

## 1. Naomi Trusts that the LORD is Near

- a. "visit" to draw near with a purpose
  - i. in most cases it is gracious visitation, like here
  - ii. sometimes it's in judgment (Ex 32:34; Lev 26:26; Is 13:11)
- b. note also that the narrator's emphasis is on the LORD, not merely on the return of food
  - i. He places the cause of bread returning to the house of bread to the LORD, not merely a change in weather, or a stoppage of a famine.
  - ii. Gracious Providence of God
  - iii. The continuing grace of the LORD is coming near to His covenant people when they cry out to Him (through the book of Judges)
    1. Most likely this is after Ehud has defeated King Eglon
    2. Note that Naomi assumes that no Judean man will marry these two Moabite women, indicating strong prejudice or hatred toward Moabites
- c. Naomi recognizes the hand of the LORD blessing His people and sets out to return
  - i. She trusts in the sovereignty of God over the weather and sees that He is near to His people now
  - ii. "arose" is set in contrast to "settled" of v4
    1. Here is a change in direction, a life-change, if you will
    2. A form of repentance, because Naomi has kept in touch with the people and the land of the LORD
    3. The prodigal son always returns home
- d. She also trusted that the LORD would bless her daughter-in-law's if they returned to Moab
  - i. "may the LORD deal kindly with you"
    1. "deal kindly" is the beautiful covenant word, *chesed*, which is the word used of the LORD's merciful covenant love toward His people
    2. She tries to send them away with a blessing, hoping that the LORD would draw near them in Moab
  - ii. "may the LORD grant you rest"
    1. Comfort in the house of your husband

## 2. Naomi Trusts that the LORD is Sovereign Over Her Suffering

- a. She recognized that it was the LORD who brought an end to the famine, not merely weather change
- b. Naomi believes that the LORD is even in control of her suffering
  - i. "the hand of the LORD has done out against me"
  - ii. She sees that even this calamity is under the sovereign intent of the LORD
    1. Isaiah 45:7
    2. Amos 3:6
    3. Job 2:10
- c. Ricky and autism contrasted with Gabriel and microcephaly
  - i. The Lord gave Ricky autism
  - ii. John 9:1-3, 35-41

## 3. Naomi Has Forgotten that the LORD is Good

- a. The LORD is against me
  - i. She actually believes that it would be better for her DIL's to stay in idolatrous Moab than to be with God's people in God's land
    - 1. All she can see is God's discipline, the painful sorrow of suffering and loss
    - 2. She has lost sight of God's goodness in the midst of such discipline
    - 3. It is "much more bitter" or "exceedingly bitter for me"
  - ii. Believing herself cursed by God, she tries to convince Ruth and Orpah to get away from her
    - 1. She tells them to go home to Moab with God's blessing
      - a. They both deny the request and choose instead to stay
      - b. She must have been quite the mother-in-law!!
    - 2. She claims they will have no comfort without a husband, (v9)
      - a. It was difficult for any widow in these days, but particularly for widows of foreign descent
    - 3. She shows how they will never be married if they come with her
      - a. She tells them three times to return to Moab (v8,11,12)
      - b. Levirate Law for widows
        - i. Deuteronomy 25:5-10
        - ii. She is too old to bear sons for them to marry
        - iii. Even if she could, would they wait those many years to marry them?
      - c. Naomi's cannot see any hope of redemption
        - i. She does not believe, or remember, any kinsman-redeemer for her or her DIL's
        - ii. She is "exceedingly bitter" towards the LORD and does not believe that He has any good for her or her DIL's
        - iii. This is actually what changes Orpah's mind to turn and go back to Moab
- b. In her hopelessness she has lost all joy
  - i. she had forgotten Joseph's story
    - 1. 17 years in prison due to false accusation of rape
      - a. "the LORD was with Joseph" (Gen 39:2)
      - b. "the LORD was with him" (Gen 39:3)
      - c. "the LORD was with him" (Gen 39:23)
      - d. In the midst of our suffering, the LORD is near
        - i. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5)
        - ii. "I will send [the Helper] to you" (John 16:7)
        - iii. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
    - 2. "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Gen 50:20)
      - a. "meant" means "to think, process, intend, devise"
      - b. God *intended* Joseph's sufferings so that good would come about.
        - iv. This does not mean that God directly committed the sin against Joseph
        - v. That blame belonged to his brothers ("you intended evil")
        - vi. But God intended their evil choices for His glorious good
  - ii. She had forgotten *the end* of Job's story
    - 1. Satan had to ask the LORD's permission to bring any calamity into Job's life
    - 2. God limited that calamity
      - a. He sets limits on our sufferings
      - b. These limits are purposed for His glory and our good!

3. God had a purpose that Job did not know until the end of the story
  - a. All Job could see in the midst of his suffering was his suffering
    - i. First love's broken heart and the glory of my wife
      1. If I had gotten what I wanted, I would have missed such glorious beauty as my Katie
      2. The Lord knew, and trained me through a broken heart, to chase after Him, gracing me after His continual work with such a wife
  - b. God was revealing HIMSELF to Job through it, and that is the *best good imaginable*

#### 4. Look at the Cross of Christ: God brings suffering into our lives for His glory and our good

- a. Romans 8:28-29
  - i. "all things"
  - ii. Working them together for good
  - iii. ONLY for those who love God and are called according to His purpose! (NOT everyone)
    1. The PROMISE is for those who belong to Christ
    2. God still uses suffering to get the world's attention and to make them uncomfortable with their idols, but it will not bring about their ultimate good b/c they don't trust in Him
  - iv. Predestined to be conformed into the image of His Son
- b. Phil 3:8-11
  - i. "might know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings"
  - ii. I choose knowing Christ over comfort
- c. 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13
  - i. Trials and suffering test our faith and lead us to joy of our salvation from sin
  - ii. Condemnation is defeated!
  - iii. We have an inheritance waiting for us in heaven!
- d. James 1:2-5
  - i. God develops Christ-like character through sufferings
  - ii. "when you have various trials"
  - iii. Count it joy!! God is working in you to make you complete and mature
- e. 2 Cor 4:7
  - i. Christ is sufficient for right now
  - ii. His strength is perfected in weakness (2 Cor 12)
- f. God had to bring Naomi through the pain in order for Boaz to marry Ruth and for Jesus to be born through the lineage of David
  1. We will see in this story that Naomi's joy is overflowing in the end (see 4:14-16; and all the physical blessings from Boaz through Ruth)
  2. This story is really about the LORD and His faithfulness to provide a kinsman-redeemer, not merely for Ruth, but for all of mankind
    - a. Matthew 1:1-16
- g. The greatest good the world has ever seen, the Messiah Jesus, flowed out of God's intended suffering and blessing for Naomi and Ruth
  - i. It is this Messiah who defeated death by His death, burying it by His burial, and will away all the tears of suffering with His risen and living hand
    1. Jesus suffered so that we would glorify God. May that be a reason that we suffer, that we and others would glorify God?
    2. How we endure suffering with hope and joy speaks of the glory of God

- a. There is place for mourning, but it is not like the hopeless mourning of the world, but with the hope of the reconciling and restorative work of Christ
- b. His resurrection gives us hope that out of our suffering comes glorious redemption and eternal joy (Heb 12:2-3)
- ii. Because one day we will be made into the image of Christ, and will no longer need suffering to shape and conform us: God will finish His work

**Revelation 21:3-4** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place<sup>1</sup> of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,<sup>2</sup> and God himself will be with them as their God.<sup>3,4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

#### Conclusion:

Why do God's people suffer? Your Father is providentially accomplishing His will for you, and it is good, acceptable, and perfect (Rom 12:2). Your Savior, Jesus Christ, is interceding on your behalf and His Holy Spirit indwells you for your hope, joy, and peace. God's grace is sufficient, even when the torments of thorns in your flesh do not decrease (2 Cor 12). And let us remember that He brings suffering into our lives to shape us into the image of Christ. He is for our good...as He defines good. He never brings difficulties into our lives without the greater purpose of shaping us into men and women of great hope, great praise, great trust, and great character. He is for you and He has planned that you know Him, trust Him, and glorify Him with joy!! Though you may be in year 17 of the prison of your sufferings, do not let doubt overtake you, forgetting that there is good that you cannot yet see. Keep your eyes upon Jesus and His glorious promises of redemption and the joy of your salvation in the age to come. The LORD is near and He is working all things together for your good, forming you into the image of Christ for His glory and your joy! Death's death has been declared. But let suffering and sorrow have their work completed in us, remembering these things: This is not my home, heaven is my home (John 14:1-3); My Savior loves me and when I see His glorious face, He will wipe every tear from my eye because He is returning to defeat suffering and death forever (1 Pet 1:13). Ruth and Orpah were left with a choice: the comfort of Moab and a husband at the expense of your relationship with Naomi, or bear the reproach of Naomi and cling. Your choice today is similar: the comfort of a "god" who is not sovereign or is not good, or bear the reproach of Christ and cling, where God intended His suffering for your good, knowing that clinging to Him will mean taking up your own cross to follow Him. He will never let go of you through your suffering, so will you rejoice in the midst of your suffering, saying with me: bring on the fellowship of His sufferings, conforming me to His death, through whatever means that you see fit, Lord Jesus, that you will be formed in me and that I may know you and the power of your resurrection. Bring on the suffering, Lord Jesus, if it makes me know you more, until the day when I see you face to face...to you I cling both now and forever.