

THERE ARE NO ACCIDENTS WITH GOD

RUTH 2:1-23

Introduction: (1). Charlotte and I lived in Texas for right at 15 years. We love the friends we made there, but we never grew to appreciate the flat land with no trees, and the unbearable heat and rainless summers. Texas of course is famous for its cowboys, and some of those rough riders are pretty smart fellas. Some even have better theology than some professors and preachers I know.

(2). I heard the story of a cowboy who applied for health insurance. As the agent was making his way through a marathon list of questions, he asked the cowboy, "Have you had any accidents?" The cowboy replied "No, none at all. I was bitten last year by a rattlesnake and a horse kicked me in the ribs. That did lay me up for awhile." Well the agent responded with a confused look on his face, "Wouldn't you call those accidents?" "Why no," said the cowboy, "They both did it on purpose!"

(3). Ruth is a short story that teaches us "There are no accidents with God." Everything has a purpose. Everything has a reason. Apparent accidents are the Almighty's appointments. Our seeming chance decisions are in perfect harmony with a Sovereign chosen determination. Ephesians 1:11 tells us that God "works all things according to the counsel of His will." Ruth shows us this truth played out in the everyday happenings of very ordinary people.

Transition: Note with me 4 truths that weave this wonderful chapter together.

IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE:

I. Apparent Accidents Are The Occasion Of Divine Direction. 2:1-3

- Naomi and Ruth have returned to Bethlehem husbandless and penniless. Prospects for the future include poverty and possibly starvation. Their situation is grim from a human perspective, but not from God's. Why?

1. **God Works Through Particular Humans.** 2:1

- Relative of Naomi's on her husband's side (!)
- He is a man "of great wealth" (*NKJV; NASV*), "a man of standing" (*NIV*); "a worthy man" (*ESV*). The word can mean "strength, power, ability, capability, wealth" depending on the context. Here it speaks of a man with social standing and a good reputation, an honorable man of character and means. "A real substantial man of character" (Younger, 440).
- Named Boaz—his name appear last in the verse and is withheld to the last possible moment to increase the suspense and drama of the story.
- Here is a man God can and will use, a spiritual "knight in shining armor." He is a man who honors God (v.4), he is a man of influence and integrity, a man of standing and substance, credentials and character. He is also of the clan or family of Elimelech. He has the "right stuff" relationally, morally and financially to solve Naomi's and Ruth's problems. Such a man was an example to his community. He is also an example to us.

Application: Point to Boaz and you point to a man you could point your sons to and say "Grow up to be like him." May the clan of Boaz increase mightily!

2. **God Works Through Particular Happenings.** 2:2-3

- Naomi and Ruth must eat. God had made provision in the Law for the poor, foreigner, widow and fatherless.
 - Leviticus 19:9-10 (cf. 23:22)—“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God.”
 - Deuteronomy 24:19-22—“When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.”
 - And Deuteronomy 10:17-19 speaks of the special concern and love God has for foreigners and widows—“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
- Ruth asked Naomi to let her go to the fields of someone who will allow her and work, that they might have something to eat. Ruth takes the initiative and Naomi responds with a short concise statement, “Go, my daughter.”
 - Ruth is active/Naomi is inactive
 - Ruth is hopeful/Naomi is hopeless
 - Ruth is determined/ Naomi is in despair
- Verse 3 is remarkable in its irony. Ruth goes to glean and “she happened to come” (*NKJV*; *NASV*) “as it turned out” (*NIV*), literally in Hebrew, “her chance chanced” to the field belonging to Boaz. Can you believe it! Of all the many fields she might go to to glean, it just so happened that she wound up at Boaz’s place.
- Of course this is no accident or happenstance happening at all. God was divinely directing, sovereignly orchestrating things down to the last detail. Ruth did not plan to end up in the field of Boaz, but God intended for her to do so.
- Ruth did what she could only do and God did what only He can do!
- Proverbs 16:9 says: “A man’s heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.”

II. Apparent Accidents Are The Outworking Of Divine Protection. 2:4-13

- Ruth ran a risk in going out to the fields, but she really had no choice. Something had to be done or she and Naomi would starve. As a pretty, single, foreign woman, she could not have been more vulnerable. All she could really count on was the protection of Jehovah, *Shadday* the Almighty! That would be more than adequate. What do we learn from Ruth’s experience?

1. Trust God To Involve The Right Person.

2:4-7

- V. 4—
 - Look who shows up but Boaz! “Wouldn’t you know it, Boaz shows up” (Younger, 442) (cf. v.1).
 - Listen to the words on his lips! Here is a man of godly character and kindness.
 - Look at the response of those who know him!
- V. 5-6—
 - Note of whom he takes interest, a fancy.
 - Note he asks, “whose young woman is that” (NIV)? There is an age distinction noted, and the observation she must have some kind of relationship with somebody.
 - The foreman identifies her not by name but nationality, not personally but racially. We can only speculate if there was a racial or personal slight in his tone. Probably note because of v. 7.
- V. 7—
 - The foreman adds information that speaks to the character of Ruth (note the 3-fold description).
- Ruth is the right person for God to bring the right person in her life (a must for single persons in search of a mate to understand). In character and conduct she is God’s lady, Jehovah’s daughter, and others cannot help but notice. Trust the Lord to involve the right person.

2. Trust God To Implement The Right Plan.

2:8-9

- Boaz becomes proactive, he takes the initiative. In a series of 6 or 7 short sentences Boaz lays out a gracious and beneficial plan for Ruth that will solve her and Naomi’s food shortage.
 - Note the statements in the text
 - Note the possible conclusions we might draw.
 - 1. Ruth may have been about to leave the field when Boaz showed up.
 - 2. The male reapers may have done something to her that offended her or made her uncomfortable.
- Dan Block wisely notes, “Boaz institutes the first anti-sexual harassment policy in the workplace recorded in the Bible” (660). Furthermore, his instruction in v. 9 to drink from what the young men have drawn is extraordinary and borders on the fantastic. In this culture it was the norm for foreigners to draw water for the Hebrews and the women to draw water for the men: What a reversal of fortune! What grace and *hesed* Boaz shows to Ruth!
 - Make my fields your place of work.
 - Move up and glean with my women where you will do better.
 - Don’t worry any more about anyone giving you a hard time.
 - When you are thirsty, the young men will provide water for you! (perhaps the occasion of harassment?)
- Ruth came hoping to scratch out (literally!) enough grain to feed Naomi and herself for a few days. Oh, but God had something else. She did what she could and God did what He could. Trust the Lord to implement the right plan for your life.

3. Trust God To Inspire The Right Perspective.

2:10-13

- Ruth is overcome by the kindness and generosity of Boaz. She did not earn it and she did not expect it (and neither should we!). She did what she did out of love and devotion to

another, Naomi. She did what she did out of love for her Lord. Ruth is an amazing example of what we should do and what we should let God do.

a. You Be Humble.

2:10-11

- Ruth fell to the ground on her face—a posture of great gratitude and respect. She could go no lower!
- She asked a question that further accentuates her humility. Why help:
 - A woman?
 - A foreigner?
- She is stunned by his display of kindness, surprised by his graciousness toward her.
- Boaz responds (v. 11) that he knows all (“fully reported”) that she has done for Naomi...I know what you have done, everyone (cf. 2:6) knows what you have done. Such love, such devotion, such service, such sacrifice. In all the book of Ruth it is never about Ruth and always about another. The Bible teaches us in Proverbs 3:34 and James 4:6, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:10 also teaches us, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” So, you be humble.

b. Let God Honor.

2:12-13

- Boaz invokes a prayer of blessing on Ruth, fully entrusting her to the Lord.
 - Repay you
 - A full reward
 - Give you refuge under His wings (cf. 3:9!)
 - “Like a defenseless baby bird, Ruth now rests protected under the mighty wings of the Lord God.”
- Ruth responds not with any sense of right, but again only with humility.
 - Let me find favor in your sight (cf. 3:9-11!)
 - You have comforted me
 - You have spoken kindly to me.
 - I am your servant, though I do not really even have or deserve that status. What a heart! What a lady! What an example to us all! Here is a lady to point our daughter to and say, “Be like Ruth.” Oh yes, Lord, give us more men like Boaz! Lord, give us more women like Ruth!

III. Apparent Accidents Are The Opening For Divine Provisions.

2:14-17

- Ruth had caught Boaz’s eye. She had also captured his heart. God was at work in his circumstances and his heart. Though Boaz is the one who is showing kindness to Ruth, no one doubts he is the instrument of the Lord. A valuable lesson is before us that we must hold in delicate balance.

1. Let God Do His Part.

- Boaz invites Ruth to join him for lunch (“mealtime,” v. 14)
- Boaz passes Ruth so much grain she was satisfied and had some left over (for Naomi).
- Boaz commanded his men to let her glean even among the sheaves of grain.
- He tells the men to even drop on the ground grain stalks from their bundles specifically for her to pick up.
- Twice he warns them, “do not reproach” (*embarrass, NIV*) her (v. 15), “do not rebuke her” (v. 16). Kennedy says the phrase means, “Don’t hoot at her or treat her in such a way as to send her away frightened and helpless” (Younger, 446). She is not to be threatened

physically or shamed personally with snide or rude comments about her foreign status or the lowly class she represents.

- What grace! What a God! Ruth has no control over any of this, none. She trusts the Lord, and she trust him to do His part and accomplish His will on her behalf. However, she does not sit back in laziness or presumption. No, she trusts the Lord to do His part, and she teaches us to:

2. **Make Sure You Do Your Part.**

- She saved from what she was given for Naomi (v. 14).
- She went back to work after lunch (v. 15-16).
- She worked all day until evening (v. 17).
- She beat out (probably with a stick) what she had gleaned.
- God gave and she gleaned about an ephah of barley. An ephah equals about 22 liters, half a bushel, or 5.8 gallons. One liter of barley was a normal day's supply of food. It would have weighed 30-50 pounds and would have been an extraordinary amount for one day's work. Naomi and Ruth would have enough to eat for more than a week. And following this pattern (cf. 2:21), in the time remaining for harvest, Ruth would be able to glean in weeks enough food to last a year! Incredible! Her biggest challenge would have been how to get all of it home!
- What a great provision from the Lord. What a great servant is Ruth.

Transition: Apparent accidents are the opening for divine provisions.

IV. **Apparent Accidents Are The Opportunity For Divine Celebration.** 2:18-23

- It has been quite a day for Ruth. It is going to be quite a night for Naomi.
- Ruth returns home tired but full! God has forgotten neither her or Naomi. The tide of life is beginning to turn and their response teaches us several wonderful lessons.

1. **Never Forget To Celebrate God's Goodness.** 2:18-19

- V. 18—Ruth returns home, shows what she gleaned, gives Naomi the leftovers from lunch.
- V. 19—Naomi is surprised and excited (an understatement no doubt) and fires off 2 quick questions:
 - Where have you gleaned?
 - Where did you work?
- Her interest is not so much in the location as the owner. Before Ruth answers Naomi blesses him. His name doesn't matter (or does it?!), he deserves to be blessed.
- Ruth only adds to the celebration of God's goodness with her answer. The climatic name of their benefactor again comes at the very end of the verse: Boaz. The celebration of God's goodness turns to greater joy and gratitude for now they teach us:

2. **Never Forget To Celebrate God's Grace.** 2:20

- This may be the key verse of the first 2 chapters. Naomi immediately recognizes the name of Boaz and for the first time in the book praises and thanks the Lord.
- There is ambiguity in the verse concerning who has shown kindness (*hesed*). Is it the Lord or Boaz? Yes! Jehovah has shown through Boaz that He has not forsaken His *hesed* to Naomi or her dead husband and sons.
- But there is more. This man is related to us, he is one of our "close relatives." Close relative translates the Hebrew word *goel* which is sometimes translated as "kinsman-

redeemer.” The marvelous and grace-filled theme of the kinsman-redeemer begins here (cf. 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14). A kinsman-redeemer could redeem, purchase, or buy back:

- A family member sold into slavery (Lev. 25:47-49).
- Land which had been sold under economic hardship (Lev. 25:23-28).
- The family name of the dead by virtue of levirate (Latin, meaning brother-in-law) marriage (Deut. 25:5-10).
- The killing of a relative as a “blood avenger” (Num. 35:19-21).
- In grace God has raised up a person who can solve the problems and resolve the difficulties Naomi and Ruth face. We have moved from bitterness (1:20) to blessing (2:20). In grace, God is moving, and Ruth and Naomi celebrate.

3. **Never Forget To Celebrate God’s Guidance.** **2:21-23**

- V. 21—Ruth (the Moabitess, how could we forget?) recounts the kindness of Boaz.
- V. 22—Naomi commends this kindness and points out it will ensure Ruth’s safety. The word “meet” or “encounter” in v. 22 can mean “to harm, physically attack” as translated in the *NIV*. God guided Ruth to a place of provision and protection.
- V. 23—Life goes on as normal in the days ahead.
 - Ruth goes out to work week in and week out.
 - She follows the instructions of Boaz.
 - She continues to work for some months, through both barley and wheat harvest. Barley was March-April, wheat was June-July.
- It would seem certain that there was further contact with Boaz. It also seems there is no further development in their relationship. Is this where it ends? Is that all there is? We are not satisfied for it to be Ruth and Naomi under one roof, we want it to be Ruth and Boaz! Has the dream died? What is God up to?
- Adrian Rogers reminds us, “Men worry about time. God is only concerned about timing. Celebrate God’s goodness, His grace, His guidance and leave the timing to Him!”

Conclusion: There are no accidents with God. Everything has a purpose, everything works according to plan. How then should we act and respond? Easy. We act and respond like Ruth and Boaz. We become a channel rather than a reservoir of his *hesed*, of His loyal love, His covenantal commitment, and His dedicated devotion. We love others like He has loved us. We serve others like He has served us. God had a plan for Boaz, Ruth and Naomi. God also has a plan for you and me. The plan, His will, may not be easy, but it will be good, acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:2). Remember, “The God who gave His Son gave His best. We then can trust Him, with all the rest.” Remember and never forget, there are no accidents, only divine appointments.