

Tabitha, the Indispensable!

Today I would like for us to discuss one of the shortest, yet challenging stories in the New Testament. Many of the stories of the Bible are to the point, concise and often leave out the details that we long to hear. I am thankful the Lord allows us to use our creativity, not to re-invent the story but to allow imagination of the details, to personalize it and make application to ourselves and our fellow students of the Word.

In my generation, when the average American hears the name Tabitha, the first thought that would come to mind is the daughter of Darrin and his bewitched wife, Samantha, a couple who lived at 1164 Morning Glory Circle on the weekly sitcom between the years of 1964 and 1972. The name is enjoying a comeback due to the desire of young couples to incorporate old names when naming their newborns. Regrettably, many hear the name but know little or nothing of the rich Bible personality behind the original lady named Tabitha. Let's break the matrix today and move away from thinking of Tabitha as a lovely little half-witch girl or a nice sounding old name.

1. A Noble Disciple

Our story begins in Acts 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."* Tabitha received accolades from God that few characters in the Bible received; she was a doer of good works, and not only a doer but she was full of good works. James tells us, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only..."* (James 1:22). In addition to that, she was full of almsdeeds. She compassionately gave to the poor in many ways. One characteristic of her giving involved making clothes for widows. Living for others turns the most common people into God's royalty. Tabitha gives me the impression she was someone who adopted as her motto: "Find a need and fill it!"

2. A Lingering Illness

Do you ever have the feeling that the illness or difficulty you are experiencing is not getting better? You have prayed and still find no relief. You have called on a trusted friend whom you believe has great communication with God and after they prayed there is still no answer. Our story continues with these words, *"And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber"* (Acts 9:37). Tabitha did not just "up and died"; she was sick and eventually died. This brings to mind the words of Martha and Mary, *"...Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"* (John 11:21,32). I am reminded of the troubled waters the disciples were attempting to navigate as recorded in John 6, *"And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went*

over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew” (John 6:16-18). Even as the disciples were bouncing up and down on the stormy sea, Jesus was coming down off the mountain where He was in prayer. He saw their need and was coming toward them at their most periled condition. When it was dark and they could not see Jesus, He saw them and was coming to the rescue. Soon he was to walk out upon the water and still the storm!

Don't push the panic button when God doesn't seem to come through. God has a plan; He is working all things together for our good and His glory.

3. Contact with a Deeply Committed Christian

Yogi Berra, said, “It ain't over 'til it's over.” Although the world would look at this situation as over, God's people are hope driven. We live with a blessed hope! The Bible says we are *“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).* As Bible believing Christians we believe very strongly in the supernatural intervention of God in our daily lives. We equally believe that God gives us common sense to take advantage of every means He places in our path that would activate the needed miracle. The Bible says, *“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.” (Acts 9:38).* God's choice servant whom God has already seen fit to work miracles through, Peter, is nearby. Why not incorporate his help? It is wise to consult with someone who is experienced in the ways of God when a miracle is needed.

4. The Virtuous Woman

In our continuing story we read, *“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 [Tabitha] made, while she was with them” (Acts 9:39).* The weeping widows could not contain their grief. They shared with Peter the clothes this precious departed saint had made for them. Solomon's description of the virtuous woman illustrates Tabitha: *“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet” (Proverbs 31:10, 13,19,20,21).*

How many of us would be missed for the good we did for others?

5. The Miracle

Acts 9:40 says, *“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.”* An atmosphere of faith is most

advantageous for a miracle. Notice the words, *“But Peter put them all forth....”* We highly suspect Peter was removing those who were not exercising faith for a miracle. This is not isolated; Jesus did the same when He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead as recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke. When Jesus arrived and told them that she was asleep, Matthew 9: 24b says, *“...And they laughed him to scorn.”* After hearing the announcement of the girl's death, Luke 8:50 and 51 says, *“But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.”* Jesus only wanted devout believers in the room. Miracles abound when faith is exercised.

6. The Relief of Grief

When Stephen, James and other prominent disciples died even by martyrdom, there was no miracle performed to bring them back to life. When Tabitha died there was a miracle performed to bring her back to life. In other words, the church will continue and go on without the apostles, but she cannot function without the Tabithas! Acts 9:41 says, *“And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.”*

7. A Greater Purpose Revealed

What a magnificent conclusion to our story! Acts 9:42 says, *“And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.”* Tabitha's resurrection from the dead proved to unbelievers that Jesus is indeed Lord. This is often the great underlying reason for many a biblical miracle, i.e., to capture our attention so that we might believe. Jesus told His listeners, *“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake”* (John 14:11).

-Pastor Pope-