

P A T R I C K D . K I T E L E Y

FAVOR IS COMING YOUR WAY

MOVING FROM EMPTINESS TO FULLNESS

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF RUTH

PART ONE: FAVOR COMES THROUGH A CHOICE

Introduction:

There is a thought that comes straight from heaven directly to you. It is a thought that originated in the heart of the Father, it is made way by the Son, Jesus, and is delivered to you personally by the Holy Spirit. It is a thought that is among the millions of thoughts that God has towards you that outnumber the sands of the sea. It is a thought that is older than time yet it is for now. It is for this moment. The time you presently are in. It is very particular thought. It is faithful thought that has been reserved for you. Amazingly this thought has been waiting since eternity past with a date stamped on it called *now*. Now is the time for God's thought for your life to be released. Not a minute, month or year sooner or later, but now.

Are you ready to know what this thought is? Of course you are. It is best not to draw this out and cause you to wait any longer. ☺ You need to know what this thought is so you can fully fathom what you are moving into in this next season. Ready? Here it is...*Favor is coming your way*. Catch it. When you read this thought something should leap inside of you. Something is changing. Your world is shifting. You have known the exact opposite of favor. You have experienced disfavor, dishonor, disgrace and disapproval. Let me use other words that might resonate: abuse, ill treatment, unkindness and cruelty. No matter what word says what you have experienced let me make an announcement before heaven, earth and hell...*favor is coming your way*.

This means your fortunes are turning. Your destiny is about to unfold in the direction of goodness. David sang in Psalm 27:13, "*I would have fainted unless I believed that I would see the GOODNESS of the Lord in the land of the living.*" In other words there is a belief (faith) that the goodness of the Lord will be revealed in my life. I have a saying that I have shared all over the world, "*Things are going to be different.*" I dare you to believe those words. Believe that things are going to be different. Things cannot stay the same. What has been happening does not resonate with what you know in your heart. You know God has so much more for your life. Things have to be different. You are ready for it. You are ready for God to do what He said He would do in your life. I have got a hunch that God in this time, without hesitation, is doing something in your life that is causing what you have known to change not only right before your eyes, but also in front of everyone else's too. That includes your friends and foes, angels and demons, and even satan himself. God prepares a table before you even in the presence of your enemies. That is a reason for you to celebrate.

As you read this brief volume on the book of Ruth I want you to do two things while reading it: 1. Know that change is happening as you read it, and 2. Celebrate each step of the victory along the way. And by the way, it is not just a singular victory that you are experiencing, rather it is victory after victory. All around you there is victory. On your right, your left, below you, above you, behind you and before you is glorious, victorious victory. In fact can I let you in on a huge secret? You are about to experience a chain of victories like you have never known before. Sometimes we get so used to looking for something bad to happen right after something good happens. But now we break this cycle and declare, "Victory after victory after victory after victory after victory, again and again and again. In the name of Jesus."

Favor Defined:

The basic definition of favor is *to cause one to prosper, to succeed or to flourish beyond their own experience, ability or expertise*. It speaks to us of a supernatural help (favor) that is given for the journey. When God told Abram, *“I will bless you,”* basically He was telling him, *“Personally, I am going to HELP you in your journey.”* This is when God directly gets involved in your life. He doesn’t send an angel. He doesn’t send a prophet. He doesn’t just send some peace rather He is your Peace. This is the part of the story where God says, *“I am going to lead you to a place where you are going to move from being Abram (father of a multitude) to becoming AbraHAM (father of many nations). I am going to put the HA in the middle of your name.”* The HA is the breath of God. When God puts His breath of life into your name it changes everything.

Whenever God helps you in whatever you are doing or whatever you are dealing with that is called DIVINE FAVOR. Someone once said, *“Favor is a divine enablement assigned to an ordained destiny.”* In other words favor is a divine assistance to cause you to go the distance. Favor is a divine release that causes you to increase. Favor gives you hope in the midst of despair. Favor gives you joy in the midst of sorrow. Favor gives you peace in the midst of chaos. Favor is not based on the circumstance, the shortage, or the scarcity. Favor is based on God’s deep desire to cause you to prosper, succeed and flourish beyond your own ability. Favor gives you access when otherwise doors would be closed. Favor will take you places you could not go on your own. Favor gives you platforms to speak on where you couldn’t even get into the building. It is a game changer. When you have favor from God it causes you to become what you could not become without it.

And...*favor is coming your way.*

One thing that needs to be understood about favor is favor is based on timing. Psalm 102:13 says, *“Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: For the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come.”* Timing. Isaiah 61:1-2 says, *“He sent me to proclaim...the year of the Lord’s favor.”* Timing. When you get the revelation that favor is based on timing it provides insight into yesterday. The word timing tells us that some things have had to transpire, some things have had to expire, some things have had to be rewired, some things have had to be acquired in order for what God has desired to come forth...some body please get me a choir. Some things have had to happen in order for some things to happen. With God’s timing you learn through it that what has happened had to happen so that what is about to happen can happen.

Imagine one day the Psalmist sings this powerful song, *“The set time of favor has come”*. Those who heard it must have taken notice. This is a powerful lyric. An appointed time of favor comes. It has arrived. It is here. The clock has turned. The years have gone by. You have entered a time for supernatural things to happen. Isaiah said it like this in 49:8-9, *This is what the LORD says: “In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, ‘Come out,’ and to those in darkness, ‘Be free!’”* This is a biblical definition of a time of favor. In other words he says, *“Favor is coming...to you!”*

When it says, *“the set time of favor has come,”* know that favor is something that comes through various channels and instruments of God’s choosing. Favor comes. This concept is what I want to look at as we open the book of Ruth. How favor comes. Get this: Favor is on its way. Favor will be displayed. Favor is here to stay. Favor comes through a very special way...YOU! You are the inheritor of the favor of the Lord. This is what the whole book of Ruth is about. The powerful story of Ruth is an account of unusual, divine favor bestowed to an off the radar woman who up until this point had no favor whatsoever in her life. Her family didn’t know favor. Her city didn’t know favor. Her genealogy was not one of favor. But in one moment God places favor upon this girl and not only does her world change but the world is changed because of Ruth. When favor comes it comes through you and when it comes it doesn’t just change you it also changes history.

When we open the pages of the Book of Ruth we realize that the story is one of ever-increasing favor. A favor that is given to a surprising character that is outside the flow of history of the nation of Israel. It is always amazing to see in scripture WHO God gives favor to. In this story God surprises us and distributes increasing favor to an unknown, unfamiliar, mysterious woman named Ruth. In Hebrew the name Ruth means “Beautiful.” Up until now in the Old Testament she not in the story. She is new to the biblical narrative. But she is the one in this time who receives favor. This concept is newly introduced in the Bible in its eighth book. It is powerful because eight is the number of new beginnings. So this is a good time to introduce a new concept. The concept: *giving the greatest portion of favor to someone who isn't considered a family member.*

Oftentimes the one receiving the favor is NOT the one we would chose. In fact it is always amazing when the person who is the beneficiary of the portion of favor is the exact opposite of who I would chose. It actually could really annoy me that they are getting what I perceive I should receive. That is the definition of what I like to call: Favor Haters. Favor Haters don't inherently appreciate or celebrate the favor that is given to others. We have to be careful not become Favor Haters. It is easy to become one. Rather we should rejoice with them that rejoice. When someone else is blessed I understand that I am blessed. Instead of saying, “*They don't deserve that,*” say, “*I am so happy for them and I hope they continue to get blessed.*” That is a key to your blessing. Favor Haters are so focused on others that even if blessing came their way they wouldn't see it. Newsflash: God is not out to bless Favor Haters. Bottom line is, if they don't get it then they won't get it.

Favor: It Is A Set Up

Right from the first verse of the first chapter of Ruth the story starts off 3-D (dim, dark and deathly). The book begins by painting a picture for us of what I want to call: overwhelming EMPTINESS. Wait! Stop the presses! Didn't I say we are talking about FAVOR? This should be a glory story, right? Then why in the world am I changing the subject and discussing the E-word, emptiness? Hang in there family! This is how it works. I need to set up the pathos (anguish) in order for the logos (the Word) to affect the ethos (culture/philosophy). What did you say? I said I need give you the backstory on the setback in order to set-up the comeback. If there was no drama and everything was cool and you are doing really, really good then you wouldn't have a need for favor. But I think there is somebody out there who needs some serious favor. I believe that someone reading this needs a turnaround. That is this story. It is a story of favor and fullness, but it begins with extreme emptiness. If you take a close look it sounds like a formula for a miracle.

Now let me ask you a question: have you ever held an empty cup? I am talking about when you are so, so thirsty. Really, really thirsty. I am talking about being parched. Your desire for a drink is your number one priority. Your mouth is extremely dry. Your body is very dehydrated. You might even need to go to the hospital to get an IV to rehydrate your body. You actually have arrived at a place where a drink of fresh, cool water is the only thing that can quench your desperate thirst. And then finally you find a cup. You pick it up with a sense of delight and when you put it to your mouth it is completely empty. That is the how the book of Ruth begins. It begins with emptiness. A cup that is empty. The first theme in the book of Ruth is the idea of moving from emptiness to fullness. That is to say, the main characters of the story begin with nothing and end with abundance. Understand where this story is going. Let me speak to you. This is where your narrative is headed. The dryness of your last season almost killed you. Your story didn't seem like it would end well. But you need to be encouraged by the story of Ruth. God says, “*It is a day of new beginnings.*” Things are going to be different. Basically the storyline is going from poverty to prosperity, from being a pauper to becoming a prince, it is moving from rags to riches. It is a set up. It is ALL a set up.

Emptiness Experienced

Three times in the first chapter of Ruth there is a downward description of the escalating emptiness.

First, in Ruth 1:1 in Bethlehem there is an unprecedented famine. A famine is when there is a lack of rain, which causes a lack of produce. No rain. No grain. When there is no H²O then nothing will grow. Because of this particular famine a Hebrew man named Elimelech (means My Father Is The King) and his wife Naomi (means Pleasant) and their two sons, Mahlon (means Great Infirmity) and Chilion (means Wasting Away), moved from Bethlehem (means House of Bread) to a place called Moab (means Who's Your Daddy?). AB is the root for father. MO is the question, who is? Put them together and you get a question, "Who is your Daddy?" I don't know about you BUT I don't want to live in a place called "Who's Your Daddy?" Because we know whom our Father is. Our Father is creator of heaven and earth; He is holy, faithful, all knowing, all-powerful and eternal. Why would we want to live in a place where the Father is NOT known? Jesus said, "*Come and go with me to MY FATHER'S HOUSE.*" But unfortunately, this family of four goes to Moab.

It is amazing what people will do when they experience LACK. They move. They change churches. They change jobs. They change wives. They change personalities. They try to make something happen in the flesh. Here is this man and his family experiencing emptiness trying to make things happen. The deception is, "*if we move then everything will change.*" Some moves can better things. Other moves can destroy things. This move was not a wise move. It was a reactionary move. Just because a famine happens, and by the way famines do happen, doesn't mean it is time to do something rash. Sometimes you have STANDSTILL and see the salvation of the Lord. Sometimes you have to wait it out and in the waiting you grow in faith, you learn how to pray, you discover how to ask, seek and knock, you actually find out how to intercede. There were some spiritual things you knew about for years, but now in the famine you have to put them into practice. So many people are looking for the easy way out. The easy way out can get you into serious trouble.

Second, when this Jewish family arrives in Moab in Ruth 1:1-5 they discover what kind of trouble they were getting themselves into by taking Easy Street. Quite quickly the story digresses to the death of husbands/fathers and sons. Immediately the husband/father Elimelech dies. Again his name means, My Father Is The King. This makes him royalty. A prince. He doesn't have to die. This is a premature death. But his lack of sight was blurred by a lack of rain, which caused his life to end before its time. You have to be careful where you go and who you connect with in your time of need. Just because Moab might have what you are looking for temporarily doesn't mean it has what you need permanently. This temporary decision to make something happen determined his destiny. Elimelech died. Sad story.

After Elimelech dies the verse goes on to tell us that the two sons got married to Moabite women. One named Orpah (means Neck) and the other named Ruth. Shortly after the weddings the two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, die. This story doesn't waste any time. Isn't this great? Five verses. Three dead guys.

Let me just give you my opinion about these two sons. It is probably not a good idea to name your kids Great Infirmity and Wasting Away. Names are important. Names speak of identity. Names declare destiny. If you name your sons The Sick One and The Disappearing One just take a guess what might happen. It is amazing to me how Elimelech had lost his senses not only by leaving the House of Bread to go to Who Is Your Daddy-Land, but then to name his sons Diseased Child and Withering One. Then to top it off to he marries them off to Moabite women. This is amazing literature. It is a recipe for disaster.

If you take a look at this unfolding story you will find that all of the men are completely cleared from the scene. What a narrative! The men are gone. The women are left. They are in a tough place. There are four chapters to go. In a very short period of time you move from drought to death and the emptiness goes deeper. Here are three widows who have to make some decisions about the future, if there is going to be a future.

Third, in Ruth 1:21 we hear the voice of the wife/mother/mother-in-law, Naomi, speak, *“I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty and that is why I am changing my name to MARA. Call me bitter. For the Lord has dealt bitterly with me.”* Emptiness ultimately leads to bitterness. Bitterness leads to suffering in body and mind. Bitterness will eventually kill you. Here Naomi (Pleasant) proclaims that this whole experience has created bitterness and that bitterness has now become her identity. Her experience has altered her in such a way where she cannot be pleasant anymore. Naomi experienced a death of produce, a death of persons, and ultimately, a death of personality. She was not the same. She lost her identity in a very short period of time. Imagine her devastation.

This kind of experience happens to so many people. They go through loss and it changes everything. This is the time where we need God to minister to us. That childlike faith that you once knew has been shaken. The joy you had on a daily basis just happens to be gone. You are not the same person you once were. Its almost like numbness has taken over and in Naomi’s case callousness overcame her. All she could say was *“Call me bitter. From now on that is my name.”* But even in bitterness there is hope. In Isaiah 38:17 the prophetic freedom voice refers to bitterness as a pathway for deliverance. He says, *“Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.”* That is a powerful concept. God takes my bitterness and uses it for my deliverance.

Moving From Emptiness To Fullness

What a great book so far! Empty. Emptier. Complete Emptiness. This is good reading. Again emptiness has been described in three ways: as death of produce (famine), death of people (father, sons), and death of personality (Naomi). There is no life in this story. You can’t eat food. You can’t love your family. You can’t be yourself anymore. That is emptiness perfectly defined. But in Ruth 1:22 a transition takes place in the story from one of emptiness to a place of fullness. It says, *“So Naomi returned (how? Empty), and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned (how? Empty): and they came to Bethlehem in the BEGINNING OF BARLEY HARVEST.”*

Suddenly, in one verse, we are moving from EMPTINESS to FULLNESS. It’s a quick work. The whole chapter has been progressing very fast. But the good news it we are now moving from failure to favor. Thank God, the story goes up from here. Can I tell you a secret? It is going uphill from here. You are moving from bitter to better. The years behind you might have been very hard, but I want to declare that you have come for such a time as this. It’s all about timing. Favor is based on timing. This verse tells us that Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at a very specific time. When? At the beginning of the barley harvest. The very thing that drove them away (famine) was being addressed when they arrive back home (harvest).

The barley harvest was during the Passover. Passover marked the end of waiting for Israel in Egypt after 430 years of slavery. It marked the end of winter. It marked the end of deathliness. It marked the end of living under a system that would use them to accomplish its purposes. Passover was the time in the book of Exodus when the Death Angel passed over the houses that were covered with the blood. When you were covered with the blood you were safe. This concept jumps over into the New Testament era, but now it is not the blood of rams and lambs, it is the blood The Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. For Israel the Passover was the time of merriment. It was a meal of closure and a celebration of newness at the same time at the same table. Passover marked the end of a long emptiness. And in verse 22 we see that now, finally, favor was coming to Naomi (the bitter one) and Ruth (the outsider) in ways they had not known before. Favor was now raining down upon them. Favor! Before this moment they lived in the MIST. But now RAIN was falling upon the ground they were on. Their season had officially changed. Their situation began to turn around. They made the move from emptiness to fullness.

How Did We Get Here?

This is an awesome moment! Naomi and Ruth are no longer in Moab. They have arrived in Bethlehem. It is time to celebrate. Things are going to be different. But I have one question...how did we get here? The answer to that question is so simple it almost can be missed. We arrived at this moment by a choice. The first chapter of the book of Ruth reveals to us that favor comes through a choice. God has divinely determined that favor must flow certain things in order to get to the recipient. Favor must have a conduit that it flows through. Favor doesn't flow out in the open. Favor is a special thing from God. Favor comes through particular things. In this first chapter favor comes through a choice. A decision is made that releases favor.

It happened in Ruth 1:8. Naomi surveyed the situation she was in. Her husband and sons had died in Moab. She needed to get out. She didn't want to be next. Naomi decided to go back home to Bethlehem, but she knew that her daughter-in-laws should probably stay in their home in Moab. Orpah and Ruth could start over. They both could get married and have a life in the place they grew up in. So, Naomi said, to them, "Go home!" GO is one of the key words in the book of Ruth. This would be the first of four times in the book where Naomi told Ruth to go. The first go was to go home. Go back. This is the temptation: *to go back*. Go back to yesterday. Go back to the same ole, same ole. Go back to living in emptiness. Go back to Moab.

In this moment Orpah chose to go back. She kissed Naomi. It was a farewell kiss. It was not an emotional kiss. It was a ritual. There are many types of kisses in Bible. This was one of farewell. She didn't realize it yet, but she was forsaking her potential destiny. She said, "Love ya, but I gotta go do what I gotta do." Orpah went back to find a husband (need to bear seed), to her family (need to be in her comfort zone), to her gods (need to worship whatever she wanted to worship). Orpah kissed. What is interesting is when you read the Hebrew Targum, an ancient scholarly commentary of the book of Ruth you will find that story goes on. It explains that Orpah did go back and entered into several dimensions of sexuality. After that she eventually went to land called Philistia and landed in a town called Gath. There she married a giant and they had sons. One of those sons had a son who had a son named Goliath of Gath. This is where her choice gets interesting.

Ruth 1:14 states two powerful words, "But Ruth." Ruth was different. Ruth knew something. She knew that being with Naomi even in her empty state was a whole better than being in Moab in its fullest state. At this moment Ruth made her choice. Naomi told her to go back. But Ruth saw something in Naomi. You see favor comes through various channels and instruments of God's choosing. And in this case, if Ruth was going to crossover into a new favor she needed to go with Naomi. How does favor come? Favor comes through a choice. Ruth decided to cling to Naomi. Because of that, she was actually clinging to favor. Verse 14 goes on to say, "But Ruth clung onto her." To cling means to fully embrace to the point where I am attached. Ruth tells Naomi, "Where you go, I will go. Your movement is my movement. You have something I need. How I am going to receive my favor if it isn't through you, through your family, through Bethlehem, through your fields, through your produce, through your people, through your God? This isn't some light matter. This choice is attached to death. I am going to die doing this. In other words this is for a lifetime or else let God just take me now."

When you really see it there is a certain place you arrive where this isn't about you anymore. It's not about me! My feelings. My comfort. My plans. My worship. There is a greater purpose. Favor comes through a choice. Have you ever had to make a tough decision? This wasn't a tough choice for Ruth. Some of us don't move forward in life, in marriage, in careers, in education, or financially because we can't make up our minds or more truthfully we can't make a commitment. It is called commitment issues. But favor comes through a choice. An undeniable, unrelenting commitment. Ruth makes the choice...her cup begins to fill up...to a certain level. Ruth's choice changes everything.

Here is the kicker...

Where Is This All Going?

When you arrive at the end of the book of Ruth (the ending is in the beginning and the beginning is in the ending) you find a genealogy. It is the family line of Boaz with Ruth in it. It tells us that they had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse. Jesse had a son named David (the king of Israel and the ancestor of Jesus Christ). As we will find out later Ruth the Moabite is grafted into the genealogy of Jesus. What a powerful story of what a choice can do to change your destiny.

But what is interesting to note is the power of choices. Both Orpah and Ruth had the same opportunity. They came from the same village. They had the same mother-in-law. Orpah chose to go to a place called Gath. Ruth chose to go to a place called Bethlehem. Orpah married a man and became the great, great grandmother of a man named Goliath. Ruth married a man and became the great, great grandmother of a man named David. Four generations later there is a day where their choices would meet in a valley called Elah. Their choices now in the flesh would face each other in battle to the death. One was huge. He was a warrior. He was a champion. His name was Goliath. The other was insignificant. He was a worshipper. The prophet Samuel anointed him. His name was David. The choices of Orpah and Ruth would collide in a battle that would become known throughout history as the story of David versus Goliath. Ruth's choice conquered Orpah's choice that day. Their personal choices came full circle. Someone once said, "*Choice not chance determines destiny.*" Choice is so powerful you can make a choice today that can effect future generations of your family line. If favor can come through a choice then disgrace can come through a choice too. Every day we must make choices. Be like Ruth. As the Grail Knight said in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, "*You must chose, but chose wisely.*"

Think on these things: Like Ruth it is time to make a choice...

- This choice means leaving behind some things. – Don't go back.
- This choice means clinging to some specific things. – Some people connected to your destiny.
- This choice means the future will be affected by it. – Future generations will live in your choice.
- This choice means you will move from emptiness to fullness. – From Moab to Bethlehem.
- This choice means favor is coming your way. – Favor comes through a choice.

Are you ready for favor?

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Patrick Kiteley is known around the world as a speaker with a clear prophetic message of restoration, hope and healing. He is the seventh generation of a ministry family that dates back to the circuit rider preachers. Over the past two decades Patrick has pastored in the church and worked with the business, arts and entertainment, sports, government, medical and education arenas. He is an itinerant speaker, coach and mentor with the John Maxwell Team. In 2016 he and his family planted Rain Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He is also the owner of several businesses, RGNMKRS NTWRK, Slogo, Vitality Speaks and Violet's Hope. Patrick has a passion to teach people to love Jesus, have fun and to change the world. He and his wife of 20 years, Marlana have three children and four cats.