

YOUR DEEDS SHALL SPEAK FOR YOU

Ruth 2:10-16

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A man's deeds are categorized into two-good and bad. While our good deeds speak well of us, the bad deeds work against us. The reward for good deeds brings satisfaction and fulfilment; the reward for bad deeds results to humiliation and disappointments. The reward for good and bad deeds could be immediate or in a distant future. We could be the recipient of the reward for our own deeds, good or bad: Sometimes, it's our associates-wife, children, relatives that would be at the receiving end. The reward for good deeds, more often than not, outweighs the deeds. On the other hand, little bad deeds can deny the doer of something very valuable.

However, the focus of this message is on good deeds and their outcome. We shall use the life of Ruth of the Bible as a case study.

The story of the life of Ruth is an interesting one any time, any day. The climax is her wonderful relationship with Naomi, her mother-in-law. In this present era where mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship is mostly frosty and bitter, the one exhibited by Ruth toward Naomi is exceptional and inspiring. It serves as a reference point.

Ruth, we are told, was a daughter-in-law of Naomi who left Bethlehem with her husband, Elimelech and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion to sojourn in Moab when there was famine in Bethlehem, their home nation (Ruth 1:1-2). Before long, Elimelech and the two sons who were married to Ruth and Orpah (both Moabites) died -Ruth 1:3-5. With these misfortunes, Naomi decided it was time for her to relocate to Bethlehem that was recovery from the famine that hit it (Ruth 1:6). But she had to return with Ruth (Ruth 1:18).

When Ruth and Naomi arrived Bethlehem from Moab-Ruth's hometown, it was harvest time (Ruth 1:22). Having not sown, they had to rely on people's benevolence to survive. And being the younger of them, Ruth had to volunteer on a particular day to go to the farm alone to glean for corn while Naomi would stay at home (Ruth 2:2). As a stranger in Bethlehem, it was a challenge for Ruth to identify the farmer that would be sympathetic with her and also magnanimous enough to allow her glean in his farm. She submitted totally to God's providence to see her through (Ruth 2:2). God's grace led her to the farm of one Boaz, a wealthy relative of Elimelech, Naomi's late husband (Ruth 2:3). She was allowed by Boaz's servants to glean there.

While the harvest and gleaning were going on, Boaz visited his farm to assess the activities of the day. Boaz noticed Ruth's presence and demanded to know from the head servant who she was. Boaz was told who Ruth was and how she had approached them to be allowed to glean in his farm (Ruth 2:5-7). On knowing the identity of Ruth, Boaz was more than pleased to have her glean corn in his farm. He felt honoured with her presence. He seemed privileged to have Ruth glean in his farm. He said to her:

"...Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn." (Ruth 2:8-9).

Yes, Boaz encouraged Ruth not to leave his farm for any other until the end of the harvest season. Besides, he provided Ruth water to drink. Overwhelmed with Boaz's benevolence and profound hospitality, Ruth fell on her knees and said to Boaz,

"Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" (Ruth 2:10).

Ruth demanded for a reason why she was being accorded such honour and favour (grace, as she put it) by Boaz. Truly, she asked for grace as she ventured into the field and, here she was, receiving it in abundance and beyond her expectation. Boaz answered and said to her,

"It hath fully been shewed me, all thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knowest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." (Ruth 2:11-12).

Indeed, Ruth had insisted on following Naomi to Bethlehem. Even when Orpah, her sister-in-law had yielded to Naomi's persuasion to remain in Moab, Ruth was not dissuaded from following Naomi to Bethlehem. She had said to Naomi,

"Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." (Ruth 1:16-17).

What a show of love! It was as if there was a bond between them, like the one between a man and his wife. Ruth realized that having lost her husband and children, and with age no longer on her side, Naomi would be lonely without company. She was prepared to fill the void left by these losses: To be the husband, sons, daughter that Naomi needed.

As a further reward for Ruth's good deeds, Boaz allowed her to eat with his servants. Furthermore, Boaz asked his reapers to allow Ruth glean even among the sheaves. Moreover, Boaz equally told the reapers to intentionally let go of some of the harvested crops for Ruth to glean (Ruth 2:14-16).

The ultimate reward for Ruth’s good deeds was her eventual marriage to Boaz and subsequent birth of a child (Ruth 4:13).

Keep doing what is right and good. Your reward awaits you here in this life and in the one to come.