

**Title:** Grief Upon Grief

**Text:** Ruth 1:1-5

**Main Idea:** All of us endure the bitter providence or loss and grief in this fallen world .

**Division Statements:**

**1. Naomi endured the grief of an unfaithful culture (v. 1).**

Verse 1 gives us the setting, “in the days when the judges ruled.” These were spiritually very dark days (e.g. Judges 2:11-13). Naomi grew up and lived in a culture that had for the most part completely abandoned God.

**2. Naomi endured the grief of physical hardship (v. 1).**

Verse 1 continues, “that there was a famine in the land.” Few of us know the grief and hardship of physical hunger or the extremity of one of these ancient famines. But Naomi knew it by first hand experience.

**3. Naomi endured the grief of a desperate decision (vv. 1-2).**

The decision to go to Moab described in verses 1-2 could not have been an easy one for the family. Many criticize Elimelech here for leaving the promised land, but the fail to remember that even Abraham was forced to do the same thing (Gen. 12:10) and Isaac as well (Gen. 26:1). The decision was desperate because of the ancient and current enmity between the two nations (e.g. Judges 3:12-30).

**4. Naomi endured the grief of losing her husband (v. 3).**

The land that was supposed to be a way of escape became a grave. What was supposed to be temporary became all too permanent.

**5. Naomi endured the grief of losing her own children (vv. 4-5).**

The son’s names Mahlon and Chilion are not dissimilar from two other Hebrew words, which actually mean sickly and pining or frail. Now you must assume that Elimelech and Naomi didn’t choose these names because of their similarity to these words. But it just so happens that the very names that they were given would make it possible for people to make this kind of connection. And there is every indication based on what we read here that these names may have been unintentionally prophetic because of their premature death.

Now, if the story ended at verse five and we were left there, we would have to ask two questions, namely: “Where is God in all of this sorrow?” and “What good can He possibly make out of this?” But the rest of the book of Ruth serves as God’s answer to these two questions, and it is a beautiful and mighty answer indeed, one of great joy, love, and grace. I entitled my study through the book of Ruth, “Redemption Through Bitter Providence” to capture this reality for the congregation. Not “From” but “Through.”

Consider closing the first message with a reflection on the major theological themes of this book. Namely:

1. God provides a Kinsman-Redeemer, and thus redemption for the faithful through all the bitter providence of life in this world (4:1-12).
2. God is sovereign over all circumstances – bitter and sweet (1:6; 4:13) – and He is able to weave them together according to His purpose for His glory and our everlasting joy (4:18-20).
3. God’s redemptive plan extends beyond the Jews to men and women of all nations, those individuals who take refuge in Him (4:12).
4. God manifests for us the glory of true faith and love (1:16-17).
5. God vividly demonstrates for us the beauty of a virtuous woman (4:11-15; Prov. 31:10-31). It is no accident that Ruth was placed immediately after Proverbs in the original Hebrew Canon as it was handed down to us by the prophets.
6. God gives great reward and blessing to those who love and give of themselves in kindness toward others (2:8-23).
7. God is the God of the ordinary (1-4). By that I mean both ordinary people and ordinary circumstances. He is the God of the common. Even in the midst of the dark and dramatic eras of life, God still has his people, is still working out His purposes and is often choosing to do so in places that we would regard as very unlikely. He often chooses to do so in such a quiet fashion that those who are weak in faith and believe that the dramatic and the loud events of life are the most significant are caused to wonder whether God is doing anything at all.

---

#### **Bridging From Text To Sermon**

**Textual Idea:** The Spirit describes for us the personal tragedy of Naomi as she faced the bitter providence of God.

**Sermon Proposition:** All of us endure the bitter providence or loss and grief in this fallen world .

**Interrogative:** What were the hardships that Naomi was called upon to endure?

**Transition:** The text reveals five sorrows that Naomi faced in God’s bitter providence.

Copyright © 2009 Chris Rice

#### Permissions:

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material for use as sermon or lesson notes. For such use, you may feel free to alter the wording as necessary to meet your teaching needs. You are also permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in other formats provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction and give appropriate attribution to the author. For web posting, a link to this document on [www.fearingthelord.com](http://www.fearingthelord.com) is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved in writing by the author prior to use.

For all formats other than handouts to be used in the personal delivery of sermons or lessons, please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Chris Rice. © 2009 Chris Rice. Website: [fearingthelord.com](http://fearingthelord.com)