

The Book of Acts

Lesson 15: Peter, Aeneas, and Dorcas -- Acts 9:32-43

After the high drama of Saul's conversion, Luke takes us back to Peter, who is traveling among the scattered churches, strengthening the saints. In the town of Lydda he meets a man named Aeneas, paralyzed and bedridden for eight long years. Peter does not draw attention to himself. He says simply, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed. And the man who had not risen in eight years gets up. The whole region sees it, and Luke says all who lived in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord.

Then word comes from nearby Joppa, and it is heavy with grief. A beloved disciple named Tabitha, called Dorcas in Greek, has died. Luke pauses to tell us who she was: a woman full of good works and acts of charity. She was not a preacher or a leader; she was a seamstress with a generous heart, who sewed tunics and garments for the widows of her town. When she died, the loss was deep, and the disciples sent two men urgently to bring Peter.

When Peter arrives, the upper room is full of weeping widows, and they are holding up the clothing Dorcas made, the evidence of a life poured out in quiet love. It is a tender scene. These women are mourning not a celebrity but a servant, a woman whose hands had clothed them. Peter sends them all out, kneels down, and prays. Then he turns to the body and says two words: Tabitha, arise. She opens her eyes, sees Peter, and sits up.

Peter takes her by the hand and presents her alive to the saints and widows, and the joy must have been overwhelming. The news spreads throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Two quiet miracles, a paralyzed man and a dead woman, both done in the power of Jesus Christ, both leading not to applause for Peter but to faith in the Lord. And in between, the portrait of Dorcas reminds us that a life of humble, practical love is one of the most beautiful and powerful witnesses there is.

Group Discussion: Dorcas was remembered not for a public ministry but for a life full of good works and acts of charity, sewing clothes for widows (vv. 36, 39). Why do you think Luke singled out this quiet, practical kind of love, and what does it say about what truly matters in a Christian life?

Personal Reflection: The widows held up the garments Dorcas had made for them, the lasting evidence of her love (v. 39). If your life were remembered today, what evidence of love and service would others hold up? What would you want it to be?

Read Acts 9:32-43

Study Questions

1. When Peter healed Aeneas, he said, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you (v. 34), crediting the Lord rather than himself. What does this teach about the source of the miracle, and why is it important that Peter pointed away from himself to Christ?
2. Peter gave all the credit for the healing to Jesus Christ (v. 34). When good things happen through you, your gifts, your service, your successes, do you point others to Christ or quietly take the credit yourself? How can you cultivate a heart that gives God the glory?
3. After Aeneas was healed, all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord (v. 35). What does this show about the purpose of the miracles in Acts, and what does it mean to truly turn to the Lord?
4. The people of Lydda and Sharon turned fully to the Lord (v. 35). Conversion is a complete turning, not a half-hearted interest. Are there areas of your life where you are only half-turned to the Lord, still facing the old direction? What would a fuller turning look like?
5. Dorcas was described as full of good works and acts of charity (v. 36), and her life of practical love was treasured by all. What place do good works have in the Christian life, and how do we understand them rightly as the fruit of genuine faith rather than the means of earning salvation?
6. Dorcas filled her life with practical acts of love for those around her (vv. 36, 39). What good works characterize your life right now? Where is God inviting you to express your faith in tangible love toward specific people?
7. Dorcas served quietly, behind the scenes, and the widows she helped were the ones who treasured her most (v. 39). What does this teach about the value of humble, unseen service, and about caring for the vulnerable and overlooked?
8. Dorcas served the widows of her town with her own hands, meeting their needs personally (v. 39). Who are the vulnerable or overlooked people in your community or congregation, and how might God be calling you to serve them this week?
9. Peter knelt, prayed, and said, Tabitha, arise, and God raised her from the dead (vv. 40-41). What does this miracle reveal about Christ's power over death, how does it point to the resurrection hope of believers, and how should we understand such a sign in light of the whole New Testament?
10. Looking back over this passage, the power of Christ at work, the people turning to the Lord, and the beautiful life of Dorcas, name one specific way the Lord is calling you to grow, in giving Him glory, in good works, or in resurrection hope, and what is one step you will take this week.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Ephesians 2:8-10, saved by grace through faith, created for good works; James 2:14-17, faith without works being dead; James 1:27, pure religion caring for

widows and orphans in their affliction; John 11:25-26, Jesus as the resurrection and the life; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Christ the firstfruits and the resurrection of those who belong to Him