



73rd Year

May 11, 2025

Pamphlet #19 (3754)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Acts 9:32-42)

Miracles of the Apostles

In those days, as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter rose and went with them. And when he had come, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing tunics and other garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, rise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. Then calling the saints and widows he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

ALMSGIVING, THE KEY TO PARADISE

Today's Epistle reading narrates two remarkable acts of the Apostle Peter. While in Lydda, Peter encountered Aeneas,

who had been paralyzed for eight years. Calling upon the power of Jesus Christ, Peter healed the paralytic, and the local inhabitants glorified God and believed in Christ.

Shortly afterward, Peter traveled to Joppa, where a devout woman named Tabitha had recently fallen ill and let out her last breath. The author of the book "Acts of the Apostles" notes that Tabitha was a person of great love and generosity, so for this reason her death brought great mourning among her fellow citizens, who hastened to her house to mourn her loss. Peter, after fervent prayer to the Lord, raised Tabitha from the dead, and everyone admired and glorified God's majesties.

God-loving philanthropy

From today's Epistle narration, we will focus on the virtue of almsgiving, which adorned Tabitha. In the consciousness of the Church, charity and philanthropy are an imitation of Jesus Christ, Who, imbued with boundless love for man, put on human flesh and sacrificed Himself for the salvation of the world. This means that, as St. John of the Ladder notes, "almsgiving to the suffering person constitutes worship of God, whereas inhumaneness is an insult to Him."

Many times, as Christians, we believe that worshiping God can be limited to specific actions of a ritual character. We consider that attending church services alone, or the formal practice of virtues, as a duty before God, is sufficient to bring fulfillment to our ecclesiastical life. However, the saints of God identify the authenticity of our religiosity in the way we conduct ourselves toward our brethren, especially when they are facing various difficulties in life. A characteristic exhortation from Saint Gregory the Theologian states: "Do not stretch your hands toward heaven, but toward the hands of the poor. If you extend your hands toward the hands of the poor, you have reached the pinnacle of heaven."

A hidden benefactor

Years ago, a bishop reposed who had shepherded one of the largest metropolises of Greece for many years. He was not known for his spirituality, nor for the magnitude of his outward virtues. He had the reputation of being abrupt in manner, which, quite a few times, negatively concerned his flock, particularly among the "proper Christians." When he reposed, however, the following wondrous phenomenon was observed: The church where his body was displayed was flooded with all kinds of people – those whom society often labels as marginalized: the ragged, the homeless, the sick, the poor, and so on. Thousands of people who had endured every type of trial in life rushed to surround his coffin and mourn his loss.

The explanation for this paradoxical event was that those people had been repeatedly benefited by the departed bishop and had experienced the abundant fruits of his love and philanthropy. He may have had many weaknesses, but he was a man of love and charity. And these virtues, which he knew how to carefully hide from the indiscreet gaze of others, became the passport that he carried with him on the great journey to eternity. They became the key to open the door to Paradise.

Imitators of Tabitha

In our time, many of our fellow human beings are hurting and suffering in various ways. Here lies a glorious field of glory for those of us who will seek to imitate Tabitha from the Epistle passage and the bishop of love and mercy. Let us not allow wounds to grow and pain to multiply. As Christians, we have a duty to stand beside our brethren in their needs and to share the magnitude of their problems with them. Only thus will we justify our place within the Church, become imitators of Christ, and ensure that our worship will not be empty and meaningless, but full and substantial.

Archimandrite E. Oik.

May 11, 2025: 4th Sunday of Pascha
Commemoration of the healing of the Paralytic.
Remembrance of the dedication of Constantinople (402);
Mokios the hieromartyr (3rd c.);
Cyril (+869) and Methodius (+855), Equal-to-the-Apostles and
Enlighteners of the Slavs.

3rd Tone – Eothinon: 5 – Epistle: Acts 9:32-42 – Gospel: John 5:1-15

NEXT SUNDAY: May 18, Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
Epistle: Acts 11:19-30 – Gospel: John 4:5-42

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