

Ruth 1:1-5

“Sometimes The Sky Actually Falls”

I. Introduction

- A. **Date** — The events of Ruth’s life took place during the time of the Judges 14th century B.C. — 11th century B.C. But there is mention in the book itself of the genealogy of David. So it was written after the ascension of David to the throne of Israel in 1010 B.C.
- B. This was a very tumultuous time in the history of Israel and the nation often experienced a **pattern of disobedience, judgement/discipline from the Lord and repentance...**only to soon repeat the patter again.
- C. **It seems from the circumstances presented to us in these first few verses that the people were experiencing one such period of judgement in the event of a famine (evidence is how local the famine was).**
- D. **Purpose** — **The reason “Ruth” was written is to demonstrate God’s love and sovereignty in our life. God wants to show us that He is in control. Even when the events of our life seem completely out of control.**
- E. **God wants to assure us that we cannot lean on our own understanding. We must acknowledge Him...confess that He**

is God, in control, and that He is working all things together for our good...He is making our path straight.

F. And we need this kind of reminder. We need to know God is in control, has a plan, loves us and can be trusted...Because

sometimes the sky actually falls in our world. Sometimes it seems everything is against us and all of our plans have come to nothing.

G. Sometimes we feel like failures. We all experience moments when we get knocked down and question whether or not we will ever get up again. And it is in these moments a book like Ruth comes in handy. In these moments it is good to be reminded that “God has got this.”

H. That’s what God wants you and I to know, remember and take comfort in...He has our life in His hands...He has a plan...and He is never out of control

I. That plan — Is abundant life! That we might know and be like Jesus...that we might be saved from sin, know, bring glory to and enjoy God...that we might be a part of what He is doing in the world.

J. There can be a lot of rough and rocky roads along the way to experiencing God’s plans for our life.

K. Most of the Psalms were born in difficulty. Most of the Epistles were written in prisons. Most of the greatest thoughts

of the greatest thinkers of all time had to pass through the fire. Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress from jail. Florence Nightingale, too ill to move from her bed, reorganized the hospitals of England. Semiparalyzed and under the constant menace of apoplexy, Pasteur was tireless in his attack on disease. Sometimes it seems that when God is about to make preeminent use of a person, he puts him through the fire.

L. There is a lot of preaching which denies this fact now days...God always intends for you to be happy, healthy and wealthy...and if you're not then something is wrong with your faith in Him. But nowhere do we see such a promise in Scripture...nowhere!

M. At the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith...such preaching wouldn't have gone over too well in the 4th century

N. Paul experienced some rocky days in his own life...

O. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 — “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships,

persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

P. God has purpose in our suffering, we must pray for faith and grace to walk in them. None of us want suffering but all of us will experience suffering of one kind or another in this life.

Q. We live in a sin sick and darkened world. It is broken... sometimes God removes the storms and sometimes He holds us in the midst of them...but in either case His grace is sufficient, He can be trusted and His plans will succeed.

R. Daniel 3:15b-18 — But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

S. God can...but even if He won't we serve Him. We have faith in Him...we love Him...and we TRUST Him!

T. The book of Ruth is a reminder that our faith, love and trust in God are well-founded...Truly He works all things together

for our good...that we might be like Jesus and be a part of what He is doing in the world around us.

I. The Setting

- A. The family is from Bethlehem in Judea. This is a very fertile place and the name itself can loosely be translated “Breadbasket.”**
- B. God has promised the people if they were faithful to Him that He would bless their fields and give them plenty to eat. But if they were unfaithful to Him that He would discipline them by cursing their fields.**
- C. Deuteronomy 28:17, “Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.”**
- D. The land was obviously under such discipline. The famine was a localized one as there is only a short distance from Bethlehem to Moab (30-60 miles depending upon the route taken), the place Elimelech took his family.**
- E. God had promised that if the land was under such discipline and repented then He would lift the curse and once again bless the land. Elimelech doesn’t seem concerned with waiting around for such repentance and simply “jets” from the land.**

- F. It never was his intention to stay in Moab forever. He went to “sojourn” there...a word that means to embark upon a temporary stay in a country. So he wasn’t going to participate in any kind of repentance and revival...He simply wanted to get away until Bethlehem and Judea got their act together and were once again experiencing the blessing of the Lord...His plan led to disaster for her and his family.**
- G. Here is a picture of God’s sovereignty...God was going to take the tragedy of Naomi and Ruth and weave it into his plans for the nation of Israel as well as the whole of the human race.**

I. The Sky

- A. The family went to Moab to escape the famine...seemed like a reasonable plan if one is seeking to control his every circumstance rather than repent and trust God for His plans.**
- B. At first everything seems fine. Moab is a fertile place, there is food and things are moving along nicely. But then tragedy strikes as Elimelech dies leaving Naomi and two sons. Naomi picks up the pieces and finds Moabite wives for her two sons. Ten years pass and once again things seem to be moving along nicely but

tragedy strikes again as both sons die leaving Naomi, Orpah and Ruth.

C. At this point Naomi becomes the main character of the story...for a while. It is her tragedy and reaction to such that become the central theme.

D. Her sky has fallen. All of the plans she and her husband had made for their life have been crushed. Her time of testing was here. Would she respond the way Paul, Shadrach and Abednego did or would she be crushed by her circumstances and give up? **Would she have faith for a future?**

E. It was 1818 in France, and Louis, a boy of 9, was sitting in his father's workshop. The father was a harness-maker and the boy loved to watch his father work the leather. "Someday Father," said Louis, "I want to be a harness-maker, just like you." "Why not start now?" said the father. He took a piece of leather and drew a design on it. "Now, my son," he said, "take the hole-puncher and a hammer and follow this design, but be careful that you don't hit your hand." Excited, the boy began to work, but when he hit the hole-puncher, it flew out of his hand and pierced his eye! He lost the sight of that eye immediately. Later, sight in the other eye failed. Louis was now totally blind. A few years later, Louis was sitting in the family garden when a friend handed him a pine cone. As he

ran his sensitive fingers over the cone, an idea came to him. He became enthusiastic and began to create an alphabet of raised dots on paper so that the blind could feel and interpret what was written. Thus, Louis Braille opened up a whole new world for the blind--all because of an accident!

- F. All of us are going to face these moments...big and small...in our life. Moments when things don't go as planned...when we were being faithful but circumstances arise that crush us. What we do next tells the story of what's genuinely in our heart. Can we trust God for a future?**
- G. Our faith or lack of faith for God's sufficiency and plans give a testimony to the world of what we really believe about Him. Will we trust God for His plans? Can he still do something wonderful with our life? Can we ever have joy again?**
- H. This is what we are going to see in the life of Naomi...an answer to the question of whether or not she has faith for God's plans for her future. In the process life is going to get real and we are going to see her heartbreak, depression and doubts along the way.**
- I. This is no clean, sanitized fairy tale. This is real life and in the midst of it God encourages us to faith when real life knocks us down.**

I. Conclusion

- A. None of us want to face hard times and we pray that we won't. We ask God for mercy and grace so that we might be spared pain. And most of the time God chooses this for us... that we would be spared pain. But sometimes pain comes... sometimes tragedy strikes.**
- B. These times may be a result of our unfaithfulness and sin or they may be the result of the unfaithfulness and sin of others...or they may simply be a consequence of living in a sinful and broken world. But whatever the reason...they hurt.**
- C. The story of Ruth is encouragement for the moments of pain in our life...**
- D. Jean Nidetch, a 214 pound homemaker desperate to lose weight, went to the New York City Department of Health, where she was given a diet devised by Dr. Norman Jolliffe. Two months later, discouraged about the 50 plus pounds still to go, she invited six overweight friends home to share the diet and talk about how to stay on it. Today, 28 years later, one million members attend 250,000 Weight Watchers meetings in 24 countries every week. Why was Nidetch able to help people take control of their lives? To answer that, she tells a story. When she was a teen-ager, she used to cross a park where she**

saw mothers gossiping while the toddlers sat on their swings, with no one to push them. "I'd give them a push," says Nidetch. "And you know what happens when you push a kid on a swing? Pretty soon he's pumping, doing it himself. That's what my role in life is--I'm there to give others a push."

- E. The Book of Ruth is here to give us a push...so we might trust God and keep on kicking...working as though it all depends upon us as we pray knowing it all depends upon Him.**
- F. God is working all things together for our good. He makes our path straight. He has good works He has prepared in advance for us to do and creates circumstances for us to do them. He is orchestrating the events of our life to be a part of what He is doing in the world around us...if we trust Him...the book of Ruth is a wonderful encouragement when we forget such things...**
- G. The story begins with the sky falling all around Naomi...but as she certainly testifies in Heaven today...when the sky falls look up and be ready...God still has a lot of beauty and blessing yet to come...if we trust Him.**
- H. Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths."**