

3rd Corinthians

This translation of 3rd Corinthians is by M.R. James, 1924. Seeing as it is out of copyright, I have felt free to update the language where the wording is awkward. I have been extremely careful not to change any meaning by doing so. Mostly I've (www.christian-history.org/3rd-corinthians.html) changed things like "marvel not" into "do not marvel."

3rd Corinthians forms part of "The Acts of Paul." This is a different work than "The Acts of Paul and Thecla," which is available in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. VIII. I have not been able to find the Acts of Paul anywhere other than on the internet, and apparently the manuscripts are so damaged that there is little besides this letter and the one from the Corinthians to Paul.

I don't believe there is anyone that considers these to be original to Paul, though they are ancient, probably from the 2nd century. EarlyChristianWritings.com says that Tertullian attributes it to an elder from shortly before his time who wrote it in honor of the apostle Paul, but who was removed from his position for the forgery. They give no reference, however, and it's not in any writing of Tertullian that I have access to.

It does make sense that some 2nd century Christian wrote this in order to have more direct refutation of the gnostics than is available in the accepted letters of Paul.

Origen mentions "The Acts of Paul" (De Principiis I:2:3), but the quote he gives is not found in "The Acts of Paul" as we have it today. The editors of The Ante-Nicene Fathers suggest he might have been quoting Hebrews.

Despite all this, 3rd Corinthians was in the Armenian Orthodox Church's canon for a while, and it is an interesting piece of ancient literature!

The words in brackets are not in all versions. The italicized words in brackets are M.R. James notes.

3rd Corinthians Text

Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, unto the brethren which are in Corinth, greeting.

Being in the midst of many tribulations, I do not marvel if the teachings of the evil one spread quickly. For my Lord Jesus Christ will hasten his coming, and will set at nought (no longer endure the insolence of) them that falsify his words.

For I delivered to you in the beginning the things which I received of the [holy] apostles which were before me, who were at all times with Jesus Christ: namely, that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of Mary [who is] of the seed of David [according to the flesh], the Holy Spirit being sent forth from heaven from the Father to her [by the angel Gabriel], so that he might come down into this world and

redeem all flesh by his flesh, and raise us up from the dead in the flesh, just as he has shown us in himself as an example.

And because man was formed by his Father, therefore was [mankind] sought when he was lost, that he might be made alive by adoption. For to this end did God Almighty who made heaven and earth first send the prophets to the Jews, that they might be drawn away from their sins. For he planned to save the house of Israel. Therefore he conferred a portion of the spirit of Christ upon the prophets and sent them to the Jews first [*or to the first Jews*], and they proclaimed the true worship of God for a long period of time.

But the prince of iniquity, desiring to be God, laid hands on them and slew them [*banished them from God, Laon MS.*], and bound all flesh by evil lusts [and the end of the world by judgment drew near].

But God Almighty, who is righteous, would not cast away his own creation, [but had compassion on them from heaven] and sent his spirit into Mary [in Galilee], [who believed with all her heart and received the Holy Spirit in her womb, so that Jesus might come into the world], so that by that flesh whereby that wicked one had brought in death [had triumphed], by the same he should be shown to be overcome.

For by his own body Jesus Christ saved all flesh [and restored it to life], so that he might show forth the temple of righteousness in his body, in whom [or whereby] we are saved [, in whom if we believe we are set free].

They therefore [or Know therefore that they or They therefore who agree with them] are not children of righteousness, but children of wrath who reject the wisdom of God, saying that the heaven and the earth and all that are in them are not the work of God. [They therefore are the children of wrath], for cursed are they, following

the teaching of the serpent, whom you should drive out and flee from their doctrine. [For you are not children of disobedience, but of the well-beloved church. Therefore, the time of the resurrection is proclaimed to everyone.]

And as for that which they say, that there is no resurrection of the flesh, they indeed shall have no resurrection [to life, but to judgment] because they do not believe in him that is risen from the dead, [not believing nor understanding]. For they do not know, O Corinthians, the seeds of wheat or of other seeds, how they are cast bare into the earth and are corrupted and rise again by the will of God with bodies and clothed. And not only that [body] which is cast in rises again, but many times more blessing itself.

And if we must not take an example from seeds [only, but from more noble bodies], you know how Jonah the son of Amathi—when he would not preach to them of Nineveh, [but fled]—was swallowed by the sea-monster. After three days and three nights God heard the prayer of Jonah out of the lowest hell, and no part of him was consumed, not even a hair nor an eyelash.

How much more, [oh you of little faith], shall he raise you that have believed in Christ Jesus, just as he himself arose. In the same way, a dead man also was cast upon the bones of the prophet Elisha by the children of Israel, and he arose, both body and soul and bones and spirit [or arose in his body]. How much more shall you who have been cast upon the body and bones and spirit of the Lord [or How much more, oh you of little faith, shall you which have been cast on him] rise again in that day having your flesh whole, [just as he rose]?

[In the same way, concerning the prophet Elijah, he raised up the widow's son from death. How much more shall the Lord Jesus raise you up from death at the sound of the trumpet, in the twinkling of an eye? For he has shown us an example in his own body.]

If, then, you receive any other doctrine, [God shall be a witness against you]. Let no man trouble me, for I bear these bonds that I may win Christ. I therefore bear his marks in my body so that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Whoever receives [or abides in] the rule which he has received by the blessed prophets and the holy Gospel shall receive a reward from the Lord, [and when he rises from the dead shall obtain eternal life]. But whoever transgresses these things, with him is the fire, and with those that walk in the same way, which are a generation of vipers [or who are men without God], whom you must reject in the power of the Lord, and peace, [grace, and love] shall be with you.