

Ruth

Ruth's Devotion and Care for Naomi

Ruth and Naomi Return to Bethlehem

Ruth 1:19: So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"
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Naomi returned to Bethlehem without her husband and her sons, bearing witness to the difficulties and hardships she had endured. It had been ten years or more since Naomi and Elimelech had left Bethlehem with their sons and upon Naomi's return, the whole village was talking about her return. They did not seem to be able to believe what had befallen Naomi. Things had not quite turned out as Elimelech and Naomi had planned or thought.
Psalms 37, 84; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Matthew 5:3-10

Psalms 37:3-6: Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday.

Jeremiah 29:10-14: "For thus says the LORD, "When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. 11 "For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 12 "Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 "I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, "and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, "and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'

Matthew 5:3-10: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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Ruth 1:20-22: She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" 22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. NASU

Once again, we witness the profound hurt and pain in Naomi's life. Her devastatingly traumatic experience in Moab, where she lost both her husband and sons, has undoubtedly taken an emotional and likely physical toll on her. To those who have known her, she expresses her deep sorrow by asking them to call her Mara, which means bitter, instead of Naomi, which means pleasant. The bitterness Naomi endured came through the discipline/instruction of the LORD. We, knowing the final-outcome of the story of Ruth, can see what Naomi did not understand. In the plan of God, Ruth was to be in the line of Christ Jesus, therefore, Ruth needed to reside in Bethlehem. If life was pleasant for Naomi in Moab, would she have returned to Bethlehem? At times, God moves in unpleasant ways in our lives to move us to where we need to be; to teach us lessons about ourselves or in general, that He cannot accomplish through blessings. *Exodus 15:23; Job 5:17, 13:26; Lamentations 3:1-23; Haggai 2:14-19; Psalms 107:1-13*

Exodus 15:23: When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah.

Job 5:17: "Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproveth, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

Job 13:26: "For You write bitter things against me and make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth.

Psalms 107:1-13: Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting. 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary ... 11 Because they had rebelled against the words of God and spurned the counsel of the Most High. 12 Therefore He humbled their heart with labor; they stumbled and there was none to help. 13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses.

Lamentations 3:1-4: I am the man who has seen affliction because of the rod of His wrath. 2 He has driven me and made me walk in darkness and not in light. 3 Surely against me He has turned His hand repeatedly all the day. 4 He has caused my flesh and my skin to waste away, He has broken my bones.

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Lamentations 3:15-23 He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood. 16 He has broken my teeth with gravel; He has made me cower in the dust. 17 My soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness. 18 So I say, "My strength has perished, and so has my hope from the LORD." ... 21 This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. 22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

Haggai 2:14-19: Then Haggai said, "'So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,' declares the LORD, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean. 15 'But now, do consider from this day onward: before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the LORD, 16 from that time when one came to a grain heap of twenty measures, there would be only ten; and when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there would be only twenty. 17 'I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,' declares the LORD. 18 'Do consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; from the day when the temple of the LORD was founded, consider: 19 'Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you.'"

Even in her despair, the character of Naomi comes through, she acknowledges all that had occurred in her life was under the sovereign power and control of God, and she was thankful to the Lord for bringing her back to Judah. God remains sovereign in all situations; the presence and efforts of evil and the ungodly cannot stymie the plans and works of God. *Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Philippians 4:10-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-8*

Romans 8:28: And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18: Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

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Philippians 4:10-13: But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

1 Timothy 6:6-8: But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.