

# Spiritual Depression

*Book of Ruth*

By Ty Blackburn

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Ruth 2:17-23  
**Preached on:** Sunday, October 23, 2016

**Providence Church**  
2146 Buford Hwy  
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

**Website:** [www.providenceduluth.org](http://www.providenceduluth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch)

What a beautiful song. Wonderful music this morning.

I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to Ruth 2. We'll be looking at verses 17 to 23. I'm a little bit hobbled today, you may have noticed a little change in my gait. I tore a muscle in my calf on Monday night playing softball and running to first base. What good does it do to run as hard as you can when you're as slow as I am anyway. My only hope is that they throw the ball away which they did, but I was running to first base, I thought the ball hit me in the back of the leg and then I saw the ball go, as I started stumbling, I saw the ball go by the first baseline. Fell over the bag in agony but managed to crawl back to first base and I was safe and so then I was carried off the field. Jess Arnds, our associate pastor said, "Ty, you can tell Dr. Mack that you were down but not out." Anyway, praise God. He is good and makes you appreciate when you don't hurt, doesn't it? When you have things that happen and it makes you appreciate how so many of our brothers and sisters deal with all the time pain and so God is good to give us these things as reminders that we're not home. Heaven is our home.

Now, the title of the message this morning is "The Cure for Spiritual Depression." The cure for spiritual depression. Borrowed the title, somewhat actually the book by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure." It's an excellent resource and has been a blessing in my life and so help me think in terms of some of the points you're going to see this morning kind of borrowed from that title but spiritual depression. When Lloyd-Jones wrote that book in the 60s, he's a wonderful British pastor, wonderful expositor of God's word that ministered in London from 1939 to 1969 at Westminster Chapel. He wrote that book, "Spiritual Depression," and he titled it "Spiritual Depression" because he was concerned about the number of Christians, professing believers, who struggled with depression and so in his first section of that book, he remarks how when Christians are depressed, it's a terrible witness for the Gospel; when we're down and discouraged, what does that say about our Savior and our message. So he wrote that book and it's actually titled "Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure" to address this issue and interestingly, this is exactly what's happening in Ruth 2:17-23. We see Naomi who, as I've said before, is really the main character of the book. Though the book is titled Ruth, Naomi is the one in the spotlight most of the time and she is the one with whom the original audience, remember this was written to the nation Israel, we don't

know exactly when, my guess is probably between 1000 and 600 BC, written to the nation of God's people, the Jews, and they would have naturally identified with Naomi, not with Ruth. It's a little bit different for us because most all of us are Gentiles, we weren't born Jewish and so it's easier for us to identify with Ruth because we're more like Moabites in our background in that sense, in a way. But for them, they would have identified with Naomi and we've seen as we've read through the book how really she's in the spotlight.

Before we read our text, just look back with me at chapter 1 for a moment. We saw this in chapter 1 how she is the focus. Like in verse 5, "Then both Mahlon and Chilion," that's her two sons. Her husband has already died, Elimelech has died, and her sons took wives, Orpah and Ruth, verse 4, but when her sons died and "both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband." You see, no mention of Ruth. It's Naomi who was bereft of her husband and her two children. That's the main focus of the author. And he goes on to say, "Then she arose with her daughters-in-law," they were coming along, "that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard." You see, all the verbs there, third person singular, feminine; it's all "she" not "they." It transitions to "they" eventually but she's the focus. And in fact, it's her emptiness that's really the subject of the book.

We're going to see, you know, she says later in this chapter, chapter 1, "I went out full but God brought me back empty," and then at the very end of the book, the climax of the book is really verses 16 and 17 of chapter 4. This is where the whole story is wrapped up and it's not wrapped up with a love scene with Ruth and Boaz holding their baby as you might have expected it would have been, but it's wrapped up this way, "The neighbor women," 4:17, "gave him a name," that is, her grandson, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." In verse 16, "Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse." You see, Naomi has the child.

So she's the focus of the book, the primary focus. Secondly, of course, on Ruth and wondrously on what God does in Ruth's life but Naomi is, in a sense, the main character and therefore she's the one with whom the original audience would have identified and with whom we're invited to identify as well and I say that because she is a person who is characterizing the symptoms of spiritual depression. Last time, we looked at Ruth and Boaz in the field and we saw the beginning of their relationship and we saw what God was doing in that, but remember where Naomi was last time we saw her, she was dealing with being angry at God. Anger at God and so what I want us to see is that the life of Naomi in this account here in the book of Ruth is a case study in spiritual depression, among other things. A case study in spiritual depression so it provides great help for us because many of us have struggled with depression, are struggling with depression, or may soon be struggling with depression and so this passage shows us the way out.

So let's read verses 17 to 23. This is really, we're going to see in these verses the cure. We're going to spend some time fleshing out the background but we'll go ahead and begin reading at verse 17 because this is where we're going to spend most of our time this

morning in these verses. Now, here we find Ruth, that's the "she" in verse 17, chapter 2, verse 17,

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. 18 She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. 19 Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." 20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives." 21 Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" 22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field." 23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank you for the preciousness of your word. As we come to it, we come again aware of our great need. Lord, your word is that which gives us life, your word is that which sustains and continues to deepen our relationship with you which is life so we pray that by your Spirit you work in each heart, by your Spirit you would make clear to us the glory of your word and the glory of your Son. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Alright, this morning we're going to end up in verses 17 to 23; that's where we're going to focus. That's really going to be our third point and it's going to be our main point we're going to spend time unpacking, but to really see it correctly, we need to see it in context and so I've got two points before that that I want to....so there are three points, the third point is going to be our main point. But the first point we want to look at and it's all about spiritual depression, spiritual depression: the cure. The third point is going to be the cure. That's where we're going to get to. But the first point this morning is the characteristics of spiritual depression. The characteristics of spiritual depression, and I think in this passage we really see three. Now, there are more clinical characteristics of depression that you can find out there, but from a standpoint of scripturally and biblically and in this passage, there are really three things that jump out at you when you look at the text carefully, that show that Naomi was really dealing with kind of this thing that we often call depression and the wonder of it we see in the word is that like in everything else, the word of God has the answers for life's problems. We don't need...I mean, there are rare cases and there are cases where people have organic issues that contribute to some kind of clinical depression, that is, physical issues and so maybe you need to see a doctor. It's always a

wise thing to see a doctor to see if there's something going on like that, but way too often people turn to medicines and pharmacology when the answer really is the word of God and the ultimate answer. Sometimes there may be a short term need of something but the word of God is the answer and we're going to see that.

Now, the characteristics of spiritual depression, that's our first point. I think we see three. When we look at the passage more carefully, we see three things here that show us that she was dealing with depression. The first is, the first subpoint under number 1 is she demonstrates a loss of energy or a loss of initiative which is a characteristic of those who are depressed. A loss of energy and a loss of initiative. Back in verse 2 where we read, "And Ruth the Moabitess said to," well, to put it in context, they have arrived in Bethlehem from Moab, she's had her pity party with her friends and said, "Don't call me Naomi," which means "pleasant," remember; her name means "pleasant." That's what people would hear, the Jewish mind would hear, "We named our child pleasant." That's what her name meant. She said, "Don't call me pleasant, call me bitter. Don't call me Naomi," in other words, "call me Mara for the Lord has dealt very bitterly with me." So she has shared this and the next thing we know, we don't know how much time has passed since they've arrived in Bethlehem but it's Ruth who takes the initiative.

"Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.'" The omission is: why isn't Naomi the one initiating this? She's the one who should know the laws of Israel. She's the one that knows the customs that when you don't have any means of providing for yourself, God has made clear in his word that you can go and glean behind the reapers and the gleaners in the fields of the people of God. The Lord has made this provision clear in his word and Naomi should know that but she's not even thinking about that. There is no sense of energy, no sense of initiative. You can almost hear her saying when Ruth says that, "'Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.'" Almost as if, "What's it really matter? Go ahead."

So a loss of energy and a loss of initiative. The second thing that we see is a loss of interest in or concern for others. When we allow ourselves to experience sinful depression, we lose interest in other people and we lose concern for others. She's not concerned about her daughter-in-law. Now, it's interesting, you have to kind of read the whole chapter to see this work itself out, especially for those of us who are not familiar with what it was like in an agrarian society like that with the customs that they had. But she doesn't give any words of warning or concern. There are no words of gratitude, "Ruth, thank you. Thank you for thinking of this. I'm so grateful that you are willing to go out and work, even though I don't think it's going to amount to much anyway. But thank you that you're going to do it." None of that. There is nothing about instruction. "Now, this is the way you're supposed to do it, Ruth. I don't want you to get in trouble. I want you to do it the right way. You're supposed to wait until they drop things or you can glean around the edges of the fields. That's what God's word says." That's what a person who was concerned about someone would do. I mean, she's the stranger, she's the foreigner, help her, Naomi. There is no help. There is no concern because she's wrapped

up in herself. That's what happens when we are in pain and when we allow ourselves to focus on our pain, we lose sight of other people.

And you see it even as it continues because what does Boaz do when he meets her? When he meets Ruth and he talks to her, Naomi doesn't have any idea what's going on here. This is one of the really neat things is we're seeing Naomi, we're identifying with Naomi in the story, I mean, the original readers especially would have, then we don't know all that's transpiring and then suddenly it becomes real to us. When Ruth gets home, she sees all the grain she's going to bring home and then she hears who she was working with. Bam! Her circumstances change like that, but at this point they haven't changed and she is not expressing any concern for her but Boaz, when Boaz shows her the kindness in the field, remember when he says, "Hey," basically, "Ruth, don't go anywhere else. You stay in my field. You reap behind my workers. I told the men already that they should not harm you." And then after they have lunch, he tells the guys in verse 15, it says, "Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her." Well, that needed to be given; that instruction needed to be given because it was possible or likely that she would be insulted because of the nature of the poor gleaning behind the people that are trying to reap the harvest, the workers. I mean, you drop something and she picks it up. "I was going to pick that up." You can see the natural animosity that could create.

But Boaz is thoughtful about that and he gives her the encouragement, "Listen, I've told them," in verse 9, "I have commanded the servants not to touch you." Then in verse 15 he commands them. We talked about last time how in verse 9 he's actually saying a question, "Have I not commanded them?" And he hasn't really commanded them yet but it's a Hebrew idiom that's basically saying, "You can be certain that I'm going to tell them not to mess with you. You can know it. You can count on it. Have I not already done it?" It's to speak as if the future event has already happened. The greatest emphasis. So Boaz has concern for her. He knew there needed to be concern for her.

Then you see that Naomi, once she comes out and snaps out of her self-focus and the depression that she's feeling, what does she do? In verse 21, when Ruth says, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.' Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law," verse 22, "Yes, it is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field." You see, I should have been aware of the fact to tell you to watch out because anybody would be in trouble but especially a foreigner, a Moabitess. You see, there was no concern. A loss of interest and a loss of concern for others.

She had a loss of energy, a loss of initiative, secondly, a loss of interest in her concern for others and, thirdly, she demonstrated a loss of spiritual vision. She just wasn't seeing things at all the way they were. You see this in a stark contrast between Naomi's view of Ruth and her coming with her, and Boaz's view of Ruth coming with Naomi. Look at what Naomi says about Ruth. In chapter 1, she says in verse 20, when they say, "Is this Naomi? Is this pleasant, pleasant one?" "She said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the LORD has

brought me back empty." There is Ruth standing right beside her. "I went out full but now I've got nothing." She doesn't see any kind of blessing in Ruth. Now, at the end of the book, right before the passage we read earlier at the end of chapter 4, her friends are going to say to Naomi, "Ruth is better to you than seven sons." But she has no idea. She has no vision. She can't see what's right before her. And in fact, she can't see something much more wonderful than even the blessing that Ruth is for her, she can't see the hand of God in Ruth's life.

Look at what Boaz says about the fact that Ruth came with Naomi and stuck with her and left Moab when you look back at chapter 2, verse 11. He says, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." Boaz who just meets Ruth, he's just heard about her, he realizes and sees what's happened. God has plucked this lost soul from the darkest place imaginable, Moab, and has brought her into his own kingdom, the kingdom of his beloved Son, and Boaz is awed by that. Naomi has got no clue. She's not thinking about it because when you allow depression to overtake you, you don't resist it the way God intends us to. There is a loss of spiritual vision. We can't see what God is doing and what is really happening all around us.

So those are the characteristics of spiritual depression. Now, the causes of spiritual depression, our second point. The causes of spiritual depression. Now, we could say essentially I would say that if you really want to boil it down, I agree with what Lloyd-Jones says in his book, that the main cause of spiritual depression, this is for a Christian or a professing believer to be depressed or a genuine believer to be depressed, what's the cause of it? This is what Lloyd-Jones says: the main cause is unbelief. You distill it down, that's essentially it. It is a failure to believe the word of God and what it says about God and what it says about his heart, his purposes, his plan, his ways. We are only depressed because we are not believing. If we were believing, we would be characterized by joy, joy in the midst of sorrow. As Paul says, "As always as sorrowful yet always rejoicing." We go through difficulties and tribulations and we cry and we weep and yet when our hearts are set properly upon the Lord and his word, there is a joy that wells up within the soul of the one who's looking at the promises and that is our birthright. That's what we're called to be. I mean, the fruit of the Spirit, think about the fruit of the Spirit. What's the first fruit? Love. What's the second one? Joy. When the Spirit of God is within us, this is what we're supposed to be exhibiting. It doesn't mean that it's a kind of a pretend sort of mind-over-matter, power of positive thinking thing. No. No. No. It's not that. It's believing the truth. It's facing reality as it really is and, you know, what reality really is is what the word of God says about reality.

That's what's real. Not what I feel but what the word of God says so that the cause of spiritual depression is really unbelief. That's the main cause and then it has a lot of different fingers that that turns into. For Naomi, we could say that her unbelief was really expressed in anger at God. She was angry at God. She looked at her life, she looked at

her circumstances and they were exceedingly painful circumstances and that's what happens. When people are depressed and when we find ourselves in depression, it's because of pain. We're supposed to mourn with those that mourn and to come along and come alongside those that need the support and encouragement and sometimes just sit there and cry with them for a while. Yes, we're supposed to do that for one another but when we don't take our pain and our circumstances and look at it through the lenses of God's word, we misread it.

So Naomi had become angry with God. She was convinced that the Lord was against her. She told us this in chapter 1, and she not only told us this, she told her two daughters-in-law this when she says in verse 13 when they're asking to go with her, she says, this is the end of verse 13, chapter 1, "No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me." She's come to believe looking at her circumstances without putting on the spectacles of God's word, she's looked at her circumstances and misread them and she's convinced herself that God is against her and she's telling that publicly. And of course, she says the same thing when she goes to her friends in Bethlehem, "Don't call me Naomi," verse 20, "call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." Verse 21, "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" The Lord is judging me, he's punishing me, he's afflicting me. He is against me. That's what she's saying. Now, if you believe that and you let your mind dwell on that, you will be depressed. There is no other option. Well, you ought to be if you believe that was true. Praise God it's not true.

So, anger with God, and related to that, another, you know, I said unbelief, another thing that leads to spiritual depression are things like bitterness. Bitterness at other people. Anger with other people. When we don't forgive. When we don't allow God to work in our hearts and to heal us after we've been wounded or hurt. That can result in depression. You know, life is painful and even physical pain can lead to depression and part of it is there is a physiological element in it, in that if you waste all of your energy, you can waste your energy a lot of different ways: you can waste it being angry; you can waste it being anxious and fearful. You can always be anxious and always be fearful. You can waste it being bitter. You can waste it in so many ways. You can waste your energy, actually sometimes this is like not so much a spiritual issue, but when you're hurting, just physically hurting, it takes a toll on you, doesn't it? It's taxing. And so there's a physiological element and we have so much physical energy and so that if you think of your physical energy as in a bowl and you have a hole in it, how long does it take until that bowl is empty? And depression feels like that, doesn't it? "I've got nothing." Well, when you're bitter, when you're anxious, when you're angry and you're not resolving it, depression is a natural outcome but the root is unbelief. If we were trusting God, we wouldn't have that. We'd be plugging that hole.

So the causes of spiritual depression, basically unbelief, which leads right into the third point: the cure for spiritual depression. To see God, to look at God, to trust God, to believe God, that's the cure, but I want us to see it in the passage. Now this is where we're going to spend our time in looking at verses 17 to 23 because it is beautiful, the grace of

God, the kindness of God. He gives Naomi what she does not deserve. She doesn't deserve any help from the Lord. I mean, nobody does. On our best days we don't deserve it, do we? I mean, the very best day we have, we're worthy of wrath. We deserve hell. But praise God we have a Savior that has merited perfect righteousness. But she hasn't had a good day in a long time and so she certainly doesn't deserve a blessing from the Lord but she gets it anyway.

When you look at the way the author reports this, the first thing is, I mentioned earlier, he's wanting us as the reader and we put ourselves in the minds of the original audience and it helps us. In chapter 2, you know, you end up chapter 1 that she's made a statement, "the Almighty has afflicted me," and then you have, "So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest." That's the way chapter 1 ends. Now, you would expect chapter 2, verse 2 to come right after that previous verse, "And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field.'" That's the next event that's happening in the narrative but the author inserts chapter 2, verse 1, in there and he's giving us some extra information that we the reader have, that Naomi does not have. She's not thinking about this at all. "Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz."

Now, Naomi if you really pressed her and you started saying, "List all my relatives," she would know him because she knows him immediately when he's brought up later. But she's not thinking about Boaz. He's not on her mind at all. Why does the reader want it on our minds? He's creating suspense. "Wait a minute, Boaz." Remember when I mentioned this when we taught on this a while back, the name itself means "strength," Boaz. He's a man of great wealth. He's of the family of Elimelech. He is a kinsman. It really means a relative that is known. It really emphasizes the fact that she knew Boaz. It wasn't like a third cousin that you meet and you find out, "Hey, we're related. I had no idea." That's not the situation at all. You meet this one and you know him. "Oh yes, there's my in-law. I haven't seen you in a long time. How have you been?" She knows Boaz. That's what the word means. She had a kinsman of her husband, someone she knows, but she's not thinking about him but we are as we read.

He's a man of great wealth and he's of the family of Elimelech. One of the other things that's going on here that we have to help each other as we look at this to really get the full benefit of, is the original audience, Israelites living in the land with the Torah, the Old Testament law, in an agrarian society, they knew and they felt the weight of Naomi's situation. Naomi had lost her husband and had lost her sons and remember I said before, to have no man meant you had no future. You had no immediate future. You had no way to provide for yourself. It meant you had no land, no way to farm the land. But it also meant you had no long range future. You're not going to have children and the land, the inheritance had to pass down through male heirs so the land and the inheritance is gone from Naomi and it's gone, in a sense, from that whole line of Elimelech and the Jewish reader sees this and feels it. You and I don't feel it as much. We just see...in fact, we don't even see it quite the way that they did anyway because for us, I mentioned this before too, it's so easy for us to get food and we live in a land where the poorest people in



America are some of the wealthiest people in the terms of world history, of all time. We are so economically prosperous and so we can't relate to the fact that if you don't have land, you can't grow the food, pick, harvest the food, grind the food, build a fire and make the food. Do you see how hard it is just to eat? It makes me tired and hungry talking about that.

No, but it's a totally different situation and so they could see that and, "My goodness, this is terrible for Naomi and Ruth. This is awful." Then when they read that verse 1, "Wait a minute. There is a man in her extended family, the extended family of Elimelech." They would have automatically been thinking about what the Bible says about the poor and the redemption of the poor, that they can be helped through near family relatives. So that's given to us and then we watch it unfold. We watch Ruth ask Naomi, Naomi says, "Yeah, go ahead, my daughter." She goes into the field. She meets Boaz. Boaz is tremendously generous to her, praises her. We see this amazing...and the reader is thinking, "Wow! There is potential there." Have you watched a show and you see it and you're like, "There may be a spark of romance there." That's what they're reading and we probably caught that too when we're reading it, but they were thinking about it not in terms of just the romance and how wonderful it is, they're thinking life and a future are possible.

So then we see Boaz's amazing generosity to her where he tells the guys, "Make sure you drop some stuff. Drop a lot of stuff." And then in verse 17 it says, "she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley." This was an extraordinary harvest for one day's work, for one person gleaned like that. It was unheard of. I mentioned before it was probably like more than a five gallon bucket of just the kernels of grain. Probably weighed about 30-35 pounds.

So when she walks in, Naomi who has been at home probably still continuing her pity party, not thinking about Ruth, not wondering about her like she should, "I wonder if she's okay? Is she safe?" Ruth walks in the door and look at verse 18, "She took it up and went into the city," here she has worked all day, carrying this 30-35 pound thing home, comes in the door, walks to the table and sets it down. Look what it says in verse 18, "her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned." The text emphasizes it. They could have started a dialogue. No, the author wants us to know she saw what she had gleaned because the author knows that ephah, and the original audience would have known, "Man, that is an incredible harvest for one day."

She saw what she had gleaned and not only that, look what Naomi is experiencing. She's hopeless, she thinks there's no future, she's got no energy, she's got no concern, she's got no vision, and yet here comes this amazing harvest, bam, on the table. Her eyes are processing it. "What in the world?" She's thinking, "How could this happen." And then the next thing you know, look at verse 18, "She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied." From a pocket, Ruth pulls out some bread, some cooked grain, leftovers. Naomi is not going to have to grind and make her meal that night, wait another hour until it's done. Here it is, she's eating right now. The Lord's kindness just pouring out on her.

Now, this is where she starts looking up because what's happening is she has lost her spiritual vision, she's depressed, but God will do this many times and he does it more than we realize. In the midst of our self-focus, lack of vision, just looking at myself, looking how bad things are, the Lord will break in to our pity party and show us his glory and that's what he does.

So she in verse 19, "Her mother-in-law then said to her, 'Where did you glean today and where did you work?'" As a matter of fact, it's two questions in a row. You can kind of hear the excitement. I mean, the first question was enough, wasn't it? "Hey, where did you glean today?" Wait. Pause. Let her answer. No, it's like this, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Please tell me quickly!" And then before she even gets a chance to answer, "May he who took notice of you be blessed." This joy has come into her heart because of this obvious token of God's kindness to her.

And look at how the author says this next part, it's so wonderful to see this. Now, what did she ask? She asked, "Where did you glean today and where did you work?" Two times she said "where." But what is the answer? Whom? And it's repeated twice because the author tells us ahead of time, he doesn't just jump right into the...you know, Ruth could have said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." No, look at how it is worded, "So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said," and look, look at the repetition, the redundancy, "So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, 'The name of the man with whom I worked today.'" Do you see how that just...redundancy, it's kind of stopping the flow of the excitement of the conversation and focusing your attention on the fact it's not where, it's who. That's the focus. And the NASB gets this right, I didn't check all the other translations to make sure, but the way the word order in the Hebrew, the last word in Ruth's sentence is "Boaz," and like I said earlier, we know, right? We know where she worked. We've seen it. We know Naomi has no idea what's going on about this guy Boaz and so the author is allowing the suspense to build. Even, "Ruth, tell her. Tell her. Tell her." That's kind of the effect.

"So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, 'The name of the man with whom I worked today is,'" you can almost hear a little pause. I'm sure she didn't do this but it might have felt like that to Naomi. Naomi's, "Who did you work for?" And we're saying that, the readers, "Boaz." Boaz.

And look at her reaction, "Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.'" She shouts out basically, "May he be blessed. May Boaz be blessed of the LORD," and I think she's basically saying of, "the LORD who has not withheld his kindness." But Boaz also. It's a little bit of an ambiguity about it. "Who has not withdrawn his kindness." Well, either way, if it's Boaz, it's also the Lord so I think she's really saying the Lord. She's praising Yahweh that he has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead. She's overwhelmed.

And it's interesting that she says "to the living and to the dead." What's in her mind? What we see here and I think the original reader would have seen this as well: they feel

the tension of the fact that the line of Elimelech is at a dead end. Who's dead in this verse? Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion. Elimelech and his two sons. Naomi sees God, even though she has no idea what's going to happen yet, she now with hearing the name Boaz, whatever she knew about Boaz from before, the kind of man he is suddenly comes rushing in. She's probably calculating in her mind his age. He's a bit older because remember, he called her daughter but he's not too old. And in her mind she's realizing, "Wait a minute," it's like it's all coming together in her mind though she's not going to explain all of it completely to Ruth yet. In her mind, a plan is formulating. "God is going to address all of the problems that I have. He's concerned about the living. He's keeping us alive." Remember, that 30 pounds or 35 pounds of grain was a good two week supply. In fact, I read something this week, it was basically like ten days' wages for a Babylonian worker at that time. A day laborer, what she took home was like ten days' wages. That's why Naomi was shocked. But she now sees God is up to something big. Suddenly she sees the Lord and she has a restoration of hope.

Now, let's think about this. Let's draw back from this and think: what's the cure for spiritual depression? I said it's to see God, to look at God, it's to trust God. If the cause of spiritual depression is unbelief, the cure is belief. But there are three subpoints under the cure for spiritual depression that I want to talk about that we need to lay hold of in seeking the cure for spiritual depression.

The first is to do what Naomi does. The first thing we need to do is we need to see the hand of God in our circumstances. See the hand of God in our circumstances. Clearly, she sees the hand of God. She immediately upon seeing the load of grain says, "May he who took notice of you be blessed." She's invoking God's blessing upon the one who has done this extraordinary act of kindness. And then when she says in verse 20, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead," the Lord's kindness, the Lord's chesed is upon us. The Lord's hand, he has been guiding this. That's what she sees. You have to see the hand of God at work in your life if you're going to not be depressed.

Now ironically, this is one thing Naomi had pretty well all along, didn't she? She felt like the Lord was afflicting her. Now, it's instructive though to consider this for a moment because many Christians suffer from depression, anxiety and fear because they don't think the hand of God is at work in their lives. They have a low view of the sovereignty of God. And if you don't believe that God is in control, you probably ought to be depressed. Isn't that sad?

I can remember my call to ministry, one of the key moments in my call to ministry was I was at a funeral for a girl I went to high school with, her younger sister was killed in a car wreck and I was in college. Patti and I were at this funeral together for this friend that her sister was killed in a car wreck and I remember the pastor, my pastor of the church I went to, preaching the message and I was sitting in the congregation and he said, "Listen, don't blame God for what happened to this young lady. God had nothing to do with it." And I remember thinking at the time, "Well, how did it happen if God had nothing to do with it? Are you saying that like God was busy with something else? He wasn't paying

attention and Satan came in and just killed her?" I thought, "That doesn't sound like what I read in the Bible." And I remember thinking, I had a pastoral heart for the other people there that were there and I was thinking, "This family doesn't need to hear this. They need to hear the truth that God is on the throne; that we may not understand his purposes but he is on the throne." That, as Ted mentioned earlier, not a sparrow falls from heaven without his knowledge; that he has a purpose for every single thing. Every molecule in the universe is under his governance, active, watchful care.

So you have to see the hand of God in your life but we see from Naomi that's not quite enough. The second thing you have to see and this is what she sees or she sees it more clearly, you have to see the heart of God in your circumstances. You have to trust the heart of God. You have to see the hand of God in your circumstances, you have to trust the heart of God in your circumstances. See the hand of God, trust the heart of God. She sees here the Lord's kindness. He has not withdrawn his kindness. This is that key word we've mentioned before, it's the Hebrew word "chesed" which can be translated "lovingkindness." It's kind of a combination of love, mercy, grace, tenderness, help, all those things in one. It's the fact that God as the greater who has no obligation to help those who are lesser and in need and in misery, that God out of the goodness of his heart is moved to action toward those in misery. It's the character of God. She has her eyes, you see, not just on the hand of God but on the heart of God and she trusts that God's heart is now toward her. She now sees his kindness toward her.

Now, remember before, we even talked about the fact that she believed in the kindness of God before because she prayed it for her daughters-in-law, "May He show you His chesed," back in chapter 1, verse 8, "May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me." Her problem was she just didn't think that God was kind to her. "He's kind but he's not kind to me." That's not trusting the heart of God. Trusting the heart of God is to say that, "The God who is sovereignly ruling over everything is kind to me because I'm in Christ. I'm his. He's kind to his."

So when you apply it to your life and your circumstances, even though I can't make sense out of my circumstances, his heart is kindness and blessing. He's told me in Romans 8:32 that everything that happens in my life, if he didn't spare his own Son but he delivered him up for us all, he didn't hold back Jesus but he delivered him up, if he gave that which was most precious to him, Paul says, how will he not together with Jesus as a part of the package of what he gives you in giving Jesus, how will he not together with him freely give you all things? If he has given you the most incredible gift, can you doubt that he's only going to give you good things? Paul says, "No. If you understand what he's given you in Christ, it's unthinkable that God would give you anything other than that which is good and best." So applying that means that even though this circumstance is painful, even though this circumstance, I can't see any good in it, when I apply it and I look at the heart of God through the word of God, I say, "Yes, this is best because my Father knows best and he always does what is best."

So it is see the hand of God, trust the heart of God, but then there is one more step that we see in our passage. When she says, verse 20, "May he be blessed of the LORD who

has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said to her, 'The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.' This first word translated "relative" means "he is close; he's near." We would use, "He's a close relative." Actually, I think the NAS kind of misses it a little bit here. It's hard because these words have a lot of overlap but really it would be better to say, "Naomi said to her, "The man is our close relative, he is one of our redeemers." The man is our close relative, he is one of our redeemers. He's a near member of the family. We already knew he was a member of the family of Elimelech, now she's saying, "Hey, he's close in the family." All of the household of Elimelech is gone. Maybe this is a first cousin or a second cousin, or it's a first cousin once removed, but he's close.

And then she says, "Because he's a close relative, he's one of our redeemers." That's speaking...the first one was about relationship, the second is about responsibility. He is one of those who might have the responsibility of redeeming us according to the word of God. That is, the laws of redemption were that if you were a close relative and your family was in distress, the Hebrew word here is the word "goel," the verb is "gaal." But "goel" is "a one responsible to redeem, that had the responsibility of buying back or helping a family member in great need or distress." In Leviticus 25:25, we're told that when a family would have to sell their field because of financial hardships, they sell the field and they no longer have a way to...they sold the field in a moment of poverty, they weren't able to get the money back and now the field belongs to someone else, a close relative can go in and buy that field, pay the redemption price so that they can have the field back because God has an interest in keeping the inheritance, the plots of land, along the family lines.

So when she says, "He is one of our closest relatives, he is one of our redeemers," she is showing us, she's tipping us that she has formulated the plan. "This is our way out." And what she's doing though, is she's expressing faith. She's looking to God's provision and God's help the way God has ordained and that's what we have to do. The third point is: we should seek the help of God. You see the hand of God in your circumstances; you trust the heart of God in your circumstances; and you seek, actively seek the help of God in your circumstances. This redeemer, this idea that God had provided that the close family member would come in and redeem the field and we're also going to see in Deuteronomy, we're told, we'll talk about this later, that he could then marry her and continue the line of the family; save the family line and the inheritance; Levirate marriage. But this idea of the redeemer, the near kinsman, the Lord, such an amazing thing what God is doing here in picturing to us what salvation is.

The other thing that a goel, a kinsman redeemer could do, they could buy you back out of slavery. If a person became poor and had to sell their land and then they were still poor and to eat they sold themselves into slavery, they would remain a slave until the year of jubilee which could be 50 years, it was between, if you sold yourself early on remain a slave all that time but if one of your near kinsman wanted to come and pay the redemption price, they would buy you back, not as their slave, they would buy your freedom. That's what the goel did. But it had to be a near kinsman that had the obligation.

So Naomi is putting her hope in God's plan to send a near kinsman and what we really see here is the beauty of how God sends help. First of all, it shows us that God is a helper. Job 19:25, when Job was in his misery, he's kind of a parallel to Naomi in many ways. Although he started out good and it went bad, Naomi must have started out pretty good when her husband died because I think that's how Ruth got saved. But anyway, that's another story. But Job started out good in chapter 1 and 2, and then he struggles the rest of the book until God shows up. But in chapter 19, verse 25, when he's being accused by his friends basically, they're saying, "Job, come clean. What is it that you've done? We know you've sinned to bring all this on yourself." Job at some point finally in exasperation toward them says, "I know that my Redeemer lives. I know that my Goel lives. And He will come and take His stand upon the earth." He's talking about God and he's seeing God as his kinsman who will come and defend his honor at some point and take his stand and defend him. And of course, the Lord does that in a beautiful way at the end of Job when he comes and he first of all deals with Job and then he tells Job's friends, "You guys better ask Job or I'm going to kill you. You'd better ask him to pray for you because you deserve to die." That's pretty good vindication. The Lord came down and because it's God's character, his chesed, his kinship, to come down, to come to the aid and to come to us. And then, of course, we can see how this was really just picturing Jesus Christ.

Turn with me to Hebrews 2:14. How wonderful it was for the apostles when they were just continuing to marvel in what Jesus had done on the cross and the resurrection and they were beginning to see more and more and more how all of the word of God pointed to this point. Everything from Genesis to Malachi pointed in so many wonderful ways to what Jesus would do.

Chapter 2, verse 14, the author of Hebrews says, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Verse 17, "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." Do you see that? He is our near kinsman. Because we share in flesh and blood, to save us, to redeem us, he came and took on our flesh and blood and became our flesh and blood relative, and he experienced all the temptations that we experience so that he could come to our aid; so that he could be our ready help, our kinsman redeemer; so that he could come to us in our circumstances. And not only in saving us when we trust in him from the penalty of sin, but he continues to come and be our Advocate and our Comforter and our Counselor in whatever circumstance we find ourselves. Chapter 4, verse 15, the author of Hebrews says he is able to sympathize with us. He feels with us. It's the nature of God to come to us in our pain, in our agony, to meet us at the point of our need, to feel it with us, and to lead us out of it.

So what Naomi is looking at is showing us the pattern. When you see the hand of God in your circumstances and you trust the heart of God in your circumstances, look for the

help of God. Look for God to actively meet with you. Seek him with all of your heart and to realize that he really cares. He cares so much he came to experience everything we've experienced so that he could come to you and could say, "I understand. Follow me." That's amazing.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we thank you for the wonder of what you've done for us in Christ. We thank you that you would not leave us in our misery, our self-inflicted misery and our sin, but you made a way for us to come into the very family of God. And Lord, we're thankful that you don't continue to leave us in our misery because we continue to put ourselves in circumstances and situations through our own foolishness, our unbelief, and we find ourselves miserable at times, Lord, in anguish and in pain. We're so thankful that we have a Savior who when he came to the earth was called a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, that his whole life, he experienced sorrow upon sorrow so that he could come to those in sorrow and bring joy. Lord, help us to love and treasure Jesus Christ. We pray for those that are here that have not trusted him, that today they would turn from their sins, turn from looking to their own righteousness, their own efforts, and put all of their hope and all of their trust in what Jesus Christ did at Calvary on the cross, taking our sins in his body that we might die to sin and live to righteousness for by his stripes we are healed. And Father, help us to be people who though we experience the pains of life, the very real sorrows and troubles of life, may we be people who are more than conquerors, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing because of our great Savior. We pray in his name. Amen.*