

The Acts of Paul and Thecla

Translated by Jeremiah Jones, (1693-1724)

Chapter 1

When Paul went up to Iconium after his flight from Antioch, Demas and Hermogenes became his companions, who were then full of hypocrisy.

But Paul looked only at the goodness of God and did them no harm, but loved them greatly. Accordingly, he endeavored to make agreeable to them all the oracles and doctrines of Christ, and the design of the Gospel of God's well-beloved Son, instructing them in the knowledge of Christ as it was revealed to him. And a certain man named Onesiphorus, hearing that Paul was coming to Iconium, went out speedily together with his wife Lectra and his sons Simmia and Zenon, to meet him and invite him to their house.

For Titus had given them a description of Paul's personage, for as yet they did not know him in person but were only acquainted with his character. They went in the king's highway to Lystra and stood there waiting for him, comparing all who passed by with that description which Titus had given them.

At length they saw a man coming (namely Paul), of a small stature with meeting eyebrows, bald [or shaved] head, bow-legged, strongly built, hollow-eyed, with a large crooked nose; he was full of grace, for sometimes he appeared as a man, sometimes he had the countenance of an angel. And Paul saw Onesiphorus and was glad.

And Onesiphorus said: Hail, servant of the blessed God. Paul replied, The grace of God be with you and your family. But Demas and Hermogenes were moved with envy, and under a show of great religion, Demas said, And are not we also servants of the blessed God? Why did you not salute us?

Onesiphorus replied, Because I have not perceived in you the fruits of righteousness; nevertheless, if you are of that sort, you shall be welcome to my house also.

Then Paul went to the house of Onesiphorus, and there was great joy among the family on that account; and they employed themselves in prayer, breaking bread, and hearing Paul preach the word of God concerning temperance and the resurrection, in the following manner:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are they who keep their flesh undefiled, for they shall be the temple of God.

Blessed are the temperate, for God will reveal himself to them.

Blessed are they that abandon their secular enjoyments, for they shall be accepted of God.

Blessed are they who have wives, as though they had them not, for they shall be made angels of God.

Blessed are they who tremble at the word of God, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they who keep their baptism pure, for they shall find peace with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Blessed are they who pursue the doctrine of Jesus Christ, for they shall be called the sons of the Most High.

Blessed are they who observe the instructions of Jesus Christ, for they shall dwell in eternal light.

Blessed are they, who for the love of Christ abandon the glories of the world, for they shall judge angels, and be placed at the right hand of Christ, and shall not suffer the bitterness of the last judgment.

Blessed are the bodies and souls of virgins, for they are acceptable to God and shall not lose the reward of their virginity, for the word of their Father shall prove effectual to their salvation in the day of his Son, and they shall enjoy rest forevermore.

Chapter 2

While Paul was preaching this sermon in the church which was in the house of Onesiphorus, a certain virgin named Thecla (whose mother's name was Theoclia, and who was betrothed to a man named Thamyras) sat at a certain window in her house. From where, by the advantage of a window in the house where Paul was, she both night and day heard Paul's sermons concerning God, concerning charity, concerning faith in Christ, and concerning prayer; Nor would she depart from the window till with exceeding joy she was subdued to the doctrines of faith.

At length, when she saw many women and virgins going in to Paul, she earnestly desired that she might be thought worthy to appear in his presence and hear the word of Christ; for she had not yet seen Paul's person, but only heard his sermons. But when she would not be prevailed upon to depart from the window, her mother sent to Thamyris, who came with the greatest pleasure, as he hoped now to marry her. Accordingly he said to Theoclia, Where is my Thecla?

Theoclia replied, Thamyris, I have something very strange to tell you. Thecla, for the space of three days, will not move from the window not so much as to eat or drink, but is so intent in hearing the artful and delusive discourses of a certain foreigner, that I am completely astonished, Thamyris, that a young woman of her known modesty will suffer herself to be so prevailed upon. For that man has disturbed the whole city of Iconium, and even your Thecla, among others. All the women and young men flock to him to receive his doctrine; who, besides all the rest, tells them that there is but one God who alone is to be worshipped, and that we ought to live in chastity. Notwithstanding this, my daughter Thecla, like a spider's web fastened to the window, is captivated by the discourses of Paul, and attends upon them with prodigious eagerness and vast delight; and thus, by attending to what he says, the young woman is seduced. Now you go and speak to her, for she is betrothed to you.

Accordingly Thamyris went, and saluted her with care not to surprise her, and said, Thecla, my spouse, why are you sitting in this melancholy posture? What strange impressions are made upon you? Turn to Thamyris, and blush.

Her mother also spoke to her after the same manner and said, Child, why do you sit so melancholy, like one astonished, and make no reply?

Then they wept exceedingly: Thamyris, that he had lost his future spouse; Theoclia, that she had lost her daughter; and the maids, that they had lost their mistress; and there was universal mourning in the family. But all these things made no impression on Thecla to incline her so much as to turn and take notice of them, for she continued to contemplate on the discourses of Paul.

Then Thamyris ran into the street to observe who they were who went in to Paul and came out from him; and he saw two men engaged in a very warm dispute, and said to them; Sirs, what business have you here? And who is that man within, belonging to you, who deludes the minds of men, both young men and virgins, persuading them that they ought not to marry but continue as they are?

I promise to give you a considerable sum if you will give me a just account of him, for I am the chief person of this city.

Demas and Hermogenes replied, We cannot so exactly tell who he is, but we know that he deprives young men of their intended wives, and virgins of their intended husbands, by teaching, There can be no future resurrection, unless you continue in chastity and do not defile your flesh.

Chapter 3

Then Thamyris said, Come along with me to my house and refresh yourselves. So they went to a very splendid

entertainment where there was wine in abundance and very rich provision. They were brought to a table richly spread, and made to drink plentifully by Thamyris, on account of the love he had for Thecla and his desire to marry her.

Then Thamyris said, I desire you would inform me what the doctrines of this Paul are, that I may understand them; for I have no small concern about Thecla, seeing she so delights in that stranger's discourses that I am in danger of losing my intended wife. Then Demas and Hermogenes together answered and said, Let him be brought before the governor Castellius as one who endeavors to persuade the people into the new religion of the Christians, and he, according to the order of Caesar, will put him to death, by which means you will obtain your wife; While we at the same time will teach her that the resurrection that he speaks of is already come and consists in our having children, and that we then arose again when we came to the knowledge of God.

Upon getting this account from them, Thamyris was filled with hot resentment, And rising early in the morning he went to the house of Onesiphorus, attended by the magistrates, the jailor, and a great multitude of people with staves, and said to Paul; You have perverted the city of Iconium, and among the rest, Thecla, who is betrothed to me, so that now she will not marry me. You must therefore go with us to the governor Castellius. And all the multitude cried out, Away with this impostor, for he has perverted the minds of our wives, and all the people pay attention to him.

Chapter 4

Then Thamyris stood before the governor's judgment-seat and spoke with a loud voice in the following manner. O