

CARE OF GOD

Ruth 1:1-22

INTRODUCTION: We know from the Bible of many who endured hardship and heartache from the loss of a loved one. Naomi was such a woman. This pleasant and lovely lady had to drink from life's bitter cup. She eventually experienced the loving reward from God.

I. PEOPLE OF GOD

A. REASON FOR NAOMI'S BROKENNESS.

Naomi was a broken woman. Her husband, Elimelech, died while they were living in Moab. They had left their homeland in Judah because of a famine. Elimelech and Naomi had two sons who married women from Moab. While in Moab, Naomi lost her husband and her two sons in death. One of her daughters-in-law, Orpah, left Naomi after her husband died. Ruth faithfully stayed by Naomi's side.

B. RETURN OF NAOMI TO BETHLEHEM.

Naomi returned home to Bethlehem a broken woman. She was bitter as she complained about her misfortune. When Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, some who knew her said, "Is this Naomi?" And she said unto them, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why [then] call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" (Ruth 1:20-21)

II. PRIMACY OF GOD

A. COMPREHENDING THE WAYS OF GOD.

1. GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

Providence is defined in our English dictionaries as the act of seeing and providing or preparing for the future. The doctrine of divine providence can be summarized this way: "God in eternity past, in the counsel of His own will, ordained everything that will happen; yet in no sense is God the author of sin; nor is human responsibility removed."

We may not see God, but He is at work providing and preparing a future for each of us. We see this in these verses concerning Naomi and Ruth. Many would say this was a chance or an accident.

In the Scripture, we see it from God's perspective; it was His sovereignty in action. Sovereignty and providence are not the same. God's sovereignty is His right and power to do all that He decides to do.

Ray Pritchard writes that providence is: "God's gracious oversight of the universe." Every one of those words is important. God's providence is one aspect of his grace. Oversight means that he directs the course of affairs. The word universe tells us that God not only knows the big picture, he also concerns himself with the tiniest details.

Job spoke of God's sovereignty in Job 42:2: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." Job referred to God's wisdom and plans. God in His sovereignty has all power and the right to do as He wills. No one can stop Him. Divine providence is seen in God's authority exercised in His wisdom, love, and care, while He directs all things in the universe.

Someone has written, "The laws of nature are nothing more than God's work in the universe." Providence of God primarily refers to the secondary work He does through the laws of nature and human choices. In other words, God usually works indirectly to accomplish His will.

2. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY.

We understand that God is sovereign. "God's sovereignty is a natural consequence of His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence." We understand that the sovereignty of God is His rule over the universe. Since God is sovereign, we know of His ability to do anything He chooses.

In His sovereignty, God chose to give mankind free will. The Almighty God has absolute authority, and creation including man is accountable to Him. Someone said God's "sovereignty means that He is absolute in authority and unrestricted in His supremacy."

C. GOD'S GRACE

1. CHANGE IN NAOMI. v. 19 "call me Mara," meaning bitter

We learn that the name Naomi means "sweet or pleasant." She was a God-fearing woman who lived with her husband and sons. Once she returned to Bethlehem, people noticed the change in Naomi's expression. She said to the people, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" (Ruth 1:20-21) The name Mara means "bitter."

Naomi understood that her affliction came from God, who is sovereign in all things. We discover from the Scripture that her sorrow and bitterness eventually led to great blessings. It would be through her descendants that Jesus Christ would enter the world.

2. CARING DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

Ruth was one of Naomi's daughters-in-law. Ruth was raised by her family who lived in Moab. After Ruth's husband and her father-in-law died, Ruth had to decide whether to stay in her home in Moab or live with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth loved Naomi and remained with her when Naomi returned to her homeland. Ruth was cared for not only by her mother-in-law Naomi, but also by a Jewish man named Boaz, whom she later married. Ruth came to trust the Lord, and God blessed her with a son. God gave Ruth the blessing of being listed in the lineage of Jesus. (Matthew 1:5)

LESSONS FOR LIFE:

1. Like Naomi, many people have lost members of their family.
2. Those of faith look to the Lord for grace and guidance to continue on in life.
3. Ruth and Boaz would continue the lineage that would bring Jesus into the world.
4. Jesus is the only redeemer for sinners. He purchased our salvation by His shed blood.

