

Finding Hope When You Hit Rock Bottom

“Then she [Naomi] arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food” (Ruth 1:6).

Have you ever hit rock bottom? Have you ever lost someone you dearly loved? Have you ever felt like your whole world came crashing down, that there was no one to turn to and God seemed far away? That’s what these wounded widows felt as they wept together at the funerals for their husbands.

But then, there’s a hint of hope from God that lit up the night sky of their darkest days. Ruth 1:6 provides a very important underlying theological revelation of God in Ruth for two reasons. First, while God is mentioned 23 times in the book, this is only one of two occasions where the unknown author directly mentions God (1:6 and 4:13). These bookends at the beginning and end of the story show God blessing with food and a child, while the other 21 occasions when God is spoken of are on the lips of the various characters in the book explaining *how* He is working in their lives. This shows us that a lot of what we learn about God is from other people who speak His truth into our lives.

The second reason this verse provides an important underlying theological revelation of God in Ruth is because here, the providence of God is revealed and stands as the theme of the entire book and thread, which weaves all the lives therein together. Much like a song needs a beat to hold together, so a story needs a theme to hold together. And here the theme of God’s providence is revealed.

In speaking of God’s providence, Christians have always held

that God works through His visible hand of miracle (e.g., a burning bush, parted sea, visible angel, etc.) and invisible hand of providence, which is only seen by those with faith that gives them eyes to see it at work in their lives. In Ruth, God's visible hand of miracle is never revealed, but God's invisible hand of providence is continually revealed in the lives of ordinary people and ordinary events such as food, marriage, and children. An angel never arrives, God never speaks, and a miracle never happens in Ruth. But God was quietly, subtly, and certainly at work. This gives us hope that He is also at work in our lives, even if we don't see it at first.

When we speak of God's providence, we confess that God is BOTH sovereign and good to us personally. This means God not only created us and our world, but He also sustains and rules over all creation in general, including the details of our lives. This doesn't mean that everything that happens is God's will, as God is repeatedly grieved and angry at sin, as is confirmed throughout Scripture. But, it does mean that God is free to do as He pleases and ultimately works out all things for His glory and our good (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28). And, this provides home amidst hardship.

Looking back at your life, how have you seen God's hand of loving providence at work through circumstances? {eoa}

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