

TRYPHENA AND TRYPHOSA

"Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord," Romans 16:12.

The number of salutations to members of the Roman church is remarkable when we take into account that Paul had never visited it. The capital drew all sorts of people to it, and probably there had been personal intercourse between most of the persons here mentioned and the apostle in some part of his missionary life.

He only displays his intimate knowledge of the persons saluted, but his beautiful delicacy and ingenuity in the varying epitaphs applied to them shows how in his great heart and tenacious memory individuals had a place. Those shadowy saints live forever by Paul's brief characterizations of them, and stand out to us almost as clearly and as sharply distinguished as they did to him.

These next two "*Women in My Life*," Tryphena and Tryphosa, probably were sisters. And that we gathered from the way in which they are expressed here, and as well as the similarity of their names. These names mean "delicate and/or luxurious" and no doubt express the ideal for their daughters which the parents had had, and possibly indicate the kind of life from which these two women had come.

We can hardly fail to see the contrast between the meaning of their names and the Christian lives they had lived. Two dainty women, probably belonging to a class in which a delicate withdrawal from effort and toil was thought to be voluptuous, and was always self-indulgent, and had chosen the better part of "labor in the Lord." **They had become untrue to the names they were given because they must be true to their Lord and to themselves also.**

We can take the lesson from these "*Women in My Life*" as is suggested here, and which is needful today among the senseless, and often sinful tide of luxury which runs so strongly as to threaten the great and

eternal Christian principle of **having the mastery over the details of life and not allowing them to control you, but to treat them as slaves and not as a master.**

The one main thought that stands out with all of these "*Women in My Life*" and mention of them in Scripture and especially in the salutations is the once again ever present uniting power of a common faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Tryphena and Tryphosa were Roman ladies of some social standing, and their names may indicate that they at least inherited a tendency to exclusiveness.

Yet here they occur immediately after the household of Narcissus and in close connection with that of Aristobulus, both of which are groups of slaves. Aristobulus was a grandson of Herod the Great, and Narcissus was a well-known freedman, whose slaves at his death would probably become the property of the Emperor.

Other common slave names are those of Ampliatus and Urbanus, and here in these lists they stand side by side with persons of some distinction in the Roman world. And with men and women of widely differing nationalities. **The church at Rome would have seemed to any non-Christian observer a motley crowd in which racial distinctions, sex, and social conditions had all been swept away by the rising tide of a common faith.**

In it was exemplified in actual operation Paul's great principle that in Christ Jesus, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free, but in Him all are one."

Roman society in that day, as "Juvenal" shows us, was familiar with the leveling and uniting power of common vice and immorality, and the few sternly patriotic Romans who were left lamented that "the Orontes flowed into the Tiber," but such common wallowing

in filth led to no real unity, whereas, 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 had the one faith in the one Lord.

That fair dawn had 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. There 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 Romish Church of our day has lost its early GRACE of welcoming all who love the one Lord into its fellowship, and we of the Protestant churches have been but too swift to learn that bad lesson of forbidding all who follow not with us.

Another thing I learned from these women, Tryphena and Tryphosa, is the blessed hallowing of natural family relations by common faith. They were probably sisters, or, at all events, as their names indicate, near relatives, and to them that faith must have been doubly precious because they shared it with each other. None of the trials to which the early Christians were exposed was more severe than the necessity which their Christianity so often imposed upon them of breaking the sacred family ties. **It sadden even Christ's heart to think that He had come to rend families in sunder, "And to make a man's foes them of his own household."** And we can little imagine how bitter the pang must have been when family love had to be cast aside at the bidding of allegiance to Christ.

But though the stress of that separation between those most nearly related in blood by reason of unshared faith is alleviated in

this day, it still remains, and that is but a feeble Christian life which does not feel that it is drawing a heart from closest human embraces and constituting a barrier between it and the dearest of Earth.

There is still need in these days of relaxed Christian sentiment for the stern austerity of the law. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." **And there are many Christians' souls who would be infinitely stronger and more mature, if they did not yield to the seductions of family affections, which are not rooted in Jesus Christ.**

But still, though our faith ought to be far more than it often is, **the determining element in our affections and associations its noblest work is not to separate but to unite, and while it often must divide, it is meant to draw more closely together the hearts that are already knit by earthly love.** Its legitimate effect is to make all earthly sweetness sweeter, all holy bonds more holy and more binding, to infuse a new constraint and preciousness into all earthly relationships, to make brothers tenfold more brotherly and sisters more sisterly.

The heart, in which the deepest devotion is yielded to Jesus Christ, had its capacity for devotion infinitely increased and **they who look into each other's faces, can reflect there something of the Lord whom they both love, love each other all the more because they love Him most, and in their love to Him, and of His to them, have found a new measure for all their affection.** They who looking on their dear ones, can trust they live in God, will there find them "worthier to be loved," and will there find a new power of loving them.

Tryphena and Tryphosa were more sisterly than ever when they clung to their elder brother. "There is no man that hath left brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, for My sake, but he shall receive a hundred-fold more in this time, brethren and sisters, and mothers and in the world to come eternal life."

The contrast between the names of these two Roman ladies and the characterization of their "labor in the Lord," may suggest to us the most formidable foe of Christian earnestness. Their names, as we have already stated, point to a state of society in which the parents ideal for their daughters was dainty luxuriousness and a withdrawal from the rough and tumble of common life, but these two women magnetized by the love of Jesus Christ, had turned their backs on the parental idea, and had cast themselves earnestly into a life of toil.

That ideal was never more formidably antagonistic in the vigor of Christian life than it is today. Rome, in Paul's time, was not more completely honey-combed with worldliness than the United States is today. **And churches in America are not far behind the American world in their paralyzing love of luxury and self-indulgence.**

In all ages earnest Christians have had to take up the same vehement remonstrance against the tendency of the average Christian to let his spiritual life be weakened by the love of the world and the things of the world. The protests against growing luxury have been a commonplace in all ages of the Church, but, surely, there has never been a time when it has reached a more senseless, sinful, and destroying height than in our day.

The rapid growth of wealth, with no capacity of using it nobly, which modern commerce has brought, has immensely influenced all our churches for evil. It is so hard for us, aggregated in great cities, to live our own lives, and the example of our class has such immense power over us that it is very hard to pursue the path of "plain living and high thinking" in communities, all classes of which are more and more yielding in the temptation to ostentation, so-called comfort, and extravagant expenditure. And that this is a danger, we are tempted to say the danger, to the purity, lofti-

ness, and vigor of spiritual life among us. He must be blind who cannot see, and he must be strangely ignorant of his own life who cannot feel that it is the danger for him.

If Demas begins with loving the world, the present world, it will not be long before he finds a reason for departing from Paul. **We may take these two sisters, finally, as pointing for us the true victory over this formidable enemy. They had turned away from the heathen ideal that enshrined in their names to a life of real hard toil, as is distinctly implied by the word used by the apostle.**

What that toil implied consisted in we do not know, and need not inquire. But the main point is to be noted in that their "labor was in the Lord." That union with Christ makes labor for Him a necessity, and makes it possible.

The labor we delight in physics pain, and if we are in Him, we shall not only "live in Him," but all our work begun, continued, and ended in Him, will in Him, and by Him be accepted. There is no victorious antagonist of worldly ease and self-indulgence comparable to the living consciousness of union with Christ and His life in us. To dwell in the swamps at the bottom of the mountain is to live in a region where effort is impossible and malaria weakens vitality, to climb the heights brings bracing to the limbs and a purer air into the expanding lungs, and makes work delightful that would have been labor down below.

If we are "in the Lord," He is our Atmosphere, and we can draw from Him the full essence of a noble life in which we shall not need the stimulus of self-interest or worldly success to use it to the utmost in acts of service to Him.

They who live in the Lord will labor in the Lord, and they who labor in the Lord will rest in the Lord.

Thank you, ladies, Tryphena and Tryphosa.