

familiar with them, or that he despised them as a mere knowing of Christ "after the flesh." But the fact is that he everywhere assumes this knowledge on the part of his readers. To persons ignorant of the life and teachings of Christ, the Epistles of Paul would be incomprehensible. Furthermore, the general impression of Christ left by a reading of these Epistles corresponds accurately with that produced by a reading of the Gospels themselves.

Paul's view of the revelation contained in the Old Testament had been revolutionized by the new revelation that had come to him through Christ. The old covenant was obsolete. Its inefficiency in procuring salvation having been demonstrated, should it then be thrown aside as worthless? No. It remained for Saul to show how they were related. The law was a preparation and therefore transient, the Gospel was the fulfilment and therefore permanent. The one was the shadow, the other the substance. Saul's preparation for his work demanded accordingly a new interpretation of the old Testament from the point of view of Christ as its completion and goal. Old ideas and new revelations were reorganized and combined into a logical system which gave to Christianity a foundation in reason as well as in faith. Step by step, through long and painful struggles, he wrought out this transcendent result under the inspiration of the Almighty.

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON I.—PETER WORKING MIRACLES.—APRIL 4.

(Acts 9. 32-43.)

GOLDEN TEXT—"Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."—Acts ix. 34.
TIME AND PLACE—A.D. 40; Lydda, twenty-five miles north-west of Jerusalem; Joppa, ten miles north-west of Lydda.

INTRODUCTION.—Our last lesson in the history of the early church recounted the conversion of Saul, whose career of persecution was thus arrested. For reasons that do not appear in the record, and which can only be surmised, the fierce persecution, in which Saul had been so prominent, was for a time arrested, and the churches had rest and were multiplied. The seed sown by the scattered disciples had taken root, and produced an abundant harvest, and in our lesson to-day we find Peter engaged in visiting the churches thus established.

VERSE BY VERSE.—V. 32. "All quarters."—The different portions of Judea where the Gospel had been preached. "Saints."—Holy, or consecrated ones. A term early applied to the disciples of Christ. "Lydda."—See *place*.

V. 33. "Eneas."—The name is Greek, and he was probably of that nation or a Grecian Jew. He was doubtless a believer in Jesus. "Palsy."—A contraction or *paralysis*, a disease which, in this case, rendered the man helpless.

V. 34. "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."—Peter makes no claim to healing power himself, he is only the instrument of divine power. "Arose immediately."—Showing that he was fully restored.

V. 35. "Saron, or Sharon."—This was the district of country in which the city of Lydda was located. It was a plain extending along the coast from Joppa to Cosarea, about thirty miles. "Turned to the Lord."—The attention of all was turned to the Lord Jesus, and many believed.

V. 36. "Joppa."—See *place*. "Tabitha-Dorcas."—The first name is Aramaic, and the second Greek; both signify the same thing—a gazelle. "Alms-deeds."—Deeds of charity to the needy.

V. 38. "Sent unto him."—Peter was sent for, no doubt, with the hope that the miracle of the restoration of Eneas might be followed by a greater one in the restoration of Dorcas.

V. 39. "Coats and garments which Dorcas made."—That is, which she had made for others—the poor and needy about her.

V. 40. "Put them forth."—As Jesus (Mark v. 40); as Elisha (iv. 33). "Prayed."—For the restoration of Dorcas. "Opened her eyes . . . sat up."—Restored to life.

V. 41. "Throughout all Joppa."—Joppa was a large city, but the news of such an event soon spread over it. "Many believed in the Lord."—The miracle was a testimony of the truth of the gospel of which Peter and the saints of Joppa preached.

V. 43. "Tarried many days."—How long can only be conjectured, perhaps a year.

THOUGHTS.—The mission of Christianity is to do good to the bodies and souls of men. The apostle Peter, like his divine Master, sought opportunities to help his fellow-men. He found his way, when he entered into a new place, into the homes and sanctuary of the saints. He went there always to comfort, to exhort, and to reprove. Christ came to seek and to save. His religion is beneficent. The biographical sketch of Dorcas is very brief, but comprehensive. Two pen-strokes described the super-

natural workmanship in Dorcas—she was a disciple and a saint. She was Mary and Martha in one. As a disciple, she sat at Jesus' feet, and confessed him before men; as a saint she served Jesus in serving His afflicted ones, and in the consecration of her possessions, time and capabilities to Christ. She did not seek for honor or position in the church, but being full of love, sympathy and benevolence, she gave coats, garments and, no doubt, food and fuel to God's poor. She presents a model worthy the imitation of every godly woman.

The power of Christianity is seen in the recovery of Eneas to complete health, and the restoration of Tabitha to life, Peter said to Eneas, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," and to Tabitha, "Arise." The former arose immediately and made his bed, while the latter "open her eyes and sat up." This power was not in the apostle, but he was the channel by which it was applied. It was the power of Christ. It was derived from him by faith. Eneas was a hopeless invalid. He could not restore himself, and no human physician could restore him. Yet he desired to be made whole. Just as he was, he trusted in the power of the risen Christ, and the work was done. Dorcas had passed beyond human help. She had but reached the prime of life, and her illness was, in all probability, brief but violent. She could not exercise faith for herself. She could not present herself to Peter. Neither of these things was a necessity. Power belongeth unto God. All power is given unto Jesus, and it was faith in His power that led Peter to pray. The bereaved friends dwelt upon their loss, and recounted the good deeds of their departed sister. Peter's faith claimed her restoration. He presented the case alone before God, and in the name of the Lord Jesus bade the saint arise. Her case was not dependent upon human skill, any more than that of Eneas, but upon the sovereign and miraculous power of Jesus. He had power over death. He had the keys of death and hell, and for His glory Dorcas was made alive again. When He had restored her to life, Peter presented her unto her friends. The power rests in Christ; the instruments are his sincere believers.

The influence of Christianity is noticed in the expressions "turned to the Lord," v. 35, "and many believed in the Lord," v. 42. The fame of these two miracles spread throughout all that region. The multitude thronged to see the restored paralytic and the risen benefactress. Then openly they took their stand with the Church of Christ. The news thrilled the Church with joy, and Lydda and Joppa with wonder. Such manifestations of the power of Christianity produced great revivals in these two cities. Wherever Christianity fulfils its mission and displays its power, the effect will be seen in the conversion of many to its principles and doctrines. The greatest miracle wrought through the power of Christ is the conversion of a soul. It proves the power divine. It reveals his love surpassing; and exalts His name above every other name. It establishes His kingdom in the earth. It saves men from the power of sin, and leads them in the way everlasting.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

DAILY READINGS.

First Day—Jesus Curing the Palsy—Mark ii. 1-12.

Second Day—Jesus Raising the Dead—Luke vii. 11-16
viii. 41-56.

Third Day—"The Works that I do shall be do."—John xiv. 1-14.

Fourth Day—"Endued with Power from on High."—Luke xxiv. 44-53.

Fifth Day—Peter Healing the Lame Man—Acts iii. 1-16.

Sixth Day—Peter Working Miracles—Acts ix. 32-43.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, April 4—LESSONS FROM CHRIST'S MIRACLES—Matt. xii. 2-6; John xiv. 8-14.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

The change of water into wine was the first miracle which Jesus wrought. It is a miracle of transformation, and fore shadows the whole character of His public mission and ministry. His work was and is now, to convert sinners into saints, to turn grief into joy, to elevate earth to heaven.

It was, moreover, a miracle of festive joy and gladness, and shows in striking contrast to the Mosaic law of condemnation, that Christianity is a religion of life and peace. It relieves not only the present need, but provides an abundant supply for all the future. Christ gives as a King, and with more than royal munificence, enough and to spare for every one that thirsteth.

Christ significantly began His miracles in the bosom of a family. The family is the first institution of God on earth, and the nursery of Church and State, where all moral reforms of society must begin.