

Title: Interpret Providence by Revelation

Text: Ruth 1: 1-6

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God's church is Bethel—the house of Bread—because Christ is our Bread of Life. He gives us life and feeds us in his house of bread, by revelation of his word through the preaching of the gospel. By revelation in his word, God commands us that above all else we are not to forsake assembling in the house of Bread. One of our greatest expressions of faith in Christ and love to our brethren is to bear with one another's error and sin and slips and falls, to continue in the faithful attendance and support of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the first steps to apostasy is the neglect of assembling to hear Christ speak in his gospel. It is always justified in a man's mind. It starts out to be temporary. But it ends in death.

Every believer has God's word, God's revelation. We are to use revelation to interpret providence, to determine what we should do. Yet, we tend to use providence to determine what we should do. We look at things going on in our lives to determine what God would have us to do—which is wrong!

Human reason interprets God's revelation by providence; faith interprets providence by God's revelation. God's revelation in his word teaches me what I am to do, no matter what God puts before me in providence. But I should never interpret God's revealed will by providence alone. That is the mistake Elimelech made.

THE TRIAL

First, we see the trial God gave in his providence—**Ruth 1: 1: Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. 2: And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah.**

It came to pass because God brought this famine to pass. Providence is everything that comes to pass. All providence is by God's sovereign hand. Sometimes, God brings a famine. In Bethlehem-Judah there was a famine in the land. But at the same time, God made the land of Moab more fruitful.

What happens when we use human reason and interpret God's revealed will by providence? Reason looks at providence and says, "Bethlehemjudah has a famine in the land. The cupboards are bare. People are starving and suffering. I've got a wife and children to feed and it is my responsibility to provide for my family. But look how fruitful Moab is. They are not suffering at all. I can feed my family easily in Moab. We can live without sacrificing any of the things we are accustomed to and maybe even have more."

Interpreting God's will by providence, reason says, "It must be God's will for me to move to Moab. We won't forsake assembling in God's house, this is just temporary—we will sojourn there. God has opened this door so we can send food back and provide *for* our brethren. Then when it is easier, when there is not so much to suffer, not so much to give up, we will come back to Bethlehemjudah." Something along those lines is what Elimelech reasoned. Therefore, he moved to Moab.

But this is how faith interprets providence by God's word. Faith says, "God's word says Moab is the place on which God's curse rests. It is outside the land of God's promise. There is no place to worship God in Moab. There is nothing but idolatry there and God is not bothering to correct them because he has no sheep there."

Faith hears God's word declare that Bethlehemjudah is in God's land of promise where he delivered us and planted us. So faith says, "Bethlehem is God's house of bread where God has established his place of worship where God promises to meet with his people. This is where God, who cannot lie, promised to provide for his people. God has revealed by his word that he will meet us one place, over the mercy seat through his high priest through the blood of the lamb. God has revealed by his word there is nothing more important than staying in God's house, with God's people, where we can assemble and worship him. I'm to teach this to all in my house. We are staying put."

God's trials in providence and God's open doors of prosperity are opportunities for the believer to deny himself. It is opportunity to teach all in our house that nothing is as important as obeying God's word. It is God providing us opportunity to teach our family that nothing is as important as being in God's house where God has established his worship. It is opportunity to teach family and friends that it is better to trust the Lord than to use providence to lean to our own understanding.

Do you see how faith interprets providence by God word, by God's revealed will? Human reason interprets God's will by providence. God says,

Proverbs 3: 5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7: Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. 8: It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

OBSTACLES REMOVED

If a child of God errs, departing from the house of bread, God will remove all the obstacles preventing us from returning—**Ruth 1: 2...And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.**

Remember, they were only planning to “sojourn” there. But they continued there. If this is the famine mentioned in Judges then it lasted 7 years. But verse 4 says, and they dwelled there about 10 years. So they “continued” there even after the famine in Bethlehem had ended.

But Naomi is God’s elect child. So if God is going to bring her back into his house then he will have to chasten and correct her by removing everything that hinders her. God did just that—**Ruth 1:3: And Elimelech Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. 5: And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.**

Elimelech’s name means “My God is King.” Elimelech failed to show he believed that. But God did not fail to show it is true. Maholon means “weakness, sickness”; Chilon means “consumption.” If God left these boys as obstacles to Naomi that is all they would have caused her. So God removed them!

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

What do we learn from Elimelech and his two sons? If lean to our own understanding, using providence to justify our rebellion, instead of walking by faith in God’s revelation, by attempting to save our lives, we will lose it. Christ said,

Luke 9: 22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. 23: And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24: For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Christ denied himself for his people. Christ suffered for his people. Christ was rejected for his people. But by losing his life for the glory of God and for the salvation of his people he saved his life and all his people.

Now, he calls his people to rest in him from all our vain works. He calls us to deny ourselves—our works, our will, our way. Christ calls us to suffer with his people and to be rejected with his people. “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”

Brethren, Christ will have no one and nothing competing for our affection. It is impossible to divide our hearts between ourselves and our wants in this world and Christ and his revealed will in his word. You cannot serve God and mammon.

REPENTANCE WORKED

God is able to work repentance in his people and make us willing to return to God’s house—**Ruth 1: 4: And they [Naomi’s sons] took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.**

Even in our rebellion, God is able to bring his will to pass. Not only was Naomi a chosen child of God, so was this Moabite girl, Ruth. It was Elimelech’s rebellion against God’s revealed will to take his family to Moab. It was rebellion against God’s revealed will for his sons to marry Moabite women. There is no excuse for rebellion against God. Yet, God ruled over their rebellion and worked it to teach Naomi and to draw his elect child, Ruth, to himself.

So now, *Naomi* is left alone with two daughter-in-laws. She has no place to worship the Lord, no brethren to help her and no way to provide for herself. By the hand of the Lord, the sweetness of Moab was now turned bitter. All she can do now is turn from trusting self and trust the Lord. The only time we really do repent from self and trust the Lord is when God works repentance in our hearts.

GOOD NEWS DECLARED

Then the Lord sent someone declaring to Naomi the good news—**Ruth 1:6:...for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.**

The Lord has visited his people. The Bread which he has freely given is Christ Jesus the Lord. Christ declares,

John 6: 49: Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness which fell from heaven, and they died. 50: [I am] the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die....51: I am the living bread which came down from heaven:...if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever:...

The bread that Christ gave is his body which he voluntarily gave up for God’s elect. He said, “This is my body which is given for you.” Christ was willing to give his life to preserve the life of his people. He paid for the offenses which his people were guilty of—“He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

Romans 7:4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

And by God's grace working in her, fruit was produced in Naomi and Ruth—**Ruth 1:6: Then [Naomi] arose with her daughters in law that she might return from the country of Moab:...7: Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.**

One daughter-in-law went back. But not Ruth. Ruth and Naomi were granted repentance from "the *country* of Moab" and faith to go to their Lord and their brethren in Bethlehem--"the *house* of Bread."

Did the Lord disappoint them? Oh, no! The Lord freely gave to Naomi in abundance just as he promised. The Lord Jesus Christ promised "whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Naomi and Ruth were led by the hand of God to their kinsman redeemer just like every elect child of God shall be led to Christ. Christ is the true nourisher, the true bread, and our life is preserved by him alone. Take time to read Ruth 4: 13-17 and see this typified.

Brethren, I cannot press upon you enough the importance of this! Our eternal Sustenance, our Bread from heaven is not something we obtain by the work of our own hand, by leaning to our own understanding. Life cannot be found in the pleasures which this world offer for a season nor in the people of this world. Christ is Life. Sheep need a Shepherd and to be with other sheep. Christ feeds us together with our brethren. He is the good and pleasant unity in whom brethren dwell together! The Lord taught that to Naomi. I pray, the Lord be pleased to teach us this.

Amen!