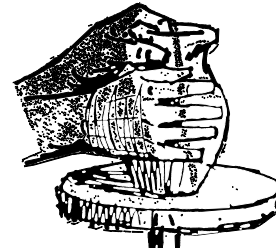


# His Workmanship at Westside

*“For we are His  
workmanship, created in  
Christ Jesus for good works.”  
—Ephesians 2:10*



Isaiah 64:8

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## Paul's First Prayer for the Ephesians *by Paul Deffinbaugh*

Paul stayed in Ephesus for three years on one of his missionary journeys. Ephesus was famous both for its temple which honored the Greek goddess Artemis and for its sorcerers. Paul spoke boldly in this port city, and God worked miracles through him. Many who heard the gospel believed in Jesus Christ, Eph 1:13. Would they continue in their faith after Paul left? Later, when Paul was in prison in Rome, he heard that the Ephesians' faith and love were steadfast, Eph 1:15 and 3:1. He thanked God for their faithfulness and continued to pray for them, 1:16. He prayed that God would give the Ephesians spiritual wisdom and revelation so that they would know God more fully and deeply, 1:17. He asked God to *“enlighten the eyes of their hearts,”* 1:18. He wanted them to use spiritual eyes, not just physical eyes. Paul also prayed that they would know *“the hope to which He has called you, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power toward them,”* vs. 18-19. He told them that their hope was based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension to heaven where

He sits at God's right hand. Hope is a spiritual quality that can't be seen with physical eyes, and yet, we can see the effects of hope in someone's life. The riches of God's inheritance and the power of God are also difficult for many to see except by spiritual eyes (faith in the promises of God revealed in the Scriptures).

Do you pray with *“the eyes of your heart”*—not just for physical needs but also for spiritual needs? Do you thank God continually for fellow believers, the ones you see and others all around the world? Do you remember the hope to which He has called you—your identity as a child of God and your inheritance? Do you experience the power of God in your life over sin? Let us look at Paul's prayer to understand more fully what these things mean.

**The Link between the Word and Prayer.** Paul did not hesitate to tell his readers that he was praying for them, nor was he reluctant to tell them what he was praying for. This is the first of two prayers in Ephesians. It establishes a standard for prayer which few of our prayers meet. If we take it as a model for our prayers, our prayers would have to

be radically transformed. This prayer instructs us concerning the vital link between God's Word and prayer. In the early days of the New Testament church, the apostles determined that their priority was the *“prayer and the ministry of the word,”* Acts 6:4. This prayer helps to clarify the relationship between the Word and prayer. This prayer also identifies three vital elements of faith and doctrine: hope, inheritance, and power. These are truths taught only in the Word of God, truths which are foundational to our daily walk in Christ.

In his letter Paul had just summarized the eternal purposes of God for history and the blessings which God has provided for the believer in Christ, Eph 1:3-14. He had spoken of the activity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to bless us. He had spoken of God's purpose in eternity past, in history, and in eternity future. If vs. 3-14 focus on the purpose of God as it relates to Christ, the church, and His glory, then vs. 19-23 will concentrate on the power of God in Christ toward His church. In the middle of these two texts, Paul recorded his prayers for the church .  
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**"[I pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand..." —Eph 1:17-20**

at Ephesus. Viewed as a whole, chapter one contains three summaries:

- (1) the purpose of God for His church.
- (2) his prayers for the Ephesian church.
- (3) the power of God directed toward the church.

Paul's prayers for the church at Ephesus were based upon his understanding of God's purposes for the church and His power directed to the church. **The Reason for Paul's Prayers.** Paul informed his readers that he constantly prayed for them, without ceasing, v. 16. He began by telling them the reasons for his prayers, two primary motivations for his persistence in praying for this church. He assumed that his readers would readily understand his first reason, v. 15. Paul had stressed God's sovereign purposes for His church in vs. 3-14. The church is "from Him," "through Him," and "unto Him," see Rm 11:36; Col 1. He thanked God because He has given birth to all who are part of His church. He made his petitions to God because God sovereignly works in and through His church. He gives life to the church, controls its destiny, and directs its growth. So Paul prayed to God for the church.

The second reason for his prayers is also in v. 15. He prayed for the Ephesian church because there were genuine saints there. The lives of the Ephesian Christians bore witness to the genuine faith and love which they had in Jesus. The evidence is twofold: (1) their faith in the Lord and (2) their love for *all* the saints. Loving

God and loving others are the marks of the true Christian, obedience to the great commandments, Mt 22:36-40. What Paul had heard concerning the Ephesian church convinced him that there were true believers there. Since God has purposed and provided for the blessing of true believers, and since the Ephesian saints are true believers, Paul prayed for them.

There are those who would argue that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God undermines the doctrine of human responsibility of man. The first 14 verses emphasize divine sovereignty (God's eternal plan). Verses 15-19 demonstrate human responsibility (Paul's prayers). For Paul, as for every Christian, the sovereignty of God is the reason for human responsibility. What better motive for my obedience than to know that God not only commanded my obedience, but He also purposed it, and the results He would accomplish through it:

**The Nature of Paul's Prayer.** Consider these characteristics of Paul's prayer:

**(1) Paul's prayer was addressed to God the Father.** His prayer is to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (verse 17).

**(2) Paul's prayer was continual.** Paul says here and elsewhere that his prayers were made "without ceasing," v. 16, see also Rm 1:8-10; Col 1:9-12.

**(3) Paul was not alone in praying for the church at Ephesus.** Note the little word "too" in verse 15. "*Epaphras who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may*

*stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis,"* Col 4:12-13.

**(4) Paul's prayer included thanksgiving for the saints at Ephesus.**

Paul was a Jew, and the Jews as a nation were not eager to see the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, even though it was a part of the eternal plan and purpose of God. The people of Jesus's home town turned from enthusiastic approval to an angry murderous mob when Jesus made it clear to the people of Nazareth that His coming as Messiah included the blessing of the Gentiles, see Lk 4:16-30. The Jews of Jerusalem listened quietly to Paul's personal testimony of his conversion to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, until he added that God had called him to preach to the Gentiles, Ax 22:1-23. The Jewish saints at Jerusalem only reluctantly granted that God had purposed to save Gentiles as well as Jews, but after having done so, kept on preaching the gospel to Jews alone, Ax 11:1-19.

Paul was called as an apostle to the Gentiles, Rm 1:5. He, with Barnabas and other coworkers, Ax 11:22-24, rejoiced when Gentiles came to faith. Like John the Baptist, he rejoiced in seeing the fulfillment of his calling, cf. Jn 3:22-23.

**(5) Paul's prayer was a petition that the Ephesian saints would come to a deeper and fuller grasp of the truth of God as revealed in Scripture.** He prayed "*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and*



Psalm 133:1



**Fill your can-  
teen in 2013**

“May you be filled  
with all the full-  
ness of God.”

—Ephesians 3:19

**Prayer for the Ephesians**, from p. 2  
*of revelation in the knowledge of Him.*  
*I pray that the eyes of your heart may*  
*be enlightened, so you may know....”*  
Eph 1:17-19. His petition moved from  
the general to the specific:

- that God would give a “spirit of wisdom and of revelation,” 17
- that the “eyes of their heart may be enlightened,” 18.
- that the Ephesian saints may come to grasp:
  - the hope of His calling
  - the glory of His inheritance in the saints
  - the surpassing greatness of His power

The general request was for a “spirit of wisdom and of revelation.” Repeatedly in scripture, wisdom and revelation are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit: “*But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task,*” Ax 6:3; cf. 6:10; .Lk 2:26; 1 Cor 2:10; Eph 3:5; 1 Pet 1:12. It is true that the Scriptures produce wisdom, Ps 119:97-100; 2 Tim, 3:15, and that the Word of God is sufficient for all our spiritual needs, 2 Tim 3:14-17; Heb 1:1-2; 2:3-4; 2 Pet 1:2-4. Nevertheless, Paul prayed for more than this. The first words of v. 18—“*that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened*”—are an amplification, an explanation of the words of v. 17—“*a Spirit*

*of wisdom and of revelation.*” Other texts of Scripture reveal a strong emphasis on the fact that God’s wisdom helps us to understand God’s inspired revelation in Scripture. The psalmist prayed for the wisdom to understand the Law of God, Ps 119:18, 27, 33-34, 73. Solomon indicated at the beginning of the Proverbs that His wisdom was necessary to understand difficult truth, Pr 1:1-6. When Jesus came to the earth as the promised Messiah, He came as God’s full and final revelation, God’s “last word,” cf. Heb 1:1-3. And yet He was not understood by men. He was not even understood by His disciples. Repeatedly in the gospels, the disciples and others failed to grasp the meaning of what Jesus was saying at that time, see Jn 2:17; 6:22-71; 7:37-40; 13:18-38; 14:1-5. Jesus understood this completely. They could not understand. Just before His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus spoke of His departure. He instructed them to abide in Him by abiding in His Word and keeping His commandments. And yet they did not understand many of His words. He assured them by promising the coming of the Holy Spirit, Who would not only bring His words to their remembrance but who would make their meaning clear to them as well, see Jn 14:25-26; 16:1-15. It was the work of the Holy Spirit in communicating and clarifying the Word of God that Jesus promised. In the New Testament epistles, Paul took up this same theme. He contrasted the wisdom of God with the wisdom of men, showing that by means of the revelation of the Holy Spirit the inspired writers could

*continued on p. 4*

**Rejoice** Danielle Huelsman put on her Lord in baptism recently when she heard the gospel at Bible Camp.

**Job concerns** Megan Aki, Lorenzo Gonzalez, Linda Szymanski, Andrew Tope, and Frank Savarese seeking jobs

## Discipleship Here At Home

**PRAY FOR healing, protection,  
help, and comfort here and away**

**Tracy Corray**—kidney infection & viral meningitis

**Mark Campbell**—at Grace Care in Glenwood Spgs; making gains in cognition

**Judy Sartin’s** aunt **Vallie Ek**—back in treatment for uterine cancer; **Judy’s** grand son **Tristan Sartin**—recent autism diagnosis

**Eric Perry**—tennis elbow  
**Rod Green’s** mother, **Shirley**—surgery for broken wrist

The **Reameses** need prayers for their daughter and son-in-law, **Sandra** and **Nathan Hampton**, who are practicing bigamy and are reviling the **Reameses’** other two children, **Matt** and **Amy**. Please pray for the **Hamptons’** eight children.

**Valerie Greenwalt**—surgery for tumor later this month

**Megan Aki** and the girls—now living with the **Szymanskis**

**CHRONIC CONDITIONS**

**Logan Corray; Rocco Sangellino Jr;**

**Addison Tope; Pat Wilkes**—asthma

**Pearl Chapman**—leg pains; pancreatitis

**Nell Free**—pacemaker, heart; back pain

**Autumn Hadders**—epilepsy

**Kirk Johnson**—worsening MS; needs help around his house

**Menards**—aging; **Lloyd**, diabetes;

**Virginia**, worsening rapid macular degeneration; high BP; 90th birthday today

**Lynda Szymanski**—COPD, lung

**Expecting** Amy Vander Kooi—SOON!

**Traveling** DeWayne and Ethan Howell will travel to Cincinnati tomorrow for a week

**Bereaved** The **Campbells** and

**Thompsons** are grieving the loss of

Pat’s mother, **Ruth Hice**. Send cards

to Pat’s father, **Delmar Hice**, 28345 Highway 69 W, London, AR 72847.

The **Hadders** family sorrows at the recent death of Jonathan’s grandmother, **Frances Selvidge**.

**Paul's First Prayer for the Ephesians**, continued from p. 3  
grasp and communicate not only the words but also the meaning and application of God's Word, 1 Cor 1:1-15. In the light of this, we understand Paul's general prayer of petition in Eph 1:17-18 to be his request for God to illuminate the minds of the saints in Ephesus, so they could grasp the depth of the riches of God's Word. That is why we pray for God's guidance, wisdom, and understanding before we study the Scriptures. This whole epistle to the Ephesians was, in part, an answer to Paul's prayer. Paul prayed for a deeper insight into God's plan and purpose for the saints, and Ephesians took us further into the "mysteries" of God's working than any previous book of the Bible had ever done.

Specifically, Paul prayed for a greater grasp of three Biblical truths, to know 1) the hope of God's calling, 2) the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and 3) the exceeding greatness of His power towards believers, according to the working of His mighty power. These three truths are found only in the Scriptures. You may read the daily newspaper from the front page to the last, and you will never find these truths. You may read the secular writings of great minds, and you won't hear a word about these foundational facts either. You will read of them often in the Bible. Consider the truths which Paul believed to be so essential to the spiritual lives of these saints, and to us as well.

**The Hope of His Calling.** The first fundamental truth is that of the hope of God's calling. The *calling* here is a Christian's calling to Jesus Christ, Rm 8:28-30; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 1:9; Heb 9:15; 1 Pet 2:9. This calling to salvation was a calling to "blessing" and to "eternal glory," 1 Pet 3:9; 5:10. Many of the benefits or blessings of our salvation are yet to be fulfilled. It is these benefits which make up the *hope* which Paul spoke of, and for which he prayed. Paul's prayer was that the Ephesian saints would begin to grasp all of the blessings which God had in store for them, blessings which are beyond the ability of the human mind to grasp, and thus God's Spirit is required in order for us to comprehend them, 1 Cor 2:9-10; Rm 11:33; Eph 3:8; Phil 4:7; Ps 25:4-5; 27:11; 86:11; 143:10.

We will consider the rest of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 next week. In the meantime, if you are wondering how to pray, Paul's prayers are reliable guides. They were brief and explicit, directed to the needs at hand. Paul came to the point immediately. His prayers stand as a rebuke to the way many Christians pray. His prayers are not only brief and explicit, but they are spiritually strategic in nature. They center on the great spiritual issues facing individual believers and the body of Christ as a whole. As Paul prayed for his readers, we should always approach our own study of the Word of God with prayer, asking Him to open our hearts and minds to understand the riches of His Word. This is what the psalmist of old did, which enabled him to discover in the Law the wonders of His word, Ps 119:12, 7-19, 25-27, 33-40, 64-68, 123-125; 135; 171. May God give us His Spirit of wisdom and of revelation, so that we may gain from His holy Word a deeper and fuller grasp of the hope of our calling, the glory of His inheritance in us, and the mighty power which is at work for those who believe. How is our knowledge of God, of the hope of His calling, of His riches, of His power?

## *Westside church of Christ*

meets at  
13789 W. 8th Avenue  
Golden, Colorado 80401  
(303) 972-0087

### **Pastors**

Larry Campbell (303) 462-4987  
DeWayne Howell (303) 973-7283

### **Preacher**

Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

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## *Assembly Schedule*

### **Sunday**

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

### **Wednesday**

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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This morning: "Finding God in Time of Need" Jim Reingrover

This afternoon:

**Paul's Prison Epistles Series**  
Ephesians 1, Jonathan Hadders