

Running Away From Home

Compiled/formatted by Tom Stephens
(Emphasis' are mine. All Scripture: KJV)

A Little red wagon, a teddy bear, a piece of worn blanket, a peanut butter sandwich and a little boy—running away from home.

Circumstances had forced him to make the first major decision of his life. It had become utterly impossible to live with these harsh, unreasonable people any longer.

Every other little boy or girl had a better mother and father than he and could stay up as late as their parents, and eat all the candy they wanted.

Besides, his big sister was always picking on him, and now his new baby sister was getting all the attention and love from the household.

Bravely he announced his departure to his mother. He expected weeping and wailing, but she did not even look up from the potatoes she was peeling as she said “good-bye”.

Out across the front porch and down the steps. When he reached the end of the block, he realized more decisions would have to be made. Shall he go out *that* street, or *that* one, or *the other* one?

He had never even crossed his *own* street by himself! Now, at which one of those houses shall he park his little red wagon? Which steps should he climb? Which door bell should he ring? Where was he to go? Oh, cruel world, crazy complicated mixed up world! You expect too much out of a little five year old boy!

With all these decisions facing him, he did manage to make one. He turned around and headed back to home. To his great surprise, his mother never even realized he was missing. Right there, he wondered why he hadn't realized before that his mother was the kindest, loveliest and most wonderful mother in the whole world!

“*Running away from home*”. Some people spend a whole lifetime doing just that—running from responsibilities, obligations and disciplines, from challenges and even from opportunities and blessings. Running away from life itself—running from God.

In the Book of Ruth, we read the story of a whole family who ran away – away from their home, their country and even their God.¹

Is Anyone Hungry?

“In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man *did that which* was right in his own eyes.” (Jud. 21:25)

The book of Judges ends by emphasizing that during the time of the judges, the Israelites ignored God's standards for them and did what they thought was right. But as Proverbs points out, human thoughts and opinions are a poor judge of what is righteous. (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). To make our opinions rather than God's Word the guide for our lives is nothing less than rebellion against Him. Nehemiah writes concerning

¹ The first part of this paper concerning “A Little Red Wagon”, was the introduction to a pamphlet called, “Running Away From Home”; and the pamphlet showed the following copyright information:
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this: “They were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast thy law behind their backs... Nevertheless for thy great mercies’ sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God (Nehemiah (9: 26, 31).

It was during that time the events in Ruth took place.

“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. 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. And Elimelech Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.” (Ruth 1: 1-3)

The land was in famine because God was judging the people’s sin.

“And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.” (Leviticus 26:19, 20)

Empty Breadbasket

Names have Hebrew meanings in the Bible; and the famine was in Bethlehem-Judah. For instance:

1. Beth – House
2. Bethel – House of God
3. Bethesda – House of Mercy
4. Bethlehem – House of the breadbasket of the land. Land of bumper crops and granaries.
5. Judah – Praise. And anybody can be happy in the midst of plenty in the land of Praise...under Christ!

No Famine In Moab

Elimelech’s family went where almost everyone else was going—to Moab. Moab was the son of an incestuous union of Lot and his daughter. Moab and Israel were enemies; and Israel was oppressed for 18 years during a part of the Judges era, Jeremiah 48:11:

“Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.”

Then the Lord God condemned the Moabites in Deuteronomy 23:1-14 (vs. 3 shown)

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever.”

In his discouragement over the famine, Elimelech made a bad choice, not just for himself but for his family. Likely he was at one time a godly man but maybe he became like some Christians today. Maybe he moved his family from church to church always looking for the “perfect” pastor. Maybe Sunday dinner was a time to emphasize the faults he found in the pastor and his flock. Maybe he complained because he wasn’t given the credit he felt he and his family deserved. Maybe eventually the family left the church altogether and journeyed to the place where God was no longer Lord of their lives.

Sound familiar? You see, our Father in Heaven is a God of justice; and He always judges in a righteous manner. His judgments are sometimes full of eternal terror for those who love a critical countenance, and an evil attitude. Read God’s condemnation on those who continue in their sins of omission.

“But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.” (Isaiah 47:9)

It was God’s will Elimelech remain in Israel. If he had stayed, continuing to trust, God would have made provision for each of their lives.

There was a godly remnant who remained in Israel and continued to love and honor God. Ruth emphasized that God is active in the lives of those who remain faithful to Him and his Word. *“The Lord...under whose wings thou art come to trust” (Ruth 2:12).*

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. (Ruth 2:11-13)

Verse 11 is the key verse in Ruth. Even in the midst of great apostasy during the period of the judges, God watched over those who sought Him in sincere trust and committed faith (Psalm 17:8; 36:7). The story of Ruth is about God’s providence and provision in the lives of all who remained faithful to Him.

The family suffered in the land of Moab. First, the two sons married Moabite women. Then Elimelech died and after that his two sons. His wife, Naomi, heard the famine was gone and bread was once again plentiful in the House of Praise. She determined to return to the land of her fathers and her God. She called her two daughters-in-law, Orpha and Ruth, to her. She expressed her love for them and told them to return to the homes and find new husbands. In tears, Orpha agreed. Ruth, however, had found more than a family in the home of Naomi – she had also found the true and living God.

Returning To Bethlehem

She pledged herself to return with Naomi to Israel and to the God of Israel. Faithfully, she helped Naomi and went to the fields to glean the grain that was missed or dropped by the harvesters. When she came home the first day, Naomi asked her about the field where she had grained. When she learned it belonged to Boaz, a kinsman, she encouraged Ruth to return there. Ruth caught the eye of Boaz and when he learned who she was, he instructed his laborers to drop handfuls on purpose for the young woman. Eventually, he took the steps necessary to make her his wife.

Though the book of Ruth is sad, it has a happy ending. Because of her faithfulness to God, Ruth became the grandmother of King David and is one of only four women mentioned by Matthew in the lineage of Christ.

The Israelites knew there was some sound advice in the book of Ruth on how to be sure of the Pentecostal rains necessary for a bountiful harvest. Therefore, from ancient times, it was the custom to read the book of Ruth during the feast of Pentecost.

Sadly, our world today is also in famine. Now any famine is very hard to understand, especially when you live in a land of plenty. It’s difficult to believe that tens of thousands—maybe millions—will starve to death world-wide, every day for the remainder of our lives! And, what’s more, two-thirds of the population our world do go to bed hungry every night! The facts are difficult to believe.

At the time of the original writing of this paper, it was stated that in India and other similar lands, the bodies of young children would be found bloated from malnutrition! Yet, equally horrifying is the fact that there is a spiritual famine in today's church and in the world. Our world today is violently awaiting the antichrist, and God's kids remain looking toward the time when Jesus will fully fulfill John 14: 1-4:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Yet, we the true church, are losing the power we need to rightly win the world for Christ. We have lost our strengths to modernism, indifference, and are lounging in the sun while the world has already prepared for the antichrist system. Godlessness and heathenism seems to have taken authority over His church. I said “*seems to*”, for it is impossible that Satan will be able to destroy His Church. (Matthew 16: 17-19)

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Blessings to all from Tom and Linda Stephens
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