

Ruth 01 – **The Grass IS Greener - Ruth 1:1-5**
But does that mean you should be there?

RUTH - after **Joshua** & **Judges** - before **Samuel**

I had **tentatively PLANNED** to start a series today
called **“Why Believe the Bible”**

But **I believe** God had the Book of **RUTH** planned for us **instead**
& **I MIGHT even do ESTHER after RUTH**

I KNOW God has a **Word** for us from the **Book of RUTH**
Just like He would in **ANY Book** He led us to **study**

But I believe the message in the **book of RUTH**
is especially **Timely - & Needed** for Christians **Today**

The book of Ruth is **kinda BURIED** in the **Historical** section of the **OT**
& so, some **consider it** to be **PART** of the **Historical Books**

& **in some ways** - it is an **Historical** Book
at least **it happened** in the **MIDST** of the **Historical Books**

It occurs **AFTER Joshua** had **Conquered** the **Promised Land**
& **BEFORE** King **Saul** & King **David** came on the scene

But it's kind of a little **“cut-out”** of Israel's **history in the O.T.**

& **in it** we find **wonderful lessons** of **Loyalty**, **Commitment**, & **Love**
Occurring During very **DARK NATIONAL TIMES** for God's people

The 1st vs. of Ruth says - *In the days when the judges ruled . . .*
& those days - were very dark days for God's people

The phrase that best captures the condition of the Nation of Israel
in those days is found TWICE in the book of Judges . . .

Judg 17:6 & 21:25 (esv)

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

& you may think that sounds like Full Equality - Equal Rights
like the Power Brokers in our nation are pushing for

But that KIND of "Equal Rights" really just means:
everyone just does whatever they FEEL LIKE

It Really Means: *"Everyone served their own SIN Nature with no
Regard for the Moral or Ethical standards of God"*

It means there were no Moral or Ethical ABSOLUTES -
people did whatever they wanted

& I'm not talking about the United States now
I'm talking about ISRAEL in the time of the Judges

& as they Adopted this SELF-Serving Culture

Israel immersed itself into SIN
& it Spiraled into SELF-Destruction

The days of the Judges were Dark Days
of "Turning Away From God" for the Nation of Israel

But **RIGHT** in the **MIDST** of **ALL** that . . .

God was **AT WORK** for **Good** -
in the lives of those who **REMAINED FAITHFUL** to Him

His **Plan** & His **Purpose** were **NEVER Derailed** thru it all

NO MATTER what the condition is - of the world we live in

God is **STILL** on the **THRONE**

God is **STILL** at **WORK** for **GOOD** - &

God is **STILL ALL** that **WE NEED**

God is not **BOUND BY** - He's Not even **DISTRACTED BY**
the **current circumstances** of **The World** around us

God is **AT WORK** for Good - In **the Lives** of those who **LOVE** Him
& are **Called** According to **His Purpose** (as **Rom 8:28** says)

But guys - **WE** have a **ROLE** in that **Promise** !!

Our **Choices**, Our **Actions**, Our **Faithfulness**
Are what **SHOW** that we **ARE** those **who Love God**

& **THEREBY** - **those for whom** He is at work **FOR GOOD**

The lesson in Ruth is **NOT** that God is **Blessing** the Nation of **Israel**
as it **turned** from **Him** & was **immersed** in SIN

The lesson in Ruth is that God is **AT WORK For Good** . . .

For those who are **FAITHFUL** - **IN-SPITE** of their **Difficulties**

For those who are **holding** onto **GOD'S STANDARDS**
in the **midst** of a **nation** - **turning AWAY** from God

& guys - **THAT** means - the **Book of Ruth** is **Totally & Completely APPLICABLE** to our lives **TODAY** !!

PLUS - it is one of **the Greatest LOVE STORIES** in all the Bible

Ruth is the story - of **Two** seemingly **hopeless widows**
& the **son of a prostitute**

Who all **miraculously** become **PART** of God's **perfect plan**

AND who are **ALL** used - to **continue** to **weave** the
SCARLET THREAD that would bring **The Messiah to the World**

LET'S MEET our **3 main characters** before we dive in

Character # 1) - BOAZ

He is a **wealthy land-owner** - He is **Still Single**
& **His mother** is a very **Famous Prostitute** named **RAHAB**

In **Joshua's conquest** of **Jericho** - It was the Harlot **RAHAB**
who **hid the spies** that went in to **scout out** the city

& **Then Rahab** hung a **SCARLET CORD** from her window
So that **God** would **spare her** & her **family** (which He did)

& **Rahab** (a Gentile) **remained** with **Israel**
& **became** part of the **Blood line** (Genealogy) of **Jesus Christ**

Well - RAHAB'S SON - was named **BOAZ**
& he is **now** the **wealthy** (& **single**) **land owner** in our story

He is an Israelite - Living Faithfully for God
In the Midst of an Unfaithful Nation

& - being the son of RAHAB - Boaz would certainly understand
God's LOVE for those OUTSIDE the Nation of Israel

Character # 2) - NAOMI

She's an Older Widow - an Israelite who was TAKEN OUT
of the Promised Land (along with her 2 sons) . . .

by A Husband who was just trying to "Make Ends Meet" -
A Husband who was doing - what HE thought was BEST

BUT - - Naomi's life had become so HARD, so DIFFICULT

that she changed her name from NAOMI, which means "My Joy" -
To MARA, which means - "Bitter"

Her LIFE had become Extremely BITTER
But her HEART had NOT become BITTER

In the Midst of her Extreme Difficulty - Naomi had HELD ON
to her FAITH in her God, & her COMMITMENT to God

Character # 3) - RUTH

Ruth is a Moabite

She belongs to a nation that's an Enemy of God's People

She's a Gentile - from a different culture
& she is OUTSIDE of God's Covenant People (Israel)

But her **FAITHFULNESS** - & her **LOYALTY**
& her **COMMITMENT** to follow **the ways** of the Lord

put her **smack dab** in the **MIDDLE** of God's **Greatest blessings** -
& **NOT ONLY** that . . .

But her **FAITHFULNESS** & her **LOYALTY** Also **put her** in
the **Blood-Line** of King **David** - & *in the Blood-Line* of **Jesus Christ**

In **the Genealogy** of Christ - in **Mat Ch 1**
there are **FOUR women** listed - ***Other than Mary***

The 1st 3 - **RAHAB** the Harlot of Jericho
TAMAR who pretended to be a prostitute to get pregnant
BATHSHEEBA the adulteress

& God **used them all** - & **placed them** ALL in the **genealogy** of Christ

But then there's **RUTH** - who was a **Virtuous & Faithful Woman**

& **even tho** she was a **Gentile Moabite** . . .

Her **FAITH**, & her **LOYALTY**, & her **COMMITMENT** to God
& His **people**, **make her** far and away - **the STAR** of our story

& **So thru** these **3 KEY Characters** (**BOAZ**, **NAOMI**, **RUTH**)

We're **going to see** God at **work** for **GOOD** for those who Love him
Regardless of the **Spiritual Condition** of **the world** around them

AND we're going to see . . . ***a wonderful love story to boot***

So - if that's enough of an Intro - LET'S PRAY

We start today - with A MAN
who is NOT one of our MAIN Characters

A MAN who unfortunately - Walked by SIGHT - Not by FAITH

A MAN who took matters into his OWN hands
INSTEAD of trusting his troubles into GOD'S hands

A MAN who led his family INTO Difficulty & Extreme Hardship

BECAUSE he had . . . the "Grass is Greener" Syndrome

You know the Syndrome . . .

*God - it just doesn't seem like you're providing for me
the way that I'd like to become accustomed to here*

*& since it seems like you can't do that - HERE
I'm gonna do what I think is best*

& go to where the Grass is obviously - GREENER

This Man with the "Grass is Greener" syndrome -
His NAME is ELIMILECH

& although he IS the one who gets our story started
He does NOT get MAJOR Character STATUS

He gets the Unfaithful One who caused the Trouble - STATUS

Alright - Let's Start - Ruth 1:1 (ESV)

1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, . . .

Opening with that **“Half a Sentence”** tells us a **LOT**

As I said - the **Days** when the **Judges Ruled**
we're some of the **DARKEST Spiritual Times** in **Israel's** History

& in **Lev 26** & in **Deut 28** - God had **told Israel** - & **Told** them again

That **IF** they would **SERVE Him** & **FOLLOW Him**
He would **BLESS them** abundantly

AND (He told them) - **IF** they **TURNED AWAY** from Him . . .

He would **bring CHASTISEMENT** upon them
in order to turn them BACK to Himself

& **TWICE** God had told them - that **one of the ways** He would
RESPOND to their **Rebellion** - was to allow **FAMINE** in their land

& so - in the 1st Vs of Ruth we see;

God's People **HAD Turned away** from Him -
& **God** had done **JUST** what He **PROMISED**

He had **Allowed a Famine** to **come** to the Land
in order to **turn** the **hearts** of His people **BACK to Him**

**& so - the QUESTION is - What will ELIMELECH DO
in the face of this Trial**

Again Ruth 1:1 & 2 (esv)

1 *In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.*

2 *The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.*

There is **NOTHING GOOD** in these **2 Vs's**

Bethlehem - which **MEANS** - "***House of Bread***"

Had become an **EMPTY Breadbasket** . . .

BECAUSE of **Israel turning away** from **the Lord**

God had **Promised PROVISION** - ***IF*** His people would **follow** Him - **but their SIN** had **led** them into a **Difficult TRIAL**

& **during this time**

"everyone was DOING - what was right in their own eyes"

INCLUDING - **ELIMILECH**

which - ***btw*** - the Name **Elimelech Means** - "***My God is KING***"

Which you would **THINK** - would **INFLUENCE** his decisions

God had **BROUGHT** he and his Family **to Bethlehem** in **Judah** - & **GIVEN him** that land

But **Now** - There was a **Trial where God had PUT him** & **Elimelech** had to **DECIDE** what to **DO about it**

(pls listen carefully) **Warren Weirsbe says this about our Trials**

When trouble comes to our lives, we can do one of three things: endure it, escape it, or enlist it.

If we only endure our trials, then trials become our master, and we have a tendency to become hard and bitter.

If we try to escape our trials, then we will probably miss the purposes God wants to achieve in our lives.

But if we learn to enlist our trials, they will become our servants instead of our masters and work for us; and God will work all things together for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28).

**Elimelech was IN THE PLACE that GOD had PUT him
AND - he was in The Midst of a Difficult TRIAL**

& If YOU are IN THE PLACE that God has Put YOU -
& you find yourself in a Difficult TRIAL . . .

**Then You - Just like Elimelech - will have THREE OPTIONS
in how you RESPOND to Your Trial**

**#1) You can HUNKER DOWN & be a TUFF GUY (or Tuff Girl)
& just Grit your Teeth - & ENDURE your trial**

But you may very well become HARD - & BITTER - & ANGRY

**#2) You can ESCAPE your trial - by running away
to where you THINK the Grass is GREENER**

**#3) You can ENLIST your Trial - & allow God to Work IN that TRIAL -
for YOUR Good - & for your FAMILY'S Good**

**You & I have the SAME Choices Elimelech had
& the 1st 2 Vs's of Ruth - tell us his choice**

Ruth 1:1-2 (esv)

1 . . . [Elimelech] went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

2 . . . They went into the country of Moab and remained there.

Elimelech DIDN'T just ENDURE his Trial in Bethlehem even with the wrong motive of just being TUFF

**& he Definitely DIDN'T ENLIST his Trial -
to allow God to USE IT to bring good out of it**

Elimelech CHOSE - Door Number TWO !!

He chose the ESCAPE ROUTE - He chose the BACK DOOR

**He chose to JUMP SHIP - & ESCAPE The TRIAL
by RUNNING to where the Grass was Greener**

& Here's the DEAL guys - the Grass WAS greener in MOAB

**There was a Drought & Famine in Bethlehem
Where God had Placed Elimelech & his Family**

& so The Grass WAS indeed Greener in MOAB

But the Famine had been caused by Turning AWAY from God

**& Elimelech COULD HAVE Turned BACK to God
& Trusted God to Bring him THRU the Trial**

But - in order to ESCAPE the Difficulties

**Elimelech RUNS from the Place God had PUT him
to a place where The Grass was Greener - in MOAB**

The problem is - **MOAB** was **NOT** where **God** had **placed** his people
In Fact - **MOAB** was a **VERY UNGODLY** Place

They had **hired Balaam** to **CURSE** Israel
They'd **used their women** to **Seduce** the Israelites into **IDOL Worship**
They had **OPPRESSED** Israel during **this time** in Judges

BUTTTT The Grass was GREENER there

Maybe The Grass **IS** Greener . . .
But does that mean You should be there??

If God has **PUT** you in a **certain PLACE**
& **You** are **Experiencing** a **TRIAL** there . . .

& **the Grass** is **Recognizably GREENER** - over **YONDER**

Does that mean that **You Should** you **GO THERE**
Just because **The Grass is Greener** ??

Guys - **please hear me** when I say -

The BEST place for you to be - &
The SAFEST place for you to be
Is RIGHT smack-dab in the middle of **God's WILL**

Whether that means **the Grass is GREEN there** - **OR NOT !!**

If you are **where** God has **PUT** you . . .

Then God is **AT WORK** in your life - **for your GOOD**
whether it "**LOOKS**" like it - or **NOT**

BUT - if all you're **LOOKING FOR** is
the **Escape Hatch** - the **Back Door** - the **Easy Way Out**

then you will **NEVER** be able to **ENLIST** that Trial
to **allow God** to bring **GOOD** out of it - into **your life**

AND - Very, **Very OFTEN** - We end up **SORRY**

that we **didn't WAIT** - & **let God** bring us **thru the TRIAL,**
Right where He **PUT** us

Elimelech - & his **Wife** - & his **Sons** - were all **SORRY** that
they **Chased the GREENER GRASS Syndrome** - to **MOAB**

Ruth 1:3 (esv)

3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.

Now - - I'm **not saying** this is the **normal result** of the
Grass is Greener Syndrome . . . but it **does make** a **good point**

Elimelech thought **His Life** - & **His Family's Life**
would be **EASIER** - where the **Grass was Greener** . . .

WHETHER that was **where** God had **PLACED** them - or **NOT**

The Grass WAS Greener in **MOAB**

& **Elimelech** was just ***"Doing what was RIGHT in his own eyes"***

& it all **made perfect sense** to him - **right up until he DIED !!**
& **LEFT** his **Wife** & his **Sons** - in a **Foreign**, & **Ungodly**, Land

**Would it have been better for Elimelech
to have STAYED right where God PUT him ??**

**Would it have been better for Elimelech
to allow God to USE the Trial there - For his GOOD ?? - YES !!**

BUT - was God Still AT WORK in the Midst of his POOR CHOICE ?

**YES ! - God WAS at work
but Elimelech's Choice was Still WRONG**

**& Unfortunately - The CONSEQUENCES of Elimelech's
attempt to ESCAPE his Trial - weren't finished yet**

Ruth 1:4-5 (esv)

4 These (Elimelech's 2 sons) took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years,

5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman (Naomi) was left without her two sons and her husband.

Naomi (a KEY Character) is now:

- **A Foreign Widow** in her old age
- **No sons to work** - which means she has **No Food to eat**
- **She is left alone** - in a strange land,
with **no family structure** to support her

**Her life has become SO BITTER - that she will CHANGE her name
to MARA - which means - "Bitterness"**

Guys - I'm not trying to be Ominous or "Over the Top"

I'm just trying to LEARN - from a man who had a
"Grass is Greener Syndrome" - that cost his family - Everything !

The Book of Ruth HAS an incredible & wonderful ENDING
& God is AT WORK - THRU ALL of this - for GOOD

But we must Recognize - that this story unfolds
against a BLACK Back-Drop of Sin & Rebellion against God

It begins with a man trying to ESCAPE his TRIALS
Instead of allowing God to work WITHIN them for his GOOD

God WILL Still Bring GOOD out of all this

But - - our FIRST LESSON in the Book of Ruth is . . .

Yes - *The Grass IS Greener . . .*

But does that mean you should be there?

IF we ARE where God has PUT us - Let's be careful looking for
the ESCAPE HATCH - the BACK-DOOR - the EASY WAY OUT

IF we ARE where God has PUT us - Then we need to KNOW
that God is AT WORK for our good - WITHIN the TRIALS

So FIRST- Let's MAKE SURE - that we ARE where God has PUT us

& then Let's BEWARE of - "The Grass is Greener Syndrome"

Let's Pray