**Tabitha – An Example of Grace and Beauty**

*Acts 9:36-43*

**Introduction**

1. The word of God is intentionally revealed.
2. Acts does not cover every conversion, nor does detail every disciple – what it does reveal, then, is of great importance.
3. **Acts 9:36-43** reveals a short record of a miracle Christ performed through Peter. This account of this miracle of healing is unique to the book of Acts so far:
   1. First that gives much detail concerning the character and life of the one on whom the miracle was performed.
   2. First resurrection.
4. Out of all the miracles being performed by the apostles, it is significant that the HS chose to record that which dealt with the disciple named Tabitha/Dorcas.
5. A Noteworthy Disciple
6. A Certain Disciple
   1. ***“a certain disciple”*** – not special when compared to – **Acts 6:3** – Stephen and Philip span the next 2 chapters.
      1. Or Joses – of such note that the apostles gave him a name – ***“Barnabas…Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36***).
   2. Compare – **Mark 14:6-9** – Mary (**John 12:1-8**) anointed Jesus with fragrant oil, and it is Divinely recorded for all eternity.
      1. ***“a certain disciple”*** (3x) – might not be prominent in the narrative of scripture, but great enough to be noted (especially in God’s eyes) – referred to **Ananias** (**Acts 9:10**), and **Timothy** (**Acts 16:1**).
   3. God gives honor where it is due – **1 Corinthians 12:22-24** – even if our name is not known, and our deeds go unnoticed by the majority – ***“as unknown, and yet well known” (2 Corinthians 6:9***).
7. ***“a certain female disciple”*** (YLT)
   1. Disciple – *mathētēs*
   2. ***“female disciple”*** – *mathētria* – feminine form (only here)
   3. Luke’s Gospel – “The beloved physician’s book has been called The Gospel of Womanhood, for the Savior’s tender and profound regard for women comes to the fore in this Gospel more clearly than in any other.” (Hendriksen)
      1. The HS continues this through Luke in Acts – Dorcas/Tabitha is a case in point.
   4. Weaker vessel – **1 Peter 3:7** – not negative.
      1. ***“giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel” (ASV)***
      2. The honor due her is connected to the idea of ***“weaker vessel”*** – value – **1 Peter 3:4** – not to be taken advantage of, but elevated in honor and protection.
      3. THE BIBLE PRIZES WOMEN, AND PRESENTS THEM AS VALUABLE, AND IRREPLACEABLE ASSETS IN THE KINGDOM.
   5. Women, and the role they fill, are vital to the success of the gospel – **Romans 16:1-2** – Phoebe is an example.
   6. **Tabitha shows the indispensable role and value of women in the church.**
8. A Picture of Grace and Beauty
9. Her Name – ***“Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas”***
   1. **Tabitha** – Aramaic
   2. **Dorcas** – Greek
   3. **Both translate – Gazelle**
      1. “The beauty and grace of the gazelle made it an appropriate name for a woman.” (Pulpit Commentary)
      2. “the emblem of grace and beauty. This name was frequently given to girls.” (Lenski)
   4. Not necessarily appropriate for every woman who was given the name when their life is observed.
      1. Compare – **Acts 5:1** – **Sapphira** (1st female to be featured with emphasis in Acts) – “It is either derived from the Aramean הרָיפָשַׁ, beautiful, or from the Hebrew ריפִסַ, a sapphire.” (Pulpit Commentary)
      2. **Sapphira’s actions were far from beautiful/precious – deceptive, dishonest, carnal, selfish, weak, etc.**
   5. However, Tabitha/Dorcas wore the name well with the modest attire of good works – **1 Timothy 2:10**
10. A Worthy Name
    1. True Feminine Beauty (**vv. 36, 39)**
       1. ***“a female disciple”***
          1. **It is significant that the HS uses the feminine for “disciple” here – *mathētria***
          2. Compare – ***Romans 16:1*** – *diakonos* – feminine form – deaconess.
             1. Some wrongfully suggest she held an official position in the church – **cf. 1 Timothy 3:12** – ***“husbands of one wife?”***
             2. Why should it be an official position to have significance?
             3. **She served in the capacity she could, in ways which surely surpassed the ability of any man.**
          3. **Scripture rejects modern feminism because it devalues women – opposite of what it claims.**
          4. Woman’s glory? – IN FOLLOWING JESUS – **Galatians 2:20** – yield entire life to His control – including feminine role.
             1. **Tabitha did not simply act as a philanthropist, but especially as a lover and follower of Christ.**
          5. **1 Timothy 2:11-15** – embrace Christ’s appointed role and do great good.
             1. **(vv. 11-13)** – not in the position of a man. (Submissive role)
             2. **(v. 14)** – the catastrophe of usurpation – Eve acted as lord, and problems followed.
             3. **(v. 15)** – salvation within the appointed role.

**Childbearing** – representing the uniqueness of a woman – not created to function as man, but to provide what man could not. (Helpmeet comparable)

**Faith, love, holiness, self-control** – be faithful to Christ. (*But that would include knowing what you were called to*.)

* + 1. ***“good works and charitable deeds”***
       1. ***“good works”*** – **Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8, 14**
          1. Female discipleship – **Titus 2:3-5; 1 Timothy 5:14** – domestic.
          2. **1 Timothy 5:9-10** – using opportunity, talents, qualities special to women to do good deeds – *diligent, industrious, caring, kind, serving*.
       2. ***“charitable deeds”*** – ***“charity” (NASB); “acts of charity” (ESV, RSV); “almsdeeds” (KJV, ASV); “kind acts” (YLT)***
          1. *eleēmosynē* – “exercise of benevolent goodwill, *alms, charitable giving* w. focus on attitude and action as such” (BDAG)
          2. “compassionateness, i.e. (as exercised towards the poor) beneficence, or (concretely) a benefaction” (STRONG); “(1) mercy, pity (A) esp. as exhibited in giving alms, charity” (THAYER)
          3. **Emphasis on the character and attitude behind the action – women generally have a capacity for compassion that exceeds that of man, and she was given to that.**
          4. Not empty thought – **Acts 9:39** – “the middle voice (“showing”)…conveys the idea that they were showing what belonged to themselves, they wore the very garments Tabitha had made for them” (Lenski)

Widows – destitute.

Practical, helpful provision – **James 1:27; 2:15-17** – HER FAITH WAS VERY MUCH ALIVE.

“So Dorcas was a dressmaker, but instead of enriching herself by sewing only for money she enriched her soul by sewing for love.” (Lenski)

* + - 1. ***“This woman was full of…”*** – ABUNDANCE – this is what she was known for – that was just who Tabitha/Dorcas was…
         1. ***“which she did” (v. 36)*** – imperfect – noting continually.
         2. Not isolated, but common for her.
  1. Beauty Made Conspicuous by its Absence **(v. 39)**
     1. What is precious to God? – **1 Peter 3:4** – her works were not loud, self-seeking acts.
     2. She sought to be seen by God – **Matthew 6:1-4**
     3. **(v. 39)** – garments shown that she made ***“while she WAS with them”***
        1. Not made with a logo for advertising her talent, or good deeds.
        2. Not given through pretense to gain more customers.
        3. **Yet, when she was gone, great boasting on her behalf!**
     4. **What was more than her clothing left behind?** – "In the possession of one such example a Church has a great spiritual capital. When such a one dies, God will raise up followers, for love never dies." (Pulpit Commentary, Homilies by E. Johnson)
     5. ***We should not live to be presently lauded, but in such a way that when we are absent, the void left speaks volumes about the work we were given to, and encourages others to enter into our labors*** – **Hebrews 13:7** – ***“whose faith follow”***

1. A Manifestation of the Power of Grace Behind Her
2. Her Resurrection Retold a Story of Her Past
   1. We are not told what the disciples expected in sending for peter – **Acts 9:37-38**
      1. Perhaps the comfort provided by the truth an ambassador of the Lord could readily reveal. (Haste for Peter to arrive before the necessary burial.)
      2. Perhaps faith enough in the prospect of a resurrection.
   2. Regardless, the Lord raised her from the dead – **Acts 9:34, 40-42** – ***“Jesus the Christ”*** raised her, and it is He that the people believed upon witnessing the miracle.
   3. **This was not her only resurrection:**
      1. She was a disciple, a Christian – **Acts 9:36**
      2. **He gave her life now, but He was the giver of her life before** – **John 5:24-25; Romans 6:4** – she had heeded the words of Jesus and been raised to a new life.
      3. **1 Corinthians 15:10** – if it had not already been apparent that her activity of faith owned itself to the transforming power of God’s grace, it now was.
3. Her Resurrection Anticipated a Story of Her Future
   1. All resurrections recorded in scripture anticipate the final resurrection.
   2. Tabitha died again, but she would be raised again to die no more – **1 Corinthians 15:20-23**
      1. With her life, it would be a resurrection to life and glory, not condemnation – **cf. John 5:29**
4. Her Resurrection Attested to a Story of Salvation
   1. Christ used the life of Tabitha to influence people to follow Him – **Matthew 5:16**
   2. He used her death to do the same, but through raising her to provide evidence that He Himself was raised and was seated on the throne in Heaven – **Acts 9:42** – they believed on the Lord.
      1. **Acts 3:13-16** – the One crucified, God raised and exalted, and He is the One who accomplished this.
      2. **Acts 4:12** – no salvation in any other.

**Conclusion**

1. It is important that we consider that we are useful in service to Christ and do what we are called to do by faith.
2. Tabitha represents a picture of grace and beauty that female disciples should emulate today – the church depends greatly upon it.
3. The account of her resurrection speaks volumes about the authority and power of Christ, and we must submit to Him today.