

## Dorcas' Service

*In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. She was always doing good works and acts of charity. In those days she became sick and died. After washing her, they placed her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples heard that Peter was there and sent two men to him who begged him, "Don't delay in coming with us." So Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they led him to the room upstairs. And all the widows approached him, weeping and showing him the robes and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Then Peter sent them all out of the room. He knelt down, prayed, and turning toward the body said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her stand up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented her alive. - Acts 9:36-41 HCSB*



Tradition says that Phillip the evangelist, during his evangelistic campaign in the Samaritan territories,<sup>1</sup> established a church in Joppa. Joppa is the biblical name for the Mediterranean port city now known as Jaffa in Israel. This church was known for service evangelism; it was famous for teaching service to mankind as a means of demonstrating love for God. As a result, its benevolence was known throughout the area.

In that church, there was a woman by the name of Dorcas. If Dorcas became a believer in that church, it explains why her life was so characterized by service. She was a dressmaker in that bustling port town<sup>2</sup>, and apparently, was pretty successful in her business because she was known for performing a great many charitable works. Dorcas' name meant "gazelle" and was meant to imply graceful beauty, a name she conscientiously lived up to.

It's interesting that she is described as a disciple of Christ.

James, the half-brother of our Master, said that one of the marks of pure religion is that a person will take care of widows and orphans.<sup>3</sup> Luke describes Jesus as going around "doing good"<sup>4</sup> Obviously, Dorcas did not just hear the Word, but practiced what she was taught.<sup>5</sup> I bet that she would have been pretty pleased to know that she was described in the same words that described her Master!

Many focus on the fact that she was resurrected, but I believe that her greatest service was in fact her death. Whether she contracted a disease as she ministered to the poor or simply worked herself to death, I don't know, but Luke said what happened to her "became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord."<sup>6</sup>

With all the great works she did, God allowed her to become sick, to suffer and to die, thereby, encouraging the church and leading many to the Lord. Are we willing to be like Dorcas and do whatever it takes to serve the Lord?

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 8:5, 12, 26

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chronicles 2:16; Ezra 3:7; Jonah 1:3

<sup>3</sup> James 1:27

<sup>4</sup> Acts 10:38

<sup>5</sup> James 1:22-25

<sup>6</sup> Acts 9:42