

In Christ I Am Destined

Series: Made for More (Ephesians)

Brad Bailey – May 1, 2022

Introduction

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.

It relates to the whole way we think about what we imagine as “our life.” We tend to think of our life primarily as our earthly life. If you ask me about my life... I would tend to tell you about my current circumstances.

But...the Biblical Book of Ephesians captures the larger reality... the way in which Christ has revealed the larger ultimate storyline.

Paul began declaring that in Christ we have received every spiritual blessing. And now he continues....

Ephesians 1:15-23

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.

May God bless this word in us.

These words speak of such **grand things....** that it may be hard to easily grasp them... or take them in.

What we hear is the **passion of someone who realizes what God has** done...and the desire for everyone to.

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

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.

He tells them how he is praying for them...and 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 their faith in Christ...and love for others. And he wants them to know that is something he is thankful for.

> **It's a great example** of the significance of **expressing our appreciation to those who do well to us or others.**

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.

Paul shows 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.

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.

Think about those circumstances. What would be their **natural effect**? Wouldn't we **tend to find our spirits** bound within the **confinement of these circumstances**? Paul had every reason to **focus on his own hardships**...but he focused on others ...and expressed his appreciation.

This prison couldn't contain his spirit.

He is **not bound within the circumstances** of his own life... **he exists in a larger reality.**

And this is **what he now prays for** others to more deeply know... a larger reality.

Do you recall what this same Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians about what matters most...about the **three great forces** that matter most. **faith, love, and ???** [1]

> HOPE. He said that what the most powerful forces in life... are faith, love, and HOPE.

And that is precisely what he now prays for.

Ephesians 1:18

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...

If we could sum up what defines his prayer...it is that they would know **the hope to which they have been called. This speaks of knowing their DESTINY.**

"Destiny" is what has been determined for a particular person or thing in the future; or the ultimate agency regarded as predetermining the course of events.

God had **not just called** them **from** something **but TO something**... something that defines your destiny. [2]

He seek us to know "the hope to which HE... God... has called us."
My destiny is defined by God's calling. I am destined by God's calling.

The first thing for us to grasp is that...

1. My destiny in Christ is already determined by God.

It is the hope to which HE has called us.

What have we received?

Here we are told... we receive **“the riches of HIS glorious inheritance.”**

Who determines an inheritance... the one who gives it...or the one who receives it?

The **one who gives it.**

An inheritance is determined by the one who gives it...and at some point it is made known. It is **often made known well before one will receive it...but it has been set.**

As I read these words I **couldn't help but think** of the process of receiving some **inheritance from my parents.**

It was something they set up... something that simply waited to be enacted.

And another example came to us communally. In the midst of significant challenges to our communal financial resources... through the pandemic... we discovered that a member who had left us for heaven... had left the community their inheritance.

It is already recognized... and just waiting for the transition to be completed.

It was determined by the other.

And in Christ we receive the riches of God's inheritance.

It is **not simply what we hope will be decided...** it has **already been determined.**

It already exists in the eternal realm... sphere.

The Apostle Peter... speaks of this in a very similar way...in fact it should be **striking how clearly** this truth is **testified to between both Paul and Peter.**

1 Peter 1:3-9

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

It is a **“living hope”**... because it **already exists.**

In Christ... heaven had come into earth and revealed what is to come when this world is fully transformed by the will of heaven.

He says **God has provided a way** to be **born afresh** into the life we had lost. We are born into a living hope. [3]

He explains...

.... an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you - 1 Peter 1:4

Already waiting...

And it “can never perish, spoil or fade.” Why?

Because it lies outside this deteriorating created world.

The Scriptures testify that the **whole of creation...**the whole universe... was created by God who exists outside of creation. It explains that when humanity that was to rule over it... sought to operate apart from God...the **whole of creation was effected** ...it was **subjected to operating outside of God's order** ... and was separated from it.

And so it shouldn't be surprising that from all we can gather... it appears that the whole of the universe was initially created by that which exists outside it... and with **a power beyond understanding...** a power that was expansive... but is **now marked by entropy.**

Entropy is defined as **the measurement of degree of randomness** or in other words, it is the increase in the disorganization within a system.

Entropy is the condition by which something loses order... and energy...including our own aging.
[4]

What our text is telling us... is that entropy is at work here...but beyond this world's condition... lies that which "never perishes, spoils or fades."

Life points towards that which transcends the conflict and entropy we know.

There is something that points toward the potential of redemption and restoration.... Towards the triumph of what is good.

We sense it if we dare.

When a story ends in tragedy...we feel something is wrong... tragically not met what it should. We naturally see the potential towards redemption.

This is why we fight for love and life and justice... because we sense that they are the true and original **good ends.**

If there is something that this world never satisfies... it is because we were **made for another world...**another form of existence.

"Ever since God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden, we have lived in an unnatural environment, a world in which we were not designed to live. We were built to enjoy a garden without weeds, relationships without friction, fellowship without distance. But something is wrong, and we know it, both within our world and within ourselves. Deep inside we sense we're out of the nest, **always ending the day in a motel room, never at home.**" - Larry Cribb, Inside Out

We have a living hope because the eternal reality already exists... and that **unchanging reality will consume the changing... what is out of sync will be aligned... and unite a new creation.** [5]

This world is may be defined by entropy...but entropy is not our end.

There is that which is everlasting.

And Peter says something that **captures our reality.**

1 Peter 1:6

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

Knowing our destiny...knowing that which is to come... is **not some pie in the sky dismissal of the hardship** that this current world brings.

Jesus told those who followed... "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33

Jesus said he came to give us his joy... world will have troubles... but he has overcome.

Jesus never dismissed the troubles of this world ... but he lived in relationship to **a much bigger world.**

The true Christian Faith never calls us to deny or dismiss the reality of suffering... rather it calls us into a larger reality.

We can think of our current form of life as a **short dotted line**... it is what we call life.. how we experience life... but Christ says we don't understand the whole story. We are a part of a grand and eternal story...like that of the **solid line above that knows no end.**

That line is our destiny. It **“never perishes, spoils or fades.”**

Christ says... take heart... he has overcome.

Find heart... because I will overcome all the powers of this world... all that oppresses... even death.

And that is what our primary text speaks of as Paul speaks of power...

Ephesians 1:18-23

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.**

2. My destiny in Christ is defined by the power of God.

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

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. [6]

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.

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.

Why did he come and defeat the powers and then return to reign? For the sake of **those who would receive him** and become his body... his image bearers in the created order.

He already reigned in the heavenly.... So his coming and rising... was to fulfill what began at creation.

Our destiny in Christ is already determined by God... and defined by the power of God.

Our part is to allow our hearts to be enlightened.

I want to close with what Paul said he was praying for...

Ephesians 1:18

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...

That "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened"
This is **not simply the academic knowledge.**

The heart refers to the deep inner life out of which we live.
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.

3. My destiny in Christ is a transforming knowledge.

My destiny in Christ can transform my whole understanding of "my life."

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.

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 [7]:

"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." - C.S. Lewis

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.

Martin Luther King Jr... 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. The future is what keeps us faithful in the present.

This week, **Time magazine had a story** about Russians Risking Everything to Support Ukraine. As the lead journalist said...

***"Hope gives you the strength to act. If you think that everything is doomed and you are nothing, you become a very comfortable instrument for the regime."* - Mary G., Russian photojournalist**

CLOSING

You may be sensing how God is calling you... to be united with Christ...and a destiny that is joined with him.

You may be realizing how your sense of life has become too small...the circumstances have become like a prison... and you sense the value of allowing a larger reality to fill your heart.

PRAYER

Notes

1. 1 Corinthians 13:13 – “now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

2. It should be noted that Paul first says, in verse 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.” He refers to knowing God better and then launches into the future we receive. They cannot be separated because it is the very nature and presence of God at the center of our future.

Thomas Merton wrote: “Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another.” I did not expound on this in this message simply to maintain a focus on Paul’s primary focus.

3. Here are some of the English translations for this phrase...

“...gave us new birth into a living hope.” (NRSV)

“...an ever-living hope *and* confident assurance.” (AMP)

“...regenerated us unto a lively hope.” (DRB)

“...granted us a new birth, resulting in an immortal hope (ISV)

4. More on aging as entropy at: Drawn from: Entropy, aging and death; Daniel Hershey, William E. Lee III, First published: December 1987 [here](#)

This also is reflected in Romans 8

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.

(Romans 8:19-21 RSV)

That phrase, “the bondage to decay,” is a very accurate description of what scientists call the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the law of entropy, the law which states that everything in the universe is running down, that it was wound up once but that now everything is declining, deteriorating. Paul includes not only the natural world, with its constant decay, but the human body as well. He says,

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly[and sometimes outwardly] as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:22-25 RSV)

5. “He has ...set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” - Ecclesiastes 3:11

6. 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.

7. “Mere Christianity,” p. 118