

Paul's Prayers For The Ephesians

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
September 4, 2005
AM Worship

Introduction:

Paul worked as an evangelist in numerous congregations. One of the churches to which Paul was the closest was in Ephesus, where he had worked for three years (**Acts 20:31**). If you read **Acts 20**, you cannot help but see that Paul loved the Ephesians. Thus, when we read Paul's prayer in **Ephesians 1:15-23**, we see His most intimate desires for a church to succeed. It makes sense then to make this our prayer for this congregation. We should make these things our goals. Read **Ephesians 1:15-23** and note four desires Paul had for the Ephesian church, which desires should be ours as well.

Discussion:

- I. Paul prayed that God would give the Ephesians "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray the eyes of your heart may be enlightened" (**Ephesians 1:17-18**).
 - A. The basic theme of these three related requests is that the Ephesians have a mindset or spiritual disposition governed by wisdom, knowledge and understanding. When you boil these requests down, Paul was praying that the Ephesians would be different from the world. In **Romans 11:8**, Paul described those who remain in the world. They have a spirit of stupor and blindness. But read the context of **Isaiah 29:9-14**, the passage to which Paul alluded in Romans. These people have blinded themselves because they refuse to listen to God. They do not follow after God's things but man's.
 - B. Paul's hope for the Ephesians is reiterated to the Corinthians in a different manner in **I Corinthians 2:12-3:3**. Paul wanted them to think spiritually, not carnally, following after the things of God, not man. As he said in **I Corinthians 14:20**, he wanted maturity in understanding, but simplicity in evil—exactly the opposite of the worldly.
 - C. In order to grow in wisdom, understanding and knowledge, we must first ask for it (**James 1:5-8**). Secondly, we must study for it (**Ephesians 3:3-4**). Finally, in contrast to those described in **Isaiah 29:9-14**, we must live according to what we have learned from God.
 - D. Paul wanted the Ephesians to grow in wisdom, knowledge and understanding because through this knowledge God grants all things pertaining to life and godliness (**II Peter 1:3**). Thus, without increasing in wisdom, knowledge and understanding, the Ephesians would have neither godliness nor life. They would be lost and condemned forever. We must make this our prayer and our goal—to grow in wisdom, knowledge and understanding and, therefore, obtain life.
- II. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would "know what is the hope of His calling" (**Ephesians 1:18**).
 - A. Paul wanted the Ephesians to consider their options. He wanted them to contrast being in Christ with being in the world. In Christ, we are to walk worthy of His calling (**Ephesians 4:1**). We are to turn from the passing pleasures of sin. We are to put aside our own will, sacrificing ourselves to live according to Christ's will. In the world, we get to do whatever we want. We get to follow our feelings and find immediate gratification for every desire. Regrettably, far too many people never get past this part of the contrast. But this is not where Paul wants us to stop.
 - B. What hope do we have in these two options? In the world, there is no hope (**Ephesians 2:12**). There is only the certain terrifying expectation of judgment (**Hebrews 10:27**). But when we walk worthy of His calling there is great hope. What is the hope of His calling? According to **Acts 23:6**, it is the hope of resurrection from the dead. **Titus 1:2** says our hope is eternal life. **Colossians 1:5** says our hope is laid up in heaven. Our hope is that this life is not at all about this life, but about our eternal destiny.
 - C. How many people never get past looking at this life? How many people do not become Christians because they do not want to make the commitment? How many Christians turn away because they decide it is too difficult? Do you realize what is really being said by these people? They are saying that the Christian path is not worth it. They have never looked past what they are seeing now. They have never looked to the unseen hope (**Romans 8:24-25**) of eternal life that lies at the end of the narrow and difficult path (**Matthew 7:13-14**). It is worth it.
 - D. Paul wanted the Ephesians to know the hope of His calling because it would be an anchor to their souls (**Hebrews 6:19**). We must make this our prayer and goal—to know the hope of His calling. Look past this life and focus on eternity. Where have you been looking?

- III. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would “know ... what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (**Ephesians 1:18**).
- A. One of the factors that most distracts us from doing the Lord’s will is worldly riches. Jesus said it was difficult for a wealthy man to enter the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 19:23**). Paul told Timothy that the love of money had caused many to stray from the faith (**I Timothy 6:10**).
 - B. How many people would become Christians if God promised each of us a \$1,000,000 signing bonus upon our baptism, a house, a new car, all the appliances, entertainments and computer gizmos we wanted, plus a huge annual salary? People would become Christians in droves. Sadly, He has promised us greater riches than these. Yet, people have turned their back on them in the pursuit of all the things I have just mentioned. Some of them will get earthly things. But like the men in **Matthew 6:1-2, 5, 16**, they have all their reward. There is no reward waiting for them on the judgment day—only punishment.
 - C. But God has offered us, His chosen and peculiar people, exceeding riches—not earthly riches which vanish with the using and can be stolen or destroyed. He has granted us heavenly riches which cannot be destroyed or taken from us (**Matthew 6:19-20**). We must be like Moses in **Hebrews 11:24-27**. We must not look at the seen, the here and now. We must focus on the unseen. We must remember the reward. We must know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.
 - D. This is Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians and should be our prayer for the Franklin Church of Christ. Only by knowing these riches will we keep our focus on things above (**Colossians 3:2**), lay up treasure in heaven (**Matthew 6:20-21**), store up for ourselves a good foundation for the time to come and lay hold of eternal life (**I Timothy 6:17-19**).
- IV. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would “know ... what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe” (**Ephesians 1:19**).
- A. What had God done for you? How many people get upset when they are not healed of sicknesses? How many get upset when they are not blessed with “earthly blessings”? How many turn away from God because He has not used His power to keep them from disappointment, pain and harm? Have you ever thought about what these people are really saying? They are saying that God has not done enough for them. Why should they serve God, He did not keep their parents, spouse or children from dying? He did not keep them from pain and suffering? He has not kept them from poverty? Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians was to realize what great power God has displayed toward us who believe.
 - B. He has saved us from sin. In order to do that He sacrificed His Son and then raised Him up to sit at the Father’s right hand in heavenly places (**Ephesians 1:20-21**). He established His church of which you can be a part in order to help you go to heaven (**Ephesians 1:22-23**). And through all of this He made you alive from the dead, forgiving your sins (**Ephesians 2:1**). Finally, He has raised us up to sit in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus so that He may shower us with the riches of His grace in the ages to come (**Ephesians 2:6-7**). When you consider what He has done for you, does it matter if He has allowed you to suffer some temporal pain or poverty in this life?
 - C. Who else has done so much for us? Is there anyone in your life that has done more than this to whom you should owe your allegiance above God? Has any mother or father done even half as much for their children? Has any preacher, pastor or priest done anything even similar to this for the members of their church? Yet, people the world over show allegiance to family, friends and clergymen and leave behind the teaching of God.
 - D. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would know what power God had worked on their behalf. This must be our prayer and desire for the Franklin Church of Christ as well. For when we recognize God’s love toward us, then we will be convicted to also love Him (**I John 4:19**).

Conclusion:

Just think how much fruit the Ephesians would bear to God’s glory if they prayed for and worked toward these goals. We too must make this prayer our own. When you pray for this church, pray for these things. When you focus on growth, grow in these things. May we grow in wisdom, knowledge and understanding, knowing the hope, riches and power of God in His grace and mercy.