

## Ruth Ch 1 Vs 6-22

Tonight we continue in the book that illustrates to us the bringing of a gentile woman into the inheritance of the promise of God to His people by becoming the bride of a wealthy Jewish prince becoming a kinsman redeemer. The book of Ruth is sort of a real life Cinderella, the story of a woman who went from rags to riches, being swept off her feet by a man by the name of Boaz, who made her his bride. And of course it wasn't as a result of any fairy godmother, but the love and grace of our heavenly Father God. And it's just a wonderful story that shows us how we as the gentile bride of Christ have been brought into the promises of God, the inheritance that God has set apart for the nation of Israel. We see an outsider receiving the blessings that God intended for the Hebrews by marrying into an Israeli family. Even as we've received an inheritance in Christ that God had intended for the Jews, having become His bride, as the book of Romans makes clear. Again God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and so His grace is made available to all, both Jew and Gentile alike. Now you recall that things seemed to start off rather well in this book, and then things went radically south, going from bad to worse. The book opens up by introducing a family that lived in prosperity, in the house of bread, Bethlehem, in Judah, which means praise, so they were praising God in the House of Bread, the name of the man was "My God is King" "Elimelech", his wife was a pleasant lady named "Naomi" which means "pleasantness" and we read that they were Ephrathites which means "fruitful." So they were in the house of bread, praising God and being fruitful, they were where God intended them to be, in the center of His will, and things were going good, but when the nation began to turn to idolatry (this being set in the time period of the judges) God allowed them to be chastened by famine. And when the hard times went, they left the place where God had called them, they didn't stick around to be part of the solution, but when the going got tough, they got going and they went into Moab, they left the promised land. They left that place that God had called them and sought refuge in the world, and from that point on in all went down hill. Elimelech died, which when you leave the house of bread, the Word of God, and the place of praise, it's only a matter of time, and it won't be long before God ceases to be your King, all that Naomi had left was "sickly" and "pining." And they (her 2 boys) married worldly ladies who solidified Naomi's stay, they were supposed to be there for only a short time and one compromise led to another causing them to remain in Moab, to tarry in the world, for 10 long years. And then even what little she had was taken from her when her 2 sons died as well and this is where we left off last week seeing Naomi left alive with nothing, and Orpah and Ruth being widowed as well, rock bottom, so what happens?

Vs6

So while she was in misery in Moab as the result of her rebellion to the will of God for her life, she caught wind of how Bethlehem was being blessed and attended to by God, those who waited it out in Bethlehem were blessed. Again the bible says that those who *wait* upon the Lord shall renew their strength, Ps 145 says of those who look to the Lord that He will provide their sustenance in due season, in their time of need.

Now you recall that the Law was very clear that when they turned aside to idolatry that God would visit them with famine that they might repent, but Elimelech rather than seeking the Lord in repentance, sought to escape the wages of sin by running.

But you remember as we quoted last week the Lord said that when they turned aside to false gods, that not only would the heavens be as bronze and the earth as iron, but that they would be cursed in the city, and cursed in the country. In other words it wouldn't do them any good to run from their problems, because the wages of sin aren't restricted to our geographical location. The remedy for famine in our land is to stay where we're called (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles tells us) and turn from our wicked ways and pray and seek the face of the Lord. Then He will hear from heaven and heal our land, cause the fallow grounds of our hearts to become fertile soil once again. And so though many were apparently in sin in the nation of Israel at this time, I have to conclude that their were those who took to their knees in regards to the situation working repentance in not only their hearts but the hearts of the others as well, God looks for those who are willing to stand in the gap on the behalf of others. So that He can do an awesome work and when He found such in Israel during *this* time, God began to revive and rebuild the land which had become so fruitless and dry, and in Naomi's *despair*, she was led to listen, she heard of what was happening back in the place that she had left. And I want you to notice and take note of that fact, it was her loss that led her to listen, as long as things seemed to be going ok for her where she was, you don't hear or read of her inquiry or hearing about anything as long as she was content where she was at. But once tragedy had seemed to strike and she had nothing else to cleave to, she heard what was happening back in the house of bread and decided to go back. Listen, this (I believe) is key in so many lives that have gone astray and we see here the purpose behind what was aloud to transpire in her life. God had visited His faithful people in Bethlehem, those who had stayed in the house of bread with blessing, but not His disobedient daughter in Moab, who had forsaken the place she was supposed to be to find refuge in the world. But what was the result, as she heard and seen what God was doing back where she was supposed to be, and weighed it up against what was happening where she was at, she determined it was time to head back. She'd lived in compromise for years, the whole while things getting progressively worse and then when she'd lost everything, she decided to turn back. The point of this record isn't to show God punishing Naomi for wandering off into Moab. (Many people think that this story sort of revolves around her because it may've been her probing and prodding that encouraged her husband to leave the Promised Land.) But her loss was not that which was to *condemn* her, but rather to *correct* her and there's a big difference. So that she might get back on track, and get back to where she needed to be, back to Bethlehem, the house of bread, the place of praise. And the same is true for you and me, when we're out of the will of God, and begin to suffer loss (not that the only time we suffer loss is when we're out of God's will) But understand that the chastening of the Lord isn't to punish us or condemn us, because if that were the case it would never be severe enough. Because if God were punishing us we'd be completely consumed, because there is no punishment severe enough to balance out payment for our sin.

And the punishment that should be poured out on us because of our sin has already been absorbed in Christ, Him taking our place on the cross. So understand that His chastening work in our lives isn't to punish us, it's to correct us, to get us back on track where we're supposed to be, so if you've been in that place of loss, whether it be vocationally, or relationally as with Naomi, maybe materially or simply internally, you need to know that God *isn't mad at* you. He's not angry with you or disappointed in you, but He does want to speak to you. And He knows our nature, and so many times the only way He gets our attention, so that we direct our ear towards Him, is when we're at that place of loss where there's nothing else to look or listen to.

Vs7

Notice that she went out from the place where she was, she heard what was going on and responded accordingly and this is important because she could've stayed in Moab her whole life regretting the decision to ever leave, but never going back. Many people hear about what God is doing and wish they were apart of it, but never get out from where they are; they just wallow around in the mire. But she purposed to return to the place she needed to be, if you want to experience the blessings of God upon your life, you have to be in a place where you can be blessable. You have to remain under the "umbrella of blessing," that covering that God has provided for you in Christ, abiding in Him and in His word, being His worshiper. Not for what's in it for you, but because he's worthy, but if you're seeking after the Lord, loving on Him, abiding in Him, and in His word, He wants to bless you more than you want to be blessed. But many times we're not blessable, we're out on our own, or in the flesh, or we've sought refuge in the world and wonder why things are drying up. And it's because God's not going to bless us in such places, He wants it to dry up so that we might remember from where we've fallen, repent, returning to Him (our 1<sup>st</sup> love) and repeat those 1<sup>st</sup> works. Isa 55:7 says, "*Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*" Naomi's fed up with the "slop" of the world, and she's ready to return to the "house of bread" that she might feast from her Father's table. Her heavenly Father's table, this record drips with resemblance to the illustration that Jesus gave us regarding the prodigal son in Luke 15. The young man who kinda wished that his dad were dead so that he could have his inheritance and so he said dad how about you give me my inheritance now. And so the dad said, ok if that's what you want. And he went to a far country wasted it all on prodigal living, just partied it away, and after he'd spent everything Jesus said, a sever famine arose in that land. And he found himself getting a job feeding pigs and the slop they were eating was better than what he had, because he had nothing, (he'd suffered loss) and no one would help him out. And so the bible says that one day he came to himself and thought, "Man, even the hired servants in My Father's house have bread enough to spare and here I am starving, that's it, I'm going back." He found himself wallowing around in a pig pen only wishing he could eat as good, but the difference between a prodigal and a pig is that even though a prodigal might spend some time in the pig pen, he doesn't make it his home.

Eventually he comes to a place where he's had enough and he wants out, he wants to back to his Father's house. And the only time in the bible that God is seen to be in a hurry, is in the person of the prodigal son's father, seeing his son afar off and running to meet him and embrace him and receive him again into the family. It's a picture of restoration, of redemption, renewal, revival, and refreshing, that's the heart of God.

#### Vs8-9

Now I have to confess, this seems a bit strange, Naomi is encouraging them to go back to their idolatrous ways, to their pagan land. She should have said, like Moses said to his father in law, "*Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD has promised good things to Israel.*" But she wasn't thinking with *kingdom* sense, she was thinking on the natural level, using *common* sense. Notice

#### Vs10-13

In other words look, you've done the right thing by my boys, and me but now they're both dead, and I can't give you any more sons. And she's referring to the portion of the law which states, "*If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.*" Deut 25:5-6.

So it was the responsibility of the next eldest brother to take his brothers wife if he died so that that brother's name wouldn't be erased from history. But she's saying c'mon use your head, even if I was married and had children tonight, you wouldn't wait for that many yrs so that they could marry you nor would I expect you to. So just go home and find some good young men to marry, it's the logical thing to do. It's common sense, but it's not kingdom sense, she should've been encouraging them to come with her back to the Promised Land that they might enter into the blessings to be found in being in the covenant of God's people. Now it's also possible that she was trying to cover her tracks, because if she comes back with these Moabite women, then everyone will know that family has been blowing life. Because they weren't to have dealings with them, it would be like backsliding and then finally coming back to church with a couple of friends you met at the bar, it would just be kinda weird because everyone would know what you'd been up to. But I want you to notice real quick vs 9, notice that the house of your spouse is to be a place of rest, a place of peace and ease, not a place of contention and dissension, and quarrelling, and if that's not the case in your marriage I encourage to immerse that situation in prayer because that's what God desires in your marriage, peace and harmony, unity and refreshment.

#### Vs14

So Naomi's grieving, Orpah's leaving, and Ruth's cleaving, Orpah means "gazelle" and she's just as skittish as she runs back to Moab, Ruth means "friend" and notice, she won't let go, Orpah showed emotion, but Ruth showed devotion.

Orpah represents that believer who receives the word with gladness, gets all excited at a bible study, but has no root and so when the sun beats down, and hard times come, she withers and goes back, lots of emotion, but no real devotion. And so don't be fooled by the kisses of emotion, look for those who cleave with devotion.

#### Vs15

You know with this kinda friend who needs enemies, "go on back to your pagan ways, don't follow me to the true and living God." But before we get on into Ruth's remarks, I want to comment briefly on Orpah once again. You need to realize that she had the same opportunity as Ruth, but sadly she chose to turn back to the world and she fades into oblivion never to be mentioned in scripture again. However Ruth commits and will wind up becoming David's great grandma actually become an ancestor to Christ Himself, she'll be used in God's Kingdom in a mighty way. But what struck me so profoundly is how quickly these eternal decision's were settled. Orpah opted to leap like a gazelle back into idolatry and from that moment on, she's never motioned again, it was settled in a moment, the eternal destiny of each individual can be decided in a single moment, they each had a choice, one fizzled through emotion, and one pressed on in devotion and was used radically by God. Look at vs 16

#### Vs16-17

To me this is one of the most sentimental confessions of faith in the scriptures. In the face of everything coming against her, her background in idolatry, Chemosh being the Moabite god, who was worshipped through sensuality and human sacrifice. Her circumstances of loss, her mother in law encouraging her to go back instead of come with her and yet through all of that she realized that Moab had nothing to offer her and that the only hope was found in the God of Israel. In vs 16 she confesses "Your God, my God" a personal confession of devotion to the God of Israel. Not by works of righteousness that she had done, but by grace this woman was saved.

But what's she doing here? She's forsaking all for the God of Israel, she's confessing Him as her personal God, she's turning her back and leaving her family, her friends and life as she's known it, what did Jesus say? Luke 14:26 "*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*" Jesus is saying if I'm not the priority of your life even over your own family and your personal desires, you can't be My disciple. And again Luke 14:33, "*whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*" What a picture perfect example of both of these things we see in Ruth, and she's following a broken and embittered woman right back into the Kingdom. And I say that because if you've been in Moab recently, like Naomi you may be coming back *to* nothing, and coming back *with* nothing, but so many times people will look to those who are broken, who are headed home in repentance and see hope for themselves. Hey, if God loves them and can forgive them, then surely He can forgive me! So should we sin that we might draw others to Christ as we repent? God forbid, the best testimony is a life lived for Jesus Christ, but God can take the tragedies of our lives and utilized them for His glory.

## Vs18-19

In other words, man, sister you look rough. You know, sin can have an effect even on our personal appearance, the effects of sin can be brutal, you look at someone who's done a lot of speed or some hard drugs for a long period of time and they look about 15yrs older than they are, or their teeth are all grey and rotting. Their hair turns white because of stress (not that every person with white or grey hair is in sin). But the ramifications can be brutal.

## Vs20-21

The blame game begins, she says don't call me "pleasantness", call be "bitter", Mara means "bitter." And then she begins to blame God for the results of her sin, but you know without getting into the cliché, trials and tribulations can either make you bitter, or they can make you better. And if you can believe that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him and have been called out of the world according to His purpose, then you will become better. Refined and disciplined, reaping the peaceful fruits of the chastening of the Lord, but so many people play the blame game and become bitter against God. And to be honest that's sad, "why did God do this to me, how could God let this happen?" And we begin to rebel in our hearts against the Lord through bitterness, Heb 12:14-15 says, "*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*" Don't call me pleasant, Naomi said, call me bitter, for the Lord has testified against me. Now she could've been all, "thank God that He sobered me up and brought me back to the place I belong." But her perspective was introverted, she was thinking of herself, however in vs 21 she makes a profound evaluation of sin. She says, I went out full, and came back empty. When you leave the house of Bread, the place of praise, wandering off into Moab, you will always go out full, but you come back, empty. Sin always brings sorrow and sadness, don't be deceived God is not mocked; whatever a man sows that will he reap. One has noted the mathematics of sin and said, "Sin adds to your sorrows, subtracts from your energy, multiples your troubles, and divides your loyalty." Sin, makes no sense.

## Vs22

So it's as if act one closes with this lament of Naomi and then the info is interjected, oh yeah, and it was the beginning of the barley season and the curtain closes. But this fact sets the stage for the remainder of the play, because barely season took place in the spring, the season of new life and beginnings. And so we have a subtle hint here that a new beginning is just around the corner.