

Tryphena and Tryphosa

Scripture Reference: Romans 16:12

Name Meaning: Delicate or dainty one

As Paul links these two Christian ladies together, we shall think of them as one-which they were in many ways. Probably they were twin sisters in the flesh, as well as in Christ, or very near relatives, and belonged to the same noble Roman family. They must have been conspicuous in the service of the church at Rome perhaps deaconesses-otherwise Paul would not have singled them out for his expression of gratitude for their devoted labor in the Lord.

Their names, characteristically pagan, are in contrast to their significance. Having a similar resemblance in appearance and constitution, if twins, they were given names having a like meaning. Being of noble birth they "lived delicately," that is, in plenty and pleasure and luxury. Lightfoot says that, "It was usual to designate members of the same family by derivatives of the same root." "Delicate" may, of course, refer to physical weakness, and as tender and delicate women, Tryphena and Tryphosa stand out as early examples of incessant and arduous labors in the service of the church.

Whether of gentle and refined manners, or delicate in health, or both, these active workers carved a niche for themselves in Paul's portrait gallery of saints. Early Christian inscriptions in cemeteries used chiefly for the servants of the emperor contain both of these female names, and so can be identified as being among "the saints of Caesar's household" (Philippians 4:22). How we bless God for the record of those early "honourable women which were Greeks" (Acts 17:12) who became humble followers of the Lamb!