

Naomi

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, it might be well to follow in the book of Ruth. Let me make one little apology to you as we begin, so that I don't have to catch myself all the time.

I'm accustomed when the covenant name of God appears in the text, and that usually happens when the Lord is spelled in all capital letters in most of our English Bibles.

I'm accustomed to using the covenant name Yahweh, which that word the Lord translates. So if I use that and it's not familiar to you, you just mentally translate it back into your own to the Lord, if that's easier for you.

But so that I don't have to catch myself, let me just go ahead and use Yahweh as I'm accustomed to do. Now, Leo Morris tells of a time when he was reading of a certain airman in World War II, who was a fine fighter pilot, but he was a very obnoxious person.

He was so concentrating on his own success as a fighter pilot that he'd gone along well with nobody. What happened that he was transferred to another unit, as sometimes happened, and his commanding officer passed on this message.

[1 : 19] Splendid officer at 5,000 feet should never come lower. Now, that's sometimes the way it is, isn't it?

When one can be very good at their job, but they're not very congenial with people and so on. Fortunately, the living God does both. He has his job or his work, if you like. He is establishing his kingdom on earth, and that's his work.

But at the same time, he takes care of the people that he calls into his kingdom and to himself. So he both does his work and his job, and he also cares for his people.

And you see that working in the book of Ruth. You might keep that in mind as we go through the book. Not in high detail, but in a sketchy sort of a way.

[2 : 22] In fact, I think you can sum up the main point by bringing these two items together. The main point, not necessarily the only way you can possibly put it, but the one main way you can look at the book of Ruth is this.

It teaches that God takes the common and complicated circumstances in the lives of his people and makes them contribute to the coming of his kingdom in this world.

And I run that through again because it kind of encapsulates the book. God takes the common and complicated circumstances in the lives of his people and makes them contribute to the coming of his kingdom in this world.

Now, there's a certain simplified structure that you can use for the book of Ruth. I don't know what directions we have here, but we'll say this is like a big wall and map here.

And this is the northwest corner. In this northwest corner, you put a little box. And you put chapter 1, verses 1 to 5. And you put in there sad disaster.

[3 : 27] Now, that's the first chunk. And then you go down a little and you make a huge box in the middle. And you put in that chapter 1, verse 6 through chapter 4, verse 17, which is most of the book.

And you write in that beautiful providence. And then you get down here to the southeast corner and you have another little box. And you put in there chapter 4, verses 18 to 22, which is the genealogy at the end of the book and is the most important part of the book.

So those are the major blocks. Now, as you look at the bulk of the story in the book of Ruth, seems to be told from Naomi's point of view. She's not the center of interest.

The center of interest is Ruth herself. But it's told from Naomi's point of view. And the climax comes, as I said, in chapter 4, verses 18 to 22.

And when you get to that genealogy or ancestry table at the end of the book, you see that Naomi is a great, great grandmother in the kingdom of God, as it traces that kinship down to David.

[4 : 34] Well, let's begin and look at the whole book from a Naomi perspective. But before we do that, make sure that chapter 1, verses 1 to 5, sinks down deeply into your mind.

That's a very scary beginning to a biblical book, those first five verses. You can do the math yourself. One famine, two marriages, three deaths, ten years, five verses.

The writer is sort of telling you that it only takes five verses for your whole life to fall apart. That is indeed scary. Now, let's go to the book.

What do we have here? What do we find here? Now, first of all, there's a perseverance you may miss. A perseverance you may miss. If you look at chapter 1, verses 6 to 22.

You know clearly that there's a certain bitterness with Naomi. Notice how she expresses herself in verse 13 to her daughters-in-law. No, my daughters, middle of the verse.

[5 : 41] For it is far more bitter for me than for you. Indeed, the hand of Yahweh has gone forth against me. And then you notice what she says in verses 20 and 21. Don't call me Naomi.

Don't call me pleasant. Call me Mara bitter. For the Almighty has deeply marred me. There's a little wordplay there in the Hebrew on the name.

Don't call me Mara. For the Almighty has deeply marred me. And then she says, Yahweh has testified against me, 21.

And the Almighty has brought disaster on me. There's a certain bitterness, certainly, it seems, in Naomi's expression and so on. And yet at the same time, she doesn't like what God has brought about, obviously.

And yet at the same time, it's not like she thinks God only does bitter things. That God only inflicts trouble on her. Because she knows, verses 8 and 9, she seems to know that Yahweh is also the God of kindness and grace and goodness as well.

[6 : 47] It's interesting the balance Naomi has. You notice in verses 8 and 9 that she says to her daughters and maw, You go return, may Yahweh deal kindly with you as you have done with the dead and with me.

And the same kind of expression in verse 9. So she knows that Yahweh deals kindly and graciously with people. And she utters this semi-blessing on her daughters-in-law.

It's not like she thinks he only brings distress and affliction. She has a certain balance in her. And yet at the same time, she's deeply upset over what the Lord has done in her case.

And there's a certain blindness that goes with her bitterness as well. You see it down in verses 21 and 22. You know, she said, I went away full, but Yahweh has brought me back empty.

It wasn't true. It's hard to see that at the time. We're in the flurry of distress. He didn't bring her back empty. You notice in verse 22 it says that Ruth the Moabitess came back with her.

[7 : 53] If Naomi would have just stuck out her elbow, she would have plunked Ruth in the ribs. And she would have known, Ah, Yahweh has given me something. I haven't come back empty.

But it's very hard to see that when you're overwhelmed with trouble and sorrow, isn't it? So there's a picture of Naomi. The thing that I want you to see is that there's a certain kind of perseverance in this.

And you can miss it if you focus just on Naomi's bitterness. As one older commentator said, She does not abandon Yahweh.

She complains of Him, but she does not forsake Him. Even down in verses 21 and 22, she doesn't like what He's done, but she's still dealing with Him.

There's a perseverance there. She hasn't given over her faith. Now, it reminds me of a time when my dad expressed something like this.

[8 : 59] He wasn't going through the extremity of the trouble that Naomi did. But my mother had, I think, broken her leg. She was in the hospital.

And I went up to be with my dad. I was in graduate school at the time, and I was trying to help my brother and his wife by giving them a few days' respite in caring for them. And so I went up to stay with my dad while my mom was in the hospital.

So, this was in the mid or late 70s. And I don't know what your families are like, but ours was kind of close-lipped.

Pop didn't say things. I mean, he didn't, let me just put it this way, he didn't tend to spill his psychological guts. He didn't wear his feelings on the sleeve and that sort of thing. If he said

something that revealed anything he was particularly thinking or was close to his heart, you probably multiply it by about four and you get the real effect of it.

And so, here we were. It was after supper, and we were up in Pop's study, and we had worship together. Pop read the scriptures and he prayed.

[10:12] And then, one of those little notes after our prayer, he was reflecting and he said, It seems like the hand of the Lord has gone out against us lately.

And I think he was thinking of my mother's trouble. And so, it seems that the hand of the Lord has gone out against us lately. Now, you probably know how you kind of begin to respond if someone would say something like that to you, and you become a little bit defensive for the Lord, and you think maybe you should give a little bit of an explanation.

And I began thinking of what I could say to him at that time, sort of to Pop sense, you know. Well, Pop, you need to understand that when you get to be 76 years old, you can't expect to have perfect health.

I mean, some of these things are going to happen, and so on. I don't know why, but I kept my mouth shut, and I didn't say anything. I'm glad I did, because Pop didn't need any of my secular garbage that I was thinking of saying.

You see, that was a marvelous thing in a way. It seems that the hand of the Lord has gone out against us lately. Because he was dealing with his God.

[11:25] That was really faith. It was tried faith, but it was faith. It was wobbling faith, but it was faith. You can miss that sometimes.

Naomi here, do you think she had what Paul calls joy and peace in believing? No, she didn't. Did she have believing, though? Yes, she did. The very fact that she was struggling with what God had done still shows that she's holding on to him.

She's dealing with him. Bitter faith, sometimes, is still faith. Baffled faith is still faith. Perplexed faith is still faith.

There's a perseverance you can miss here. And for your own soul's good, you may need to understand that and remember that. Because sometimes, in the midst of the darkness, you may think that you've lost your faith.

No. Baffled faith is not lack of faith. It's struggling faith. A perseverance you may miss.

[12:28] Now, secondly, notice that there's a providence you can trace. Okay, here we go to that big box in the middle. Chapter 1, verse 6 to chapter 4, verse 17.

And we've got to zip over this. A providence you can trace. Now, what do I mean by providence, that word? Well, I simply mean God's always interesting and frequently unguessable way of working for his people.

Now, how do we trace this providence? How do we see it happening here? I'm not saying that Naomi could see all these things at the time, but perhaps she could see them when she looked back at them. For one thing, there's a common providence.

A common providence. Do you see chapter 1, verse 6? She comes back from the country of Moab because she had heard in the country of Moab that Yahweh had looked after his people by giving them food.

The famine's over. That doesn't change Naomi's personal situation. Elimelech's still dead. Machlon and Kilion are still buried in Moab.

[13:32] And there's some things that can't be changed. But she is going to eat if she goes back home. So it doesn't change everything. It doesn't relieve all her distress.

But it changes the larger circumstances. She is going to have daily bread, probably. That's something. It may be a common gift of God, but it's still a gift.

And we can sometimes miss that, can't we? You can sometimes miss it when you come to the end of chapter 1 and you look down there and you see that they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

There was a barley harvest that year. Maybe it doesn't relieve all your distress. But God still is feeding you.

Sometimes you need to look at the common providences in the midst of your troubles to see that God's still extending His gift. I don't know how you folks deal with garbage over here on the Isle of Lewis.

[14:37] And we have several ways at our place in the States. Where we are now, you put this garbage container out at the edge of the street and the garbage truck comes by and this big robotic arm comes down and hugs your garbage container and lifts it up and dumps it into the truck and puts it down.

And we didn't have that yet when we were living in southern Mississippi about three years ago and a little beyond that. You would take your garbage out to the street and the truck would come by and a couple fellas would be on the truck and they'd jump off and throw the garbage in the truck. Now, the problem with that was that if you took your garbage cans out there and so on, the fellas were rather careless. They might leave the garbage cans in the street, whether they were metal or plastic, and someone might come by and run over them and wreck them and so on. So I never took my garbage cans out the street. I always pulled those big black plastic bags, the liners we use, pulled them out of the garbage can, tied them up, and then I took the black plastic bags out the street.

They were safe for them to handle and let them do it that way. We usually had two big black plastic bags every garbage day.

[16:00] If we had company some evening, then I might have three black plastic bags. But one day it hit me as I was carrying two big black plastic bags down the driveway to the street.

You know, this is really the sacrament of the black plastic bags. Because I got to thinking theologically about garbage.

I started to think, I have garbage here. And the reason I have garbage is because God is good. I have garbage because God is feeding us.

I have garbage because he gives me daily bread. It is simply a reflection and a pointer to the God who gives daily gifts. And then you go out to the edge of the street and you look up and down the street and you see garbage cans and black plastic bags all over your neighbor's street.

And the whole place ought to be erupting in a doctology. Isn't God good? We have garbage. That is a common providence. You can lose sight of those things in the midst of big trouble.

[17:12] Then secondly, there's an encouraging providence in this segment. You notice chapter 2 of Ruth, an encouraging providence. You have that episode in the barley field.

And you know it says that Ruth went out to labor to pick up the scraps of grain in somebody's field. The poor were allowed to do that. And she just happened, verse 3, chapter 2, verse 3, to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.

And he was of the clan of Elimelech, which sets off lights and so on. But she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz. It's not like the writer believes in chance.

He's not saying this was just a chance thing. No, no. He's just describing it in the way we would commonly describe something like this. But it really reflects God's providence.

And in all of this time, we can't go into it in detail, Boaz showed great kindness to her and just overwhelmed Ruth with that kindness.

[18:14] She was so appreciative. And then after lunch and so on, Boaz kind of primed the pump a little bit.

He said to his harvesters, look, when you're gathering the grain, make sure you pull out some of the stalks of grain from the bundles and just accidentally leave them so that Ruth can pick them up.

Well, at the end of the day, she comes out with an ephah of barley. That's like three-fifths of a bushel of barley. That's a pretty good take for just picking up scraps here and there.

You get a little goat's milk and you can cook, I suppose, barley cereal and have it for quite a number of days every morning. This was an encouraging providence.

And it was encouraging because notice how it affected Naomi in chapter 2, verse 20. She finds out who it was that Ruth worked under that day.

[19:14] And she said, May he be blessed by Yahweh, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. Do you see how Naomi reacts in chapter 2, verse 20, verses chapter 1, verses 20 and 21?

Do you see the difference there? Yahweh, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. You say it was only an ephah of barley. What's the difference does that make?

Oh, but sometimes a sign, a mere sign, a mere indication is so significant. And that's the way it is here. It lifts her spirits.

Now, it's something like what happened in about 1840 or so. The Church of Scotland sent several men to what is now Budapest, Hungary.

One of those men was Dr. John Duncan, who was an eccentric Old Testament professor. Most Old Testament professors are not eccentric, but Dr. Duncan was.

[20 : 17] And they called him Rabbi Duncan because he was so expert in everything Hebraish and so on, and Old Testament-ish. And so, Rabbi Duncan was there as one of the men, and they conducted services for the English workers in the city.

And also coming, some of the Jews began to come to the services. One of them, Israel Sefer, came. He was about 63 years old.

He was the prime Jew, you might say, in Hungary. He had studied Judaism for 40 years. He was a friend of the chief rabbi. He was a learned man and so on, and he came ostensibly to improve his English.

But after he was there a while, he began to have some discussions with Rabbi Duncan about Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillments in Jesus the Messiah, and he was on the verge of believing, and came to the services and was singing the psalms and so on.

And he never came without this frail, little, 11-year-old son of his, Adolf. Adolf Sefer. So there you would have the picture in the meeting of this bearded, 63-year-old man with an frail, 11-year-old lad standing between his knees, and there they were in the services and so on.

[21 : 37] Now one day, they went home, and Adolf, little Adolf, begged his father to be able to give the prayer of thanksgiving at the meal. So he allowed him to do it.

He did it. And he ended it in the name of Jesus. It was a shot heard around the land. Everything was out in the open.

Now they knew that those two had become Christian believers. The friendship with the chief rabbi went down the drain. Israel, Safer, had to resign from the synagogue, and so on.

It was, in one sense, devastating the cost he had to pay. But you say, it was only a phrase. Only five words.

He just said, in the name of Jesus. Yeah, but, it was a sign that was significant. It said loads, as we say.

[22 : 38] So, an ephah of barley can say very, very much when Naomi sees that it's a sign of a God who is still caring for her.

If Yahweh has smitten her, he is also sustaining her. And she recognizes that it's an encouraging providence.

It doesn't take much to encourage you, does it, really? Now, there's another kind of providence here. It's a suspenseful providence. A suspenseful providence in chapter 3 through chapter 4 verse 17.

And we'll try to summarize that. Very complex in a way, but we'll try to give it a dose of superficiality and see if we can catch the main point here.

Now, Naomi tells Ruth that she should go down to the threshing floor. She should get gussied up and showered and put on her best clothes and so on and go down to the threshing floor.

[23 : 41] Somehow, Naomi knew that Boaz would be down there that night guarding his pile of barley that had been threshed from marauders and robbers. Difficult position.

Here you have two women, Naomi and Ruth. Boaz, though he's a relative of Elimelech, seemingly hasn't made any move to show any concern to fulfill any responsibility toward Ruth and Naomi.

There's probably a reason for that. But it might be that Naomi thought, you know, maybe we need to give Boaz a nudge. That's hard to do.

Interesting, isn't it, that Naomi seems, though she certainly believes in divine sovereignty and divine providence. She sees no conflict between that and human ingenuity.

Naomi has a little plan. She tells Ruth what to do. But you see, these things were very delicate, because in that time, you didn't do what might happen now.

[24 : 47] I mean, you couldn't, Ruth couldn't go by and put a little sticky note on Boaz's lunch pail that says, Boaz, dear, we need to talk.

My cell number is love Ruth. He just didn't do that. So how are you going to get this thing out in the open? How are you going to get things moving along a little bit?

Well, leave it to your mother-in-law. And so Naomi has this plan. Now, you notice the reason this is a suspenseful providence is because it kind of keeps you on edge.

This is tricky stuff. What if someone sees Ruth down at the threshing floor at night? A very delicate situation. Naomi had said, you wait until Boaz eats and drinks and goes and lays down and goes to sleep at the heap of barley.

Then you go up, uncover his feet and lay down there and so on and he'll tell you what to do. Well, you look at verse 8, chapter 3, verse 8, and Boaz got the daylights scared out of him.

[25 : 55] in all his days and nights of guarding his barley grain and so on, he had never been wakened up and found a woman laying at his feet. It just startled him and just really scared him and he finds out it's Ruth.

She says, 3, 9, spread your wings over your servant for you are a redeemer, a go ale. Now that spread your wings means spread the wing of your garment over me.

It's a metaphor for marriage, which is really what Ruth is asking to be brought into the protection of marriage, which Boaz as a relative had a right to do.

But you see the moment of tension in chapter 3, verse 8. What's going to happen when Boaz wakes up or is disturbed and finds this? And then, what's his reaction going to be to Ruth's proposal, you might say?

Will he reject it? Will he say, oh, come on, you can't expect me to do this? Who knows what the reaction will be? Well, he's only too glad to do it. He's flattered and so on.

[26 : 59] But that was a whole moment of tension and suspense. But then the suspense comes out again because Boaz says, well, in one way, Ruth, it really doesn't make any difference what I intend to do because there's a relative who's closer than I am to you and Naomi's family, and he gets first crack at this matter.

Another element of tension comes in to view, doesn't it? And your insides kind of get tied in a little literary knot there again.

Well, what's going to happen now? And you see what happens in the first part of chapter 4 when Boaz goes to court and he summons this nearer relative and he says, Naomi's selling some land, etc.

you are before me, you get first go at it, as it were. And he says, yes, I'm very interested, that's very good. I'll paraphrase there.

And then Boaz plays what you might call a trump card. He says, now when you take this land, you also have to marry Ruth, the widow of Moclon, and raise up seed to her.

[28 : 09] Well, then the fellow said, hmm, don't know about that, because if he marries Ruth and has a child by Ruth, say a son by Ruth, then that land, after he dies, that land will not go to his own family, it will go to Ruth's son.

So he wouldn't retain it in his own heritage. Not only that, but he would have to support Ruth. And he would probably also have to support Naomi. So you lose the land eventually and you have to support two women.

He said, I don't think this is too good a deal, in essence. You go ahead, Boaz. So that resolves the next moment of tension. All I want you to see there are these moments of tension and whether Boaz, what will be Boaz's reaction will be.

And then how are we going to get around this whole matter of this closer relative? And it's finally resolved. And so on. But it's a suspenseful providence.

Now, what's that tell you? That tells you something about your God. That tells you that God is not boring.

[29 : 21] That God is so interesting that the excitement and tension that's generated in this story points to the doctrine of the fascination of God.

Now, in your theology books, if you look up the index or the table of contents, you won't find a doctrine about that, but it ought to be there because it's taught throughout Scripture. The doctrine of the fascination of God.

Isn't God interesting? He never bores you. He will baffle you. He will distress you sometimes by what He does.

But in all my experience, whether God does something in my life or in the life of others that I don't like, etc., whether I am perplexed or distressed or whatever, I have never found God boring.

He does not have one iota of tedium in his whole massive triune being. And it's reflected in narratives like this that just ooze with suspense.

[30 : 33] It's just saying to you, your God is interesting. Isn't he fascinating? And shouldn't you adore him for that?

So, interesting that you have a God who shows up in barley fields and at threshing floors. That's the providence you can trace. Now, thirdly, let's look at a preoccupation you can infer.

A preoccupation of God that you can infer here. Again, now here, stand back and look at the whole book and the flow of the whole book.

We'll just try to survey it quickly. There's a certain literary pattern in the book of Ruth, it seems to be a literary pattern, that every major episode returns to Naomi, brings attention back to Naomi.

You saw that in chapter 1, naturally, it was almost obvious there. Naomi comes back to Bethlehem and all the women gather around and start talking to her in the city gate.

[31 : 37] So the focus there is on Naomi, obviously. But it happens in chapter 2 as well. Ruth goes to work in the barley field, gets her ephah barley, etc. But then she comes back at the end of chapter 2, you have a focus on Naomi again, don't you?

And then you have chapter 3, the threshing floor incident, you have all the excitement of that and so on, but what happens at the end? In the end of chapter 3 it comes back to Naomi. Boaz sends Ruth back to Naomi with six measures of barley, etc.

And Ruth reports to Naomi, and Naomi said, well, how did it go? And so on, and they discuss it. But it comes back to focus on Naomi. And then in chapter 4, after the court case is cleared up, in verses 1-12, you notice that verses 13-17 focus on Naomi again.

Would have actually been a little bit sometime later, would have been after Boaz and Ruth actually married, but she has a son, Ovid, and so on. And the focus then in chapter 4, verses 13-17 comes back to Naomi as she holds little Ovid on her lap, and so on.

So, every episode, major episode, comes back and puts its attention on Naomi. And also at the same time, some provision for Naomi.

[33 : 00] Trivial as that may seem. At the end of chapter 1, it was the provision of Ruth who came back with her. At the end of chapter 2, it was an ephah of barley. At the end of chapter 3, it was six measures of barley.

At the end of the major episode in chapter 4, it was a little grandson. Always some provision. But it's always coming back to Naomi. Is that just a literary pattern or is God saying something about his own ways?

Is it not as if the book is saying that's just the way it is with God? It's as if he just can't get his attention off of Naomi. It's as if God is preoccupied with Naomi's need.

It's as if God is fixated on caring for Naomi. And he just can't let her out of his view, you might say. That seems to be implied or inferred. It's God's preoccupation in caring for his servant. As if to say Naomi is never forgotten.

[34 : 04] She is ever and always the focus of Yahweh's attentions. As if Yahweh is preoccupied and fixated with her welfare and he simply cannot forsake her and can't get her off his mind we might say.

I think you know what preoccupation is. You've probably seen a number of samples of it. A number of years ago when my wife and I were serving in the first congregation where I pastored.

It was in the state of Kansas. It's right in the very middle of our country where my wife comes from. And it was what we call a two point charge.

There was a larger church in town that I served and there was a smaller church of about 50 people out in the country six miles away. And every Sunday I would go out to the smaller church and preach and lead worship there and then about near 11 o'clock I come in and conduct service at the town church.

Now this country church I don't know what it's like on the Isle of Lewis but where we were when the weather started turning warm things started to happen.

[35 : 29] It might be like May or early June but in the warmer spring you open up a country church and things like wasps start to come out.

And I remember one Sunday morning we had a problem with a wasp or two. You must understand I don't know how they thought about it but I was looking at it from my viewpoint I was preaching on Jeremiah 31 and we were having a sermon on the new covenant and they were trying really hard but you would look at them as you were preaching and you see this wasp was doing a kamikaze effect they would take a dive and you could just watch their eyes you couldn't keep their eyes off

that wasp and so on it would go up and circle around and they would kind of be back with you getting ready to duck again if need be and then he would take another plunge they just couldn't get their eyes off that wasp they were pre occupied with it fortunately the wasp landed right on the pulpit and I smacked it and we were back in Jeremiah 31 again but it's that preoccupation well that's what the literary pattern of the book of

Ruth seems to be suggesting about Naomi's Lord by always coming back to Naomi and her need and her provision it's as if the book is quietly saying the living God is preoccupied with the need of his servant and he simply can't get her off his mind that's a preoccupation you can infer and we need to hear that maybe because it's very hard for us it's very hard for us to grasp the intensity of Yahweh's care for us now one more matter that you see in the book and that is a perspective you must trust chapter four verses 18 to 22 a perspective you must trust now you notice that these verses begin with the generations of

Perez and so on and go on down and you pick up in verse 21 that Salmon fathered Boaz Boaz fathered Obed Obed fathered Jesse and Jesse fathered David and so on now this genealogy if you want to call it that is the climax and the most important part of the book it shows you where everything comes out Naomi's grandson Obed is a part of it and that means that what happened to Naomi and her story and Ruth and her story and connecting with Boaz and then the birth of Obed all of that leads to David the covenant king verse 22 and that should turn your lights on for you probably cheated and read ahead to 2 Samuel 7 and you know the rest of the story that this David is the king through whom Yahweh has promised to establish his kingdom in this world through that line of kings through

David's line of kings then Jesus the Messiah will come so do you get it this is not just a nice family story in the book of Ruth this is not just God giving Naomi a garment of praise instead of a faint spirit though it is that but it's far more than that it's an essential episode in the prime line of the kingdom of God now here's something Naomi and too often we ourselves can never see here's the perspective most of us never have on our afflictions well think of it how could Naomi see 150 years down the pike and see the kingship of David well she couldn't but a writer coming in David's or later time and knowing David as the king could look back and see how

[39 : 54] Naomi's story fed into David's kingship and into Yahweh's plan for his kingdom in this world so you see what it's saying is something like this that famine and triple grief and destitution and the conversion of a Moabite girl and barley fields and dirt under the fingernails and threshing floors and courtrooms and the whale of little Ovid coming out of the nursery all of that was God's way of establishing his kingdom in the world you never know what your affliction what fruit your affliction might bring and Naomi couldn't see that at the time that's why this is a perspective we must trust there's a town in Alabama down in the deep south of the

United States down near the Gulf of Mexico this town is in southeastern Alabama it's a town called Enterprise and in the area of Enterprise Alabama they was a big cotton producing area and about 1910 they had a big problem come to the area it was called the boe weevil it decimated the cotton crop in 1914 I think it was they produced 38,000 bales of cotton in the area 1917 they produced 7,000 what to do they tried everything they tried drowning the boe weevils they tried picking them off the plants they tried spraying them with carbolic acid they tried all sorts of shenanigans they even tried whiskey to try to kill them nothing worked the boe reval reached heaven and then some of the farmers turned to peanut farming and they found that profitable and others turned to corn and hay and livestock and gradually the economy stabilized and it prospered again well about 1919 some of the merchants there began to think you know we need to give thanks where thanks is due hopefully they were thinking about

God's providence as well but they were thinking about other things and so in 1919 they began to erect the monument and it was finally finalized in 1949 so if you go to Enterprise Alabama today you will see a monument it's some kind of stone or something I think of a statuesque woman in flowing robes holding a lot a seventeen and a half pound iron likeness of a football sized bull weevil it's their tribute to the benefit that the bull weevil thought brought to them that scourge drove them out of dependence on cotton and brought a new prosperity to the area but there's no way they would have seen that in 1914 now that's sort of like the way things are here we can't get that perspective most of the time or very often in the midst of our troubles we have to trust that God will do something like that and bring fruit from our affliction the reason this is important is because it shows that none of us knows enough to say that God doesn't know what he's doing none

of us has enough wisdom to dispute God's strange ways we just don't have enough data faith can never guess what God will do through afflictions what he did with Naomi a great great grandmother of the kingdom of God let spread oh Lord who is a God like you behind a frowning providence you hold a smiling face how we thank you that you are a God who can multitask you are the one who both brings your everlasting kingdom and cares for your individual people we give you praise and we give you thanks that you are our God in Jesus name Amen Halloween you are the Halloween people for their ancestors they couldn't come them they they havegehen talking they might summer in they they have after other Christmas weekend and they have their hearts