

I Am Destined

Series: Becoming Who We Are (Engaging Ephesians)
Brad Bailey - January 19, 2014

Introduction

Do you have hope? I don't mean simply hope about what you might do today or tomorrow....I mean ultimate hope.

Do you know your ultimate destiny?

> That is what I believe God wants to speak into us today as we continue engaging the Book of Ephesians.

The Book of Ephesians captures the Divine Drama.

> Our stories are a storyline within a storyline.

We are living in the intersection of the eternal and created realms.

Without knowledge of the bigger reality... we try to find meaning in these stories....but what if the separation was pulled back....what if the writer entered the play...

> He did...in Christ.

God entered Paul's story as a religious man... and it changed him. He realized he was fighting the playwright...in vain of course.

> **The playwright has come to reveal the bigger drama... the bigger story of the end of the play as it exists forever...as it defines the acts that we may be in.**

> **That is what Paul presents.**

Last week... Paul begins this letter declaring that in Christ we have received every spiritual blessing. And now he continues....

Ephesians 1:15-23 (NIV)

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Again lofty...it's hard for me to fully get hold of what he is saying in one read.

Let me offer **a few observations and then drill into the central word** God has for us.

He has spoken of the blessing they have "In Christ"...and now begin to express that he GIVES THANKS for them.

Ephesians 1:15-16 (NIV)

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Paul has been praising God for the spiritual blessings that are ours...and now he is drawn toward **praying**. Throughout Scripture, we often see **praise preceding prayer**. In the Lord's Prayer, for example, we see the disciples asking Jesus to teach them how to pray....Jesus says a good way to begin is Our Father who art in heaven, may your name be made holy..." Prayer flows most naturally from praise.

And as he tells them of his prayer... he "gives thanks to for them." He expresses his appreciation for their faith and love. These are lives that he was once in community with...for possibly two years. He is hearing of how much with faith in Christ...and love for others. And he wants them to know that is something he is thankful for.

It **may not seem significant**...but consider that Paul had been suffering more than anyone...and was likely **writing from prison**. Paul's gone from freedom to imprisonment. He has gone from a position in the culture where he had dual citizenship, and he was able to speak multiple languages, and highly educated under the leading rabbi, Gamaliel, he was highly honored, possibly a member of the Sanhedrin. I mean, this is a very successful man. Now he's broke, single, hated, and in prison. Is he consumed with bitterness? Cynical and critical? What he expresses is gratitude...appreciation for these people.

> **It's a great example** of the significance of expressing our appreciation to those who do well to us or others. Paul had every reason to focus on his own hardships...but he focused on others ...and expressed his appreciation.

Grumbling never helps us find satisfaction and strength. **Appreciation blesses everyone.**

It's an encouraging example to all of us to **stop and express our appreciation** to those who serve us ..as well as whatever faithfulness we see to Christ...and love is expressed to others. And if someone thanks you...don't feel you have to say "**well all the glory belongs to God.**" I know I can tend to deflect appreciation... but I have come to realize that we all need to be appreciated...and especially for our faith and love.. The truth is that: We can glorify God AND thank people." The glory does go to God, but the appreciation can go to his servants. You can do both. If God sends someone and God uses them, you can glorify him and thank them.

He thanks them for **two qualities** that matter most...**faith and love**. **If you can identify your life** as bearing faith in Christ...and a love for the church everywhere...I hope you here this as a **word of encouragement to you**. If you are choosing to believe what Christ has done and taught...more than the world... Paul recognizes something for all to appreciate. If you are loving Christ's community in this world... praying for people, serving, giving, inconveniencing yourself ... there's a life that is flowing toward the well-being of the whole church. Paul recognizes something for all to appreciate.

Do you recall what this same Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians about **what matters most...faith, love, and ???**

> **HOPE.**

And that is precisely what he now prays for.

Ephesians 1:17-18 (NIV)

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you

If we could sum up what defines his prayer...it is that they would know **the hope of their destiny**.

From I sense about how we live, life is often lived between despair (futility)...and denial.

We either face our powerlessness...or we try to find power in something beyond it's ultimate merits.

Ephesus lived with that all around them. [1]

Today we could travel to Ephesus... historically part of Greece but now in modern day Turkey...and as we enter we would see the remains of an aqueduct and the **Temple of Artemis** ...one of the seven ancient wonders of the world.

The goddess Artemis was the **goddess of the hunt and of fertility and much more**...all across the Grecian empire. **One's destiny** was believed to be **set by whether they had made her happy**.

Along the side, intricate mosaic-tiled floors remain in what were once were homes. In Domitian Square, a ground-level relief portrays a flight of the **victory goddess**. It was believed that she could bring victory because of her **swiftness**...as noted by her wings. Do you know her name? The **goddess Nike**... by which a modern company would name itself...as a new offering of power for victory. (Image in PowerPoint of ancient relief of her...with wing and it's use in Nike trademark.)

We might think that such worship simply reflects that these people were archaic ...unenlightened. I wonder what some civilization from another time would say about us ...if they looked upon one of today's professional football games...or next weeks Grammy awards and the Oscars that follow...with the red carpets.

So often it is good gifts becoming gods...offering a power beyond their merits...a hope that is beyond what they bear.

As I said, we face our powerlessness...or we try to find power in something beyond it's ultimate merits.

> But there is that which pierces the despair and the denial...it's the living hope that has come in Christ.

Paul declares the hope...the living hope... that has come in Christ.

Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)

I pray... that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you

"The hope to which he has called you"

Paul prays for them to know **their hope...their destiny**...but know **in a way that transcends** what often is basic knowing.

That "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened"

This is **not simply** the **head knowledge**...it is **more than calculation that has no personal effect**.

The heart refers to one's truest personhood...our inner posture in which our will is set by mind and emotion. [2]

Paul is praying that we will have the eyes of our heart...our inner life...enlightened...that we might "know" the living hope that is our destiny.

This "hope" is not simply some sort of wishful thinking. There certainly is **foolish hope**...but there is **solid hope**. You can have hope that the **sun rises tomorrow**. That is a relatively well founded hope. It will shape how you live today. Since you believe that the sun will rise tomorrow...you will live a certain way today.

Paul is speaking of our ultimate hope... ultimate hope is what you live for...what matters.

Paul's prayer was not a prayer for anything physical, or for anything material.

- He was praying for something within – something unseen – something spiritual.
- We tend to pray for things tangible – but most of the important things we need are not tangible.
- What is needed to overcome the despair of life is not physical strength or health, but spiritual.

What we really need is not physical power – the power within.

As noted last week... we are not just called from something...but to something. Salvation is not simply about leaving some sinful life... or even escaping the future of judgment and hell as separation from God. It is to something...to the riches of God...and the exalting of all that is good.

It is what energizes your present.

If you hope to get married...get promoted... get released from prison... graduate... you live in the present because the present is understood in light of the future.

Martin Luther King Jr...whose birthday we celebrate tomorrow.... understood such hope. His famous speech about having a dream...spoke not of some weird vision at night... it bore the power of the future as it claimed a future God had announced. He saw it and it changed him. It was a reality in the eternal realm. It already exists in another realm.

Being enlightened by hope of what eternity bears... doesn't mean we dismiss this world.

It is about **living in this one in light of that one.**

The future is what keeps us faithful in the present.

The wrong attitude is the one that says, "This life is terrible and intolerable and we just need to hang on until we die and go to heaven." No. **This is the life you've been given to reveal heaven on earth.** Oh, there's more coming -- no doubt. But **the better future is something that energizes a better present.**

C.S. Lewis wrote:

"If you read history you will find the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next...It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth "thrown in": aim at earth and you will get neither. "Mere Christianity," p. 118

Paul speaks of this as living with wisdom and understanding.

It is the **wisdom of God that alters people.** And once you've been altered by wisdom, the way you move in the world is different. By the way, the **latter part of the book of Ephesians** is all about how wisdom-filled people move about in the world of relationships and situations.

It's not about becoming checked out...but about becoming checked into the future so that we live in the light of it.

It's about living "on earth as it is in heaven."

It's about living in the light of our destiny.

Paul refers to our hope...our destiny...in three ways.

1. My destiny is defined by God's calling

I am destined by God's calling

Our calling refers to God having called us out to something.

Think of Abraham. **God called Abraham...** and gave him a destiny.

Abraham...whose name was originally Abram...lived in a city in Babylonia, named Ur...a city advanced at the time...steeped in astrology and idolatry. His father worshipped idols (Joshua 24:2) and according to Jewish tradition made idols. Every female in the city at some time in her life would have to take her turn in serving as a priestess prostitute in the temples.

It was into such a life that God called one out...and INTO a different future.

Genesis 12:1-3 (NIV)

¹ The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

It was a calling from one life...TO another. It was not conditional...it was ordained by God.

How do you think that calling changed how he lived? (He was destined. He knew that God had set out his future...and his life was on a path.)

God's calling was spread out upon a people and through Christ has spread to all who receive it.

> A calling **chooses you...it summons you...and it changes you.**

EX - I was willing to serve this community...but sensed a need to be called in order to fully give my life long term. God spoke to my heart on night... changed me.

Not called simply from something but TO something... something that defines your destiny.

2. My destiny is defined by the riches of God's inheritance

I am destined to receive the riches of our inheritance

Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints

Inheritance **reminds you of your identity**. It reminds you of who you are. Before inheritance is about anything else, it's about identity. It **locates you in a family**.

The **phrase that is used here** can also be translated as **we being God's inheritance**. While I don't feel that is likely what Paul's phrase in this instance refers to. **It is equally true.**

Did you know that **God calls us His inheritance over 20x** in the Bible! When you come to Jesus... there are so many blessings we receive (in 3-14)

What does God get? YOU... WE ARE ALL GOD EVER WANTED. We don't understand the worth we have to God. All of human history is really about God's Pursuit of YOU AND ME...that ultimately brings forth his glory. He is the hero...and He is our prize...but we are also His prize.

In the **previous verses** Paul had just been describing that such an inheritance has been guaranteed and **given a seal...which is the Holy Spirit** given to us.

Ephesus was a port town with containers heading out of it all over the known world...and the owner could seal them with a wax seal to guarantee their proper delivery would be completed.

3. My destiny is defined by the power of God that exalts I am destined by the power of God that exalts

Ephesians 1:18-23 (NIV)

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Here Paul is saying that our **hope is rooted** in the exaltation of Christ. **Our destiny is rooted in what God did in Christ...raising him...and exalting him.**

Jesus' resurrection was very **different from when Jesus raised Lazarus** from the dead – Lazarus' resurrection was temporary, he still would have died a second time. But in Jesus we do not have a temporary defeat of the power of death, but **a permanent defeat of the power of death**. In the resurrection of Jesus, we have an eternal life, a resurrected body, a deliverance from the permanence and hopelessness of death!

> The power of God which raised Christ Jesus **established a permanent hope in a new order.**

But it was **larger than defeating death...it is the exaltation over all the powers of this world.**

We tend to speak often of the life, death, resurrection of Christ... which misses one element that God says is vital...that he ascended and was exalted over everything in heaven and on earth.

This is what the Jewish prophets spoke of long before. This is what Jesus spoke of. This is what Paul speaks into our inner lives. [3]

"God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

He exalted him over all powers FOR THE CHURCH.

Because those who receive him become his living BODY in the created realm....so while God redeems the world...he has already subjected everything under Christ in the eternal realm.

Paul will later speak more about all the spiritual forces we face in this world...but here he is declaring that they are already subject to Christ. If we are his body in this world...we are on the right side in the grand divine drama.

On a balmy October afternoon in 1982, Badger Stadium in Madison, Wisconsin, was packed. More than 60,000 die-hard University of Wisconsin supporters were watching their football team take on the Michigan State Spartans.

It soon became obvious that MSU had the better team. What seemed off, however, as the score became more lopsided, were the bursts of applause and shouts of joy from the Wisconsin fans. How could they cheer when their team was losing?

It turns out that 70 miles away the Milwaukee Brewers were beating the St. Louis Cardinals in game three of the 1982 World Series. Many of the fans in the stands were listening to portable radios--and responding to something other than their immediate circumstances.

They were tuned into another reality.

> Paul says that our inner reality should be tuned into the eternal hope and destiny.

It is critical for us to understand who is in control – what Jesus' role is and what this means for us.

> **God will redeem what is given to him.**

When Jesus looks at a person He “does not only see what that person is; He sees what that person can become. Jesus looked at Peter and saw in him not only a rough, impulsive Galilean fisherman but also what he could become. Seeing us not only as we are but as we can be, Jesus says, ‘Come to me... I will change you... I will make you a new creation.’”

Christ entered the created realm and then revealed how the writer will redeem the world...and all who belong to "his body" will be joined in that ending...in which he reigns over all.

He has a new destiny. If you are in Christ... give your life to his reign...your life is destined in him.

I want conclude this call to know our hope...to live in our destiny...with a few things we may need to do.

1. Let go of the false gods of power we may be giving the hope of our hearts to

We have to be honest... if we have put our hope in money... intellect... looks... or the affirmation of others.... then that is our hope. For some of us...Christ is really a back-up...a contingency in case the hope we are involved in doesn't come through.

You will give your heart to what you are hoping in most. We need to decide what we are going to give our hearts to.

2. Open our "hearts"... our inner seat of control...to God

Some of us may have closed off our hearts from God's intimate influence. Perhaps we've been hurt by others...or been disappointed. We may become cynical so we settle for the safe knowledge about God. We are more comfortable learning some more things about God...but our hearts are not very open to his influence. We simply will limit Holy Spirit filling the eyes of our hearts with hope.

As one man noted, “**It is much like music, or a sunset, or a delicious dinner.** You can represent these things logically and analytically if you so choose. A musical score, for instance, is the mathematical representation for music. A marvelous concerto or symphony can be represented by the notes on a page. Or you can represent music by means of an audioscope where you can analyze the varying wavelengths of sound. But this is not experiencing music. Looking at notes on a page

doesn't thrill you like being surrounded by a full orchestra soaring to the heights. Likewise, you can describe color mathematically. But you must see color to really know how orange looks. You can describe taste anatomically. You can describe the chemical reactions which occur when we bite into a lemon. But you will never experience the pungent sour taste of a lemon until you bite into one yourself. We can describe God theologically. We can list His attributes, and describe His work in creation and redemption. But unless we experience God ourselves, we will never truly know Him. [4]

"Taste and see that the Lord is good." - Psalm 34:8

Closing / Ministry

Resources: The title and general thematic idea used for this series on Ephesians was drawn and adapted from Mark Driscoll 'Who Do You Think You Are?: Finding Your True Identity in Christ.' However, this message does not draw upon Mark's message in the series. Various thoughts were drawn from Doug Henry, Craig Simonian, Steven Simala Grant

Notes

James Boice notes how "knowing" is central point of Paul.

Paul's statements of what he is praying for follow a typical Greek construction. In this construction he says what he is praying about first. Then he uses a purpose clause to indicate why he is praying in this way. He does it twice in this passage. In verse 17 he says that he is praying that God might give the Ephesians "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" in order that they "may know him better." Then in verses 18 and 19 he says that he is praying that "the eyes of [their hearts] may be enlightened" in order that they may know "the hope to which he has called [them], the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." Put together, it is really one great prayer for knowledge: knowledge of God and a fuller knowledge of the elements of salvation, consisting in our hope, our inheritance, and the power available to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The chief idea is that we might know God.

Boice, J. M. (1988). Ephesians: An expositional commentary (34). Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library.

1. The "powers" worshipped at Ephesus

Wikipedia re The Goddess Artemis - At Ephesus in [Ionia](#), Turkey, her temple became one of the [Seven Wonders of the World](#). It was probably the best known center of her worship except for Delos. There the Lady whom the Ionians associated with Artemis through [interpretatio graeca](#) was worshiped primarily as a mother goddess, akin to the Phrygian goddess [Cybele](#), in an ancient sanctuary where her [cult image](#) depicted the "Lady of Ephesus" adorned with multiple rounded breast like protuberances on her chest. In [Acts of the Apostles](#), Ephesian metalsmiths who felt threatened by Saint Paul's preaching of Christianity, jealously rioted in her defense, shouting "*Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!*" Of the 121 columns of her temple, only one composite, made up of fragments, still stands as a marker of the temple's location. The rest were used for making churches, roads, and forts.

The sites that can be found in Ephesus are described at <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/29839158/#.UtmSi3nTm70>. These include reference to Artemis, Nike, and Christianity.

Below from - <http://www.omg-facts.com/Business/The-Nike-Clothing-Brand-Is-Named-After-T/20906#calm3qsStxjTtWAQ.99>

The Nike clothing brand is named after the Greek goddess of victory.

The winged goddess Nike sat at the side of Zeus. Her presence symbolized victory, and she was said to have presided over some of history's earliest battles. The company's distinctive SWOOSH logo represents the goddess's wing!

2. "Knowing" in the "heart"

Revelation is the activity of God, not a faculty of man. We do well to ponder, though, how “new Christians” often seem to be in more direct contact than Christians who have been in the faith for years. Could it be that we allow our spirits to be jaded by too much sophistication, too much materialism? We are duped by the pressure of society to be “rational.” Thus our spirits are not receptive to the Holy Spirit who would enlighten the eyes of our understanding.

Paul knew that knowledge of God is something more than knowledge of facts about God. Even the objective revelation of God in Jesus Christ is not enough to produce the knowing of God we long for and desperately need. So Paul prayed that the Spirit would provide that revelation, that knowing which is ours as the Spirit of Christ becomes a living presence in us. He puts this knowing that comes by the Spirit even more graphically in Eph. 3:19. “May you be strong to grasp... the love of Christ and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge” (NEB).

For this “higher knowledge,” it is necessary that “the eyes of your understanding be enlightened.” The RSV says “the eyes of your hearts”; NEB designates it “your inward eyes.” When we talk of our “heart,” other than designating the physical organ, we are usually talking about the seat of our emotions. In biblical days, however, the heart was the whole inner self. In the Old Testament, the heart was the seat of the intelligence, and we find such phrases as “a wise and understanding heart.” In the New Testament the mode of speaking is expanded so that “the heart” identified the higher intelligence in which will and emotions cooperated with the mind. This is the reason faith for Paul was an activity of the heart, of the whole inner being— not a mere assent of reason (cf. Rom. 10:10).

Dunnam, M. D., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1982). Vol. 31: Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon. The Preacher’s Commentary Series (157–158). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc.

Wisdom in our spirit or by the Holy Spirit

Dunnam, M. D., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1982). Vol. 31: Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon. The Preacher’s Commentary Series (156–164). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc.

"The wording of this petition lends itself to two interpretations. The RSV has the petition, “a spirit of wisdom and revelation while the NKJV has “the spirit.” The words may refer to a human disposition, a receptive spirit, a capacity to understand, eagerness to receive truth. Or the words may refer to the activity of the Holy Spirit imparting a particular gift—the gift of wisdom and revelation. These two interpretations are not incompatible. Paul used the word in both senses. In fact, he used the word both ways in one sentence. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15, NKJV). The human spirit is precisely the aspect of our being which is open to the Holy Spirit. And, it is the human spirit dedicated to and informed by God that is the vehicle of the Holy Spirit’s activity in the world."

3. While everything is ultimately under Christ, we read in Hebrews that "at present we do not see everything subject to him." The eternal realm has not been fully realized in the created realm.

Hebrews 2:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. ⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

4. Source I drew from , reference is made to Pastor J. David Hoke