

Sermons in Ruth

Title: **From the Country of Moab to the House of Bread**

Text: Ruth 1: 1-6

Date: 7-6-08

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Princeton, New Jersey

Let's read the passage together: Ruth 1: 1-6

Title: From the country of Moab to the House of Bread

Divisions: I. An Offense; II. A Sad Result; III. A Happy Ending

I. An Offense

Ruth 1: 1: Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land.

A. It came to pass because God brought this famine to pass.

1. *The days when the judges ruled* were the days when the Lord God ruled Israel through certain judges he raised up. These judges typify the Lord Jesus Christ under whose care believers rest.

- The judge served as Captain of the army--conquering their enemies and delivering the people--*Captain of our salvation--our warfare is accomplished by Christ.*
- The judge settled all legal matters among the people in righteousness--*by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many*
- The judge protected the people so they could enjoy the land God gave them and the liberty they had at God's hand--*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Believer's stand in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.*

2. While a judge was over the people they served the Lord in truth. When the judge died they would forsake the worship of the Lord and follow false gods.

- We can not lead ourselves.
- We need the Lord to lead us, to teach us, to protect us.
- He says clearly that he is pleased to do so through his word, through those he has sent to feed us with knowledge and understanding of Christ.

3. When they turned from him, the Lord sent judgments upon the people, turning them back to him. Thus when the people turned to the Lord for mercy the Lord would raise up before their eyes a faithful judge to whom they would submit and upon whom they would cast all their care--another good illustration of his faithfulness to keep believer's ever looking to him.

4. This famine most likely occurred, during one of those periods when the people turned from the Lord again to serve mammon. Turn with me to:

Judges 6: 1: And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2: And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. 3: And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; 4: And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. 5: For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. 6: And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

So we see that this famine came to pass because the Lord brought it to pass. The Lord promised this in: **Leviticus 26: 18: And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. 19: And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:**

There are no accidents in this world. From great things--such as a nation which destroys the land of a people TO the tiny bird which falls to the ground, it is by the hand of God, according to the will of God. If we have no food OR if our table is full it is by the hand of God. Everything comes to pass according to his will and his purpose just as the Lord said in Matthew 10: 29: **Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30: But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31: Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.**

Ruth 1: 1: [During this famine]...a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. 2: And the name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

A. In our own country, in this day, it may not be too difficult to put ourselves in Elimelech's shoes.

1. The people in Bethlehem-judah had turned from worshipping the Lord, there was a famine in the land, and things were prospering pretty well in the country of Moab.

2. So like any loving father and husband would do, while he had the means to do so, Elimelech packed up and moved to Moab.

B. Now, knowing my own sinful flesh, there is no doubt in my mind that Elimelech justified this move in his own mind. We have some indication of it, in verse 1:

1. He *went to sojourn in the country of Moab*--I can hear what I might say:

- "It is honorable for a man to provide for his family; that's all I am trying to do."
- "It's not like we are forsaking the assembly of the saints, this is temporary."
- "We're only going *to sojourn in the country of Moab*. We'll be back."

2. But read the last sentence of verse 2: **And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.** If this is the famine mentioned in Judges then it lasted 7 years. Verse 4 says, **and they dwelled there about 10 years.**

This is exactly what the Lord is warning us against in Proverbs chapter 3:

Proverbs 3: 5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7: Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. 8: It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

C. But here is the truth of the matter...according to the Lord.

1. The only thing Elimelech would be starved of by staying in Bethlehem was his own desire for the pleasures to which he had grown accustomed. We read no where in scripture of anyone dying from this famine.

2. The only thing Elimelech would have given up by staying in Bethlehem was the temporal delights which had become his false gods; which had come between him and the Lord.

3. But rather than suffer the loss of those things, rather than honoring the Lord by providing for his brethren with the substance he had, rather than hearkening to Word of the Lord and worshipping the Lord--this man whose name means "My God is King," of the tribe of Ephraim which means "Fruitfulness", of Bethlehem which means "House of Bread,"--this man left the place where his family could worship the Covenant God, he turned his back on the people of God, and moved his family to a land of idolatry simply because he insisted on having his own way. He may have claimed to believe on the Lord, but he did not justify his claims by his actions. He could not crucify the lust of his own flesh. Elimelech had prospered until he was in the same state as the church in Laodicea:

Revelation 3:14: And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16: So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17: Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with

goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

II. The Sad Result

Ruth 1:3: And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. **4:** And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. **5:** And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

A. As long as we refuse to submit to the Lord and trust him alone, the result will always be more and more rebellion, sorrow, and suffering.

1. *Elimelech died--*

2. Following the example which their father taught them by his actions--his sons rebelled against the direct command of the Lord God and *took them wives of the women of Moab and died also both of them.*

The Lord commanded Israel: Deut. 7: 2: **And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: 3: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4: For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.**

The Lord declared the same through Paul in 2 Corinthians 6: 14: **Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15: And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16: And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17: Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, 18: And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.**

What do we learn from Elimelech? If we attempt to save our lives:

- **by trusting our own way and refusing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ**

- by leaning to our own understanding instead of trusting him in times of plenty or in lean times
- by refusing to deny ourselves the temporary pleasures of this world
- by turning our backs on the worship of our Redeemer
- by depriving our brethren of the comfort which he has given us to provide
- by joining ourselves with the world of unbelievers

If we attempt to save our lives, we will lose our lives.

Luke 16:13: No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it.

3. *Elimelech died*, his sons died, and his wife--*Naomi*--was left alone with two daughter-in-laws, with no place to worship the Lord, no brethren to provide for her, and no way to provide for herself. What a sad result of turning from the Lord!

III. A Happy Ending--

A. Scripture says little about the others, but the Lord loved Naomi.

Because he loved her, the Lord would not allow her to continue in that barren land, away from his people, away from his worship.

1. He took away the husband she once served.

2. She hung around in Moab because of her two sons--**Mahlon and Chilion**--whose names mean "Sickness" and "Consumption"--but now the Lord removed them because they would only bring her more sickness and consumption.

3. By the hand of the Lord, the sweetness of Moab was now turned bitter...

4. Naomi had become so sickly from all this...But the Lord sent a person declaring to Naomi the good news--*how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread,*

5. Look at the result: **Ruth 1:6: Then [Naomi] arose...**

- The Lord said, the words I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life--
- Through his Word, through his messenger, the Lord gave Naomi strength to say, "No more! She chose that day, whom she would serve."

Ruth 1:6:...for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

A. The Lord has visited his people. The Bread which he has freely given is Christ Jesus the Lord.

The Lord declared: John 6: 49: Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness which fell from heaven, **and they died.** 50: [I am] **the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a**

man may eat thereof, and not die....51: I am the living bread which came down from heaven:...if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever:...and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

- The bread that he gave is his body which he voluntarily gave up--**This is my body which is given for you:** I will give my life to preserve the life of my people.
- He paid for the offenses which his people were guilty of--**He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.**
- **Romans 7:4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.** And Naomi did just that:

Ruth 1:6: Then [Naomi] arose with her daughters in law that she might return from the country of Moab:...7: Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

A. She turned from the loneliness of that vast wilderness called "the *country* of Moab" to her Lord and her brethren in "the *house* of Bread."

1. Did the Lord disappoint her?

2. Oh, no! The Lord freely gave to Naomi in abundance just as he promised.

- The Lord Jesus Christ promised...**whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.**
- **Let's read Ruth 4: 13-17**

Application:

Brethren, I can't press upon you enough the importance of this! Our eternal Sustenance, our Bread from heaven is--

- not something we obtain by the work of our own hand,
- by our own understanding;
- Life can't be found in the pleasures which this world offer for a season,
- nor in the people of this world--

Christ is Life and Sheep need a Shepherd and to be with other Sheep.

Without a living union with Christ through faith, without him feeding us together with our brethren, we will starve to death in this "country of Moab." He is the good and pleasant unity in whom **brethren dwell together!**

The Lord taught that to Naomi. I pray, the Lord be pleased, to teach us, that we might return from the country of Moab to the House of Bread. Amen!