



Silverdale Baptist

RUTH: BEAUTY FROM ASHES ~ GOD IS WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES.
RUTH 2:1-13 ~ 06/10-11/2023

Big Idea

God is always at work in the circumstances.

Getting Started

How have you seen God at work through circumstances or coincidences?

Even though we know that God is at work around us, we sometimes get so distracted by life that we miss Him. Yet, as we see in Ruth chapter 2, God is at work in the circumstances.

Learn

1. God has people prepared for His plans.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 2:1-13

What is the main idea of this passage?

What do you learn about Boaz from this passage?

2. God blesses people who will work.

What do you learn about Ruth in Chapter 2?

3. God sovereignly orchestrates events.

Boaz is a godly man and Naomi's relative. Ruth is working to support herself and Naomi. And God is at work in the details. So, although God is not mentioned by name in this passage, His presence is felt.

How do we see the providence of God in the details of chapter 2?

How should a man treat a woman? (Ruth 2:8-10)

He should provide for her.
He should protect her.

How did Boaz provide for and protect Ruth?

What made Ruth so attractive to Boaz? (Ruth 2:11-13)

Her commitment to family.
Her commitment to the Lord

From this passage, how do we see Ruth's commitment to family and to the Lord?

Ruth and Boaz meet by the providence of God. Ruth happens to pick Boaz's field to glean. Boaz happens to walk out to check on the harvest and notices Ruth. And, as Christians, we don't believe in luck; we believe in the sovereignty of God. God was at work in the details, and He was about to bring beauty from ashes.

Apply

Take a moment and reflect on your current life circumstances. How do you see God at work in your circumstances?

**If you are a man, how do you compare to Boaz?
Are you intentionally developing a love relationship with Jesus?**

Are you a provider or learning to be a provider for the women in your life?

Are you the protector of others around you?

If you are a woman, how do you compare to Ruth?

What are you doing to intentionally develop character qualities and a love relationship with God?

Pray

Father, give us spiritual eyes to see Your hands at work all around us. And, please help us see Boaz and Ruth as role models in our own lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

Digging Deeper into Ruth 2

Before God changes our circumstances, He wants to change our hearts. If our circumstances change for the better, but we remain the same, then we will become worse. God's purpose in providence is not to make us comfortable, but to make us conformable, "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Christlike character is the divine goal for each of His children.

Naomi was bitter against God, but Ruth was willing for God to have His way in her life; so God began His gracious work with Ruth. Ruth would influence Naomi, and then God would bring to pass a wonderful work that would eventually bring the Son of God into the world. Ruth and Naomi had no idea that they were part of an eternal plan that would fulfill God's promise to Abraham that his seed would bring blessing to the whole world (Gen. 12:1–3). Ruth's story begins with the death of a husband, but it will end with the birth of a baby. Her tears will be turned into triumph.

If we want God to work in our lives and circumstances and accomplish His gracious purposes, then there are certain conditions that we must meet. These conditions are illustrated in Ruth's experiences in this chapter.

1. We must live by faith in the Lord (Ruth 2:1–3)

A Latin proverb says, "Providence assists not the idle." Since Ruth was not the kind of woman who could long remain idle, she asked Naomi's permission to glean in the fields so they would have food to eat. This was a step of faith on Ruth's part, based on God's commandment in the Law (Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19–22). Whenever they reaped a harvest, God's people were to consider the poor and leave gleanings for them. After all, God gave the harvest; and He had every right to tell the people how to use it.

The existence of this law was proof of God's concern for the poor among His people. The nation was instructed to treat the poor with equity (Ex. 23:3, 6; Lev. 19:15; Prov. 22:22–23) and with generosity (Lev. 19:9–10). God was also concerned for the widows, many of whom were poor, and He told the people to care for them (Ex. 22:22–24; see Isa. 10:1–2). Ruth was not only a poor widow, but she was also an alien. Therefore, she had every right to look to God for His help and provision. "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing" (Deut. 10:18, NIV).

To live by faith means to take God at His word and then act upon it, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20, NKJV). Since Ruth believed that God loved her and would provide for her, she set out to find a field in which she could glean. This was completely an act of faith because, being a stranger, she didn't know who owned the various parcels of ground that made up the fields. There were boundary

markers for each parcel, but no fences or family name signs as seen on our farms today. Furthermore, as a woman and an outsider, she was especially vulnerable; and she had to be careful where she went.

It is here that Boaz enters the story (Ruth 2:1, 3), a relative of Elimelech who was “a man of standing” (NIV) in the community. His name means “in him is strength.” By the providence of God, Ruth gleaned in the portion of the field that belonged to Boaz. The record says Ruth “happened” to come to this portion of the field, but it was no accident. Her steps were guided by the Lord. “I being in the way, the Lord led me” (Gen. 24:27, KJV).

God’s providential working in our lives is both a delight and a mystery. God is constantly working *with us* (Mark 16:20), *in us* (Phil. 2:12–13), and *for us* (Rom. 8:28) and accomplishing His gracious purposes. We pray, we seek His will, and we make decisions (and sometimes make mistakes); but it is God who orders events and guides His willing children. In a spectacular vision, the Prophet Ezekiel saw the providential workings of God depicted by a throne set on a “firmament” that was moved here and there by “wheels within wheels” (Ezek. 1). You can’t explain it, but thank God you can believe it and rely on it!

2. We must live by the grace of God (Ruth 2:4–16)

When Ruth set out that morning to glean in the fields, she was looking for someone who would show her grace (v. 2, and see vv. 10 and 13). Grace is favor bestowed on someone who doesn’t deserve it and can’t earn it. As a woman, a poor widow, and an alien, Ruth could have no claims on anyone. She was at the lowest rung of the social ladder.

The channel of that grace was Boaz. How good it is to know that God has good people living in bad times! If you knew only the record in the Book of Judges, you might conclude that the righteous had perished from the earth (Ps. 12:1–2; Isa. 57:1; 1 Kings 19:10; Micah 7:2). But there were still people like Boaz who knew the Lord and sought to obey His will. Boaz was concerned about his workers and wanted them to enjoy the blessing of the Lord (Ruth 2:4).

No sooner had Boaz greeted his workers than his eye caught the presence of a stranger in the field, and a lovely stranger at that. I get the impression that when he saw her, it was love at first sight; for from that point on, Boaz focuses his interest on Ruth and not on the harvest. Though an alien, Ruth was an eligible young woman whom the young men of the town would notice (3:10). Ruth 2:11 indicates that Boaz had already heard about Ruth, but now he was about to meet her personally.

Again, we marvel at the overruling providence of God. The Lord led Ruth to the field of Boaz and then led Boaz to visit his field while Ruth was there. When Boaz arrived, Ruth might have been resting in the shelter house that Boaz provided for his workers; or she might have grown weary and gone home to Naomi. When we commit our lives to the Lord, what happens to us happens by way of appointment and not by accident. Ruth was still a poor widow and an alien, but God was about to create a new relationship that would completely alter her circumstances.

Bible students have seen in Boaz a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in His relationship to His bride, the church. Like Ruth, the lost sinner is outside the covenant family of God, bankrupt, with no claim on God’s mercy. But God took the initiative and provided a way for us to enter His family through faith in Jesus Christ. (See Eph. 2:10–22.) I will have more to say about this relationship when we get to the next chapter and we consider the “kinsman redeemer.”

Now let’s notice the evidences of God’s grace in the way Boaz related to Ruth:

(1) *Boaz took the initiative (Ruth 2:8)*. Grace means that God makes the first move to come to our aid, not because we deserve anything, but because He loves us and wants us for Himself. “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19, NKJV). God took the initiative in salvation when we were

spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1–10), without strength (Rom. 5:6) sinners (5:8), and His enemies (5:10). Salvation was not an afterthought of God but that which He planned from eternity. We have every reason to believe Boaz loved Ruth and therefore took the first steps to meet her needs.

(2) *Boaz spoke to Ruth (Ruth 2:8)*. It was he who first spoke to her, for she would not have dared to speak to a man, especially one who was a stranger and “the lord of the harvest.” What right did a widow and an alien have to address a great man like Boaz? Yet he interrupted his conversation with his foreman to speak to a poor stranger gleaning in his field.

Several years ago, my wife, younger daughter, and I visited Great Britain and found ourselves in Lichfield, where we learned that Queen Elizabeth was coming to dedicate a new school for exceptional children. We interrupted our plans and stood on the curb, waiting patiently for the motorcade, which finally appeared. We stood perhaps ten feet from the Queen as she slowly rode by with her lady-in-waiting, waving to the crowd in her distinctive manner.

Now, suppose she had rolled down the window and called, “Hello, Warren! Hello, Betty and Judy! I’ll tell my guards to take care of you!” If that had happened, everybody would have been duly impressed with our importance and perhaps asked for our autographs. Imagine, here are three American citizens to whom the Queen speaks personally!

Queen Elizabeth has never spoken to me, and probably never will; *but Almighty God has spoken to me in Jesus Christ and through His Word!* “God ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Heb. 1:1–2, NKJV). In spite of all that a world of sinners has done to the Lord, He still speaks to us in His grace. He not only speaks the word of salvation, but He also gives us the guidance we need for everyday life. Just as Boaz instructed Ruth, so the Lord also shares His Word of wisdom to direct our daily lives. He is the “Lord of the harvest” and assigns to us our place in His field.

(3) *Boaz promised to protect Ruth and provide for her needs (Ruth 2:9, 14–16)*. Boaz called Ruth “my daughter” because she was younger than he (see 3:10), but it was also a term of endearment. He would treat her like a member of his family. (This is what David did for Mephibosheth. See 2 Sam. 9.) Boaz instructed his young men to protect her and the young women to work with her. She was to walk with the female servants who followed immediately after the reapers. In other words, Ruth had first chance at the best of the gleanings! Boaz even instructed his workers to allow her to glean among the sheaves and told them to deliberately drop some of the harvest so she could pick it up. If she was hungry or thirsty, she could refresh herself with his workers. In fact, Boaz ate with her and personally handed her the food! (Ruth 2:14)

What a picture of the grace of God! The master became like the servants that he might show his love to a foreigner. Ruth had no idea that Boaz had commanded his workers to be generous to her, but she believed his word and found that her needs were met. Jesus Christ came to this earth as a servant (Phil. 2:1–11) that He might save us and make us a part of His family. He has shared with us the riches of His mercy and love (Eph. 2:4), the riches of His grace (v. 7), the riches of His wisdom and knowledge (Rom. 11:33), His riches in glory (Phil. 4:19), and yes, His “unsearchable riches” (Eph. 3:8, NIV). We, undeserving “foreigners,” are members of the family of God and have all of His inheritance at our disposal.

(4) *Boaz encouraged Ruth (Ruth 2:10–13)*. Ruth’s response to Boaz was one of humility and gratitude. She acknowledged her own unworthiness and accepted his grace. She believed his promises and rejoiced in them. There was no need for Ruth to worry, for the wealthy lord of the harvest would care for her and Naomi. How did she *know* he would care for her? He gave her his promise, and she knew he could be trusted.

Ruth neither looked back at her tragic past nor did she look at herself and consider her sorry plight. She fell at the feet of the master and submitted herself to him. She looked away from her poverty and

focused on his riches. She forgot her fears and rested on his promises. What an example for God's people today to follow!

I find that many people are miserable because they don't obey the admonition of Hebrews 12:2: "fixing our eyes on Jesus." They spend so much time looking at themselves, their circumstances, and other people that they fail to do what Ruth did, namely, center their attention on their Master. Instead of resting in His perfections, they focus on their own imperfections. Instead of seeing His spiritual riches, they complain about their bankruptcy. They go to church "to get their needs met," instead of going to church to worship the God who is greater than any need. They need to heed the counsel of the little poem a radio listener sent me years ago:

Look at self and be distressed,
Look at others and be depressed,
Look at Jesus and you'll be blessed!

(5) *Boaz saw to it that she was satisfied (Ruth 2:14, 18)*. All of this happened to Ruth because of her faith in the God of Israel. Boaz fully knew Ruth's story, for it didn't take long for news to travel in a little town like Bethlehem. He knew that Ruth had abandoned her home and her gods and had put her faith in Jehovah. She had taken refuge "under His wings." That image sometimes refers to the hen protecting her chicks (Ps. 91:4; Matt. 23:37), but it can also refer to the wings of the cherubim in the holy of holies (Pss. 36:7; 61:4). Ruth was no longer a foreigner and a stranger. She was not only accepted by the God of Israel, but she was also dwelling in the very holy of holies with Him! (See Eph. 2:11–22.)

The word translated "answered" in Ruth 2:11 is literally "raised his voice." Boaz was getting excited! He wanted everybody to hear what he thought about Ruth, and he wasn't ashamed to be identified with her. She had trusted Jehovah, and she had proved her faith by cleaving to her mother-in-law and becoming a part of the people of Israel in Bethlehem. The phrase "spoken friendly" in verse 13 means "spoken to the heart." The Word of God comes from the heart of God (Ps. 33:11) to the hearts of His people (Matt. 23:18–23) and gives encouragement and hope (Rom. 15:4). If you listen to the voices of the world, you will be discouraged; but if you listen to the voice of God from His Word, your heart will be encouraged.

The Word of God and the Son of God can fully satisfy the heart of the believer. When we seek for satisfaction anywhere else, we will find ourselves disobedient and dissatisfied. The lost world labors for that which doesn't satisfy (Isa. 55:2), but the believer has full satisfaction because of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (Pss. 36:7–9; 63:5; 65:4; 103:5; 107:9). As the hymn writer put it:

Well of water ever springing,
Bread of life so rich and free,
Untold wealth that never faileth,
My Redeemer is to me.
Hallelujah! I have found Him
Whom my soul so long has craved!
Jesus satisfies my longings,
Through His blood I now am saved.

(Clara T. Williams).¹

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Committed*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 25–34.