

11-17-19 STRONG BONES REFLECT THE CHARACTER & ACTIONS OF GOD AND HESED SAYS IT ALL!
RUTH 1:8; 3:10

Today's sermon continues the 7-week series "DEVELOPING STRONG BONES" aka learning daily practices that help us develop a growing FAITH & TRUST in GOD AND a LIFE-STYLE THAT REFLECTS CHRIST-LIKE LIVING.

SO FAR WE'VE LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF:

- + Daily **BIBLE Reading & Reflection**
- + Daily **PRAYER & Vital Time & Relationship with GOD**
- + **SPIRITUAL BREATHING** – every Day Confessing and Letting Go of the 'bad' and breathing in the 'good' of God's love & grace thru the indwelling presence & control of the Holy Spirit.

Today we'll see that when we demonstrate & practice the love & character --- the kindnesses & goodness' of God:

- + the world is blessed,
- + the world sees a touch of God and
- + we grow in our capacities to know, experience & extend God's loving kindness & goodness, particularly to those who are children of God, members of the family of God.

1st --- Let's consider the CONTEXT of the Old Testament Book of RUTH:

- + Ruth is a 4 chapter book in the Old Testament just before 1st Samuel
- + The story of Ruth occurs around 1075 BC – near the end of the Hebrew history known as the time of the "Judges" & a little before King Saul

Major Characters in the story:

ELIMELEK and his wife NAOMI

Their sons, MAHLON & KILION & their wives, ORPAH & RUTH

BOAZ – an extended relative of ELIMELEK, in the town of Bethlehem

1. There was a famine & economic depression in Bethlehem.
2. Elimelek sells the rights to his land and moves his wife & sons across the border of Israel to the land known as Moab.
3. Elimelek and Naomi's sons marry Moabites – Orpah & Ruth.
4. Elimelek & his two sons die, leaving all three women with no protection or means of sustaining income ...Naomi is too old to remarry and Orpah & Ruth have no relations in Bethlehem.

5. Naomi's only possibility of survival is to return to Bethlehem and pray that the townspeople may remember her and care for her.
6. Orpah & Ruth vow to stay with Naomi. But Naomi begs them to stay near their families where they may have better options.
7. Their loyalty, kindness, selflessness, love and goodness towards Naomi is remarkable and is actually compared to God's loyalty, kindness, selflessness, love & goodness (see Ruth 1:8).
8. Orpah decides to stay in her hometown and RUTH decides to travel with NAOMI to care for her in whatever way may be necessary.
9. At this point Naomi is without hope --- **she is indeed HOPELESS & DEPRESSED** (Ruth 1:19-21).

NOW WHAT ?????

1. Ruth forages for grain that has fallen onto the ground during the harvest ... BOAZ --- a good man --- intentionally leaves extra droppings of grain so that the poor and needy may be able to work and feed themselves.
2. RUTH's hard work & kindness are observed by Boaz.
3. BOAZ blesses RUTH and tells RUTH that her kindness, goodness & love are like God's ... he prays for her welfare & pledges to intercede for Naomi and Ruth's wellbeing.
4. **Like a great LOVE STORY** --- in the end, BOAZ & RUTH get married – they have a baby (OBED – see Matthew 1: 5 per the Genealogy of Jesus) - Naomi is cared for the rest of her life.

There are many morsels in the story of Ruth that can be highlighted & preached. Today, however, in the context of our STRONG BONES series we will focus on one word ... let's consider Ruth 1:8 and Ruth 3:10.

Ruth 1:8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you **kindness**, as you have shown **kindness** to your dead husbands and to me.

Ruth 3:10 "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This **kindness** is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor.

HESED is the Hebrew word that is translated in these verses as "KINDNESS". But truly, no one English word can begin to convey accurately the comprehensive expression of **HESED**.

- + COVENANTAL LOYALTY, FAITHFULNESS & FIDELITY
- + KINDNESS & GOODNESS
- + MERCY, LOVE and COMPASSION
- + Usually based upon a COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP or COVENANT
- + CONOTATES & IMPLIES DRAMATIC ACTION – *hesed* recognizes And ACTS to relieve an urgent need or stress – an act performed out of an enduring kindness & commitment to help and to care – rooted in love

YAHWEH is the ONE who models *hesed* in the Old Testament. The use of *hesed* in the OT is virtually exclusive in terms of GOD's HESED to humans or God's natural expressions to all of creation.

+ According to G. Clark in his book, THE WORD HESED IN THE HEBREW BIBLE "IT IS NOT EVEN POSSIBLE TO PRACTICE OR EXPRESS HESED WITHOUT GOD's DIVINE NATURE."

THIS IS HUGE!!!! ---- the action of HESED in its fullest Hebrew understanding is unique to God and not even possible apart from God!!!

According to K. Lawson Younger, Jr. of the University of Sheffield, "the ONLY human actors who are explicitly said to have exercised *hesed* are directed to ORPAH (once) and RUTH (twice) per Ruth 1:8 & Ruth 3:10.

WOW! 2 MOABITE WOMEN are the only two people noted in the Old Testament as expressing & demonstrating the DIVINE NATURE OF GOD ALMIGHTY known as *hesed*.

GOD's HOLY SPIRIT so filled ORPAH and RUTH's love & kindness towards Naomi that their ACTION – THEIR EXPRESSION TOWARDS NAOMI – was like that of GOD's REPEATED EXPRESSIONS OF *HESED* towards humanity!

GOD demonstrates and extends *HESED* to Naomi & Ruth when God provided a kinsman redeemer to intercede and redeem Elimelek's land for Naomi; provided for Ruth's marriage to Boaz; and even provided an heir that preserved Elimelek's clan within those of Bethlehem.

REFLECTIONS:

CAN WE, LIKE RUTH, BE EXPRESSIONS OF GOD's HESED?

1st --- WE MUST HAVE the SPIRIT OF GOD WITHIN US --- in our innermost being --- the ACTUAL DIVINE NATURE OF GOD.

2nd --- GOD's NATURE, GOD's PRESENCE (GOD's SPIRIT) must be unencumbered and released to be allowed to CONTROL US & DEFINE US

ARE YOU OPEN TO this DIVINE INTERJECTION INTO YOUR LIFE?

So, *HESED* which is an OUTWARD ACTION or EXPRESSION is actually a REFLECTION or manifestation of an INWARD, DIVINE SPIRIT OR NATURE

Galatians 5:22-25 "But the *fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

"HESED" ---A ONE WORD EXPRESSION OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT ????

As we grow in the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, WE BECOME expressions of God's Holy Spirit – aka the Fruit of the Spirit, which is ACTUALLY A DIVINE EXPRESSION OF **GOD's HESED** !!!!!!!

IN CONCLUSION:

WE HONOR GOD WHEN WE DO *HESED* --- showing kindness to one another is among the most fitting means God can use to display his own *hesed* to a world that desperately needs God

SO, AS we have noted --- God is asking us, actually, commanding us to help the world to see and know him BY THE EXPRESSION OF *HESED* AND SINCE *Hesed* can only come from deep within our innermost being ... and only thru the transforming power & presence of the Holy Spirit that we must ALLOW to DEVELOP & TRANSFORM us ...

HOW WILL THE WORLD KNOW GOD?

HOW WILL THE WORLD KNOW THAT WE ARE CHRISTIANS?

AS RUTH TO NAOMI --- WITH GOD's HELP, WE MUST ACT "KINDLY" TO ONE ANOTHER And "DO HESED" one to the other, empowered by God's DIVINE SPIRIT ... ☺

BOTTOM-LINE: WHATS IN YOUR NATURE?