

Call Me Bitter

Ruth 1:20-21, "And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

At a certain point in our walk with the Lord we may become discouraged with seeing Christ and His Cross in powerful ways in the Word while not seeing Him as clearly in the circumstances of our daily life. One's heart can break over beholding amazing spiritual truths concerning the Cross in the scriptures, only to walk right into a similar situation in our own life and just see the issues, people and things. Although we are eternally grateful to the Holy Spirit for His kindness in sharing Christ with us in the Scriptures, yet we know there is more in God's heart for us. The Word must be made flesh. The Crucified Christ who died for us now wants to live through us. And so our heart's cry out for God to make Christ Crucified more practical in our daily walk.

I believe this is the place Naomi's heart was at when we are introduced to her in the book of Ruth chapter one. Up to that point Naomi's life and name had been translated as "Pleasant". She was married to a man of God (Elimelech) and bore him fruit (two sons), yet deep within her own being she had not yet personally known God in the depths of His Being. God led Naomi through a series of events that turned her life around. Naomi entered into a season of loss and distress unlike anything she had ever experienced before. All that was pleasant had become bitter. All that was once blessed seemed as though cursed. What could explain such a change of season? Such carnal thoughts as these could have easily arisen in her mind, *"Had she sinned, was God mad at her, ... did she not pray hard enough"*? Yet I believe that since the Cross of Christ, the Lord no longer relates to us based on our sins or our works, but only based on His Son.

The Lord was drawing Naomi's heart out into a deeper fellowship with the Son. She was about to know the Lamb of God in a way that the pleasant times could never have granted her. In the circumstances that chapter one highlights we find cross-roads that require heart decisions. These heart decisions will effect the rest of Naomi's life and the future of the Seed in the generations to come. These cross-road moments of choice may sound spiritual on paper, but in real life they are filled with temptation and trial. Because God has given us free will, our heart's can choose to find the Lord in the midst of such flames, or accuse Him of abuse and lack of care and turn cold against Him. How Naomi responded to her unpleasant turn of events would determine if she was to become a bitter old woman full of bile and woe, or a vessel of the Lamb of God filled with the dying of the Lord Jesus so other could receive His Life.

*In this way the what once was bitter becomes sweet as the
Lamb of God within us translates those trials into altars upon
which to lay down His life for others.*

The Bitter Becomes Sweet

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters. (Exodus 15:22-27)

To further examine this principle let us look at the scriptures in Exodus 15. It is in these passages that we again encounter the word "Marah" which is translated "Bitter" in Hebrew. In Exodus chapter 15 the bitter waters at Mara represent how trials and tribulation taste to us when Christ the Lamb is not filling us with His crucified Life. The only way to change that condition is to "CAST THE TREE INTO THE WATERS". Peter described the Cross of Christ as "the Tree" (I Pet. 2:24). We need the "tree / Cross" to be applied in us in such a way that transforms bitter trials into His Lamb nature. Only God can reveal to us how to "apply the Tree" in such a way that our view and identification is changed where our walk becomes following the Lamb in oneness rather than being led into depression by our circumstances. God prevented Israel from becoming a "people of doctrine" by immediately leading them into the wilderness which pressed them into trials that would require inward change. The Cross would have to become REAL IN THEM in order for them to walk out the journey required to enter into the Land. God could have miraculously transported them into the land of promise from the start, and skipped the entire wilderness episode. But it was IMPORTANT to God that His people know Him and choose to apply and yield to His Crucified Life within.

Therefore the wilderness was God's blessing, for hidden in every bitter crisis was "THE TREE", waiting to be seen, embraced and applied. It is the same for us today. God wants to "solve the mystery" of our trials and tribulations, but the only way God can solve them is by revealing the Tree (*the applied Cross*) in the midst of these things, causing our eyes to "behold the Lamb of God" rather than "the bitter problems". Christ's death on Calvary's tree can be understood in two basic ways. The first is as an event that happened 2000 years ago, purchasing our redemption. The second is a reality that Christ is now in us and He continues to lay down His life through us, His Body. The Lamb Who died on Calvary's tree is our Life now. His sacrificial nature in us continues to translate our circumstances into opportunities to lay down our lives and release the sweet savor of the Lamb's Life. In this way what once was bitter become sweet as the Lamb of God within us translates those trials into altars upon which He pours forth for others through us. It is a glorious thing when our faith lays hold of the Cross and applies it, bringing us into an intimate fellowship with Christ in His suffering. All of a sudden our lives are no longer temporal and purposeless, but part of God's eternal plan as we embrace the reality of the Cross that fills the trial with the sweet savor of the Lamb. Oh how ETERNAL each of our lives can be if we allow God to "solve this mystery" and "apply the Tree". It is what our hearts are aching for. This is what Naomi found, and this is what caused Ruth to follow her. All glory to the Lamb of God!