

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes July 25, 2007*

*Ephesians 1: 15-16*

- 15: For this reason,  
    because I have heard of  
        your faith in the Lord Jesus  
        and your love toward all the saints,
- 16: I do not cease to give thanks for you,  
    remembering you in my prayers,

## Introduction:

- We are called to pray for one another. We presume this ... it is an accepted practice of our faith. Jesus encouraged this, the entire Bible encourages this; the Church and her spiritual writers and leaders have always encouraged this. But why and what should we pray for? This is part of what we will discuss today on **Deep In Scripture**.

## Discussion:

- We come to you from the CMN conference in Cleveland, Ohio;
- Website ....
- We turn in Ephesians from one long sentence to another! Verses 15-23 are one long sentence!
- Sometimes the best way to *hear* Scripture is to condense long sentences down into their most basic thoughts: today we'll look only at vss 15-16.

## The most basic condensed thought in 15-16 is given in Verse 16:

***I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,***

1. St Paul prays;
  - Reference other verses that denote his prayer life;
2. His prayers are not self-focused: they include interceding for others;
  - He often refers to intercessory prayers (Phil 4);
  - This underscores the power of the communion of the saints;
3. Specifically he gives thanks for them (eucharistei)
  - Our attitudes in prayer are affective: they shape the affect of our prayers;
  - I.e., "offer it up"
  - Possible that he is eluding to daily offering of Eucharist for them.
    - Are his prayers merely random, whenever he feels like stopping what he is doing to offer up prayers, or does he pray on a scheduled routine, as the Jews have always done? And wasn't the mass already being said daily with liturgy? When was it called "eucharist"?
4. He does this without ceasing.
  - He has elsewhere encouraged us to pray without ceasing.
  - Does this mean he does nothing else during the day except pray for them?
  - Or does it mean that every Eucharist / everytime he prays, he remembers them, not just once or twice, but constantly and consistently.

## In this instance, St. Paul gives a clear reason why he is interceding for them:

***For this reason,  
because I have heard of  
your faith in the Lord Jesus, and  
your love toward all the saints,***

## There are at least three reasons that he prays for them without ceasing:

1. Because of what he knows about what has happened to them due to their baptism;
  2. Because of what he has heard about them;
  3. Because of what he knows is true about the Christian life in general.
- The first two reasons, he expresses clearly; the last he eludes to elsewhere.
  - **First, his prayers are spurred on by what he knows about them due to their baptism.**

He has just finished summarizing this, with overwhelming praise to God, what they have received by grace through faith and the anointing of baptism:

    3. *They have been "blessed ... in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..."*
    4. *They were chosen "in him before the foundation of the world...to be holy and blameless before him."*
    5. *They have been "destined ... in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ"*
    7. *"In him" they "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of [their] trespasses"*
    9. *He has made known to them "in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will"*
    13. *"In him [they] who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of [their] salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit..."*
    - Therefore, "for this reason," he never ceasing remembering them in his prayers. Why?
      - Because of the awesomeness of God's merciful grace!
      - And because the newly baptized so easily forget!
      - These benefits are not automatic, as if by magic! They must be acted on:
        - Given in grace; acted on in grace.
  - **Second, his prayers are spurred on by what he has heard about them:**
    - This statement has caused quandaries for biblical scholars:
      - Acts indicates that St. Paul was VERY familiar with the Ephesians;
      - So why does he write as if he doesn't know them?
      - Answer: St. Paul is directing his comments through the Church leaders (bishops) he knows to the newly baptized Gentile believers, whom he has never met but only heard if through their reports.
    - What has he heard: They are demonstrating a balanced, complete faith:
      - Often St. Paul refers to the balance as expressed in "faith, hope, and love"
        - 1 Cor 13, ...
      - As in contemporary Christianity, however, many were already differing in the essential content of the Christian message:
        - As a Pharisaical convert, St. Paul was particularly concerned with those who emphasized only works of the law, so he emphasized faith... Galatians ... etc.
        - St. James seems to have been fighting against a completely different imbalance: an emphasis on faith alone: 2:8-24
          - 8: *If you really fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well.*
          - 9: *But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*
          - 10: *For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.*
          - 11: *For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law.*
          - 12: *So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.*
          - 13: *For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment.*
          - 14: *What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?*
          - 15: *If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food,*
          - 16: *and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled,"*

*without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?*

*17: So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.*

*18: But some one will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.*

*19: You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe -- and shudder.*

*20: Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren?*

*21: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?*

*22: You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works,*

*23: and the scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"; and he was called the friend of God.*

*You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*

- St. Paul affirms them because their reputation indicates that their witness is a balanced witness:
  - ***your faith in the Lord Jesus***
    - Which of course sets them apart from everyone and every part of their past, and
  - ***your love toward all the saints,***
    - Fulfillment of Christ's command;
    - And not just "some" but "all"
- **Third, he prays for them because of what he knows about the spiritual battle:**
  - Much of his letters are about the spiritual battle;
  - He knows the battle between what is seen on the outside and what is real on the inside;
  - He prays that what he has "heard" remains true!

### **What can we learn from this text:**

- We, too, are called to pray for one another without ceasing:
- Why?
  - Because of what we know is true through our baptism;
  - Because of what we know about each others walk of faith;
  - Because of what we know about the spiritual battle.