

Three Widows in Moab

Ruth 1:8-18

Last week we began our study in the book of Ruth. We discovered that Moab was a place of difficulty and desperation. It is a picture of the world, much like that of Egypt in Scripture. Dwelling in the land of Moab will always result in separation and spiritual compromise.

We need to remember that Moab was a place that despised the Lord and oppressed His people. The ways of God were not regarded in Moab. We find nothing to support any worship of Jehovah God in Moab. This seems an unusual setting for the grace of God to be extended, but that is where the beauty lies. God is gracious and merciful to all who will receive Him.

These verses describe the lives of three women, Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth. Each of us can relate to one of these women. Their lives paint a picture of all our lives. They made different choices that resulted in vastly different outcomes. I want to examine their lives and the [choices](#) they made as we consider: [Three Widows in Moab](#). You are in a position much like one of these women and it is up to you how you choose to respond to God's grace.

I. Naomi – A Woman of Compromise (8-13) – We found last week that Naomi was the wife of Elimelech. They made an unwise decision to leave Bethlehem-Judah for the land of Moab. Naomi stands as a picture of the wayward Christian, one who has known the Lord and experienced His grace, but made the choice to seek the ways of the world. These verses reveal that this is not a desirable position. Notice:

A. Her Influence (6-7) – [Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. ^{\[7\]} 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.](#) In these verses we find that Naomi had an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of her daughters-in-law. She had lived many years separated from the Lord, but there was something different about Naomi. Ruth and Orpah recognized that she may have suffered pain but her faith was not completely forsaken. She had impacted their lives. Even though her life had not been lived for the Lord, others had noticed.

- There is a profound truth we need to understand when considering the life of Naomi. We may stray from the Lord and wander from the path that He has chosen for us, but His Spirit never leaves us. Our lives may not always reflect his holiness, but the Spirit will not depart from a believer. Those around us eventually recognize our relationship with Christ. They are watching our lives. We have the opportunity and obligation to influence those who are unsaved.

B. Her Indifference (8-9) – These are troubling verses. Naomi had the opportunity to be a positive witness to those who did not know truth. She had the opportunity to point them toward the Lord. At that moment they were ready to follow her wherever she chose to go. Sadly we find that Naomi encouraged them to stay in Moab rather than going to Bethlehem to seek the Lord. In her pain and suffering she became indifferent to their needs.

- Sin never brings joy. I am convinced those Christians today, content to dwell in their Moab, have lost their zeal for the Lord. They have lost their testimony and are no longer concerned about the needs of the lost. They have met the Lord; they know what it is to experience His grace in salvation, but there is no desire or concern to share that with others.

C. Her Insinuation (10-13) – Here we find that Naomi has resigned to defeat. She has all but given up. She feels as if there is no reason to go on. Notice the state of Naomi's life:

1. She Lacked Hope (10-13a) – Naomi sought to discourage Ruth and Orpah. She reasoned that she was too old to bear more sons for them to marry, and even if she could, would they be willing to wait all those years for them to grow and mature. Naomi was implying that all hope was gone. Her life has brought nothing but pain and utter devastation. She had resigned to defeat.

- This is exactly how the adversary wants each of us to feel. He wants us to believe all hope is gone and there is no reason to live. Sin always brings consequences, many of which we had rather not face, but hope is not lost. God will chastise us for our sin. We may have to face His divine punishment, but we are never forsaken. He stands ready to forgive and to restore!

2. She Lacked Help (13b) – Naomi realized that God had removed His hand from her life. She did not charge God foolishly, but she knew that her life had brought separation. She was aware that she needed the Lord's presence if she was to overcome and enjoy victory once again.

- Many in our day have tried to make it on their own. They have walked away from the Lord and sought their own path. Some may not even realize that God has removed His hand from their lives. He is our only hope. Life will never be victorious or fulfilling apart from the presence and blessing of God. [In Him we live, and move, and have our being!](#)

II. Orpah – A Woman of Confusion (15) – Little is revealed about Orpah, but we know enough to realize that she was never fully committed to the God of Naomi. She was part of the family, but she kept her distance.

- Orpah pictures one who has been exposed to the gospel of Christ, but never submitted to His offer of salvation. She is like those who attend church, but never know Christ as Savior. They may be on the church role, but there has never been a change in the heart. Many times these will come and go. There is nothing to keep them committed to the Lord, no real relationship. This one verse reveals Orpah's desire.

A. She Sought the Old Lifestyle – [She has gone back to her people](#). Orpah had no desire for the people of Naomi. She wasn't interested in living a godly life. The demands of a holy God were more than she was willing to embrace. The lure of Moab called and she chose to return.

- Sadly this is the case for many church goers. They may attend for a while, but there has been no conversion. There has been no change of heart. Their attendance and worship is only superficial. When the world begins to beckon again, they return to the old paths. [1 John 5:4 – For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith](#). It requires faith and saving grace to overcome!

B. She Sought the Old Loyalties – [Orpah also went back to her gods](#). Naomi must've shared her faith in God, but it wasn't enough. Orpah desired the gods of Moab. She likely had heard of the righteous demands of God and wasn't willing to forsake herself to live according to the will of God. The gods of Moab pleased the flesh and that was her desire.

- How do you view Christ the Lord? Is He the object of your affection, or do you desire to serve the flesh? No man can serve two masters. There must be a choice. If you forsake the Lord, you have chosen the gods of this life.

C. She Suffered the Old Loss – Remember that Moab was a place that rejected the favor of God. They wanted nothing to do with the God of Israel. Orpah returned to live in a land where God wasn't welcome. The Bible is silent about Orpah from this point on. The last words we find of her are turning back to the old ways and to her gods. It is very likely that Orpah died lost without God.

- The book of your life is being written today. What will eternity reveal concerning you? Will this be the last page that was written with you in the presence of God, calling you to come and accept Him? The world has nothing to offer but death and destruction. You will not find the Lord's grace and merciful call living in sin. Don't let this be the day that you walk away from God for the last time!

III. Ruth – A Woman of Conviction (16-17) – Ruth had the same chance to return to Moab, but she chose a much different course. The decisions Ruth made changed her destiny. Consider:

A. She Abandoned Herself (16-17) – Moab was all that Ruth had ever known. Her extended family was there and yet she made the decision to follow Naomi to Judah. It was on this day that Ruth forsook her past as well as herself for a new beginning. Moab had brought nothing but pain and suffering. She looked for a brighter day. She was committed to remain in Judah until death.

- Each of us is born in sin with a desire to please ourselves. If we are to receive the favor of God, we must be willing to forsake the old life of sin and come unto Christ! You cannot have it both ways, but you can make the choice to go toward the Lord and His call. The Lord demands that we die to ourselves in order to live in Him. There is a much better life found in the Lord, if you are willing to make the sacrifice.

B. She Accepted the Lord (16b) – Ruth stands in stark contrast to Orpah. She chose the God of Israel rather than the gods of this world. If you are in need today, Jesus stands ready to save, but you must be willing to receive Him as Savior of your life. You must be willing to call upon the Lord to save your soul. He is the only way you can obtain redemption. There is no other way of gaining life eternal. Your good works won't do it; your church attendance won't do it; living a good moral life won't do it, salvation is of the Lord! **John 14:6 – Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

- The choice Ruth made brought great favor. In the remainder of the book we find that she gained the favor of a man named Boaz. He stood as her kinsman redeemer and purchased her to be his wife. Moab was a place of suffering and want, but Judah became a land of redemption. I can assure you, if you will forsake the old paths of sin and turn to Christ, He will save you today. He has already purchased your redemption on the cross of Calvary.

Conclusion: There is a picture of all our lives in these verses. Are you like Naomi wandering in a foreign land away from God? If so, He wants you to come home. Are you like Orpah, familiar with the ways of God, but unwilling to accept Him as your Savior? If so, He wants to save you, just as He did Ruth.

I'm glad that I can identify with Ruth. I once dwelt in the land of Moab apart from God, but He saved my soul and met my need. Has God spoken to your heart? If so, why not come and seek His help and guidance in your life?