

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### TABITHA: LESSON NINE

by Sandy Harber

**"And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner." Acts 9:42-43**

Rumors were flying through the seaport town of Joppa. Wondrous things were happening. Amazing things! Stories and gossip spread from house to house.

First, there was the tragic news that the lady Tabitha had died. She was known as a kind and generous patron of the poor widows. Tabitha sewed garments for the women who had no husband to provide for them and were, therefore, without the means to replace old and worn out clothing. The weeping and wailing over her passing was heard blocks away from her home, where the body was laid out prior to burial.

The good citizens of Joppa joined the mourners or went about their business quietly and solemnly. As the day wore on, a second amazing thing happened. The Apostle Peter was seen entering the home of the deceased! Stories of his miraculous healings were repeated eagerly from person to person. Just recently, it was said, a man named Aeneas, who lived nearby in Lydda, was healed of the palsy. Peter had invoked the name of Jesus, that Rabbi Who had been crucified in Jerusalem a few years prior. Some repeated the rumors that Jesus' followers claimed that He had risen from the dead, and appeared to them. Some curious folk congregated near Tabitha's house hoping to get a glimpse of the famous Apostle.

That's when the third, and most amazing, event occurred. The Apostle Peter raised Tabitha from the dead! People actually saw her alive, walking around and talking to her friends and neighbors. This was not a trick. Too many people claimed they saw the dead body of Tabitha laid out in her upper room. Many of the widows that she had ministered to testified that they had washed her body in preparation for burial. Friends and neighbors had gathered in her home for hours, comforting one another and expressing their grief over her passing. And those same people rejoiced when Peter presented her alive and well. The evidence was overwhelming. The power of God had come to Joppa!

Many people came to believe on the Lord Jesus because of the resurrection of Tabitha. Jesus had bestowed upon His disciples the power to work miracles to authenticate their message that Jesus was God come in the flesh to seek and to save that which was lost. Peter and the other believers in the Church at Joppa were able to witness to the unbelievers and bring many into the body of Christ.

Peter saw an opportunity open up at Joppa, which he took advantage of. The story of Tabitha was responsible for the conversion of many. Those new believers needed to be baptized and to receive instruction in their new faith. Therefore, Peter decided to accept the invitation of Simon the Tanner to stay at his home for a while.

The "many days" that Peter stayed with Simon lasted about three years. He was still in Joppa in 41 A.D., when two servants and a soldier dispatched from a Roman Centurion named Cornelius found him (Acts 10:7, 8, 19-22). Peter presented the gospel to those gathered in Cornelius' house and saw the door of the kingdom open up for the Gentiles to come in.

Peter watched for opportunities to share his faith with others. He was willing to walk for three or four hours to attend the funeral of a lady he had never met. He was open to the teaching of the Holy Spirit which challenged his Jewish upbringing and he entered the home of a Gentile to bring the good news of Christ (Acts 10:9-16, 28). If we want to be effective for Jesus we need to be more like Peter. We need to watch for opportunities to share our faith. We need to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and go where He leads.

*"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15*