

Mother of God Community  
Sunday Night Prayer Meeting  
Pray at All Times in the Spirit  
Rick McKinney  
June 1, 2008

In reflecting upon Sacred Scripture I have found it helpful to ask at least two questions:

- 1) What does the passage say about God – His character, His actions, His desires?
- 2) What does the passage say to us: what God desires within us and from us in our walk or in an example to follow or not follow?

We have been studying Ephesians and near the end of that letter Paul writes:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. Ephesians 6: 18-20 NIV

Most of this passage appears to pertain to the second question. We are to pray in the Spirit, we are to be alert, we are to pray for Paul (i.e. our fellow brothers, missionaries, priests, and bishops) that he may fearlessly proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which he is an ambassador in chains. It seems we are especially to pray for those brothers that are in prison for their faith and we ourselves should consider their example and boldly proclaim the good news even in the face of ridicule or other unpleasantness or persecution. Twice Paul asks that his listeners pray that he be fearless in his proclamation.

In regards to “God” it is to be noted that only by God’s grace and through the power of His Spirit are we able to pray or proclaim or be fearless or believe. The mystery of the gospel, the good news that is proclaimed, is all about God and his love for we bent sons of Adam and we fallen daughters of Eve and how He delivered us through the death and resurrection of his beloved Son, Jesus.

However, what is intriguing to me about this passage is the command, “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” What does it mean to “pray in the Spirit?” And is it even possible to pray continually (1 Thes 5:17) on all occasions and with all kinds of requests? Perhaps a clue can be found in the Paul’s letter to the Romans, the highly celebrated chapter eight.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will. Romans 8:26-27 NIV

Whatever praying in the Spirit is, it would seem that such a prayer would be with the mind and will of the Spirit not so much with our minds, our will, our desires. Of course one way to do this is to pray softly or silently in tongues, no matter where you are, for all kinds of requests, in all kinds of occasions, in all kinds of thanks, in all kinds of praise, and in all kinds of service. Yet God has also revealed to us His mind in regards to His will for us – how He loves each person as if that person were the apple of His eye, for indeed he or she is. In my old way of thinking I observe and I judge others with myself as the center, but God is showing me more and more that I can choose to look prayerfully at others with the wholeness and wholesomeness of His desires for their lives and that they would come to know His love more and more and be transformed by it. That to me is “praying in the Spirit.” As Paul wrote:

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. Eph 6:17-19 NIV

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### **The Unheralded Companions of St. Paul: Lessons in Relationship and Service**

Other than those persons Paul directly addresses letters to, probably few sermons have been written about the companions of St. Paul, but he refers to them in most all of his letters as they make concrete his concerns for the body of Christ. There is a reason why they are mentioned in our scriptures.

Point of example – the conclusion of the letter to the Ephesians:

Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love. Ephesians 6: 21-24 (NIV)

Tychicus is called a dear brother and faithful servant (what honorable attributes). He is sent to deliver letters, to encourage the Ephesians and to tell them about how Paul is. At this time Paul is probably either in prison or under house arrest in Rome. Yes, the mundane details and the still ongoing ministry of Paul's life, not just his teaching, is of great interest to the Ephesians as it is naturally for all friends. Fellowship, to a large degree, consists of such details. That's why people used to write long letters before cell phones, e-mail and text messaging. If your fellowship time doesn't involve the details of how you are doing then perhaps you should reconsider how you are spending that time.

Tychicus also delivered the letter to the Colossians (with Onesimus) and apparently he delivered one to the Laodiceans (who are to read the one to the Colossians and vice versa) and a personal letter to Philemon in Colossae (see Col 4:7-18 and the letter to Philemon). In the letter to the Colossians Tychicus is called "a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant" and he is also to tell the news about Paul. Yes, his role was largely that of a messenger, but what a messenger. Just think, Tychicus carried many of the original letters of St. Paul. What if he and Onesimus were drowned at sea or were robbed? What would have become of our scriptures? Onesimus, as you know, was Philemon's slave and Paul sent him back to his master in Colossae, hoping he would be freed and returned to Paul's service. As an aside there was a bishop of Ephesus named Onesimus in the later part of the first century and it is in Ephesus that scholars believe St. Paul's letters were collected. Perhaps that may explain how the private letter to Philemon became part of Sacred Scripture.

Tychicus is mentioned in three other books of the Bible. In Acts 20:4 it is related how he accompanied Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem and that he is a native of the province of Asia. In Titus 3:12 Paul tells Titus that he is sending either Artemas or Tychicus to Crete as sort of a substitute and that Titus will then be free to come to Paul. Tychicus is also sent by Paul to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12). It seems that Tychicus, the messenger evangelist, could be used in a New Testament game like the modern movie game "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon," in which persons are challenged to link any actor within six movie connections to Kevin Bacon, who is mainly known as a supporting actor.

Tychicus does indeed play a supporting role to Paul and others, and yet Sacred Scripture calls him a dear brother and a faithful servant. Would that each of us be described in similar ways when the roll is called up yonder? For we can all be dear to one another. We can all be servants to each other, the body of Christ. It doesn't take much – perhaps a phone call, or a visit with food to an ill sister, or stacking chairs, or a thank you, or an intercession, or a compliment, or volunteering for clean up or other ministries. Let it be said of us – see how they love one another, see how they serve one another, see how dear they are to each other.

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**Friends and Coworkers of St. Paul Mentioned in Sacred Scripture**

- Agabus: believing prophet from Judea who foretold of famine and of Paul being handed over to the Gentiles – Acts 11:28, 21:10-11
- Ampliatius: believer in Rome, loved in the Lord by Paul, greeted by Paul – Rom 16:8
- Andronicus and Junias: fellow Jews and early Christians before Paul was, fellow prisoners, called outstanding apostles – Rom 16:7
- Apelles: believer in Rome, said to have been tested and approved in Christ – Rom 16:10
- Apollos: teacher, Scripture scholar, instructed by Aquila/Priscilla, ministered in Corinth – Acts 18:24-28, 19:1, 1 Cor 1:12, 3, Tit 3:13
- Apphia: a sister in Christ at Colossae addressed by Paul – Phlm 2
- Archippus: a Colossian, church met in his house, told to complete the work he received in the Lord – Col 4:17, Phlm 1:2
- Aristarchus: traveled with Paul to Ephesus, Jerusalem, Rome and imprisonment – Acts 19:29, 20:4, 27:2, Col 4:10, Phlm 1:24
- Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, Olympas: brothers and sisters greeted in Rome – Rom 16:14-15
- Barnabas: fellow apostle, brought Paul before apostles and Antioch, divided over taking Mark – Acts 4:27, 9:27, 11:25, 13,14, 15, 1 Cor 9:6, Gal 2
- Carpas: friend of Paul's in Troas (Troy), keeper of Paul's cloak and perhaps his scrolls as well – 2 Tim 4:13
- Clement: fellow worker of St. Paul's in Philippi whose name is written in the book of life – Phil 4:3
- Crescens – companion of Paul's, went or was sent to Galatia – 2 Tim 4:10
- Crispus: Corinth's synagogue ruler, one of Paul's first converts in Corinth, baptized by Paul – Acts 18:8, 1 Cor 1:14
- Damris: woman converted in Athens under Paul's preaching – Acts 17:34
- Demas: coworker of Paul, said to have deserted him (but so did Mark and the early disciples) – Col 4:14, Phlm 24, 2 Tim 4:10
- Dionysius: an Athenian convert under Paul's ministry, member of the Areopagus – Acts 17:34
- Epaphroditus: Philippian brother, fellow worker/soldier, messenger, sent to care for Paul, but became deathly ill for a time – Phil 2:25, 4:18
- Epaphras: brought gospel to the Colossians, dear servant, faithful minister, wrestled in prayer for Colossians – Col 1:7, 4:12, Phlm 1:23
- Epenetus: friend of Paul's, first convert in province of Asia, settled in Rome – Rom 16:5
- Erastus: Corinth's director of public works, sometimes accompanied Paul, sent to Macedonia – Acts 19:22, Rom 16:23, 2 Tim 4:20
- Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers in Rome: gave greetings to Timothy – 2 Tim 4:21
- Euodia and Syntyche: Philippian women who contended for the gospel at Paul's side, but needed help agreeing with each other – Phil 4:2
- Eutychus: young man who fell three stories after falling asleep listening to Paul, but after Paul prays he is able to return home – Acts 20:9
- Fortunas and Achaicus: Corinthians who came to Paul in Ephesus with Stephanas, refreshed his spirit and deserve recognition – 1 Cor 16:17
- Gaius: known for his hospitality, possibly baptized by Paul, traveled with Paul to Ephesus and Jerusalem – Acts 19:29, 20:4, Rom 16:23, 1 Cor 1:13
- James: brother of Jesus and Judas, leader of church at Jerusalem, authored epistle, gave right hand of fellowship to Paul – Acts 12:17, 15, Gal 2:9
- Jason: convert of Paul's in Thessalonica, dragged before city officials, posted bond – Acts 17:6, 7, 9; Rom 16:21
- Judas: prophet who was sent with Silas to accompany Barnabas and Paul back from the Council of Jerusalem to Antioch – Acts 15:27, 32
- Lucius: came from Cyrene, a prophet/teacher in the Church at Antioch, sent Paul and Barnabas on mission – Acts 13:1, Rom 16:21
- Luke: a Gentile doctor and coworker/companion with Paul, considered the author of Luke and Acts ("we") – Col 4:14, 2 Tim 4:11, Phlm 24

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Lydia: a dealer in purple cloth, one of the first converts in Europe, Paul and Silas invited to stay in her house – Acts 16:14-15

Manaen: a prophet/teacher in the church at Antioch, brought up with King Herod, sent Paul and Barnabas out on mission – Acts 13:1

Mark: helper of Paul/Barnabas, Peter, deserted, reinstated, wrote Gospel of Mark – Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13, 15:37, Col 4:10, 2 Tim 4:11, Phlm 24, 1 Pet 5:13

Nympha: leading lady in the Church of Laodicea, church met in her house – Col 4:15

Onesimus: Philemon's slave who ran away, Paul sent him back to Philemon in Colossae, requested he be treated as Paul – Col 4:9, Phlm 1:10

Onesiphorus: an Ephesian, who in Rome found Paul and refreshed him in chains, Paul asks mercy on him and his household – 2 Tim 1:16, 4:19

Peter (Simon, Cephas): chief apostle, Pentecost Day preacher, opened way to Gentiles, corrected by Paul in Antioch – Acts 2-12, 1 Cor, Gal 2

Philemon: friend and fellow worker of Paul's whose slave, Onesimus, is sent back to him. Paul hopes he would free him to serve – Phlm

Phoebe: servant or deaconess of Cenchrea church, called a sister of Paul, a great help, probably carried letter to the Romans – Rom 16:1

Priscilla and Aquila: wife/husband teaching team who risked their lives for Paul – Acts 18:2, 19:26, Rom 16:3, 1 Cor 16:19, 2 Tim 4:19

Quartus: Corinthian brother in Corinth sending greetings to the believers in Rome – Rom 16:24

Rufus: chosen in the Lord, mother was like a mother to Paul, possibly the son of Simon of Cyrene – Rom 16:13, Mark 15:21

Secundus: Thessalonian brother, accompanied Paul to Ephesus and Jerusalem – Acts 20:4

Silas (Silvanus): from Jerusalem, co-missionary and co-writer with Paul and Peter – Acts 15-18; 2 Cor 1:19, 1 Thes 1:1, 2 Thes 1:1, 1 Pet 5:12

Simeon called Niger (African Jew?): a prophet/teacher in the church at Antioch, sent Paul and Barnabas out on mission – Acts 13:1

Sopater: from Berea, a city that accepted Paul's teaching, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied Paul to Ephesus and Jerusalem – Acts 20:4

Sosipater: fellow believing Jew with Paul who sends greetings to the Romans – Rom 16:21

Stephanas: first convert in Achaia, Paul baptized him and his household, Corinthians told to submit to such brothers – 1 Cor 1:16, 16:5

Syzygus (or loyal yokefellow): Philippian who is urged to help Euodia and Syntyche agree with each other in the Lord – Phil 4:2-3

Tertius: Paul's temporary secretary, wrote down Paul's letter to the Romans as Paul dictated it, greets the Romans – Rom 16:22

Timothy: Paul's spiritual son, close companion and emissary – Acts 16:1, 1 Cor 4:17, 16:10, 2 Cor 1:1, Phil 1:1, 2:19, 1 Thes 3:2, 6; 1 Tim, 2 Tim

Titus: convert, true son, comforter and coworker of Paul's, sent to Corinth and Crete – Gal 2:1, 2 Cor 2:13, 7-8, 12:18, 2 Tim 4:10, Titus

Titus Justus: a worshiper of God in Corinth, his house used for meetings after synagogue became inhospitable – Acts 18:7

Trophimus: a Greek native of Asia, traveled with Paul to Ephesus and Jerusalem, left ill in Miletus – Acts 20:4, 21:29, 2 Tim 4:20

Tryphena and Tryphosa and Persis: women in Rome, first two possibly twin sisters, said to work hard in the Lord – Rom 16:12

Tychicus: dear brother and faithful minister, delivered Paul's letters, sent to Ephesus – Acts 20:4, Eph 6:21, Col 4:7, 2 Tim 4:12, Tit 3:12

Urbanus and Stachys – called respectively as fellow worker in Christ and dear friend, greeted by Paul – Rom 16:9

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**Questions to ponder**

What do think praying in the Spirit is?  
How do you pray in the Spirit?  
Who do pray for in the Spirit?  
What companion of Paul's can you identify with?  
How are you a dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord?  
What unheralded brother or sister would you like to honor?