

Naomi & God's Providence



What is Providence?

- ❖ God's sovereignty refers to His power over all things. God's providence refers to the manner, means, and events God uses to bring about His sovereign will.
- ❖ "Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without His providence; yet by the same providence He ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently." (1689, 5.2).
- ❖ How does Naomi react to God's providence in her life?

Is Naomi bitter?

- ❖ (1:11-13a) - What is Naomi's view of her present and future circumstances?
- ❖ Does Naomi have a problem with believing God's sovereignty?
- ❖ (1:13b) - "it grieves me greatly" - lit. "it is greatly bitter to me"
- ❖ (1:19-20a) - "call me Mara" - Naomi = "pleasant, lovely"; Mara = "bitter" (see Exodus 15:23)
- ❖ (1:21a) - "... full... empty...."
- ❖ (1:21b) - "... the Lord has testified against me"

What is bitterness?

- ❖ Bitterness is not the same as envy or discontentment.
- ❖ Bitterness is the refusal to find peace with events as they have occurred, or are expected to occur.
- ❖ Bitterness believes that there is no blessing from God on your life.
- ❖ Bitterness questions the goodness of God in His providence.
- ❖ Bitterness ultimately is an accusation against God that says that you can do better than He can at running your life.

Things at which we get bitter

- ❖ We get bitter at God over life's tragedies or embarrassments.
- ❖ We get bitter at God when we don't understand what He is doing, or why (e.g. Job)
- ❖ We get bitter at ourselves over our own sins (e.g. Peter & denial of Christ - Peter "wept bitterly")
- ❖ We get bitter in envying others (James 3:14)

Three Characteristics of Bitterness

- ❖ Exaggeration of condition
 - ❖ The past was so perfect, the present stinks.
 - ❖ The present is so bad, the future can't be worth having
- ❖ Refusal to be grateful for what you have
- ❖ Refusal to believe that there are no hopeless situations.

Cure For Bitterness

- ❖ We get bitter when we think we aren't getting what we deserve. Remember that we only deserve hell.
- ❖ Holding fast to *both* the idea of God's sovereignty and His goodness.
- ❖ Remembering that God has promised us eternal glory. Do we have to be perfectly content now?

Final Remarks

- ❖ Naomi doesn't exactly "triumph in faith" - yet God is still faithful.
- ❖ Christians can be bitter. That's why we are warned against it.
- ❖ Feed your faith with reminders of God's goodness.