

It Is Written

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Dorcas, a Fond Remembrance

By Bill Feist

She was married to a non-Christian. I met her years after the “battles” were fought over the importance and role of the Lord in her life. She sketched for me one time what some of those battles were, only because she had come to volunteer to talk to any of our girls who were thinking of marrying a man who was not a Christian. At this point in her life, things looked “easy,” as she stood her ground and her husband no longer refused to stop for worship on the Lord’s Day when traveling or tried to interfere anymore in other areas that involved her commitment to the Lord. Yet she assured me that it had not been an easy “row to hoe.”

I learned that her husband had decreed from the very beginning of their marriage that none of his money was going to some church! He supported her and the family well but steadfastly refused to allow one dime of his money to be used for the Lord’s cause. She worked with her own hands, making arts and crafts all year long for one big weekend “show.” It was from this activity that she gained the funds she used for the Lord’s service. Her talent was much in evidence in these shows, and local people and others who had heard of her talent anticipated her yearly sale.

Among the many things she did with this revenue was to help provide assistance to Christians who had needs, contribute on the first day of the week and take food to people who needed it. All the children in the local assembly knew her for her sugar cookies with almond icing whenever they were ill.

This good sister could easily have excused herself from any responsibility to the Lord, saying, “My husband refuses to provide me with any funds for ‘church work,’” but she did not. Instead, she labored with her own hands while being a “stay-at-home mother” to provide for those who had need. This unnamed sister, unnamed because she still lives in her old age, and others like her serve as a model for all women, as does her spiritual namesake, Dorcas.

Acts 9:36-42 records all that we know of Dorcas. Yet what insights we are able to obtain by studying this first-century sister who spent her life in acts of kindness and charity. When we think of the word “serve,” Dorcas should automatically come to mind. She possessed a servant’s heart, and it was this that the widows showed to Peter as much as “the tunics and garments which she had made while she was with them” (9:39). These articles of clothing served as a silent but eloquent testimony to all who viewed them of the kind of heart Dorcas had.

Death overtook Dorcas in the midst of a life of blessed service. Her brethren sent for Peter, who was nearby, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Possibly they sent for Peter prior to Dorcas’ death, hoping he would heal her. What a scene greeted Peter when he arrived. He found the body of Dorcas laid out in an upper chamber, attended by the widows she had assisted in life — weeping and commending the deceased for her praiseworthy life. Their commendation was like Dorcas’s virtues, not in word, but in deed. They showed the garments she had made and bestowed upon them. The very backs of these widows praised Dorcas for the gifts she had made for them. Doubtless, there were other acts of kindness she had done, but this evidence was presented as a tribute to Dorcas’ servant heart. Dorcas was remembered for the things she left behind when death overtook her. She now rests from her labors, and her works follow her (Rev. 14:13).

We can all serve God with whatever talents or gifts we have, but we must serve while we can. Scripture never presents a “no-talent” person. Dorcas simply did what she could, as did our unnamed

sister above. She saw a need and an opportunity that challenged her talent, and she acted.

The question posed by Dorcas is, "What legacy will I leave behind after my death?" Dorcas was raised back to life in the midst of the "viewing" before her funeral. She saw how her death was affecting others. Think about it, what kind of funeral do you want? We are determining day by day the kind of funeral we shall have. Actually, the funeral service itself is unimportant: an eloquent eulogy, the many floral tributes, the tears of loved ones, etc., will have no effect on our eternal destiny. When our bodies lie motionless in death, God and men will apprise how well we have used these few short years entrusted to us. It matters little what man's assessment is, but our eternal destiny depends on God's assessment. What will God's appraisal be of my life?

Where Will I Be In Another Year?

By Greg Gwin

With the end of a calendar year and the beginning of a new one, there is always a tendency to look back — and to look forward. Evaluations are made in regards to our financial status, our career pursuits, and other important matters. Surely it is appropriate to evaluate our spiritual welfare.

Ask yourself this simple question: If I keep doing what I am presently doing, where will I be in another year?

- Will I be a stronger Christian because I am doing things that will help me grow in Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)? Or, will I be weaker as a result of continuing to ignore the most important things in life?
- Will I be a better Bible student? Will my knowledge of the Word have increased through regular and consistent study? Or, will I still be only wishing that I knew my Bible better?
- Will I have brought any lost soul to the Lord through a committed effort to teach others? Will I have invited folks to visit the assemblies, or encouraged them to have a private Bible study? Or, will I only be giving lip-service to the whole notion of personal work?
- Will I improve in my ability to react to life's provocations in a godly and controlled manner? Will I be displaying more of the "divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) as I deal with people and problems? Or, will I still be easily provoked and often fail as trials and temptations are placed before me?
- Will I have broken that "bad habit" that has nagged me for so long? Or, will I still be offering lame excuses and trying to convince myself that "I can't"?
- Will my example be stronger? Will others begin to recognize dependability in me? Will I be constantly striving to do all I can as a disciple (1 Cor. 15:58)? Or, will I be counted as only a "lukewarm" Christian (Rev. 3:15-17)?

If I keep doing what I'm presently doing, where will I be in another year? Or, more to the point, where will I be in eternity? Think!