

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon January 15, 2023  
Acts 9: 32 – 43 “Jesus Heals His Church” – Part 2

32 Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. 33 There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. 34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. 35 So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

36 At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. 37 But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. 38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. 43 So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" 4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. 5 "Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. 6 "He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." 7 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. 8 So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

I. Introduction

- a. "...to be always of good courage, and to engage in battle with strength and a good hope, the struggling Christian must necessarily always have a steadfast comfort in this life. There must be something that is continually administered to him from heaven. It must be something that enables him in all strife and in all the sorrows of this world (which are manifold and occur relentlessly) to lift up, encourage, refresh, and comfort his heart, saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?...hope in God" (Ps. 43:5). There must be something that, during his journey through this valley of Baca, will always be a well of refreshment upon which his weary soul can rely, such as a staff—something that renders him patient, gives him a good hope, and causes him to walk in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:31)."

- i. Excerpt From: Theodorus VanderGroe. "The Christian's Only Comfort in Life and Death: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism."

- b. Acts 9: 32 – 43 “Jesus Heals His Church” – Part 2
  - i. The healing of Aeneas at Lydda v32-35 – Part 1 (last week)
  - ii. Tabitha raised from the dead at Joppa v36 – 43 – Part 2 today
    - 1. About Tabitha v36
    - 2. Tabitha becomes sick and dies v37
    - 3. The Joppa disciples call for Peter to come quickly v38
    - 4. Peter goes to Joppa and meets the weeping widows v39
    - 5. Tabitha is raised from the dead v40
    - 6. Tabitha presented alive v41
    - 7. Results in Joppa of her resurrection v42
    - 8. Peter stays in Joppa with Simon the tanner v43



- c.
- d. Note above the Plain of Sharon on the western coast and note the proximity of Joppa to Lydda. (Joppa is 10-12 miles northwest of Lydda.) Also note Caesarea.



- e.
- f. Above: Recall Saul has been sent from Jerusalem to Tarsus via Caesarea. (9:30)

## II. About Tabitha v36

- a. 36 At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.
- b. Joppa: “The city of Joppa ...was an old Canaanite and Philistine town. It was the port of entry for the timber imported from Lebanon, which was used in the construction of the first and the second temple. In the Hellenistic period, Greeks settled in the city. In 146 BC, the Hasmonean ruler Jonathan conquered Joppa and transformed it into a Jewish harbor. After Judea had become a Roman province in AD 6, Joppa seems to have been the capital of one of the [regions] of Judea. The population seems to have been predominantly Jewish.”<sup>1</sup>
- c. Tabitha is a faithful and fruitful believer in Jesus Christ. She is a disciple of Christ. She is overflowing with many good works, especially sacrificial deeds of service to those in need. Drinking of Christ, her heart overflows streams of living water.
  - i. “... [she] was eminent above many for works of charity. She showed her faith by her works, her good works, which she was full of, that is, in which she abounded. Her head was full of cares and contrivances which way she should do good. ... Her hands were full of good employment; she made a business of doing good, was never idle, having learned to *maintain good works* (Tit. 3:8), to keep up a constant course and method of them. She was *full of good works*, as a tree that is full of fruit. Many are full of good words, who are empty and barren in good works; but Tabitha was a great doer, no great talker: *We do not talk great things, but we live them.*”<sup>2</sup>
    1. Titus 3:8 “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”
    2. Jn 7:37-39 “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”
- d. Tabitha = female gazelle. Dorcas = gazelle.
  - i. “Her name was *Tabitha*, a Hebrew name, the Greek for which is *Dorcas*, both signifying a *doe*, or *hind*, or *deer*, a pleasant creature.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 9:36.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2105.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2105.

III. Tabitha becomes sick and dies v37

- a. 37 But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.
- b. This fruitful disciple gets sick and dies. Tragedy strikes this Christian community. Such moments will test our faith. How would we respond?
- c. The disciples love Tabitha, and they treat her dead body with respect. They give personal care to her body, washing her and tenderly laying her in an upper room. Hope guides their treatment of her body. No mention is made of planning her burial. Instead, Peter's near proximity gives them hope Tabitha may arise.
  - i. "Her friends and those about her did not presently bury her, as usual, because they were in hopes Peter would come and raise her to life again; but they *washed the dead body*, according to the custom, which, it is said, was with warm water, which, if there were any life remaining in the body, would recover it; so that this was done to show that she was really and truly dead. They tried all the usual methods to bring her to life, and could not."<sup>4</sup>

IV. The Joppa disciples call for Peter to come quickly v38

- a. 38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them.
- b. Resurrections have occurred before. Surely, these Joppa disciples knew of those prior events, both in OT Scripture and in NT times.
  - i. OT
    1. Elijah raises up the son of the widow of Zerapheth. (1 Kings 17)
      - a. "And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him." Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived."
    2. Elisha raises up the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4)
  - ii. NT
    1. Jesus raises up the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7)
      - a. "Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother."
    2. Jesus raises up Jairus' daughter (Luke 8)
      - a. "But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat."
    3. Jesus raises up Lazarus (Jn 11)

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2105.

- a. “Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go.””
    - c. They implored Peter not to delay. Why?
      - i. There was a Jewish belief that the soul stayed near the dead body for only a few days.
        - 1. “When a body was kept, it was kept for three days because there was the belief that after three days the soul had departed (John 11:17; *m. Yebam.* 16.3; Lev. Rabbah 18.1; Eccles. Rabbah 12.6).”<sup>5</sup>
- V. Peter goes to Joppa and meets the weeping widows v39
- a. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.
  - b. Peter has faith that the Lord may raise Tabitha from the dead. Also, Peter can be a comfort to the saints if she is not raised up. So, he goes with the men. Note his willingness to be interrupted and imposed upon. He is submitted to the Lord’s guiding Providence.
    - i. “Let not faithful ministers grudge to be at every body’s beck, as far as they have ability (the great apostle [Paul] *made himself the servant of all*, 1 Co. 9:19.) He found the corpse laid in the upper chamber, and attended by widows, probably such as were in the communion of the church, poor widows”<sup>6</sup>
  - c. Peter arrives to the upper room where Tabitha’s washed body is waiting. He enters and finds weeping widows, grieving the loss of their dear sister. Tabitha spent some of her time making tunics and garments- worthy of being displayed as examples of her good works and her charitable deeds. Who will be grieving at your funeral, and why? Will we leave behind good works to be displayed by our dear, grieving friends? How will our deeds be interpreted? For ourselves or for God’s glory?
    - i. “a good work, when there was that in them which was truly commendable, and worthy of imitation, and when it is done modestly and soberly, and without flattery of the survivors or any sinister intention, but purely for the glory of God and the exciting of others to that which is virtuous and praiseworthy. The commendation of Tabitha was like her own virtues, not in word, but in deed. Here were no encomiums of her in orations, nor poems inscribed to her memory; but

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<sup>5</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 378.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2105.

*the widows showed the coats and garments which she made for them, and bestowed upon them while she was with them.”<sup>7</sup>*

VI. Tabitha is raised from the dead v40

- a. 40 But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.
- b. Note Peter seeks the Lord Jesus, kneeling down and praying. Before Peter calls for Tabitha to arise, he calls to the Lord. After praying, Peter believe the Lord would have him call our for Tabitha to arise. Peter looks to Christ for guidance and for power, aiming for the glory of Christ.
  - i. “he gets down on his knees (θεῖς τὰ γόνατα), expressing his submission to God.”<sup>8</sup>
  - ii. “
- c. “Tabitha, arise.” – simple, no need for exaggerated emotional pleas. Faith speaks calmly and confidently. Note, Peter turns to her body and speaks toward it.
  - i. “the ...pronouncement of a command to Tabitha indicates that Peter prayed for God’s power to bring the dead woman back to life, and presumably for the assurance that this would happen right at this moment, allowing him to speak the command.”<sup>9</sup>
- d. Tabitha comes back from the dead, looks at Peter and sits up.
  - i. There is no question she was dead and is now alive. Opened eyes. Saw Peter. Sat up.
    1. “The miracle, which happened instantly, is described with three verbs. Tabitha “opened” (ἤνοιξεν) her eyes; she “looked” (ἰδοῦσα) at Peter, the only person in the room, kneeling beside the bed (or the mattress) on which she had been placed; she “sat up” (ἀνεκάθισεν), probably as a result of seeing a man in the room.”<sup>10</sup>

VII. Tabitha presented alive v41

- a. 41 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.
- b. Like her life before her death, actions speak more than words. No words are mentioned other than Peter calling the saints and widows together.
- c. “he presented her alive” – what glorious understatement!

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2105.

<sup>8</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, [\*Acts\*](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 9:40–41b.

<sup>9</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, [\*Acts\*](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 9:40–41b.

<sup>10</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, [\*Acts\*](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 9:40–41b.

- i. “he *called the saints and widows*, who were all in sorrow for her death, and *presented her alive* to them, to their great comfort, particularly of the widows, who laid her death much to heart (v. 41); to them he presented her, as Elijah (1 Ki. 17:23), and Elisha (2 Ki. 4:36), and Christ (Lu. 7:15), presented the dead sons alive to their mothers. The greatest joy and satisfaction are expressed by life from the dead.”<sup>11</sup>
- VIII. Results in Joppa of her resurrection v42
  - a. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.
  - b. The news of Tabitha’s death and resurrection spreads through the entire town of Joppa, and because of this miracle many new believers are brought into the church there.
    - i. “Many were by it convinced of the truth of the gospel, that is was from heaven, and not of men, and believed in the Lord, v. 42. The thing was *known throughout all Joppa*; it would be in every body’s mouth quickly, and, it being a town of seafaring men, the notice of it would be the sooner carried thence to other countries, and though some never minded it many were wrought upon by it. This was the design of miracles, to confirm a divine revelation.”<sup>12</sup>
  - c. Note, they did not believe on Peter, the man who was so instrumental, seemingly so important for this miracle. Rather, they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Right preaching protects the church from misguided faith.
- IX. Peter stays in Joppa with Simon the tanner v43
  - a. 43 So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.
  - b. As a result of the growth of the church at Joppa, Peter stays many days, surely participating in the evangelism and discipleship needed to grow and establish the Church there.
    - i. “Peter was hereby induced to continue some time in this city, v. 43. Finding that a door of opportunity was opened for him there, he tarried there many days, till he was sent thence, and sent for thence upon business to another place.”<sup>13</sup>
  - c. Note, where we are called to minister, the Lord provides for us. Simon, the tanner is an example of the Lord’s provision to His people.
    - i. Mt 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2105.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2105.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2105.