you worked so hard. You know what?

Put your feet up over here. Take a load off. Can I cook you or fix you a cup of tea or something? Then she passes over her and gives the blessing to the man whose field she worked in and showed her favor.

And you know what's amazing is we don't see Ruth react. She just keeps loving and serving and persevering quietly for Naomi's sake. And we look at this, and that's part of what makes Ruth so noble in this story.

It's a beautiful thing to behold. She doesn't complain. She doesn't give up. She doesn't try to resolve things and fix Naomi to make things easier and find an easier way. She also doesn't react and get upset and blow up at Naomi.

[14 : 13] Like, how can you be so unthankful? Look at the hard work that I'm doing. Why can't you pull some weight here and help out a little bit more? What we see is that Ruth is choosing to carry the tension of her trial.

That's why we see her and we say, man, she is noble of heart. Ronald Rollheiser puts it this way. What makes for a great hero or heroine?

What constitutes what we call nobility of the soul? Usually we ascribe that quality to the person who, mindless of his or her own comfort, need, and pain, is willing for a higher reason to carry a great tension for a long period of time, not acquiescing to the temptation to prematurely resolve things.

True greatness, true nobility of the soul is seen in those who choose not to run when things get hard, who choose not the easy path to try to fix people through might or manipulation.

They don't put themselves and their problems before others. Instead, they persevere with great patience precisely for the sake of helping those around them. And when you do this, when we do this, what we see is something amazing.

[15 : 31] When you decide, when you and I decide to carry the tension of the trial, something incredible happens. It's like this gestation process inside our soul for the Holy Spirit, who turns the hurt into forgiveness, the anger into compassion, the hatred into love.

And Jesus is a great example of this. He demonstrates this in his passion, right? From the beginning, he's falsely accused. He's beaten, he's mocked, he's spat on, he's exposed naked on a cross.

He was made to be an object of scorn by all who passed by and looked on him. And yet, it said he was silent like a lamb. He didn't respond. He didn't turn reviling with reviling, anger with anger.

He stayed in the tension with quiet nobility. And near the end, before he died, he looked at all who had mistreated him and said over them, Father, crush them, take vengeance on them.

No, no, no, he didn't say that. He says, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. He looks on them with this amazing compassion. All the ugliness, all the pain, all the vitriol, he just took it in.

[16 : 49] And something beautiful happened. And what came out of him was grace and mercy and compassion and kindness, real love. That is what creates the nobility of the soul.

That is how real love is proved in patient perseverance. But the question on many of our minds, or that should be on many of our minds, is like, man, who can endure that?

Who can endure such a thing? Here's the answer. We can't. At least not on our own. We have no strength to do that.

If you're in the midst of the trial, it is impossible to sit in that tension and wait for that beautiful transformation to take place. You and I will never stay there unless we have something. We need some kind of assurance that this isn't how it will always be.

We need some kind of hope to persevere. When I was a young kid, my dad took me hiking in the Sierra Nevadas, just beautiful mountain range.

[17 : 58] And before we got started, he placed a six-pack of Pepsi in this cold mountain stream. Right? And he said, when we get back, we're going to pull this Pepsi out of this cold mountain stream.

It's going to be nice and cool. And then we're just going to drink and be satisfied. Now, I was eight years old, and that sounded awesome. Right? I was like, yes, I'm all in.

I didn't realize it was a six-mile hike with, like, an elevation change of a few thousand feet. Right? I'm eight years old. That was crazy. If Ruth was there and heard me complaining, Shemada reached down and said, oh, I'm sorry, did you also carry 30 pounds that whole time?

I don't remember much about that hike, like the beautiful scenery or anything like that. I do remember how thirsty I was and how tired I was most of the time.

But the thing that kept me going, the thing that kept me from complaining and giving up was knowing that Pepsi was waiting for me at the end. Right? I'm easy to please. It's all I need.

[18 : 59] Give me a couple of Pepsis. I'm good to go. But I needed that hope. I needed something to look forward to, to carry me through, and it got a little bit difficult and it got a little bit hard. So where did Ruth and Naomi find this hope to persevere?

What was their Pepsi? Verse 19 says, her mother-in-law said to her, where did you glean today and where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.

So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, the man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, may he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

Naomi also said to her, the man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers. You see, there is lots of places they could have put their hope, right?

They could have put their hope in the generosity of Boaz so that she was able to glean half a month's work in one day. It could be the hope that Boaz was possibly their redeemer, which is something we're going to cover in a couple of weeks.

[20 : 03] But right now it's sufficient to say that they're seeing that Boaz could possibly restore their fortunes and change the game of their lives. But none of these things is where they ultimately place their hope.

I'm not saying they ignored it, but that's not ultimately where they place their hope. Look at what Naomi says in verse 20. May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

Bitter Naomi has turned to worshiping God in response to the good news she's received. She sees God's hand in this.

It wasn't that like Naomi just lucked out into the right field. She sees God's hand in guiding her to specifically be in Boaz's field. And Boaz's generosity toward her, she sees God's hand in that, moving in the small details of everyday life.

Of Boaz taking notice of Ruth among all the other young women that were in his field working. And for the first time, Naomi has joy. She has hope.

[21 : 09] In the midst of her pain, she is experiencing what she needs. She's experiencing hope. But she isn't putting her hope on Boaz. She is putting her hope in God. She sees God as the hand preparing and guiding all those details.

And she ascribes to God the attribute he's most known for. Says here, whose kindness, his kindness. Literally translated, that's the word has said.

That's that Hebrew word has said. She's like, oh, God's kindness has not forsaken the living and the dead. The God who is faithful love. The God who is merciful. The God who is kind.

The God who doesn't forget. He hasn't forsaken the living and the dead. Naomi is experiencing God's real love at work in her life. And it drives her to worship and thankfulness.

She says about God that he does not forsake the living and the dead. Not only is there renewed hope for Naomi and Ruth that their lives won't forever be hard and bitter. Naomi sees this other hope.

- [22 : 12] That even her dead husband's name might not be wiped off the face of the earth. She sees a God who gives restoration. And the God who gives resurrection life to those he loves.

Renewed hope gives Ruth persevering power to carry on. Working hard through the whole harvest season. And this doesn't mean she's not going to feel tired. She's not going to feel worn out at the end of the day.

She's going to feel all those things. She's going to experience all that. She's going to get tired and weary. All that. She's a human being. I'm sure she was looking forward to her Sabbath rest, right? Day off. I'm sure she looked forward to the end of the harvest time too.

But in the tension of her trial, Ruth didn't try to fix anything. She didn't try to make the easy plan or find the easy way or run from it. She held on to it and she persevered in hope.

So what about you? What trial are you in? I know a lot of you are in the tension of the trial right now. You're facing some tough stuff.

- [23 : 12] You're going through some tough stuff. Are you trying to fix it? Or run from it? Or are you trusting in God? Turning to him and enduring in hope?

You might ask, what is the hope that I should be looking for, right? I mean, Naomi and Ruth, they got to see this like cool thing God was unfolding with being in Boaz's field and him being generous and getting so much grain.

I mean, you can find hope in a rainbow. A friend choosing to bear the burden of your trial with you. Someone reaching out to pray for you. Those are all good things. Those are all good things. But there is always a sure, unchanging hope that we have.

And that is the best kind of hope. The best kind of hope is one that is guaranteed. And that's what we see here. Ruth and Naomi have a hope that is built on their faith in God whose nature is faithful, faithful love.

He's kind, he's merciful. They really have no guarantee of how things will work at the end. They can't like write it, prescribe it, and finish that chapter of their lives. But still, they're looking ahead in hope and putting their trust in who God is and what he could do.

- [24 : 23] But they also can look back and see God come through time and time again for his people. They can look back and see God's faithfulness to Israel throughout its history.

And it was a rocky history even up to that point. See, and that's what we have to realize. Man, the nature of God isn't just on display in the small moments to moments of our day to day and our present.

Man, it's on display throughout history. It's on display as we look over our shoulder in our own lives and further past our lives. It's on display as we look over our lives.

As much material of God's faithful love that they had to work with. We today, we have all that and a lot more. Hebrews, the book of Hebrews is a New Testament letter that has the theme of perseverance woven throughout.

It is written to Christians going through the trial of persecution because of their faith, what they believed. They faced deceptive teachings. They faced physical danger, the plundering of their property, unjust imprisonment.

- [25 : 56] They lost loved ones. They faced hatred and prejudice in the cities and towns that they lived. And here's the thing. They couldn't fix their situation. They were stuck in that.

They had to live in the tension of the trial and trust God. And that's happened throughout the history of the church. If you dare to read the history of the church, especially early on, there was a lot of persecution that happened.

But those saints held strong. I'm not saying like, I'm saying everybody who believes in Jesus is a saint. All those people who loved God and have faith, they held strong.

They chose to live in the tension of their trial and trust God. And here's the hope that they had. And this is the hope that we have too.

Hebrews 6, verse 11 and 12 says this. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness, to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

[27 : 09] We have this in verse 19. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone ahead of us as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

What this is saying, what this is promising us is this. Persevering hope for today rests on what Jesus did and has confidence in what he will do.

Ultimately, our hope isn't that the trial will go away and we always get what we want in this life. Our ultimate hope is in what Jesus did. And because of what he did, we get the best reward.

We get him. We get to go into the inner curtain. We get to go into the place that was shut off to us before that. We get to be in the very presence of God, the Almighty, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

We get to be with him. He is our great reward. Jesus has gone before us to make that way and also to be the way into the presence of God.

[28 : 24] And it's a hope that we look forward to because one day we're going to experience in its fullness. But guys, we get to live in that hope. We get to live in that reality right now. And one day we are going to experience its fullness.

And in that place, there's going to be no trials and no pain and no more tensions to carry, which is going to be amazing. We can't wait for that, right? But today, we get to experience that.

I want you to know, do you know that nothing, nothing today can separate you from the love of God? Nothing. That is what Naomi and Ruth are celebrating in these verses, in the middle of their difficult circumstances.

They believe that. And we would do well to believe it as well. That no matter what is going on in your life right now, no matter what you are going through, God's love is there for you, and it cannot be taken away.

Romans 8, 38 to 39 is this promise. For I am sure, Paul is writing, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[29 : 47] Are we aware of that? Do we believe that? God's love, firmly fixed in Jesus, is here for you right now.

You can take a hold of it. It's a love that we know because we can look back to the cross and say, yes, there is the evidence of that. I can believe it.

But it's a love that we experience through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit who comes and makes that love so real. That we can taste it. That we can know it.

That we can feel it. As he fills us with his Holy Spirit, he fills us with all who he is. He fills us with his love. And that love carries us through every difficult area of our life.

It's a love that sustains us and fills us and strengthens us. It's a love that empowers us to persevere. Don't buy into the counterfeit love that says to live like a survivor.

[30 : 44] Reacting, punching back, reviling when you're reviled, returning evil for evil, and running from the tension of the trial. Man, live in God's has said love.

It invites you to live like a son. Son of the Heavenly Father. That carries you through all the tensions of life. But it is there as we do that and live in that reality.

It is there through the Holy Spirit's work that what comes out of us, despite what we're facing, despite what comes at us, what comes out of us through what he does is faith and gentleness and kindness and peace and long-suffering and patience and goodness.

Those fruits of the Spirit. As the band come up. As the band comes up. I want to end this way. Hebrews 10.23 says this.

Let us hold fast. The confession of our hope. Without wavering. How do we do that? Is it just because we have to?

[31 : 57] Do we have to rev ourselves up emotionally to do that? To hold fast? All it says is to look to him. Look to the faithful one. Look to the one who has steadfast love and has said, for he who promised is faithful.

If you're here and not yet a Christian, man, I want to say to you, man, do not run away from this. Do not run away from God's faithful love.

His faithful love is seen in Jesus dying for your sins. You can't earn your way into heaven. You can't earn your way into heaven. You can't earn your way into God's love. He made the first move.

But he's calling you to respond. He's calling you to say, yes, I believe. He's calling you to say, I give up doing things my own way and trusting in him who is faithful.

If you're here and you're a Christian, I want to ask you this. Are you persevering in the hope of Jesus?

[33 : 00] Or are you looking to something else? Are you carrying the tension of the trial? Are you inviting God into it? Are you bringing it to him?

Are you letting it sit so the Holy Spirit can transform it into something beautiful and God glorifying? I want to give us time to respond.

If you could all just stand. We're going to take one minute, just one minute. This is what I want us to do. I want us to close our eyes just to give some privacy.

We can really focus in on Jesus. Jesus, I want to say, man, a lot of us here today may be struggling with stuff. We may be struggling.

We may be in the tension of the trial. We're struggling with strength to persevere. We're struggling to find and grasp where that hope is in God.

[33 : 55] Maybe we've lost it. But I want to remind us that you can't make it on your own. We have to be filled with God's grace and love.

Actually, the book of Ephesians invites us to ongoingly be filled with that. It's not a one-off thing. Man, it's something we need every single day. Like the Israelites had to collect manna every single day.

The bread of heaven. We need that too. We need grace for today. We need hope for tomorrow. The Bible says his mercies are new every morning.

I just want you to raise your hands to him. Raise your hands to God. It doesn't mean something special is going to happen. It's just a posture of the heart. It's an outward confession that you need him.

And I want us right now just to silently and softly or out loud cry out to God and ask him to fill you with his love.

And I want you to take this in as your prayer, as your cry to God. The name of the hymn is Jesus Draw Me Ever Near, and it says this.

[36 : 52] May this journey bring a blessing. May I rise on wings of faith. And at the end of my heart's testing, with your likeness, let me wake.

Let the treasures of the trial form within me as I go. And at the end of this long passage, let me leave them at your throne.

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