

The Raising of Dorcas

Written by admin

Wednesday, 29 June 2011 12:23 - Last Updated Wednesday, 04 December 2013 10:44

Inspiring Women of the Bible – Tabitha (Dorcas)



'Faith without works is dead.' (James 2.20)

Peter sent them all out of the room, then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman he said, "Tabitha, get up," She opened her eyes and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa and many people believed in the Lord. (Acts 9:40-43)

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The story of Tabitha demonstrates faith coupled with good works. Good works are the fruits of obedience to God's commandments: to love God and our fellow men and women.

Tabitha was a godly woman, a true disciple who was loved and respected in the Christian community of Joppa. She was well known for doing good and for helping the poor and especially the widows. She mainly did this by making robes and other clothes for them. This resulted in so much love by the community that when she died, they cried so much and in their devastation they sought for a miracle of her resurrection and God granted it through Peter's prayers. The story is found in Acts 9:36-43.

We are told that Dorcas (Greek) and Tabitha (Aramaic) means gazelle or an emblem of beauty. Maybe this meant that she had great physical beauty. What is certain is that she was beautiful inside because she was always doing good and helping the poor, especially widows. According to James 1:27, *"religion that God our father accepts as faultless and pure is this; to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unpolluted by the world"*

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Widows were especially disadvantaged in Bible times because the Jewish culture which (like many African traditional cultures was extremely paternalistic). Wealth passed along male lines. A woman was also expected to work at home, and a woman who did not have a man in her life, either a father, husband or son had no one to provide sustenance to her. This was especially so if she was of advanced age and unlikely to marry. Such poor people depended on the charity of others. Often these involved collecting leftovers in fields after the harvest like the widows Naomi and Ruth did.

Tabitha had the gift of kindness, knowledge of sewing, and financial resources. She was much like the Virtuous Woman mentioned in Proverbs 31:10-31.

Tabitha's life was extended by God because of her good works. Tabitha's story compares to that of Hezekiah, the King of Judah. When Hezekiah was told to put his house in order since

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he would not recover from a sickness, he beseeched the Lord, *"Remember Oh Lord, how I have walked behind you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes."* 2 Kings 20:2. And

the Lord healed him and added him 15 years because of the good work he had done re-establishing worship of the true God.

If at this moment God decided that he could only let you continue with your life if :

- (a) others interceded for you - quoting your good deeds, or
- (b) if God's tally of all the good you had done was high enough.

What chances would you have of seeing tomorrow?

Ask the Lord for His help to be more like Dorcas, a faithful and true believer, beautiful in his sight.

"Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised. Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise." Psalms 31:30-31

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Inspiration and Lessons from Women in the Bible

The “Evil” Herodius

“ On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodius danced for them and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked, even if it was half his Kingdom. Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me on a platter the head of John the Baptist. The King was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison.” Mathew 14:6-9 (NIV).

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According to Mathew 14: 1-12 and Mark 6: 14-29 Herodias divorced her husband (and uncle) Philip the ruler of Iturea and Traconitis, and married as a second wife his half brother Herod Antipas who was the ruler of Galilee and Perea. Herod had also divorced his first wife. Herodias went into the marriage with her daughter from her previous marriage.

John the Baptist openly criticized their marriage terming it an adulterous relationship and declared: *"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."* (Mark 6:18). Because of this, Herod Antipas had John the Baptist arrested and put in prison. However he did not have him killed since the people considered John a prophet and he was afraid of their reaction. He himself also feared John and thought him a righteous and holy man. However, his hand was forced by Herodias who must have passionately wanted John dead as revenge for daring to criticize her marriage. She used her daughter Salome's dance before Antipas and his guests to exact her vengeance. She told her to ask for the head of the John the Baptist as a reward.

Herodias must have known that Antipas would be too embarrassed to rescind the oath he had made in front of his guests. On the other hand Herod must have been affected by the alcohol he was most likely drinking and Salome's dance which many believe aroused his sexual desires due its sensual nature.

According to some researchers, it could have been the "dance of the seven veils" – a kind of striptease dance, that affected him a lot such that his reasoning was so compromised that he promised Salome up to half his Kingdom in appreciation for her dance.

We learn from this story that John the Baptist did not shy away from pointing out people's sins no matter how important they were. He was ready to go to prison or even die rather than accommodate the king. That is unlike some church ministers and fellow Christians today who find it difficult to point out the blatant sins of members of their congregation especially if they are rich and powerful.

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We are also reminded to be true to God's word. No matter what the world thinks, we need to proclaim God's laws on marriage even if others do not like it.

We are also reminded to be cautious about dances designed to arouse physical passions and some of the ways we make merry, because these can distort our thinking and lead to sinful actions and consequences.

Parents should instil in their children a sense of modesty unlike Herodius who saw nothing wrong with her daughter's shamelessness and even used it as a means to achieving her purposes. Salome's dance caused John's death. Even today similar lack of propriety between men and women cause a lot of problems. We are reminded to beware of our weaknesses which can allow us to be manipulated by others so that we succumb to temptations. We should not get into a situation where it will be too embarrassing to do what is right. Herod feared the ridicule of friends and preferred to let a righteous man die. Christians should be strong and seek to do what is right and not allow others to pressure us into doing wrong. And no matter how embarrassing or painful, we should determine to do what is right. We need to ask God for help and seek his approval beyond that of fellow men and women.

We also learn that even though it appears that evil wins over good in the short term, we should not despair. Such apparent success is fleeting. God will eventually bring the wicked into judgement. Sometimes this happens in this world. Even though Herod's family managed to get John killed, they were later exiled.

Asaph, the writer of Psalm 73 struggled to realize this. ***"That is what the wicked are like, - always carefree they increase their wealth.When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me. Till I entered the sanctuary of the Lord., then I understood their final destiny."* Psalms 73:12, 16-17**

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We need to appreciate how much more joy, fulfilment and true spiritual prosperity we have in God. Being faithful to God is the only way to true happiness and eternal life.

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