

# Providence and Salvation

by Keith Malcomson

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*This sermon delves into the theme of providence in the book of Ruth, highlighting the journey of Naomi and her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, back to Bethlehem. It explores the contrast between Ruth's steadfast faith in God's providence and Naomi's initial blindness to God's plan, despite her knowledge of God's character. The sermon emphasizes the importance of following God's path even in times of bitterness and uncertainty, as Ruth's unwavering commitment leads to a new beginning and the unfolding of God's providential plan.*

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**Scripture:** Ruth 1:16, Ruth 1:20, Ruth 1:22, Romans 8:28

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want you tonight to turn with me to the book of Ruth again for this third message. And we are dealing with providence in the book of Ruth. I really believe that two plus months ago, maybe three months ago, the Lord gave me this.

I not realizing what was just about to happen within a week, literally gave me this the week before losing Candace. And I was utterly consumed, just a seed thought. I knew that God was going to minister through this, and it was going to be very important for what was happening.

And I really do believe it's a message, not only for you, not for those online, it's for me. This is very personal, very real, looking at the God of providence in the book of Ruth. But it's bigger than that.

I believe it does impact all of our lives. I believe it's got everything to do with the salvation of this world. Let's read, follow with me.

Ruth chapter one and verse six. Then she, that is 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 and given them bread.

Wherefore she went forth out of that place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her, and they went on their way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me.

The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and they wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters. Why will ye go with me? Are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters. Go your way, for I am too old to have a husband.

If I should say, I have hope. If I should have a husband also tonight, and should also bear sons, would ye tarry for them till they were grown? Would ye stay for them from having husbands? Nay, my daughters, for grieveth me much for your sake. And the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.

And they lifted up their voice and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods.

Return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. For whither thou goest, I will go, and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge.

Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they too went, until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them.

And they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara. For the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty.

Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest. Let's pray here tonight.

Father we thank you for the word of God, the encouragement, the purpose behind this little book. These stories, these testimonies of real living people. You do have a plan and a purpose to reveal your character, and your nature, and your plans.

Lord God I pray that you'd show us, that you'd anoint our eyes again, even tonight. That you'd show us the reality of these things. That you're the God of providence.

That your hand is even in the dark things of life. In Jesus name. We're coming to part three of this series on providence in the book of Ruth.

And I've titled this third part, Providence and Salvation. I believe the rest of chapter one that we haven't dealt with in the two previous weeks. I believe it deals with God's hand in the normal things of life.

Not the supernatural, the normal. That are connected directly with someone's salvation. Either in them rejecting it, or receiving it.

It says in Luke chapter 22 and verse 21. But behold the hand of him, Jesus speaking on the night of his betrayal. Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table.

And truly the son of man goeth. In other words, something's just about to happen here. As it was determined.

Notice that what is about to happen to Christ, didn't depend on Judas. Can you imagine thinking that Judas has the power to destroy or change God's plan? Can you imagine that? Here are dark things, evil things. A betrayer.

A false apostle. One that's going to sell Jesus for 30 bits of silver. And can you imagine thinking all of this happened because of Judas? Or because of Herod? Or because of Pilate? Could you imagine that? That God's will in our life, what happens to us.

So depends on those around us and circumstance. That we don't see God in it. Do you know what Jesus is saying here? The son of man is going to go the direction it's determined.

That word determined means determined by the father. Determined by God. Christ knew he was going to go the way that his heavenly father had determined.

Who determined the cross? It was Christ. Who determined the crucifixion? The suffering. The darkness.

The betrayal. The whipping. The scourging.

The death. Who determined this? It was God the father. And yet look what Christ says.

But woe unto him by whom he is betrayed. So you've got two things here. The hand of man and the hand of God.

At work in the cross. If you see the cross you'll understand providence. Where man's hand and God's hand come together.

Jesus says Christ has to be betrayed. I will have to be betrayed. And someone at this table, one of you twelve is going to betray me.

You have to betray me. But woe unto you whosoever it is. You know what he was saying? You don't need to betray me.

You've got a choice about betraying me. That's why Christ constantly through three years warned Judas. One of you is a devil.

One of you is going to do this. But you don't need to. In other words Judas' sin was absolutely laid at his own feet.

God didn't make Judas betray him. But someone has to betray him. If you see where man's responsibility meets God's sovereignty.

You're going to understand an awful lot. You'll keep yourself from great difficulties. You know what? Someone had to betray Christ.

But it didn't have to be Judas. It doesn't have to be you. But someone is going to do it.

They're going to sell Christ out. And yet in the midst of that Christ actually says but it was determined. It wasn't Judas determined or Pilate or the religious Pharisees.

It wasn't them or Herod or Pilate. You know who it was? It was God determining this. It is dark.

It is hard. You know Mary's heart. It's going to be like a sword piercing her heart.

Watching her son die. And yet you've got God's determined plan. Providence.

Judas is doing it. He's going to get punished for it. He'll get sent to hell for it.

He'll be damned eternally. Judas is responsible for his actions. They are wicked actions.

They are evil actions. And yet God's hand of providence is in it. Oh that God would open your eyes to see this.

I mean this will radically change how you view life. And even what we said last week. Then Jesus says in Matthew 26, 24.

He goes further. It had been good for that man if he had never been born. Someone is going to do it.

There is a plan. People are going to betray Christ. But woe to that person who dares do it.

Then listen to what Peter preaches in Acts chapter 4 verse 27. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus. Whom thou hast anointed.

Listen to what Peter is saying here. Both Herod and Pontius Pilate. With the Gentiles and the people of Israel.

Were gathered together. What a power base. Rome's power.

Israel's power. The people's power. All gathered together in agreement.

Do you think that was accidental? They're all gathered together. To do what? The next verse says. For to do whatsoever they intended.

No it doesn't say that. Listen. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

In other words. Thy hand of providence. Remember it's his hand.

Not his miracle. Not his voice. His hand.

God's hand. Is in Pontius Pilate, Herod and the people. Agreeing together to crucify Christ.

God's hand is in this. And you know what it says? Whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined. That word determined again.

Before should be done. God determined this way back. Where? In his counsel.

Where father, son and holy ghost met together. In their eternal everlasting counsel. Before there was an earth.

And they determined certain things. They determined the blood of the lamb must be shed. They determined God's son must die at Calvary.

They determined that wicked men would take Christ and crucify him. It was in the counsel of God. It was determined before there was an earth.

Before there was a fall. And yet men are responsible. Absolutely.

You don't get damned because God chose that. You know why? You get damned. You're in trouble with God because of your sin.

Your attitude. Your decisions. God will hold you accountable for every decision.

You know if God made you do something. You're not responsible. This is where the sovereignty of God.

Man's responsibility come together. And are revealed in a remarkable way. What's my message tonight? Providence and salvation.

You may think that's a strange way to start and to go into the scriptures I've just read. But it's not. It's connected.

Do you know why? I believe providence is connected with salvation. All the way through the Bible. God is working secretly.

Hiddenly. Hidden in a hidden way. In normal events.

To reach out to every person in salvation. And the cross is the example of that. Normal events.

Wicked men making decisions. Doing bad things. Normal things happening.

Soldiers on duty at the cross. For criminals. And yet God's hand is upon us.

Even in their words that they spoke. Even the high priest who spoke. This man must die for the nation.

Why did he speak that? God had determined the words that were in his mouth. He didn't even know what he was saying. But let's go into Ruth chapter 1. And let's begin to see providence at work.

In individual salvation. God dealing with people like you and I. To bring you to Christ. To bring you to salvation.

How does that work? I believe you've got it in Ruth chapter 1. Here's my first point. Links in the chain of providence. Just think about this.

The book Ruth. Who it's named after. She is a Moabitess.

An idolatress. Far from God. A stranger to the covenant.

Outside of Israel. Lying. Born.

Raised in darkness. Superstition. Paganism.

That's where she was. And yet God starts working providentially. In people far away.

Who have nothing in common with her. To bring her the gospel. Look at the initial events in this story that we've already dealt with last week.

Look at the people. The circumstance. The famine.

Their journey. Their decisions. The unlikely steps that they begin to make.

The perchance happenings of life. Are the normal incidental events that happen in all of our lives. That lead you to those.

Either who are going to give you the gospel. Or lead you to people you're going to give the gospel to. See in Ruth chapter 1 that's what you have.

You've got God working in two situations. And he's providentially going to bring the gospel to Ruth. He is providentially going to guide this little family.

And it's no accident. What Naomi has, has to be given to Ruth. That woman Naomi has something.

She has a faith in God. She has a knowledge of the character of God. And I'll prove it tonight.

And she's got to bring it to Ruth. It's vital. And so God begins to guide two people together.

Who had never had met. I never would have met you outside the providence of God. And the grace of God.

And the work of God. You're such a motley bunch. And a bunch online or even worse.

I'm going to tell you. Scattered everywhere. And yet God providentially has worked to bring us together.

Why Ruth? Why is it that God would look down at this pagan woman? Why her and all of her nation? Why her and why not just someone in Israel? Wasn't there someone in Israel could provide and do the job of a wife for Boaz? Does it really matter? Did God have to go to Moab? You know all the Bible commentators and preachers criticized that family for going to Moab. Hold on. Why not criticize God? Why didn't God find a Ruth in Israel? He didn't do that.

He actually reached out into Moab. He had to get a Moabitess. He had to get an idolatress.

And he brings her in. Why Ruth? Why this woman? Why a stranger to the continents of Israel? Because God has a plan and a purpose. And God's providential hand, not in miracles.

He didn't send an angel. He didn't do a miracle to get her. He just began to use a famine and need and trouble.

And the thinking of men and women's minds say, What are we going to do to preserve our family? Let's go to Moab for a short time. Do you realize God's hand was in all of that? Look at this woman, Naomi. She's a woman prepared in the providence of God to touch Ruth's life.

I'm talking about evangelism here. I'm talking about one person who knows God, impacting someone who doesn't. Do you realize God's hand is in that? God can be leading.

You don't even know it. You're thinking of a famine. You're thinking of disaster.

You know, thank God, last week, the guys, they went out whenever it was last Friday, evangelizing, preaching on the street like lightning. They hit and run. They went out there, stood up, preached on the high street.

Wonderful. But this is a different type of evangelism. You're not conscious.

You're not prayed up. You're not there saying, Lord, give us souls as we go out. Oh, no.

This is you just trying to save your life. This is you in trouble. This is you thinking about just having bread on your table.

And yet God is in that for you to evangelize someone. You know, you could walk into a shop and see someone, and God's hand of providence is within that. Let's look closer at these links in the chain of providence.

Naomi was a vital part of that. Look at Ruth chapter 1, verse 6. Then she, that is 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 how the Lord had visited his people and given them bread. Do you see how after 10 years in Moab, what we read in verse 6, we've had the disaster, the dark threads, the problems, the crisis, the death of three husbands.

No children are there. And yet this little book is all about a seed, a child coming forth, and yet there's no children that you can see in this so far. It says that Naomi arose.

It means to stand up or to begin something. Usually the commencement of a journey. So she arises.

She's not just arising to stand up. She goes, I'm going to make a journey. I'm going back home.

Why was that? Because your husband died? No, that was 10 years ago. Because your sons died? No, that didn't move me. Do you know what it says here? She heard that the Lord had visited.

She heard. She's out there just rummaging around, working. Her belly's full because there's bread there.

But suddenly a message comes. The Lord had visited his people and given them bread. Do you know that stirred her to arise? Remember like last week I said, seek for bread.

Go for the bread. She arose to go after the bread. Someone, I wonder who this someone was, providentially came to her on that day, at that time, and said, do you know what I have heard? I don't believe she was in touch closely with Bethlehem.

I think this whole book shows that. They didn't know what was happening to her. But someone happens to come into her village who says, have you heard the news this morning? Have you heard the latest about

over in Bethlehem? Imagine someone coming right into Moab, right to where you are, and saying, do you know God has visited the little tiny village of Bethlehem with bread? Do you know that? She didn't hear anything else.

She immediately arose, began to pack her bags. I'm telling you, you could see the dust moving. And she begins to get stirred up.

And she says, the Lord has visited. You know, when the Bible talks about God visiting, it's either in judgment or to bless. This was a sudden visitation of the Lord to Bethlehem to give them bread.

He'd come to bless the people again. You know why? It's time to come home again. Providence in timing.

Why didn't it happen yesterday? What if it had happened tomorrow? No, it's going to happen today. God's hand of providence. You know why? He's dealing with a person's salvation.

And it's very important. I believe God has providentially dealt with all of you in this room, whether you're saved or unsaved. His hand has been working.

What you do with it will set your eternity in a remarkable way. She actually says here that the Lord had visited His people. The Lord.

See the word Lord there? It's in capitals in your Bible. In your Old Testament, every time you see the word Lord in capitals, it actually means it's the word Jehovah. Or as it's written in the Hebrew, there's only four Hebrew letters.

Y-H-W-H. We call it Yahweh. Or the old preachers would have said Jehovah as a way to pronounce it.

The Jews actually said it was the unpronounceable name of God. So all these Jewish roots groups that argue now and are divided over how you say Yahweh, they say we should all say Yahweh when we pray. And they'll say Yahweh in their church caverns.

Now they're splitting saying you're not saying Yahweh the correct Yahweh way. So we're splitting now because you're actually apostatizing on how you pronounce it. Do you know the old Jews actually said it was the unpronounceable name of God? It has no vowels within it.

And what does it actually mean? It means I am God. I am the unchanging God. I am the eternal God.

It was the name actually given to the Jewish God. It was so uniquely. You had to be in the Jewish covenant with God to know Jehovah or to know God as Jehovah.

It was the name of God given to Israel as a nation. Who visited Bethlehem? The God of Israel. The God of the Bible.

The God revealed to Moses and to the nation. He visited. And he's brought bread back to the small community in an extraordinary way.

He come to bless. He is active. In other words, this divine being has intervened to bring an end to famine.

Do you know when a famine ends in a church and they go back to preaching and to praying and to seeking God and evangelizing, it means God has intervened. A church isn't going to be on fire for biblical preaching. Or there won't be bread there if God is not involved.

It's God's hand of providence. When you find a church that is Bible preaching in the 21st century, I want to show you, God's hand is involved with that. God has visited his people.

He has come in a remarkable way. And look at this lady. She arises and she immediately begins to move.

It says she arose. Singular. Not talking about the two daughters.

She arose and began to do something. Her actions will impact her two daughters-in-law. Do you know as a Christian, your actions will impact a daughter-in-law? Or a daughter? Or a son? Or a father? Or a mother? When you are in Moab and you hear there's bread to be found, and you begin to arise to make a journey, I want bread.

I want to go back to the house of bread. You're going to affect sinners' lives around you. Do you realize someone's eternity is impacted by your actions as a Christian? Whether you stir yourself and arise, there's bread.

I'm after bread. I'm after the house of bread. Do you see the heart of this woman? As soon as Bethlehem is no longer in famine, and it comes back to being a house of bread, God is there.

There's bread there. You know what? She says, I want to go to that house of bread. I want to go to a church where there's a revival, a stirring, a moving of the Spirit of God, where the Word of God is preached.

That shows Naomi's heart. She is a woman after bread and the house of God. But she's going to impact these two daughters.

But first of all, she's only thinking of herself. She's not even thinking of them. She's just going, I want bread.

I want to be in the midst of a house of bread. And so she stands, and she begins to make a movement. But it's only her.

But do you know what it does? It initiates something. The two other ladies said, we're going with you. They also arise and begin to follow her.

Her life had so impacted them that her desire for bread in Bethlehem, they'd never been to Bethlehem. They didn't know the things of God. But this lady had so impacted their lives that they said, we'll make a journey that we know nothing about.

We will go back to the house of bread. We're coming with you. And so they rise up, and they begin to make that journey in a remarkable way.

God is at work in this, providentially. You know why? Salvation is the issue here. The Messiah is the issue here.

God's plan of redemption is the issue here. And it's tied up in individual lives. You say, oh, I'm not responsible for someone's eternity.

You don't think that. You really don't think that. I want to tell you, when you read the Bible, you see that what an individual does has such knock-on consequence you can't imagine.

You can't even begin to understand that, that your life could impact people for eternity. That's the first thing, links in the chain of providence. God's hand was in all of these events, and especially in this relationship with Naomi.

God had brought Naomi right into relationship with two ladies. And their lives are going to be impacted by Naomi's life and decision. So it is with you.

Who is in your family? Who is working with you? Who lives with you? Who lives next door to you? You think that's accidental. Those little chats and talks along the way, you think that's accidental. It absolutely isn't.

God providentially works in these things, positioning people, and some people, because they listen to you, will turn their back on God and say, I don't believe this. And through talking to you, others will turn and say, I want to know you're God. So point one, links in the chain of providence.

There's links concerning salvation. All of you in this room were initially affected by someone sharing the gospel with you. It didn't come in a dream for most.

Someone shared with you. You maybe went online and heard the gospel. Some preacher, who you don't even know now, preached the gospel to you for the first time.

I met people who got saved through street preachers before, and always asked them this, every time. They said, that was the first time hearing the gospel. I come under conviction of sin.

I said, did you ever go and find that preacher and tell him? Ten out of ten times so far, they said no. In other words, street preachers are preaching, and the people never come back to tell them, say, you were the first link in the chain. You were the first person.

This was the first time I ever heard the gospel. You were a link in that chain that brought me to salvation, and it was very important. Most don't even think that.

Point two here, the right path of providence. Look at verse seven. Wherefore she went forth out of that place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her.

Now the daughter-in-laws are involved. Look at the word went. That's not plural.

It was singular, just her. Now it's them responding. God's hand of providence is working on Naomi.

God is getting her back into the land, back to Bethlehem. But do you know what? God's providence in Naomi's life is now affecting two daughter-in-laws. Now they also went on their way to return unto the land of Judah.

All three now embark on a journey, not just Naomi. All three are caught up. This is the right pathway.

If you knew God, God's plan was in this. God's hand was in this. In the journey, making a decision, I'm going back.

That wasn't just your decision. God is actually working in these normal events that led you to a decision. And so they set off on this journey.

First of all, they get out of that place. They can't stay there any longer. You know what? God is finished with Moab as far as having them there.

In case you think it's wrong that they were in Moab, do you know years later, David, who is a descendant of Ruth, David would never have been born if she wasn't in the right place. Do you realize David, when he's being sought after, pursued by Saul, sends his entire family over into Moab to be protected from Saul killing them? So don't tell me there's not a right time to go into Moab. There is a right time biblically to go.

David sent his family there to be protected. When Saul dies, he brings them back in again. And so you've got these three ladies making their journey.

Notice in verse 7 here a certain word I really want you to see. And it says, And they went on their way to return unto the land of Judah. See the verses we read here, verses 6 to 22 in chapter 1. This word return in the Hebrew text is used 12 times in the verses that we've just read.

In this one story, 12 times the word return is used. That is not accidental. What does it mean? It can mean return back to a certain place.

It can mean something good or it can mean something bad. You see, many start out in the right direction who do not continue. I want you to hear this so carefully.

The right path of providence. God's providence is at work. Now these three ladies are journeying.

It's the right path. It's God's path. God's will is in this.

They are walking together down this path. And it's got everything to do with returning. But let me ask you.

You could return to the world. You could return to your old ways. Or you could return to God.

But do you know what? Every single life is going to be caught up in this. What are you going to turn to? What are you going to return to? Every single individual tonight is going to make some sort of journey. This was definitely the right path.

Some follow providence into sin. You're in a situation and a young girl comes in. If you're a young guy.

No. If you're a young girl these days. We're in the 21st century.

And a young girl comes in. You're a believer. You love Jesus.

You're walking with God. And this young girl comes in. She dresses immorally.

Speaks immorally. And she goes to the discos on a Saturday night. But she said she believes God.

Really she wants you. She doesn't want God. She wants you.

You know what? I've always said. Bring this so-called partner of yours to church. If they can tolerate me preaching Sunday morning.

It reveals an awful lot. You want to test them out. Bring them in here.

They don't want to sit under the word of God. In the house of God. You should run like you're running from a fire.

That means there's something seriously wrong. But listen. Some people.

They're on a journey. And they go. Oh.

This is God's hand. I've been praying. I had a friend once who sat.

Was at someone's house. Sat down in the toilet. Looked sideways.

And there was some jar of some product. And it had the name of the girl that he was praying about. And he came and told me.

He says. See. That's the girl for me.

Never did marry her. I want to tell you. He thought that was providence.

Look. What's the chances that I would just look. And her name is there.

And I'm praying for her. God wants me to have her. He never got her.

Do you know what that is? That's a very dangerous game of providence. Oh. Providence.

God's given me this job. So where are you Sunday morning? Oh. I'm at work.

Okay. Don't tell me that's providence. Oh.

But I've got a pay rise. A position rise. Oh.

Oh. It's great for my career. Fine.

But don't tell me God's hand was in that. You're assuming that. And you're squeezing it.

You. You. You.

You care about. Oh. God let me.

Did he really? Did he really? I doubt it very much. Or. Some follow providence in disobedience to God's clear word.

They say. Oh. God's leading me here.

Here's confirmation. I see his hand in these things. But it leads you away.

It causes you to disobey the word of God. That is not God. I can tell you.

It might be the devil's hand. Do you know the devil can send you unusual circumstance to confirm things? Do you know the devil can do that? The devil can lead you and say. See.

See. See. Keep walking.

And he'll give unusual spectacular providential confirmation. And you know what he's doing? He's throwing out some bait and pulling you in. You know how I know providence? Because it's got God's hand upon it.

In a very real, real way. It says in Hebrews chapter 10, 36. For you have needed patience.

That after you have done the will of God. You might receive the promise. Now the just shall live by faith.

Listen to this. But if any man draw back. My soul shall have no pleasure in him.

But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition. But of them that believe to the saving of the soul. That tells me.

If you draw back. You're not of those that believe to the salvation of your soul. If you go back to your old life.

If you go back to the world. If you go back to sin. That's a very dangerous position.

And do you know what? God has no pleasure in that. And you know what? It shows you don't have any faith. If you had faith.

You'd persevere. You'd seek after God. There'd be salvation for you.

And so there's a real warning here. Here's the three ladies. Walking on the right path of providence.

They start well. They're going in the right direction. They have many good motives.

Look at these two daughter-in-laws. They are good daughter-in-laws. They are good ladies.

They are moral. They actually married her sons. Because they said we believe in the God of the Bible.

We're actually seeking after you. Point three. The time of decision.

The time of decision. You see, I believe that outwardly. They married the two sons.

Do you know why? They said we here. They weren't just after a relationship. They had already come into this.

We want to be a part of the covenant. We want to move away from statues and idols. We want to associate with a family.

That believes in the one true God. I believe they've already heard this from Naomi. Year after year after year.

They're impacted by this little family. And they join themselves to this family. And they believe in what they're being told.

I believe Orpah believed this. Academically. I believe Ruth believed this.

They are drawn into marriages. Because of the godliness of this little family. They fell in love with men.

Who loved the God of the Bible. And they're drawn in. But a time of decision comes.

Now the husbands are gone. Now death has marked all of this. Remember they were married.

They were joined outwardly. But now comes the time of cost. Do you realize many people hang around in born again churches.

Who aren't born again. Do you realize there's many people who say. I believe all of this.

Yet they're not regenerate. You could not convince them to believe more. Of the facts of the Bible than they do.

They go I believe this. I do want it. I want to be here.

I believe this. I want to follow Naomi. I want to be with Naomi.

Why? She's a woman of God. Is it because she's got a smile on her face all the time? No. Is it because she's blessed of God? No.

This was a hard time. You know Naomi. As they looked at Naomi.

It was very obvious. Naomi was not in this for the blessings. She was in this for God.

This is the true path. It is the narrow way. This is the real God.

And she's walking after God. When everything bad goes against her. When she loses her husband.

And then her two sons. They're watching her. And going her faith is real.

Don't tell me Naomi was a backslider. I don't believe that at all. I believe that this woman of God.

That this woman of God. Was here. Seeking after God.

Walking with God. And she impacts these two daughters-in-law. In a very remarkable way.

And so the time of decision. Look at verse 8. And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law. That was providence by the way.

Just in case you wondered. Said unto her two daughters-in-law. Go return each of you to her mother's house.

The Lord deal kindly with you. As you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant you that you may find rest.

Each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them. And they lifted up their voice and they wept.

The time of decision is here. They have seen this family for ten years. They've heard about the God of Israel for ten years.

They have walked as believers in the covenant for ten years. But here is now the crunch time. The consequence time.

The cost time. Look what she's doing here. And again I have to keep telling you this.

Because most preach this differently. And I want to warn you about it. And I want to prove it here.

They'll say she's trying to get rid of them. She doesn't care about their souls. She's telling them to go back to Moab.

Now look very carefully at the text. Do you know what she says? Go return to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you.

She's blessing them. The Lord grant you that you may find rest. You know what she's doing? She's praying for them.

Encouraging them. She's blessing them. She's wanting God to have an impact in their life.

Who is she calling upon? The Lord. The God of Israel. Jehovah.

Yahweh. She's saying may God bless you. May God give to you.

May God grant unto you peace. That you're going to have a Godly family. That's what she is doing in a very real way.

Look what she says about them here. She says the Lord deal kindly with you. See that word? It's the word kessed.

It's our New Testament word for grace. That's about as close as you get. Unmerited favor.

Do you know what the word kindly here means? It means loving kindness. The grace of God. But it means much more than that.

She says may God show you kindness as you showed me kindness. Notice these two daughter-in-laws had showed great kindness to their lost husbands. The word kindly or kindness here.

It means loyalty. With real passionate warmth. Reliability.

It's a covenant word that you're to be trusted. You keep covenant. You stay in relationship.

And it means all the love. All the grace. All the mercy.

All the blessings that come inside that covenant. So she's saying may God treat you like you treated me. And treated my two sons, your husbands.

You were kind to them. You're faithful. You're reliable.

You weren't mixing with the world. You were utterly faithful. Good wife.

And she says now may God be kindly unto you. I want him to be a covenant God unto you. You see they were good wives.

And good daughter-in-laws in a very, very real way. They were extremely good. And she's praying and blessing for them.

But look what it says. She kisses them and they all weep together. Typical women.

All three of them are weeping together. She gives them a kiss which was a sign. Bye-bye.

Farewell. You are going to make a journey now. You may say why did not Naomi do this? She wasn't telling them to turn away from God.

She's just blessed them. May God bless you. May God grant you.

I'm praying for you. She is not sending them back to a life of sin and worldliness. She's just saying look the journey I'm taking naturally, humanly, in human family life is a very hard life.

I'm heading for poverty. I'm a woman deprived. I don't have a man to look after me.

Naomi's future was uncertain. It was going to be hard. She wanted God's blessing upon these two daughters.

But practically she knew that going with them seemed a very bad choice. The Moabites would have a harder job to marry in Israel than they would in Moab. More likely it was to find a home, a place, a life, a new life.

Think about it. Would you easily turn away two daughters-in-law who are kindly to you and gracious and reliable and very loyal? And now you're saying I want you to go back. It's your loss.

You're going to loss out on two remarkable daughter-in-laws. My pathway is hard. Look how God has dealt with me for ten years.

My heart is utterly broken. I'm very sad and grieved in heart. You really want to come with me? I've got no man to care for us.

I'm going to have to work with the sweat of my brow. I believe she's pleading with them not to depart from God but to go an easier journey. She's thinking of them as a mother would do.

She wants them protected and guarded and looked after. Says if you hang about, if you're following me because of my faith and my walk with God, and now I know this is my journey, if you're only following because you're so loyal to me, I'm really worried lest you get disappointed with that. It was an uncertain future of poverty, rejection.

They could have got rejected for their family background. It was a hopeless situation. Look at verse 10.

And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. So even after she says that, they're still very determined. So she goes into overdrive.

Now she's going into detail. Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Are there yet any more sons in my womb that they may be your husbands? Turn again.

See how often this is said. My daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. You see, she began to go, Are they only following me for a husband? Do they think I am the pathway to a husband? Are they making this journey to Bethlehem, to the house of bread, for a husband and for children and for a lifestyle? She actually started to get worried here that they had some other agenda.

Her agenda to go back was God and bread in the house of God. That's why she's making this journey. But I don't know about them.

Do you realize how hard this path is, how narrow? Do you see it's a place of decision? You know, in evangelism we go, It's three steps to get you saved. Do you know it's easy to get saved? Do you believe in heaven? Yes. Do you believe in hell? Yes.

Do you want to be saved? Yes. Let's say a little sinner's prayer. There, you're saved.

And if you ever doubted, it was the devil. That is typical evangelism in this day. And then they say, You're saved.

That is an absolute lie from the pit of hell. That's deception. That doesn't make you saved.

But look at these two ladies. Here they are. And Naomi's talking about the cost, the reality of making this journey.

It's a very, very real thing. She thinks they're following her only for a husband. And she doesn't want false converts walking into Bethlehem.

I'd hate you to be in the house of bread if you don't want to be there. I'd hate you to be in the house of God whenever your motives are wrong. I'd hate for you to give towards God financially when you think that you're going to get blessed in return.

And every time you drop something in the bucket, you think, Now, God, I want this from you. Keep your money. You know what? You're on dangerous ground.

That actually shows there's something terribly, terribly wrong in all of this. She begins to reason with them that if you're after husbands, I can provide it for you. All she has is God, a faith in God, a knowledge of the character of God.

She doesn't have wealth. She doesn't have a house. She doesn't have anything.

She cannot give them more of her children. And she reasons with them. Some people think she was trying to turn them off God.

No, she was not. You know what? She's dealing with real life in the midst of loss. Remember when Elijah went to Elisha, and Elisha's plowing in the field, and Elijah goes there and throws his mantle over him and says, Come follow me.

And the call of God came to Elisha. He goes from being a plowman to a prophet instantly. And Elisha says to Elijah, He said, No, just hold on a minute.

Let me go see my mommy and daddy and say farewell. You know what Elijah said to him? What have I got to do with you? Go back home. Do you realize God tests the heart of what you really want in this walk? Do you know a false gospel only says, It's all blessings.

It's all joy. Here's all the benefits. It's blessed, blessed, blessed.

You know the real gospel will begin to bring the message of discipleship, the cross. What did Jesus say? You want to follow me? Take up your cross. When the cross is removed from evangelism, and all it is is God wants to give, God wants to forgive, but you remove the cross to say, You need to deny yourself.

You want to follow me, Jesus? You need to deny yourself. How do you do that? Take up your cross, put it on your shoulder, and begin to follow me. Do you realize how many people turn back at this point? The rich young ruler, he comes running to Jesus one time, and he says, Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He was passionate.

He was committed. He was coming to the right person. He was saying the right thing.

He's obviously seeking after eternal life. How would you deal with such a convert? Well, Jesus said, Well, let's look at the law. Why keep all the commandments? Go sell all that you have, give to the poor, and then come follow me.

Uh-oh. Do you know what? It says he turned around, and walked away from Jesus. And it says, Jesus loved him.

You've just seen true evangelism. Here's someone saying, I want you. I want God.

Jesus, fine. Okay. Just one thing.

And that person isn't willing to deal with that one thing. And they turn away sad, because that's their God. Do you realize here in this story, Naomi doesn't realize how much God is using her.

No outward blessing. No joy on her face. But she does have faith in a real God.

And God is going to use her in an extraordinary way. And has done. Let's see where the real converts are.

In verse 14, And they lifted up their voice, and they wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. Oh, she had stayed until now pretty good.

But she kisses. You know what? She's saying farewell. She's going back to Moab.

You know what? The argument about a husband worked upon her. I can't give you a husband. That makes you go back to Moab.

Why were you on this journey anyway? Do you know there was a young man in this church. Some of you know about it. And he sat down.

He'd come here. He wanted to serve. And to give out tea.

And do this from day one. He'd come and take pictures of the words. The hymns.

Never heard them before. He was absolutely in awe of us sending me messages. Then one day we sat down.

And he said, Can I speak to you? I said, yes. And he sat down. He said, Now about a wife.

I said, yes. He says, Well, I need one. I said, Okay, let's talk.

And I started to tell him that I couldn't provide. I said, That's not my job. I'm not a marriage counselor or a matchmaker.

I don't do that. Will Graham was over preaching here at the very same time. And he also went to him privately.

And asked him the same. And Will said, Go speak to Keith. Thanks, Will.

Do you know he turned into a demon after that conversation? I didn't realize what I was saying. By simply saying elementary things. I said, I can pray for you.

I can warn you. I can encourage you. I can help you.

I can't give you a wife. As soon as he's seen that he wasn't going to get a wife. And I wasn't going to provide a wife.

He absolutely turned into a demon. And began to almost attack us. He then left the church.

Went to another church in this city. And gets a girl pregnant. That same guy.

Do you know here, Orpah. Why is it you're persuaded to go back to Moab? Whenever you had a husband here. I said, I can provide you a husband.

But look what Ruth does. It says, Ruth clave on to her. In other words, She took both hands.

Laid hold. She glued herself. And said, You aren't going anywhere.

I'm staying with you. So Orpah went back. Because the argument worked.

Do you know what Ruth said? I don't care. If I never get a husband. You know what? I know you've got something.

I know you're going somewhere. I know there's something along the... I've seen enough of your life. To go, I need to stay in this pathway.

Then listen to what she says. It is utterly remarkable. And she said, Behold.

Thy sister-in-law has gone back. Unto her people. And unto her gods.

Naomi now knows. That Orpah is after her own gods. She's gone back to her own gods.

This wasn't just a decision about a husband or something. Believe me, I don't know why I'm just preaching these things. But it's in the text, okay? But it wasn't only an issue of a husband or a wife.

This was an issue of her gods. Until then, she didn't know. But now Naomi knows.

You're going back to your gods. I know why you're going back. Now she says to Ruth.

Oh no. Did I have two false converts in my home? Was this how shallow they were? So she now says unto Ruth. Why not go back with your sister? Why not go back to her gods and your people? If you want your gods, Then go have it.

I would hate you to make this journey. When really you're after their gods. And you're after some husband that's a pagan.

I don't want to stand in your way. This is the wrong journey for you. This is the wrong direction for you.

Listen to what Ruth actually says here. Verse 16. And Ruth said.

Entreat me not to leave thee. Or to return from following after thee. For whither thou goest, I will go.

And whither thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people. And thy God Elohim shall be my God.

Where thou diest, I will die. And there will I be buried. And the Lord.

That's Jehovah. The Lord do so to me. And more also.

If aught but death part thee and me. Look at this determination. Now it becomes clear.

Ruth said. I want your God. I want salvation.

I want the real thing. Why do you think I'm following you? It's because I want your God to be my God. She begins by speaking about Elohim.

The God of creation. The God of salvation of the Gentiles. Then she moves into saying.

The Lord do also to me. Which is the name of the God of Israel. She's not only after Elohim.

She is after Yahweh. The God of the Jews. She says.

You know what? Nothing is going to separate me from you. You know on my wedding day 16 years ago. Candice took verse 16 and 17.

And she looked into my face. And she read these very words. Very powerful words.

And she read them in our marriage vows. Looking at my face. Saying.

Where you're going to be buried. I'm going to be buried. Your God will be my God.

It's a remarkable thing. I'll never forget those words. Because you know what? Candice was determined.

I'm going to say that in my vows. When I marry you. I'm going to say this.

It's very very important. You know why? Because it's all to do with God. It's because I'm after God.

That I'm joining myself to you. And that's what it was here. And it says.

Verse 18. When she. Naomi.

Saw that she. Ruth. Was steadfastly minded to go with her.

Then she left speaking unto her. Look at that mind. Steadfastly minded.

It means you're absolutely firm. You're alert. You know exactly what you're saying.

It means to be courageous or strong. Or to be unshakably firm. Do you know Ruth? She was utterly silenced.

And going boy this girl. She's not in this for the blessings. She's not in this for a husband.

She's not in this for the joy. Or the happiness. Do you know what she's in this? She wants the real.

And the living God. And she's utterly determined. Let's finish this sixth and final point.

Very briefly. I didn't know whether to call this. Fourth.

Point. Either a new beginning. Or blindness to providence.

And this is how I'm going to finish. Listen carefully. Just give me a couple of minutes.

A new beginning. Or blindness to providence. You say.

Well what's the problem? It doesn't sound quite the same. Well actually I'm speaking from God's perspective. And Naomi's perspective.

So I've got a problem here. I'm trying to make a fourth point. To finish this chapter.

And this message. If you look from God's perspective. And our perspective.

Knowing the whole story. Here is a new beginning. How this chapter finishes.

Remember it started in such disaster. It's going to finish in a remarkable way. If you look from God's perspective.

It's a brand new beginning. A new chapter. If you look from Naomi's perspective.

What you see is blindness to providence. Let's look at it. Verse 19.

So they too went on until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Bethlehem. That all the city was moved about them.

And they said. Is this Naomi? Then she said unto him. Call me not Naomi.

Call me Mara. Call me bitterness. Don't call me any nice names here.

I am bitter. Not against God. Not against man.

My life is bitter. It's been a hard journey. These 10 years have left me utterly bitter.

And disillusioned. Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara.

For the almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. Look at the third name in this that we've dealt with. Remember we've looked at Elohim.

We've looked at Yahweh. Do you realize Naomi uses a name for God she hasn't used yet. It's been all about Yahweh.

The God of the Jews. Now she says for the first time. The almighty has dealt bitterly with me.

The almighty. Else should I. Do you know each of the names of God reveals his character. His character is so amazing.

God uses different names to reveal himself. It's all the one same true God. But all these names describe something about him.

What does else should I actually mean. Some say it means the many breasted one. In other words he provides bountifully.

Look at the word almighty. All power. He's got all power to do anything.

He's a bountiful God. He is a good God. He's a kind God.

He's a provider God. Look at the sentence again. For the almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

You've got a lady who knows God. Who doesn't change the character of God. Who understands God.

Who says this is who he is. I know you're good. I know you're kind.

I know you're a provider. I know you're a faithful God. But this God has dealt very bitterly with me.

You know what she's got these two things have gone. I know your character. I know who you are.

But all I can see is bitterness in my life. It seems this God I love and I serve. And I know and I understand.

And I know your character. And yet I look at my life and it's a bitter life. There's a contradiction.

You know most Christians what they do now. They change something. They change something.

They change the Bible. Or they get bitter at God. Or they get angry.

Or they say I don't believe this anymore. Or you failed me. Or the promises don't work.

She didn't. She had faith in God. No wonder Ruth is following her.

This is a real woman of God. I went out full and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why then call me Naomi seeing the Lord has testified against me.

And the Almighty has afflicted me. Do you realize she is blind to providence. God's brought me home empty.

I'm bankrupt. I have nothing. Do you realize how blind she was.

She could see God. She knew the character of God. But she's blind to providence.

I'm bitter. God's afflicted me. It's all bad.

I've got a rough life ahead. Do you really? Have you forgotten about one thing you've got Ruth? Here she is. It's a new beginning.

An absolute new start. God's about to intervene in dramatic ways. Unusual ways.

To open up a whole new story. But she cannot see it. And you know what? I've come back empty.

No you haven't. You've got a Moabitess Gentile. A real convert.

Who says I want God. A woman that's going to get rafted into the line of King David. And into the Lord Jesus Christ.

And her DNA is going to come right down that royal line to the Messiah. What a remarkable thing. And yet there's Naomi.

She is blind. She's reached Bethlehem. She says I'm bitter.

Don't call me Naomi anymore. And they're all moving. Is this really Naomi? She's got white hair now.

And she's got wrinkles. And she's aged. And she's sad.

She left happy. Now she's come back sad. Empty hands.

And you know what? She cannot see the God's hand of providence. She's blind to it. Everything is against me.

But I do know his character. She actually has a battle at this moment. You know why? Because her knowledge of God.

Her faith in God. Her belief of the word of God. Is in contrast to her own life.

How do I fit this with present circumstance? With what's going on with me? It doesn't seem to fit. Then follow the God of providence. Do you hear me tonight? I don't care what happens in your life.

How dark it gets. What happens to you? Follow the God of the Bible. That's always the right way.

Make sure you make a journey to the house of bread. And so Naomi returned. And Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law with her.

Which returned out of the country of Moab. And when did they come to Bethlehem? Very providential. In the beginning of barley harvest.

Do you realize? There's the beginning. God has visited. And the crops are growing again.

And there's about to come a great harvest. God's going to feed his people. And provide abundantly for them.

When did they come? At the beginning of barley harvest. This is the beginning of a new chapter. This is the beginning of God working.

And you know what? If Ruth had not followed the God of the Bible. If she went. She's a sourpuss.

Oh but look at Naomi. She talks about this God of the Bible. He's almighty.

He's the God of covenant. But when I look at her life. She lost a husband.

She lost two children. And she's sad in heart. And she's grieved in spirit.

I'm not going to follow her. Do you realize what a mistake that would have been? And yet Ruth said. I believe in your God.

But look at me. I'm grieved. I'm afflicted.

My God is afflicting me. I want to know your God. And you know what? Most of the church is in big trouble.

In this generation. Because when persecution comes. And trouble comes.

And martyrdom comes. They're going to say. I wasn't in it for this.

The God of sorrow. The God who allows trouble to come. Or the loss of your wife.

I don't believe in you. If you let this happen to me. I don't believe in you.

What a disaster. And yet Ruth. Clave unto this woman.

Who knew God. And they're walking in divine providence. And do you know what it says? It actually says.

Earlier in verse 13. The hand of the Lord has gone out against me. God's hand of providence is all over this.

And next week. We're going to begin to look at what happens. All you've seen is sorrow so far.

And a sad story. But you're about to see these two ladies. Who came to Bethlehem.

The house of bread. Seeking the real God. Seeking bread.

Seeking the narrow way. You're actually going to see them. Begin to walk in the providence of God.

Before God blesses you in providence. He's going to test your heart. That's why I believe great blessing is about to come.

God is working in all that's happened to us. And happened to me. All things work together for good.

To them that love God. And who are the call according to his purpose. Let's pray.

Father we thank you tonight for your word. Your truth. Lord God we know that your hand of providence works.

In this issue of salvation. And all of our lives. Your hand is revealed.

That we can be brought to the Lord Jesus Christ. That we can have a real meeting with Jesus. Father we pray right now.

Lord God we pray for all that's happened to us. As a church. And me as a preacher.

We do follow you. We don't understand. We don't know what's going on.

Lord God we're grieving. We're sad. We're broken hearted.

But my God we do follow the character of God. The nature of God. Lord God we know that your hand is in these things.

And although it seems dark and evil at this time. Yet we know oh God revival. Lord God is in the midst of this.

We know your plan is a harvest of souls. We know that salvation is caught up in this. And my God we pray.

Will you keep us as a people. Lord God like Ruth who laid hold of Naomi. And would not let go of her.

Lord God send your God. Is going to be my God. I will not turn back.

Woe unto you even tonight. In Jesus name. We praise you oh God.

We bless you oh God. As almighty God. We bless you as Yahweh.

The God of the Jews. Lord God we bless you as Elohim. The creator of all things.

Lord God we thank you. That we don't go by what we see or hear or feel. Or any other thing.

But oh God our heart is trusting. In you in Jesus mighty name. Lord God work out your plan.

In each one of our lives. That many souls are going to come into the kingdom. In Jesus mighty name.

Amen.

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