

April 29, }
1882.

PETER WORKING MIRACLES.

{ Acts 9
32-43

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."—Acts 9: 34.

CONNECTION.—The narrative now changes from Paul to Peter. In this time of peace, and growth, and comfort, Peter makes an extended tour among the churches of Palestine. It is wonderful how a visit from a good man will strengthen a weak church.

NOTES.—Lydda, Greek name for Lod (1 Chron. 8: 12; Ezra 2: 33), called also *Diospolis*, a city about twelve miles east of Joppa. Its people were sold as slaves after the death of Julius Cæsar: set at liberty by Mark Antony. The city was wealthy under the Roman rule, and was a seat of Jewish learning. Its modern name is *Ludd*, its houses small and poor, its lanes dirty, about 1,000 population, with a splendid church of St. George, who is said to have been born and buried there. Saron, a plain north of Joppa reaching to Cæsarea, and often spoken of with Mount Carmel. Joppa, the seaport for Jerusalem. It was upon a high hill on the Mediterranean Sea; had a poor, dangerous harbour; was noted as the place where Hiram landed materials for Solomon (2 Chron. 2: 16); where Jonah shipped for Tarshish (Jonah 1: 3). Its present name is *Yifa*; it has about 5,000 inhabitants; poor dwellings; crooked, narrow streets, but considerable trade. Eneas, Dorcas, Simon: all we know of these persons is stated in the lessons.

ROMAN EMPERORS.—*Augustus* Cæsar, who was the reigning Emperor at the time of Jesus' birth, was succeeded by *Tiberius* Cæsar seventeen years later. He was the first of that line of tyrannical rulers which spread persecutions in the early Church and hastened the downfall of the Roman empire. He reigned during the early manhood and ministry of Jesus. In the eighteenth year of his reign Christ was crucified. About the time of Stephen's martyrdom Tiberius was put to death by one of his court. His successor, *Caligula* Cæsar or Caligula, reigned four years, when he fell by the hands of an assassin, in the twenty-ninth year of his age. *Claudius* Cæsar was his successor, and his reign commenced about the time of this period of rest in the Church and continued until the founding of the Church at Ephesus, when he was poisoned by his wife, and her son, the monster *Nero*, ascended the throne. Paul's ministry ended during Nero's reign.

I. ENEAS HEALED.—Ver 32.—Passed throughout all quarters: Peter seemed to go all over the country; visiting every church—just as Paul afterwards did in other lands.

Ver. 33.—Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years: we suppose him to be already a believer. Not every believer, even in those days of miracles, was healed.

Ver. 34.—Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: every miracle was for the main purpose of attesting Christ's power and divinity, or to call attention to the truth proclaimed. The healing of Eneas would excite the attention of the whole city. And he arose: the cure was instantaneous; and complete.

Ver 35.—Turned to the Lord: the miracle, backed by the preaching of Peter, was the means of converting very many of the inhabitants; as well of the town, as of the country around.

II. DORCAS RAISED.—Ver. 36.—At Joppa. *Tabitha* . . . Dorcas: the two names, the first Hebrew, the other Greek, mean the same—"a gazelle." Full of good works: her crown is still to be had, by the pure, the kind, the loving. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Ps. 41: 1.

Ver. 37, 38.—She was sick and died: death is sent to Christians, even as to others. And as they have their chief treasures in heaven, it would be a great misfortune if it were not. They laid her in an upper chamber:

there seemed to be a purpose from the first, of delaying the customary hasty burial, in order to send for Peter. Sent unto him two men: it was ten miles; and their request and entreaty was very urgent and touching.

Ver. 39.—Peter arose and went: "arose" brings before us the idea of an instant compliance. Without doubt, the journey, both ways, was performed in one day. The widows stood by him, weeping: mark, no hired mourners, to raise their artificial and (to us) repulsive wailings. Her friends, and those she had benefited, wept for their loss:—

Her hands folded now, that were never at rest,
Till the wants of the widow and orphan were blessed!

Coats and garments which Dorcas made: she had evidently passed her life in helping others: and her name is fragrant yet. Many a band of Christian women have been proud to attach her name to themselves—"Dorcas Societies."

Ver. 40.—Put them all forth: kindly, no doubt: but he wished to be alone. He perhaps had, as yet, no intimation of the Divine will. He must talk to God, **Kneeled down and prayed:** if a man does not find God's mind in prayer, he will not find it otherwise. He gathered that the Lord would do a great work by him. **Tabitha, arise!** And she opened her eyes: her spirit returned. She sat up: it is remarkable that we have no intimation that any who were raised to life again, ever related anything they had seen in the spirit world. It is perhaps better. The descriptions would be most imperfect and garbled. The same power that made Paul remember (but not tell) what he had seen and heard (2 Cor. 12: 4) could easily cause Lazarus and Tabitha to forget.

Ver. 41.—Called the saints and widows: they, too, no doubt, had been praying. He gave Dorcas his hand, and assisted her to rise; and now presented her alive to the wondering saints. Another great impulse for the Gospel.

III. A BLESSING TO JOPPA.—Ver. 42.—Known throughout all Joppa: it was a considerable city. Population mixed. Jews and Gentiles would alike be impressed. Peter was now ready for further directions from the Lord, how to treat Gentile believers.

Ver. 43.—Tarried many days: a considerable time. We cannot tell how long: some think perhaps a year. More probably two or three months. There was much work to do in that city, for the Master. Simon, a tanner: he was a Jew; and no doubt a Christian. His house was near the sea. We are interested in a man who even *lodged* an apostle. We may make, not an apostle, but our Lords's own Spirit, our guest.

PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

1. Let Christians *visit* Christians. It will do both sides good.
2. We know not from how many follies, temptations, and sins, Eneas' long confinement had kept him. Sickness generally has some *blessing* wrapped up in it.
3. Christ can make the soul "whole," as well as the body.
4. One miracle of healing, or one striking conversion, can win many to God.
5. What one woman did may well teach us possibilities before unknown.
6. Woman's work in the Church, after being long and shamefully overlooked, is now coming into prominence as a great agency in the conversion and well-being of the world.

PALSIED
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FAITH **C**AN **Y**OUNG,
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DOAS **U**S.
DORCAS
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