

Series #24: Women of the Early Church
Session #5 – St. Thecla
Tuesday, May 18, 2021

St. Thecla

Thecla was a saint of the early church and a follower of St. Paul. According to the 3rd century text of *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Thecla, a noblewoman, was converted while listening to the preaching of the apostle. Forsaking her old life, she followed Paul and endured persecution, tribulation and great peril. The story resembles the ancient pagan romances in the repetition of hair's-breadth escapes, the fortitude and nobility displayed by both hero and heroine, and the happy ending. It is, however, a Christianized romance, as are several other of the apocryphal Acts and The Recognitions of Peter.

Thecla appears as a truly heroic character who endures all manner of suffering for the sake of Christ. After her itineration through Asia Minor with the Apostle Paul, she settles near Seleucia, where she teaches, preaches, heals and baptizes. Tertullian, incensed that Montanist women used her as a model, declared that a deacon had confessed that he fabricated the story “for love of Paul.” William M. Ramsay maintained that The Acts of Paul contained an authentic 1st century account, which had been outrageously embellished by the 3rd-century deacon. Dennis McDonald has pointed out that, though the story is almost surely fictitious, this does not obviate the existence of an actual female leader of that name.

Both Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea spoke of Thecla as a historical figure. Writing in the 300s, they described her teaching center and hospital near Seleucia. The pilgrim Egeria visited this facility in 399 A.D., and also described its monasteries, convents and assembly buildings, along with the teaching and healing ministries that went on there. The German team that excavated the center in 1908 found the apse still standing above the ground, with the main basilica's outlines covering a space equal to that of a football field. The excavators also found numerous cisterns, apparently for washing the sick, two other churches, and many fine mosaics. The center apparently was in active use for at least 1,000 years, indicating the presence in Asia Minor of an extremely strong female leader.

Her feast day is September 23. She is the patron saint of the city of Tarragona, Catalonia, Spain and many churches dedicated to her.

The Acts of Paul and Thecla

A. CHAPTER 1

1. When Paul went up to Iconium after his flight from Antioch, Demas and Hermogenes became his companions, who were then full of hypocrisy.
2. 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 Zeno, to meet him and invite him to their house.

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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?"
6. 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."
7. 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:
 - i. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
 - ii. Blessed are they who keep their flesh undefiled, for they shall be the temple of God.
 - iii. Blessed are the temperate, for God will reveal himself to them.
 - iv. Blessed are they that abandon their secular enjoyments, for they shall be accepted of God.
 - v. Blessed are they who have wives, as though they had them not, for they shall be made angels of God.
 - vi. Blessed are they who tremble at the word of God, for they shall be comforted.
 - vii. Blessed are they who keep their baptism pure, for they shall find peace with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - viii. Blessed are they who pursue the doctrine of Jesus Christ, for they shall be called the sons of the Most High.
 - ix. Blessed are they who observe the instructions of Jesus Christ, for they shall dwell in eternal light.
 - x. 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.

- xi. 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.

B. CHAPTER 2

1. 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 Thamyris) 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.
2. 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?"
3. 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."
4. 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."
5. 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?"

6. 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.
7. 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.”
8. 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.”

C. CHAPTER 3

1. 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.
2. 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.”
3. 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.”

D. CHAPTER 4

1. Then Thamyris stood before the governor’s judgment-seat and spoke with a loud voice in the following manner: “O governor, I know not where this man comes from, but he is one who teaches that matrimony is unlawful. Command him therefore to declare before you for what reason he publishes such doctrines.”
2. While he was saying thus, Demas and Hermogenes whispered to Thamyris and said, “Say that he is a Christian, and he will presently be put to death.” But the governor was more deliberate, and calling to Paul, he said, “Who are you? What do you teach? They seem to lay gross crimes to your charge.” Paul then spoke with a loud voice saying, “As I am now called to give an account of my doctrines, O governor, I desire your audience. That God, who is a God of vengeance, and who stands in need of nothing but the salvation of his creatures, has sent me to reclaim them from their wickedness and corruptions, from all sinful pleasures, and from death; and to persuade them to sin no more. On this account, God sent his Son Jesus Christ, whom I preach, and in whom I instruct men to place their hopes as that only person who had such compassion on the deluded world, that it might not be condemned, O governor, but have faith, the fear of God, the knowledge of religion, and the love of truth. So that if I only teach those things which I have received by revelation from God, where is my crime?”
3. When the governor heard this, he ordered Paul to be bound and to be put in prison till he could be more at leisure to hear him more fully. But in the night, Thecla took off her earrings and gave them to the turnkey of the prison, who then opened the doors to her and let her in; And when she made a present of a silver looking-glass to the jailor, she was allowed to go into the room where Paul was; then she sat down at his feet and heard from him the great things of God.
4. And as she perceived Paul not to be afraid of suffering, but that by divine assistance he behaved himself with courage, her faith so far increased that she kissed his chains.

E. CHAPTER 5

1. At length Thecla was missed and sought for by the family and by Thamyris in every street as though she had been lost, but one of the porter’s fellow-servants told them that she had gone out in the night. Then they examined the porter and he told them that she was gone to the prison to the strange Man. They therefore went according to his direction and found her there; and when they came out, they got a mob together and went and told the

- governor all that happened. Then he ordered Paul to be brought before his judgment-seat.
2. Thecla in the meantime lay wallowing on the ground in the prison, in that same place where Paul had sat to teach her. Then the governor also ordered her to be brought before his judgment-seat. She received the summons with joy and went. When Paul was brought there, the mob cried out with more vehemence, “He is a magician, so let him die.”
 3. Nevertheless the governor attended with pleasure upon Paul’s discourses of the holy works of Christ, and after calling together a council, he summoned Thecla and said to her, “Why do you not, according to the law of the Iconians, marry Thamyris?”
 4. She stood still with her eyes fixed upon Paul, and finding she made no reply, Theoclia her mother cried out, Let the unjust creature be burned; let her be burned in the midst of the theatre for refusing Thamyris, so all women may learn from her to avoid such practices. Then the governor was exceedingly concerned and ordered Paul to be whipped out of the city and Thecla to be burned.
 5. So the governor arose and went immediately into the amphitheater; and all the people went forth to see the dismal sight. But Thecla, just as a lamb in the wilderness looks every way to see his shepherd, looked around for Paul; And as she was looking upon the multitude, she saw the Lord Jesus in the likeness of Paul, and said to herself, “Paul has come to see me in my distressed circumstances. And she fixed her eyes upon him, but he instantly ascended up to heaven while she looked on him.”
 6. Then the young men and women brought wood and straw for the burning of Thecla; who, being brought naked to the stake, extorted tears from the governor, who was surprised to see the greatness of her beauty. And when they had placed the wood in order, the people commanded her to go upon it, and she did so, first making the sign of the cross. Then the people set fire to the pile; though the flame was exceeding large, it did not touch her, for God took compassion on her and caused a great eruption from the earth beneath, and a cloud from above to pour down great quantities of rain and hail; So that by the rupture of the earth, very many were in great danger and some were killed, but the fire was extinguished and Thecla preserved.

F. CHAPTER 6

1. In the meantime Paul, together with Onesiphorus, his wife and children, was keeping a fast in a certain cave which was in the road from Iconium to Daphne. And when they had fasted for several days, the children said to Paul, “Father, we are hungry and have nothing with which to buy bread; for Onesiphorus had left all his substance to follow Paul with this family.” Then Paul, taking off his coat, said to the boy, “Go, child, and buy bread, and bring it back.” But while the boy was buying the bread, he saw his

- neighbor Thecla and was surprised, and said to her, “Thecla, where are you going?”
2. She replied, “I am in search of Paul, having been delivered from the flames.” Then the boy said, “I will take you to him, for he is greatly concerned on your account, and has been in prayer and fasting these six days.” When Thecla came to the cave, she found Paul upon his knees praying and saying, “O Lord Jesus Christ, grant that the fire may not touch Thecla, but be her helper, for she is your servant.”
 3. Thecla, standing behind him, cried out in the following words, “O sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of your beloved and holy Son, I praise you that you have preserved me from the fire to see Paul again.” Paul then arose and when he saw her, said, “O God, who searches the heart, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, I praise you that you have answered my prayer.” And there prevailed among them in the cave an entire affection to each other; Paul, Onesiphorus, and all that were with them were filled with joy.
 4. They had five loaves, with some herbs and water, and they solaced each other in reflections upon the holy works of Christ. Then said Thecla to Paul, “If you be pleased with it, I will follow you wherever you go.” He replied to her, “Persons are now much given to fornication, and you being handsome, I am afraid you might meet with greater temptation than the former one, and would not withstand it, but be overcome.”
 5. Thecla replied, “Grant me only the seal of Christ, and no temptation shall affect me.” Paul answered, “Thecla, wait with patience, and you will receive the gift of Christ.”

G. CHAPTER 7

1. Then Paul sent back Onesiphorus and his family to their own home, and taking Thecla along with him, he went to Antioch; And as soon as they came into the city, a certain Syrian named Alexander, a magistrate in the city, who had done many considerable services for the city during his magistracy, saw Thecla and fell in love with her, and endeavored by many rich presents to engage Paul in his interest.
2. But Paul told him, “I do not know the woman of whom you speak, nor does she belong to me.” But he, being a person of great power in Antioch, seized her in the street and kissed her; which Thecla would not bear, but looking about for Paul, cried out in a distressed loud tone, “Force me not, who am a stranger; force me not, who am a servant of God; I am one of the principal persons of Iconium, and was obliged to leave that city because I would not be married to Thamyris.”
3. Then she laid hold on Alexander, tore his coat, and took his crown off his head, and made him appear ridiculous before all the people. But Alexander, partly because he loved her and partly being ashamed of what

had been done, led her to the governor; and upon her confession of what she had done, he condemned her to be thrown among the beasts.

H. CHAPTER 8

1. When the people saw this, they said: The judgments passed in this city are unjust. But Thecla desired only the favor of the governor that her chastity might not be attacked, but preserved till she should be cast to the beasts. The governor then inquired who would lodge her, and a certain very rich widow named Trifina, whose daughter was lately dead, asked that she might have the keeping of her; and she began to treat her in her house as her own daughter. At length a day came when the beasts were to be brought forth to be seen, and Thecla was brought to the amphitheater in the presence of a multitude of spectators, and put into a den in which was an exceeding fierce she-lion.
2. Trifina, without any surprise, accompanied Thecla, and the she-lion licked the feet of Thecla. The title written which denoted her crime was Sacrilege. Then the woman [Trifina] cried out, O God, the judgments of this city are unrighteous. After the beasts had been shown, Trifina took Thecla home with her, and they went to bed. And behold, the daughter of Trifina, who was dead, appeared to her mother and said, “Mother, let the young woman Thecla be reputed by you as your daughter in my place, and ask her to pray for me, that I may be translated to a state of happiness.”
3. Upon which Trifina, with a mournful air, said, “My daughter Falconilla has appeared to me and ordered me to receive you in her place; wherefore I desire, Thecla, that you would pray for my daughter that she may be translated into a state of happiness and to life eternal.”
4. When Thecla heard this, she immediately prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord God of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, Son of the Most High, grant that her daughter Falconilla may live forever.” Trifina hearing this groaned again and said, “O unrighteous judgments! O unreasonable wickedness that such a creature should again be cast to the beasts!”
5. At daybreak the next morning, Alexander came to Trifina’s house and said, “The governor and the people are waiting; bring the criminal forth.” But Trifina ran in so violently upon him that he was affrighted and ran away. Trifina was one of the royal family; and she thus expressed her sorrow and said, “Alas! I have trouble in my house on two accounts, and there is no one who will relieve me, either for the loss of my daughter, or for being unable to save Thecla. But now, O Lord God, you be the helper of Thecla your servant.”
6. While she was thus engaged, the governor sent one of his own officers to bring Thecla. Trifina took her by the hand, and going with her, said, “I went with Falconilla to her grave and now must go with Thecla to the beasts.”

7. When Thecla heard this, she prayed weeping and said, “O Lord God, whom I have made my confidence and refuge, reward Trifina for her compassion to me and for preserving my chastity.” Upon this there was a great noise in the amphitheater: the beasts roared, and the people cried out, “Bring in the criminal.”
8. But the woman [Trifina] cried out and said, “Let the whole city suffer for such crimes; and order all of us, O governor, to the same punishment. O unjust judgment! O cruel sight!” Others said, “Let the whole city be destroyed for this vile action. Kill us all, O governor. O cruel sight! O unrighteous judgment!”

I. CHAPTER 9

1. Then Thecla was taken out of the hand of Trifina, stripped naked, had an encircling cloth put on, and was thrown into the place appointed for fighting with the beasts. Then the lions and the bears were let loose upon her. But a she-lion, which was of all the most fierce, ran to Thecla and fell down at her feet. At that, the multitude of women shouted aloud. Then a she-bear ran fiercely toward her; but the she-lion met the bear and tore it to pieces. Again, a he-lion who had been accustomed to devour men, and which belonged to Alexander, ran toward her; but the she-lion encountered the he-lion, and they killed each other.
2. Then the women had a greater concern because the she-lion that had helped Thecla was dead. Afterwards they brought out many other wild beasts, but Thecla stood with her hands stretched towards heaven and prayed. When she finished praying, she turned about and saw a pit of water and said, “Now is a proper time for me to be baptized.”
3. Accordingly she threw herself into the water and said, “In your name, O my Lord Jesus Christ, I am this last day baptized.” Upon seeing this, the women and the people cried out and said, “Do not throw yourself into the water.” And the governor himself cried out to think that the sea-calves were likely to devour so much beauty. Notwithstanding all this, Thecla threw herself into the water in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. But when the sea-calves saw the lightning and fire, they were killed and floated dead on the surface of the water, and a cloud of fire surrounded Thecla so the beasts could not come near her, and the people could not see her nakedness. Yet they turned other wild beasts upon her, at which the women made a very mournful outcry. Some of them scattered spikenard, others cassia, others amomus, others ointment; so that the quantity of ointment was large in proportion to the number of people; and upon this all the beasts lay as though they had been fast asleep and did not touch Thecla.
5. Whereupon Alexander said to the governor, “I have some very terrible bulls; let us bind her to them.” To which the governor, with concern, replied, “You may do what you think fit.” Then they put a cord around

Thecla's waist, which bound also her feet, and with it tied her to the bulls, to whose privy- parts they applied red-hot irons so that they, being even more tormented, might more violently drag Thecla about till they had killed her.

6. The bulls accordingly tore about, making a most hideous noise; but the flame which was about Thecla burned off the cords which were fastened to the members of the bulls, and she stood in the middle of the arena as unconcerned as if she had not been bound.
7. But in the meantime Trifina, who sat upon one of the benches, fainted away and died; then the whole city was greatly concerned. And Alexander himself was afraid and implored the governor, saying, "I entreat you, have compassion on me and the city, and release this woman who has fought with the beasts; for fear that both you and I, and the whole city be destroyed:
8. For if Caesar should have any account of what has now taken place, he certainly will immediately destroy the city because Trifina, a person of royal extract and a relation of his, is dead upon her seat. Then the governor called Thecla from among the beasts to him and said to her, Who are you? And what are your circumstances, that not one of the beasts will touch you?"
9. Thecla replied to him, "I am a servant of the living God, and as to my state, I am a believer on Jesus Christ his Son, in whom God is well pleased. For that reason none of the beasts could touch me. He alone is the way to eternal salvation and the foundation of eternal life. He is a refuge to those who are in distress, a support to the afflicted, a hope and defence to those who are hopeless, and in a word, all those who do not believe on him shall not live, but suffer eternal death."
10. When the governor heard these things, he ordered her clothes to be brought and said to her, "Put on your clothes." Thecla replied, "May that God who clothed me when I was naked among the beasts, in the day of judgment clothe your soul with the robe of salvation." Then she took her clothes and put them on; then the governor immediately published an order in these words, "I release to you Thecla the servant of God."
11. Then the women cried out together with a loud voice, and with one accord gave praise unto God and said, "There is but one God, who is the God of Thecla; the one God who has delivered Thecla." Their voices were so loud that the whole city seemed to be shaken, and Trifina herself heard the glad tidings and arose again, and ran with the multitude to meet Thecla; and embracing her, said, "Now I believe there will be a resurrection of the dead; now I am persuaded that my daughter is alive. Come home with me, my daughter Thecla, and I will turn over all that I have to you."
12. So Thecla went with Trifina and was entertained there a few days, teaching her the word of the Lord, whereby many young women were converted. So there was great joy in the family of Trifina. But Thecla longed to see

Paul, and inquired and sent everywhere to find him; and when at length she was informed that he was at Myra in Lycia, she took with her many young men and women. She dressed herself in the habit of a man and went to him in Myra in Lycia. There she found Paul preaching the word of God, and she stood by him amid the throng.

J. CHAPTER 10

1. It was no small surprise to Paul when he saw her and the people with her, for he imagined some fresh trial was coming upon them; When Thecla perceived this, she said to him, “I have been baptized, O Paul, for he who assists you in preaching, has assisted me to be baptized.” Then Paul took her and led her to the house of Hermes, and Thecla related to Paul all that had befallen her in Antioch, insomuch that Paul was greatly amazed, and all who heard were confirmed in the faith and prayed for Thecla’s happiness.
2. Then Thecla arose and said to Paul, “I am going to Iconium.” Paul replied to her, “Go and teach the word of the Lord. But Trifina had sent large sums of money to Paul, and also clothing by the hands of Thecla, for the relief of the poor. So Thecla went to Iconium. When she came to the house of Onesiphorus, she fell down upon the floor where Paul had sat and preached, and, mixing tears with her prayers, she praised and glorified God in the following words, “O Lord the God of this house, in which I was first enlightened by you; O Jesus, son of the living God, who was my helper before the governor, my helper in the fire, and my helper among the beasts; you alone are God forever and ever. Amen.”
3. On her return, Thecla found Thamyris dead, but her mother living. So she called on her mother and said, “Theoclia, my mother, is it possible for you to be brought to a belief that there is but one Lord God who dwells in the heavens? If you desire great riches, God will give them to you by me; if you want your daughter again, here I am.”
4. These and many other things she represented to her mother, endeavoring to persuade her, but her mother Theoclia gave no credit to the things which were said by the martyr Thecla. Thecla perceived that she discoursed to no purpose, so she signed her whole body with the sign of the cross, left the house and went to Daphne. When she arrived there, she went to the cave where she had found Paul with Onesiphorus, fell down on the ground, and wept before God.
5. When she departed from there, she went to Seleucia and enlightened many in the knowledge of Christ. And a bright cloud conducted her in her journey.
6. And after she had arrived at Seleucia, she went to a place out of the city about the distance of a furlong, because she was afraid of the inhabitants because they were worshippers of idols. And she was led by the cloud into a mountain called Calamon, or Rodeon. There she abode many years and

underwent a great many grievous temptations of the devil, which she bore in a becoming manner by the assistance which she had from Christ.

7. At length certain gentlewomen heard of the virgin Thecla and went to her to be instructed by her in the oracles of God, and many of them abandoned this world and led a monastic life with her. A good report was spread everywhere of Thecla, and she wrought several miraculous cures, so that all the city and adjacent countries brought their sick to that mountain, and before they came as far as the door of the cave, they were instantly cured of whatever they had. The unclean spirits were cast out, making a noise; all received their sick made whole and glorified God, who had bestowed such power on the virgin Thecla;
8. Insomuch that the physicians of Seleucia were now of no more account and lost all the profit of their trade because no one regarded them; this so filled them with envy that they began to contrive what methods to take with this servant of Christ.

K. CHAPTER 11

1. The devil then suggested bad advice to their minds on a day they met to consult. They reasoned among each other thus, “The virgin is a priestess of the great goddess Diana, and whatever she requests from her is granted, because she is a virgin and is therefore beloved by all the gods. Let us procure some rakish fellows, and after we have made them sufficiently drunk and given them a good sum of money, let us order them to go and debauch this virgin, promising them, if they do it, a larger reward.” (For they thus concluded among themselves, that if they were able to debauch her, the gods would no more regard her, nor Diana cure the sick for her.)
2. They proceeded according to this resolution, and the fellows went to the mountain, and as fierce as lions to the cave, they knocked at the door. The holy martyr Thecla, relying upon the God in whom she believed, opened the door, although she was before apprized of their design, and said to them, “Young men, what is your business?”
3. They replied, “Is there anyone within whose name is Thecla?” She answered, “What do you want with her?” They said, “We intend to lie with her.” The blessed Thecla answered, “Though I am a humble old woman, I am the servant of my Lord Jesus Christ; and though you have a vile design against me, you will not be able to accomplish it.” They replied, “It is impossible for us not to be able to do with you what we intend.”
4. And while they were saying this, they laid hold on her by main force and would have raped her. Then she with the greatest mildness said to them, “Young men, have patience and see the glory of the Lord.” And while they held her, she looked up to heaven and said, “O God most reverend, to whom none can be likened; who makes yourself glorious over your enemies; who delivered me from the fire, and did not give me up to Thamyras, or give me up to Alexander; who delivered me from the wild beasts; who did preserve me in the deep waters; who have everywhere been my helper and have glorified your name in me; Now also deliver me from the hands of these wicked and unreasonable men, nor suffer them to debauch my chastity which I have always preserved for your honor; for I love you and long for you, and worship you, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forevermore. Amen.”
5. Then came a voice from heaven saying, “Fear not, Thecla, my faithful servant, for I am with you. Look and see the place which is opened for you; there your eternal abode shall be, and there you will receive the beatific vision.” The blessed Thecla looked and saw the rock opened to as large a degree as that a man might enter in. She did as he was commanded, bravely fled from the vile crew, and went into the rock, which instantly closed so that there was not a crack visible where it had opened.
6. The men stood perfectly astonished at so prodigious a miracle and had no power to detain the servant of God, but only caught hold of her veil, or hood, and tore off a piece of it; And even that was by the permission of

God, for the confirmation of their faith who should come to visit this venerable place, and to convey blessings in succeeding ages to those who would believe on our Lord Jesus Christ from a pure heart.

7. Thus suffered that first martyr and apostle of God, the virgin Thecla, who came from Iconium at eighteen years of age; afterwards, partly in journeys and travels, and partly in a monastic life in the cave, she lived seventy-two years, so that she was ninety years old when the Lord took her.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/thecla.html>