

Tabitha Arise!

Opening Text: Acts 9:36-42

I want to share with you today about one of the most remarkable women of the New Testament: Dorcas or Tabitha

- Her name is mentioned here in both Aramaic and Greek – and that is not accidental. In English her name means “*pleasant gazelle*”. That is certainly a great description of her personality: she is strong and yet graceful and with great inner beauty.
- She is kind and she is giving
- She is called a ‘disciple’ –that means that she was a committed follower of Jesus and serious about the gospel.
- She was ‘*full of good works*’ – she lived a fruitful life - not barren or unfruitful.
- She was full of good works and *charitable deeds* towards the poor – She was generous, compassionate and resourceful.

James 2:15-17 - *¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

Dorcas was certainly an example of someone who showed her faith by her works. She took care of the poor.

When Peter was asked to come into Dorcas’ house, the widows showed him garments and tunics she had made for others. Right until the end she was doing something for others. What a legacy.

- a) I am always amazed at how God has equipped women (generally speaking) with a greater capacity for empathy and a heart to care for others.

In Luke 4 we read about Peter’s mother-in-law. She died but Jesus brought her back to life. What amazes me is what happened next: Verse 39: “*and immediately she arose and she served them*”. There seems to be an innate predisposition in women to be caring and to respond to the needs of others.

(Luke 4:38-39)

- b) Another powerful ingredient that I find amazing in many of the women mentioned in the Scriptures is tenacity:
 - We read about the Syrophenician woman who came pleading with Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter (**Mark 7:24-30**). She would not take ‘no’ for an answer.

- Then there is that other mother who comes to Jesus to ask that both her boys seat one at His right hand and one at His left hand, in heaven! (**Matthew 20:20-21**)
- Another example of this ‘tenacity’ is the woman with the issue of blood. She wasn’t supposed to even be there, but she came anyway, and she touched Jesus.
- In the Old Testament, we find in **Numbers 27:1-7** a group of 5 sisters known as the ‘daughters of Zelophehad’.

Their father died and the normal custom of the time was for sons to inherit the land of their fathers. In the absence of a son, daughters could not inherit, and the land had to be passed on to other male relatives.

However, the tenacity of these ladies was such that they pleaded their case before Moses, standing against tradition, prejudice and social norms of the day... and won their case.

Numbers 27:5-7 - *⁵ So Moses brought their case before the Lord. ⁶ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ⁷ “The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father’s brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.*

These ladies impacted legislation! The rest of the passage shows us that this precedent was going to be Law for all generations in Israel. Property law in Israel today still observes this principle.

Now, going back to Dorcas...

No doubt Dorcas exhibited great qualities. She was a giver, caring, resourceful, actively involved in the welfare of others. She took good care of everybody around her but perhaps not enough care of herself. She collapsed. She gave out. She probably died helping everybody but herself.

I believe that there are times when need to audit our lives. In financial terms to audit means balancing the deposits and withdrawals of money into your checking account.

In life, if there are more withdrawals than deposits, it means that you are operating your life in the red. Sooner or later something is going to break, fail or fall apart.

And that is truth for both women and men:

Philippians 2:25, 30 - *²⁵ Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;*

³⁰ because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

Maybe you’re not running around planting churches like Epaphroditus but perhaps the busyness of life in general, has left you running on empty, in the red, depleted.

Maybe you’ve been even doing good, not just living for yourself and being fruitful in the process but even then, you can find yourself in deficit.

Here are 4 suggestions to live well and to live full:

1. Audit your life

Know what God called you to do. **Ephesians 4:7** says that we have grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

2. Audit your strengths

In 1 Kings 18 and 19 we read how the prophet Elijah ran out strength. Exhaustion will lead to confusion and depression.

Galatians 6:9 - *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

3. Audit your priorities

As we saw last week, abiding in Jesus is the priority of our lives. Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing. We will be like branches withered and with no sap, disconnected from the source of our strength.

John 15:5 The Passion Translation (TPT) - *"I am the sprouting vine and you're my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you—but when you live separated from me you are powerless.*

Matthew 11:28-29 The Passion Translation (TPT) - *"Are you weary, carrying a heavy burden? Then come to me. I will refresh your life, for I am your oasis.²⁹ Simply join your life with mine. Learn my ways and you'll discover that I'm gentle, humble, easy to please. You will find refreshment and rest in me.*

4. Audit your relationships and commitments

We can't always be all things to all men. There's only one of you to go around.

Conclusion

Once you have established your calling, your strengths and your priorities, then be wise to apportion your time, energy and resources to all the demands of life. We need to be good managers and stewards of the life God has given us. Develop the right habits based on the right priorities. Be sure to always replenish what has been depleted in your life.

Peter said, **Tabitha arise!** – he put death on hold. There was a lot more in store for Dorcas. I also say to you als: Arise! Live a generous life, be tenacious in your prayers, be gracious and compassionate and live full, never depleted. Live from a place of strength, united to Jesus as your source.