

“Seven Companions, Five Prophets, One Evangelist, & One Apostle!”

Acts 21:7-16

And when **We** (*The Eight*: **Paul** ¹, **Sopater** ² of **Berea**, **Aristarchus**, ³ & **Secundus** of the **Thessalonians**, ⁴ **Gaius** of **Derbe**, ⁵ **Timothy**, ⁶ **Tychicus** ⁷ & **Trophimus** of **Asia**. ⁸) had finished our voyage from **Tyre**, **We** came to **Ptolemais**, greeted the **Brethren** (of **Ptolemais**), and stayed with **Them** one day. On the next day **We Who** were **Paul’s Companions** departed and came to **Caesarea** (**Philippi**), and entered the **House of Philip** the **Evangelist**, **Who** was **One of the Seven** (**Original Deacons** of the **Church in Jerusalem**), and stayed with **Him**. Now this **Man** had **Four Virgin Daughters Who Prophesied**. And as **We** (*The Eight*) stayed many days (In The **House of Philip**), a **Certain Prophet** named **Agabus** came down from **Judea**. When **He** had come to **Us**, **He** (**Agabus**) took **Paul’s** belt, bound **His** own hands and feet, and said, “*Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the Man Who owns this belt, and deliver Him into the Hands of the Gentiles.’*” Now when **We** (**Who** were **Paul’s Companions**) heard these things, both **We** and **Those** from that **Place** (**Caesarea Philippi**) pleaded with **Him** (**Paul**) not to go up to **Jerusalem**. Then **Paul** answered, “*What do You mean by weeping and breaking My heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus!*” So, when **He** (**Paul**) would not be persuaded, **We** (**All Together**) ceased, and said, “*The Will of the Lord be done!*” And after those days, **We** (*The Eight*) packed and went up to **Jerusalem**. Also, some of the **Disciples** from **Caesarea** went with **Us** (*The Eight*) and brought **Us** to **Mnason** of **Cyprus**, an **Early Disciple**, with **Whom** **We** were to lodge.

Acts 21:7-16 (NKJV)

BACKSTORY TO TODAY

Q

“What Did Paul & His Companions Find In The City Of Tyre?”

A

Disciples in The Faith – Most Likely A **House Church**,
Started During the Dispersion of the Church After The Martyrdom of **Stephen**.
Possibly Started By **Peter** Or **Philip The Evangelist**,
One of the Original **# 7 Deacons** of the **Church in Jerusalem**

Paul Continues His Steadfast Journey

And when **We** (*The Eight*: **Paul** ¹, **Sopater** ² of **Berea**, **Aristarchus**, ³ & **Secundus** of the **Thessalonians**, ⁴ **Gaius** of **Derbe**, ⁵ **Timothy**, ⁶ **Tychicus** ⁷ & **Trophimus** of **Asia**. ⁸) had finished our voyage from **Tyre**, **We** came to **Ptolemais**, greeted the **Brethren** (of **Ptolemais**), and stayed with **Them** one day.

Acts 21:7

TODAY’S NEW ARRIVAL

... On the next day **We Who** were **Paul’s Companions** departed and came to **Caesarea** (**Philippi**), ...

Acts 21:8a

Q

“Upon Arriving In Caesarea Philippi Where Did The Companions Stay?”

A

House of Philip - The Former Member of the **Original Seven Deacons** In The **Church of Jerusalem**.
Now **Leader & Evangelist** Of The **House Church** in **Caesarea Philippi**
With His **Host Family** & **Four Prophetess Virgin Daughters**

... On the next day **We Who** were **Paul’s Companions** departed and came to **Caesarea** (**Philippi**), and entered the **House of Philip** the **Evangelist**, **Who** was **One of the Seven** (**Original Deacons** of the **Church in Jerusalem**), and stayed with **Him**. Now this **Man** had **Four Virgin Daughters Who Prophesied**.

Acts 21:8-9

SELF STUDY ON YOUR OWN – SEE APPENDIX – PREVIEW

According To Later Church History, **Philip & His Family**, Including His **Four Prophetess Daughters** Move To **Asia Minor**, Into The **Lycus River Valley**. There They Help In Ministry To The **Churches Of Colossae, Hierapolis, & Laodicea**. It Appears **Philip's Daughters** All Lived To Near Or Over 100 Years of Age, Never Marrying, & Leading The **Church In Hierapolis**. Further, **Two Other Women** Were Instrumental In The **Lives & Leadership Of The Churches In The Lycus River Valley**: At **Colossae (Apphia)** & at **Laodicea (Nympha)**. Both Churches Were Closely Associated With The Other **Church Of The Lycus River Valley In Hierapolis**.



The Rest of the Story!

Now A Certain Prophet Comes To Philip's House Church
... And as **We (The Eight)** stayed many days (In The **House of Philip**), a **Certain Prophet** named **Agabus** came down from **Judea**. Acts 21:10

A Reminder of Who This Prophet Agabus Is!

Then **Barnabas** departed for **Tarsus** to seek **Saul**. And when **He (Barnabas)** had found **Him (Saul)**, **He (Barnabas)** brought **Him (Saul)** to **Antioch**. So it was that for a whole year **They (Saul & Barnabas)** **Assembled** with the **Church** and **Taught** a **"Great Many People"**. And the **Disciples** were first called **"Christians"** in **Antioch**. And in these days **"Prophets"** came from **Jerusalem** to **Antioch**. Then one of **Them (A Prophet)**, named **Agabus**, stood up and **Showed (Propheisied)** by the **Holy Spirit** that **there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world**, which also happened in the **Days of Claudius Caesar**. Then the **Disciples** (in **Antioch**), each according to their own ability, determined to send relief to the **Brethren (Disciples)** dwelling in **Judea**. This **They (Disciples in Antioch)** also did, and sent it to the **Elders (Church Council in Jerusalem)** by the **Hands of Barnabas and Saul**. Acts 11:25-30 (NKJV)

Agabus' Prophecy Is Not Like The Rest Of These Similar Prophecies Concerning Paul.

While It Warns Of His Impending Future;

It Does Not Try To Change Paul's Mind Or Actions In Response To God's Will!

Agabus' Prophecy Has An Old Testament Flavor Of Words & Actions

Ahijah the Shilonite Tore His New Cloak To Show

King Solomon His Kingdom Would Be Eventually Torn Apart

1st Kings 11:29-39

Isaiah Went Around Barefoot & Naked To Show

The Egyptians & Ethiopians They Would Become Captives Of The Assyrians

Isaiah 20:1-6

Ezekiel Laid Siege To A Replica Model City Of Jerusalem To Show

Judah Would Also Become Captives Of The Babylonians As Well

Ezekiel 4:1-8

Great Similarity Of Agabus' Prophecy Concerning Paul & Jesus' Self-Prophecy

Concerning His Arrest By The Jewish Authorities

& Being Handed Over To The Gentiles At The Passover

Mark 10:32-34

... Now **They** were on the road, going up to **Jerusalem**, and **Jesus** was going before **Them**; and **They** were amazed. And as **They** followed, **They** were afraid. Then **He** took the **Twelve** aside again and began to tell **Them** the things that would happen to **Him**, "**Behold, We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the Chief Priests and to the Scribes; and They will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and They will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again!**" **Mark 10:32-34**

Agabus' Prophecy Concerning Paul

When **He** had come to **Us**, **He (Agabus)** took **Paul's** belt, bound **His** own hands and feet, and said, "**Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the Man Who owns this belt, and deliver Him into the Hands of the Gentiles.'**" **Acts 21:11**

Paul's Companions & The House of Philip & The House Church In Caesarea Philippi

All Try One Last Time To Persuade Paul Not To Go To Jerusalem

... Now when **We (Who were Paul's Companions)** heard these things, both **We** and **Those** from that **Place (Caesarea Philippi)** pleaded with **Him (Paul)** not to go up to **Jerusalem**. **Acts 21:12**

Paul Remains Steadfast To Obey God's Will To Go To Jerusalem No Matter What!

... Then **Paul** answered, "**What do You mean by weeping and breaking My heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus!**" **Acts 21:13**

Church & Companions All Are Now In Agreement To Accept The Will Of God For Paul!

... So, when **He (Paul)** would not be persuaded, **We (All Together)** ceased, and said, "**The Will of the Lord be done!**" **Acts 21:14**

Paul Continues Steadfastly On His Journey To Jerusalem!

... And after those days, **We (The Eight)** packed and went up to **Jerusalem**. **Acts 21:15**

Paul Is Comforted By The Presence Of His Companions & Others From The House Church

In Caesarea Philippi On His Journey To Jerusalem & Paul Finds Great Fellowship & Lodging!

... Also, some of the **Disciples** from **Caesarea** went with **Us (The Eight)** and brought **Us** to **Mnason of Cyprus**, an **Early Disciple**, with **Whom We** were to lodge. **Acts 21:16**

Personal Question

PQ?

**"Have You Set Your Face Surrendered
To The Call & Will Of God For Your Life,
No Matter What He Asks Of You,
Now, Tomorrow, & Until The End,
He Has Written For You In His Book Of Life?"**

A!

**"Today,
Talk To Your Lord & Savior Jesus Christ,
About Giving You A Daily Resolve
In Your Mind, Heart, & Spirit:
To Live For HIM & HIM Alone,
Form This Day Forward!"**

APPENDIX

Scriptures Pertaining To Colosse, Hierapolis, & Laodicea Churches In The Lycus Valley

Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the Will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the Saints and Faithful Brethren in Christ Who are in Colosse: Grace to You and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the Word of the truth of the Gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the Grace of God in Truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your Love in the Spirit. Colossians 1:1-8

For I (Paul) want you to know what a great conflict I have for You (in Colosse) and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. For though I (Paul) am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Colossians 2:1-5

Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master In Heaven. Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God Would Open to Us a Door for the Word, to speak the Mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They (Tychicus & Onesimus) will make known to you all things which are happening here. Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with (John) Mark the cousin of Barnabas - about Whom (John Mark) you received instructions: if He (John Mark) comes to you, welcome him, and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are of the circumcision (Jews Converted To Messianic Jews – Christians); They have proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras (A Gentile), who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the Will of God. For I (Paul) bear Him (Epaphras) witness that He has a great zeal for you (in Colosse), and those who are in Laodicea, and those who are in Hierapolis. Luke (A Gentile) the beloved Physician and Demas (A Gentile) greet you. Greet the Brethren Who are in Laodicea, and Nympha (Laodicean Christian) and the Church that is in Her House. Now when this Epistle (to the Colossians) ¹ is read among you (in Colosse), see that It (Epistle) ¹ is read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that you (in Colosse) likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea. ² And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.' This salutation by my own hand, Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with You. Amen! Colossians 4:1-17

(Continued Over)

The Ancient Cities of **Colossae**, **Laodicea**, and **Hierapolis**, are each mentioned in the New Testament, and situated in the **Lycus River Valley**. This **Valley** is 121 miles east of **Ephesus** and was within the **Roman Province of Asia Minor**, now modern-day Turkey. It seems Paul's travels did not extend to this area. See: **Colossians 2:1** Nevertheless, he had a connection with the **Church in Colosse** there through his co-worker **Epaphras**. **Epaphras** probably brought the **Gospel** to the **Lycus Valley** See Above: **Colossians 1:7-8 & 4:12-13**. **Onesimus**, a slave belonging to **Philemon**, provided another connection to this area. See: **Colossians 4:9 & Philemon 1:10-22**.

Paul sent at least **Two Letters** to the **Lycus Valley**. A **Letter to Philemon** and a **Letter to Colossae** that survive today and are included in the New Testament. From this correspondence, we learn that Paul was at least acquainted with **Two Women** in the **Lycus Valley**, **Apphia** and **Nympha**.

Part I: Two Women In The Lycus Valley - Nympha

CQ: "Who was *Nympha*, and what was *Her Role or Position in the Church at Laodicea*?"

Paul Writes To The Church at Colossae, "Greet the **Brethren Who are in Laodicea**, and **Nympha (Laodicean Christian)** and the **Church that is in Her House**. Now when this **Epistle (to the Colossians)** ¹ is read among you (in **Colosse**), see that **It (Epistle)** ¹ is read also in the **Church of the Laodiceans**, ¹ and that you (in **Colosse**) likewise read the **Epistle from Laodicea**." ²

Colossians 4:15-16

Nympha is one of **16 Women Paul mentions by name** in **His Letters**. Unfortunately, like **Junia** and **Euodia**, her gender was hidden when her name was masculinized in some Greek manuscripts. "**Nymphas**" (masculine) and "**Nympha**" (feminine) are both names that occurred in ancient times and both are spelt "**Nymphan**" (**Νυμφαν**) in the accusative or objective case, as used in writing the text of **Colossians 4:15**. It is only the accents that distinguish the **masculine (Νυμφᾶν)** from the **feminine (Νύμφαν)**, but accents were not used in the early manuscripts that contained **Colossians 4:15**. In some later manuscripts, when the name was accented, it was incorrectly accented as a masculine name.

But it wasn't just **Nympha's** name that was **masculinized**. Because it wasn't exactly clear if **Nympha** was a man or a woman, variations appeared in some manuscripts concerning the Greek pronoun that occurs in **Verse 15**. Some manuscripts had the **masculine pronoun** equivalent to "**his**" instead of the **feminine pronoun**, "**her**". Furthermore, some scribes apparently took the church as belonging to the **brothers** and **sisters** alike (who are mentioned in **Verse 15**), so the plural pronoun, equivalent to "**their**" ("**their house**" or "**his house**" rather than "**her house**") was written into most of the early texts. However, later reinterpretations of **Junia**, **Euodia**, & **Nympha**, especially from the **Nestle Greek Text (NASB & RSV)** show these errors for what they are – **Masculine Bias** over the centuries, especially in the **KJV** of the Bible from the 17th Century Onwards.

So what can we know about **Nympha** and the **Church She Hosted or Led**? Reverend Alfred Barry, writing approximately one hundred years ago, assumed **Nympha** was a man and stated, "**He is obviously a man of importance, a center of church life, in the Christian community at Laodicea**." Commenting on the (incorrect) phrase "**the church which is in his house**". See: **Colossians 4:15 (KJV or NKJV)** Barry Continued, "**This phrase is found elsewhere only as applied to Aquila and Priscilla** (See: **Romans 16:5 & 1st Corinthians 16:19**), and to **Philemon** (See: **Philemon 1:2**). Of these **Aquila and Priscilla** are notable Christian Preachers & Teachers (See: **Acts 18:26**) and Confessors of the Faith (See: **Romans 16:4**); and **Philemon** is spoken of as a "**beloved fellow-laborer**" and one in whom "**the saints are refreshed**" (See: **Philemon 1:1 & 1:7**).

Hence this "**church in the house**" is seen to have gathered only round persons of some mark and leadership. According to Rev. Barry, **Nympha was a person of importance and leadership in the Church at Laodicea**, although he was mistaken about her gender.

Other Commentators who thought **Nympha** was a man also seem confident in assuming that **Nympha** was the leader of the Church at **Laodicea** and perhaps also a **“Ministry Co-Worker”** of **Paul**. This confidence, however, is not always seen in commentators who understand that **Nympha** was a woman, and her role is often minimized. This downplaying of her ministry reveals a gender bias that is shared by some commentators and perhaps by the scribes who altered the original Greek Text from the accusative case to the masculine singular case each and almost every time in the **Masoretic Text**, from which almost every modern Bible is translated from.

From the very beginning of the **Christian Church**, **Wealthy Women** were attracted to **Christianity**, and they were among the **Church’s Patronesses** and **Protectories**. **Nympha** appears to be one such woman who opened Her Home as a **Place for Christians** to meet for worship and fellowship. Margaret MacDonald writes, *“Leadership in Pauline Christianity has been linked with the ability to provide services. Perhaps the most important service that a first-century believer could provide for a church group was to offer a house for meetings. Thus Nympha no doubt played a key leadership role in the Churches of the Lycus Valley.”*

It’s difficult to determine exactly what Leaders of Local Churches did in the 1st Century A.D., even men and women who had ministry descriptions such as **Bishop / Supervisor** (*episkopos*) or **Minister / Deacon** (*diakonos*). The first ministers probably did what was necessary, what they were capable of, what they were gifted for. **Men and Women Who Hosted House Churches** would have facilitated **Eucharist** and **Charity** (*agapē*) **Meals**, and helped to make meetings run smoothly. Since **Wealthy Householders** were more likely to be literate than other church members, they were probably the ones to read and reread letters and sermons written by prominent Christians, as well as portions of Old Testament scripture. Reading and Reciting Letters and Scripture was an important part of worship meetings. The **Householder** may also have offered words of encouragement and theological or moral correction or teaching.

Furthermore, **House Church Leaders** would have welcomed, or shunned, visiting teachers, prophets, and apostles, but other members were involved in welcoming or shunning too (See: **2nd John 1:10–11**). **John Writes**, *“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.”*

And, presumably, all gifted and capable people could contribute to worship meetings. In His **Letter to the Colossians**, **Paul Encouraged Participation in Meetings**, *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, Seated at the Right Hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is Our Life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in Glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the Wrath of God will come upon the Sons of Disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the Image of the One Who created Him, a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on Love, which is the perfect bond of Unity.”...*

... “Let the Peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father!” **Colossians 3:1-17**

Of Importance, at a time when poverty was common and crippling, **House Church Leaders** cared for the material and physical well-being of church members, and they probably **Supported and Hosted Missionaries** such as **Paul**. Some may also have Baptized New Converts, thus acting like **Ministers**.

Nympha's Home was in the **Lycus Valley**, but it is unclear what **City** she lived in for sure. She most probably lived in **Laodicea**, the largest city in the **Lycus Valley**, about 11 miles west of **Colossae**. But she may have been from **Hierapolis** or another city in the region. **Colossians 4:15** refers to **Nympha** and the **Church in Her House**. Because of the reference to **Laodicea** in the same verse it seems most likely that **Nympha's Church** was located there, but **Hierapolis** (See: **Colossians 2:1 & 4:14–16**) and **Colossae** itself cannot be ruled out as possible locations for the **Church in Her House**.

However, Later Writings Also Indicate that **Philip the Deacon & Evangelist** Along with **His Family**, Including **His Four Virgin Prophetess Daughters**, Were Active in the **Church of Hierapolis**.

Whether **Nympha** lived in **Laodicea**, **Colossae**, or **Hierapolis**, there is little doubt **She** was the **Hostess** of a **House Church**. This means she was at least the **Patroness** and or, the **Supervisor / Overseer** of the **Congregation**. That **Paul** does not greet anyone else connected with the House Church directly alongside her, makes the idea fairly certain that **Nympha** was its **Leader**.

Unfortunately, one verse in the New Testament, **1st Timothy 2:12**, casts a very long shadow and makes it difficult for some to acknowledge that **women** such as **Nympha** ran **House Churches**, and a gender bias persists in some interpretations of **Nympha's** role. But **Paul** had no issue with a **Woman Running a House Church**. Paul approved & sanctioned, **Gifted Women** to be **Patronesses, Missionaries, Prophetesses, Preachers, & Teachers** in the 1st Century A.D.

Part II: Two Women In The Lycus Valley - Apphia

CQ: “Who was **Apphia, and what was **Her Role or Position** in the **Church at Colossae**?”**

**“Paul, a Prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy Our Brother:
To Philemon Our Dear Friend and Co-Worker,
To Apphia Our Sister,
To Archippus Our Fellow Soldier,
and To the **Church in Your House**:**

Grace to **You and Peace from **God Our Father** and the **Lord Jesus Christ**.”**

Philemon 1:1-3

The **Letters** of the **Apostle Paul** give us glimpses of some of the men and women involved in 1st Century Church Life. In a short Letter sent to **Colossae**, a Letter which we know as the **Letter to Philemon**, Paul writes primarily about his friendship with two men, **Philemon** and **Onesimus**, but **Apphia** is also addressed in the Greeting of the Letter.

It has been thought that **Apphia** was **Philemon's Wife**. This seems unlikely, however, when we compare how **Paul** speaks about **Apphia** and **Philemon** with how he speaks about people who we know were couples. When **Paul** mentions a couple, such as **Prisca** and **Aquila**, or **Andronicus** and **Junia**, he refers to them as a couple; the husband and wife are not addressed individually or referred to separately.

Apphia, however, is addressed and described individually as a single person, much like **Lydia** of **Thyatira** & **Philippi**, and as is **Philemon**, and another man named **Archippus** in the Greeting of the Letter.

Furthermore, the Three Persons of the Greeting are each described by Paul with different ministry or ecclesial descriptions. **Philemon** is called *“our dear friend and co-worker.”* **Apphia** is called *“the sister”*. **Paul** used the description of *“sister”* or *“brother”* for certain believers who were his ministry colleagues. David Pao writes that **Apphia** as *“sister”* is *“a title comparable to “our brother”* as applied to **Timothy** in Verse 1 and thus highlights her independent standing as a **Christian** and possibly as a Co-Leader of the Church.” Apart from **Apphia**, **Paul** refers to one other woman in his Letters as “sister”. **Phoebe**, Minister / Deaconess (*diakonos*) of the **Church at Cenchrea** See: **Romans 16:1-2**

Archippus, the 3rd Person to be greeted, is called *“our fellow soldier”*. It was to this **Archippus** that **Paul** Sent the Message to the Colossians: And say to Archippus, *“Take heed to the Ministry (*diakonia*) which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it!”* **Archippus** may have been a Minister / Deacon (*diakonos*) of the **Church at Colossae**, even though he is not specifically identified as such. Still, he is clearly some kind of Minister (*diakonos*) since he has a Ministry (*diakonia*) to fulfil.

As well as the Three Individuals, **Paul** is Greeting a **House Church**, presumably the **Congregation** that all Three belong to. However, a singular pronoun is used in the Greek text with the sense, *“and To the Church in Your House”* (**Philemon 1:2**).

Q: “Whose House did the Church meet in?” “In Philemon’s, Apphia’s, or Archippus’s Home?”

Rather than being the **Wife** of **Philemon**, **Apphia** may have been His Ministry Partner (Co-Ministers). Writing about **Apphia**, Ross Kraemer proposes that *“sister” may designate the female partner of a male-female missionary team*. In **1st Corinthians 9:5**, Paul poses a rhetorical question concerning his apostleship; he asks whether he has the right to take an (*adelphē gunē* - literally, *“sister-woman”*; as it cannot mean for him, *“sister-wife”* - *adelphē gunaika* as Paul remained and wished to remain, unmarried) with him on his missionary travels.

Paul Writes His Questions To The Church at Corinth, *“Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ Our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an Apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of My Apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife (sister), as do also the other Apostles, the Brothers of the Lord (James & Jude), and Cephas (Peter)? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?”*

1st Corinthians 9:1-6

Paul did not have a wife, but he did have “sisters”, such as **Apphia** (**Philemon 1:2a**) and **Phoebe** (**Romans 16:1-2**), and he had “female co-workers”, such as **Euodia** and **Syntyche** (**Philippians 4:2-3**), as well as **Priscilla** who, alongside **her husband Aquila**, travelled and ministered with **Paul** (**Acts 18:18** & **Romans 16:3-4**). **Paul** may have had these *“sister-women”* or *“female co-workers”*, in mind when he asked his rhetorical question to the **Corinthians**.

Paul Writes Further Concerning Families, Marriage, & Ministry To The Church at Corinth, *“Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time,” ...*

...“that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”

1st Corinthians 7:1-16

Clement of Alexandria understood that Paul was speaking about such “sisters” rather than wives in 1st Corinthians. The Apostles, in accordance with their ministry, devoted themselves to preaching without any distraction, and took women with them, not as wives, but as sisters, that they might be their “Co-Ministers” (*sundiakoni*) in dealing with women in their homes. It was through them that the Lord’s teaching also penetrated the women’s quarters without any scandal being aroused.

Clement refers to the Women not merely as companions but as “Co-Ministers” of the Apostles. These “sisters” played an often crucial, and sometimes difficult and dangerous, role in taking the gospel into new territory. In places that were influenced more by Greek Culture than by Roman Culture, “sisters” were needed to Minister to other women, such as widows, who lived relatively secluded lives (Stromata or Miscellanies of Clement of Alexandria: Bk 3: Ch 6: Vs 53).

Apphia is mentioned sandwiched between, and with, Two other Ministers: Philemon, “our coworker” and Archippus, “our fellow soldier”. And She is referred to as “our sister” (*hē adelphē*), the feminine form of “our brother” (*ho adelphos*) which is how Paul refers to Timothy. She was a Christian Woman, with some important significance, and most likely a “Trio of Co-Workers” with Paul & Timothy.

Apphia may also have been a High-Status Woman of Wealth or Business and the Patroness of the Congregation that met in Philemon’s or Archippus’s Home, or she may have been the Patroness of a Network of House Churches In and Around Colossae. Perhaps She was like Phoebe who was both Patroness and Minister / Deaconess (*diakonos*) of the Church at Cenchrea. Was Apphia another Phoebe? If so, this makes Apphia a Woman of Considerable Influence.

Therefore, once again, it appears that Paul’s Greeting to Apphia is some kind of respectful acknowledgement of Her Position. Finally, at least 16 Women are mentioned in the Pauline Letters in the New Testament; one wonders about each of their roles in the early church!