

WHEN LIFE GOES WRONG

Ruth 1:19-21, *So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?*

And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

The Christian life is a wonderful life. True Christians have the presence of Christ in their life. They know that Jesus Christ saved them from a life of sin, and eternal damnation in Hell. Christians are Blessed, because they are God's children.

Yet, Christians are called on to suffer hardships, persecution, and even death, to accomplish the will of God. There are times when it is impossible to see God's purpose in the events of our lives. There are times when we must have the faith to endure the hardships, and pain, and trust God to give us the strength to weather the storms of life. Most of the time we cannot see what is ahead. We just trust the Lord to get us through.

We do not know why God puts us in times of trouble, but we do know He always has a reason.

Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and jailed for a crime he did not commit, so he could eventually save his people.

Esther was a beautiful woman, who was taken into a king's harem, so she could become a queen, and save the Jews from genocide.

Daniel was enslaved in a foreign land, so he could be a great prophet.

Paul and Silas, were beaten, and thrown into prison to win souls, and show the power of God.

Often God allows His people to suffer to accomplish a great purpose. When the storm is raging we may not be able to look up and see the sun, but we know the storm is temporary, and the sun has not stopped shining. When the storms of life are raging, and the devil is doing his worst, and we are suffering, we can be sure the Lord has not left us alone! The Lord is still with his people! Through faith we can turn the tribulations of life into a testimony for Christ. A great sorrow, or a great tragedy is an opportunity. Let us not let the evil one cause us to be overcome with sorrow, or grief that we miss the opportunity to shine for Jesus. We need to have faith, and understand the worst of events, and the darkest times are the times we must shine the brightest for Jesus, and the times that God is closer to us, and uses us the most.

WHEN IT SEEMS GOD IS AGAINST US WE NEED TO HAVE FAITH GOD IS USING US.

Ruth 1:13 says, *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.*

This is that touching scene in the book of Ruth where Naomi is having to send her daughters-in-law away. She was counseling them to return to the home of their parents. She could hardly provide for herself much less for them. Naomi was heartbroken. She and her husband Elimelech had left Bethlehem, and journeyed to Moab, because of a famine. When they reached Moab her husband died, and she became a widow with a family to support. Her two sons Mahlon, and Chilion soon got married. But things got worse. Both Mahlon, and Chilion died, and left their wives Orpah, and Ruth widows. In a period of ten years Naomi lost her husband, and her only two sons. Naomi was not a young woman. She was in a foreign land, she was poor, and she felt for the benefit of her daughters-in-law, she needed to send them back to their parents. Orpah did not want to leave, but she consented it would be best. Ruth stayed with Naomi.

Naomi was sad. You just can't get much lower than this poor widow felt. Life had treated her badly. She was in trouble, and the trouble just kept getting worse. Naomi probably imagined God was punishing her. She certainly could not see God's goodness in all that had befallen her. Boy, in her place which of us would think any differently? She had lost her worldly possessions, and she had no livelihood. She had suffered the pain of losing her loved ones. Job was not the only one who ever suffered troubles he didn't understand. Sometimes to do God's will we must suffer. Sometimes, we must endure things that hurt us. Naomi wondered where God's protection was. Have you ever felt like she must have felt in this terrible time in her life? Have you ever wondered why God allowed you to go through such pain, suffering and trouble? What possible good could come out of your troubles? We have all probably had some of those thoughts.

The truth was, God was using Naomi to accomplish His divine purpose. Naomi had to go through all her suffering to win Ruth to the Lord. Of course we know how important Ruth is in the scheme of God's plan. Ruth is one of the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ. Don't ever underestimate the importance of winning souls. There is no price too high to win someone to Jesus.

Sometimes, for the Lord to use us, He has to allow us to suffer. Most of us have read the book, *Pilgrims Progress*, by John Bunyan. If not, you should read it. It is one of the greatest books ever written. Written in 1670 A D, or about 400 years ago. It is still read and cherished today. Most of us would be glad for the Lord to call us to write a great book, or to do some other great work. That would be wonderful! But wait! To write the book, *Pilgrims Progress*, John Bunyan spent twelve years in a filthy jail with terrible conditions. His family suffered, and was devastated, while he was in prison. His blind daughter suffered because her father could not provide for the family's needs. John Bunyan was persecuted for his faith in Christ, and was put in jail for preaching the gospel.

It was while he was in prison the Lord inspired him, and he wrote this great book. You see, it was while he was suffering, and his family was suffering for the cause of Christ. Do we think Bunyan wanted to be in jail? Do we suppose he did not pray for the Lord to affect his release? Do we not understand that he did not

want to go through the pain of being separated from his beloved wife and children. God was working out His purpose. John Bunyan had to go to jail, and suffer in order to do his greatest work for Christ. *Pilgrims Progress*, has been a source of spiritual strength for millions. While John Bunyan was suffering God was using him. Though he did not know it. This was his finest hour.

Now most of us, if we knew for God to use us, we would have to suffer like Bunyan did, would say, “wait a minute Lord. I would like to serve you, and I would like to do something great for you, but if I have to suffer like that, why don’t you use someone else?”

You see the question is, do we really want God to use our life to glorify Jesus, and to help others to go to Heaven? I hope we want God to use us enough to suffer for HIM.

Let me ask, do you want God to use you to accomplish His purpose? Even if it means you have to suffer? Even if it means we cannot understand why it is necessary? You see the greatest thing we can do in life is to love God, and let Him work out His purpose through us. It is a privilege to suffer for Jesus Christ, because He paid the supreme price for our salvation. Oh yes, ***For God so loved us***. The question is do we love Jesus enough to trust Him, and be faithful to Him no matter what.

Oh, the devil may send the lightning, and the rain. The sky may be so dark we cannot see the light. Troubles may come. Our heart may break over and over. We may suffer beyond our understanding. Even, we may think, beyond our limit. But, dear friend let us remember, and remind each other the clouds, and thunder, may hide the Son, but He still loves us, He is still there, and He is using us:

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (Rom. 8:37)

May we have faith, and always cling to this great truth. As long as we walk with God He will use us. He will use us on the highest mountain, and He will use us in the lowest valley. He will use us in sickness, and in health, in troubles, and happiness. If you are suffering I don’t say you should go around gleefully. I know you are hurting, but this may be the greatest opportunity of your life to glorify the Lord. Don’t let self pity beat you out of shining for Jesus! Just keep on being faithful to the Lord. Be faithful! Stand your ground for God! Don’t let the devil tell you God doesn’t care. Don’t quit. Ezekiel’s wife died, and he could not even mourn. You talk about cruel! You talk about hurting. Ezekiel was dying with pain inside, but he just kept on shining for the Lord. This was his finest hour for God. Let’s just keep shining for Jesus!

Dear friend, it may be you are not saved. It may be you are backsliding. Your trial, and suffering, is God’s message for you to repent of your sins, and come to Him. He wants you to come to Him, and learn how He can love you, and care for you. God is not against you. He is drawing you to Himself. Why don’t you give it up. Your rebellion, and stubbornness, will only cause you more pain. Come to Jesus, and let Him save you!

Backslider why don’t you stop wallowing in self pity, and repent of your sins, and lack of faith, and come back to God. So you got hurt. Do you think Stephen didn’t get hurt? Do you think God let you down? I assure you He did not. You

know the Lord loves you. I do not know what happened. Maybe you just fell for some temptation. Maybe you got hurt, and you can't understand. I know this. The devil is the one who hurt you. The devil is the one who is hurting you, and enslaving you today. The only one who can help you is Jesus. Why don't you come, and let Jesus love you? When it seems God is against us He is doing something great in our life, and the life of others. We need to have faith in God's goodness and His love for us. We need to be like job and trust God in the good times and the bad times!

WHEN IT SEEMS THAT GOD REFUSES TO HELP US HE IS MOVING US.

Ruth 1:20, *And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.*

Naomi, and Ruth, had returned to Naomi's home which was Bethlehem. A lot of her old friends had come to meet her. Naomi said don't call me "Naomi" which means pleasant. She said to call her "Mara" which means bitter. Remember, when the children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea they journeyed through the wilderness of Shur, and could not find water. They came to Marah, spelled M-a – r-a-h, and they could not drink the water because it was bitter. It was there that God showed Moses a tree that turned the water sweet so they could quench their thirst. But M-a-r-a or M-a-r-a-h is basically the same word, and means bitter. Naomi said, *the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.*

She was saying, God is against me, nothing has gone right, everything is wrong, and I had to come back home, because I am destitute. Oh! I don't understand why God would do this to me!

You see Naomi could not see that God was forcing her to move back to Bethlehem. The lord had a great purpose for Ruth. Naomi was God's way of getting Ruth to Bethlehem so she could meet a handsome man named Boaz. In order to get Ruth to be married to Boaz the Lord had to force Ruth to move back to her homeland. Sometimes we go through trouble because the Lord has to move us. I have seen people who were too stubborn to move. God had to change their circumstances to get them to walk down the aisle, and get things right. We do not understand God's reasons for what He does, but we know He always has good reasons. That is where our faith in His goodness over rules our pitiful reason. I don't understand a lot of things, but I can tell you, God never does anything to hurt us. He always does things to help us. Now some of you are probably sitting there saying, why couldn't the Lord have moved Naomi another way? Why couldn't He have done it without all the suffering? The answer is He could have! But you see God's ways are higher than our ways. In other words, for you folks that are a little slow, God is infinitely smarter than we are. We as human beings of finite intelligence may look at many reasons when we do something, but God in his Infinite wisdom considers thousands of things. He considers all the probabilities, and possibilities. God does what He does because it is the very best way to do it, and it is the very best thing for everybody concerned, and it is the only way to do things without making a mess today, and twenty, or a hundred years from today. Evidently Naomi had to go through her

suffering to encourage people who would read about her life in the Bible. Maybe The Lord will use our faith in trials to help others. Now if you want to sit around, and argue with God you will just get frustrated with life. God is perfect. Everything He does is perfect. When we trust God we always win. When people don't trust God they always lose. I can't explain it better than that. Ruth needed to marry Boaz, and Naomi needed to go to Bethlehem, and live the remaining years of her life there, so God moved them.

Sometimes, we go through bad trouble, because God is forcing us to move. Sometimes, it is a geographical move. Often, it is a spiritual move. The Lord wants us to grow. He wants us to leave some things behind, and find some new things. Growth is so hard for some people. People tend to not want to give up things. God at times refuses to answer our prayers because we are not moving, or we are not growing, or we are refusing to surrender to God's purpose in our life. We pray, and nothing happens. Things get tough, and things go wrong. Sometimes, the Lord refuses to answer our prayers to get us to stop playing around, and get closer to Him. Let me tell you, from my own experience, when God wants you to move just go along with Him. Can you imagine if Naomi had refused to move, and just stubbornly held on to her own will, how much worse things could have gotten. The Lord just wants to bless us folks. Why don't we just stop resisting His will, and let Him bless us?

When God refuses to help us He is using us, and He is moving us to something better!

WHEN IT SEEMS GOD HAS DISAPPOINTED US HE IS ALLOWING US TO GLORIFY HIM.

Ruth 1:21, *I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

Naomi was at a terrible time in her life. She was hurting! Her whole world had fallen apart. She had lost almost everything that she loved. It seemed everything she cherished had been taken away from her. Her very purpose for living was gone. She had once been a wife, and enjoyed the love of her kind, and gentle husband. But now she was broken. She could no longer hear his reassuring voice. She could no longer depend on him to care for her. Add to that she had two bright, and wonderful sons stolen from her. She had not only had to suffer the death of one of her children, she had been bereaved of both her children. What mother could endure such pain, and heartbreak, and not feel defeated, and deserted? Oh, the hours of tearful prayer, and lamentation. How she must have prayed. O Lord Why? Why? Why? In her heart she must have thought how she had tried to live for the Lord. She must have agonized over why she would be put through such awful things. She had not been wicked like so many she had seen. She had tried to do right. Why would God not bless her, and protect her from such awful tragedies? Naomi was a wife, and a mother. That was her life. Now, she had been robbed of almost everything that mattered to her. Oh yes, add one more tragedy to this poor woman's life. She wondered how could the God she

loved be so cruel to her? Now, on top of her other trials, she had to face total humiliation. She had to return to her hometown at Bethlehem a failure. She had left with her husband on a brave adventure to the country of Moab. Now, she was returning in total defeat. She had nothing. Absolutely nothing! She was poverty-stricken. Her faith was broken. Oh no, she had not stopped believing in the Lord, but she was bewildered, and she could not understand why all her beautiful dreams about life, and how she believed God would take care of her, and provide for her, were shattered. The clouds, and the storm had covered the sky. There seemed to be only darkness. Everything she had touched turned to ashes.

When she met her friends she said, ***I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*** Oh, Oh, the sadness of that poor broken woman. She was saying I AM A FAILURE, AND EVEN GOD IS AGAINST ME! She probably reviewed every sin in her life. The old Devil probably made her think God had not forgiven her, and her sins were the reason the Lord was punishing her. Naomi did not know why the heavens seemed to close up against her. All she could feel was the pain. Oh, let us not sit in our air conditioned homes, and judge this poor woman. Her soul was bare, she thought God was punishing her. How could she think otherwise?

What she did not see. What she could not see, for the clouds of her awful pain had hidden the truth from her, and she in her sorrow had all but quit. She had all but given up. Almost! Almost! Oh, how Satan must get tired of almost. You see, Naomi did the one thing every true child of God does when the devil does his worst, and there seems no reason, no hope, and no relief. Naomi joined with Job who said, ***Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him*** (Job 13:15,16).

Naomi had come to the end of her rope. There are times when a child of God knows only one thing. He knows he is saved. Brethren sometimes all you can do is stand! Brethren, when the devil has you beaten, and you have done all you know to do, and everything seems to fail, just remember, the devil almost had Naomi defeated! Almost! In those dark hours of grief, and despair, God just reached down, and whispered to Naomi just go one more mile. Oh, Naomi may not have even known it was the Lord who whispered to her, “keep believing,” but it was. Oh yes, it was! Sometimes, God lets the devil take us to the very brink, but Jesus is always there to give us strength to bear our cross. Jesus knows about bearing a cross. Jesus cried out on the cross is in Mt. 27:46, ***...Eli Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?*** Study those words. Yes, Jesus knew what it was to be completely alone! Jesus knew how to cry! Even when we can't see or feel Him, He is there. That is what this story, in God's holy Word, is about!

Naomi believed she was a failure. This was the worst time in her life. What she did not know was God was getting great glory from her life. God was going to help myriads of people to keep on keeping on through the life of Naomi. Think of it. How much faith, and encouragement is Naomi to us today. Her faith, and faithfulness, and her righteous life, is a blessing to every child of God who reads

the Bible. My friend let us say “God if I have to suffer for you to use me then help me have the strength to be faithful.” Naomi couldn’t see God, she couldn’t understand, but she just kept on serving the Lord. Oh! Lord give us an army of Naomi’s!

When I was a little boy I went to a little country school. One day a great storm arose, and as a little six year old boy I was extremely fearful. My mother and my father were not with me. They were at home. I was afraid. I remember how I looked out the window, and saw the big black clouds. I could see the sky grow dark, and it became almost like nighttime. I could hear the wind blowing, and I could feel the building strain against the wind. The lights flickered, and I was afraid they might go out, and we would be in the dark. I learned a great lesson that day. The storm was temporary, but the sun was always there. The devil may do his worst, and we may suffer, but The Son of God never fails.

Oh! keep believing, and the Lord will get glory out of your life! That is our purpose. God wants us to glorify Him in every situation. There are many times life will be hard. If we can find a way to glorify the Lord we can be of great service to our Lord.

The sun shined again in Naomi’s life. Ruth 4:13-17 says, ***So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.***

And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Out of all the people of the earth God chose Naomi to Glorify His name. Ruth was the great- grandmother of David. David, the King of Israel. The shepherd who slew Goliath. David, a man after God’s own heart. David, the writer of psalms. Oh, Ruth must have been so proud of her great-grandson that God had given her. But it all happened because of a widow woman who just refused to give up on God. Naomi is the reason Ruth is a part of the lineage of the Savior of the world. It was Naomi’s life that helps the rest of us know that when the old devil almost has us defeated we can trust that God is just working out His purpose. We already have the victory in Jesus. The devil is already defeated. Our Job is to trust God, hang on, and Let Jesus use us.

God always outsmarts the devil. God always defeats Satan and his plans. God always has that special man, or woman who is willing to suffer, and be faithful. Naomi will have great rewards in heaven, for she was a woman who kept on keeping on. She was disappointed in the way life treated her. She was disappointed that all her plans failed, and she thought God had turned against her. Folks when it seems, let me say again, it seems! God has disappointed us, He is using us to Glorify Himself, and accomplish His wonderful purpose! He is just

making our faith stronger. He is teaching us to love Him, and trust in Him. He is helping others by our suffering. We may not be able to understand, but we can trust HIM.

If we are faithful to the Lord, and it seems like God is against us, He is using us!

If we are faithful to the Lord, and God refuses to help us, He is moving us!

If we are faithful to the Lord, and it seems God has disappointed us, He is allowing us an opportunity to glorify Jesus!

God is greater than all the storms of life.

God is good!

Jesus will never leave us!