

Title: FROM SWEET TO BITTER

Text: Ruth 1:1-5

Intro: The Book of Ruth is rich in interesting paradoxes. It opens with a terrible famine and closes with a great feast. It begins with three sad funerals and ends with one happy wedding. In it we see some excellent examples of faith, patience, humility, industry, and kindness in the common events of life. Also, we see the special care God takes of our smallest concerns, guiding us to fully trust in Him.

Though this book is, for the most part, about the main character (Ruth), let us also observe how this story unfolds for a second character, another woman named Naomi – Ruth's mother-in-law. We shall look at four reasons why Naomi went from sweet to bitter.

I. She Had Her Priorities Set in The Wrong Place (vv. 1-3).

A. They were convinced that Moab had more great opportunities than did Bethlehemjudah. They relied on the world to find much "*greener pasture*" instead of letting the Great Shepherd to provide.

B. Elimelech's name means "*my God is King.*" Ironically, though his name signified that God was in control, yet Elimelech wanted to take full control of his provisions for his family instead of God.

C. The first thing they did was NOT to allow God to provide for them. They tried to provide for themselves. Our actions must be in God's will. He is *Jehovah-Jireh (the Lord will provide)* for a reason.

D. Remember that our today is God's yesterday. He knows what we are going through and what we shall go through; for God is all-knowing (**Isa. 55:9**). We must realize that it is God Who is really in full control. Whenever we get out of His will, we pay the price for it!

II. She Lowered God's Standards for Their Needs (vv. 4-5).

A. Naomi's sons, Mahlon (*infirmity*) and Chilion (*complete*), married Moabite women named Orpah (*neck*) and Ruth (*satisfied*). They dwelled in Moab for ten years. How long shall we stay in a place that causes hardships and hinders our relationship with God?

B. Ten years out of the will of God will surely mess up your life and cause you a lot of problems. When you are out of God's will, you will find yourself being in wrong places you are not supposed to be, and doing wrong things that you are not supposed to do!

C. Long ago, the Moabites denied food and safe passage to the Israelites while on their way to Canaan. They even hired Balaam to curse them (**Num. 23:5-7**). Because of these evil deeds, God became very displeased with the Moabites (**Deut. 7:1-3; 23:3-4**). Whenever Israelites took Moabite wives God's judgment followed.

III. She Failed to See God's Hand in Their Plight (vv. 6-13).

A. It took the deaths of the three men Naomi love to bring her to the place where God could freely use her for His glory. Naomi buried her husband and sons and set a course to return back to Bethlehemjudah. Perhaps if her husband and sons had not died, they may have never come home. Maybe they all would have died in Moab. We often cannot see the best plans God has for us. We usually find ourselves upset and disappointed with what He does.

B. We find Abraham in a similar situation where, during a famine in Canaan, he and Sarai went down to Egypt instead of waiting upon the Lord (**Gen. 12:10-20**). As soon as they got there, Abraham feared for his life and compromised by lying to Pharaoh. Sarai almost lost here purity had not God intervened in His mercy!

C. In time of crisis, the world will offer you everything – alluring places and opportunities – that you know you should not be a part of. Although it looks good, sounds good, smells good, and even tastes good, it will not be good for you at all if you are out of God's will! Outside of God's will, we become easy targets for Satan.

IV. She Blamed God for Her Situation (vv. 13-14, 19-22).

A. It is so easy to blame someone for your failures when it is your own fault getting into the mess you are in. This "*blame-game*" goes all the way back to the first couple in Eden (**Gen. 3:12-13**). Naomi said that God has dealt bitterly "*against*" her. Friend, you always reap the fruit of the choices that you have sown in the past; whether in the present or in the future, it is just a matter of time. You really cannot blame God, man or circumstances (**Gal. 6:7-8**).

B. The good part of the story was that someone obviously told Ruth about God. Through all that happened, whether it was Naomi or one of the men, someone told Ruth about the Lord. Ruth was converted and placed herself at the mercy of God (see **vv. 15-17**).

C. In her disappointment Naomi (*beautiful*) changed her name into "*Mara*" (*bitter*). It is rather wise of us to observe and own the appointment of God in all that befall us. Surely the comforts of God's grace are sweeter when they follow the troubles of our life. The trial of our faith should make us BETTER and not BITTER!

Conclusion: Maybe your life is like that of Naomi's – in the wrong place, doing the wrong things, oblivious of God's hand, and blaming Him for it all; when all it takes is to be in God's will (see **John 6:38**). To obtain God's blessings we must be in His will. The choice is yours – bitter or sweet? Friend, trust Jesus and be saved today!