

I. Introduction.

II. Is your life bitter? v. 19-22

- A. Naomi makes a stirring (and bitter) entrance into Bethlehem. v. 19-21 Ex. 15:23
- B. Naomi, like many depressed people, has an overwhelming sense of loss. v. 21,3,5
It is normal to feel sad when bad things happen to us. Gen. 23:2 Jo. 11:35 Neh. 2:2ff
- C. Naomi, like many depressed people, is bitter against the LORD. v. 20b-21,13b
Isa. 45:6-7 46:8ff Eph. 1:11
 1. She correctly understands that these calamities came from God's hand. v. 13b
 2. She declares that the Almighty is against her. v. 20-21
 3. It seems that she fails to recognize the contribution of her own sin to her plight.
Gal. 6:7-8 Deut. 28:1ff Lev. 26:1ff
 4. Other biblical characters struggled with bitterness and despair. Gen. 42:36
Ps. 73:2,15 1 Ki. 19:4,10 Jonah 4:1ff
 5. How is Naomi like Job? Job 2:10 6:4 27:1
 6. How is Naomi like the nation of Israel at this time?
- D. Naomi, like many depressed people, fails to recognize God's goodness to her. v. 22
 1. The famine in Bethlehem is over. v. 6b,22b
 2. She arrived safely in her home town. v. 19a Judges 19:1ff Luke 10:30
 3. The LORD cares for widows and has made provision for them. 1:6,22 2:2 4:5
Ps. 68:5f Lev. 19:9-10 23:22 Dt. 24:19-22 25:5-6 Ex. 22:22
 4. The LORD has given Naomi someone to share her burdens. v. 22a 2:2 Ga. 6:2
 5. The LORD has saved her daughter-in-law. v. 16-18
 6. The LORD brings good out of the calamities experienced by His people.
Jer. 29:11 Gen. 50:20 Romans 8:28 Ps. 119:67,71 James 1:2ff
- E. Ruth's faith commitment to the LORD stands in sharp contrast to Naomi's unbelief.
v. 16-17 2:2,12 Ps. 63:11 Gen. 12:3 Ro. 11:1ff Eph. 2:11ff 1 Pe. 2:10

III. Application – counseling Naomi.

- A. We should have compassion for those who suffer. Rom. 12:15 John 11:35 Js. 1:17
- B. Are you tempted to be embittered against God? Eph. 4:31 Ps. 73:2,15 Prov. 3:5-6
 1. Trials can tempt us to anger, bitterness and depression. Js. 1:2ff
 2. Bitterness is dangerous. Ps. 73:2,15 Job 40:3-5
- C. Why do people get depressed? Pr. 18:14
 1. Some are depressed because of guilt over sin. Ps. 32:3-4
 2. Many feel badly because of difficult circumstances in their lives. Ps. 42
 3. Bad feelings are compounded when we respond sinfully to our trials.

4. Some feelings of depression appear to have physical causes.
 5. Will medicine solve the problem?
- D. How can you help someone who is depressed? (or yourself?) 2 Tim. 3:16-17 Ro. 15:4 Heb. 4:15
1. Remind him from Scripture of God's character (attributes). Ex. 34:6-7 Ps. 100:5
 2. Remind him of who he is in Christ. 2 Cor. 5:17 Rom. 6:1ff
 3. Help her to patiently trust in God's promises and to think long term. Heb. 12:2 Rom. 8:18,28ff Deut. 31:6 1 Cor. 10:13 Phil. 1:6 1 Pet. 1:6-7 4:12-13
 4. Remind him of God's past faithfulness to himself and others. Ps. 118:10ff 78:12
 5. Recognize present manifestations of God's goodness in her life and give specific thanks to God. 2 Pe. 1:3 James 1:17 Eph. 1:3ff Phil. 4:6-7
 6. Help him to identify the lies he is telling himself along with the biblical answers which point him back to the truth of God's faithfulness. Gen. 3:4
 - a. "God is against me." Romans 8:31-32,38-39
 - b. "God is not good." James 1:13,17 Ps. 145:9
 - c. "God doesn't care." Heb. 13:5b Isa. 49:16 Ps. 27:10
 - d. "I have every right to be bitter and angry with God." Job 38:1ff 40:1-3 42:1-6
 - e. "I need people to make me happy." Jer. 17:5-8 Mt. 11:28
 - f. "I need my circumstances to change in order to be content." Phil. 4:4-6,11-13
 - g. "This situation is more difficult than I can bear." 1 Cor. 10:13
 - h. "I have messed up God's plan for my life." Phi. 1:6 Jer. 29:11 Eph. 2:10
 - i. "No good can come of this." Rom. 8:28 Eph. 1:11
 - j. "I am no good." 1 Tim. 1:15-16 Phil. 3:9
 - k. "Perhaps I am not a Christian after all." 1 Cor. 12:3 1 Jo. 5:1
 7. Help him to be very deliberate with his thoughts – rather than listening to himself, talk to himself. Ps. 42:5,11 43:5 Phil. 4:8-9
 8. Warn him against turning to idols for comfort. Isa. 55:1-2 Jer. 2:13
 9. Help him to repent of his sinful attitude against God – bitterness, ingratitude, idolatry (misplaced desires), etc. Job 42:1ff
 10. Be a friend. Pr. 18:24
- E. Practical assignments for a person who is struggling with bitterness or depression.
1. Fill your mind with God's Word. Psalm 119:92-93 Phil. 4:8-9
 2. Pray – ACTS. Phil. 4:4-7 1 Pe. 5:7 Heb. 4:14-16 2:18
 3. Serve others. John 13:1ff 1 Pet. 4:9-11
- F. Should you expect a depressed person to immediately respond to this help? Psalm 42-43 88:1ff

IV. Concluding applications.

- A. Do you feel like God is against you?
- B. The gospel proves that God is for you and that He loves you. Rom. 5:8 Ga. 3:13 4:4-6 Col. 1:13-14 John 3:16 1 John 4:10 Romans 8:31ff Isa. 53:4-6,10-12 Phil. 2:6-8
- C. God is in control and is working all things for the good of His people. v. 22 2:1ff Rom. 8:28-32,38-39 Jer. 29:11 Phil. 3:7-8 2 Cor. 7:6 2 Cor. 5:7 4:17-18

Discussion questions

- 1. In what ways does Naomi respond sinfully to her trial (loss)?**
- 2. In what ways does Naomi fail to recognize the LORD's blessings to her?**
- 3. What does Naomi have in common with Job?**
- 4. How is Israel during the era of the Judges like Naomi?**
- 5. What would you say to someone who, like Naomi, feels that God is against her?**
- 6. Why do people get depressed?**
- 7. Into what sins can depressed people fall?**
- 8. How can you use this passage to help a depressed person (including yourself)?**