

BOOK OF RUTH
STEPPING OUT OF GOD'S WILL-PT 2
DANGEROUS CHOICES
RUTH 1:1-4

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We began last week to look at this **BOOK OF RUTH**. We were introduced to **ELIMELECH** and his family and we began to see what led up to their **"STEPPING OUT OF GOD'S WILL."**

THEY LIVED IN A TIME OF DESPERATE CIRCUMSTANCES. (Vs. 1a)

It was during the chaos of the time of the **JUDGES** that we just finished and **"...there was a famine in the land."**

In fact, I pointed out there was a two-fold **FAMINE** in the land.

1. **There Was A MORAL FAMINE In The Land!**

2. **There Was A MATERIAL FAMINE In The Land!**

GOD may use these times to CORRECT US!

Revelation 3:19—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

GOD may use these times to PERFECT US!

2 Corinthians 12:9—"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

How we REACT to our FAMINE experience determines whether it becomes a **TIME OF BLESSING** or a **TIME OF DEVASTATION** in our life.

So, IT WAS A TIME OF DESPERATE CIRCUMSTANCES.

IT WAS A TIME OF DANGEROUS CHOICES. (VS. 1b-2)

We see in these verses that **ELIMELECH** did not respond correctly to what the **LORD** was doing in **ISRAEL** or in his own personal life!

WHATEVER CIRCUMSTANCES WE FIND OURSELVES IN, ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THAT GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN THOSE!

Let's notice here three mistakes **ELIMELECH** and his family made during this **FAMINE** experience:

I. **THEY CHOSE TO LEAVE THE PROMISED LAND! (Vs 1)**
Verse 1 tells us that this man made a **CONSCIOUS CHOICE** to leave **"BETHLEHEM-JUDAH"** with his family and move to the country of **MOAB**.

The name **"BETHLEHEM"** means **"HOUSE OF BREAD"** and the name **"JUDAH"** means **"PRAISE."** But there was **NO BREAD** in **"The House Of Bread"** and there was seemingly **NO REASON FOR REJOICING** in **"PRAISE"**.

(Although as GOD'S people we are to REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS! Philippians 4:4)

But, while the geographic location failed to live up to its name, neither did **ELIMELECH!** His name means **"My God Is King."**

If GOD had truly been his KING, then at least 4 things should have happened:

1. **He should have paused to meditate on GOD'S WORD** that recorded what happened to **ABRAHAM** and **SARAH** in **Genesis 12:7ff** when he made a similar wrong choice to leave the **LAND** when there arose a **FAMINE**.
2. **He should have known that GOD** always has a **PURPOSE** for what **HE DOES** and what **HE ALLOWS** in our lives!
3. **He should have known that GOD'S** valleys do not last forever! **Others before him** went through some difficult times and trusted the **LORD** to get them through!
4. **He should have known that GOD** could take care of him and see him through the time of **FAMINE** if he would remain **FAITHFUL TO GOD AND LEAN ON HIM!**

Yet, we see that **ELIMELECH** didn't do any of that, but rather chose

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to leave his **INHERITANCE** in the **PROMISED LAND** and head off to a land inhabited by **PEOPLE** that **GOD HAD CURSED** and where **GOD WOULD NOT BLESS HIM!**

This is a scene that is repeated countless times in the **FAMILY OF GOD!** A **FAMINE** of some sort comes in one's life and they choose to leave the place of **GOD'S BLESSING** and wind up in places where **GOD WILL NOT BLESS THEM!**

Maybe things don't go their way down at the **CHURCH HOUSE**— so they **CHOOSE TO QUIT CHURCH** and/or **QUIT ON GOD!**

Maybe a particular **TRIAL** comes in their life and they are **BLIND SIDED** by it—so they **CHOOSE TO BLAME GOD** and **QUIT ON GOD** rather than **LEAN ON GOD'S GRACE!**

Maybe they find themselves in a **FINANCIAL CRISIS**— so they **CHOOSE TO PLACE** their livelihood ahead of **GOD** **ABANDONING THEIR FAITHFULNESS TO HIM!**
(e.g. JESUS spoke about trying to serve GOD and mammon in Matthew 6:24-34)

Maybe they slowly **COME TO LOVE THE WORLD** more than they **LOVE THE LORD** and **CHOOSE TO FORSAKE SERVING THE LORD!** *(e.g. Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10)*

Maybe it's something else. Whatever the reason, they **CHOOSE** to walk out of the **PROMISED PLACE** of **GOD'S BLESSING** and live life on their own terms.

There is a word for that kind of behavior: **It is called "backsliding!"** And sadly, there are more **BELIEVERS** in that shape than are willing to admit it!

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THEY CHOSE TO LEAVE THE PROMISED LAND.

II. THEY CHOSE TO LIVE IN A POLLUTED LAND.

For them to leave **ISRAEL** to go to **MOAB** was in **VIOLATION** of a **the LORD'S WILL FOR THEM!** *(Vs. 1-2)*
(Cf. Joshua 23:6-8, 11-13)

We are told this took place during the time when the **JUDGES** ruled but are not told exactly when that was. It could possibly have been after **MOAB** was subdued in *Judges 3:30* by **EHUD**. But even if it was, that didn't make it right! **MOAB** worshiped **CHEMOSH** along with other false gods, not the **LORD GOD JEHOVAH!**

In spite of the **LORD'S** clear **COMMANDMENT**, **ELIMILECH** **CHOSE THE FORBIDDEN PATH TO LIVE AMONG THE MOABITES** over the **LORD'S WAY OF REMAINING IN THE LAND OF PROMISE!**

To leave one's **INHERITANCE** as **ELIMELECH** did was equivalent to **DENYING THE FAITH OF THE LORD GOD JEHOVAH**. It was a turning away from the **ONE TRUE GOD** to the world!

Consider that this move to **MOAB** involved total separation from the things of **GOD**.

They could not **WORSHIP** at the **TABERNACLE**.

They could not bring their **OFFERINGS** to the **LORD**.

They could not properly keep the **FEASTS** that they were commanded to keep by the **LAW**.

They were totally isolated from the **LORD'S** best for them!

They were away from their **BRETHREN** as well!

Not only that, but by moving his family to **MOAB**, **ELIMELECH** unnecessarily exposed his family to **EVILS** they might have very well avoided had they just stayed in **ISRAEL!**

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Both of his boys married **PAGAN** women. It is never right for a **CHILD OF GOD** to marry an **UNBELIEVER!**

2 Corinthians 6:14-15—“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

ELIMELECH'S family violated the **KNOWN WILL OF GOD** by intermingling with this **PAGAN** race of people. Sadly, we see this still happens today in the lives of some **BELIEVERS**. I can see someone headed that way and **WARN** them, but those **WARNINGS MUST BE HEDED!**

So, when **BELIEVERS** walk away from the things of the **LORD**, they can't **SERVE THE LORD** the way that they should and their family can be adversely affected. **There is NO WAY TO BE RIGHT WITH THE LORD** when you **SEPARATE** yourself from the **THINGS OF GOD!**

When **GOD'S HOUSE— HIS WORD, HIS WORK, HIS WORSHIP** and **HIS WILL**—are not **PRIORITIES** in our life, it is a bad place for us to be and for those closest to us to be!

To step outside of **GOD'S KNOWN WILL** is a **CHOICE** that always leads downward. If we walk out on **GOD**, we will find ourselves doing things we never thought possible! We will see ourselves affected by **WRONG RELATIONSHIPS** and **WORLDLY ACTIVITIES**.

We are to **DRAW NIGH UNTO GOD** in our **PRESENCE** and in our **PRACTICE** and **HE WILL DRAW NIGH UNTO US!**

THEY CHOSE TO LEAVE THE PROMISED LAND!

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THEY CHOSE TO LIVE IN A POLLUTED LAND!
III. THEY CHOSE TO LINGER IN A PRODIGAL LAND!
This family went to **MOAB** to “sojourn” (*Vs 1*) which means “to turn aside for lodging or any other purpose.” But notice that they “continued there” (*Vs 2*). The word “continued” means “to exist or to become.” And notice that *Vs 4* says they “dwelled” there. The word “dwelled” means “to sit down, dwell, remain, to settle.”

Not only did ELIMELECH and his family go into MOAB, but MOAB got into them as well! GOD alone knows how far into the **SIN** and **SOCIETY** of **MOAB** this family fell.

(e.g. Let's go back to the roots of MOAB. Remember there was a contention between the herdmen of LOT and the herdmen for his uncle ABRAM. So they decided to split up and Lot chose for himself the well-watered plain of JORDAN that included land bordering SODOM because it appealed to his eyes. Then Scripture says that he pitched his tent toward SODOM (Genesis 13:10-13) And later we find him sitting in the gate of SODOM in Genesis 19:1 and by the end of that chapter LOT and his two daughters escaped GOD'S JUDGMENT of SODOM. His two daughters got him drunk and committed the wickedness with LOT that brought about the wicked AMMONITES and MOABITES!)

When **ELIMELECH** and his family left for **MOAB** they may have intended that it would be only for a short time. But the **days turned into weeks**, the **weeks into months** and the **months into years**. Before they knew it, 10 years had passed (*vs. 4*), and they were farther away from the **LORD** than they could have ever imagined themselves being.

That is an example of the **DECEPTIVE NATURE OF SIN!**
It will take you to places you never should have gone, it will keep you in those places far longer than you intended to stay, and it will cost you way more than you want to pay!

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While we are on the subject, I want to remind you that going to **MOAB** doesn't always involve an actual, physical move. There are folks who **may attend church regularly, pay their tithes, who outwardly may live clean, moral lives, but they are in MOAB.**

We can go to MOAB SPIRITUALLY even when we just allow our ATTITUDE to get bad.

1. When we become **critical, quick to find fault in others, but remain blind to the fault in our own hearts**, we have gone to a place we should not be! **A MOAB!**
2. When we **use our tongues as weapons instead of witnessing tools**, we have gone to a **MOAB!**
3. When we **harbor grudges and ill will toward others, we have gone to a MOAB!**

Remember that not all the **PRODIGALS** leave the **FATHER'S HOUSE** physically, though they may be miles away **SPIRITUALLY**. (Remember the **PRODIGAL SON'S BROTHER** who remained at home had his issues!)

Conclusion

If you are in **MOAB SPIRITUALLY, GET OUT!** And get back to the **"House of Bread"** and the place of **"Praise"**.

IT WAS A TIME OF DESPERATE CIRCUMSTANCES. (Famine)

IT WAS A TIME OF DANGEROUS CHOICES.

They Chose To Leave The Promised Land, To Live In A Polluted Land,

They Chose To Linger In A Prodigal Land!