

**RUTH 1:19-22**  
**BITTERNESS!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Ruth chapter 1 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Ruth.

As you remember from our studies so far, we were introduced to a man named Elimelech. And Elimelech lived in Bethlehem of Judah or the House of Bread!

The problem now was that there was no bread there, there was a famine in the land and thus, Elimelech packed his family up and headed to Moab!

Now I don't doubt that he was a godly man, but even godly men make bad decisions when they don't seek the Lord. And we don't see Elimelech seeking the Lord for direction.

You see, if he did, I am sure that the Lord would not have told him to go down to Moab, into the land of their enemy, and literally, Moab was called a washpot!

Think about what was taking place here. Elimelech was moving from the House of Bread into a washpot!

And maybe he thought it was going to be for a short time, until the famine was over in Israel and then he would return to Bethlehem! But they were down there for ten long years!

And during their time down there Naomi's husband, Elimelech died. And here is Naomi left in a foreign country with her two sons!

Now, the story goes on to tell us that her two sons got married, and they married Moabite women by the names of Orpah and Ruth!

And after some time, we don't know how long, but within those ten years, both her sons, Mahlon and Chilion died.

So once again we see Naomi left with only her two daughters-in-law who are Moabite women!

And being a widow during that period of time was not good. It was hard to provide for yourself and now this whole family have become widows!

But then we are told, after living ten years down in Moab, that Naomi “**... arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them bread.**” Ruth 1:6.

What is interesting to me is that she is going back to Bethlehem for the food that was now there, not because that is where the Lord wanted her to go.

And I think she is not happy with the Lord for putting her in this situation. In fact, in Ruth 1:13 we see Naomi, in trying to discourage her daughters-in-law from going with her, told them, “**... No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!**”

And, as we saw last time, God was not against Naomi, but Elimelech and Naomi had placed themselves in a situation that was not of God and they were reaping what they had sown!

And here is this woman of God, Naomi, discouraging her daughters-in-law from coming with her to the House of Bread, to Bethlehem, she wants them to remain in the washpot!

For Orpah, she departed and went back to Moab. But for Ruth, she came to saving faith and she wanted to know the God of Israel more and thus, no matter what, even death, she was not going to depart from following Naomi to the House of Bread, to Bethlehem!

Listen to what Ruth said in Ruth 1:16-17, **“But Ruth said: ‘Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.’”**

It would seem here that Ruth has more faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob than Naomi does.

And it is possible that all three of these women went to see the three graves that remained there in Moab, that of Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion! And then, both Naomi and Ruth head out to Bethlehem and Orpah heads home to Moab!

And as Ruth and Naomi begin this journey to Bethlehem, we need to keep in mind that this is a place that Ruth has never seen before, she has no friends there, she knows no one except Naomi, and yet she is willing to forsake all that she had in Moab, in the world, and follow Naomi to the House of Bread!

I have called our study this morning – ***BITTERNESS!***

And as we go through these verses you will clearly see why.

Yes, Naomi went through a lot, and she had placed herself in this situation, and yet, God was working, and she missed it. Instead of this trial making her ***BETTER***, it made her ***BITTER!***

Someone wrote, ***“Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die!”*** It is not a good thing, it never is, and it destroys our life if we don’t deal with it!

This is a lesson that Naomi will learn, but not yet as we will see in our study this morning.

I have broken these verses down into three main points and they are as follows,

***THE JOURNEY HOME – RUTH 1:19***

***BLAMING GOD – RUTH 1:20-21***

***GOD’S NOT DONE – RUTH 1:22***

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Ruth chapter 1, beginning in verse 19, and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we look at this topic – ***BITTERNESS!***

## **RUTH 1**

### **VERSE 19**

Now as you read this it just says, “**Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem.**” And this is speaking of both Naomi and Ruth, keep in mind that Orpah remained in Moab.

And because we don’t know this area of the world, we don’t think much about it. We don’t think it was such a big deal. But this was a big deal, it was a tough journey to Bethlehem!

Keep in mind that this was over a 50-mile journey and it was just these two women.

They were open targets for anyone. It was a dangerous journey.

Not only that but the descent from Moab to the Jordan River was 4,500 feet.

And then, from the Jordan River to Bethlehem it was a 3,750-foot ascent!

Thus, it was a difficult and dangerous journey for them and yet, there is no record of any trouble, why?

It is simple. Because God was with them and God was watching over them.

What a beautiful picture that is for us, and what the Lord does for us as we journey!

I have called this verse – ***THE JOURNEY HOME!***

And that is exactly what we see happening.

Naomi is heading home, and Ruth is coming to a new home with her mother-in-law!

How does this apply to us?

First of all, for some Christians, they take a detour in life, they move away from the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ and they have to reach that point where they know they are wrong and they are willing to repent and return to the Lord!

Remember the story of Jacob, how he deceived his brother, tricked his father Isaac into giving him the blessing of the firstborn. And his brother Esau, who was supposed to get it, was mad and wanted to kill Jacob.

And Jacob was sent to his uncle Laban's house for a short time, until his brother was no longer mad at him. And during that time Jacob's mother died, and he spent twenty-years with Laban, who ripped him off with his wages, changed his wages some ten times and not for the better!

Jacob was not where he was supposed to be and now God had called him to go back to Bethel, the House of God!

And, after twenty long years living outside the House of God, we see Jacob return to Bethel and we are told in Genesis 35:1-7, **“Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.’ And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.’ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem. And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.”**

I want you to see something that happened in Jacob’s life, something dramatic as he returned to the Lord.

Here in Genesis chapter 35 God is mentioned more than 10 times and Bethel and Israel, which contain the name of God, is mentioned another 11 times.

And we might not think much about that but when you go back to Genesis chapter 34 the name of God is not mentioned once!

What is my point?

My point is pretty simple, and it is pretty dramatic! You see, when you are not in the place God wants you to be, you will not mention God; you will not seek after God, just as we see here.

And look at the mess Jacob brought upon himself and his family because he did not obey God!

But now he has returned to the Lord.

Also, because of Jacob's condition with the Lord, Jacob being the spiritual leader of the family and as his walk with God was distant, it affected his family – they gathered idols!

But now Jacob gets right with God and it also affects his family in a positive way, they got rid of their idols, their gods.

Not only that but Jacob tells his family that they need to change their garments, why?

Barnhouse put it like this, *“Throughout the Bible, garments symbolized character. The inward life of the unregenerate is compared to a polluted garment.”*

You see, when God touches your life inwardly, it will overflow in your outward actions. Every aspect of your life will be affected, even your dress.

Now clothes, behavior, the things we do don't save us, Jesus does. But they do show where a person is at with the Lord!

Paul put it like this in Romans 12:2, **“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

I don't know where you are at this morning, maybe your walk with the Lord is distant. Don't throw in the towel, return to Bethel, return to the House of God. Repent of your sins and get right with God and do those things that you did before you moved away. Get rid of those things that are hindering your walk with the Lord and be in His Word, pray, and be in fellowship with other believers!

That was Naomi, or I should say, at this point, that is where Naomi is at. The Lord is distant in her life and, as we will see, she is going to blame God for all her problems!

But there is also Ruth and Ruth is a new believer you might say. She came to the House of God and received the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

Maybe this morning you are here, and you have not asked Jesus to forgive you of your sins and to be Lord and Savior of your life. Maybe you are listening on the radio or the Internet and it is not by accident!

God is calling out to you and all you must do is call out to Him, as I have said. That is what Ruth did and apart from calling out to Jesus, we are dead in our trespasses and sins!

Now, in this verse here in Ruth 1:19, we see Naomi and Ruth make it to Bethlehem and Naomi has been gone for a long time. She has been gone for ten years and you would think no one would remember her, she would be long forgotten. But that is not the case!

We are told that as they both entered the city of Bethlehem, **“... that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’”** Ruth 1:19.

Now, yes, it has been ten years since they saw Naomi, and thus, the question, **“Is this Naomi?”** And the reason for the question was those ten years were hard on Naomi!



You see, the woman that left was not the same one that was returning. Sin had its toll on her life and what was taking place on the inside, her heart, had now overflowed outwardly, in her flesh.

I believe that she was an empty shell of the woman she once was.

And, because of that, as the people looked, they were astonished and even questioned themselves if this was truly Naomi!

That is what sin, that is what running away from the Lord will do in our lives!

And as we focus on all that has happened to us, all that we are going through, what happens many times is we come to the idea of – ***BLAMING GOD!***

In other words, it is His fault that all this has come upon my life.

And as we let that grow in us, we will become bitter, and that is not a good thing as we will see as we look at the next topic – ***BLAMING GOD!***

#### VERSES 20-21

Here we get the idea of where Naomi was at. You see, her name, “***Naomi***” means pleasant. It is a beautiful name and yet, at this point in her life, she was no longer feeling pleasant for the circumstances of life have brought her to a place of bitterness.

I know that some commentators don’t feel Naomi was bitter, but I think that is exactly what God is showing us here.

Why do I feel that way?

Because the name “***Mara***” means bitter!

And I want you to look at how she saw her present condition. She tells these women in Bethlehem, “**I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?**”

In other words, she is blaming God for all her affliction and she is not yet taking responsibility for her own actions, and it would seem that she is bitter towards God and all that is happening in her life.

Let me also say this. I think Naomi is beginning to recognize that she has sinned, but she is not taking that responsibility for what she has done, not yet.

And here’s the thing, because trials will come upon our lives, difficulties will come upon our lives. Let’s face it, we will all go through some very trying times where we may just want to throw our hands up in the air and say, “*What’s the point? Everything is going wrong. I might as well just give up!*”

God never said it would be easy. God never said that we would not have any trouble. But He did say that through it all He would be with us and He would see us through them all. Maybe not with the outcome we want, but the outcome He has for us and it is the best, even though we might not see it that way right now!

So trials in our life can have two basic effects. They can make us better or they can make us bitter.

We choose which we want.

They can make us better by drawing us closer to God.

Or they can make us bitter and we can become angry with God.

Instead of allowing this to be a period of growth in our Christian walk, we become stunted in our growth. And as you allow this bitterness to grow it will eat away at you until it is manifested in physical problems.

Be careful!

Let me share this with you regarding bitterness. We are told,

Bitterness is a biting resentment that clings to a person like a flesh-eating parasite. This unpleasant affliction shows itself with some of the following symptoms: harsh, unprovoked cynicism and an antagonistic attitude that can become downright hostile.

Something bitter can be described as “sharp like an arrow or pungent to the taste, disagreeable; venomous.” . . .

The more figurative definition of bitterness speaks of an emotional or mental state that works destruction in the mind like a poison would work destruction on the body. It’s a state where the affected party clutches their anger in a death grip, refusing to let it go, all the while braced for a fight at even the smallest, most illogical offenses.

Anyone who has fallen into the pattern of bitter thought can attest to how hard it is to break the mold they’ve placed themselves into. Bitterness colors life in a grimy film, making things that were once innocent and beautiful look like they’re something sinister or just masquerading as something pure. It’s a miserable place to be, and it can feel like our feet are encased in concrete when we try to just “let it go.”

If bitterness is something you struggle with, be careful not to entertain those thoughts or they will pierce your mind like the root of a tree and become unshakable. Ephesians 4:31 says to get rid of negative feelings toward others right away: “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”

Bitterness resists change. Bitterness wants its captives to stay right where they're at instead of reconciling with the thing that hurt them (knowingly or unknowingly). Once bitterness has begun to sink into a heart, getting rid of it is like trying to pull a tree stump out of ground with your bare hands. It just isn't going to happen.

If bitterness is left unchecked, it can lead to wrath, and wrath leads to angry outbursts, and angry outbursts lead to slander, and finally, the stage will be set for the heart to nourish an attitude of malice toward another person or group of people. None of these are godly attitudes, and bitterness is at the root of them all.

It is critical that we aim to keep bitterness from getting a foothold in our lives, and instead seek to conform to the image of Jesus Christ and His characteristics (2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:14-16; John 3:30; Luke 9:23-24; ).

Battling bitterness requires *choosing* to love the subject of our anger and our hurt instead of allowing the bitterness to continue to keep its roots burrowed into our hearts.

- <https://bit.ly/2V9548b>

And let me say this. Bitterness does take its toll on our lives. Let me share just a few points regarding what bitterness does to us because it is one of the most destructive and dangerous of all human emotions and if not dealt with, it will spiritually destroy the person who has it.

- It can rob you of your peace and joy.
- It is an open door for Satan to control your life.
- It can lead to the loss of good friends.
- It can hurt or destroy your relationship with your family, your wife and can even lead to the breakup of your home.

- It makes peace and harmony impossible.
- There can be no true biblical love where it exists.
- It destroys any true relationship with the Lord and will keep you from growing in the Lord.
- It will defeat you and ruin your life and the lives of those around you.

This is not some off the cuff remarks, bitterness will destroy your life, and yes, even your relationship with God!

Now you may not agree with me on this but hear me out. The other side of bitterness is thankfulness. In other words, if we are thankful for all that God has given to us, no matter how bad it may seem or how good it may seem, it deflates that power that is swelling up inside of us and it does not give bitterness a place to grow, to rise up in our lives!

In Psalm 136:1 we are told, “**Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.**”

Notice that we are to be thankful to God for two reasons here. First, the Lord is good, it is a constant goodness towards us. And secondly, it is a steadfast love towards us! That is unchanging and we should be thankful for that!

You see, once you recognize that there is no good in you, nothing that should cause God to love you and yet He loves you more than you can ever imagine, then a loud – ***PRAISE THE LORD*** should come from your lips!

In Psalm 30:1-12 we are told, **“I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, And have not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried out to You, And You healed me. O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning. Now in my prosperity I said, ‘I shall never be moved.’ Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain stand strong; You hid Your face, and I was troubled. I cried out to You, O Lord; And to the Lord I made supplication: ‘What profit is there in my blood, When I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your truth? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy on me; Lord, be my helper!’ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.”**

Notice that David is going through a very difficult time here and he is praising God for his deliverance from the situation that he was in. And what I like about David is that he just doesn't praise God for the present situation but for the past deliverances that God has brought him through! In other words, God is good to us all the time and His love for us is steadfast or unchanging!

Another difficult time for David is found in Psalm 28:6-7, **“Blessed be the Lord, Because He has heard the voice of my supplications! The Lord is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him.”**

Here we see that David is in distress and he cries out to God who heard his hearts cry!  
And David gives thanks to God for answering his hearts cry to him during this difficult time!

Think about all the difficulties that Paul went through in the New Testament for his faith in Jesus Christ. And over and over again we see his thankfulness to God and his praise to God through them all. He wrote in Hebrews 12:28, and this is from The Living Bible, **“Since we have a Kingdom nothing can destroy, let us please God by serving him with thankful hearts and with holy fear and awe.”**

Again, having a correct perspective of the situation causes us to be thankful knowing that we have a kingdom that can't be destroyed. Yes, in this life all these things can be taken away, but not our faith and our eternal inheritance with the Lord and thus, we should have thankful hearts!

And it is interesting to me that one of the characteristics of the last days, which I believe we are in, is having a heart that is unthankful. We see that in II Timothy 3:2, **“For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.”** And the list goes on and it is not good!

And yes, we can point to the unsaved regarding these things, but I think we too can get caught up with that idea of being unthankful and it is not good. We should be thankful because of all that God has given to us. And think about it. When we are thankful the focus comes off ourselves and what we don't have, and it is focused upon God as we express thankfulness to Him for all that He has given to us!

And, of course, there is I Thessalonians 5:16-22 where Paul tells us, **“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”**

Notice what Paul is admonishing us here, because it is the will of God for our lives. He tells us to . . .

- Rejoice always.
- Pray without ceasing.
- Give thanks in everything.
- Do not quench the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.
- Do not despise the Word of God.
- Test all things.
- Hold fast to what is good.
- Abstain from every form of evil.

Make no mistake about it, bitterness is sin, and it will break our fellowship with God, and it will break our fellowship with others, believers and unbelievers!

Repent and return to the Lord and let the things you are going through make you better, not bitter!

For Naomi and her late husband, they left Bethlehem because they thought they had nothing, they were empty, and they went looking for something in the world.

But, in the end, when Naomi evaluates her life, she realizes she had much in the House of Bread, living where she should have lived than living in the world!



Thus, here it is, plain and simple.

You may start out full, but sin will cause you to return totally empty and broken, as Naomi did.

As one writer put it regarding the mathematics of sin, *“Sin adds to your sorrows, subtracts from your energy, multiplies your troubles, and divides your loyalty.”*

You can’t win in sin and God is going to chasten you, trying to draw you back to Him so that your joy may be full and not empty!

You see, the fullness of joy we have in this life is not found in this world, but in Christ, in His presence!

God allowed these things in Naomi’s life to draw her back to the House of Bread, to Bethlehem, and she did come home, but she has not repented of her sin and come back to the Lord. She is only blaming God for all that has happened in her life!

In Psalm 119:65-67 the Psalmist shows us the chastening of God. He says, **“You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to Your word. Teach me Good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.”**

God’s Word opens our eyes to sin, but if we refuse to look and deal with it, God will chasten us to get us back on track.

Warren Wiersbe sums this up for us as he wrote,

We can’t control the circumstances of life, but we can control how we respond to them. That’s what faith is all about, daring to believe that God is working everything for our good even when we don’t feel like it or see it happening.

“In everything give thanks” (1 Thess 5:18) isn’t always easy to obey, but obeying this command is the best antidote against a bitter and critical spirit.

The Scottish preacher George H. Morrison said, “Nine-tenths of our unhappiness is selfishness, and is an insult cast in the face of God.”

Because Naomi was imprisoned by selfishness, she was bitter against God.

To begin with, she accused the Lord of dealing very bitterly with her (Ruth 1:20). She had left Bethlehem with a husband and two sons and had come home with-out them. She had gone to Moab possessing the necessities of life, but now she had returned home having nothing. She was a woman with empty hands, an empty home, and an empty heart. Because she didn’t surrender to the Lord and accept His loving chastening, she did not experience “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11). . . .

But was Naomi really that poor and empty? Or was she simply exaggerating her situation because she was weary of body and bitter of soul? Just think of the resources she had that should have encouraged her.

For one thing, she had life; and this in itself is a precious gift from God—a gift we too often take for granted. Naomi left three graves back in Moab, but God in His goodness had kept her alive and brought her back to Bethlehem.

“Fear not that your life shall come to an end,” said John Henry Newman, “but rather that it shall never have a beginning.” Naomi thought that life had ended for her, but her trials were really a new beginning. Naomi’s faith and hope were about to die, but God had other plans for her!

Naomi not only had life, but she also had opportunity. She was surrounded by friends, all of whom wanted the very best for her. At first, her sorrow and bitterness isolated her from the community, but gradually that changed. Instead of sitting looking gloomily at a wall, she finally decided to look out the window; and then she got up and opened the door! When the night is the darkest, if we look up, we can still see the stars.

One of Naomi's richest resources was her daughter-in-law Ruth. In fact, it is Ruth whom God used and blessed throughout the rest of this book; for Ruth was a woman who trusted God and was totally committed to Him. Naomi soon learned that God's hand of blessing was on this young woman and that He would accomplish great things through her obedience.

But most of all, Naomi still had Jehovah, the God of Israel. The Lord is mentioned about twenty-five times in this brief book, for He is the Chief Actor in this drama whether Naomi realized it or not. "I firmly believe in Divine Providence," said President Woodrow Wilson. "Without it, I think I should go crazy. Without God the world would be a maze without a clue."

When we fear God, we need not fear any-thing else. On his deathbed, John Wesley said, "Best of all, God is with us!"

God is not only with us, but He is also for us; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31, KJV)

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT, p. 481

So we have looked at – ***THE JOURNEY HOME!***

And what should have brought great joy, as Naomi looked at her life, she was bitter with God and thus, she was – ***BLAMING GOD!***

But there is one more point I would like to look at and that is – ***GOD'S NOT DONE!***

VERSE 22

Again, I have called this verse – ***GOD’S NOT DONE!***

And just like we see here with Naomi, God is not done with any of us. He does not give up on us. He does not forsake us. He never leaves us! That is important to remember, especially when we are going through a difficult time and we want to run away!

Naomi and her husband did that and it was devastating to them. Elimelech died and not only did Naomi lose her husband but her two sons also died in Moab.

And now she is back, and she is bitter, she sees that her life is a mess, that she left with plenty and came back to Bethlehem with nothing.

But again, God is not done with Naomi.

Let me share this with you to encourage you wherever you are at this morning. This is from a commentary and we are told,

On Wednesday night, three weeks before I wrote this, I had a telephone call from a man I did not know. He told me his name was James and that he’d lost his faith because of something that had happened many years ago, but wanted to get it back again.

He said that someone had told him I had a men’s Bible study in my home every Thursday night, and would it be alright if he came. He said, “I don’t even have a Bible.” I replied, “No problem. I print out the Bible passage and give it to everyone.” “Do I need to bring anything else?” James asked. “No,” I said, “Just come.”

And he did. He came the following night and the following week and has kept coming. James told us how one of his children suffered brain damage at nine years of age and became mentally handicapped and how he has had a running argument with God about it ever since.

James was bitter and empty for thirty years, but he's heard God calling him and is on his way home.

Ruth 1 is a story about someone who went away *but came home*, and it's an invitation to all of us to do the same.

- Barry G. Webb, Judges and Ruth – God in Chaos, p. 254

I think that is where Naomi is at right now. She is home and she is working on re-establishing her relationship with God. And let's face it, she could have continued to let that bitterness grow in her life and she would remain a barren woman!

May we learn that lesson and move on, not remain bitter towards God or others but let those situations we face, those trials we encounter, cause us to be better, to grow in the Lord.

And yes, it is not easy for if it was easy, like I have said so many times before, we would not need God.

Naomi needed God and so do we and we will see how God worked not only in the life of Naomi but in Ruth as well!

Now, here in Ruth 1:22 we are given the timeframe of when they returned to Bethlehem, it was during the time of the barley harvest, and most of us would just read over that and miss what the Lord is showing us.

The book of Ruth is a story of redemption.

Thus, the barley harvest took place in the month of Nisan, March/April.

What Jewish feast took place during this time of year?

It is the Feast of Passover and that, of course is the Feast of **REDEMPTION!**

Interesting, Ruth comes to the Lord on the feast of redemption.

Not only that, but as we move on in this story, we will see Boaz fall in love with a Gentile woman, Ruth, and they will get married about 50 days later – on the Feast of

***PENTECOST!***

This speaks of the birth of the Church or the Bride of Christ. Interestingly enough, Ruth is a Gentile bride!

What a coincidence!

No, it is the sovereignty of God as His hand is upon all things!

And we also see the blessings that God pours upon the life of Naomi as she returns to the Lord. Her spiritual appetite, you might say, was filled as she returned to the House of Bread, to Bethlehem!

Now let me also make this point because sometimes I think we miss out on the blessings or we feel that God is so distant from us when we are going through those difficult times. He is not, He is right there beside us!

For Naomi, she could not see the future, what God was doing, and I think that is our problem many times. We look at the circumstances we are facing, and we lose all hope, we become angry, we become bitter and we think that God is done with us. He is not!

We need to hold onto the promises of God, believe them and apply them to our lives, to walk in faith and keep our eyes upon Jesus or we will lose hope!

Let me share a story with you about someone who felt that he blew it, that God was done with him, that there was no hope for him to be used by God any longer.

The person I am speaking of is Peter!

Remember when the Lord told Peter that he would deny Him three times. And Peter knew better than the Lord and told the Lord that he is ready to die for Him!

And after Jesus is arrested by the Jewish Supreme Court you might say, the Sanhedrin, John gets Peter into the area where they are questioning Jesus, the High Priests house, and he is in the courtyard with many other people.

And it is here that we see Peter deny the Lord three times and the rooster crowed and at that point we are told in Luke 22:61-62, “**And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.**”

Now when it says that the eyes of Jesus met the eyes of Peter, how do you think the Lord looked at Peter? Maybe with disdain and disgust.

Have you ever felt the Lord looking at you like that?

Maybe He said, “***I told you Peter!***”

Or “***Peter, how could you do that?***”

Or maybe “***Peter, you are a failure!***”

And again, I am sure we have felt that way before.

Now here’s the thing. I don’t believe Jesus responded like that.

The ancient Greek word for “**looked**” “*usually signifies a look of interest, love, or concern.*” (Liefeld)

I believe that Jesus looked at Peter with such love, such compassion that it broke Peter and he did need to be broken of self.

Can I be sure of that?

Absolutely.

Notice again how Peter responded to this look of love by Jesus, “**Then Peter went out and wept bitterly.**” Luke 22:62.

And we need to keep in mind that this was not a surprise to Jesus. He had already told Peter that this was going to happen.

And I am sure that Peter felt that it was over, the Lord could never use a man like him. He might as well go fishing, at least he was pretty good at that.

But God was not done with Peter, not even close.

In John chapter 21 we see Jesus restore Peter and really, we see that here in Luke chapter 22 as Jesus said in verse 32, “**. . . and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.**”

I love that. I think the same is true for us. As we fail, as we stumble, as we are broken of self, when we return, we can help those who are dealing with these same issues just as the Lord has done with Peter. May we look upon them with the love of God and not disdain!

Remember what Jeremiah 31:3 says, “**The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.’**”

And in Ephesians 2:4 we are told, “**But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.**”

Never forget that He loves you. Don’t let the enemy sift you as wheat and blow you away with his lies!

Don’t let bitterness grow in you because of the situations you are facing, as difficult as they may be. God loves you and He will always love you and if you have walked away, you need to return to Him!



Let me share these words with you from Warren Wiersbe. He wrote,

It was barley harvest when the two widows arrived in Bethlehem, a time when the community expressed joy and praise to God for His goodness. It was spring, a time of new life and new beginning.

Alexander Whyte often told his Edinburgh congregation that the victorious Christian life is “a series of new beginnings,” and he was right.

Naomi was about to make a new beginning; for with God, it’s never too late to start over again.

Are you trusting God for your new beginning? After all, with God at your side, your resources are far greater than your burdens.

Stop staring at the wall and, by faith, get up and open the door to a brand-new tomorrow.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT*, p. 481-482

Amen to that.

May we all take a good look at where we are at and if we need to, if we have walked away from that deep relationship with the Lord, may we make that – ***JOURNEY HOME!***

And as we do, we need to stop – ***BLAMING GOD!*** And really, stop blaming not only God but everyone and trust in God.

And the reason we can trust in God is that – ***GOD’S NOT DONE!*** He is still working in our lives and will continue to work in our lives until the day we go to be with Him!

Let go of the ***BITTERNESS*** and let the things that God has allowed into your life to make you ***BETTER!***