

Who was Archippus in the Bible?

Archippus is mentioned in Colossians 4:17 and Philemon 1:2. In his letter to Philemon, Paul refers to Archippus as a “fellow soldier.” In Colossians 4:17, Paul requests his readers to “tell Archippus: ‘See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.’” Apparently, then, Archippus was a young man from Colossae tasked with some sort of ministry in the church.

Many believe Archippus to have been the son of Philemon and Apphia, close friends of Paul’s. The connection between Archippus and Philemon seems clear in Philemon 1:1-2, “To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker—also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home. . . .” Paul is writing to a household. Philemon; his wife, Apphia; and his son, Archippus comprise the family unit. The church of Colossae met in their home.

Some believe Paul’s words to Archippus to “complete the ministry” are a gentle rebuke for having neglected certain of his duties. But a majority see Paul’s admonition to Archippus as simple encouragement, similar to Paul’s exhortations in his epistles to Timothy and Titus (see 2 Timothy 4:5). One tradition holds that Archippus was a leader in Laodicea, a city about 12 miles away from Colossae. It seems strange to send an admonition to Archippus through leaders of another church, but Paul’s intent was that the letter to the Colossians should be read in Laodicea, too: “After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans” (Colossians 4:16). In any case, Archippus would receive the message.

Ultimately, we do not know much about Archippus other than he was a Christian in the early church who was granted a ministry from the Lord and who soldiered for the faith.

Paul's encouragement to Archippus and his family should encourage all of us to also "complete the ministry" God has given us.