

# BOOK OF RUTH

## Chapter 2

Ruth 2 is another beautiful example of God's providence. In other words, it shows how God provides for His people in every way, working behind the scenes and in the shadows to oversee all the details for the good of His people. Ruth is a beautiful story about God's goodness, guidance, grace, and providence. Providence has to do with the way God protects us, guides us, and supplies all of our needs. The word "providence" comes from the word "provide." God is our Provider. We don't always realize it is the hand of God until after the fact. Providence has been described as "the hand of God in the glove of history." Providence means that God is able to take care of us in all situations and circumstances. Nothing is too big or too small for God to handle. Ruth 2 is a perfect illustration of two Bible verses:

- *Psalms 37:23* *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*
- *Proverbs 3:5-6* <sup>5</sup> *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.* <sup>6</sup> *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

In Ruth we see how God guides the steps of His people.

### **Step 1. A famine in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1)**

From Ruth's standpoint, the providence of God began with a famine in Bethlehem (1:1). This was a famine she knew nothing about and could have cared less. It didn't affect her, did it? It was the famine that caused Naomi's family to move to Moab so they could find food.

### **Step 2. A family from Bethlehem (1:1-2)**

Ruth somehow met Naomi's family and she married one of her sons. It was through this family that Ruth first heard about Jehovah, the true and living God.

### **Step 3. Three funerals in Moab (1:3-5)**

Ruth suffered the loss of her father-in-law (Naomi's husband), her brother-in-law, and her husband. These were tragic and sad losses, but she would not have come to know the one true God without her relationship to this family.

### **Step 4. The godly fear and simple faith in Ruth's heart (1:6-17)**

Ruth faced the prospect of dying without God and without hope. There is little doubt that the deaths of her father-in-law, brother-in-law, and her husband caused her to think long and hard about her own death.

*Ecclesiastes 7:2* *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.*

One of the lines in the hymn *Amazing Grace* says, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved." Ruth said, "I'm staying with you, Naomi. Where you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God (1:16)."

### **Step 5. The field of Boaz near Bethlehem (2:1-3)**

This part of the story takes place in a harvest field somewhere near Bethlehem. It may be that Joseph and Mary traveled through this same field about 1,000 years later when Jesus was born. When Ruth and Naomi returned to Bethlehem, it was the beginning of barley harvest in the spring (1:22). Ruth looked for a way to find some food for the two of them, and so she went to glean in the fields. God led her to the right field. The law of gleanings (leftovers) was important in those days.

Farmers didn't have expensive equipment, so everything was done by hand. Some of the harvest was intentionally left in the field for poor and needy people, like Ruth and Naomi.

**Leviticus 19:9-10** *And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.*

**Deuteronomy 24:19-21** <sup>19</sup> *When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.* <sup>20</sup> *When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.* <sup>21</sup> *When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.*

### **Step 6. A fine man in Elimelech's family**

The name "Boaz" means "strength." He was a good man, a compassionate man, a man of integrity and character, and a generous man. And best of all, he was a single man—the most eligible bachelor in all the land. He was also related to Naomi's family, so according to Jewish law he had a responsibility to care for Naomi and her family. It was called the law of the kinsman-redeemer. Ruth was poor, but he was incredibly wealthy. Ruth was in need of help; Boaz was ready and willing to help. Do you see God's hand in all of this?

Notice the details of God's providence: It was *the right time* (harvest). Ruth went to *the right place* (the field belonging to Boaz). She met *the right person* (Boaz, a mighty man of wealth). She had *the right response* to Boaz (she was humble and grateful). Then Naomi told Ruth that this is *the right relationship* (Boaz is related to their family). Naomi knew that Boaz was the key to their survival. And finally, Naomi gave Ruth *the right advice*, "Do whatever Boaz says." God was guiding Ruth's steps and directing her path to the one who could provide for her needs.

### **Boaz is a picture of Christ our Kinsman-Redeemer:**

1. He was a mighty man of wealth (2:1)
2. He was from Bethlehem (2:4)
3. He saw Ruth before she saw him (2:5)
4. He showed kindness and took care of Ruth even before she belonged to him (2:8-9, 15-16, 20)
5. He was a kinsman related to Naomi and Ruth (2:1, 20)

### **Ruth's story is an illustration of God's work in salvation:**

God's providence brought Ruth to Naomi and then to Boaz. God brought her from a foreign land to a field in Bethlehem. In salvation God brings us to Himself. Nothing happens by chance. Everything takes place by His divine wisdom and grace. God cares about all our needs and He is willing to meet our greatest need, the need for salvation. It's all by grace. What should we do? Do what Ruth did—humble ourselves and realize our need of God's grace (2:10).

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**1 John 4:19** *We love him, because he first loved us.*

**Ephesians 2:12-13** *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*