

MOTHER'S DAY 2010
Acts 9:36-43

Introduction: Many feminists with misinformation indict Christianity for the plight of women in the world. They point to Biblical passages that seem to limit women in leadership roles and consider it evidence of Christianity's culpability in the subjugation of women. This is historical revisionism, a sin that has also been committed in American history books. The unequivocal fact is that no other religious system in history has elevated women in society like Christianity has. Consider the inauspicious plight of women in the Eastern religions, especially Islam, the greatest example of female subjugation.

Paul praised women in his ministry – Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2), Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3). Consider Jesus' relationships with women. Respect ... equality. It was women who ministered to Him during His life. Women stayed to watch the crucifixion. Women came to the tomb to anoint the body of Christ, and they were the first witnesses of the resurrection. Jesus recognized the worth of women, appreciated their efforts, and received their following.

Our passage today speaks of a great woman; a woman so great in her community that her fellow believers could not bear to lose her to death. From this passage we will see the importance of our Christian labors in life and in eternity. We are known by what we do. Whatever we are on the inside will show up on the outside. Dorcas was a great Christian. We can be, too.

I. Dorcas praised. Acts 9:36-37.

A. Her description:

Both names, Dorcas and Tabitha, mean "female gazelle." This denotes her physical beauty. Today we compare woman's beauty to flowers, not to animals. (See the Song of Solomon for examples.) The point of this story is that, though possibly physically attractive, her deeds are what testified of her true beauty. She lived in Joppa, which also means "beautiful."

Verse 36 – "... a certain disciple ..." Mathetria (math-ay'-tree-ah) – this is the only time used in the New Testament, and it means a "female disciple." Evidently, she was so committed to Christ that this description fit her better than "follower" or "servant."

B. Her deeds:

"Full of good works" – thoroughly permeated, covered in every part

"Alms, deeds" – merciful pity, giving of herself for the benefit of the less fortunate.

Her deeds made her beautiful. Modern Christians do not make it a priority to do good deeds. We are concerned with correct theology and showing ourselves to live according to prescribed rules. We show off instead of giving of ourselves!

In the civil war, there was a union nurse who labored among the wounded. Her face had been disfigured in a fire when she was younger. When asked why she volunteered to work among so much death and carnage, she replied, "The wounded soldiers don't notice my scars as much as others. To them, I'm beautiful."

C. Her death:

"...she was sick and died." The good works ceased. The charities ... The labors ...

"...they laid her in an upper chamber..." It was a place of rest and prayer.

II. The saints' desire. Verses 38-39.

A. Their hope:

They knew Peter was nearby. Maybe God would use him to restore her to them!

What faith! Where did they get this idea? Peter had raised others ... They were willing to go to any length to get her back. She was too wonderful to lose!

Some people fall in love, and they never get over it! Some people have traumatic things happen in life, and they get over their first love. Never get over it! Alexander the Great wept because there were no more nations to conquer. Bill Clinton is said to have brooded because he was no longer in power as President. Some people can never get over past experiences in life. These people could not get over Dorcas. Can you imagine the effect that this woman had on her fellow believers?

B. Their heartaches:

"Weeping" – to mourn, to lament, to bewail

C. Their heritage:

"...Showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them."
(Verse 39.)

What a beautiful picture. They put her Godly works on display! They were saying, "Look, this was her! This shows you her love and her labors!"

III. Peter in servant ministry. Verses 40-41.

A. Peter's example of service:

He requested privacy (did not make a spectacle).

He engaged in prayer (no labor is complete without prayer).

He presented Dorcas to the people (the fruit of our labor is apparent to all).

B. Dorcas' example of service:

First, after Peter prayed, she "... opened her eyes ..." (Have we opened our eyes to the possibilities of service?)

Her obedience! (She had always obeyed in life ... now obeys even in death) Her opportunity came. "... When she saw Peter, she sat up." She was ready to serve again. There are those in every workplace, every church, and every family who by their commitment make a difference!

IV. The Sovereign's design. Verses 42-43.

A. Publicity:

"And it was known throughout all Joppa ..." God's work publicizes itself! No need for modern means, worldly means. If God shows up, people will hear about it!

B. Perception:

"... And many believed in the Lord." Good deeds lead to others being saved!

C. Providence:

"... He tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon, a tanner." This is the place that Peter had the vision about opening the Gospel to the Gentiles. Good works are an ever-expanding wave.

Conclusion: Dorcas was a river of good deeds and a fountain of blessings. No good deed goes unrewarded! You may be unrecognized by some on earth, but God sees. Everyone saw Dorcas' good works. She was honored by her fellow believers on earth, and most importantly, by God Himself who raised her from the dead.