

1. THE PAINS OF NAOMI AND THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD: Ruth 1:1-5

by Brett Baggett on Sunday, February 21, 2021

- **Q. Can you think back to a particularly painful time in your life?** Did you ask, “Where is God?” or maybe “What is God doing?” **If you have not, you will.**
- **This is one reason you need to master and be mastered by what God says to you in this book:**
- **The book of Ruth is healing medicine for suffering saints who wonder what on earth God is doing while they are in pain.**

WHY STUDY THE BOOK OF RUTH? FIVE REASONS

I) The book of Ruth is in the Scriptures, therefore God wants us to know it (1 Corinthians 10:11).

- **“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction....” 1 Corinthians 10:11**

II) The book of Ruth is God-breathed, therefore it is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

- **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

III) The book of Ruth is both king David’s and the Lord Jesus’ family history (Matthew 1:5).

- **“and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,” Matthew 1:5**

IV) The book of Ruth will help us see and trust the mystery of God’s providence especially in times of pain (again 1 Corinthians 10:11).

- This will become plain in the text before us.

V) The book of Ruth will help us delight in Jesus all the more, who is like Boaz but even better (John 5:39).

- **“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,” John 5:39**
- **Come with me and search the book of Ruth, seeing that it ultimately testifies about Jesus!**

BIG IDEA: Though the saints’ pains are great, God’s providence is greater.

I. THE PAINS OF NAOMI (explanation)

I) Naomi lived in a painful *time* (v.1a)

Ruth 1:1a “In the days when the judges ruled”

- **Judges 21:25** “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

II) Naomi endured painful *discipline* (v.1b)

Ruth 1b “*there was a famine in the land*, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.”

- **Leviticus 26:3-4** “**3** If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, **4** then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.”

III) Naomi was part of a painful *decision of faithlessness* (v.2)

Ruth 1:2 “The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. *They went into the country of Moab and remained there.*”

IV) Naomi suffered a painful *separation* (v.3)

Ruth 1:3 “But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.”

- **Genesis 2:24** “...a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

V) Naomi experienced two painful *marriages* (v.4)

Ruth 1:4 “These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years.”

- **The LORD forbade His people from marrying pagans!**

Deuteronomy 7:1-4 “**1** When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you...**3** You shall not intermarry with them...**4** for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods...”

- **The LORD forbade His people from seeking the peace or prosperity of Moabites!** **Deuteronomy 23:3,6** “**3** No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. . . **6** You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.”

VI) Naomi endured multiple painful *losses* (v.5)

Ruth 1:5 “and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.”

- **Psalms 127:3** “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.”

II. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD (application)

Though you may not have any idea what is happening in your life or in the world around you,

I) THE LORD IS PROVIDENTIALLY WORKING ALL THINGS EXACTLY AS HE WANTS TO!

- **Q.** Can you imagine what is going through Naomi’s mind? Can you imagine what she is feeling?
- **One of the reasons God reveals the story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz to us is to teach us to trust Him in any circumstance!**
- **Ephesians 1:11** “[He] works all things according to the counsel of His will.”
- **This is why WILLIAM COWPER sings and we should sing with him,**
“God moves in a mysterious way...His wonders to perform: He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.”
“Deep in unfathomable mines...Of never-failing skill, He treasures up His bright designs, And works His sovereign will.”

- **CHILDREN:** Did you know Jesus is controlling every single thing that is happening in the world and in your life right now? Did you know He never sleeps? Hebrews 1 says “He upholds the universe by the word of His power.” He never takes a day off. He never takes a nap. He has never been surprised by anything.

Q. Does this give you comfort or anxiety? If the fact that Jesus controls everything gives you anxiety you need to read and meditate on His great love!

- **The same Jesus who is so powerful and wise that He controls everything in the universe is also so loving that He willingly died to save sinners like you and me from the hell we deserve. You can trust Him** who “works all things according to the counsel of His will.”

Though you deserve to end up like Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, in Christ,

II) YOU WILL END UP LIKE NAOMI AND RUTH!

- **The Lord saves Naomi and Ruth so that none would despair; He passes over the other four so that none would presume.**
- **Q. Do you know the wages of sin is death and that you deserve what Elimelech, Chilion, Mahlon received? Q.** What good would it do you to run from the land of the LORD to seek satisfaction in the land of idols if it only leads to your death & damnation?
- **Do not presume on the mercy of God. Oh but do not despair either!**
- **Romans 6:23** “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Though you may have great pains in this life for your sin, in Christ,

III) GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A REDEEMER WHO WILL HAVE THE LAST WORD IN THE STORY!

- **The book of Ruth is all about the redeeming love of the LORD.** In fact, the word *redeem* in its various forms is used 23 times in these four short chapters!
- **Naomi is not without sin in leaving the land of the LORD,** staying in the land of Moab, and, it seems, letting her sons take Moabite wives. And yet the LORD blesses her with a Redeemer in Boaz and Obed!
- **In Ruth 4:14** “The women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer...’”
- **Q. Has the LORD given you a Redeemer in Jesus Christ?** Then He will have the last word in your story, not your sin or the pain that comes from it!
- **Our Lord Jesus Christ—the descendant of Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, and Obed—**came into this world to buy you back from the curse that you have sold yourself into by your sin.
- **Oh then see that your end is not cursing because of your sin;** in Christ, your end is blessing because God has not left you without a Redeemer!

Though you may experience painful discipline from the LORD in this life, in Christ,

IV) GOD DISCIPLINES YOU OUT OF LOVE, SO THAT YOU MAY BE HOLY AND HAPPY!

- Naomi experienced the discipline of the LORD in this famine, but it was to wake her up for holiness.
- **Hebrews 12:10** “[God] disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.”
- **Sadly, Naomi ran from God at first into Moab.** She did not return to the Promised Land after Elimelech died either. Only after everything in the world had been stripped from her did she return to the LORD. Do you see the lesson to be learned?
- **Saints, like Naomi, may not repent until their backs are blue with bruises from the LORD’s providential rod of discipline.**
- **Oh but you will repent, loved one!** How many bruises you receive may depend on you.
- **Q. Do you see how stingy God is with His redemptive property?** God is stingy with the things that belong to Him. If you belong to Him by grace, He will not let you finally fall away—He will work in you so that you persevere to the end.
- **We must listen to and obey God speaking through King Solomon in Proverbs 3:11-12:** “**11** My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, **12** for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”
- **CHILDREN:** If your parents love you they will discipline you when you do wrong, so that you may learn to do what is right. God does the same thing. Sometimes Jesus will cause you to suffer in your life so that you will realize you need to repent—He does this because He loves you.

Though you may be painfully separated from your spouse, in Christ,

V) GOD HAS PROMISED NEVER TO SEPARATE FROM YOU!

- **Naomi’s momentary husband was ripped away from her but her eternal husband was not!**
- **Is. 54:4-5** “**4**...you will not be ashamed...you will not be disgraced...you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. **5** For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer.”
- **Beloved, the one that you have become one flesh with may be ripped apart from you by desertion or death;** but Christ on the cross was ripped apart *for you* so that you would be washed clean and forever united to Him by grace.
- **This is why Jesus says to you in Hebrews 13:5** “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Though you may painfully lose your children, in Christ,

VI) GOD HAS GIVEN YOU HIS OWN SON!

- **Naomi lost her children, but was given God’s only Son.** Christ Jesus came into the world to save Naomi, even though at the time she only trusted God’s promise to save! Little did she know she would be a part of bringing her Redeemer! Christ bore Naomi’s sins in His body on the tree!
- **Q. Have you lost children?** I cannot imagine the pain. Yet, hear me: God knows what that is like.
- **To those who have lost children God gives a special medicine to heal the heartache.** From heaven He says to you, “I know what that is like, dear one.” **Q.** How can I say that?
- **Because God says it through Paul in Romans 8:32:** “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

Though you will experience pain in this life, in Christ,

VII) GOD HAS PROMISED TO WORK ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR GOOD!

- **Romans 8:28** “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”
- He take can a death and make it a resurrection.
He can take a loss and make it gain.
The LORD can take a sinner and make them a saint.
- **So sing to your own heart and to the hearts of others with William Cowper,**
“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”
- **Be comforted with the words of your bleeding King from John 16:33:**
“In the world you will have tribulation; but take heart, I have overcome the world.”
- **If you are *NOT* in Christ,** you may have worldly pleasure now, but your story will end in pain. The wages of sin is death. Turn to Christ Jesus!
- **If you are *IN* Christ,** your story does not end in pain; it ends in pleasure!
- **Psalm 16:11** “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

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