

# I Will Redeem You

## An Expository Journey Through the Book of Ruth

### **Ruth 4:13-22**

#### 6 “A Son Has Been Born to Naomi”

#### Divine Providence in the Genealogy of Jesus

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August 20, 2017

#### **Ruth 4:13-22**

**13** So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

**14** Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.

**15** "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

**16** Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.

**17** The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

**18** Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron,

**19** and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab,

**20** and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon,

**21** and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed,

**22** and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

To the Glory of God

For many years now, people have read the **Book of Ruth** to find comfort when the hard Hand of God's Providence has moved against them. And Ruth is in the Bible to tell believers that when it looks like God has abandoned you, or when it looks like satan is winning his war against you, that God is actually very busy, working behind the scenes, to push and pull, to raise up and cast down, to allow and cause, and to "work" ten thousand different variables and contingencies together to assure that two things will come to pass:

1. That God is glorified
2. That the Joy of believers is full

Now, maybe you think that the phrase “the Glory of God” is a little overdone here. After all, this last segment of the **Book of Ruth** tells us that Ruth had a child. Well, so what? Lots of people have children, so *why* is this something that earns the phrase “the Glory of God”. This is just a child, right? I mean a grandmother holding a little child after a long hard life of much heartache is real nice, but it hardly rises to the place where we could say that it is the “Glory of God”. Unless, that's really *not* the end of the story.

You see, dear friends, one of the great diseases of our day is the disease called “Triviality”. The things with which most people spend most of their time today are utterly trivial, utterly meaningless. And what makes us engaging in trivial things a “disease” is that we who were created in the Image of God were meant to live for magnificent Causes. We were created to know and to love and to enjoy the most magnificent Being in the Universe, the Owner and Creator of the Universe. And so, for any of God's people to turn away from Him to find comfort and joy with silly and foolish things dishonors the God we say we love.

The reality is that no human is fully content with the trivial pursuits of this fallen world. And that is because God has created us in such a way that our souls will simply not be satisfied with trifles. For example, why is there an entire section of the newspaper devoted to “Sport”, and almost nothing devoted to the greatest Story in the universe, that the God Who formed Light out of darkness can be known and loved and enjoyed by sinners through Jesus Christ? And what is infinitely insulting to this great God is that Sunday, the Lord's Day, the day of the week that believers are commanded to assemble together to hear and believe and obey the preaching and teaching of God's Word and to fellowship together and to partake of the blessed Sacraments, and to hold each other accountable by provoking one another to love and to good works, has become the day where the most sporting events take place. And so, the lure of sports robs God of the attention and the affection and the time from His people that He so infinitely deserves.

It is nothing but insanity that insignificant games should occupy such a central role in our culture. And it is one of many unmistakable signs that we have become enslaved to trivialities. It is like working in a shop at the base of Mount Everest and fiddling with wooden trinkets, that are nothing but emblems, while completely ignoring the magnificent forests and the everlasting snows and the majestic mountain peaks that are right outside.

We, who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, live in a perpetual and hopeless struggle to satisfy our longings on trifles that cannot possibly fulfill them. And so, our souls shrivel. And our lives become trivial and meaningless. And our capacity for great worship dies.

Back in 1912, John Henry Jowett, then Pastor of the Fifth Presbyterian Church in New York City, gave the “*Yale Lectures on Preaching*”. And there is a passage in one of Jowett’s lectures which describes what great preaching looks like. And it also gives us insight into what the writer of the **Book of Ruth** was doing when he ended his story the way he did. Jowett described a great preacher as one:

“... who seems to look at the horizon rather than at an enclosed field, or a local landscape. He [has] a marvelous way of connecting every subject with eternity past and with eternity to come . . . It is as though you were looking at a bit of carved wood in a Swiss village window, and you lifted your eyes and saw the forest where the wood was nourished, and, higher still, the everlasting snows! Yes, that was Binney's way, Dale's way, the way of Bushnell, and Newman, and Spurgeon—they were always willing to stop at the village window, but they always linked the streets with the heights, and sent your souls a-roaming over the eternal hills of God.”<sup>1</sup>

... and that is *exactly* what the Prophet Samuel did with this Book. **The Book of Ruth** wants to teach us that God's Purpose for the life of His people is to connect us to something far greater than ourselves. God wants us to know that when we follow Him, our lives always mean *more* than what we can see and feel and taste and experience.

For the faithful Christian, there is *always* a connection between the dull, dry, bland, and ordinary events of life, and the stupendous Work of God in history. And so, *everything* we do in obedience to God and in full dependence on Him, and to His Glory, no matter how small

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<sup>1</sup> John Henry Jowett; *The Preacher: His Life and Work*, p. 95

or insignificant it might *appear* to be, is actually small or insignificant. *Everything* we do and *everything* we experience and *everything* we are a part of, *every* struggle and *every* agony and *every* blessing and *every* wonderful event, is all part of the Eternal Plan of God, and that He is busy working together to display the greatness of His Power and Wisdom to the world and to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

And so, the deep satisfaction of the Christian life is that it is *not* given over to trifles. No true saint of God wastes his life. And that means that serving a widowed mother-in-law, or gleaning in a field, or falling in love, and having a baby, for the Christian, these things are all connected to Eternity. They are all part of something so much bigger than they seem.

And that means that the phrase “the Glory of God” connected to this particular Story is not too strong. The life of the godly is *not* a straight line to Glory. But, we will get there, it is guaranteed; God sees to it. And that means that there is a great hope for us in this Story that is way beyond the cute little baby and the happy grandmother. And if there weren't, if all we can hope for is some small amounts of pleasure in this life, the Apostle Paul said:

### **1 Corinthians 15:19**

**If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.**

Now there are at least five parts to this Story. There are at least five different things that God is doing in, by, and through the lives of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. And these parts are like ever increasing circles in the lake when you throw a rock in. You have the nearest circle, and then the one that is larger than the first, and then there is the next one that is even larger than the second, and so on, until the very first small circle becomes almost insignificant. And yet, without the first one there wouldn't be any other circles. And, without somebody throwing a rock in, there would be any movement in the water at all.

And all five of these parts or circles can be found in the genealogy that the Prophet Samuel gives us here at the end of this Book of Ruth.

So, what we have to understand is that the “Glory of God” is a much *larger* concept, and it is an infinitely more *important* Truth, and has a far *greater* impact than one family in one nation at one point in

history having a sweet time with a baby. And so, if this Story of Ruth simply ended in a little Judean village with a happy old grandmother hugging a new grandson, we would be hard pressed to find "God's Glory" in it.

But the writer doesn't end it with Naomi holding the baby of Ruth and Boaz. No, the Prophet Samuel lifts his eyes to the forests and the mountain snows of Redemptive History. And at the end of verse 17, he begins a genealogy that goes from this little baby boy all the way to Israel's most beloved King, David.

And, all of a sudden, we realize that God was doing something far greater and infinitely more important than blessing the people we have been reading about for four Chapters. You see, what God the Holy Spirit has moved upon this Old Testament Prophet to tell us is that God was not simply working hard for the temporal blessing of a few Jews in Bethlehem, 3,000 years ago. No, the Lord has been very busy, through all the hardships and all the blessings of these obscure Jewish people, to make sure that two things will happen:

1. That the Glory of God's Grace would be displayed through the Salvation of millions of unworthy sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, through what Jesus Christ did for them.
2. That the fullness of Joy would be realized for those who have been chosen by God.

So, as we see Naomi holding this small infant boy and rejoicing at all the Goodness of God, we also need to see the much *greater* joy of a beloved King, who would come out of this union, who would love God, and who would display God's Mercy and God's Forgiveness and God's Grace, even through his own sins and failures.

But, we can't stop there, because out of David's loins will finally come the sinless Messiah, the God/Man, Who would bring in a Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness and Forgiveness to not only Jews, but to all who will believe.

But we cannot stop even there, because out from this Messiah would come His Church, which would go into the four corners of the earth, preaching the Gospel of Forgiveness and Salvation to every creature. And 2,000 years later, this Church would stretch into almost every nation and tribe and language on earth with the glorious Message

of Redemption and Righteousness, preparing a people for the Return of this Messiah. And when King Jesus breaks through the clouds and comes back, He will impose His Will on planet earth, and will remove all sin and wickedness from the earth by removing all unrepentant sinners and casting them into a lake of fire. And this King will establish His final Rule over the earth and all will bow before Him and every tongue will praise Him.

But, we cannot stop there because after that, believers from every nation and tribe and language will gather together before the Throne of God and we will be clothed upon with a new glorious body that has never known sin, and we will praise the Lamb forever!

So, you and I would never stand before God redeemed and with a new glorious body if we were not chosen by God for Salvation in Jesus Christ from before the foundation of the world. But Jesus could not have saved you if He had not been the Messiah, Who was foretold by the Old Testament Prophets. But to be the real Messiah, Jesus had to be of the lineage of David. But for Jesus to be of the lineage of David required that David had to be born. And David could not have been born, if Jesse had not been born. And Jesse could not have been born if Obed had not been born. And Obed could not have been born if Ruth had not married Boaz.

Another way of understanding this is to say, because God placed His hard Hand of Providence on a single Jewish family, to drive Naomi and Elimelech from the Promised Land by famine, and then to allow Naomi to experience the shame of her two sons marrying pagans, and then to allow her to go through the deaths of her husband and both sons, and then to bring Naomi and Ruth back to Bethlehem empty, you and I are saved by Grace through faith in Jesus Christ and will spend eternity in Heaven!

So, in reality, this simple little four-chapter story, that begins with such hard, bitter Providence, opens out like a stream into a great river of hope. And that hope involves even more than one single King of Israel, no matter how beloved he was. This involves an *eternal* hope to the millions of people who will put their trust in this Messiah, that He alone is the One Who can help guilty sinners pass through God's Judgment upon their lives.

Now the Jews were real big about keeping track of their family histories. And, as a result of that, there are many genealogies in the

Bible. And we see one of them here at the end of the Book of Ruth that gives us insight from this baby boy named Obed, all the way to King David. But there is another interesting genealogy that is found in the first Chapter of the Gospel Record of the Apostle Levi, so please go there with me, **Matthew 1:**

**Matthew 1:1-16**

**1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:**

**2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.**

**3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram.**

**4 Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon.**

**5 Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse.**

**6 Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah.**

**7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa.**

**8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah.**

**9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.**

**10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah.**

**11 Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.**

**12 After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.**

**13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor.**

**14 Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud.**

**15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob.**

**16 Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.**

Now Levi was a despised tax collector, who had betrayed his own people to tax them and give that money to the Roman Government. And yet, Jesus called this man to not only Salvation, but to be one of His Apostle. And, evidently, at some point, Jesus changed his name or he simply changed his name from *Levi* to *Mattityahu* or *Mattai*, which means "Gift of Yahweh". And in Sanhedrin 43a of the *Babylonian Talmud*, it tells of a man named *Mattai*, who was a disciple of *Jeshua*.

And Matthew wrote his Gospel record to the Jews to give them reason to *abandon* the inferior Revelation of the Old Covenant and embrace Jesus, Who by His Life, Death, and Resurrection, brought in the superior New Covenant. So, the genealogy of Matthew 1 was given to the Jews to show how Jesus was, in fact, descendant from both Abraham and David. And yet, in this genealogy is the names of five different women, which would have been insulting to the Jews who read this record.

Now I believe and teach what is called "Biblical Complementarianism", which is a "three-dollar word" that means that God created them uniquely male and female on purpose. And that means that we should *understand* the God-given *distinctions* between men and women, and we should *teach* those differences and *emphasize* those distinctions and *celebrate* them, rather than try to avoid them, marginalize them, or ignore them under the false and unworkable banner called "Equality".

God has *not* called men to women to equality, but to Holiness, and the way to biblical Holiness is by *not* ignoring what the Bible teaches about the special uniqueness that godly femininity brings to women and that godly masculinity brings to men.

And so, in order to *preserve* women for the wise and good and fulfilling purposes for which they were created female to begin with, in His Mercy, God has sovereignly *assigned* certain roles and positions in both the home and the Church for men and women that are different. But these roles are not designed to make women "second-class citizens", but rather to "free" them to "be" and to "do" what God called them to be and to do.

But, because we are fallen, we have taken beautiful and good and wise aspects of the Word of God and we have made them hideous and hurtful and oppressive. Evil men take the glorious Truth that God holds men accountable to lead and guide the home and the Church, and they use that as a hammer to force women into submission. Evil women take their God-given gift of beauty and they use it as a trap to lure foolish men into doing foolish things.

But God has called men to love and serve Him by humbly and joyfully struggle against the lusts of their flesh, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, to submit themselves primarily to a leadership role in the home and in the Church. Men are called by God to primarily provide and to protect and to lead and to order the home and the Church.

And God has called women to love and serve Him by humbly and joyfully struggling against the lusts of their flesh to submit primarily to a support role in the home and in the Church. Women are called by God to support and to strengthen and to help the man.

And when that balance exists, when men are struggling to lead and when women are struggling to help, it is truly a thing of beauty. And when that effort does *not* exist, it is rottenness to our bones.

Men are commanded by the Lord Christ to sacrificially love their wives, and to order their homes in such a way that the grace and the beauty and the peace of godly femininity can shine through. And women are commanded to respect their husbands and honor them and support them in their efforts to lead, so that the strength and glory of godly masculinity can shine through.

Now, historically, men have gone off to fight in wars to protect their wives and their daughters and their sisters and their mothers from being misused by other evil men. And so, laws were passed that *protected* women and that favored them. But with the advent of godless feminism, all that has changed, and women today are more used and more abused than ever before. And that's not because men are *worse* than they have historically been; it is because we have *abandoned* the God-given solution.

So, historically, biblical genealogies don't mention the mothers and the daughters and the wives and the sisters. They usually say something like, "*So-and-so was the son of so-and-so*". And yet, here in Levi's genealogy, we read something very unique; look again at verse 3:

**Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram.**

Now look again at verses 5-6:

**5 Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse.**

**6 Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah.**

And finally, look again at verse 16:

**Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.**

Now there is nothing in Scripture that allows for any man to dominate women through force and cruelty. That isn't being the head, that isn't leading, it is simply men being sinful barbarians. Nothing in Scripture allows for *anyone* to suggest that women are second-class citizens or that God is punishing women for being female.

Yet, women were not normally included in genealogies. So, buried in the genealogy of Jesus that we see here in Matthew is a Gospel Treasure. And that treasure is five women. And their inclusion in this list is notable because this list is basically a record of fathers and sons. But their inclusion is also notable because they were among the most notorious women in biblical history. Let's see.

The first woman mentioned is Tamar. And Tamar was probably a Gentile woman who entered the royal bloodline of the Messiah by disguising herself as a prostitute and seducing her father-in-law, Judah, so he would make her pregnant. Now with all due respect to the fathers of Israel, Judah had it coming because he had denied her justice. But this was a very ugly affair all around.

The second woman is Rahab. And while she didn't have to disguise herself, she was a prostitute. And a Gentile, too; a Canaanite, no less. So, this was not a very good pedigree for a nation that emphasized ethnic purity. And Rahab and her family were the only survivors of Israel's conquest of Jericho because she hid the Jewish spies and helped them escape. And once they integrated into Israel,

Rahab married Salmon, and became King David's great, great grandmother.

Ruth is the third woman mentioned in Matthew's genealogy and she, too, was a Gentile. A Moabite. Her ancestry had its origin in the incest committed between Lot and his oldest daughter. Ruth's people were polytheistic pagans, occasionally offering human sacrifices to idol gods like Chemosh. And through the hard Hand of God's Providence, Naomi met Ruth, and Ruth wound up at Bethlehem and in the arms of Boaz.

Now I simply can't move on without mentioning the staggering fact that Ruth has a Book of the Bible named after her! So, how did that happen? Jews were strictly forbidden from intermarrying with Moabites, unless a Moabite renounced all that being a Moabite meant and became all that it meant to be a Jew, which is exactly what Ruth did. And the fact that one of the canonical books of the Old Covenant is named after a Moabite woman is God shouting to us something about His Grace.

The fourth woman mentioned in the list is "**Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah**". And this woman suffered sexual abuse and the murder of her husband by Israel's greatest king. And as a result, she became an ancestor of Jesus and the mother of the wisest man in the world.

And finally, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the fifth woman named in Jesus' genealogy. And Mary became pregnant with Jesus before her wedding, and the Child's Father was God, and not Joseph! We have to understand that fewer people in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century believed in the Incarnation than do today. Most of the people then, as well as now, believe that Mary was unfaithful, probably with a Roman soldier, and that Jesus was an illegitimate Son. And this scandal would have lingered like a cloud through all the whispers and suspicions and innuendoes of Mary's wider family and fellow Nazarenes for many years.

Now all five of these women share two things in common:

1. Disgrace
2. Jesus

These women either committed or suffered terrible disgrace. They all had tainted reputations. Several of them were Gentiles. And they very likely endured the contempt of others for their entire lives. And at least the first four would have struggled with very painful, even sordid memories.

Now according to this genealogy and **1 Chronicles 2:11**, Boaz, who became Ruth's redeemer-husband, was the son of Rahab. But since biblical genealogies sometimes skip generations, it's *possible* that Rahab was Boaz's *grandmother* or even his *great-grandmother*. Now, like Ruth, Rahab was a non-Jewish woman. And unlike Ruth, Rahab was a Canaanite and a former prostitute. Rahab and her family were the only survivors of Israel's conquest of Jericho, because she hid the Jewish spies and helped them escape.

So, just try to imagine all the stories that Boaz heard as he grew up. Think about the scandal that followed him around, the shame heaped upon him by his fellow Jews. Most people would become hardened and bitter by the taunts and the ridicule. But, not Boaz. As we read what Samuel wrote about him, all we see is a man who loved God, and a man who had become kind and merciful by all the cruelty and harshness.

We need to try to imagine how having a mother (or grandmother or even a great grandmother) who had been a foreigner and a harlot, yet was grafted into the olive tree of Israel by the Grace of God, affected the way Boaz saw Ruth that day she was gleaning in his field. Other men might have simply seen a foreigner scrounging for food, like a parasite. But Boaz saw something familiar and precious in a woman who had left her family, her nation, and her gods, to embrace Naomi, her nation, and her God.

It seems that Boaz had been uniquely prepared by God for Ruth through the hard Hand of Providence, even as Ruth was being prepared for Boaz by that same hard Hand. So, truly, this was a marriage made in heaven, arranged by God, and a love story brought together through bitter Providence. O, how we can learn so much from this Book!

Yet, there was so much more that God was doing here than a fairytale romance. Their union produced a son named Obed, who had a son named Jesse, who had a son named David, who became the greatest king Israel ever had. That is, until David's line produced a King named Jesus.

So, here is what we need to know about all this. Most people tend to conceal the more disgraceful events and people in their family history. But, not Jesus. He chooses to move upon Matthew to *highlight* possibly the five most scandalous women in His Lineage. And that was to prove that God weaves His glorious Grace throughout the entire Bible, through sin, through bad blood, and even through the genealogies!

We must understand that the one, true, and living God of the Bible loves to redeem sinners. He is a saving God by Nature. God enjoys producing something beautiful out of sordid family backgrounds. He loves to take foreigners and make them His children, and He delights in reconciling His enemies. He loves to make all things work together for Good for those who love him and who are called according to His Purpose (**Romans 8:28**).

And so, each of these women who entered Redemptive History during the Old Covenant era, are beautiful illustrations of what God would later say to Peter when clarifying that His Grace is extended to all peoples:

#### **The Acts 10:15**

**What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy.**

... and that is amazingly Good News to sinners and commoners and foreigners like us.

Now one of the amazing things I have learned from going through this magnificent Book is the attention that the Prophet Samuel gave to Naomi as opposed to Ruth. The title of this inspired writing is called “**The Book of Ruth**”, and Ruth is mentioned twelve different times in four chapters. Yet, Naomi and how God dealt with her and afflicted her, and then blessed her, is mentioned twenty-one times! So, this Book begins and ends with Naomi. After verse 13 of Chapter 4, Ruth is not mentioned anymore. Look at how the people responded to what God had done in verses 14-15:

**14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.**

**15 "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."**

... the focus is clearly on Naomi here, and Ruth is almost an afterthought. Now look at what happened in verse 16:

**Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.**

It was God's hard Hand of Providence against Naomi and her family that drove them out of the Promised land to begin with to *providentially* come across the young Moabite woman named Ruth. And it was Naomi's agony that was so prevalent throughout this Book that caused the neighbors to say in verse 17:

**A son has been born to Naomi!**

Strangely, there is no mention anywhere in this Book that Mahlon taught Ruth *anything* about the Lord during the ten years he was married to her, even though he was commanded to. Remember that, as a Moabite woman, Ruth would have *not* known about what God had revealed to Moses in the first five Books of the sacred Scriptures. And because Mahlon was married to Ruth for a decade before he suddenly died, he had ten years to teach his pagan wife about the things of God. And yet, when it came time for Ruth to trust in the one, true, and living God, Ruth only mentions Naomi,

**Ruth 1:16-17**

**16 ... Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.**

**17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me.**

... which indicates that it was *Naomi's* faith, and it was *Naomi's* integrity and godly demeanor that so impressed Ruth that she gladly *abandoned* her nation, her culture, her religion, and her family to embrace the God of Naomi, and not *anything* that her husband may

have said to her. And this illustrates a very important point as to the role that godly women have on the course of history.

Now, in 1727, America's greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards, married Sarah Pierpoint, who proceeded to give him eleven children over the next several years. By today's standard, Sarah Edwards would be considered a failure, a stay-at-home wife and mother, who did the hard task of raising eleven children while her husband pastored a Church and was used by God to usher in the First Great Awakening in the New England area where over one million new converts were added to Christ's Church.

Modern Feminism would have counseled Sarah to put her children in Day Care while she pursued her career. But Sarah believed God, and she bore and raised and taught and loved her children, who grew up to marry and have children of their own who would follow in Sarah's footsteps.

So, what can one woman do to stem the tide of wickedness and evil that seems to dominate our nation? Love your husband, love your children, and obey God. Because out from this one godly man and this one godly woman came 17 Preachers of God's Word, 27 Pastors, 4 Chaplains in the Military, 3 Congressmen, 2 Senators, 2 Governors, 3 Presidents of Universities, and 42 mothers, who took their turn to love and to teach and to impact generations of Americans to love God and obey Him.

And this is what we must remember in our times of desolation, grief, and loss. How things appear to us and how they actually are, are rarely the same. Sometimes it looks and feels like the Almighty is dealing "very bitterly" with us. When all the while, He is doing us and many others more Good than we could have imagined.

The Bible is crystal clear about this: God's Purposes in the lives of His children are *always* gracious. Always. God never forgets and God will never leave you nor forsake you. So, when the hard hand of Providence falls heavy on you, the Book of Ruth is in the Bible to tell you that we cannot trust our perceptions. We are not the best interpreter of what is going on, God is.

In one of his darkest days, as his melancholy had once again surrounded him, William Cowper wrote these words, as much to himself as to us:

Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His Work in vain;  
God is His Own Interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

The **Book of Ruth** teaches us that we can trust God's Promises, because, God is *always* fulfilling His Promises.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.