

# The Most Dire Famine

by Fred Tomlinson

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of leaving behind worldly influences, represented by Moab, to seek the true bread of life found in Bethlehem. It highlights the need for a personal encounter with God's living word, the transformative power of surrendering to God, and the divine timing of God's provision and destiny in our lives.*

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**Scripture:** Isaiah 7:14, Luke 1:38, Ruth 1:16, Matthew 1:5, Romans 10:17, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Corinthians 5:21, John 6:33

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## Description

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## Transcript

Greetings to you, beloved. I'm very grateful to the Lord for this opportunity to talk with you from my study. It's an unfamiliar experience certainly to be sitting in one's own study room and talking to one's own computer rather than to a congregation whose faces you can see.

But nevertheless I thank God for this opportunity and I pray that God will use it for his own praise and his own glory. Now before I actually read from scripture I would like to read a couple of verses from a hymn. It's a hymn that I learned when I was a boy so a long long long time ago now.

But the words have remained with me and we've sung the hymn from time to time in our church meetings. What's so special about these words is that really they're a prayer to God as you will see as I read them. My heart resonates to these words and echoes them from my own heart to God and I trust as you hear them they'll resonate with your heart also and maybe set the scene for whatever we're going to go on to talk about in a few minutes.

So the hymn goes like this. Speak Lord in the stillness while I wait on thee. Hushed my heart to listen in expectancy.

Speak O blessed master in this hallowed hour. Let me hear thy voice Lord. Feel thy touch of power.

For the words thou speakest they are life indeed. Living bread from heaven now my spirit feed. Amen.

Well now to read some scripture. I'm looking at some verses in the book of Ruth which of course is in the Old Testament and I'm reading from chapter 1. I might read nine verses I think. Verse 1. Now it came about in the days when the judges governed that there was a famine in the land and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi and the names of his two sons were Malon and Kilion. They were Ephraites from Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

Then Elimelech Naomi's husband died and she was left with her two sons. They took for themselves Moabite women as wives. The name of the one was Opa and the name of the other Ruth.

And they lived there about ten years. Then both Malon and Kilion also died and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that they might return from the land of Moab for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.

So she departed from the place where she was and her two daughters-in-law with her and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

May the Lord grant that you may find rest each in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept. Amen.

As we read in the Old Testament, we really need to read it through the lens of the New Testament. The reason I say that is perhaps clarified with a little ditty that some of us learned many years ago, again in my Sunday School days. It's in reference to the two Testaments or the two Covenants.

It goes like this. The New Testament. The New is in the Old, concealed.

The Old is by the New, revealed. And so since we have both the Old and the New Testaments, we want to read the New Testament and familiarize ourselves with its message very thoroughly. And then as we go back and we read in the Old Testament, we read it through the lens of that which we've learned in the New Testament.

As we do that, we find that there are, back in the Old Testament, there are what the New Testament will refer to as types and shadows that find their referent or fulfillment or reality in the New Testament. And so that makes for a very intriguing study. Also, as we read through the various accounts, much like I've read these verses to you, we find, again looking through the lens of the New Testament, we find that there are other elements that we discover in the course of the reading, which strike us as being significantly important and in many ways perhaps can be very helpful to us in understanding various aspects of God's purpose and plan for our lives.

This is exactly what I find happening when I read, let's say in the first verse that I read to you, with just a simple reference to the city of Bethlehem. The fact is that the meaning of the word Bethlehem is the house of bread or a house of bread. And what is particularly striking in this verse is the fact that there was a famine in the house of bread.

And so we've got kind of an agonizing contradiction, particularly felt by the people who lived there. I'm sure these were folk who lived in the house of bread, and yet there was a famine raging at that time. And, you know, they had the name that they lived, but were dead, or the city was, excuse me.

They, you know, they lived in this bakery, this house of bread, and yet the ovens were cold, there was no aroma of fresh bread baking, and the shelves that ordinarily would carry their food were all empty. So there was a contradiction so far as the very word Bethlehem, the title of the city, was concerned. Now for that to become meaningful, particularly meaningful to you and to me, we need to ask ourselves well, okay, if we're looking at this in a symbolic fashion, what does bread signify? How should we understand any significance in this? Of course we know right away that, well, bread is a staple food, and was obviously very important to keep the people alive.

But then as we read through the lens of the New Testament, we know that in the New Testament bread is very clearly presented as a metaphor for the true bread. In other words, physical bread that would be baked in the ovens of the world was being used as a metaphor, a symbol for bread on a different level altogether, true bread. And I'm sure that this is not unfamiliar to most of you listening to me at this stage, but we know that the true bread that is referred to in the New Testament was a reference to our Savior, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is presented to us as the true bread from heaven. Let me read a few scriptures to you from John's Gospel, chapter 6. There's much in the chapter, it's a long chapter, 71 verses. Let me just pick out one or two verses which make the point that I'm emphasizing.

I read, and Jesus is speaking of course, in verse 33, I read these words, for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world. In verse 48, he makes this statement succinctly, but very clearly, very emphatically, I am that bread of life. Or I read in the 51st verse, I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. And so the passage continues on.

So notice in particular, in verse 50, and then 51 again, this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.

Amen. And so what we're, you know, he's, he's saying this, this, this, this whole issue takes the concept of bread to a whole different level altogether. And Jesus has a very real purpose for using this metaphor in reference to himself.

But I suppose to start with, just as the people knew, the people who were listening to him knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that bread was their staple diet. It was important. In fact, it was vital for, for living.

And Jesus is wanting to say, I'm, I am the bread that has come down from heaven. And you need to receive from me. He goes on to say actually, who's verily, verily I say to you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you've got no life in you.

He says, whosoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at that last day. For my flesh is meat, indeed, and my blood is drink, indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him.

So Jesus is making an incredibly profound statement here, beloved. This, this is so important for us to really grasp, we get a sort of superficial idea of what's going on. But there's, there's a depth of riches here in this statement, that we must not miss on any account.

He that receiveth this bread shall live forever. Just, just turning the camera, as it were, in a slightly different direction, but not losing the point at all. We, we read in the first chapter of John, where the, where John himself is writing, and in the fourth verse, he says this, in him was life, and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not, or overcame it not. And John is adding this feature, we know that the bread is vital for life. Jesus is making that point as he refers to himself as the bread from heaven, that is so crucially important for men to participate in.

John, John is saying concerning the Lord Jesus, he's saying, he, he is the life. He is, he is the life. What, what we're supposed to think about here is something that is far more than mere existence.

Jesus, in John chapter 11, as a matter of fact, he will say, I am the resurrection and the life. A couple of chapters later in chapter 14, in verse 6, that verse we all know so well, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. I, I am it.

He's not merely saying I possess it, he's saying I am it. My being is the very essence of life, this life, the life. As he is referring to it in the Greek language here with the definite article, the, the way, the truth, the life, barring any possibility of any alternative that can even begin to match what he is stating.

I am the life. I am the life. You know, this, this truth lies right at the core of the Christian gospel, and it really is, is the very essence, it's the very meta-narrative, as we might refer to it, of scripture.

He is the true bread from heaven, the true bread from heaven. The true bread from heaven is Christ. The true bread from heaven is life.

I think sometimes we really confuse ourselves. We've become so familiar with the phrase Christian life, and I think in the majority of ways in which we use that phrase, we're using it as a synonym for a Christian lifestyle, the Christian life. That phrase, of course, is never found in that form in scripture, but we're not talking here about a Christian lifestyle.

What we're faced with here is the life of Christ, the life, that which he is, this is, is being referenced here is the very life of God himself. I am the life. The apostle John, writing in his first epistle, chapter one and verse two, he makes this statement.

He said, the life, not life. He's not talking about bread now. We've sort of moved on, as it were, broadened out what we're thinking about here for a while.

He says, the life, the life was manifested. The life that came from heaven was manifested. And then he goes on to say, and we have seen it.

He talks about touching it and handling this very word of life. He was in raptures when he wrote that. We can read the verse in a sort of monotone way.

But I believe as John wrote those words, I'm sure his mind was filled with wonder. The life, the life, the life of God was manifested and we've seen it and we've, we've handled it. This was the heavenly life.

This life is the abundant life that Jesus spoke about. This was the eternal life that is referenced. This is again, the divine life.

That's what we are talking about here. And, you know, I think as soon as we pursue this line of thinking, at least I speak for myself, of course. But I think one's mind is very quickly directed to, first of all, the Apostle Paul's words when he spoke of the mystery of the incarnation, the mystery of God manifest in the flesh.

That's what John's talking about there in the verse I've been quoting. And as our minds and our attention is turned to one, toward the mystery of God becoming a man and the life, which is God being manifest in a bodily form in the person of the Lord Jesus, I find my mind immediately moving on through the space of the time that is recorded in the Gospels and it takes me directly to the cross. We think of the love of God and we find as we turn our attention to the cross where we're facing an unfathomable mystery, the mystery of Calvary.

I'm thinking of, although I can't explain it, but I'm thinking of the primeval darkness that fell over the scene like a cloak covering over the whole Calvary scene as the life of God, which was manifest in the person of Jesus, was now there on the cross. And in that darkness something transpired, something which is so terrible we can't understand it, something which caused the one who is the life from heaven to cry out to his father and say, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And this is a mystery. I'm wanting to mention this, particularly to try to give context and to emphasize the particular message that I want to lift out of this whole set of verses that we're looking at here.

The Apostle Paul will say, writing to the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 5, he says, that this life giving bread from heaven was made sin for us, that I may be made the righteousness of God in him. In other words, what he was doing, he was doing for a purpose. We're filled with wonder, we're lost with amazement as we try to get our heads around what was actually taking place.

We can't comprehend it. And yet somehow through our thoughts and through the fog of our spiritual blindness and inability to comprehend, restricted by our humanity, we find ourselves being reminded that all this that was taking place was taking place for a very express purpose and reason. On the third day, he was raised from the dead.

On the day of Pentecost, though a dam burst and that life which had been resident in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, now released through the miracle of redemption which was accomplished in the darkness upon the cross, was somehow able to burst forth from heaven. There was a sound of a rushing mighty wind that came from heaven and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They were filled with, what happened? They were receiving the life from heaven.

It wasn't merely just a Pentecostal experience. They were receiving the life that was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ which came originally from heaven's glory, the life which is God himself. And here's the wonder of it all, beloved, that I'm going to say this evening because it's evening for me as I speak, but whatever the time of day is, whatever the territory you are in as you listen to this, whatever's going on in your life, I want to say to you today that God's plan and God's purpose is that you might become a recipient of this life of God.

You must receive it. Amen. I think I can just reflect back for a moment to the metaphor which Jesus was using, John chapter six, speaking of himself as this essential bread.

It makes the point so clear. We are being handed this bread. It's being handed to us.

I want to say a little more about that in just a moment, but it's for us to take it. It's for us to receive it. It's for us to allow the Spirit of God to cause that life to fill every fibre of our being.

Amen. The outcome of that can be described by many verses in scripture. I'm choosing in this moment to read to you two verses from second Corinthians and chapter four.

Paul the apostle is speaking and he says that he is always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that or in order that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our body. Verse 11, for we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. There's a lot contained in those two verses, but just let me take this one point from them for now.

And that is in the first of the two verses, verse 10, he's talking about the life of Jesus being manifest in our body. And I think at this moment, Paul, like I spoke of John being ecstatically amazed at the wonder of what he was able to be expressing. I think Paul is in that very same position.

I often find him there as a matter of fact, as I read his epistles. So he repeats himself, not quite verbatim, but he makes the statement again that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. First time he said in our body, saying in our mortal flesh.

I think he's saying this in the second statement to just emphasise his sense of wonder. He's saying in this, not just in my body, in my mortal flesh that the life of Jesus may be in me and manifest through my mortal body, wonder of wonders. What an amazing concept.

Amen. You know, without this living bread from heaven, we are suffering a most dire famine. No matter what church we belong to, what our spiritual experiences may be that we've experienced along the way.

If we're not participating in the wonder of this living bread, feasting on the living bread, drinking at the fountainhead wonder of wonder. Without him, man is spiritually lost. Without this experience, without receiving this bread, which creates life within us, we are spiritually dead.

That's how serious it is. That's how important this is. And we can't discover this bread by just searching ourselves.

And here's a wonderful point. You know, I often am heard to say that God is always the initiator, never man. It's always God initiating.

This can be proven and highlighted in many different ways from many different sections of scripture. And that's certainly the case here. If you have a hunger for this living bread, rest assured it's because God is putting that there in your heart.

You didn't just dream it up. You didn't just come up with it. No one does.

No one can. Amen. The fact of the matter is, although it seems to stretch the metaphor beyond reason, but here's the truth.

The fact is, we don't search for the bread. The bread searches for us. A couple of weeks ago, I was talking about the Holy Spirit is the hound of heaven who pursues us through life.

We hear his heavy footsteps. Some of you will know the poem I'm thinking about, which is titled The Hound of Heaven. And he's pursuing, he's pursuing, he's following me, I hear him there, I hear him here, I hear him there, until finally he corners us, and finally we capitulate and reach out our hand, according to the poem, and receive him to ourselves.

Amen. He is seeking you today. He's pursuing you.

He's seeking to open up your heart and your mind to a reality that is transformational in the most superlative manner. Amen. No wonder Paul said, if any man, any man's experiencing this, if any man is in Christ, he's a whole new creation.

He's not the same person he once was. This is what God's wanting to do with each and every one of us. Amen.

So, but then when it comes right down to it, how do I receive this life? That's an important question. I think it's crucial to understand this. There's a couple of verses I'll draw your attention to that really add another element.

We've got, we started out with bread, and then we've moved into another sort of nuance, another aspect of this, and we've said it's life. It's not just life, it's the life. But now there's a new element added to our equation, if you will.

Matthew chapter four and verse four, Jesus is responding to Satan's temptations, but he makes this important statement. He said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. By every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Our question was, how do we receive this life? Well, Jesus is giving us a huge amount of help here with the answer. And then again in chapter six of John, where we were a few moments ago, verse 63, Jesus said, the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life. Amen.

You know, there's a lot of features to this, that there's a lot of scriptures which have some bearing on this. But think of it this way. So spiritual life comes to us when we hear, and we respond to, and we receive his engrafted word as the writer, James himself actually would say in his epistle.

We remember he said, he speaks about us receiving the engrafted word or the engrafted word with meekness. In other words, without argument, but like a little child. Some of us are so theologically informed that we're too clever for our own good.

But we need to come again to the word of God. And rather as the word of God comes to us, we need to respond to it like little children, like a child. Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth, I'm listening, Lord, my ears are attuned to you, my heart is wide open, I long for you to fill my life with yourself.

Hallelujah. You know, Peter, in his first epistle, he speaks about the word of God being like a seed, he speaks about it being the very spore of God, like the seed, the spore of that, that which births life within us. This is the word of God.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Hallelujah. This living bread from heaven that we're thinking about here.

Let's just be really clear. This is more than merely good Bible preaching. It's more than a clever exposition of a passage of Scripture.

It's more than a dramatic presentation of truth. It's more than that. You know, perhaps one of the most important things for us, maybe even one of the most difficult things, is to really distinguish between things that differ.

You're remembering with me, perhaps, the verse of Scripture in Hebrews chapter four, which speaks about the word of God being sharper than a two-edged sword and dividing even between soul and spirit, bone and marrow. And the idea there that impacts me as I read that verse is that the Spirit of God is saying through the apostle that the word of God is able to accomplish something that nothing else can. He's able to distinguish between two things that are not equal, but in fact, they're not equal, but they appear to be, and we get them confused.

And I think there's an area that we get confused about, and that is a failure to distinguish between head knowledge and experience. And this is a very, very big issue. We can feel and believe that if we fill our heads with the right kind of information, listen to the right kind of preaching, this is it.

But let's be clear, this is the crux of the whole matter, which I think in many ways we've just failed to grasp, that there's a distinction between head knowledge and actually receiving what God is offering to us. I want you to go away with that at the end of this talk. But you know, there's more to this than just great preaching, great expositions, and so on.

And I'm not devaluing the place or benefit of them, but there is something more. You know, let's take it to another level, even the very scriptures that we have here before us concerning them for which we are so indebted to God and indebted for the many men and women who have invested their lives in making this book available to us. We thank God with all of our hearts for that, certainly.

But having said that, the Word of God is something more than words on a page, though they are these precious words that we have on our page here. Do you remember Jesus spoke to the crowd that was gathered around him on one occasion, and he said, you search the scriptures because in them you think you have eternal life, but these are they that testify of me, and you won't come to me, he said, that you might have life. Amen.

Let's be sure that we recognize the distinction here very, very, very clearly indeed. You know, as we follow this idea through, scripture that we have is God breathed. We're told that, Paul tells us that, he's writing to Timothy.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God. One translation says all scripture is God breathed. God has breathed his word into existence.

That would be the word logos, as we think about the scriptures. There is another word, it's the word rhema, and I think I'm trying to decide how to say this. I am very much aware that there are certain charismatic teachers who will make a very big issue out of this, and quite possibly cross the line and fail to distinguish, or in their efforts to distinguish them, maybe take the whole thing too far, because we find these two words used in the text of scripture, logos and rhema.

They're two different words, and to counter the strong argument that sort of insists that in every case they're totally separate, you can't support that from scripture, because there are passages of scripture

where the two words are used interchangeably, and that's indisputable. But having said that, they are two different words, and there are a variety of contexts of scripture where it's evident that the writers have chosen one of those words over and above the other. And that brings us to a point where we say, well, why would they do that? Well, the conclusion that we come to, and it's an important one, is that yes, we have the written scriptures here.

God has breathed, past tense, he's breathed these words into existence, and they form the bedrock basis for Christian life and practice, and we're thankful to God for them. I certainly am. But here's one of the unique features of the work and ministry of the Spirit of God.

What we're needing, and what we really were praying for in the opening verses I quoted to you, was that the Spirit of God would breathe again, that he would breathe again across the page and quicken the words of scripture, which are objective and settled and unchangeable, that the Holy Spirit would somehow quicken them in order to make them personal to me, to my life. He personalizes the scripture. It's that unique moment of revelation when you've been reading a scripture for years, over and over again, different times, but there comes a moment when somehow it just comes to life.

In England, in days gone by, we would have said there comes a point when the money drops, when something dawns on us, truth dawns upon our hearts, and we see and understand something we've not understood before. Someone, whoever it was, tried to give an illustration which may be helpful. He said, well, it's as though the logos, the written word that we've got is like a deep well, rich with truth, but the word rhema is like a bucket of that water which is handed to me for me to drink for myself.

And there's a sense in which that's exactly true. Let me just quote two verses of scripture, and I'm done with this part of my message, but in Isaiah chapter 7 and 14, and you'll hear this section read quite a lot as we get closer to Christmas, I'm sure, but this is how that text reads. It says, A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.

Many, many years later, there's a young woman called Mary, and an angel visits her, and he says certain things to her. I won't take time to quote to you what he said to her, because you know exactly what he said to her, I'm sure, and what he said was staggering to her. Her mind could not even begin to comprehend what he was saying, and she said, how shall this be? It doesn't make sense to me.

But nevertheless, the word came to her with such force and such clarity and authority. Although she couldn't understand it, she responded with these words, Luke chapter 1 verse 38. Let it be to me according to your word, according to your rhema, word, your personal word.

In other words, it would have been folly. You know, we've all heard about the name it and claim it, people. Well, it's in the Bible, so you name it and you claim it for yourself.

Well, how foolish would it have been for young virgins in Israel to have read Isaiah 7, 14 and named it and claimed it for themselves? That would have been the ultimate folly. But when Mary comes onto the scene and the angel visits her and speaks this word to her, he brings the word which was prophesied objectively 700 years earlier, whatever it was, and he speaks it to her. It's a word which she receives.

Do you remember James's word I quoted to you? She receives it like a child. She receives it with meekness. And somehow the very word itself has quickened faith.

Faith comes by hearing the rhema of God, Paul will say in Romans chapter 10. She hears the rhema of God. She can't figure it out theologically or mentally, but her heart grasps hold of it.

And as the result, the very seed of the very Son of God is conceived in her womb. Amen. We are in great need.

That's why we say with the song I quoted earlier, Lord, speak to us that living word from heaven that brings that living bread, that living life to us. Let us feed on it continually. Amen.

So the conclusion here is that one thing is certain, whether we've got disputes about rhema and logos and so on, but one thing is certain, life that is the life is communicated to men and women today exclusively by the Spirit of God himself. He is the Spirit of truth. He is the the administrator of an executor of the Godhead.

He comes bearing the virtue, the power, the efficacy and the life that was released through the redeeming work of Christ upon the cross. Amen. And it's only through his ministry to our hearts that words become powerful to me.

They become like the two edged swords to my heart. It quickens faith, births faith in my heart. And is effective in the transforming of my life.

Amen. So today's famine is not a shortage of preachers. We've got plenty of preachers.

It's not a shortage of biblical material. We've got lots of that. It's not a shortage of programs.

We've got all those things. But the famine that we are thinking about is a famine for the bread of life. The living bread that's life transforming.

Amen. You know, it was Watchman Nee, who some of you will have heard about. Some of you will have read some of his writings.

But he was visiting England many years ago now, because he's long gone from this scene altogether. But he'd been taken by a friend to an assembly, Christian assembly in London, England. And they went into the morning service.

And when they came out and they were chatting as they left, the local resident said to Watchman Nee, well, what did you think of the service? And his response was this. He said, they have much light, but little life. Much light, but little life.

You know, Elimelech, when he found himself in this situation, he said, we're leaving. We're out of here. And he had a bad idea.

It was a bad idea. He took his wife and his sons and they left the area. They headed for Moab.

They would cross the Jordan. It's a long journey. And they would, if you like, they would invalidate the great deliverance that took place at the Jordan.

They're going across Jordan the opposite way. And they go into the wilderness. They go to the land of the enemies of the people of God.

They were a Baal worshipping nation. And when we do that, you know, beloved, it never ends well. It never ends well.

And this was certainly true in this case. The tragic irony is this, that Elimelech's name meant my God is King. And yet the man whose name was my God is King made his family home in Moab, the land of God's enemies.

And Moab claimed his life and the life of his boys. And I want to tell you something, beloved, and I've lived a while now. It always does.

It always does. You know, there's a story that's being played out today. At this time where there's parents who are conducting themselves with a worldly lifestyle, and they never really claim to be Christians, but they're not yielding their lives wholly and completely to God.

They're not pursuing holiness or a real knowledge of God. But they're flirting with the world. At the same time, they're doing what suits them and pleases them.

If only parents would live out, my God is King. I think the outcome, I know the outcome would be very, very different. Indeed.

Instead of leading our families to Moab, which is really leading our families into the world, and many of them never make it out. Of course, this applies to the church as well. I mustn't digress too far.

But I don't think anyone in the churches today would be heard saying, you know, let's have an elders meeting and let's just decide how we're going to, you know, embrace the world. I don't believe that's true at all. But what happens is, you know, we've made idols out of things, we've made an idol out of numerical success in terms of our congregations.

And when we choose that road, it's a road to Moab. No question, because then we have to become seeker friendly. That's crucial to us.

We have to adapt to the cultural methods. And we can have great meetings, but our meetings are about the bread. But if we're only talking and ministering about the bread, the result will always be spiritual famine.

You know, Naomi had lost her husband and her two sons. But an unknown preacher came into her life. We never know who it was in this world anyway.

But an unknown preacher came into her life evidently, and he preached a gospel to her. And the gospel was this, Naomi, there's bread again in Bethlehem. That was the gospel to her.

With all my heart, I pray that I could be a preacher who preaches that message and tells people, beloved, there's real bread. There's the bread of heaven again in Bethlehem. It's available for you.

Amen. You know, here's the point, and it's fleshed out in this story. If you want to taste the bread of Bethlehem, the living bread from heaven, you have to leave Moab.

You can't have it both ways. You have to leave Moab. And not everyone is ready to do that.

But this is the simple but plain truth. Amen. Naomi said, I'm returning.

I'm going back. And you know, when you take a step of faith, or when you take a step that's failure, you impact the lives of many other people as well. And Ruth was a Moabite girl.

And evidently, she saw something in Naomi that she found tremendously attractive. And you know, we can see this here, because by this stage, where I'm breaking back into the text, Orpah has left and she's returned. And of course, Naomi's encouraged both the girls to do this.

And as a result of that, verse 14 of our chapter, and they lifted up their voices and wept again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. But Ruth clung to her. Listen to these words.

Then she said, This is Naomi. Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Return after your sister-in-law.

But Ruth said, but Ruth said, do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you. For where you go, I will go. And where you lodge, I will lodge.

Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God. Where you die, I will die. And there will I be buried.

Thus may the Lord do to me and worse, if anything but death, part you and me. And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. Amen.

She saw something in Naomi. May God bring you into this life and bring this life into you in such a measure that men and women see the life also of Jesus, the life of Jesus manifested in your body, in your mortal flesh. Amen.

She wanted the bread that Naomi seemed to know about. Hallelujah. She paid a high price for it as she left the land of her nativity and any other family members that were there.

She left them all. She clung to Naomi. They went back.

She went for the first time with Naomi. She went back to Bethlehem. Amen.

The reward that she got for that decision and that action was incredible in the extreme. She was led, clearly led by divine providence and they arrived in Bethlehem. The timing was impeccable.

Let me draw your attention to that. It's the very last word of our chapter. So Naomi returned and with her, Ruth and Moabites, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab and they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Glory to God. When God speaks his word to our hearts as well, his timing is always impeccable. I wonder and I certainly pray to God that what you're hearing, even through this message, is God's word and if it is God's word, it will be timely for you.

It will quicken desire in you. It will quicken faith in you. It will carry the possibility of you receiving something on a level that you have not known before.

I believe that because that's the very nature, that's the essence of the word of God. It births life within us in ever greater measure. Well, for Ruth, it was the time of the barley harvest.

There was food everywhere. There was rejoicing everywhere. It was a very significant time because of that particular moment.

Circumstantially it gave her opportunity to meet someone called Boaz. She would be filled with joy unspeakable and she discovered there her destiny. Amen.

She would never know this but she became the great-grandmother to King David and her name would be mentioned many, many years later and recorded in scripture in Matthew chapter 1 verse 5 and she's named there in the very lineage of the Messiah himself. Glory to God. God had his eye on that woman and although I said to you earlier and I believe it was true that when Elimelech made the decision he made it was a bad decision but look what came out of it you will say.

In response to that I say well this is the grace and the genius of God that even when we make really, really bad decisions and who among us has not done that? Perhaps many times. God doesn't throw us on the garbage heap and I don't know what your story is all about but I want to tell you God he's not discarded you and he's speaking to you I believe by his Holy Spirit even right now and if you will respond to his leading and to his speaking in your heart if you will be prepared to leave Moab and all that it represents and if you're prepared to make the kind of pledge to him that I hear Ruth making to Naomi that you'll be making it via the Spirit of God to the very person of the Lord Jesus where you give your life wholly and unreservedly to him maybe you've done this before but you need to refresh it and come again more fully being freshly stirred by the Holy Spirit I hope you're sensing the aroma of the fresh bread of Bethlehem the fresh bread of heaven even as I'm sharing with you today and you make that same kind of absolute surrender to him he will allow you to know joy unspeakable and full of glory in your life and in your heart and he will begin to unfold in a fresh way your destiny that which he has ordained for you before the foundation of the world may God bless you and encourage you as you make your response to him today Amen. Father help everyone that said this word and listen through Lord through simple words presented tonight Lord but Lord I pray that your Holy Spirit will quicken these words and make them living words from heaven living bread from heaven the precious men and women who are hungering for truth for righteousness and for a knowledge of God that is richer than anything they have known until now I pray this in Jesus name Amen.

God bless you.

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