

# Our **GUIDE**

## for little ones

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Protestant Reformed Sunday School Association  
Writer: Don Doezema     Artist: Connie Meyer  
Designers: Judi Doezema & Brenda Brands

IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

### Lesson 67

#### The Raising of Dorcas

*Acts 9:31-42*

Christianity was *spreading*. Little churches — that is, *groups of believers* — were popping up here and there throughout the country. Compared to *Jerusalem*, these other little churches were like scattered flocks of sheep. Little flocks ... without shepherds. The shepherds were all in Jerusalem. Once in a while, though, the shepherds (the apostles) would travel around the country, visiting these little flocks, to see how they were doing and to give them help — help, that is, to *grow*. By bringing the gospel to *others*.

In our story for today, we find Peter doing that. In his traveling he comes to the town of Lydda. And he isn't there very long before someone tells him about a man by the name of Aeneas, who was sick of the palsy. That means that

Aeneas was *paralyzed* — probably unable to use either his arms or his legs. He couldn't get around *at all*. He had not gotten out of his bed ... for *eight years*.



Peter went to see this man. He didn't go there to cheer him up. He didn't go there to wish him well. He went there to *make him well*.

Not, however, *by himself*. Peter never, ever, pretended to have the power to heal. After all, how *could* he heal a man who was *paralyzed*? How could *any* mere man fix nerves and muscles so that they work right again? Even today, one

**Note to Parents:** These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

may go to the *best hospital in the world*, and he will not find a *single doctor* who can do that. Only *God* can make nerves and muscles work.

Only God. And ... *Jesus*. Because Jesus *is* God. That, you see, is what Christianity is about. It's not about Stephen, or Philip, or Saul, or Peter. It's about Jesus — who is the Christ, the Son of God. Peter had no other reason for traveling to Lydda. And, when he was in Lydda, he had no other reason for going to see Aeneas. It was always, and only, because of *Jesus*. Only because Jesus had said, "Tell others about *Me*. Tell them that I am the *Savior*. Tell them that I am the *Son of God*. And more — not only *tell* them, but also *show* them. Give them *proof*. *In my name*, lay hands on the sick, and they shall *recover*. Who else can do that, but the *Son of God*?"

That's what is happening here in Lydda. Is Peter just *moved with compassion* for a lame man? Does he just feel sorry for someone who has been in bed for eight years? No, this is about *Jesus*. Surely Peter does feel *compassion*, surely he feels *pity*, but he will do a miracle only to *exalt the name of Jesus*.

And that's what happened. "Aeneas," Peter said, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, and make thy bed." And Aeneas arose immediately. Nerves and muscles were made better, in an instant, by Jesus, who is the Son of God.

And then what? Many who saw him "*turned to the Lord*." Many in



Lydda and in the country around Lydda, when they saw Aeneas *walking*, believed that what Peter preached about *Jesus* must be *true*.

The healing of a lame man was indeed a great wonder. But an even greater wonder lay just ahead for Peter. Listen.

Not very far from Lydda was the town of Joppa. And

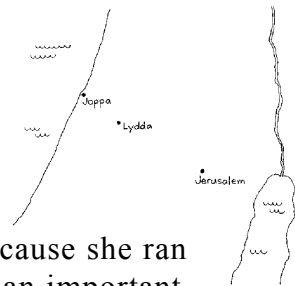
living in Joppa was a lady by the name of Dorcas. Every Christian in the town knew Dorcas. Not because

she was so *rich*. Not because she ran a *business* or worked in an important *office*. But because she stayed home to *knit*. She made clothes. Not for *herself* — but for *others*. There were poor people in the church, people too poor to buy anything *nice*. Well, Dorcas would *make* them something nice. And she was good at it. If she had wanted to, she could have made clothes for *money*. But she didn't.

She worked for hours and hours, to make clothes ... to give away for free.

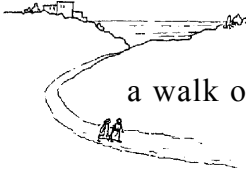
That's the kind of woman she was — always looking for ways to help others. Then one day she got sick. And, soon after, she died.

That must have happened quickly. Too quickly for her friends to go and get *Peter*. Yes, some of them had already heard that Peter was not far away, in Lydda, and that he had healed a paralytic who had not gotten out of bed for eight



years. “If only,” they must have thought, “if only Peter had been *here*. Surely then Dorcas would not have *died*.”


But is it too late *now*? These dear Christian people knew all about *Jesus*. They knew that He had raised Lazarus, and the son of a widow in Nain, and the daughter of Jairus. But now Jesus is *gone*. Will He, from heaven, through His apostles, still *raise the dead*?



They decide to send quickly for Peter. Two men head out for Lydda. Probably a walk of about three hours, one way. And when they reach Peter they ask that

he come back to Joppa with them without delay. Peter did that. And he entered the house where Dorcas lay, dead. There are widows there. They are weeping. And they show Peter the beautiful garments that Dorcas had made — for *them*.

Most likely no one in the room said anything to Peter about *raising Dorcas*. They hardly even dared to *think* it. Nor did Peter, at that moment, know if Jesus would be pleased to work so great a wonder through him. So he sent



everyone out of the room. And he knelt down ... and *prayed*.

Then he knew. He got up and said, “Tabitha (Dorcas), arise.” And she did. Alive, and healthy.

Great, great joy in that house. But more. It didn’t take long before everybody in the whole town heard about *that* wonder. And again, the Bible tells us,

many people *believed* — believed *in the Lord*, who alone has power to bring *life* ... out of *death*.

### How Well Did You Listen?

1. Where did Aeneas live?
2. Why had Aeneas stayed in his bed for eight years?
3. How did the healing of Aeneas help the *church*?
4. What good woman lived in Joppa? How did she help other people?
5. Why did friends of Dorcas send to Lydda for Peter?
6. Who raised Dorcas from the dead?

## The Visions of Cornelius and Peter

*Acts 9:43 - 10:18*

Lydda, where Aeneas lived, and Joppa, where Dorcas lived — these were towns in *Judea*, the land of the *Jews*. Peter, then, was bringing the gospel ... to the *Jews*.

That was *good*. The Jews must indeed hear the gospel. But what about ... the *Gentiles*?

Ah, yes, that was the question — what about the *Gentiles*? The apostles understood that the gospel was to be, somehow, for them too. But how?

For hundreds of years the Jews had been taught that they must be a *separate* people. Separate, that is, from *all other peoples*. Salvation was for *one people* — the *children of Abraham*, the *Jews*. That was *God’s will*. God had, in fact, given

them many pictures to remind them of their *separation from Gentiles*. Food laws, for example. Some animals were

“clean.” Others were “unclean.” A cow was “clean.” A pig was not. Why not?



For no other reason than this — to remind the Jews that God had made a *difference* between *peoples*, between *nations*. The nation of *Israel* was His chosen people. *All other nations* were not.

So, the people of *Israel* ate *beef* — but not *pork*. Thus were they reminded, every day, by their food laws, that there are two kinds of *people* — God’s people, and those who are *not* God’s people; children of *Abraham*, and *Gentiles*. The children of *Abraham* are to be a *separate, special* people.

Could a *Gentile*, in the *Old Testament*, be saved? Oh yes, but only by *becoming a Jew* — by being *circumcised*. Like *baptism* in the church of *Christ* today, so *circumcision* was a sign of *salvation* in *Old Testament Israel*. An *uncircumcised* *Gentile* was *outside* the church, he was not part of the people of *God*. It was as simple as that. The *Jews*, if they were to be a *separate* people, should not even keep close company with such a man. *Salvation* was for the *Jews*. *God Himself* had said it.

But ... *now* what? That was the question for the apostles. Are pigs still ... *unclean*? Are *uncircumcised* *Gentiles* still ... *outside the church*? A hard question it was. For *Peter* too. But the answer was close at hand. Listen.

In *Caesarea* there lived a man by the name of *Cornelius*. He was a *centurion*, in the army of the *Romans*. He was a *Gentile*. An *uncircumcised* *Gentile*. But in *Caesarea* he had become acquainted with the *Jews*, and with their *religion*. And, wonder of wonders, he believed that their religion was *true*. He believed that *Jehovah*, the *God* of the *Jews*, was the only true *God*.

*Cornelius* was a *pious* man. He gave gifts to the poor. He taught his family about *God*. And he prayed often. He prayed, surely, that *salvation* could be for him and his family — *though they were not Jews*.

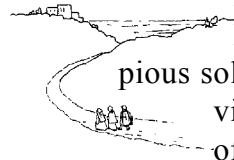
Then one day, when *Cornelius* was in his house praying, a shining angel of *God* stood suddenly before him.



“*Cornelius*,” the angel said, “thy prayer is heard.”

Yes, thy prayer is heard — thy prayer for *salvation* ... for *Gentiles*. “Send men to *Joppa*,” the angel said, “and call for one *Simon*, whose surname is *Peter*. He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”

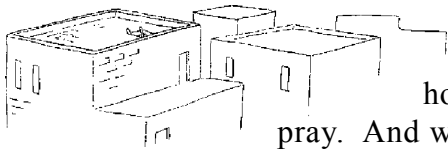
The angel then vanished. And *Cornelius* immediately obeyed his command. He called for two of his household servants and a *pious* soldier. He tells them about his vision, and then he sends them off to *Joppa* to find *Peter*.



But will *Peter* go *with them*? Will *Peter* go to the house of a *Roman centurion* — to visit with him, to eat with him, to pray with him? Will he not say,

“Sorry, I may not do that. The Jews have been commanded by God to be a *separate people* — separate from uncircumcised Gentiles”? We will see.

Joppa was a long way from Caesarea. The three men from Cornelius did not get there till about noon of the following day. Peter, meanwhile, had no idea that he would soon be visited by three men from Caesarea. He was hungry. While he was waiting for dinner to be



prepared, he went to the housetop to pray. And while he was praying he fell into a trance. In that trance he saw a vision. And in the vision he saw something come down from the sky. It looked like a large sheet, held together at the four corners so that it could *carry* something. It came lower and lower, until it was right in front of Peter. Then he could see what was inside. Animals. All kinds of them. Clean animals and unclean animals — all mixed together.

How terrible! A good Jew would not like that at all. And Peter was a good Jew. God Himself had told the Jews exactly which animals were to be to them unclean. Those animals they may not *eat*. A good Jew, therefore, would not put those animals together, so that the unclean would defile, or pollute, the clean.

And then came a voice from heaven saying, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat.” That’s right — take what you want. You’re hungry. Does ham sound good? Okay, kill a pig. And eat.

Peter was stunned. The voice had come from *heaven*. But how can that *be*? How can a voice from heaven tell him to *do* something that God’s *law* said he may *not* do? Was God, maybe, *testing* him?

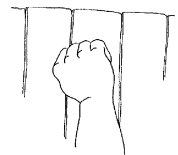
Peter didn’t know what to do. But one thing he knew, he couldn’t bring himself to eat ... *pork*. That would be just like ... just like ... keeping company with ... a *Gentile*.

“Not so, Lord,” Peter said, “for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”

The answer came — again *from heaven* — “What *God* hath cleansed, that call not *thou* common.”

Yes, God has now *cleansed* — God has *made clean* what was *before unclean*. God, here, simply *declares it to be so*. But those old ceremonial laws had such a *hold on Peter* that he *cannot let them go*. When, therefore, God repeats the command to rise and eat, Peter answers again, “I *can’t*.” So hard was it for Peter to understand that Jesus had, by His death, *finished* — put an end to — all of those laws. Three times the command to eat. And three times, I can’t, I can’t, I can’t. Then the sheet was taken up again into heaven.

Peter came out of his trance. He sat there, wondering — wondering what could be the meaning of this vision. And then there was a knock at the gate to the house. Three men stood there. Three ... *Gentiles*. Asking for *Peter*.



**How Well Did You Listen?**

1. Can you name one animal that was *unclean* to the Jews?
2. What *people* in the Old Testament were like the *clean* animals? What people were like the *unclean* animals?
3. Who told Cornelius to send for Peter?
4. What was Peter doing on the housetop? What did he see coming down from the sky?
5. What did God answer, when Peter called the animals unclean?

**How Well Do You Understand?**

1. Why were the Old Testament Jews commanded not to eat pork?
2. Why would a good Jew not keep company with Cornelius the centurion?
3. Why did Peter refuse to eat of the animals in the sheet?
4. What did Peter have still to learn about the Old Testament food laws?

**Memory Verse**

Acts 10:15b "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

**Follow the Maze**

What could Peter eat now?

Follow the maze to draw one of those animals. Color the animal pink.

