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Campbell Chapel Free
Will Baptist Church

Bob Bradley

Catastrophes

Irresponsible Behavior

and

Bad Decisions

Bring Catastrophes

CAMPBELL CHAPEL FWBC - SERMON

Irresponsible Behavior and Bad Decisions Bring Catastrophes

Sunday, July 26, 2009

Bob Bradley

Ruth 1:1-5

1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

The book of Ruth; it's a great story. It's a wonderful story when you read the whole book. I read somewhere one time by a smart fellow; he called it a love story, a short love story. It really is when you look at all that is there. We can read about a lot of different things that are there. However, what I want to talk about tonight is this.

The decisions that we make and the consequences that they bring is really what I want to talk about tonight, the Lord being our helper. The book of Ruth, when you read in the first verse here that I read to you; these events happened during the time of the judges. It says that; doesn't it? When you read the book of Judges and when you read about the book of Judges; the Bible says it was a time when men did that which seemed right in their own eyes. The Bible also says in that same verse that there was no king in the land and men did that which was right in their own eyes. That's in the book of Judges Chapter 17.

Times were very corrupt. If you read the book of Judges, you read catastrophe after catastrophe. You read about God's people. You read about the children of Israel. You see them doing real good for a while then you see them depart from Almighty God and start worshiping idols. God would go over here and He would rise up a nation to come in and oppress them. He did that because He loved them. But we saw all kinds of issues and problems that came one after the other. They would repent and live right for awhile then they would drift away from Almighty God. God would rise up another nation and they would come in and judge them and chastise them. They would come in and steal their crops and take over their land. They oppressed them and made slaves out of them. God allowed and God chastised this nation because He loved them.

What I want us to think about tonight for a few moments is this. The decisions that we make in life, the majority of the catastrophes, the crisis that come in our life is usually because of one of two things: 1) our irresponsible behavior, or 2) bad decisions that we make.

If I go down the road [driving] a hundred miles per hour in my car then that can cause a catastrophe; can't it? That's a bad decision. That's irresponsible behavior for me to do that. I'm breaking laws. I shouldn't do that. If I go out here and steal something, or take something away from someone that doesn't belong to me, or commit some kind of a sin; then my behavior is not what it should be. Therefore, these things can bring catastrophes and crisis in our lives.

The majority of the time, if you and I would be honest—not all the time, maybe—in our lives when crisis comes, when catastrophes happen; we can trace it back a little ways and see where we had made bad decisions or our behavior is not what it should have been. Therefore, God is bringing some things in our space trying to correct us. That's truth.

1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

If you read the book of Judges, you will find out that different times there was famine in the land. God would use famines. He would use droughts. He would use the enemies of Israel to come in and judge them. Again, He did that because He loved them. He wanted to bring them back to Him.

This famine here, I don't about; it doesn't tell me that for sure. However, as I read the book of Judges, famine after famine came and God was doing that and allowing famine to come because of their sin, because of their behavior and because of what they had done in walking away from Him. There is no doubt in my mind when I read here in this first verse about a famine in the land; it was because people had walked away from Almighty God.

In America, we don't know what that is. We don't know what a famine is. You could go into every house in America, or most every house in America there is food everywhere. We throw away more today than a lot of people eat in foreign countries. We throw enough away to feed millions of people. We don't know what a famine is. We don't know what it means not to have any water to drink or any food to eat. We don't know what that is.

Friend listen. These folks here were experiencing a famine in the land. Keep this in mind. They were in the promise land. They were there where God said He would bring them. They were in a place here where God said He would bless them. They had made it there. They had arrived.

Even in my life and in your life today; that's what happens. We have been brought out of sin. We know that God has saved us. We know that we have been born again. Do you know what happens a lot of times in our life because of our decisions that we made may have been bad, or our behavior has been what it should not be? Then there is a famine that comes in our life. Do you know what we start to do? We start to be in want. We start drying up.

Do you know what happens in a famine? There was no rain from heaven. The ground would just start drying up. There was nothing to eat. There was nothing to drink.

Do you know what a lot of folks are doing today? They are drying up spiritually. Do you know why? They are drying up spiritually because they have made bad decisions. Their choices in life have not been what they should have been. When we make those decisions then there is going to be repercussions. The thing that we need to remember today is when problems come then we need to understand that God will take care of us if we will just live as we should live.

The famine in the land was affecting everybody. There is no doubt in my mind, living in the land of Bethlehem, in the land of Judah here, in the city of Bethlehem; there was some good people living here. But when the drought came it affected everybody. It affected the good and it affected the bad.

This first thing we want to talk about here is this family; Elimelech, Naomi and their sons. They lived in the city of Bethlehem. There was a crisis there and it was a famine. They could see things drying up. They knew it wasn't raining. They knew that they were going to be running out of food.

Do you know what we do sometimes? We do the same thing. When the money starts getting low, we start wondering how we are going to make it or how we are going to live, or how we are going to pay the bills. What we need to be doing today instead of wondering about all those things; we need to be trusting Almighty God. If we are saved, living in the will of God; then God will take care of His people. We may have to eat Kentucky border bologna. Most of you don't know what that is, do you? I've ate a piece or two of it. I've ate a whole lot of pork and beans out of cans. Did you ever eat any value sausage? I've ate a lot of that stuff.

There was a crisis in the land. When you look at the time of judges here; there was lawlessness everywhere.

I thought about this today as I was thinking. When you read the book of Judges, you can read about corruption that went on from day to day to day. It wasn't corruption that happened today and was gone tomorrow. It was corruption that went on every day. We can read about lying. We can read about stealing. We can read about cheating. We can read about selfishness. We can read about greed and covetness. We can read about false religions. We can read about religious deception. We can read about unbelief, idolatry, immorality, drunkenness, partying. We can read about homosexuality. We can read about sexual perversion. We can read about rape, lawlessness, violence and murder.

Do you know what I got to thinking about when I read that and thought about that today? If you watch the news much do you know what you can see? You can see all those things are all around us right here in our own county. We don't have to go somewhere way off, to a city somewhere way off to see all these things going on. They are happening all around us. Do you know why? It is because that people have forgotten about Almighty God. We have walked away from Him. Even though that is the case, even though we have all kinds of this cesspool of sin that's all around you and me; we just can't pack up our clothes and say I've got to move somewhere else. Do you know why? When you and I do that we get into trouble. Where are we going to go? Where are we going to go where there is no sin? Where

are we going to go where there is no lawlessness? It's everywhere. Do you know what Elimelech is going to do? He looked around and saw all the lawlessness that was here. He saw the famine was here. Even though he was in the land of promise, even though his family was right in the place here where the Savior was going to be born just down the road; do you know what they decided to do one day? They decided "Hey, we are just going to leave here. We are just going to pack our stuff and we are going to take a trip."

Do you know what friend? I would encourage you tonight before you start taking trips spiritually, before we start walking away from Almighty God; I would consider the journey. The journey that you may take; it may be a journey that you may not like because in the journey and on the journey that you take; do you know what there is going to be? When we go where God says we don't need to go, then there are going to be issues and there are going to be problems. There is going to be danger. There are going to be all kinds of things that are going to happen. I would to God tonight that before we start walking away from the land of promise, before we start walking away from the bread of life; we had better make sure what we are doing. You had better make sure that is a trip you want to take because it's going to be a trip that after you start, you'd like to backup and change some things.

Elimelech was thinking "Hey, if I stay here, we are going to starve to death. There is a famine. It is not raining. We don't have enough food. We are going starve to death and we are not going to make it."

Our thinking sometimes is all wrong. The decisions that we make, the choices that we make and our behavior is all wrong sometimes. The sad part about that is there have been a lot of times that daddies have led mommies and children into messes. There have been many times—I could tell you many times in the thirty some years that I have been saved and been in the ministry—I can you many, many times where I saw daddies persuade mommies that they needed to do something that God was not in. It was devastating to the family. I don't want to see you all take that trip.

They were living in the land of promise. They were living where God had placed them and appointed them. They were living there in a place where God said that He would take care of them. However, do you know what they decided to do? They looked around. They saw the famine. They saw all that was going on. They saw all the things that were happening all around them. Do you know what they decided to do? They decided to leave town. They decided to pack up everything that they had and everything that they owned and to leave the promise land; to leave the land, a home, and a place that God had given them, decided to leave that, to leave God's people to go to the land of Moab.

You might say, "What's so wrong with that?" Moab is only fifty miles away or so. It was just across the Jordan River. It was on the East side of the Jordan River. But do you know where they were going? They were leaving the land of promise. They were leaving God's people. They were leaving the place that God had blessed them and gave them. They were leaving all that and going to the enemy. That's where they were going to.

Do you know who the Moabites were? The Moabite people were the sons of Lot. Do you remember reading that? If you read Genesis 19, you will find out here that they were the descendants of Lot. You will also find out when you read the Bible, that the Moabite people here were very cruel. They

mistreated the children of Israel in their wanderings, as they were wandering, walking and moving from the land of Egypt going towards the land of Canaan. They were the enemy. If you read in the book of judges 3 or so they had come over and occupied the land of Israel for 18 years. They had oppressed them and judged them for 18 years. They were the enemies of God's people. They were leaving the land of promise. They were leaving a land here where God had given them. They were leaving a home here that God had said this is yours. You stay here. You be obedient to me and I will supply everything you need.

Elimelech said "I am going to leave here. I am going to leave this place. I don't think God is going to take care of us any longer. We are going to sit here and starve to death. You will never starve to death in the will of God.

The safest place that you will ever be is living in the will of God. The safest place that you can ever get is getting right in the center of Almighty God's will. That doesn't mean everything is always going to go right. That doesn't mean that there is not going to be problems, but it does mean that God will take care of you. He will supply your needs. He'll do that.

Do you know what they did? The Bible says they load up everything that they have got. They get over into the land of Moab. They are going over here into the enemy territory. They are going over here unto the place here where they are going to be strangers. They are going over here to a place where they are going to be hated. They are going over here unto a place where they are not going to fit in. Do you know what they are doing? They are walking away from Almighty God. They are really saying in their life "I don't believe God is going to take care of me in the land of Canaan. I don't believe God is going to take care of me in Bethlehem. So I'm going to go to the enemy territory."

Friend listen.

When you leave the protection, when you walk away from the protecting hand of Almighty God and go back into enemy territory, disaster is on the way. I want you to understand that tonight. People say "Well, I don't know about that." If you think that tonight, just inventory your life just for a moment and see where you are at this evening. I promise you if you have ever known what it means to be saved, to be filled with the power of Almighty God; disaster is on the way. If you have ever known what it means to get on your face and have God answer a prayer for you and you know that He answered prayer; if you've ever been there and you walk away from Almighty God, going back into enemy territory; then disaster is on the way. They things that are going to happen to you are going to be catastrophic. The things that are going to come your way are going to come your way because you said "I don't believe God is going to take care of me. I don't think God can take care of me. Therefore, I am just going back over into the country where the enemies are at."

People are doing that today. People are going back to the world and the world is an enemy of Almighty God. The world is an enemy of God's people. The system of evil that is around us is our enemy, my friend. It is trying to destroy us.

This is where Elimelech goes.

The Bible says here he leaves Bethlehem-judah. Everybody knows what Bethlehem means don't we? It means "House of Bread." This is where Jesus was born at. He was born in Bethlehem. He is the "Bread of Life." Isn't He? It makes all kinds of sense.

They leave the security of the promise land. They leave the protection of Almighty God and the provision of Almighty God and they go over into the land of the Moabites. They go into a place where they are not welcome. They go into a place they are not going fit in. They go into a place where they are going to be looked down upon and mistreated. Do you know why? It is because they were enemies. The Moabite people hated the children of Israel. They let that be known many, many ways.

1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

Here they go. They pack up everything that they have. Do you know what was in his mind? He was just going to be gone for a short time. He was just going to go down here and stay for just a short while. That is really what the word "sojourn" means. It is something temporary, something brief. He had no idea that he was going to stay for a very long time. He was just going to go and stay a short time and then he was going to come back home and everything was going to be fine. Do you know what Elimelech did not see? He was walking away, no doubt, from the fear of death, but he was walking in to a very dangerous place. He was thinking he was going to die or starve to death in the land of Israel, but he goes to the enemy territory and he dies there.

I thought about this today. I'm going to die. Aren't you? This body is going to die. The real person on the inside of us is going to live on. This body one day is going to die. Whatever is going to take place, I don't have any idea. It may be in church. It may be at home. It may be anywhere. I don't know where I am going to die and I really don't know when I am going to die; but I know that I am going to die. Do you know where I am not going to die at? I am not going to die sitting on a bar stool somewhere. Do you know why? It is because I'm choosing not to go there. I'm not going to die being overdosed on illegal drugs. Do you know why? It is because I'm going to choose not to go there.

You see, Elimelech chose to go to enemy territory. He was just going to stay for a short time. He was not going to be gone long. That would have been sad enough but he takes his wife and he takes his sons; his family. He loads them all up and he goes. Here he is. They probably go over somewhere in shack somewhere that was probably a whole lot less of house and a home that he had in the land of Israel. No doubt, he is very scared living over here. He doesn't have any peace. He doesn't have any freedom. Here he is living in the land of Moab, a place here where the enemies of God are at.

2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

Elimelech's name means "God is my King." His name meant that, but God was not the Lord of his life. Had He been then Elimelech would not have packed up everything that he had and left the land of

promise. He would have never left where God had placed him. He never would have left where God put him had the Lord been the Lord of his life.

2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

“...they continued there.” Do you know what they do? They pull into town one day not planning on staying long. I don’t know what he thought for sure but I do know as I read this scripture that he was not planning on dying there. He was not planning on being there very long.

When we make bad choices and our behavior is irresponsible, then we don’t know what is going to come our way. Do we? Again, God loves us and God wants us to live obedient lives unto Him. Here is what I don’t know and you don’t know either. God chastises us. He scourges us. He corrects us because He loves us. Here is what I don’t know and what you don’t know.

Elimelech had no idea he was going to die here in this land. He had no idea when he left that he was going to be down there for all those years. He had no idea. But the choices he made to leave got him to where he died in enemy territory. Had he never ever left the land of promise, had he never left the place that God had given him, had he never left Bethlehem then he never ever would have died on enemy territory. Truth? The reason he died is because of bad choice. A bad choice on one particular day; he leaves. He gets there.

Here is what I don’t know. God loves us. God chastens us. God does a lot of things because He loves us. Everything He does is because He loves us. There is a line out here somewhere in my life and in your life. Where I choose to walk disobedient to God and when God does His best to correct me and chasten me and get me back in line; there is going to be a day out there that I am going to leave here. I don’t know when that day is. In our world today, we have this idea that I made commitment to God 25 or 30 years ago so I can just go out here and live like I want to live. I can just do all kinds of horrendous sins but just before I die somewhere, God is going to come and rescue me and bring me back into the family of God and everything is going to be okay. That is not in the Bible. It is not there at all.

Believers today, we have eternal life. Believers have eternal life. Believers don’t habitually sin. Believers do not habitually—day in and day out, week in and week out, month in and month out—believers do not habitually sin. We do sin but we don’t habitually sin.

Here he is; his sons and his wife are planning on just staying a short time here in Moab but the Bible says they continued there. Do you know what continued means? It is just the opposite of what sojourn means. It means their stay just went on and on and on. It was just going to be a brief stay.

Do you know what I’ve heard some of you say here? It scares me when you say things like this. “I can go out here and commit this sin. I can go out here and do these things and all I have to do is just come back and ask God to forgive me and He will forget about it and go on. It is not quite that simple folks. I’m being kind when I’m saying this; but I hope that you are not that stupid. I hope you are not that

stupid. To think that you can spit in the face of Almighty God and God just blink at us and go on. Friend, it is not that simple. It is not quite that simple.

Here he is, he goes and his family is here and they continue there. His stay goes on and on. Do you know what I don't know? I don't know a lot of things that God did. I don't know a lot of things that God may have said or spoke or whatever. I do not know. However, I do know this. In his unbelief of Almighty God, had he believed God then he never would have been in the land of Moab. Had he believed Almighty God then he never would have died in enemy territory. He died here because he chose to go there.

I hope tonight that you are not going to do that. I hope tonight that you will believe God in whatever the situation may come in our lives. Who else do we have to turn to? What did the world have to offer you except eternal damnation, death and pain? That's all the world had to offer you. Why in the world would we want to turn and go back to that? When we go back into enemy territory, we forfeit eternal life. That's over. That don't go over in our society today but that's truth. That's biblical. We forfeit that. We die a sinner. We die in our sins. We die a horrible death when we go back out in and decide to live in enemy territory. When we make our home in the world, live in the world, and when we say "Lord, I don't believe you. I don't think you are going to take care of me;" we don't say that necessarily in words but our decisions prove that. Our decisions prove that is what we are really saying. "God you can't take care of me here. Lord, with all the situations and problems; you can't take care of my family here. Therefore, I am going to pick up all and move somewhere else." It may not necessarily be in enemy territory. You may get you a nice house. There may be a few fruit trees in the front yard. You may have a nice big green lawn. But if you've left the promises of Almighty God, if you've left where God has placed you; you are in enemy territory. You've walked away from Almighty God and I promise you the enemy is on your trail. He's coming and it's going to be a sad day for you. Do you know what we do? We abandon. We forsake. And we depart from Almighty God.

The Bible says he dies. Elimelech dies. She is left and her two sons. I don't know what happened to him. I don't know how he died. The Bible doesn't tell us that, but he died. The thing that he thought was going to happen in the land of promise, the thing that he thought was going to happen in the place where God had placed him and given him; the thing he was scared of happening back there, happened in enemy territory. It happened back where the enemy was at. He dies. Do you know what else happened? They buried him in enemy territory. Isn't that sad to think about?

Someone leaves the promises of Almighty God, leaves the provision of Almighty God, leaves the protection of Almighty God and takes him and his family and goes back into the land where the enemy is at and there he dies and there they burry him. Not only that but do you know what else happens? Not that crisis, but there was going to be another one coming. Now Elimelech is dead, but then the two boys die after they have married to Moabite women. They die.

Elimelech dies. He's gone. We know that he is gone.

4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

Time goes on. Elimelech is dead. He is buried. He's gone. Here is what the two boys did. They took them wives of the enemy.

We have a lot of children, young people that are coming up. It is not going to be too many years, some of these that are eight or ten years old and you talk about being married in a few years; it is not going to be long that you are going to bat your eyes and they are going to be walking down the aisle somewhere. I know that for sure because I've seen mine do that. Be that as it may; it is your responsibility as parents to teach your children; first of all, to live a life that is pleasing to God, give their lives to Almighty God, be born into the family of God. That's your responsibility but along with that you've got a responsibility to teach them that when they go out here and start loafing with people and start having boyfriends and girlfriends to make sure that it is Christian boyfriends and girlfriends. Don't get any Amen's on that much, but its truth. Listen. Your son or your daughter; you might say we'll let them court this one or date this one or marry this one and even though they are unsaved, our child is spiritual enough that we can get them enough to bring them in. It usually works the reverse of that. The reason that I am saying that is because it is in the book. God placed it here. God knows what will happen. That's why He said it.

Do you know what Naomi allowed? She allowed her sons to marry two of the women here that were enemies. These were people that God said to stay away from. You can't intermarry with them. That's what God said for them not to do. But yet, they compromise what they knew was truth. There was no doubt in my mind that Naomi knew that her sons were not supposed to marry these two women. I guarantee you that. Do you know what they did? They married them anyway. Do you know what happens? They continued here for a while, but they also died. The boys died. Here Naomi is left by herself, in a foreign land where she is not wanted in a place where everybody looks down upon her. She has two daughters-in-law now that are heathen women. She is all alone now. Not only has her husband been buried in a foreign land on enemy soil, but also her sons. She is all alone now. The reason all these things happened is because one day they decided to leave the land of Israel, the place where God had placed them, and the home that God had given them, the land that God had provided for them. A place here where God said, if you be obedient to me, you live according to my statutes and my judgments; I'll take care of you. I'll bless you. That's all you have to do. They walked away from all of that. They spent many years in enemy territory and there Elimelech and his two sons died.

Do know what I don't want to happen? I don't want that to happen to any of us. I don't want that to happen to anybody. Someone that had been in a place where God had placed them, somewhere in a place where God has used you and blessed you and you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that you were right where God wanted you at. Then famine came, problems came, disturbances happened, you didn't fit in and you begin to not believe God and distrustful of Almighty God and when you start doing that things get worse and worse quickly. They left up here physically and moved to the enemy territory. A lot of folks today are leaving spiritually. They may live in the same house or they may not live in the same house. They are leaving a place of protection, a place of blessing; they are leaving a place where God will take care of them. They are abandoning eternal life. They are going back into a place where they are going to die a very lonely, sad, dark, cold, death. They are going to have that one day. Do you know why? It is because they have walked away from Almighty God.

That is the part of the story that I want to talk about. I know that it has a great ending to it. We understand that. We don't have time to talk about that tonight.

Listen. This story had a good ending but it did not have a good beginning. People walked away from Almighty God. It didn't ending for Elimelech and his two sons. We know that Ruth became a Proselyte. She embraced the Jewish religion. We know that she was accepted into the Jewish religion. We understand that. When she left and went to the land of Canaan, we know that God used her and through her lineage we know that Jesus Christ was born. We understand that.

The sad part of this story is that a man and his two sons were just going to take a short trip. They were not going to be gone long. They were just going over into enemy territory just for a short time, but they never came back. They died there. They were buried there. When you choose to walk away from Almighty God; you may not be planning on being gone for very long, but you may die while you are gone. You may never get to come back. Life may come to an end and you may never get to come back to where you once were.

I'm not trying to scare you. I'm not trying to do that, but I am trying to warn you tonight.

Elimelech died. His two sons died. They died in enemy territory and they were buried there. Wouldn't that be a sad thing to happen to you? That would be a sad thing to happen to you. That would be a sad thing to happen to anybody.

However, it is happening today.

Where are you standing at with God?

I'm not asking you if everything is rosy in your life. I'm not asking if you have all kinds of money in your bank account. I'm asking you tonight, do you know beyond any shadow of a doubt that if you should leave this world tonight that "I know I'm saved." That is what I am asking you tonight. If you know that tonight, I praise God for that. But if you don't know that tonight, if you don't know that you are saved, if you have never been born into the family of God; maybe you have been like Elimelech. You've just decided to take a little trip. You're not going to be gone long. But one day turns into two and two into ten then ten turns into three months and three months into fifteen months...and you are still yet in a foreign country. You are still yet on enemy soil.

Listen.

You are getting close to death. I don't know when you are going to die, but you are getting close to death.

I would plead with you tonight to repent of your sins and make things right with God.

Come—

Let's pray...