

(For Monday, February 20, 2017) **How much sense does it make to blame God for hardship?**

*"...It is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me."*  
(Ruth 1:13 - ESV)

Naomi's declaration is typical of our reaction to life's adversities. When we are beset by problems, the most convenient person to blame is often God, since he is the source of so much. But this makes little sense. First, the Bible tells us repeatedly that, God only gives goodness to his children (See Gen. 1:31; Ps. 84:11, 107:1, 119:68, 145:9; Mt.7:11; 19:16-17; Rom.8:28; Jas.1:17; ). Secondly, if we believe that God is sovereign, then there must be a good reason for him to permit challenges to come our way. In the *Book of Ruth*, not only does God turn calamity into blessing. He brings out of this pain and suffering the grandfather of David (See Ruth 4:16-17) through whose lineage God would bring to the world his son, Jesus.

Sometimes our adversities are of our own making. Sometimes we are the target of unrighteousness. Sometimes it's as simple as "Stuff happens!" But blaming God for life's hardships is really about the least productive thing a body can do.

(For Tuesday, February 21, 2017) **How much is your word worth?**

*"May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."* (Ruth 1:17-ESV)

The person of Ruth is often perceived as analogous to the "wife of great virtue" at the end of *Proverbs*. (See Prov.31:10-31) There is little at the beginning of the *Book of Ruth* to instruct us as to what strength of character Ruth possessed. But, by the time we reach the conclusion of the story we learn just what an honorable woman she was. One of the reasons certain people's promises are worth so much is because these people have learned just how costly a broken promise can be. The man whose word is not worth much is the fool who has never learned (or is in denial regarding) the suffering caused by a broken promise. It's intriguing to understand that the same promise made by two different people will be of such vastly different value.

You and I have been promised so much by none-other than God himself. Surely, God should be able to count on his children to keep the promises they make to each other!

(For Wednesday, February 22, 2017) **Who can imagine the blessings of righteousness?**

*"So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech."* (Ruth 2:3-ESV)

Apparently, Ruth found it advantageous to glean in the field of Boaz because he was faithful to God's instructions to leave something of the harvest in the field for the poor and the foreigners of the community. (See Lev.19:9, 23:22; Deut.24:19) There seems to be little other reason why Ruth would have selected that particular field in which to glean, except that Boaz was known as an especially righteous and generous man who obeyed God's ordinances regarding the welfare of the disadvantaged. As the story unfolds, we see how God blessed Boaz abundantly for his righteous behavior. Boaz could not have known the glorious future which awaited him in the company of Ruth. Yet he persisted in his righteous actions, confident that The Lord would bless him.

As you look back on your life, can't you see the unimaginable ways in which God has blessed you? Isn't that worth our being righteous in his eyes?

(For Thursday, February 23, 2017) **Are you fulfilling your role as God's Ambassador of Kindness?**

*"And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he [Boaz] be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead." (Ruth 3:20-ESV)*

Bible scholars have long noted the (probably intentional) ambiguity of this verse. Is the kindness about which Naomi is speaking the kindness of The Lord? Or is Naomi speaking about the kindness of Boaz. (See *ESV Study Bible* footnote, p. 481, 2:20) It's worth contemplating how the kindness which is being described here is actually an act of mercy dispersed cooperatively by God and his servant. It's also instructive to think about this in our own lives. Every time you feel burdened to give a word of encouragement to someone, or to perform an act of kindness or generosity, is it really a "random act of kindness?" Or rather are you acting in cooperation with the God of Heaven and Earth to bless someone who is in need.

Hmm..."Ambassador for the Kindness of God." Now THAT'S a pretty impressive job title!

(For Friday, February 24, 2017) **Who will you bring closer to God's Kingdom today?**

"Spread your wings [that is the corners of your garment] over your servant, for you are a redeemer." (Ruth 3:9-ESV)

The word play in the original Hebrew is incredibly rich here. What I find so fascinating is that Ruth names Boaz as "Kinsman Redeemer" (the Hebrew word is *goel*), and seeks his protection in what actually amounts to a marriage proposal – except that, remarkably, **she's** asking **him**, not the other way 'round! If we are truly Christians, that means we actually participate in the redemption process by being "Little Christs" (the original meaning of the word in the early church). Every single faithful act we perform as practitioners of the faith, no matter how seemingly small, will bring this world and the people in it closer to the Kingdom of God.

Who's "Kinsman Redeemer" will you be today by modeling the love of Christ in your world?