

Ruth 1:6-18

Responding to Tragedy

Ruth 1:6-18 shows us how three ladies responded to their tragic circumstances. Naomi decided to return to the land of promise. Orpah's departed to go back to the land of Moab. Ruth was determined to remain with Naomi and chose to place her trust in Jehovah. God uses times of trial in our lives to draw us to Himself and to grow us. When we face tragedy in our lives, we must respond with repentance and faith, trusting God to work through the trial for our good and His glory.

I. Naomi's _____ (Ruth 1:6-7)

- Naomi received news one day that God had been merciful to His people and had provided them food once again. The land was no longer under God's _____. (Deuteronomy 11:13-17)
- The Biblical concept of _____ is a change of mind that results in a change of direction. (Matthew 9:12-13;; 2 Peter 3:9)
- But repentance is not just necessary for salvation. Repentance is necessary for ongoing _____. (2 Corinthians 7:9-10; James 4:8; 1 John 1:9)
- The direction of Naomi's life changed, and that new direction resulted in renewed _____ for her.

II. Orpah's _____ (Ruth 1:8-15)

- Orpah knew about Jehovah, but she made the decision to go back and worship the heathen gods of the Moabites. She returned to the _____ and to sin. (Luke 8:13)
- Hard times are going to come to come to us all. In those times, you will be _____ to turn your back on God. (Psalms 73:13)
- We must not give in to the temptation to forsake the Lord. God wants to use your trials to _____ your life, but if you choose to live a life of sin, the opposite will be true. (Job 1:22)

III. Ruth's _____ (Ruth 1:16-18)

- Ruth chose to _____ with Naomi, to return to the land of Naomi's people and to place her trust in Naomi's God, Jehovah.
- Ruth 1:16 was Ruth's profession of _____. Her words revealed what was in her heart, and from them we can confidently say that Ruth was saved. (Titus 3:5; John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Renewal must continue throughout a christian's life in the process of _____ which involves the renewal of our minds. (Romans 12:2)
- God wants you to be made _____ because trials. (James 1:2-4)

Conclusion

How will you respond to hard circumstances? Naomi returned to the land of promise, illustrating the need of repentance when God brings trials. Orpah returned to the world, a reminder that the devil will tempt us to turn our back on God in hard times. Ruth placed her faith in the Lord and had a renewal of mind and a regeneration of spirit. She changed for the better as a result of her trial. Whatever happens to you in life, you must trust God to use even the worst circumstance to benefit your life and choose to respond with _____ and _____.

Ruth 1:6-18

Responding to Tragedy

In the opening verses of the book of Ruth, we read of a man named Elimelech who made a poor decision to leave the Promised Land to go into the land of Moab. While he likely made his decision for what he thought was a good reason, to provide for the physical needs of his family, it was made based solely upon human reasoning and fleshly wisdom. He did not consider the spiritual repercussions that it would have on his family. Trusting one's self always leads to undesirable consequences, and Elimelech and his son's died in the land of Moab. His wife, Naomi, and his Moabite daughters-in-law were left with no one to take care of them.

Ruth 1:6-18 shows us how these three ladies responded to their tragic circumstances. Naomi decided to return to the land of promise. Orpah's departed to go back to the land of Moab. Ruth was determined to remain with Naomi and chose to place her trust in Jehovah. For Ruth, this was a regeneration and a renewal.

God uses times of trial in our lives to draw us to Himself and to grow us. Anytime we face difficult circumstances, they have the same opportunity as these ladies did. The Christian who has sinned can repent and go back to the right place in their fellowship with God. Or, we can refuse to go that direction and remain in our old, sinful way of living. The unbeliever can respond with faith in God for salvation and be regenerated and renewed.

God wants the best of our lives, and He can work through even the worst of circumstances to achieve it. "All things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) When we face tragedy in our lives, we must respond with repentance and faith, trusting God to work through the trial for our good and His glory.

I. Naomi's Decision

Ruth 1:6-7 Then she 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 that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. (7) Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

Naomi's husband and her two adult son's were dead. She was left alone with no one to take care of her. She was lonely and afraid. We do not know how long Naomi stayed in Moab after her son's death, but whatever length of time it was, it was fraught with worries and cares.

Then she received news one day that God had been merciful to His people and had provided them food once again. We are not given the details of how it happened or how Naomi came to find out about it. We do know from scripture that this was also in indication that the spiritual condition of Israel was improving. The land was no longer under God's judgment.

Deuteronomy 11:13-17 And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, (14) That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

At this point, Naomi had a choice to make. She could remain where she was and try to make the best of a bad situation or she could return to Bethlehem, not knowing for sure how things might turn out, and trust God to take care of her. Naomi knew that Moab was not the place that God wanted her to be. She understood that she needed to be in the Promised Land, so she chose to go back home.

Naomi's decision is a great illustration of repentance. Naomi was not in that place by her own choosing, but rather by the direction of her husband. But her choice now would determine whether she would be in the place God wanted her or whether she would remain separated from the place of and the people of God's blessing. She chose to go a different route than the one she had been on. She chose to return.

The Biblical concept of repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of direction. Repentance is at the care of the Christian life. There are those who would teach that repentance is not necessary and others who would go so far as to say that preaching repentance is adding works to the gospel. Repentance, properly understood, does not add works to the gospel. It is the truth that we must change our mind about our sin and turn to God in faith.

Matthew 9:12-13 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. (13) But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Repentance is at the heart of the gospel message. A sinner cannot be saved unless they repent.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But repentance is not just necessary for salvation. It is also necessary for Christians to repent when they sin. Repentance is necessary for ongoing sanctification.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. (10) For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Sometimes God allows hard circumstances in your life because of sin. When God does that, the proper way to respond is to repent of your sin and return to God. The story of the prodigal son illustrates this truth beautifully. The son went in the wrong direction for a long time. It was not until a time of famine, when he was destitute and struggling for his very existence, that he finally came to himself and decided to return home. He changed his mind and his direction changed with it.

When bad circumstances arise, a good first question to ask God is, "Is there some sin in my life that has caused this circumstance?" If the Holy Spirit answers "Yes," then you must repent of that sin and confess it to God to receive forgiveness and cleansing.

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Naomi's choice to return started her on the long road to recovery. It didn't bring her husband back. It didn't bring her son's back. It did not erase any of the bad memories from the last decade of her life. But the direction of her life changed, and that new direction resulted in renewed blessings for her.

Ruth 1:8-13 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. [9] 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 wept. [10] And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. [11] 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? [12] Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an

husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; [13] Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

Naomi made her decision to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem. Initially, Orpah and Ruth wanted to go with her, but Naomi tried to talk them out of it. It seems as if she felt that she could not care for them properly, and she wanted them to go back their homes where they could each find another husband and have a family. We can see in this that Naomi still has a ways to go in recovering a Biblical perspective. It would have been best for both Orpah and Ruth to come with her, to follow God in faith and live with the people of God. Perhaps the years of trial had weakened her faith so that she was not confident enough to ask her daughters-in-law to trust God with that much unknown. Whatever was in her heart, it was after some discussion that Orpah and Ruth responded in two different ways as they both stood at the same crossroad.

II. Orpah's Departure

Ruth 1:14-15 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. (15) 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.

If we look at this story from the human perspective, we cannot blame Orpah for doing what she did. Her own mother-in-law, a lady whom she trusted and looked up to has encouraged her to go back to her people, so she followed her advice. The problem with her decision is that she not only went back to her people, but she also went back to her gods. Orpah knew about Jehovah, but she made a conscious decision to go back and worship the heathen gods of the Moabites. She returned to the world and to sin.

Unfortunately, many people respond this way when hard times come. Some who are Christians backslide from the Lord because of trials. Many who are lost reject the gospel seed that has been sown in their heart because of some hardship that they experience. In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of the seed that fell on the stony ground and when the sun came up, it was scorched. About that seed, He said, "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." (Luke 8:13)

Hard times are going to come to come to us all. In those times, you will be tempted to turn your back on God. The devil will tempt you to think "It was never this bad when I was living in the world. I should just go back where it was easier." You will wonder whether it is really worth it to keep trying to follow the Lord. You might think, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." (Psalms 73:13)

We must not give in to the temptation to forsake the Lord. God wants to use your trials to benefit your life, but if you choose to live a life of sin, the opposite will be true. You might feel like the pain is too much or that the heartache will tear you in half. You might feel like it is not worth it to keep following the Lord, but you do not have to give in to the temptation to forsake God. You can follow Him faithfully. Even in the midst of the most devastating circumstances, Job remained faithful to God.

Job 1:22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

If Job could do it, then by the grace of God you can too. You must not forsake the Lord when hardship comes.

III. Ruth's Determination

Ruth 1:16-18 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: (17) Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. (18) When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Ruth did the exact opposite of what Orpah did. She was determined to do what was right. She was “steadfastly minded.” But not only did she have determination, she made a determination. She chose to remain with Naomi, to return to the land of Naomi's people and to place her trust in Naomi's God, Jehovah.

Ruth 1:16 was Ruth's profession of faith. Her words revealed what was in her heart, and from them we can confidently say that Ruth was saved. She experience the regeneration and renewal that comes by placing one's faith in God.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

The word regeneration means “new birth.” In John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus that if anyone was going to enter into the kingdom of heaven, they must be born again. That new birth comes to us when we place our faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ for salvation.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

The word renewal simply means “to make new.” When a person is saved, they are transformed by the power of God into a brand new creature.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The practical affect os this renewal begins at salvation, but it must continue throughout a christian's life in the process of sanctification which involves the renewal of our minds.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Ruth placed all of her trust now in Jehovah. The land she is going to is foreign to her. She doesn't know how the people will treat her and she doesn't know how they will be cared for. It would have been much easier to go back to her home. But if she did, it would have been to her spiritual detriment. She chose to trust God and, in spite of the circumstances, do what will be the best thing for her spiritually.

She was so determined to do this, that she formed a death pact with Naomi. She says, “Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.” Ruth was no longer a heathen Moabite. She was a follower of Jehovah. Ruth changed as a result of this hardship. She grew. She improved. She became a new woman through faith in God.

God wants the same thing to happen to you in the trials that you go through. He wants you to be made better because of them. If you are not saved, then God wants you to trust Him first for salvation and be made a new creature through the blood of Jesus Christ.

If you are saved, then God wants you to learn from your hardships and become more like Him. And as a result, you will experience even greater blessings from God.

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; (3) Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (4) But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

“Perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” That is a life that is blessed by God, and it is the result choosing to respond correctly to trials and hardships.

Note the contrast between the decision that Elimelech made and the decision that Ruth made in response to difficult circumstances. Elimelech chose to leave the land of promise to go to a heathen nation. Ruth chose to leave a heathen nation to go the land of promise. Elimelech was worried about his physical condition. Ruth is worried about her spiritual condition. Elimelech was relying upon his own understanding. Ruth is trusting in the Lord with all her heart. The end of these two people is just as different. Elimelech died in a place that wasn't God's will. Ruth got to experience God's richest blessings, even being placed into the lineage of Christ. That is the difference between trusting yourself and trusting God. Trusting yourself always has bad consequences but trusting God always results in blessing.

Conclusion

How will you respond to hard circumstances? Naomi returned to the land of promise, illustrating the need of repentance when God brings trials. Orpah returned to the world, a reminder that the devil will tempt us to turn our back on God in hard times. Ruth placed her faith in the Lord and had a renewal of mind and a regeneration of spirit. She changed for the better as a result of her trial. Whatever happens to you in life, you must trust God to use even the worst circumstance to benefit your life and choose to respond with faith and obedience.