

ACTS 9:36-43

LESSON: A FAITHFUL SERVANT IN THE CHURCH—August 4, 2024

INTRODUCTION:

In these verses, Saul spoke boldly of the name of Christ and disputed with the Grecians. There was another plot by the Jews to kill Saul, prompting the brethren to bring him to Caesarea and then send him on to Tarsus, his hometown. The churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed peace and grew as they walked in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit (9:29-31).

Now, Peter's healing ministry comes forth. Acts 9 will describe two healing miracles performed by Peter. Peter travels to the town of Lydda, and there he met a man named Aeneas, paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. **The first miracle:** Peter declares to him that Jesus has healed him, and to rise and make his bed. He was healed instantly. And all the people living in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord when they saw Aeneas walking around. He lets them know that it was of Jesus Christ. I would also call this a miracle: lives changed to accept Jesus Christ (9:32-35).

LESSON: I. A FAITHFUL FRIEND ACTS 9:36-38

9:36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. "Joppa" was a Mediterranean coastal city about ten miles northwest of Lydda. Its seaport brought commercial goods from all over the ancient world. It was...

- Seaport for Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.
- The only seaport that could provide shelter between Egypt and Mt. Carmel.

And we will find that Joppa is the city where • Peter raised Dorcas from the dead, • and was given the vision that led to the evangelizing of the Gentiles (Cornelius – Acts 10).

There also was a Christian community in which a certain disciple was named—Tabitha or Dorcas.

- Two names were given for her: Tabitha, which was her Jewish or Hebrew name; and
- Dorcas, which was her Greek name meaning gazelle (or doe or deer) which is a most beautiful creature. The gazelle is known for its slender features, its grace and loveliness, and its bright eyes and tender looks.

She had endeared herself to that Christian community because she was a woman full of good works and almsdeeds. She was deeply committed to Christ; a very faithful and devoted disciple.

- She was full of **good works** meaning serving and doing all kinds of good to all who needed help.
- She was full of **almsdeeds** meaning giving charitable gifts to the needy. The emphasis is that she gave things, gifts which she herself made. She must have been wealthy, for she was buying material to make clothing, apparently for a large number of the needy, and helping a larger number of widows.

9:37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid

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her in an upper chamber. It came to pass that Tabitha/Dorcas had fallen ill and died. We never know why some good people die before they have finished their task God has given them to do. God always know our time, for He says our times are in his hands. So, Tabitha/Dorcas was prepared, meaning (bathed her body) for burial in acceptance with the Jewish customs of *"purification of the dead"*, and laid (placed) her in the upper chamber (room).

9:38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. A great hope and desperate appeal was stirred within them, for they had heard about Peter healing Aeneas and hoped Peter would come and perform an even greater miracle on their friend. Lydda where Peter performed the miracle was only ten miles from Joppa, so they decided to send two men to urge Peter to come. It seems the Lord was not through with Peter and not through with Tabitha/Dorcas. New believers still needed to grow and mature in the Lord.

- These disciples had enough faith not to bury Tabitha/Dorcas.
- They had enough faith to go for Peter and ask him to come, and to come quickly without delay.

II. A FAITHFUL GOD ACTS 9:39-43

9:39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. Peter did quickly arise from Lydda and came with them to Joppa where he will perform his **second miracle**. But all the glory goes to Jesus Christ. Upon arriving, the men brought him into the upper chamber where Tabitha/Dorcas was laid, and all the widows stood weeping and displaying the coats and garments in which Dorcas had made for them while she was alive with them. The memory and her legacy lives on.

9:40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. Peter began to put out or send them all out; including the other mourners out of the room, as he had seen his Master do before He raised Jairus' daughter from her deathbed. Jesus would utter a short sentence—*"Talitha cumi" Little girl arise (Mk.5:41)*. And so Peter kneeled down and prayed to God. We can't go pass the part about prayer. He put them out of the room because he had to commune with the Lord. This called for silence and solitude with the Master. Because if it was just Peter raising someone from the dead, he probably would have everyone there to see what was going on. OH NO! Only God can raise the dead! Now, after praying, Peter turns to the body saying *"Tabitha arise"*, calling her by her name. She then opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. That tells me that the dead will rise again. That tells me that Jesus will call us by name or some other kind of way (*the trumpet will sound*), and we will get up (*those that have believed in Him*). I Thessalonians 4:16 *...and the dead in Christ will rise first*. I can only imagine!

9:41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. Peter extended his hand to Tabitha /Dorcas, and lifted her up. That means he took her by the hand just as Jesus did in Matthew 9:25. The touching of a dead body, according to the law, Numbers 19:16 was defiling. However, a miracle was truly being performed and she was the proof of it, for Peter called the saints and widows to present her to them alive and well! There is no denying this with their very own eyes.

9:42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. The miracle they had witnessed was broadcast throughout all of Joppa. And because it was done, it was known by many, causing many to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! The results of raising the dead were twofold:

1. Many believed.

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9:43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner. So, Peter lingered many days in Joppa with one known as Simon a tanner. Simon was a tanner which dealt with the hides (skins) of dead animals and their blood. The Jews considered that type of work as unclean on account of his constant contact with dead animals. Peter's lodging there showed to some extent he did not adhere to the Jewish prejudice and was already beginning to break down those prejudices.

2. A tremendous door was open for Peter to freely evangelize the area. It was here in Joppa that God was to give him the vision that led to the carrying of the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10:10).

SUMMARY:

¹Ten miles northwest of Lydda in the seaport town of Joppa, there was another group of Christians. One of the church's members was Dorcas, a gracious woman filled with love and compassion for the poor (**9:36**). She had died and when the Christians heard that Peter was only 10 miles away in Lydda, they sent for him (**9:37-38**).

When he arrived in the upper room where Dorcas had been prepared for burial, he found a group of weeping widows (**9:39**). Peter put them all out. Having prayed, he took Dorcas' hand and commanded her to come to life. When she saw Peter she sat up, and he presented her alive to the waiting people (**9:40-41**). When Peter healed Aeneas, he did not say, "I heal you"; he said, "Jesus Christ heals you." Before he spoke to Dorcas (known as Tabitha in Hebrew), Peter prayed. It was not his own power on which Peter called; it was the power of Jesus Christ. This miracle became known throughout the area, and was the cause of many turning to Christ (**9:42**). Peter stayed in Joppa for awhile with Simon the tanner (**9:43**).

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/peter-used-by-god-in-joppa-to-heal-beloved-dorcas/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>