



Chance is not

“As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.”

(Ruth 2:3b)

Chance is hard to define. It is randomness, but it is more than that. Really, you can only define it by what it is not. It isn't predictable or controllable. It has no order, direction or purpose. Chance defies logic, and therefore, no principle governs its origin or existence; it has no control or goal. Chance also goes by the names of “luck” or “fortune” – but this does not define it any better; it only gives other names for the same thing. One last definition: Chance happens wherever God is not in control. I'll call that “pure chance.” But again, this merely defines chance by what it is not: It is where God is not in control.

So, just what is chance? Is there such a thing as pure chance? Do things happen outside God's control? Some people think so, even people who believe in God. But let's be clear about what they are saying! They are saying that there are areas where neither God nor anyone else has control. That is the only way to define chance. They are saying that under some circumstances you cannot rely on God's power because he doesn't control everything.

But then we have to ask if God doesn't have power everywhere all the time, is He still God? What if the only thing outside God's control is the key to salvation and hope?

But not even Satan is outside God's control. If he were, we are doomed, for then he would be greater than God! Satan does have some things in his control, but God's power still reigns over him. Think of how Satan needed permission to afflict Job. If even Satan is under God's complete control, then surely nothing is outside it. There is no pure chance. Chance is a product of man's imagination. And that is why it is so hard to define chance: because pure chance does not exist.

With that in mind, look at the passage before us. *“As it turned out, she found herself working.”* The Hebrew word for “chance” is behind the word “as it turned out.” That's what “turned out.” It wasn't planned. She just ended up in Boaz' field – by chance. The way Boaz and Ruth first met was simply a coincidence.

Was it really God's hand, or was it just by chance? No doubt Ruth didn't plan it that way. Naomi never told her to go to those fields. Boaz did not invite her. It just happened. We can agree that no one on earth planned it. It just turned out that way, as the text says.

Now keep in mind the wider purpose of the book of Ruth. This little book shows us the unlikely origins of the great King David. In doing so it traces a development in the family line that led to Jesus Christ. Was that by pure chance?

In this book God constantly reveals that He is in control. We are driven to this conclusion verse after verse. The fact that the writer never says so directly makes the point all the more powerfully. All the unusual coincidences and the unexpected results force us to that conclusion. We see judgment. We see blessing. Someone greater is in control of these situations.

This turns the whole matter around! The very phrase that speaks about chance in verse 3 was written to highlight the work of Almighty God. It is a way of saying that no human planning went into the meeting of Boaz and Ruth. Only in this sense might we use the word “chance.” No one on earth intended it to happen. Ruth was just looking for a field. It was the Lord who caused her to go

to Boaz' field. The Lord had a plan to provide Ruth with blessings in his kingdom. That's why it happened. God was watching over Ruth the Moabites long ago already, when she married an Israelite who had come to Moab, when she learned about the LORD and came to devote her life to Him when she entered his kingdom.

Sometimes God has a roundabout route for us. But let us trust Him and do what is right. Let us trust our all-powerful and loving Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are never outside of His control.

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