

Sitting still in our exercises and trials (Quality: Very good)

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[0 : 00] portion of truth to which I will ask your attention this evening is in the chapter that we read, that is the third chapter in the book of Ruth, and I will address particularly the last verse, verse 18.

Then said she, sit still my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall, for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day.

A wonderful history of the sovereignty of God we have in the book of Ruth.

Things were not at all stable, and I've often thought, reading through the book of Judges, we come to the end of the book, where it is written in verse 25 of chapter 21, In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

My friends, how that leads on into the first statement in the book of Ruth.

[1 : 32] Now it came to pass in the day when the judges ruled. You see, it wasn't a time of ease, it wasn't a time of real prosperity.

Everybody was considering their own situation, their own pleasure, and their own prosperity. The time of judges was a time of great uncertainty.

And yet the Lord sanctified and overruled those times. He raised up judges in his mercy.

And the nation deviated from the good way and chose their own ways and pursued their own paths.

And God patiently raised up judges to rule and to bring back a measure of order. But nevertheless, the end statement of the spirit of the people does not encourage us to think there was any real peace and prosperity in the nation of Israel at that time.

[2 : 56] But we come to the effect of the situation as it unfolded in the wisdom and by the power of God.

There was a famine in the land of Israel. A certain man of Bethlehem Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab.

He and his wife and his two sons. We may say, well, surely, for Elimelech to leave his own people and to stray off into the land of Moab, we're certainly taking a step in the wrong direction.

Nevertheless, we read on in the history and the outcome of that initial plan or project.

And we realize how the Lord wonderfully sanctified and used the development to the furtherance of the gospel, to the ingathering of those who, Ruth particularly, who was at that time a stranger to the ways and things of God as a member of the nation of Moab.

[4 : 28] I heard Mr. George Rose once say, and he was a very gracious minister of my youth, He said once, the Lord can bring good out of evil, but it never makes the evil good.

You apply that principle to what Elimelech did in taking his wife and his two sons down into Moab. Yes, we may say, surely, it was a step in the wrong direction.

But ultimately, you just think of the book of Ruth and what it records about that young woman being brought to the truth and eventually married to Boaz, who is a wonderful type of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Don't easily justify doing that which is wrong by saying, surely the Lord can bring good out of it and it doesn't matter what I do.

In other words, the principle that Paul warns us against when he says, we're not to sin that grace may abound.

[5 : 48] We're to be careful and prayerful how we walk and not ready, as it were, to follow the dictates of our own judgment, rather to seek the leading and teaching of the Lord.

But we have illustrations in the scripture where, despite the obvious wrong of certain people in forming a judgment and acting upon their own inclinations, they go into trouble, how the Lord can sanctify and overrule that and bring good to his own people and to the glory of his own great and all-worthy name.

Well now, just look for a moment or two at the providence of God. how Elimelech with his wife, Naomi, went down with their two sons into Moab.

And the two sons took wives of the Moabitish women. There was Orpah and Ruth and they dwelt there about ten years.

Well, Marlon and Chillion, the two sons, died as well as Elimelech. Naomi was widowed and her two daughters were widowed also.

[7 : 34] There were three widows together. What a lamentable situation. we can see it possibly unfolded in that the menfolk were removed from them and left them as widows dependent upon the goodness and the mercy of the Lord.

There is in the heart of God so obviously in Scripture a very tender place for the widow.

My friends, that example is left on record for us. And it is only right and true within the church of God that both prayerful and practical application should be exercised toward those that are brought into difficulty through the removal of some loved one by the hand of death.

And I hope the Lord will maintain that spirit not only in the church but in the nation. It is good when the widows have some special place.

Now the Lord in his providence he caused these two young women and Naomi to come to a point when Naomi suggested that they should each return to their own families.

[9 : 32] And there was a difference between Aupar and Ruth. And I firmly believe that the difference was essentially spiritual.

They had a common affection for their mother-in-law. They kissed her but there was a difference between Aupar's relationship with her mother-in-law and that of Ruth.

And the difference was in this that Ruth by God's grace had a union made between her soul and the soul of her mother-in-law.

Now do you know what it is to have that difference in your own heart concerning those that fear God. Ruth was evidently a chosen vessel of mercy and God worked in her heart that love to her mother-in-law that she wouldn't submit to the suggestion that they both should go back to their relations in Moab that Ruth was unmoved by the suggestion and the scripture declares she clave unto Naomi.

She didn't just have a superficial natural affection there was a bond and my friends it was a heavenly bond bond.

[11 : 14] It was a union which God alone can and does create. What a wonderful thing it is. For we know that we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.

We love them. It's not something shall I say naturally attractive. It's not it's something that's inwrought by the spirit of God and that is a wonderful mark of being under the leading and teaching of the Holy Spirit of the living God.

Oh my friends the world love the world but they don't love the church but the church should be the highest expression of union that exists under the sun because we love one another for Jesus sake.

That is surely the cement that bombs with an eternal prospect. Now these two women obviously reacted according to their own feelings or power went back and Ruth stayed with Naomi.

Naomi confessed that she got nothing to offer of a natural sense. She was aged and the possibility of bearing sons was no longer existing and she had to realize that Ruth was her companion in widowhood but God who sanctifies and over rules brought Naomi's thoughts into the wonderful relationship that ultimately developed and matured between Boaz and Ruth and I'm not going into that history this evening in detail wonderful as it is that though they were strangers in one sense they were in the other sense blessed with the uniting principle and power of true godliness

[13 : 57] I did mention that Boaz is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ and my friends what a wonderful thing it is to trace that through the relationship of Ruth with the Saviour what I want to come to this evening primarily is what Naomi said to Ruth when Ruth returned after being with Boaz and Boaz showing affection toward her when she came to her mother-in-law she said who art thou my daughter and she told her all that the man had done to her and she said these six measures of barley gave he me for he said to me go not empty unto thy mother-in-law so she came back with a real positive evidence of the disposition of

Boaz her kinsman to the need prevailing by these two widowed women then said she sit still my daughter one of the hardest things in the spiritual exercises of the godly is to sit still or be still we need much grace to follow the law we need much grace to commit our way into his hand and leave the out workings of life to his over ruling power and purpose

I wonder as this settled on my mind to speak from this evening have I one or more in the congregation that feels shall I say uneasy in the situation that everything seems as it were to have gone quiet it may be exercises that have been very influential and given rise as it were to thoughts and anticipations for the future they seem to have waned they seem to have in some measure lost their force and you wonder whether the past feelings and exercises were of God things not working out as you anticipated well there's a scripture my friends that puts as it were the whole matter straight into focus my ways are not your ways neither are my thoughts your thoughts

God's ways and thoughts are so much higher than ours the difference that exists between heaven and earth and here we are sometimes as it were running forward and making plans based upon what we think should be the pattern of our experiences and we begin to build as it were imaginary developments that will ultimately set the seal to the whole matter and then it seems that the whole comes into question the whole comes into question and we begin to think and under temptation that we must have been carried away with our own thoughts and that the whole matter seems to be going wrong the

Lord is an absolute sovereign he doeth as he will in the armours of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth none can stay his hand or say unto him what doest thou sit still my daughter sit still my daughter she says for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day he won't create an exercise in the heart of his people and leave it to come to naught the Lord is perfect in all his works and all his ways and if the

[20 : 04] Lord creates in our lives certain developments and gives to us maybe a very clear indication what will come to pass in his time and his way he will perform his purpose sit still and so often we're brought as it were from the initial exercise in some particular way and manner and we're burdened with it in prayer and we go into chapel and we wait on the ministry to hear whether the Lord has something to say through the preaching of the gospel that bears on the issue and may I use this expression advisedly there's a certain measure of excitement as this thing proceeds and then ultimately things happen that cast a question about the whole matter and you begin to wonder whether the initial was of the Lord and the devil tempts and unbelief begins to work and everything stands in doubt and in confusion and you say well if I'm wrong in this I'm surely altogether wrong and it seems to like a worm at the root of your hope give question as to your state and standing whether you will spend eternity in heaven or in hell but my friends God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain there's not such a thing with our God as something commenced and unfinished God perfectly accomplishes his purposes the question arises immediately that Naomi puts her finger straight on at this point in his own time and in his own way and as things seem sometimes to drift through a long period of time without any signal intimation that your exercises are of

God you can begin to question and begin to wonder what was the origin of your thoughts and your anticipations in the initial time of the matter well now this is a wonderful scripture scripture then said she sit still sit still oh God is his own interpreter sit still be still and know that I am God the burden of scripture is to put us back in the position where we should be my soul wait thou only upon God for mine expectation is from him if tonight in the congregation there's someone who's very deeply concerned about some particular development you thought it was clear you were building as it were on your anticipations for the future and so on and then everything goes quiet everything goes quiet you say

I cry and shout under the burden and experience of this threatening change and the Lord seems to shut out my prayer and it's a good thing my friends to come into the house of God in an exercise relative to God's leadings and dealings with you but sometimes the ministry of the gospel seems to lack any application to the case and you look to this means as a means of affirmation that God greatly uses according to his counsels and purposes and there just seems nothing for you sit still my daughter sit still my daughter God's purposes in their timing are as perfect as any other aspect of his ways he's not hurried except as speed is required to accomplish the perfection of his will it is consistent with the character of God according to scripture that his people are obliged to wait they're obliged to watch they're obliged to pray and all these things that seem to threaten the very presence of the exercise are constructive because they bring us to analyse and to respond in a way that is suitable to an acknowledgement that

God is the one in command God has the right to work out his purposes in his own time as in his own way sit still my daughter sit still my daughter some of the young people here may be exercised in regard to a wife or a husband and things have seemed to show promise and you begin to build as it were in your heart a conception of a future relationship and then unexpectedly something arises that seems to hold all in question and you become confused and you can't get the various ends together and you begin to think that you must be entirely wrong sit still be still watch wait and pray

[28 : 27] I repeat God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain that which is of God will come to pass that which is not for good is better brought to naught than left to materialize and my friends we profess this in the fear of God and to those that are graciously exercised concerning the will of God we come to this that it's better to come to naught than to prosper if so be it is inconsistent with God's knowledge of the future and God's understanding of not only the natural influence but also the spiritual influence it's better that it disappears that it doesn't develop but sit still sit still and it's hard work to sit still isn't it with nature like we've got we want to be we want to get things settled we want to be up and doing we want to see things going on step by step almost at a running pace rather than a steady walking in the fear of God sit still my daughter sit still my daughter for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day

God hasn't lost control God hasn't forfeited his sovereign prerogative as king of kings and lord of lords I can quote a hymn not a single shaft can hit until the God of love sees fit don't see it as it were shattered and broken into a thousand pieces because the Lord may well bring all the pieces together in a most positive real and clear ultimate fulfilment of his initial design I think of course and cannot but turn to it in my mind our friend who I'm standing in place of today our friend

Mr. Ralph poor boys I knew him years and years ago when he was a young man in the church at Oakington his father was alive and his mother so I knew the family brother and I went there to preach on one occasion and I saw such a change in him he was quite a sturdy well good appearance young man he looked very hallmark of fitness in that sense in his country environment then I went this next time subsequently and he'd lost weight he'd lost weight and he looked poorly

I took it to heart and thought about him subsequently I was in the presence of Mr. Leslie Rowell some of you remember the pastor of Evington years ago and I said to Mr.

Rowell I said Mr. Rowell I said I'm worried about Ralph Warboys he said to me Harold he said you know what's wrong with him don't you I said no I don't I said but I I'm concerned about his changed appearance he's obviously under the weather he said Harold you ought to know what's wrong with him I said well what Mr.

[33 : 19] Rowell he said he's exercised about preaching he said and it hasn't yet come to pass he said and the exercise with his temporal commitments is wearing him down you see Mr.

Warboys was going through the preparatory leadings and teachings of the spirit of God preparing him to be a minister of Jesus Christ which has been of recent years his labour in addition to many other commitments I could look back to that incident with Mr.

Rowell and say really sit still wait a bit the Lord will bring it to pass in his own time the man will not be at rest until he finish the thing this day and my friends the time came did it not when things developed according to the will of God Mr.

Warboys was recognised and has been confirmed over and over again as a faithful ambassador of the King of Kings you see waiting sit still it's a time as it were to realise that the Lord is able to perform his purposes without any hindrance standing in the way and it is under that pure and perfect government that he rules and brings to pass his sovereign will and pleasure well now I could apply this principle in a more general way with ease sit still sit still you may be some of our young friends may be anxious about their employment and in these days when recession seems to be threatening you wonder what is going to happen what will be your experience in a few months time if there is a sit still see how the matter will fall unbosom your hearts anxieties to the

King of Kings and Lord of Lords he can so work and overrule that your greatest fears never materialize your expectations are far exceeded by the abundance of his goodness and his mercy making a way where there appeared to be no way sit still sit still oh don't go rushing about wait on the Lord be of good courage he will strengthen thine heart I say wait on the Lord be still be still you say ah but you don't know my nature my friend pray against your own nature seek the Lord's help to overcome that turmoil of spirit that is so natural but so unprofitable in the exercise of it except the Lord overrule it to make you realize that you are but clay in the hand of the heavenly potter then she said then said she sit still my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall some of our young people come to that momentous stage in life when they're called upon as it were to make decisions as to which way they shall take in the furtherance of employment or the preparation for employment in the certain subjects they are going to concentrate on in their later periods of education and so on and they seem to be very important decisions well yes

[38 : 15] I'm not here to minimize the importance of the decision but I'm here to say the Lord is perfect who knows the end from the beginning who knows the situation in all the detail of it who you'll be expected to work with what you will expect be expected to do how things shall shape and form as you become more settled in a new situation my friend be still and know that I am God talk to the Lord about it bring it to his feet the hearts of all men are in his hand you go for interviews recently in our own family circle one of our sons in law was confronted he's in the building business and he was confronted with redundancy and of course he was very very anxious for the future and we with him but two positions came up that both seemed to hold reasonable prospects and he went for an interview one place and he took very much to the situation and thought that was the way and he took up the second interview thinking it was only right to fulfil his obligation and go and be interviewed but in so doing there was no commitment well he came away from the first interview settled that yes he thought that was it and then he went for the second interview and it wasn't quite the line of things that he'd been experiencing through the years of his life so he decided in his own mind that this is the one then he got in touch with the agency and the agency said

I'm sorry but that door's closed that's no longer in the market he had to realise that his inclination was not what the Lord had in preparation for his future and the Lord clearly told him that the exercise between the options was in the hand of the Lord and this was the Lord's way for him that wasn't though he'd set his heart on it the door closed and he had to go in the other diary my friends the hearts of all men the results of interviews the things that bear in in all their detail look we serve a God who is absolute in his control absolute sit still my daughter sit still wait watch and pray don't set your heart too firmly on something that may prove to be not the will of

God because God can close doors as well as he can open them mercifully he closes those that do not hold the same promise of benefit as those that ultimately remain open I repeat as for God his way is perfect sit still my daughter sit still my daughter how many times looking back over life an old man like me can say oh how wise I would have been not to have pursued that particular line of thought that ultimately came to nothing how wise

I would have been to do what Naomi counselled Ruth to do sit still sit still for the man will not be at rest until he finishes the thing that day in the Lord's own time the Lord's own way you'll be able to put this to the situation and it came to pass and I believe when you do see that you'll look back over life when you get toward the end of your days and reflect and you'll say oh how good the Lord was to guide me in that direction to lead me into that path how much better it has proved to be than if the Lord had given me over to my own ambitions and intentions in the days of my youth sit still my daughter does this apply to you this evening

I hope if I can venture to suggest I hope it may be a message of the Lord for his own glory and your good in time and to eternity whoever receives the direction of his word amen