

RUTH 4:13-22
GOD IS AT WORK!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Ruth chapter 4 as we finish up our in-depth study of this amazing book of Ruth.

As we have seen over the last several months, this book opens up with three deaths!

Now, as I say that, it does not sound too encouraging, and if that is where it started and where it ended, it would not be very encouraging.

Remember that this is the story of Elimelech and his family who were living in Bethlehem in Judah. The House of Bread.

The time period for this was the time of the Judges and the nation was not doing very well, they had forsaken the Lord over and over again. It was a very dark period for the nation of Israel. And God brought judgment upon them and when they cried out to the Lord, He raised up a Judge to deliver them from the bondage they were in.

Then, over time, they started to turn away from the Lord, usually when the Judge died, and they went back to their evil ways.

And in our story, we see that in Bethlehem there was a famine, and it was bad enough for Elimelech to take his family and move them out of the House of Bread and to Moab, outside the Promise Land, to a washpot. He thought his help would come from the world and he found out that the world could not help him.

Now keep in mind that everyone did not leave Bethlehem because of this famine, most of them stayed, except for Elimelech and his family.

We don't know how long that they were down there before Elimelech died. So his wife, Naomi, is left with her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion.

Because they were down in Moab, in the world, they married Moabite women. Chilion married Orpah and Mahlon married Ruth.

After they were married, we don't know how long, both Mahlon and Chilion died. So here is Naomi, left with her two daughters-in-law and no means of support for them or herself.

This short stay in Moab ended up being ten long years and now Naomi hears that God is blessing His people in Bethlehem, so she decides to return home once again.

Maybe because they were Moabite women and the children of Israel were not to marry Gentiles, Naomi tries to discourage them from coming home with her. For whatever the reason she didn't want them to come, she tries to drive home the point by basically telling them that God has placed a target on her back and is taking target practice with her life, thus, why would you want to endure all that trouble!

And Orpah listened to Naomi and returned to Moab but Ruth refused to return to Moab, and she was going to go with Naomi. I believe that Ruth is saved, and she wants to go where the God of Israel was at.

Remember what Ruth told Naomi 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.'**"

So both Naomi and Ruth head to Bethlehem, a place that Ruth has never been, she knows no one down there and yet, she was willing to go because she wanted to be where God and His people were at. That is faith.

And this was not an easy journey. The distance from Moab to Bethlehem was some 50 miles and the road was difficult and dangerous, especially for two women!

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!

And yet, God watched over them and they arrive in Bethlehem. As they enter the city the women recognize Naomi, although she looked very different. Those years in rebellion against God, angry at God had taken its toll on the way she looked. Those were a hard ten years away and they ask her, **“Is this Naomi?”** Ruth 1:19.

And she tells them not to call her Naomi or pleasant, but to call her Mara or bitter! You see, bitterness filled her life because she was living in rebellion against God, and now she is blaming God for all that has happened to her!

But our God is so gracious, and He is so merciful that even though Naomi gave up on God, God did not give up on Naomi!

As they get settled in Naomi tells Ruth that there is a kinsman of her husband’s named Boaz and Ruth wants to go and glean in his fields. This was a provision for the poor, to go and glean in the fields after the owner went through once, so they could provide food for themselves.

And when Boaz sees Ruth, he falls in love with her and tells his men to make sure she is safe and to let her have some extra grain.

What we are seeing in this story is the hand of God working in the lives of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz!

And when Naomi finds out all that Boaz has done for Ruth, she understands the intentions of Boaz and she wants Ruth to prepare herself to be his bride.

As we have seen, Boaz, the Goel or kinsman redeemer does marry Ruth and that is where our study picks up this morning.

Yes, we started out our story with three deaths, but the story ends with a wedding and a birth!

I have called our study this morning – ***GOD IS AT WORK!***

And I think that is important for us to remember, that no matter what we are going through, God is working, He cares for us, He will never forsake us, and I can go on, but I think you get the idea.

Think of it like this,

A construction crew was building a new road through a rural area, knocking down trees as it progressed.

A superintendent noticed that one tree had a nest of birds who couldn't yet fly, and he marked the tree so that it would not be cut down.

Several weeks later the superintendent came back to the tree. He got into a bucket truck and was lifted up so that he could peer into the nest. The fledglings were gone. They had obviously learned to fly.

The superintendent ordered the tree cut down. As the tree crashed to the ground, the nest fell clear and some of the material that the birds had gathered to make the nest was scattered about. Part of it was a scrap torn from a Sunday school pamphlet. On the scrap of paper were these words: ***He careth for you.***

The problem for us is that we truly believe this when everything is falling into place, when things are going well, when Mr. Bluebird is singing on our shoulder!

But then, everything is a mess, things are not going well, and Mr. Bluebird, well, I am going to have to wash that shirt now! I think you know what I mean. He left something on my shoulder!

But God is still at work and we see that here in the story of Ruth. Yes, what Elimelech and his family did was not right. But in the end, God never gave up on Naomi and we will see how her life changed as she saw the hand of God working in her life once again. It was not that God was not working, she just didn't see what God was doing and came to some very wrong conclusions. God was not out to destroy her, but to restore her!

I have broken our study down into three main points, and they are,

FROM BITTERNESS TO PLEASANTNESS – RUTH 4:13-16

FROM SERVANT TO KING – RUTH 4:17

GOD IS AT WORK – RUTH 4:18-22

With that said, let's begin reading in Ruth chapter 4, starting in verse 13 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at the topic – ***GOD IS AT WORK!***

RUTH 4**VERSES 13-16**

Make no mistake about it, weddings are special. I remember the day Julie and I got married, almost 42 years ago! The joy, all the people, it was an Italian wedding, so you can understand when I say all the people! And it was just a time of celebration. And the first dance I had with Julie, yes, it was the theme song of the Godfather! Well, I cannot confirm or deny that, but you know what I mean.

Now I also need to say this, or I will not make it to 42 years! That joy, that excitement, is still there. Yes, it is different because we have grown together through those years, but that joy and excitement continues on!

For Boaz and Ruth, I am sure they were so excited about this day and it was a celebration in Bethlehem as well.

And now, not only a wedding, but we see a birth. Boaz and Ruth have a child!

Keep in mind that having children was not something that they took for granted. They saw it as a blessing from God.

How sad today that so many don't see it that way and abort their children because they don't want to be bothered or feel that can't care for them. Back then, children were important, and I pray we see them as a blessing from God once again as a nation.

Now there is something else that I want you to see here, and that is the point of these verses, that Naomi went – ***FROM BITTERNESS TO PLEASANTNESS!***

Remember all that Naomi has been through in the last ten years. She left her home in Bethlehem and headed to Moab, from the Promise Land and into the World.

In Moab her husband Elimelech dies.

Her two sons, instead of marrying from the daughters of Israel marry Moabite women, something they were not to do.

Then Naomi's two sons die!

And now, at the end of those ten long years, she is going back to the land of Israel, back to Bethlehem. But, before she goes, she tells her daughter's-in-law after they both said that they would go with her to Bethlehem, "**But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go - for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!'**"

All that has happened to her and her family is not because of her sin, not because she and her husband did anything wrong but, "**... the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!**"

And, as I have said, Orpah went back to Moab but Ruth followed Naomi back to Bethlehem.

As they arrive in Bethlehem, the women recognize Naomi and notice what she said to them, "**But she said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 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?'**" Ruth 1:20-21.

Now we may be thinking, ***“How in the world can Naomi say something like that? How can she bring this charge against God, that she had everything and when she came back the Lord took it all away! Where is her faith?”***

And I think what the Lord is showing us is that we need to look in the mirror before we are too critical of others and their faith.

Again, when things are going well, we are all about letting our faith shine! ***“God, you are so good to me! Praise the Lord! Blessed be the name of our God! He is an awesome God!”***

Then, as Mr. Bluebird is upon our shoulder and leaving a deposit, we are not too happy! ***“God, how can you do this to me? You want me to praise your name but look at what I am going through! How can I praise your name when all this calamity has come upon me? I am not happy God! I serve you, do all I can for you, and then this! What is up with that? I thought you loved me!”***

And I can go on, but I think you get the picture, we can put a lot more into that, probably more than when we are praising God for all that He has done for us!

Now we can justify this behavior all we want, but it is not right, it is not what God desires of us. You see, God never allows things in our lives to hurt us, but He does so to correct us, to build us up, to restore us!

But once we let anger and bitterness get a hold of our lives, then not only are we affected by it, but so is the person we are angry with affected, and so are others and it can be very destructive. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

In the spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play a routine baseball game. But what happened that day was anything but routine.

The Orioles' John McGraw got into a fight with the Boston third baseman.

Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl. The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands. Among the fans the conflict went from bad to worse.

Someone set fire to the stands and the entire ballpark burned to the ground.

Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well.

- Daily Bread, August 13, 1992

We see that with Naomi. She was angry at God for all that happened to her. It made her bitter towards God and that bitterness was seen in her life, it affected her appearance!

Now, why did she say that about God? Why did she blame God for this and lost all hope for her life?

One of the reasons is that she did not recognize her sin, that she had run from God.

The other one and one that we fall prey to is this. She did not know the end of the story and she did not believe that “**. . . all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**” Romans 8:28.

And what we see here with Naomi we see in our own lives as well.

If we are honest with ourselves, and we need to be, when things get tough, when they get difficult for us, we don't even think about what God is doing but we are angry and bitter to what is going on in our lives.

You see, what is going on here with Naomi happens with us and thus, this is a lesson for us to learn.

Maybe some of you have moved away from the House of Bread and are in the world once again. And God is drawing you back but in fighting against God, there are consequences to our actions.

What we need to do is move from what the world has for us and return to the House of Bread, return to the Lord.

And even apart from sin, from walking away from God, things happen in our lives and even in the darkest of those times, Romans 8:28 still applies. Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

Professor E. C. Caldwell ended his lecture, “Tomorrow,” he said to his class of seminary students, “I will be teaching on Romans 8. So tonight, as you study, pay special attention to verse 28. Notice what this verse truly says, and what it doesn’t say.”

Then he added, “One final word before I dismiss you - whatever happens in all the years to come, remember: Romans 8:28 will always hold true.”

That same day Dr. Caldwell and his wife met with a tragic car-train accident. She was killed instantly, and he was crippled permanently.

Months later, Professor Caldwell returned to his students, who clearly remembered his last words. The room was hushed as he began his lecture.

“Romans 8:28,” he said, “still holds true. One day we shall see God’s good, even in this.”

- Our Daily Bread, 12-19-91

That truly is faith in the living God and His promises. Yes, Romans 8:28 is a promise of God and the thousands of other promises in the Bible are His promises to us. May we believe them and apply them to our lives.

For Naomi, she did not believe that, but God was slowly working in her life and her heart was changing and now she saw the goodness of God and has gone from bitterness to pleasantness once again!

And I think for us, we need to have an attitude of gratitude in all that we are going through.

Now that is a difficult one and I don't want to downplay what you are going through or make you feel that what you are going through is nothing.

Let's face it. We live in a world full of sin, full of hate, full of worldliness and pain, and we can develop an attitude that is not of God but is focused on us and what the world feels.

But if we can trust in God, believe in the promises of God to us, as we walk by faith and not by sight, I believe when people look at us, no matter what we are going through, they will see pleasantness and not bitterness.

For Naomi, she will see the blessing and I think many times we miss the blessing because we are so focused on all that we are going through. Pay attention, and see what God is showing you as you are going through this time.

Let me illustrate it like this. We are told,

A King had a male servant who, in all circumstances always said to him; "My king, do not be discouraged because everything God does is perfect, no mistakes."

One day, they went hunting and a wild animal attacked the king, the servant managed to kill the animal but couldn't prevent his majesty from losing a finger.

Furious and without showing gratitude, the king said; "If God was good, I would not have been attacked and lost one finger."

The servant replied, "Despite all these things, I can only tell you that God is good and everything He does is perfect, He is never wrong."

Outraged by the response, the king ordered the arrest of his servant.

While being taken to prison, he told the king again, "God is Good & Perfect."

Another day, the king left alone for another hunt and was captured by savages who use human beings for sacrifice.

On the altar, the savages found out that the king didn't have one finger in place, he was released because he was considered not "complete" to be offered to the gods.

On his return to the palace, he ordered the release of his servant and said; "My friend, God was really good to me. I was almost killed but for lack of a single finger, I was let go."

But I have a question; "If God is so good, why did He allow me to put you in prison?"

His servant replied; "My king, if I had not been put in prison, I would have gone with you, and would have been sacrificed, because I have no missing finger. Everything God does is perfect, He is never wrong."

Often we complain about life, and the negative things that happen to us, forgetting that everything happens for a purpose. . . . God is good and perfect!!

- <http://w.tt/3btADCz>

You see, having the correct perspective of things, that God is in control, that He is good, and He is perfect and what He does is **NEVER** wrong! **NEVER!**

And when we do understand that, then our attitude will change, and we will move from an attitude of bitterness to pleasantness! A great lesson to learn and apply to our lives!

Again, for Naomi, she went from – **BITTERNESS TO PLEASANTNESS!**

VERSE 17

What is seen here in Ruth 4:17 is this – ***FROM SERVANT TO KING!***

Now you may be wondering where in the world I got that from but listen closely.

The name, “**Obed**” means “***servant***” and how interesting that is to me.

You see, David is the grandson of Obed and David became the King in Israel!

Do you know what that tells me?

It tells me that all things work together for good. God has a plan, and He does things according to His will, and as much as we see a mess, God sees his plan coming to pass. That is what we are seeing here with this child Obed, the grandfather of David!

Now what a picture we see being painted for us here.

From the servant to the King and it is out of this lineage that the Messiah would come.

And look at what we see in the life of Jesus in His first coming. We are told in Mark 10:45, “**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**”

But how do we see Jesus in His Second Coming? We see Him as Almighty King who will rule and reign for a thousand years in Jerusalem, we call it the Kingdom Age! Now I am not saying that He is not Almighty God, King of the universe in the Incarnation, He still was and is, but He will sit upon the throne of David in the Kingdom Age!

Now let’s think about that for a minute. How can we put the words “***servant***” and “***King***” together? They don’t seem to fit. A King is not a servant and a servant is not a King. One rules and the other is ruled! So how does this work?

First of all, let’s look at some Bible verses that deal with Jesus being a servant.

We already looked at Mark 10:45 and that was very clear.

Let's also look at Luke 22:24-27 which says, **“Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called “benefactors.” But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”**”

We are so much like the disciples of Jesus. We are jockeying for position; we are trying to be the greatest and that is exactly what was going on here. In fact, and we will talk about this in a minute, they refused to wash anyone's feet, but Jesus washed their feet.

Why didn't they? The reason is simple. They were above that and notice what Jesus is telling them. He tells them that this is how the world acts, this is what the world does, but that is not what they were to do.

Yes, those who sat at the table were greater than those who served, and then Jesus shows what we are to do as He gives His life as an example! He tells them, **“Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”**

Almighty God became flesh, dwelt among us, and has become a Servant to us all and now He is telling us that we should do no less! Jesus was a Servant!

Then, in John 13:12-17 we are told, **“So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.’”**

This was the job of the lowest slave, to wash the feet of those who entered the master’s house. And in those days, with sandals and dirt roads, dirt everywhere, their feet got very dirty. Thus, this servant would come and wash everyone’s feet before the sat down to partake of the meal.

Here we see that none of the disciples of Jesus wanted to do that job, it was too low for them to do, they were the A-postles, not the B-postles!

So Jesus girds himself and washes all their feet. And this was to be an example to them, that if Almighty God can wash someone’s dirty feet, we too must be involved in people’s lives, and it can be messy, it can be dirty, but what a blessing to serve others!

Spurgeon sums it up like this as he wrote, ***“If there is a position in the church where the worker will have to toil hard and get no thanks for it, take it, and be pleased with it. If you can perform a service, which few will ever seek to do themselves, or appreciate when performed by others, yet occupy it with holy delight. Covet humble work, and when you get it be content to continue in it. There is no great rush after the lowest places, you will rob no one by seeking them.”***

Exactly. If you need to be rewarded for service. If you need to receive praise for the work that you are doing. If you need to have others witness what you are doing. Then don't do the work.

And I know, many times people do see what we are doing. Let's face it, I am not speaking to empty chairs. Well, I guess last year for a time, during that lock down, I was, but you know what I mean.

But if you are doing it for the attention, for the praise, for this or that, you are missing the point. You do it because you are a servant of God and Jesus clearly lived that kind of life and since we are not greater than our Master, we should as well.

And we can look at more, but I think you can clearly see that Jesus came to serve man, to save Him from their sins.

But make no mistake about it, He remains the King of kings and Lord of lords and one day He will sit upon the throne of David and rule and reign in the Kingdom Age.

Let me share a few verses to show you that Jesus is not only a Servant, but He is also the King!

In Revelation 19:13-16 we are told, **“He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

As I have said, He is Almighty God, and He is the King of kings and Lord of lords!

And this one I think we know very well, Isaiah 9:6-7, **“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”**

This is one we use often at Christmas time. We see Isaiah speak of the Messiah as the reigning King and that He will sit upon the throne of David. And that day is getting closer!

Make no mistake about it, Jesus rules over all of creation! But in the Incarnation, He laid down some of those Godly attributes, not making Him a lesser God, but He freely laid these down and He came to serve man, to save man from His sin!

So look at what we have seen so far.

We saw Naomi go ***FROM BITTERNESS TO PLEASANTNESS!***

And there truly was no reason for her to be bitter. But the reason she was is that she stopped looking at God and looked at all the situations that had come upon her life, and they were tough, many brought because of her disobedience to the Lord, and she stopped looking for the fact that God was still working in her life.

Once she looked and saw the hand of God, that bitterness left her, and she was pleasant!

From there we looked at how Obed, the child of Boaz and Ruth, his name means ***“servant.”***

And then, down the road, the great grandson of Boaz and Ruth was David, the King of Israel!

And we saw the picture that the Holy Spirit has given to us of Jesus, being a Servant of all in the Incarnation but always being King of kings and Lord of lords. And one day He will rule and reign from the throne of David – ***FROM SERVANT TO KING!***

The last point I want to look at is this – ***GOD IS AT WORK!***

VERSES 4:18-22

Here we see the genealogy leading up to Boaz and then all the way to David, King of Israel! And ultimately, as we will see, to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Before we get to that we need to deal with this man Perez. You see, back in Ruth 4:11 we see the response of the people to this marriage between Boaz and Ruth. They were excited about what was going to take place and they said, “**. . . ‘We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.’**”

Let me deal with Rachel and Leah first. You see, from them, two of the wives of Jacob, were born 8 out of the 12 sons who made up the 12 tribes of Israel.

It is also interesting that they speak of them prospering in Ephrathah or Bethlehem, do we see that?

You bet we do.

First of all, we see that King David was born in this little town called Bethlehem, in Judah.

But not just King David, but another King was born there, and His name is Jesus!

We see this play out for us in Micah 5:2 where we are told, **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”**

In other words, as we will see, the Messiah will be born from their lineage in Bethlehem!

And for those who like to deny the deity of Jesus, please understand that the phrase, **“from everlasting”** speaks of being beyond the vanishing point. The idea here is that this One who is to be born in Bethlehem is eternal. He has no beginning, and He has no ending. Thus, He is Almighty God!

But now we come to a problem. You see, they also said, **“May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman.”**

In Genesis chapter 38 we see Judah arrange the marriage of his son Er to Tamar. But he dies without any children and so his brother marries Tamar to raise up a child for his dead brother. He was playing the role of the kinsman.

But he gets second thoughts and refuses to raise up a child and the Lord takes his life.

Now Judah has one more son and at this point he is getting a little nervous about losing this one also. So he doesn't allow this son to marry Tamar and encourages her to go home to her father. And that is what Tamar does.

But, later on Tamar pretends to be a prostitute and has relations with Judah, who did not know that this was his daughter-in-law.

After some time, the news spread very quickly that Tamar was pregnant, and righteous Judah calls for her to be put to death for her actions.

That was until he found out that he was the father of this child. You see, it was Judah that had done this to her.

The son of Judah and Tamar was Perez, and he became part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. And the blessing given here in Ruth is that her home may be like the home of Perez, kind of a strange blessing, but out of their lineage the Messiah would come!

But there is a problem, and it is not an easy one to ignore. This is the problem.

We are told in Deuteronomy 23:2, **“One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the congregation of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the congregation of the LORD.”**

Now here is the problem. Perez was the illegitimate son of Judah and Tamar, and so none of his descendants can enter the house of the *LORD* until the tenth generation.

So how can this be reconciled?

Well, if you count from Perez to David, he is the tenth generation and thus, he had the right to the throne!

What timing and the reality is; it is God’s perfect timing!

Boaz and Ruth are the great-grandparents of David, the King of Israel!

And my point is this – ***GOD IS AT WORK!***

Here in Ruth we get the genealogy all the way to King David. But, in Matthew chapter 1 we get the genealogy from Abraham all the way to Jesus, with Boaz and Ruth mentioned, like we see here in Ruth chapter 4!

I don’t know why, but I am always amazed at the way that God works. He is never in a hurry, He always has a plan, it is in His timing, and it works out beautifully as we see here!

As one writer put it, *“God’s hand is all over history. God works out His purpose, generation after generation. Limited as we are to one lifetime, each of us sees so little of what happens. A genealogy is a striking way of bringing before us the continuity of God’s purpose through the ages. The process of history is not haphazard. There is a purpose in it all. And the purpose is the purpose of God.”* (Kidner)

I think we would be at peace more often if we rested in that fact that God knows what He is doing, He is at work even though I may not see it with my eyes, even though I may not understand what is going on, He does!

Make no mistake about it, no matter what you are going through – ***GOD IS AT WORK!***

I hope you have been blessed as we have taken our time going through the book of Ruth.

It is a beautiful story that took place in a very dark period of time for the nation of Israel, the time of the Judges!

And the thrust of the story here in Ruth is that of redemption, which means to, ***“set free by paying a price.”***

Boaz was able to do that as he played the role of the kinsman redeemer, the Goel as he took Ruth as his bride and purchased the land that was lost back.

And we saw how this is a picture of our Kinsman Redeemer, our Goel, Jesus Christ.

God became a man in the Incarnation. You see, God could not send an angel to do this work for he could not have been our Kinsman. He could not send a prophet or priest; they had their own sin!

But for Jesus, He had to add humanity to His deity to be our Kinsman. And He did just that for us!

From eternity, God planned to bring Ruth and Boaz together, and thus make Bethlehem His entrance point for the coming of Jesus as our true Kinsman Redeemer, fully God and fully man.

He has paid the price for our redemption on the cross of Calvary. He has purchased us to Himself, a bride.

Just as Ruth was a Gentile bride for Boaz, so too are we a Gentile Bride for Christ! And He has purchased us back and one day there will be the marriage with our Bridegroom and then Jesus will return and take back that which was taken from Him, this earth, that was given to Satan when Adam sinned. But Jesus purchased it back and when He does return, He will rule and reign from Jerusalem for 1,000 years!

Make no mistake about it, the Bible is a story of redemption from Genesis 3:15 through to Revelation 22:21. Paradise lost in Genesis is Paradise gained in Revelation!

That is the primary focus or thrust of the Word of God, that, **“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”** John 3:16.

Let me close with this story for you to think about, because it shows that God is always at work, even when we don't see it. Even when things are difficult and hard to even put words to what has happened. The thing is, don't be bitter, but be pleasant knowing that God is at work!

We are told,

One man's life provides a dramatic answer to the question, can God indeed bring positives out of troubled times?

This young man's name is David, and he is an awesome picture of God's using difficulties for good.

For years he viewed trials as something that affected only his external world, and any blow to what he owned or how he looked would discourage him and leave him feeling cheated.

Today, David travels around the world, talking with people about how he discovered that no matter what happens to the outside, it's the internal life that trials really touch. . . . the bigger the trial, the more potential to see God's power and peace at work in the inner person.

During the Vietnam War, David went through rigorous training to become part of the ultra-elite special forces team the Navy used on dangerous search-and-destroy missions.

During a nighttime raid on an enemy stronghold, David experienced the greatest trial of his life. When he and his men were pinned down by enemy machine-gun fire, he pulled a phosphorus grenade from his belt and stood up to throw it. But as he pulled back his arm, a bullet hit the grenade, and it exploded next to his ear.

Lying on his side on the bank of a muddy river, he watched part of his face float by. His entire face and shoulder alternately smoldered and caught on fire as the phosphorus that had embedded itself in his body came into contact with the air.

David knew that he was going to die, yet miraculously he didn't. He was pulled from the water by his fellow soldiers, flown directly to Saigon, and then taken to a waiting plane bound for Hawaii. But David's problems were just beginning.

When he first went into surgery - the first of what would become dozens of operations - the surgical team had a major problem during the operation. As they cut away tissue that had been burned or torn by the grenade, the phosphorus would hit the oxygen in the operating room and begin to ignite again!

Several times the doctors and nurses ran out of the room, leaving him alone because they were afraid the oxygen used in surgery would explode!

Incredibly, David survived the operation and was taken to a ward that held the most severe burn and injury cases from the war.

Lying on his bed, his head the size of a basketball, David knew he presented a grotesque picture. Although he had once been a handsome man, he knew he had nothing to offer his wife or anyone else because of his appearance. He felt more alone and more worthless than he had ever felt in his life.

But David wasn't alone in his room. There was another man who had been wounded in Vietnam and was also a nightmarish sight.

He had lost an arm and a leg, and his face was badly torn and scarred. As David was recovering from surgery, this man's wife arrived from the States. When she walked into the room and took one look at her husband, she became nauseated. She took off her wedding ring, put it on the nightstand next to him, and said, "I'm so sorry, but there's no way I could live with you looking like that."

And with that, she walked out the door. He could barely make any sounds through his torn throat and mouth, but the soldier wept and shook for hours. Two days later, he died.

That woman's attitude represents in many respects the way the world views a victim of accident or injury. If a trial emotionally or physically scars someone or causes him to lose his attractiveness, the world says, "Ugly is bad," and consequently, any value that person feels he has to others is drained away.

For this poor wounded soldier, knowing that his wife saw no value in him was more terrible than the wounds he suffered. It blew away his last hope that someone, somewhere, could find worth in him because he knew how the world would perceive him.

Three days later, David's wife arrived. After watching what had happened with the other soldier, he had no idea what kind of reaction she would have toward him, and he dreaded her coming.

His wife, a strong Christian, took one look at him, came over, and kissed him on the only place on his face that wasn't bandaged. In a gentle voice she said, "Honey, I love you. I'll always love you. And I want you to know that whatever it takes, whatever the odds, we can make it together."

She hugged him where she could to avoid disturbing his injuries and stayed with him for the next several days. Watching what had happened with the other man's wife and seeing his own wife's love for him gave David tremendous strength. More than that, her understanding and accepting him greatly reinforced his own relationship with the Lord.

In the weeks and months that followed, David's wounds slowly but steadily healed. It took dozens of operations and months of agonizing recovery, but today, miraculously, David can see and hear.

On national television, we heard David make an incredible statement. I am twice the person I was before I went to Vietnam. For one thing, God has used my suffering to help me feel other people's pain and to have an incredible burden to reach people for Him. The Lord has let me have a worldwide, positive effect on people's lives because of what I went through. I wouldn't trade anything I've gone through for the benefits my trials have had in my life, on my family's life and on countless teenagers and adults I've had the opportunity to influence over the years.

David experienced a trial that no parents would wish on their children. Yet in spite of all the tragedy that surrounded him, God turned his troubled times into fruitful ones.

- The Gift of Honor, Gary Smalley & John Trent, Ph.D., pp. 56-58

I pray that no matter what you are going through, that you would see the hand of God upon your life because – ***GOD IS AT WORK!***

And I also pray that we, as a body of believers would be sensitive to those who are going through difficult times and with the love of Christ, minister to them, encourage them, love them and bless them because – ***GOD IS AT WORK!***