

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

TABITHA: LESSON EIGHT

by Sandy Harber

"But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive." Acts 9:40-41

When the widows finished showing Peter all of the garments that Tabitha had made for them when she was alive Peter sent everyone out of the room. Then he knelt beside her bed and began to pray.

Peter had been one of the few people who had witnessed Jesus bring the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus back to life (Mark 5:40-43). Like Peter, Jesus had removed the mourners from the room, with the exception of the girl's parents and Peter, James, and John. Perhaps Peter was thinking back to that day as he prayed for Tabitha

Jesus had simply commanded the girl to arise. Peter began with prayer, entreating the help of God. Jesus, Who is God, could skip this step since He had the power of life and death within Himself. Peter, a mere human being, needed to invoke the power of God to accomplish the same results.

When Peter spoke, in the power of God, to the lifeless body lying on the bed, he used almost the same words that Jesus had spoken. "Tabitha, arise," Peter said. Jesus had commanded, "Talitha, cumi," that is, "Little girl, arise." There was only one little letter different between these two commands that brought life back to Tabitha and the little girl (Greek "talitha").

Tabitha's soul and spirit had returned to her body. She opened her eyes and saw Peter by her bedside. She sat up. Jesus had taken the little girl's hand before He called her back from the dead. She immediately got up from her bed and began to walk (Luke 8:54). Peter did not take Tabitha's hand until she was resurrected and sat up. Scripture tells us that he "lifted her up." The Greek word translated "lifted" means "to raise up; to cause to stand." In other words, Peter helped Tabitha to stand up.

The Bible doesn't tell us how old Tabitha was. I always pictured her as an older lady. I have absolutely no basis for that other than the idea that she herself was probably a widow. And the widows that she ministered to would most likely be older women since young women generally remarried in this society. The Law of Moses provided for the remarriage if the widow was without children by the Law of the Levirate Marriage (Dt. 25:5-10). Perhaps Tabitha needed a little assistance getting off of the bed in light of her age and recent illness. Whereas, the twelve-year-old girl bounded back quickly, got up and walked.

Once Tabitha was standing, the Apostle called the mourners into the room. Again, "the widows" are singled out as a group that had a special relationship with Tabitha. Peter presented her alive to her brothers and sisters in Christ (saints) and the recipients of her love and generosity (widows).

When Jesus included Peter with the others allowed to witness His raising of Jairus' daughter He knew that one day Peter would be confronted with a similar challenge. But Peter didn't know it. God's plan for each of us is unique, and tailor-made for our personalities and skill sets. We may not understand why God allows certain people and experiences into our lives but we can be sure that there is a purpose. Some day we may be able to look back and say, "Oh, now I understand why that happened!"

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Psalm 90:12