

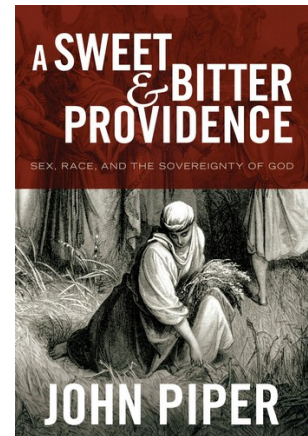
A Sweet and Bitter Providence: Sex, Race, and the Sovereignty of God

Book Details:

- **Author:** John Piper
- **Category:** Christian Living
- **Publisher:** Crossway (2010)
- **Binding:** Hardcover
- **Page count:** 160
- **ISBN#:** 9781433514371

Recommendation:

- **Review Date:** 09/03/2010 by [Bob Hayton](#)
- **Rating:** Highly Recommended



Review:

Few books or stories in the Bible match the grandeur and evocative power of the Book of Ruth. It may be one of the best stories from a literary perspective, of all time. John Piper has skillfully unpacked the beauty of this literary masterpiece in a beautifully produced work of his own.

A Sweet and Bitter Providence traces the story of Naomi and Ruth through tragedy and despair and on to grace and joy. Before I can even talk about Piper's writing I have to stop and point out how beautiful and attractive this book is. The sleeve is beautiful enough, with a first rate painting of Ruth from the Bridgman art gallery. Then the hardcover has the same beautiful image on the front with a detailed map of Israel on the back in soft whites and gray. The sleeve contrasts the white and gray with a bold maroon. Such a beautiful packaging will help draw the reader in to the glory of the Book of Ruth.

The book is divided into four chapters that match up with the four chapters in Ruth. Before each chapter the biblical text in the ESV is provided. This allows the book to serve as a devotional alongside the reading of the Biblical book of Ruth. Piper adds an introduction and “final appeals” on either side of the four main chapters.

As the subtitle indicates, several themes are addressed throughout Ruth which have contemporary significance. Piper highlights the sexual chastity and bold assessment of character displayed by Boaz and Ruth (with Naomi). He highlights the racial aspects of a despised and destitute Moabitess' return to Israel with her Jewish mother-in-law. The predominant focus is on the sovereignty of God clearly seen by the characters in the story as well as the author of Ruth. God is sovereign over both the bitter providential suffering of Naomi, as well as the beautiful and gracious provision of a redeemer and an heir.

Piper doesn't miss the author's intentional way of setting the story in the larger framework of canonical history. The book ends by declaring Ruth to be the great-grandmother of David.

The final appeals Piper offers sound like the wise advice of a seasoned man of God. Perhaps listing them here will encourage you to pick up this little book and by it be awakened afresh to the wonder of God's sovereignty and the glory found in the small book of Ruth.

Piper exhorts us to:

- 1) Study the Scriptures
- 2) Pursue Sexual Purity
- 3) Pursue Mature Manhood and Womanhood

- 4) Embrace Ethnic Diversity
- 5) Trust the Sovereignty of God
- 6) Take the Risks of Love
- 7) Live and Sing to the Glory of Christ

This little book will do much to infuse your soul with worship to our Lord and Savior. It will also call you to a greater trust and deeper obedience. I recommend it highly.

Author Info:

John Piper is pastor for preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His other books include Desiring God, Don't Waste Your Life, This Momentary Marriage, and Spectacular Sins.

Disclaimer:

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