

Ruth 1

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[0 : 00] While seeking the Lord's help and the Lord's blessing upon us this evening, I wish to turn back to that portion that we read in the book of Ruth.

Maybe we can read again the verse 6 and maybe the verses 16 and 17. Then she arose, that is, Naomi with her daughter-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab. For she heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. And again in verse 16, Ruth said, And treat me not to leave thee or to return from falling after thee. For whether thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there shall I devour it.

The Lord do so to me, and more also, before but death, part thee and me. I must confess that all the way through my Christian experience, this book of Ruth has always intrigued me when I read it.

[1 : 24] And I'm sure if we were going to put any title upon this chapter of the book of Ruth, surely we would have to say, as we read it, that we discern within it that failure is never final with God.

And we are glad as well, and we rejoice in the fact that our own failures, when we fail, that they are not final with God either. But that he is a long-suffering God, and a merciful God, who bids us all to come back to himself when we stray away from him.

And here in this chapter, in the first chapter of the book, we have an account. The older ones here will be very familiar, I'm sure, and I've heard plenty said once on this chapter, especially of the book of Ruth.

But we have an account here, just really, of a small family of four people who lived in Bethlehem. Now, they were living in Bethlehem, which is interpreted as the house of bread.

And Bethlehem was in Judah, which is the land of praise. So where were this family living? Well, they were a family who were living in the promised land.

[2 : 38] They were living in the land that was flowing with milk and with honey. This was the land that God had given to his people, and they were a part of that land.

That is where they lived. And the family themselves, the four of them, well, the head of the family was called Erebleh. And that man's name means God is my king, or God is king.

So the head of the family is God is my king. And then, of course, there is his wife, Naomi. And Naomi, as many of you know, was the fair one, or the pleasant one.

It was always amazing how these names came to be, how God's hand was in the names that were given to children throughout the days of the old covenant.

And how relevant these names became as their lives unfolded in the providence of God. So you have God as my king. And God as my king is married to the fair one, or to the pleasant one.

[3 : 41] God blessed them with two of a family, two boys. One of them is Maron, the other one is Chilion. Maron means the sick one, and so he is given the name the sick one.

And the other one, Chilion, is the pining one. So you have God as my king, and his wife, the pleasant one. And you have their two sons, the sick one and the pining one.

And they are living in the promised land. They are living in the house of bread, in Judah, which is the land of praise. But as we see there, and as we read there, it seems that an awful calamity has come upon the family.

And it would almost seem, as you read the narratives, as if the judgment of God himself seemed to pour down suddenly upon them as a family.

We know that a mighty famine came into the land. The land that was flowing with milk and honey. The house of bread in Judah, the land of praise.

[4 : 47] And all of a sudden, in the providence of God, there is a famine in the house of bread. It is no longer easy to feed your family there.

It is no longer easy to provide for your family. And that is the position, I suppose, when you look at it physically, the position that Elimelech found himself in.

He was no longer able to provide for his family. And hard times have come into the experience of this family in the promised land.

But the thing is that rather than enduring God's will, and rather than living with the portion that God had measured out for them as a family, Elimelech, God is my king, and the pleasant one, and Malon, and Chimeon, they walk away from the very midst of their true family.

They walk away from the promised land. They walk away from God's people. You see, my friends, Bethlehem, the house of bread. One author says that they left that place in rebellious discontent.

[6 : 03] And they go to sojourn in the country of Moab. They wander away from God's land. And they wander away from God's people.

And they wander away from the God of the covenant himself. And they go off into a land of idolatry. A land of sin. A land of immorality.

And a land where every other God is worshiped but the God of the Bible. And I'm quite sure as Elimelech and his family walked into that place and into Moab, I am sure there was an abundance to feed them physically.

There would have been plenty bread. There would have been plenty to eat. And Elimelech once again could provide for his family. But there was no bread for the soul there.

The only thing that could happen to the soul when it went into that place was that the soul would die. There was no manna there for the soul.

[7 : 05] Plenty manna for the stomach. But no manna for the soul. And you know when you think about it. On all of these things in relation to ourselves.

We have to accept that often we stray, don't we? We stray away. And we stray back to the world. We stray back to that from which we were taken by the grace of God.

When God redeemed us and when God saved us. And he took us from that Moab. And from that world. And from the gods of the world. And all of a sudden, so often we find ourselves straying back to that place.

Maybe through some providence. Through some hard providence that has come into our experience. And we seem to think that we will find more relief for that in the world and in Moab.

And we stray back there. And we find there that our souls are starved of the very bread of heaven. And the very manna and sustenance that our souls make.

[8 : 15] And the manna and sustenance that our souls make.

When abundance returns again to the promised land. He would have thought, oh it's only for a season. It's only for a wee while. I'll dabble again in Moab.

I'll dabble again in the world. I'm going to go back to the world. But it's only for a wee while. I'm not going to do any harm to myself. Or to my family.

Or to anybody. I'm just going there for a while. And so Elimelech. He leaves God's land. And he leaves God's people.

And he leaves the God of the covenant. And he goes to Moab. He goes to a place of sin. To a place of darkness. To a place of idolatry.

[9 : 30] He goes to a place of spiritual barrenness. And he dies there. He dies there. He dies in Moab.

And he dies in Moab. Spiritually speaking. Anyone who goes back there. And when we go back to the world. And to the world's things ourselves.

That is exactly what happens to us. Our souls begin to die. In that place where there is no sustenance for the soul.

And so Elimelech dies. And Moab. And Naomi is left a widow with her two sons. In a strange land. You ever thought what it must have been like for that woman there? In a strange land. Among strange gods. She doesn't know the people. She doesn't know its gods.

[10 : 27] And all of a sudden. God is my king is dead. And there she is. In that strange land. With her two sons. But Elimelech dying.

That was only the beginning of Naomi's tragic sufferings in the land of Moab. Because we are told that shortly after their marriage is to the woman of Moab.

That our two sons die. The sick one and the pining one are next. And they are laid in the dust of Moab. And it's tragedy after tragedy.

For this pleasant one. For this fair one. And tragedy after tragedy. As her sojourn in Moab. Became a time of death.

And a time of funerals. A time of tears. A time of brokenness. She was broken. Everything she had was gone. Within ten years of leaving Bethlehem.

[11 : 29] And Naomi is bereft of her family. And Moab has taken its toll upon her. And only she now remains with her two daughters-in-law.

With Ruth and Orpah. What do you think she would have learned? Well whatever else Naomi learned through her tragic experience.

Surely she would have learned there. That the further you stray from God. The nearer death you come. Surely she learned that. Surely she discovered through her experience in Moab.

That there was. That the wages of sin. That they can only ever be death. Surely she would have learned that. And surely she would have learned.

The very hard way. That Moab was the place where the real famine was. And she learned that to her cost. One wonders even for ourselves.

[12 : 33] Even since the last time maybe we sat at the Lord's table together. Maybe since the last time you took communion yourselves. Is it possible that you have walked again the path to Moab?

That maybe your providence has brought you to a position where you have gone back in a sense to the world. Maybe gone back to sin. And back to the world.

And back to the world's remedies. Am I asking if that is your position tonight? When you went back there what did you find there? Did you find the remedy there?

Well Naomi and her family certainly didn't find the remedy there. But you know as all this was going on in Naomi's experience.

We know and we understand that conditions back home there in Judah and the land of praise. In Bethlehem the house of bread. That things were improving. And what happens?

[13 : 39] Well a desire grows in Naomi's soul. And in Naomi's heart. There is this desire to return home. The desire to go back to the house of bread.

The desire to go back to her people. And the desire to go back to her God. And surely that is the first thing that we see here.

That there is a return to the Lord. A return to the Lord. She arose with her daughter-in-law. That she might return from the country of Moab.

It seems that this woman Naomi was in some sense reawakened. That she was revived in her soul. And I'm sure she was thankful for the great truth that we are all thankful of. That our failures as I said are never final with God.

[14 : 38] And I'm sure she was thankful that the God of the covenant was a merciful God. And I'm sure she was thankful that he was a long-suffering God.

As one author says of Naomi's experience in Moab. He says in my quote. That the crosses and the losses she met with in Moab. That they made her soul sit loose from that cursed country.

And to again long to go home. You see what happened here. What is going on here. God has struck Naomi.

God struck Naomi with his own chesoning rod. But it wasn't so much that he struck her. But that in that rod there was a voice.

It is almost as if the rod with which God struck her. As if it could talk. And in that voice that was talking. God was saying to Naomi.

[15 : 41] Naomi come back. Come back to me. My daughter. Come back to me. God is saying. Repent of your sins. Repent of your foolishness.

And come back to me. And to my people. And to the land that you will find flowing. With milk and with honey. You know when we stray from God.

And God strikes us. Because of that. His voice is so often the voice that reawakens us. And that awakens us to our sin.

And awakens us to our folly. And so Naomi's ears. Once again it is open to the voice of God.

And she arose that she might return. Can you imagine what it must have been like? This woman who had been in Moab for so long. And all of a sudden her heart is burning within her again.

[16 : 42] Even like these two who were on the road to Emmaus. While he talked with them in the way. And all of a sudden after her folly and her foolishness.

And all that she endured. All of a sudden there is this warmth again in her soul. And she again decides to return. To God's people.

And to God's land. And is now on her way back. She has been reawakened. But the thing about it is.

Reawakened as she is. She is not the same as she was. The woman whose name meant fair. And the woman whose name meant pleasant.

She is now wearing another veil. She is wearing the veil of bitterness. And of sorrow. And of tears. And of loss.

[17 : 38] And she says don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara. Call me bitterness. It's almost as if she is saying my face is now bitterness.

I went back to Moab. I went there full. And I am coming out of it. And I am empty. I am completely empty. You see this woman bears the scars.

That are inflicted upon a person. When that person strays from God. Because if we stray back to Moab.

We will not return from there unscathed. And we might go there full. But it is empty my friends. But we shall return.

You see in her day of wandering away from God. And in these ten years where she wandered. Naomi realized and found. That she had gained absolutely nothing.

[18 : 44] Well I doubt there had been a famine in Judah. But there was a far, far worse famine in Moab. And there in Moab.

Every single comfort had failed. And all her hopes had departed. In a sense her hope itself was dead. But in the midst of it all.

And in the midst of all that discomfort. And all that chaos. And all that darkness. And all of these tears. In the midst of all that.

She heard the voice of God. Calling her to repentance. And calling her back to the place. That she had left. Yes she had done wrong.

And yes without a doubt. She had wandered away. And yes my friends. She had suffered through trial and testing. But the great question is.

[19 : 41] Did the Lord cast her off forever? Was it ever the case. That the Lord said to Naomi. You have done so wrong. That you cannot come back.

You have gone so far away. That you cannot ever return. No God says to Naomi. You arise. You repent.

You awaken. And you come back. And it's as if that voice in the rod is saying. I love you Naomi. You come back to me.

How she must have longed. To go back home. To the promised land. To her people. And to her God. Can you imagine the sense of hope.

That rekindles in her heart. As she is reawakened. But she is reawakened. You see to two things. She is reawakened. To the depth of her sin.

[20 : 39] And the depth of her depravity. But she is also reawakened. To the mercy of her God. She had been emptied of everything.

Emptied of all her possessions. Emptied of all she held dear. She was emptied of her family. She was emptied of herself. God had emptied her.

But she was going to return. A return to the Lord. And the interesting thing.

About this return to the Lord. Is. That it was going to be the means. That God would use. To bring about. A new lifelong commitment.

In the life of another. Her witness and her testimony. Was going to be used. In the conversion of another. And so we see a lifelong commitment.

[21 : 39] Entreat me not to leave you who says to her. Or to return from following after you. For where you go I will go. And where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people.

And your God. He shall be my God. And where you die will I die. And there will I be buried. And that new awakening.

Through the witness of Naomi. Was going to have an eternal impact. On the history of the world. Wasn't it? The witness of her reawakening.

The witness of God. Working in this woman's life. Was going to bring about. A new awakening to another. And the interesting thing is that from her line.

And from her seat. Would come the promised Messiah. Look at the workings of God. In the midst of all of this chaos. The sovereign God at work.

[22 : 41] And so we meet Ruth. As Naomi came back to her God. Ruth was moved. And the scales fall from Ruth's own eyes.

And now this Gentile woman. Who came from a sinful and an idolatrous nation. She lost her desire for the gods of that nation. She lost her desire for the gods of Moab.

And a desire grew in her heart. For the God of Naomi. Entreat me not to leave thee. She says to her. I believe that that transaction took place.

As Naomi is just about to leave Moab. And I believe there is a possibility. That for one last time. She would go to visit that patch of ground.

Where God is my king. Is lying in the dust. And where her boys are blind. And for one last time. She goes there. Before she goes on the road back.

[23 : 46] To Bethlehem Judah. And with her there is Ruth. The Moab I guess. And the Moab I guess. Says to her. Entreat me not.

To leave thee. Here we see a woman. That is. Awakened and converted. Truly. Truly. By the only means. That that can happen.

Through the grace of God. Through the grace of God. By the grace of God. Through the testimony. The godly testimony.

Of her mother-in-law. Who was reawakened. Do you see in all of this. My friends tonight. How very very very important.

Our Christian witness is. Out there. In the world. How important it is. To live by the professions. That we make.

[24 : 40] And the vows that we take. Who knows how well. Tonight are affected. By our witness. And how we conduct ourselves.

Through sunshine. Or tempest. Sweet peace. Or despair. Whatever. Our circumstances. Might be. It is important. That we always.

Radiate. With Christ. There is no question. That truth was converted. By God's grace. But God. In his sovereignty. As God often does. He employed. The witness. Of Naomi. You see. Although Naomi's pleasantness.

Was gone. And although she bore. The scars of Moab. And although she wore. The veil of bitterness.

[25 : 37] And the veil of tears. And the veil of sadness. And the veil of God's hard providence. Yet through that veil.

Ruth could see. The beauty of God. And through that veil. Ruth could see.

The witness of this. Woman who was reawakened. And revived. In the witness. That was.

Shining through. The veil of bitterness. Ruth was then hearing her voice. Just in a sense. As Naomi had heard her voice.

Ruth was now. Hearing her voice. As she looked at. As she looked at Naomi. Through this. Veil of bitterness. As she saw. And beheld. Naomi's witness.

[26 : 31] Through that. God is saying to Ruth. My daughter. Give me your heart. And in response.

To that voice. Ruth made a complete. And absolute. Commitment. Of herself. To Naomi. To Naomi's people.

And to Naomi's God. She made a commitment there. She took a vow there. She made a profession there. That she was going to walk.

In the Lord's way. And she said to Naomi. Wherever you go. She said. I will go. It's one thing you need to remember.

About Ruth here. As she comes to this point. She had absolutely no idea. Where that commitment. Was going to lead her.

[27 : 26] She had no idea. But she is giving up. The freedom. There of choice. In the affairs. Of her own life. She is giving that freedom away.

She doesn't know. Where this path. Is going to lead. And she committed herself. To that path. Not knowing where it might take it.

But she knew where it would end. She knew that that path would end. In the promised land. She knew the path would end. In Bethlehem, Judah.

And she commits herself to a course of life. That would be entirely determined. By someone else.

Surely that is the portion tonight. Of all of us here. Who are in the Lord. Those of us who have been converted. By God's grace.

[28 : 21] Those of us whose lives. Have been changed. Those of us who are on this path. To the promised land. With all of its. Nukes and crannies. And all the directions it takes.

We know where it is going to end. But we have given ourselves over. To somebody else's control. Turned from our way.

To his way. Turned from walking in our old way. To walking in the way of faith. The way, my friends, tonight.

Is the way of the cross. It is the way that leads us home. To the cross. And so Ruth gave up that freedom of choice.

We gave up that freedom of choice. And we cast that upon the Lord. In our lives. Our soul was saved. And she went on to say.

[29 : 19] And my dear lodge. Where thou lodgest. I will lodge. Her heart is filled with her desire. To be with Naomi.

Even when she married Boaz. We know that she still clung to Naomi. She still did. And surely there we have a picture.

Of every child of God's great ambition. And every child of God's great prospect. To dwell with Christ. And to cling to Christ.

It doesn't matter where my path takes me. If Christ is there. It doesn't matter which way it turns. It doesn't matter which providence is there. Or how many providences are going to be there. On my journey. As long as on that path Christ is there. It doesn't matter what is in my experience.

[30 : 21] As long as Christ is in my experience. And at the end of the day. My friends. Whatever veil we may wear.

Whatever veil is put upon us. Even like a providence. As long as Christ can be seen through it. While you lodge I will lodge.

And your people shall be my people. Your people shall be my people.

You see, it was awakening. Included from her a painful separation. She left her own people. And she took upon herself Naomi's people.

As her own. Why would she do that? Why would she want to be found. Amongst the flock of God. Because she knew.

[31 : 27] That amongst that flock. She would find the shepherd. And so she took Naomi's people. As her own.

She developed a strong love. For the people of God. And the people of God. Became her people. Is that not one of the marks.

In our own lives. When we came to know the Lord. Celebrating ourselves. From the world and advanced people. And this strong bond.

And this strong love. Developing for the people of God. Is that not one of the marks of grace? People that may be.

In our unconverted days. Were so far from us. And all of a sudden. They become my people. And she goes on to say.

[32 : 25] Thy God shall be. My God. And you know my friends. That must have been. The most difficult thing of all. For both. The most difficult thing of all.

In all of this. Was to say. Your God shall be. My God. God. But if she was going to follow. The God of Naomi. She had to let go.

Of every other God. That the world had to offer. She had to let go. Of the gods of the world. The things of the world. She had to let go. Of the gods of Moab.

It is impossible. For anyone. To follow the Lord. Without first forsaking. All other gods. Whatever these gods may be. Maybe one of the biggest problems.

We have today. Is that. That we have too many gods. Somebody once said. We cannot worship. On the altar of free will.

[33 : 23] And on the altar of free grace. And she wanted to go with Naomi. She wanted. And desired to lodge.

With Naomi. She wanted to have the same people. As Naomi. She wanted to have the same. God as Naomi. And even more than that. She wants to die. In the same place.

As Naomi. Why? Why does she want to die. In the same place. As Naomi. Because Ruth has made.

In these vows. She has made. A lifelong commitment. It is not a commitment. For a day. It is not a commitment. For a week. Or for a month. This is a lifelong commitment.

These vows. Are going to be binding. For a week. It is a commitment. That won't be reversed. And she won't reverse.

[34 : 22] It won't be reversed. After a month. Over the years. And surely. That commitment. To Naomi. Surely tonight. For ourselves. It is a picture. Of what our commitment.

Should be. To the Lord. Jesus Christ. A lifelong commitment. Every day.

The same commitment. Every week. The same commitment. Every year. The same commitment. Until we die. Until we die.

And her commitment was so great. She even wanted to be buried. With her. She could follow her. No further. Than the grave. But she is vowing. That she would follow her. That far. As far as the grave. Surely tonight.

[35 : 23] All of us. Who have taken words. And all of us. Who have made a profession. Should have a desire. And the same desire. To follow her master. That far.

To follow him. And to cleave to him. Until we reach the grave. Is that not our desire?

Is that not what we want. In our hearts deep down? I will follow you. Until they lower me. Into the dust. I will cleave to you.

Until my journey is over. And so Ruth was awakened. Through the godly witness of Naomi.

And that awakening. Brought forth from Ruth. A commitment. A lifelong commitment. And just very briefly.

[36 : 25] To just say a word about the journey home. When she saw. That she was dead. Thus reminded to go with her. Then she left. Speaking unto her.

So they too went. Until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass. When they would come to Bethlehem. But all the city. Was moved about. Then what they said. Is this Naomi?

And she said unto them. Call me not Naomi. Call me Mara. For the almighty. Hath dealt bitterly with me. I went out full. And the Lord hath brought me home again.

Empty. And so on. Naomi is going to come home. She's going to come home. To her people.

And to her God. And Ruth has pledged. To come with her. And so they begin their journey home. On the road from Moab.

[37 : 24] Back to the promised land. To Bethlehem Judah. I wonder what they talked about. On the way. I wonder what the conversation was.

On that road for. And do you not think. That maybe Naomi. Taught with the things of God. Taught her maybe.

The law of God. And taught her from the scriptures. Of the Old Testament. Maybe. I would consider that. Is what they talked.

About. She would have taught her about God. She was teaching Ruth. About God. That Ruth had just pledged. To follow. You see my friends.

Unless we learn of her. We will not know. Who it is we are following. And that is why it is so important. For us. And especially. Even the younger ones.

[38 : 19] That are here tonight. To spend time. In the world. Spend time. With the Lord. Spend time. Amongst God's people. Talking about the Lord.

So that you will come to know. The one it is. You have pledged. And professed. To follow. Get to know him. And you will get to know him. In his world.

And I am quite sure. That Naomi would have instructed Ruth. Concerning the things of God. But I am quite sure as well. For this woman.

When you consider her coming back up that road. That she would have been reminded. Of the way that it was. On this same road. The last time she was on it.

Ten years before. Confronted there. She would have been with the memories. Of that day. Ten years before. When with her husband and boys.

[39 : 14] She came down this road. To war. And that day she was full. She was full. In her soul. She was full. Surely these memories would.

Bring up and well up inside her. A keen sense of loneliness. She has strayed. You see. From the God of the covenant.

And now the God of the covenant. Has emptied her. Everything she had put before the Lord. The Lord had taken it away.

There is an important lesson. For all of us in that. If we put anything before the Lord. And anything in the place that the Lord should have in our lives.

The Lord may just take it away. And in taking it away. It might be very bitter. And very sore. She had been emptied of all that she held dear.

[40 : 15] Her husband. Her husband. Elimerech God. Is my king. Where is him? He is lying silent. In the dust of war. The size of her womb.

Have been creamed. By the never ending hunger. Of the graves of war. There in the dust. Her wealth is gone. Her home is gone.

All her land. Everything is gone. Everything is gone. And she is empty. And she bears the scars. Of her emptiness.

Pleasantness has turned. To bitterness. And it's all taken its toll. And she is like one author says. She is like a withered rose.

Now you know your signs when you look at a withered rose. You know when you look at it. Even although it's withered. But it still arose. It still bears some of the characteristics that it had.

[41 : 18] When it was in full bloom. When it was a beautiful vibrant rose. And then it withered. You look at it withered. And you know that it is still a rose.

Its beauty is gone. But it still bears some of the characteristics. Of what it was before. That is why they ask who is this Naomi. Some of the characteristics were still there.

But the beauty is gone. The pleasantness is gone. She is no longer the fair one. She is empty. She has been broken. She bears the scars of Moab.

She is a withered rose. But she is God's rose. Withered as she is. She is God's rose. Notice what she says.

God has brought me home. She had forgotten her God. But he had not forgotten her.

[42 : 19] Not at all. And now he brings this withered rose. He brings her home. home. At the beginning. Of the barley harvest.

God's withered rose. His home. He will bring them all home. Every single one of them. Everyone who belongs to themselves.

Battered and withered. And scarred. As they may be. In this Moab. God of a world. But they are his roses.

They are his people. And he will bring them home. Because my friends. Their failures. Are never final.

With them. My daughters. My sons. Give me. Your heart. Is what the Lord. Says to us all.

[43 : 20] Tonight. And if we have stayed. Away from the Lord. He asks us. To return. To himself. To confess.

And to repent. Of our sin. And of our weirdness. And he will be willing. To take us home. And back to himself.

There was a return. To the Lord. A new. Lifelong. Unitment. And there was. At the end of that. A journey home.

For our mother grows. You know my friends. Even when you think of this. Going one step further. Than this world. What a scene.

It will be. When God's. Body harvest. Comes. And God. Takes all. His own. Will of roses.

[44 : 15] To glory. What a scene. That will be. And what a day. That will be. And that is. Our growth came.

To know the Lord. And to make a lifelong. Commitment. To follow. The Lord. May God bless. And his thoughts. Thank you. Thank you.