

## **Life's Struggle**

### **Ruth 1:1-7**

Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.<sup>2</sup> The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion -- Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.<sup>3</sup> Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.<sup>4</sup> Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.<sup>5</sup> Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

<sup>6</sup> 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 that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread. NKJV

What a sad story. It is hard to believe that the book of Ruth is one of the most delightful books in the Bible.

Of course we know the whole story and like most stories that end well we want to jump to the end. We do not like the pain of the story so we rush on to the part that we makes us feel better.

But the problem with true stories is that the people living them can not just jump to the end. Regardless of pain and anguish they are going through, they have to get up tomorrow to pretty much the same day as yesterday.

I thought of sub-titling the message, "Life starts out great and then you're born."

As Naomi says, "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 1:21

Ruth 1:20 (NKJV) <sup>20</sup> But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi (pleasant); call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

This month we will be spending in the book of Ruth. Today we see the struggles of life. Next week we will consider, Dedication and Devotion. The third Sunday we will consider God's Providence. And lastly we will consider the Blessings of the Lord.

Today we want to look at the struggles of life.

- I. Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled
  - A. This was desperate days for there was lawlessness in the land as seen especially in the latter part of the book of Judges.
  - B. Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
    1. The book of Ruth is the bright spot in the times of the Judges.

2. While it seems that everything is falling apart among the people of God, God is working behind the scenes to accomplish His plan.

II. There was a famine in the land.

A. Famine was not uncommon.

1. The land received very little rain so all it took was a time of drought to send the whole country into a famine.

B. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.<sup>2</sup> The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion -- Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah.

1. This was just one of the families of the tribe of Judah.
2. Elimelech means "God is King" or "God is sovereign."

C. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.

1. As is often the case this famine was localized by the lack of rain.
2. So Elimelech and Naomi pick up and move to Moab.
3. Moab was a cursed nation for they had withstood Israel when they came up out of Egypt. Deut 23:3-6
4. Sometimes the easiest way is not what it seems for things did not get better but only worse.

III. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.

A. We do not know how long it was from the time they moved until he died although they were there a total of ten years.

B. Naomi no doubt thought this was just another stroke against her.

1. First the famine and having to leave their home for what they were sure were better times.
2. They would be smart and escape the hardships of Bethlehem.
3. But not things had gone from bad to worse.

C. At least she still had her sons.

1. Although they would take wives from the pagan Moabites she would be able to enjoy her grand children.
2. This could all turn out alright after all.

IV. Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.<sup>5</sup> Then both Mahlon and

Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

A. But no children came.

1. The names Mahlon and Chilion mean weak and sickly.
2. We do not know the reason but in the multiple years there were not children and Naomi is getting older by the day.

B. But now both her sons have died and she is left essentially alone.

1. There was nothing holding her daughters-in-law for she had no more sons by whom according to custom might marry then and raise children to the deceased sons.
2. All that she ever feared has now come upon her.
3. 10 years and less than nothing to show.
4. Husband and sons gone and she is just older and poorer.

C. In Moab she will have no one to care for her.

1. Her only hope is to return to Bethlehem and hope to reconnect to some relatives there.
2. But how humiliating.
3. She had left with such lofty plans and now returns with nothing.
4. She will only be an object of pity and scorn by those who stayed and endured the famine.

V. 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 that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.

A. She hears that things have gotten better back home, that the rains have returned and she will at least be able to go out in the fields and glean after the harvesters.

1. Hopefully she will be able to survive.
2. But where has her joy gone.
3. She did not want to survive, but to enjoy the blessings of God.

B. In her view God has dealt with her very harshly.

1. This is a good question.
2. Is God responsible for the tragedy that has come her way.
3. Comparing them to others of that day they were no doubt very good people.

4. At least He could have prevented these things from happening.
  5. I spoke to a lady this week concerning the trial they were going through and she said that sometimes she feels like Job.
  6. This is no doubt true for many of God's people.
- C. Life happens and sometimes there doesn't seem like rhyme or reason for what they are going through.
1. There is no doubt that you have people in your family or among your friends that seem to be going through very dark times.
  2. What should they do, what do we say to them.
- D. As we will see in later messages Naomi has not lost faith in God, she is only groaning under the trials that have come her way.
1. Should we not expect that.
  2. When trial come and we struggle under to load God does not expect us to not groan, but He does expect us to continue to trust Him.

Now if you must rush home and read the rest of the book, that is fine. What you will find is that Naomi's faith is rewarded.

Ruth's faith will be rewarded.

Your faith will be rewarded. You will never regret doing what God has asked you to do.