

God's Hand is Against Me (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] So we have a fairly heavy subject this morning. So I thought we would start with maybe a couple of chuckles.

Maybe a little balance. I don't know if that's balance or not. Global recession. You know, the recession has hit everybody really hard. My neighbor got a pre-declined credit card in the mail. That's how bad it is. CEOs are now playing miniature golf. ExxonMobil laid off 25 congressmen. If the bank returns your check marked insufficient funds, you call them and ask if they meant you or them.

McDonald's, home of the quarter pounder, now selling the quarter ounce. Parents in Beverly Hills fired their nannies and learned their children's names.

My cousin had an exorcism but couldn't afford to pay for it, so they repossessed her. It's bad, isn't it? A truckload of Americans was caught sneaking into Mexico.

[1 : 13] A picture is now only worth 200 words. It's getting bad. And finally, a friend of mine was so depressed thinking about the coronavirus, the economy, wars, jobs, his savings, Social Security, retirement funds, etc.

He called the suicide hotline. He got a call center in Pakistan. And when he told them he was suicidal, they got all excited and asked if he could drive a truck.

I'm sorry, it's bad, isn't it? It's a hard time. I thought we needed a chuckle before we get into reality. Why do bad things happen?

Why do bad things happen? Cancer. Loss of a job. A pandemic. Or maybe even more tragic, the death of an innocent child.

Why do bad things happen? Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a bestseller back in 1980 called *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

[2 : 25] Still a renowned bestselling book. 40 years later. He asked the question, if God exists and is fair, how can he allow an innocent child to die?

See, he had gone through that experience with his own son who had a degenerative disease at three years old and was not going to live long. And so he wrote out of his own experience. So he felt the pain of that and wrote, how can God allow an innocent child to die?

Well, he came up with three options, three possibilities. One, that God is just. And he gives people what they deserve.

I didn't rattle well with him. Second option is that God is cruel. And he gives people what they do not deserve.

That didn't seem right to him either. So he had a third option, which is where he settled that God is actually kind. God is good. He is kind. But he is not all powerful.

[3 : 43] He cannot prevent evil. This is where he settled that God cannot do everything. So do any of those three options give you comfort or hope?

No. The Bible, and particular stories like Ruth, give a different answer about who God is and why bad things happen.

John Piper writes about Ruth. That it is a story that shows how God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

It's a story for people who wonder where God is when one tragedy after another attacks their faith. It's a story for people who wonder whether a life of integrity in tough times is even worth it.

And it's a story for people who wonder where God is. It's a story for people who can't imagine that anything great could ever come of their ordinary lives of faith.

[4 : 44] See, Ruth here in one, which I mentioned, is a prologue. It sets up everything that follows. It establishes for us the ruin of Naomi, the devastation that she experiences, the five dark

providences that come across her path.

And how I'd like to approach this is to answer three questions. First of all, when did this happen? Secondly, what is it that happened? And then finally, importantly, why did it happen?

Why? So let's look at the first factor, when this happened. We're told in verse 1, in the days when the judges ruled. So in the dismal days of the judges.

Why do I say dismal? Well, the book itself characterizes its time period as, you can read the very last book of the, excuse me, the very last verse of the book of Judges and find this statement.

That in those days, during the judges, there was no king in Israel. And everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

[5 : 59] This was what characterized those days. They were dismal. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. It was a self-focused time. It was a man-centered time, not a time characterized by people who followed God or trusted God or feared God.

So there's no king during this time. There's no leadership. This is right after a time when Moses had led. And then after Moses, Joshua had led.

And so the book of Judges even begins with the phrase, in those times when after Joshua had died. And so there was no leader.

There was a vacuum, a void. It was a spiritually dark time that had really very few people of faith. In fact, the whole book is a cycle, seven cycles of going through these various judges.

It would start with a time of people's unfaithfulness and rebellion against God, which would lead to a judgment of God. God would give them over to an enemy people, Moab being one of those people at a certain time.

[7 : 14] Then the people would repent after suffering from this judgment. They would repent. God would hear their prayers and rescue them by means of one of these judges.

So Ehud and Samson and Deborah, some of these various judges that would rise up and rescue them.

And then they'd go back into the cycle again, seven times of rebellion, then judgment, then repentance, then rescue. That was the characteristic of the times.

So imagine the spiritual climate of the times of the judges. There were not many people of character. It was a difficult time to remain faithful.

Why be faithful? No one else is faithful. Just go along with everybody else. Everybody's out for themselves. Sound familiar? It was a continual repetition of unfaithfulness.

[8 : 14] But in the story of Ruth, we find that there are some who do honor the Lord. There are some who are people of integrity. And this man, Boaz, stands out as one of them.

That even in these times, he's a generous, kind, gracious, careful, a man of integrity. And then we see the integrity, in fact, the extraordinary character of this woman named Ruth, who was not an Israelite believer, but a Moabite.

And we'll get into that later, where her heritage comes from. A little bit scandalous past, Moab. So here's the times that are set.

So just recognize that that's the timing of when all this happens. It's already a dark time. So factor two, that's when it happened. What is it that happened? And what we have in the first five verses of Ruth 1 is a characterization of five dark shadows of providence.

They're listed in quick succession. So verse one, first of all, we see it was when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. Shadow number one, a famine.

[9 : 32] Economic depression, in other words. Economic depression. And what's ironic is it's famine that's in the promised land.

This is the land of fruit and milk and honey and all that good stuff. It's a famine in the promised land. But even more specifically, remember where these people live.

They live in Bethlehem, which means house of bread. And so it's a famine in the house of bread. No bread in the house of bread. So that's the first one.

Famine meaning hunger, which means what's an economic depression? It means there's no work, no income, no money. Sound familiar? Now in the Old Testament, there were times of famine.

Abraham went through a famine. Isaac went through a famine. Joseph went through a famine.

These were typical times that happened in generations. Each of those guys moved away to another place while the famine happened.

[10:35] But part of the problem with the famine in that kind of situation of economic depression is the haves, quote unquote, exploit the have not. Those that have then raise the prices or exploit from the poor during this time of instability and insecurity.

So shadow one, economic depression. Shadow two, second part of verse one, the man, famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem and Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

So shadow two is a forced relocation. They're uprooted from the promised land and forced because of the famine to go to a foreign place. Moab is east of the promised land on the other side of the Dead Sea.

It was actually the other side of the Dead Sea, a very fertile area of land. Where they lived in Bethlehem, they were a bit on a slope. And so they would experience, you know, the way that the tropical, or not tropical, but the way that the seasons happened.

It would often be times of no rain and famine. So they're forced to leave. They leave their home in order to find work, in order to find food.

[11:55] They're leaving the known for the unknown. They're leaving the promised land to go to another land. They're leaving their friends, their tabernacle, a place that they have known all their lives and going to now, a whole new place, new people, new culture, the unknown.

And to a land, really, where in Moab was one of the enemies of Israel. So that's a little bit scary as well.

But that's where the food is. That's where the work is. That's where they go. Shadow number three. Personal loss. We see in verse three. So we see in verse two, the names are important, by the way, in this book.

The name of the man was Elimelech, which means Eli, my God, Malak, king. My God is king. So in a time of no kings, my God is king.

Naomi, which means pleasant. The names of her two sons were Mahlon, sickly, and Kilion, pining. Not real positive names for these kids.

[13:01] Perhaps they were... Remember, they got their names when they were born. They were often situated... And remember that Naomi will make a big deal about her name. Don't call me Naomi.

Call me Marah, right? So names are significant in this book. So he gives us the names. They were Ephrathites. They were from Bethlehem. In other words, they were not only from Bethlehem, but they were in the portion of Bethlehem, which was where David was born in Ephrathah.

Also where Rachel, the wife of Jacob, died. So they're there.

But verse 3. But Elimelech, my God, king, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. So shadow 1, economic depression.

Shadow 2, forced relocation. Shadow 3, personal loss, the death of her husband. Her husband, Elimelech, dies. He is her security.

[14:02] He is her provider. But, as the verse tells us, she's not all alone. She still has her sons. In fact, there's a glimmer of hope. As we're told in verse 4, that these two sons took Moabite wives.

The name of the one, Orpah, which means gazelle. Maybe she was quick. And the name of the other, Ruth, which means friendship.

And she's going to give a whole new meaning to what friendship is in this book. Friendship. And they lived there about 10 years. So we see there is personal loss, the death of her husband.

But she still has her two sons. The sons marry. There's hope of children. There's hope. Then we come to verse 5.

Where the personal loss is compounded. They lived there about 10 years. Verse 5. And both Mahon and Kilion died. So that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

[15:08] Personal loss compounded. Death of not one, but both of her children. And actually the word there, she's left without her two sons.

Actually the word is not sons. The word is children. And notice it says woman. It doesn't say Naomi. It says the woman. It's just kind of to kind of paint a stark, dark picture.

The woman. She's just a woman. She's lost all identity. No husband. No sons. No future. Death of both sons.

Imagine this. After 10 years. There's hope of this marriage and children coming. After 10 years. Both sons die. And so does her hope. Was this some cruel joke of God?

Give hope and then yank it out from under her? She's lost her husband. Now she loses both sons. Devastating blow.

[16:07] Naomi was not a wife. Now she's a widow. She was a mother. Now she's motherless. And in Israel and in that culture that was everything. That was identity. Remember Sarah suffered from being barren.

It was seen as a curse from God. Certainly not a blessing. It was a depriving of God. To be a widow. To be motherless.

And then just to kind of add to it. The end of verse 5. Not only is it a time of economic depression. Forced relocation. Personal loss of the husband.

Personal loss compounded. Death of both children. But there's the impact of this whole thing. All this weight coming. The end of verse 5. Both Malon and Kilion died so that the woman was.

Watch this. Left without. Left without. Her two sons. Bereft. Alone.

[17:06] She's without. He's painting the picture of just devastation. She is left without.

Literally left behind without anything. Deprived. Of her husband and her children. Which means. All the men in the family are gone. And that's her security. All legal basis she has to. Any land. Any inheritance. Are gone. That culture of women could not.

They could do a lot of things. But legally they could not. Make those. She couldn't sell land. She would have to find a male. In her family. To help her go through this. Just the way it was then.

I'm not saying it's right or not. Just the way it was then. She's bereft. The impact. What kind of impact did this have on her? Look at her. Look at what she says down in verse 13.

[18:08] As they return. To the promised land. And she's talking to her. Daughter-in-laws. To not come with her. She tells them in verse 10. Excuse me.

Verse 12. Turn back my daughters. Go your way. For I'm too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope. If I should say I have hope. I have no hope. Even if I should have a husband this night. And should bear sons. Would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? And wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. No my daughters. For it is exceedingly bitter to me. For your sake. That the hand of the Lord is gone against me. What's the impact? Bitter. It is exceedingly bitter to me. God is against me.

And then again in verse 20. As the women greet her. As she comes back to Bethlehem. In verse 20. She said to them. Do not call me Naomi.

[19:02] Pleasant. Call me Marah. Bitter. Call me bitter. For the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full. But the Lord. It's the Lord's fault.

The Lord. Excuse me. Has brought me back empty. I went full. Husband. Two sons. Come back. No husband. No sons. God has done this. To me.

I'm bitter. So Naomi is devastated. We can feel that. I mean you can sense it in her language. And we can have compassion with that. We can have empathy with that.

Well yeah. That would be devastating. It's devastating to suffer one loss. The loss of a husband. The loss of a spouse. Then the loss of children. Loss of future.

Loss of. That's. I mean is God cruel? Maybe what Rabbi Kirshner said. Option two is God is cruel. That's what it sounds like.

[19:58] This is. This is. I mean this is reality. The Bible is not painting a favored picture. It's painting reality. And this is how she feels. Is she inappropriate? Is she.

How can she. Well she's just real. I actually like her. I don't know if I'd like being around her. But I like her. Because she's genuine. She's not putting on a fake smile. She's not.

She's not just. Well you know. Get back to Jerusalem. Yeah everything's just great. Dying inside. No she lets you know. And she lets you know. Who she blames. She's devastated.

She's lost everything. She's bitter. Angry. Despairing. Without hope. So what do we do with all this? That's what happened. Why.

Did it happen? Why? What I want to present to you here. Is two distinctive truths to remember. How do we trust God.

[20:54] And how do we trust in God's goodness. Even in dark times. When the dark shadows of providence cross our paths. When we experience economic depression.

Forced relocation. Loss of jobs. Loss of income. A pandemic. Health loss. When tragedy after tragedy seems to cross our path.

What do we do with that? How are we to think about these things? What is God doing? What is his purpose in all of this?

Does he have a purpose? Or is it just kind of up for grabs? Does God just kind of leave us to ourselves? From time to time? What do we do?

So I would like us to think about two truths. Two promises in the scriptures. That we can hold on to in these times. Because this is what scripture teaches.

[21 : 53] And this is what the book of Ruth is going to teach us as well. Truth number one. That in every dark providence. In every dark providence.

God will prove himself good. He will prove himself good. So we look at this.

Who's responsible for all of this tragedy? Is it simply fate? It's just, yeah, what happens? It's fate. You know, nothing can do about it. No, maybe it's karma.

It's karma. Karma comes around. Comes around. You had your good times. Now you're getting your bad times. It's coming around. A lot of people believe in karma. Maybe it's just chance. You know, it's up for grabs.

It's chance. Bad luck. Got good luck. You got bad luck. Is there such a thing as luck, by the way? If you're a believer in the scriptures. Is there luck? I'm not sure.

[22 : 50] Maybe. Maybe. Who's responsible? Maybe God's punishing them for sin. Maybe it's a sin to leave the promised land.

Maybe they didn't have enough faith. Oh, they should have had more faith. Shame on them. They didn't have enough faith. Wait out for the food. Yeah, you can't find that in the scriptures. You got Abraham going to Egypt.

You got Isaac going to Gerar. You got Joseph going down to Egypt. In fact, God is even orchestrating that one.

Whereas Joseph's down there in order to help them through a famine. So no, I don't buy that. That it's a judgment for leaving the promised land. What about the two sons marry foreign wives?

Ooh. And Moabites. Ooh. You know where Moab comes from? Lot. Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

[23 : 49] Remember who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah? That Lot. Remember? And then after he fled from Sodom and Gomorrah and his wife turned to a pillar of salt. She got a little seasoned.

Sorry. He had no wife. And then he had two daughters and there was no future for them. So what do they do? They get him drunk and have children by their father, incest.

This is the background of Moab. The first son of Lot was Moab. And became competitors and enemies with Israel.

So is God judging them for marrying foreign wives? Is this bad? By the way, in this book of Ruth, there's going to be other scandalous names that are mentioned later on.

Names like Tamar. Tamar. And you will find in Matthew 1, the genealogy of Jesus.

[24 : 55] There's actually four scandalous names in the genealogy of Jesus. Not only Tamar. And then a harlot from Jericho.

I can't remember her name. Rahab. And then there's the one that's not even mentioned by name in the genealogy. The one of Uriah.

The wife of Uriah that David stole. Right? And committed adultery with. No, I don't think God's punishing them for marrying foreign wives.

What's the cause? What is the cause of all of this bad stuff that happens? Well, let's listen to what Naomi thought. Naomi's a believer. She believes in Yahweh.

And so she says in verse 13, you know who did this? It is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me.

[25 : 56] Yahweh is against me. Not just the Lord. It's Yahweh. She uses the term. See, it's, look at that. L-O-R-D capitalized. It's Yahweh. Yahweh. It's the distinctive revelatory name of God.

The one who rescued them out of Egypt. That God. Yahweh. The personal God that walks with them. Did it. And again, verse 20. She says it.

She gives another name. It's the Almighty. Do not call me Naomi. Call me Marah. For who? For the Almighty. El Shaddai has dealt very bitterly with me.

God is against me. God has brought bitterness into my life. It is God. The Almighty. The All-Powerful. The Sovereign God.

What does Rabbi Kushner say? Well, God's not all-powerful. He's kind, but he just can't. He can't. You know, there's nothing he can do. He's like an impotent grandfather. He just, there's not a lot he

can do. He wishes he could rescue you, but he can't.

[26 : 59] He just doesn't have the power. Satan's too powerful. No, that's not what Naomi believes. No, he's Almighty. Oh, he does whatever he wants.

And there's no stopping him. If he's against you, you're done. You're toast. Ask the Egyptians. He's toast.

He's the Almighty. But here's the promise of Scripture. In dark times, God will prove himself good. Here's Naomi, who is so bitter and angry. And she's going to be wrapped up in this for a while, because she's not even going to see the good that God puts in her life. She's so wound up in her despair and her depression and her bitterness.

She can't see any good. Her husband's gone. Her children are gone. Her future's gone. Her security's gone. She's done. Let me just go and die. And daughter-in-law, don't even come.

[28 : 06] You don't want to be near me. God's cursing me. You don't want to be near me. There's a story that starts with there's no king.

And yet the husband of Naomi's name is Eli, my God, Malak, king. My God's king. We don't need no king.

God's our king. That's the way God intended it. Remember, when he brought a king, it was people who wanted to be like other nations. God is king. And then, so it starts no king, right?

Time of the judges. And it ends, what's the last word in the book of Ruth? David. Oh, David. That sounds familiar. I think I've heard of that guy.

He might be kind of important. Especially in relation to king. Okay. He proves himself good.

[29 : 08] This whole story leads to David. It's a little background of, you know, poor Harvey.

There's the rest of the story. Heard about David. Did you hear about how it almost didn't happen?

Naomi is deprived of her two children here in verse five. But the story will end in chapter 4, 15, where Ruth, the women of Bethlehem will, when Ruth has a baby, the women of Bethlehem will bless and sing of God's blessing.

And they will say, Ruth. He's giving you Ruth, who is, quote, unquote, better than seven sons. You lost two?

You just got a woman whose value is more than seven sons. I mean, she's incredible. What a gift. And by the way, when she comes into Jerusalem, Bethlehem, there at the end of chapter 1, she's all bitter.

You're, I've got, brought me back empty. Brought me back empty. Would all those women see, you're not empty. There's someone tagging along there with you. But remember, she's in bitterness.

[30 : 21] She can't see what God is doing. She's still wrapped up. And that's how we get when we're bitter, when we're depressed, when we're discouraged, when we're in despair. I mean, we're just wrapped up in it.

It's like a self-perpetuating despair into misery. And your misery gets more miserable. And that's where Ruth is.

But the story will end. She's better than seven sons. And then the next verse in chapter 4, 16, she's lost her babies. Now she's got a baby in her lap. The story ends with Ruth with a baby in her lap.

And she becomes his nurse. I'm taking care of that baby. That's my baby. That's my baby. She's not my baby, but she's my baby. Obed, Obed, Obed.

That's the baby's name, by the way. So, in every dark providence, God will prove himself good at the end of the story. Remember the story of Joseph?

[31 : 23] He was sold by his brothers. He was falsely imprisoned. 20 years, he suffers. Right? He's sold into slavery. He was the favored son.

Had the coat of many colors. He's going to be something. God had given him visions. He's going to go somewhere. He's really special. And then, boom, he's sold. And then he's a slave.

And then he's a prisoner. 20 years go by before he gets remembered and brought into the palace. And Pharaoh recognizes him. 20 years.

Why 20 years of suffering? Why suffer all that evil? Well, here's how Joseph himself describes it at the end of Genesis 50.

20 years ago. 20 years ago. Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you.

[32 : 48] So then they follow it up. The brothers say now to Joseph, Now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. And Joseph wept.

Joseph wept. Joseph broke down. He wept when they spoke to him. And his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, Behold, we are your servants.

Remember, Joseph is now number two in command of all Egypt. Only the Pharaoh is more powerful than him.

So he can do whatever he wanted. He wants to wipe these guys out. He can wipe these guys out. And remember in the chapters before, he messed with them. Took Simeon. Simeon, who was one of the leaders of the, Let's beat him up and let's sell him.

Took him, put him in prison for a year. Messed with him. And I think he was angry at the time. So please forgive the transgression of the servants of your father.

[33 : 49] Joseph went and wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, Behold, we're your servants. We'll do whatever you want. Joseph said to them, Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?

And listen to what he says. This is Joseph's interpretation 20 years later after the events are behind him. Do not fear. As for you, you meant, you intended evil against me.

And then the brothers are just, Okay, here it comes. So off with your necks. But God meant, intended, planned it for good.

To bring about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. God intended it. See, did God allow all that stuff to happen to Joseph? Did God just allow it?

Nope. Wrong word. Nope, nope, nope. No, it didn't say God allowed it for good. God, he planned for all the evil to happen to Joseph?

[34 : 57] Yes. He's almighty. He's sovereign. He does whatever he wants. Well, that means he's either good.

What were the options we had? He's either, oh, he's just. And gives people what they deserve. Or God is cruel and gives them what they don't deserve.

Or he's kind but not all-powerful. All three wrong. Yeah, he's good. He is just. He's also kind.

And he's also all-powerful. He intended it not for evil, but for good. You see, every dark providence, God will prove himself good.

We cannot see it now. It will come out good. It will come to a good end. This is what we trust and believe about God.

[36 : 02] Can he end my suffering? Absolutely. Will he end my suffering? I don't know. That's up to him. It depends on what he's doing.

Say, okay, I don't know if I want that kind of God. He could end it, but he doesn't. And he, oh, he's got some other plan going on.

I don't know. You know, right now, all I'm concerned about is how it affects me. See, because I live in the time of the judges, too, where everyone does what's right in his own eyes.

Because it's all about me. Oh, wait a minute. If I'm a Christian, there's another viewpoint. And here's the second truth, the second promise that we need to remember as Christians. As a Christian, God's purpose is always, always to conform us to the image of his son.

That's always God's purpose in our lives. See, as Christians, we not only trust in Jesus, we also follow Jesus.

[37 : 11] Get that. It's not just about believing and trusting and doing your own thing. It's about actually following him, walking in his steps. He called us to, if you will follow me, if you want to come after me, you will, what?

Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. Walk in the same path that I walk, which is a path of hardship. And as we sung this morning, we sung about God's power in suffering.

I have the value of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord, and even in the loss that I experience by becoming a follower of God. I suffer the loss. I suffer the loss. I suffer the loss.

But you know what? It's worth it. There's a surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ. And not only just knowing him, but then experiencing his power, the power that comes through his resurrection, the power that's even in suffering.

That I can, that I can, I'm okay. I'm okay. He's with me. I follow in his steps. He left everything.

[38 : 21] Talk about suffering loss. He left everything. Heaven, his glory, his powers as God.

He left everything. He emptied himself for us to put on flesh, to limit himself to his humanity.

And he was rejected. He suffered. He was humiliated. He was abandoned and he was crucified for us. And if our Lord suffered, so shall we.

That's the normal Christian life. We will experience times of loss and grief and hardship like everybody else. But as a believer in Christ, we will experience another level of loss and grief and hardship.

And as Christians, we're called to look at our experience in light of our calling. We follow Jesus, so we become like him. Here's God's promise. Romans 8.

[39 : 21] We all hear Romans 8, 28 quoted. God works all things together for good, right, for those who love him. Great promise. Love the promise. Let's see the whole context of the promise.

Because God works all things for good. For who? For who? So here's Romans. Let's go back one verse and then we'll read one verse past Romans 8, 28.

Let's kind of get the context here. Romans 8, 27. He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit. So God knows what's going on within us.

God knows what's going on with God. Because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. So we walk in this life with an experience with God. We walk with God.

He gives us his Holy Spirit. Who knows what's going on with us? Who knows what's going on in God's mind? So we have that kind of benefit going on. We have relationship with God. He searches our hearts.

[40 : 20] He knows the mind of the Spirit. He intercedes for us according to the will of God. And then here's the promise. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

That's good stuff. For those who love God, all things work together for good. Who are those who love God, by the way? What does it mean to love God?

Oh, I love God. Oh, I love God because he's so gracious. And I only believe in a gracious God. I don't believe in a God that makes hard things up. I love that God.

What does it mean to love God? Well, he goes on to define it. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. Comma. For those who are called according to his purpose. Those who love God are those who are called according to his purpose.

What's his purpose? He goes on to explain it in the next verse. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined. Don't bring that word up.

[41 : 24] Don't bring up that word. That's a word for an all-powerful, sovereign God. Don't bring up predestination. Sorry, I'm just reading scripture. Truth is true.

God is God. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to what? Now, here's the purpose. Here's God's purpose. He predestined to be conformed to the image of his son.

That's his purpose for every believer. For those who love God. God. All things work together for good.

For those who are called according to his purpose. What's his purpose? To conform us to the image of his son. God's purpose always. Every day.

Every dark shadow. Every situation. God's purpose always is to conform us to the image of his son. Well, how did his son get a certain kind of image? Well, his son went through it.

[42 : 24] Suffering. Suffering. Suffering. Hardship. Hardship. Hardship. And Jesus himself said, if the master goes through suffering, so will the servant. So why do bad things happen?

Two reasons. In every dark providence, God will prove himself good. He has a greater purpose going on that we cannot see. But more specifically, why do bad things happen?

Because it's part of God's purpose. It's part of God's way of conforming us to his son. God's purpose always is to conform us to the image of his son.

Now, is that happy truth? Yeah. Sometimes. Sometimes. Is it happy? Is it happy? Oh, joy. Oh, joy. Oh, rejoice. Rejoice. When bad things happen.

No, no, no. It's not that. That's not. We're real. We're real like Naomi. Okay? And Naomi's going to be taught. Naomi's going to learn. She's going to see. By the end, she's going to be pleasant again.

[43 : 33] She's not going to be pleasant for a while. Just like us. Sometimes we're not pleasant for a while. Okay? That's life. That doesn't mean go ahead and be not pleasant.

It just means being real. Don't be what you're not. God will still show you. If God was cruel, how would he treat Naomi?

Naomi blames him. Naomi blasts. You know, she speaks evil of God. Well, not speaks evil. She just says, oh, God did it all. Oh, God says, oh, show her then.

No, it's not. No. She'll see. She'll be okay. I know it hurts. She'll see. I got a, I got, man, I got something.

I got a dream for her. Oh, she could never imagine that. And that's what he has for us. When he shatters our dreams, he's going to make another one.

[44 : 33] That's better that, that, that, where he gets the glory instead of us. So, all right, there we go. That's the setting for Ruth. So next week we'll come back and look more specifically at this Ruth person and Naomi's bitterness.

And I think that'll be healthy for us to look at these things so that we can see in the midst of the darkness how we live through that.

So, let's close with prayer. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the reality, the genuineness, the integrity of your word that doesn't hide the hard stuff.

That doesn't try to protect you, Lord, from what might look like criticism. So, Father, we pray that you would help us to be honest with the word, be honest with who you are.

And, Father, help us to accept who you are and love who you are and trust who you are. This we pray in Christ's name.

[45 : 43] Amen. Amen. Amen.