



ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 9

ROMANS Part 144

Chapter 16:12

Tryphena & Tryphosa.



“Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who are toiling in the Lord.”

Anyone who has heard me say or write anything in the last ten years or so knows that I have a thing for Tryphena and Tryphosa. The first flower blossoming in this garden is the melodious way their

names sound together. If I were Buddhist and had to claim a mantra, my mantra would be, “Tryphena and Tryphosa, you set my heart aglow-sa.” From this, I would derive great peace and happiness—possibly even Nirvana.

The second flower in this plot is that Paul recognized these women as those who were “toiling in the Lord.” He sets them apart—no small compliment from the man himself. They knew what was important in life, these two. They set their sights on the next world, not this one. And yet, being stuck in this world, they made the best of it by furthering the latest, greatest message from God. I don’t know how exactly they did it, but they did. Speaking of God, He graced Tryphena and her sister with the spiritual astuteness to recognize Paul as the latest and greatest spokesman of the latest and greatest truth. What a pair! Am I safe to say, at this time, that I love Tryphena and Tryphosa? If so, then I will speak shortly of lust.

Most scholars agree that Tryphena and Tryphosa were sisters, and probably twins. It is hard enough these days finding one woman who believes truth, let alone two in the same household. (I point this out concerning women only because I like women more than men; no offense intended to men; it’s difficult finding male believers as well.) On top of this, “Tryphena” means “dainty,” and “Tryphosa” means “delicate.” Strong’s Concordance derives the name from the Greek root *truphe*, meaning ‘luxurious’. So naturally I picture Tryphena and Tryphosa as easy on the eyes; elegant; some might say, “beautiful.”

“Yes, Martin,” says a female reader, “they were beautiful on the *inside*.” Don’t get Puritanical on me. They were beautiful on the outside as well, and no one can tell me different. These twins were hot—there, I said it. They were young and beautiful—and possibly redheads. This is the switchyard where I go off the rails.

I would adore these twins, yes, but I would approach the temple cautiously. I’d have to temper



my initial enthusiasm along these lines, for the twins must come to love and respect me—first and foremost—for my spirituality, my intellect, my sense of humor, my dedication to Paul, and my devastating good looks. Only then could I make the move to kiss their dainty and delicate (that is, their Tryphena-and Tryphosa-like) hands, revealing to them my worshipful, fawning essence. Would it be a holy kiss? Oh, hell no.

I would join the Roman ecclesia, first because of the truth there, then because of Paul, then because of Tryphena and Tryphosa. I'm not saying that I would not enjoy the company of Ampliatos and Stachys. I'm just saying that these fine gentlemen would not be the first believers I'd seek out at a meeting. Even if Paul were at a meeting, I would ask him if Tryphena and Tryphosa were coming. If, for some reason, the twins couldn't make it, I'm not saying that I would leave. I *am* saying that I would sulk.

I would discuss politics and smoke cigars with Ampliatos and Stachys. With Tryphena and Tryphosa, however, I would discuss cosmetics and drink wine.

If Tryphena and Tryphosa were married, I'd be happy for them. If they were single, I'd be gunning for them.

"Really, Martin? You would actually marry them?"

"Of course I would."

"Tryphena? Tryphosa?"

"Precisely."

THEY WENT AGAINST THEIR NAMES

Tryphena and Tryphosa went against their names—another touch of divine irony similar to that of naming a self-doubter, "Narcissus." For what a contrast between "dainty," "delicate," "luxurious" (the meaning of the girls' names) and Paul's word concerning them, that they were "toiling in the Lord."

On second thought, it's not ironic at all. It's evidence of a conscious lowering. This is to the sisters' credit. For if the sisters truly were of noble birth and therefore thrust into worldly advantage, we are moved to learn that, like their Savior, they lowered themselves to serve the ecclesia, and Paul.

According to some commentators, it is *likely* that the sisters were of noble, or at least distinctive birth. They were the kind of girls who probably wore short, lace gloves at tea-time and carried parasols. They could have (and possibly did) marry equally wealthy men. They may have lunched upon caviar while servants cooled them with ostrich fans. The future most likely laid out before them was one of quiet contentment, even settled ostentation. But then the sisters meet the radical from Tarsus, grasped his gritty, glorious message, and then willingly soiled their delicate hands promoting it.

Here is what a Zondervan publication (forgive me) has to say about my girls—

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”



Lesser-known,
unbelieving sister:
Tryfailsa.





(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! (© 1988 Zondervan. All rights reserved.)

THEY FELLOWSHIPED WITH SLAVES

For all my fooling around last week with Ampliatos and Narcissus, I left out the supposition of some commentators that these were the common names of slave families. (Urbanus occupied the same category.) As it was merely conjectural, I thought to overlook it. I’m bringing it up now because it sets the spirit-throne of Tryphena and Tryphosa even higher. It is true that a considerable number of the Romans of Paul’s day were freed (or current) slaves, so why not Ampliatos and Narcissus? We know that it is standard procedure for God to call into the body the “unwise, weak, ignoble and stupid” (1 Corinthians 1:27-28), so even better if slave stock were poured into the mix. By this means, God disgraces the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). Naturally, I believe Tryphena and Tryphosa to be the exceptions to this rule—and they probably were (“there are not *many* noble, says Paul; 1 Corinthians 1:26)—but I’m more than willing to throw Ampliatos and Narcissus under the bus if it means burnishing the reputations of the queenly redheads.

Tryphena and Tryphosa, being members of Christ’s body, knew very well that—

Whoever are baptized into Christ, put on Christ, in Whom there is no Jew nor yet Greek, there is no slave



nor yet free, there is no male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:27-28).

The ecclesia at Rome not only believed this, but lived it, throwing themselves with happy abandon into a common pot of people who, on a strictly socioeconomic level, should never have commingled. But the message of baptism into Christ's death (Romans 6:4) leveled each of them. The message of having been "crucified with Christ" (Romans 6:6), reduced each to the common ground of humanity, mortality and need. The truth that "not one is just—not even one" (Romans 3:10), found its mark in the hearts of the Roman group, leading to the well-bred sisters sweating to serve the former slaves—as well as all other members of the little band, including rogue ex-Pharisee Paul.

Alexander Maclaren, though president of the Baptist World Congress, gathered worthy thoughts and assembled fine words on behalf of my fair ladies—

In the obscure corner of the great city where there were members of the infant Church gathered together, there was the beginning of a common life in the one Lord

which lifted each participant of it out of the dreary solitude of individuality, and imparted to each heart the tingling consciousness of oneness with all who held the one faith in the one Lord and had received the one baptism in the one Name. That fair dawn has been shadowed by many clouds, and the churches of today, however they may have developed doctrine, may look back with reproach and shame to the example of Rome, where Tryphena and Tryphosa, with all their inherited, fastidious delicacy, recognized in the household of Aristobulus and the household of Narcissus 'brethren in the Lord,' and were as glad to welcome Jews, Asiatics, Persians, and Greeks, as Romans of the bluest blood, into the family of Christ.

THE FUTURE

At the snatching away of the body of Christ, Tryphena and Tryphosa will rise with all the dead in Christ, and Paul himself will introduce me to them—and them to me—with the words, "No one talked about you more than Martin Zender. In the final days of the eon, no one admired you, and no one kept your names before the saints more than Zender. I am not saying that all of his motivations were pure or of a strictly intellectual or spiritual nature—but hey."

Everyone will get a chuckle out of it—at my expense. Tryphena and Tryphosa will giggle into their little lace gloves. That will be fine. No one laughs at me more than I do. It will be a happy time together with all the saints of every generation as we bounce along the clouds, upward, en route to a star-studded glory.



The above photo could very well be what Tryphena and Tryphosa actually looked like. That would be fine. It wouldn't matter. Seriously. The spirit would still be on.

But the wedding would be off. —MZ