

**Introduction:** Everyone experiences some suffering and pain in life. Some pain comes as a consequence of un-wise choices. Some suffering comes from what used to be called ‘man’s inhumanity to man’ in my high school English and History classes over fifty years ago. \*\*\* And, using a phrase still in use in some homeowners and automobile insurance policies, ‘acts of God’ can also cause hurt to people. \*\*\* Mourning is a category to itself. There is a grief component to mourning. It is especially painful when an unexpected illness or death occurs. The suffering of a loved one may stir up the emotion of compassion. Death of a middle-aged spouse or a child under the age of thirty can cause people to cry out in pain: ‘Where were You, God?’, or, ‘How could You let this happen?’ Christians may have a ‘crisis of faith’ when this happens. \*\*\* In all these situations, it is important to remember that God’s ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:6-12); and, God causes all things to work together for good to those loving Him, so He can help them to become like His Son (Romans 8:28-29). Through the Messiah and the Holy Spirit, Adonai-Yahweh comforts those who mourn, giving them oil for their mourning, all for His glory (Psalm 30:10-12; Isaiah 61:1-3; John 16:20-22, NLT). \*\*\* ***We can trust Yahweh even in the depths of mourning.*** \*\*\* The story of Naomi and her family during the latter days of the judges begins with tragedy when they are far from home. But, even at Naomi’s darkest hour, when she doubts God’s goodness, and her mourning makes her bitter, Yahweh is working to comfort and restore her. \*\*\* Jesus declared a blessing of comfort to mourners. \*\*\* Let’s together seek to be encouraged by what God wants us to know about His goodness and gracious sovereign power, even when we are fully down in the depths of despair.

**I. Naomi leaves Bethlehem for Moab with her husband and sons because of famine; the sons marry Moabite women, the men die; Naomi hears Yahweh gave food; she leaves Moab, commanding her daughters-in-law return; Orpah returns, but Ruth clings. (*Ruth 1:1-14*)**

A. Naomi goes from Bethlehem to Moab with her husband and two sons because of a famine; the sons take Moabite wives, then all the men die. (*Verses 1-5*)

1. When judges were judging, there was a famine in the land, a man from Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in Moab (with) his wife and two sons; their names were Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion – Ephrathites; they went into Moab and were there. (*Verses 1-2*)

***Famine:*** In previous famines Abram went 250 miles to Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20) and Isaac forty miles to Philistia (Genesis 26), with mixed results. The distance to Moab was fifty miles.

***Names:*** Their names mean: my God (is) king; my delight; sickly and pining, respectively.

2. Naomi’s husband died and her sons were left; they took Moabite wives named Orpah and Ruth; they lived there about ten years; then both sons died and the woman was left (without) her two sons and husband. (*Verses 3-5*)

***Husband dead:*** Her husband soon died. He left her with two sons.

***Sons:*** They married women from Moab, disobeying Yahweh’s word to Moses (Deuteronomy 23:2-6).

***Death of sons:*** About ten years later, her sons both died and left her.

B. When Naomi hears Yahweh gave His people food, she departs Moab, her daughters-in-law with her; she tells them to return home; Orpah goes back, but Ruth clings to her. (*Verses 6-14*)

1. She rose with her daughters-in-law to return from Moab because she heard Yahweh had visited His people and given them bread; she went out with her daughters-in-law and they went on the way to return to Judah. (*Verses 6-7*)

***Naomi to Judah:*** With all her male protectors dead, and in a pagan land, Naomi returns to Judah because she heard Yahweh had given bread in the ‘house of bread’ (Bethlehem)!

***Daughters-in-law:*** And she went with her foreign daughters because of Yahweh’s command to His people to treat a stranger (foreigner) as themselves (Exodus 12:49). They were all mourning widows.

2. Then Naomi said to her daughters-in-law: You both must go, return to your mother’s house; Yahweh will do to you steadfast love, as you have done (steadfast love) to those dead and me; Yahweh will give to you and you will find rest, each in the home of a husband; then she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept. (*Verses 8-9*)

***Naomi sends home:*** On second thought, Naomi commands her daughters-in-law to go home, believing Yahweh will bless them with husbands and rest. After she kisses them they weep, loudly!

3. Then they said to her: We will return with you to your people. (*Verse 10*)

***Both determined:*** Out of love and respect for Naomi, they are determined to stay with her.

4. Naomi said: You both must turn back, my daughters; why go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb who will be your husbands? You both must turn back, my daughters, you must go because I am (too) old for (a) husband; if I say there is hope, and have a husband tonight and bear sons; would you wait for them until they are grown? Would you wait from being with a man? No, my daughters! It is very bitter to me for you, that the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me. (*Verses 11-13*)

***No husbands from me:*** Naomi wants to make them understand she is in no position to give them what they need. Even if she had sons in her late forties would they wait almost twenty years?

***Hand of Yahweh against me:*** She expresses her bitterness because she is convinced Yahweh is punishing her; and, therefore she is the cause of their suffering.

5. Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, and Ruth clung to her. (*Verse 14*)

***Orpah:*** Orpah, whose name means ‘gazelle’, kisses Naomi good-bye and returns to her home.

***Ruth:*** Ruth whose name means ‘familial intimacy’ stays close to Naomi!

**II. Naomi again commands Ruth: return to your people and ‘gods’; Ruth pledges loyalty to her and God; Naomi returns to Bethlehem in bitterness at barley harvest; Jesus declares mourners are blessed with comfort. (*Ruth 1:15-22; Matthew 5:3-9*)**

A. Naomi tells Ruth to also return to her people and ‘gods’, but Ruth pledges loyalty to her and her God, so Naomi relents, and returns to Bethlehem in bitterness with Ruth at barley harvest time. (*Ruth 1:15-22*)

1. She said: Thy sister-in-law returned to her people and 'gods'; Thou must return; Ruth said: do not request me to leave thee; where thou will go, I will go; where thou will lodge, I will lodge; thy people (are) my people; thy God (is) my God. (Verses 15-16)

**Naomi:** Naomi commands Ruth to follow after the wife of her husband's brother.

**Ruth:** Ruth pledges total loyalty to Naomi. She declares the God of Israel is her God! It is likely Naomi told Ruth much about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the Torah of Moses; the great miracles He did to deliver His people; and His grace and love.

**Application:** Like Naomi, we must take every opportunity to testify to people God brings close to us, especially those who do not know the truth about Him.

**God provides Naomi:** Ruth is living up to her name as a close family companion! She will prove to be a big part in restoring Naomi's faith in Yahweh despite the bitterness of her mourning.

#### ***We can trust Yahweh even in the depths of mourning***

2. Where thou will die, I will die and be buried; thus Yahweh will do to me (and more) because (only) death will separate me and thee; when Naomi saw Ruth determined to go with her, she said no more. (Verses 17-18)

**Until death:** As in a marriage vow, Ruth says she will stay with Naomi as long as they both live.

**Persistent heart and mind:** Because Ruth was steadfast in her devotion to Naomi, she stopped trying to change her mind. Perhaps, Naomi's heart is beginning to dare to trust Yahweh again.

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3. Then they went on, two of them, until they came to Bethlehem and the whole city was stirred because of them; the women said: is this Naomi? (Verse 19)

**Arrival at Bethlehem:** The return of one of their women had the women meeting and questioning her.

4. She said y'all not call me 'pleasant', y'all must call me Mara (bitter), because the Almighty (Shaddai) has caused exceeding bitterness to me; I went away full and Yahweh brought me back empty; Yahweh testified against me and Shaddai afflicted me. (Verses 20-21)

**Naomi:** She is still bitter she left with her husband and two sons who all died. She cannot see Yahweh-Shaddai's loving and gracious provision of Ruth to renew her faith in Him.

**Application:** When we are bitter before God because He does not give us all we want, we must still seek Him IN Jesus and the Holy Spirit for strength of heart so we will not let painful circumstances cause us to forget the LOVE, faithfulness and sovereign goodness of our Covenant God.

5. Naomi returned and Ruth, the Moabitess, from the land (sod) of Moab; they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. (Verse 22)

**First harvest:** Yahweh has provided the first food harvest just as Naomi returns. She will be filled despite her bitter mourning. Her faith in Yahweh will begin to grow with what happens to Ruth next.

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- B. Jesus pronounces blessings and comfort for mourners, the poor in spirit, and the pure-hearted who desire righteousness, saying they will be God's children. (Matthew 3:5-9)

1. Blessed (are) the poor in spirit / because to them is the kingdom of heaven // Blessed (are) those mourning / because they will be comforted. (Verses 3-4)

**Sermon on Mount:** These seven blessings are the introduction, to Jesus' first sermon. He declares truths that oppose human assumptions. He declares that people humbled by arrogant, powerful and wealthy people, and those of godly character, are those who are truly blessed by God.

**Mourners:** He begins by saying those with poor spirits and who are in a state of mourning are blessed because they will be comforted by being in God's kingdom.

#### ***Mourners are blessed and will be comforted***

2. Blessed (are) the meek / because they will inherit the earth // Blessed (are) those hungering and thirsting (for) righteousness / for they will be filled // Blessed (are) the merciful / for they will receive mercy. (Verses 5-7)

**Humbly desire righteousness:** All who strongly desire to be righteous by humble strength and merciful actions, will receive mercy, the inheritance of God IN Jesus Christ and so be filled (John 15:1-17).

3. Blessed (are) the pure in heart / because they will see God // Blessed (are) the peacemakers / because they will be called children of God. (Verses 8-9)

**Purity and peacemaking:** People who are pure and facilitate peace will see God as His children IN Jesus Christ, God's Son, their big brother

**Application:** We must all thank and praise the Three-IN-One God who blesses mourners with comfort in their poverty of spirit so we will see Him IN Jesus and also continue to be His children, comforted by Him in all our mourning.

#### ***Mourners are blessed and will be comforted***

**Conclusion:** Naomi leaves Bethlehem for Moab with her husband and sons because of famine. Her sons marry Moabite women, but then all the men die. Naomi hears Yahweh gave food in Bethlehem. So she leaves Moab, commanding her daughters-in-law to return: Orpah returns, but Ruth clings to Naomi, who again commands Ruth: return to your people and 'gods'.

Ruth pledges loyalty to her and to her God. Naomi returns to Bethlehem in bitterness at the barley harvest.

Jesus declares mourners are blessed with comfort.

#### ***We can trust Yahweh even in the depths of mourning.***