

Will You Be Missed

Text: Acts 9:36-42

In the pages of the book called the Acts of the Apostles are war reports. You might call that struggle the "war against the saints." You should know that it is still being waged. In chapter 9 the Church marked one of its greatest victories, the capture of her number one enemy. His name was Saul. Just the whisper of his name brought a chill to the followers of Jesus. He wasn't stopped with a soldier's sword. He was not captured by the Jerusalem church's karate team. The hand of God apprehended him. The Holy Spirit smote him as he traveled to Damascus to put more hurt on the church. He was captured by God's love and became a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Lost in this dramatic event is the story of another follower of Jesus. Her name was Dorcas. She was evidently a woman of means. Her heart was touched by the needs of the poor especially the widows. She purchased yarn and made robes and clothes for the widows. You might say she was a social worker. Suddenly, she became ill and died. News came to the grief stricken fellowship that Peter, one of the church leaders, was in a town only ten miles north. Two men were sent to urge Peter to come and do what he could to help Dorcas. Perhaps they heard that he had just healed a man named Aeneas who had been paralyzed for eight years. Perhaps they remembered the ancient story of Elisha who lay on the dead body of the little boy and breathed into him the breath of life. They had heard of the remarkable miracle of Jesus calling his friend Lazarus back from the dead. Perhaps God would do this for their beloved Dorcas. Peter came and called upon the living Christ to let return to the church. Dorcas was raised from the dead.

What a contrast between this famous man Saul who became Paul and a little known woman named Dorcas, whose name never appears again in the Bible. No doubt Paul has been memorialized more than any other mortal in the Christian church. But what of Dorcas? May I suggest that Paul represents the backbone of the church. He gave us at least thirteen letters upon which the convictions and behavior of the Christian church should be based. He puts calcium in our bones and protein in our muscles with his strong doctrinal teachings of Romans, Galatians and Colossians. Dorcas, on the other hand supplies the body of Christ with something just as vital. You could call her the skin of the body of Christ. I doubt that many of us are attracted romantically to a skeleton. Who would want to peer into empty eye sockets or embrace an armful of dangling bones? Don't get the wrong idea we appreciate our bones. Without them we would be like globs of jello. If you doubt the value of skin visit your local department store and check out the volume of business in the cosmetic counter. But skin is more than a nine pound stocking to hold in all our vitals.

Dr. Paul Brand, noted medical missionary to the India and later to people with leprosy in the hospital in Carville LA. Co-authored a marvelous book entitled, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made. One chapter is all about the amazing assets of the skin. He spoke of the skin's v/sibility: It reveals. It

allows the trained eye to see what's happening inside us. It's like a window. Anemia shows in the nails and the skin, jaundice yellows the skin, while a form of diabetes bronzes the skin. Some drugs transform the skin into an iridescent tattoo-blue.

Lack of oxygen in the blood casts a purple tint. Scurvy, beriberi, and granular malfunctions reveal their presence. When its rainbow is depleted, the skin turns to other signals. It closes down its nerve endings to warn of leprosy. Cancers leak out in a rash or an aggravating mole. An allergist can crack the secret code of your body's likes and dislikes merely by mapping out a grid on you back and pricking the skin with pin-sized potions. Is it dog hair? Pollen? Shellfish? Your skin will unriddle the mysterious vomiting or sneezing.

[The communicator can check out other aspects of skin from Dr. Brand's book or other sources.]

Application to the church is the skin's value to our body. But the skin can also, PERCEIVE/REVEAL. We could speak of the COMPLIANCY of skin. You have a different skin structure in the palm of your hand. If there were no skin there the boney makeup of your hand would make only four pressure points on the hammer. But Creator God filled that part of our body with a Jell-O like substance that allows you to put a firm hold on the hammer. The church is to be compliant to the needs and concerns of others so that we might know how to handle them. But we know that the most expressive thing we can say of skin is that *it touches*. That touch can either be a slap or a kiss. It can tell a person whether they are accepted or rejected. Jesus touched so many. He literally touched them. He touched the unattractive, the smelly, the diseased, and the unsanitary. He has called his church to reach out a touch.

Dorcas did that and she was missed. What do we know of the Christian's death? Generally the phrases we use are: "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." "To be with Christ is far better." These are certainly true. I have said, "That a person would not want to come back," or we need to release them to the Lord. Have you heard those kinds of remarks? But the believing people of Joppa couldn't accept that. Dorcas was too deeply needed. She must come back. She was so missed. What a contrast there is in the death of Dorcas and the death of King Jehoram in II Ch.21. When he died the record shows that he departed with no one's regret.

CONCLUSION: Who will miss me when I die? I believe I will be missed by wife of nearly 52 years. I think my loving children will miss me. I hope the grandchildren will miss me. But I would be sorely disappointed if the church of Jesus Christ did not miss me. For that would that say of me? Jim Higgs left no gap in the kingdom work of God. Whether it's the scaffolding of truth or the behind scene ministry in the fellowship. I trust we all will be missed!

What do you want placed on your tombstone? That's not just a clever phrase advertising pizza, it's an important matter. I can think of no more fitting phrase than this, "Dorcas died in the Lord and his church missed her."