

Tabitha, God's Servant

Int.

1. Aim: To tell the story of Tabitha who was God's servant and make applications to our lives.
2. Tabitha [or Dorcas] is only mentioned this one time
 - a. Her name is famous
 - b. This woman who gave so generously of herself is synonymous with acts of charity
 - c. There are still today throughout the world Dorcas Sewing Societies.
3. Tabitha was a servant of God because she served others

Discussion

I. THE LIFE OF TABITHA - Acts 9:36-43

A. V. 36

1. Certain disciple named Tabitha
2. Called Dorcas
 - a. Tabitha = Jewish Name
 - b. Dorcas = Greek translation
 - c. Tabitha was a Chaldee term meaning Gazelle, which was a beautiful and graceful animal
 - d. Still customary in the East to give names to young women of beautiful animals.
3. No mention of a husband - possible she was either a widow or single

4. Full of good works and almsdeeds
 - a. Busy continually doing good
 - b. The word *Almsdeeds* is from a Greek word from which we get our English word "eleemosynary" that means related to or devoted to charity
 - c. *Almsdeeds* - deeds in behalf of the poor
 - d. Heb. 13:16 ESV "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

B. v.37

1. She was sick and died - cause of death is not given
2. Her beauty and good deeds could not prevent her from getting sick and dying
3. Ecl. 3:20 "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."
4. They laid her body in an upper chamber for friends to view and to mourn

C. V. 38

1. Lydda was close to Joppa - about 10 miles, 3 hours travel time
2. Sent for Peter - too late for a physician
3. Why did they send for Peter?
 - a. Probably wanted him for comfort
 - b. Maybe desired him to preach the funeral
 - c. Not likely they thought that Peter would raise her
 - d. When Stephen died they did not raise him
4. Must come fast - burial is often the same day
5. Stephen died - but he was not raised from the dead - Acts 7

D. V. 39

1. Peter went with them immediately
2. Widows stood by weeping and crying
3. Showed him coats and garments which she made
 - a. Garments - inner, tunic, dress
 - b. Coats - outer, mantle, jacket
 - c. Many were wearing the clothes made for them by Tabitha
4. Rev. 14:13 "...their works do follow them"
5. Their actions at a time of sorrow and grief are similar to ours
 - a. Same tender care for lifeless body
 - b. Distress and grief felt
 - c. Desire for one who has been our religious counselor
 - d. People crying and weeping
 - e. Remembrance of the good deeds of the departed one

E. v. 40

1. Peter put them out of the room
2. Why?
 - a. He intended to ask for her return
 - b. If God's wisdom said no, then Peter would accept and understand
 - c. But he did not want the people doubly disappointed and grieved if it was God's will not to raise her.
3. We must always pray to God "Not my will, but thine, be done." Lk.22:42

4. "Father, if it be better that what we seek, should be withheld, and even the thing we most dread or fear should be better for us, then in thy providence bestow just what is best for us and thy cause."
5. Peter turned to the body and said "Tabitha, Arise!"
6. She opened her eyes and saw Peter - we are not told if she recognized Peter.
7. Do you think she was filled with regret to come back to this earth?
 - a. No doubt she was in paradise,
 - b. But she was not sorry to come back
 - c. She knew God's will must be her will and it would be best
 - d. It is even likely that God drew a veil over all she had seen and heard in paradise.

F. V. 41

1. Gave her his hand and helped raise her up
2. Presented her in normal condition to saints and widows
3. Not another word is spoken
4. Indescribable events
 - a. No words to describe the scene which followed
 - b. The day of resurrection will also be of great scenes too great for words

G. V. 42 & 43

1. All in Joppa heard about this
2. The Miracle had 2 effects:
 - a. Strengthened the faith of the disciples
 - b. Brought many sincere converts to the Lord
3. The Church was built up and strengthened.
4. Peter's joy in seeing the conversions was greater than the joy in restoring Tabitha to her friends.

H. V. 43

1. Joppa was a field "white unto harvest"
2. Peter stayed for many days because there was a lot of work to be done.

II. LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF TABITHA

A. Some Day We WILL DIE

1. Heb. 9:27
2. Ecl. 3:1-2 "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;"
3. Death is just as certain as birth
4. We all have birth certificates and we will all have death certificates
5. Since this life is only a brief stay or sojourn on this earth we must prepare for that next life. When we do this we have lived successfully.
6. What makes a successful life?

B. HOW TO MEASURE A SUCCESSFUL LIFE

1. Not by its length
 - a. A long life is not necessarily a successful life
 - b. Methuselah lived for 969 years, but that is all we know about him
2. Not by possessions
 - a. Luke 12:15 NKJV "And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."
 - b. Solomon says that all is just vanity and vexation of the spirit
 - c. Matt. 16:26 "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
 - d. Eccl. 2:11 "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." ESV "Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun."
 - e. I Tim. 6:6-7 NKJV "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."
3. But by Service to Others like Tabitha
 - a. Mt. 23:11 "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."
 - b. Tabitha did what she could for others
 - c. All of us have talents and some day we will be called to give an account for how we have used them - Mt. 25:14-30

- d. Christianity is a life that teaches us not only to live but to live and help live.
- e. Two enemies of service to others are Laziness and selfishness
 - (1) Some are too self-centered to be concerned about other people
 - (2) Others are too lazy to put forth the effort to help others in need
- f. If we are going to live a successful life it must be centered in helping other people. - Matt. 25:40
- g. "Happiness is a by-product of making other people happy."
- h. If when we leave this world, it is no better by our having lived, we will have been failures.
- i. If our acquaintances do not feel grieved and do not feel that they have lost a valuable friend, our lives will have been spent in vain.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Tabitha lived a successful life
 - a. She was a righteous woman - a faithful Christian
 - b. She lived a life of service
- 2. At her death:
 - a. People were in sorrow and grief
 - b. They remembered how she had helped them
 - c. They were happy to have her back alive.

3. What about your life?
 - a. Are you a faithful Christian?
 - b. Are you ready to die?
 - c. When you die what will people remember about you?
 - (1) A Christian
 - (2) A kind and helpful person
 - (3) Good deeds they have done
 - d. Would people be happy to have you back ?
4. There will be a resurrection some day
 - a. All will come forth from the grave
 - b. Jn. 5:28-29
5. Tabitha was a righteous person and will be in heaven. Will you prepare to be there?
6. Tabitha was a servant of God - will you serve?

Sources consulted

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 2. A.L.C. Nov. 30, 1980
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 4. All the Women of the Bible - Deed - p.218
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