

The Destiny of the Church

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Text: Ephesians 1:1-14

Series: Rooted in Christ

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Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL

Introduction: Open your Bibles to Ephesians. We are beginning the series: “Rooted in Christ”. The title of the message is: “The Destiny of the Church”.

Where are we going as a church? What is our destiny?

Illustration (Alice in Wonderland): Alice in Wonderland came to a fork in the road. Icy panic stung her as she stood frozen by indecision. She lifted her eyes toward heaven, looking for guidance. Her eyes did not find God, only the Cheshire cat leering at her from his perch in the tree above. “Which way should I go?” blurted Alice.

“That depends ... ,” said the cat, fixing a sardonic smile on the confused girl.

“On what?” Alice managed to reply.

“On your destination. Where are you going?” queried the Cheshire fiend.

“I don’t know ... ” stammered Alice.

“Then,” said the cat, with grin spreading wider, “it doesn’t matter.”

It matters to the Christian. Every Christian has a destiny in the kingdom of God. We are a pilgrim people, a people on the move—our destination matters. Where are we going as a church? It’s important. The primary words of Ephesians 1 are “in Christ”. Let’s read about it now in Ephesians 1:1-14.

Ephesians 1:1–14 (ESV) — “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are **faithful in Christ Jesus**: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us in Christ** with **every** spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he **chose us in him** before the foundation of the world, that we **should be** holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

7 **In him we have redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to **the riches of his grace**, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the **mystery of his will**, according to his **purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time**, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11 In him we have obtained [*been made*] an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were

sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

The epistle of the Ephesians was delivered by Tychicus to a number of churches. The first being Laodicea and the final being Ephesians. This is why some scholars consider this to be the letter Paul refers to as his letter to the Laodiceans, yet the epistle rightly bears the name “to the Ephesians”.

Illustration (Beretta Firearm): One of the oldest products ever continually manufactured in the world is the Beretta firearm. They began production in 1526. The printing press was barely a decade old. But there is coming a day when Beretta will cease manufacturing. That is the day when Jesus comes.

But there is never a day when the church will end. The church of Jesus Christ will last forever.

I. Our destiny is **ETERNITY**
– From IN EPHESUS to IN CHRIST.

A. We are not faithful to this world but **faithful** in Christ Jesus.

Verses 1-2, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are **faithful in Christ Jesus**: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Through the **grace** that this world cannot give and the **peace** that this world cannot give, I have **all** that I need to remain faithful to Christ.

Living in and for Ephesus

Application: Every one that Paul was trying to reach was living in and for Ephesus. Here is a heathen city, just like the city of Nineveh—totally wicked and unregenerate—completely given over to idolatry and wickedness. By ancient standards, Ephesus was a mega-city of over 300,000 people. It was the capital city of the Roman province Asia Minor and the home of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the temple of the goddess Diana.

We find in the book of Acts that Paul had labored among the Ephesians for three years—by far his longest time in one church. The church was probably begun by Aquila and Pricilla, but it Paul who labors among them and brings them together as a church—a unified body under Christ. Paul would later hand the Ephesian church over to young Timothy after his departure, and so when you read First and Second Timothy, you are reading a letter originally intended for the Pastor of the Ephesian church who succeeded Paul. Look at what these former idol worshipping heathens are called in our text:

Verse 1, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are **faithful in Christ Jesus**”.

Paul and the Ephesians – a strange pair

It wasn't Paul's idea to be an apostle or the Ephesian pagans to be saints. But this strict Jew and these wild pagans had one thing in common – at one time they were lost, dead in their sins, without God.

In Ephesus, everyone was faithful to Diana. She was the goddess of fertility. And there were many gods in the Roman empire. In Roselle, there are just as many gods. People serve work, or family, or money, or pleasure! We must “seek first God's kingdom and righteousness” we must lay down our lives for Jesus sake.

Ephesus and Roselle are only temporary, but the destiny of the church is eternal!

B. We are not blessed by this world but **blessed** in Christ (3)
– All in Christ are **blessed**

Verse 3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us in Christ with **every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.**”**

In our English translation, verses 3 through 14 are stretched out over several sentences, but when Paul wrote this, it was one sentence of over 200 Greek words! Paul is brimming over with powerful words in trying to describe all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, and it is as if he almost gets lost in his praise. Each word is bursting with meaning, and it is all one long continuous thought.

This is doctrine that fills our hearts with praise! So after the *doctrine* of verses 1 and 2, we see nothing but *doxology*. Doxology is our response to doctrine!

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| This is an important point: you and I have not truly understood <i>doctrine</i> , until it results in <i>doxology</i> ! |
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Application: This world thinks we are blessed if we are rich or if we have health, or if everything is going well for us.

Let me encourage you, that whatever you have, you are blessed in Christ! You have all you need to please God and more than you need to bless God.

DON'T WASTE YOUR POVERTY, SICKNESS...

If you have sickness, use it for Christ and bless Christ with it! If you have poverty, use your poverty for Christ – depend on Him, let Him provide for you! Don't waste your poverty. Don't waste your hardship. Are you unemployed? Don't waste your unemployment. You are blessed! You may be sick, poor, unemployed, but you are blessed. Because when Christ returns you will no longer have sickness and sorrow and poverty or unemployment, but you will have Christ. Are you in this world or are you in Christ?

II. Our destiny is **SANCTITY**

– From IN SIN to IN CHRIST.

Verse 4-5, “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed [accepted] us in the Beloved”.

God has chosen us – elected us. Before you were born, before your father or mother, before the creation of the universe, God chose you.

Illustration: When I was younger, I moved from Chicago to Louisiana. I was the strange city boy! I can remember a game of stick ball on the playground, and I was the last one picked.

Listen God doesn't choose us because of anything in us. It is because of His goodness and glory He chooses us.

But we are chosen unto holiness.

Holiness means to be “separated, set apart” for God's special purposes. We are called “saints”. Holy ones!

- We are not chosen for this world but **elect** in Christ unto Holiness (4-6) – All in Christ are chosen

Isaiah 41:9–10 (ESV) — “you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off”; 10 fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Romans 8:28–29 (ESV) — “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son”.

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25).

“He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

“God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

“God will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:8-9).

You may live in the sin City of northwest Chicago, but you are chosen, set apart, separated unto God!

III. Our destiny is **LIBERTY**
– From IN SLAVERY to IN CHRIST.

A. God provides **Redemption** in Christ (7a) – God takes sin seriously!

Verse 7a, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses,”

What does “redemption” mean. It’s primary usage in the Bible means, “to buy back from slavery”.

By nature we are enslaved to sin. In Christ you no longer have to be a slave to sin!

B. God provides through **Riches** in Christ (7b).

Verse 7b, “... according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us...”

God’s grace is really His empowerment. Romans 6:3–14 (ESV) — “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

Ezekiel 36:25–27 (ESV) — “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh

and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

C. God reveals this to us through the **Revelation** of Christ (8-10) – Christ is revealed as the ultimate security of our future...

Verse 8-9, “7b...according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth”.

Explanation: God didn't reveal everything to Abraham. He told Him Christ would come through his seed. All nations of the world would be blessed through the seed of Abraham. Yet so much of God's plan in the Old Testament was shrouded in **mystery**. The details remained hidden.

But when the Son of God came to earth, a **quantam leap** in understanding God's plan took place!

The Mystery of History

The mystery of His will is now that not only are the Jews to be saved, but the Gentiles are to be included in God's plan. We are to preach the Gospel to every creature. The destiny of the church is not segregated. We are set free from racism. We are to preach Christ to every creature!

We are set free from this world through Christ! Christ has been set before us! We see Him! We've been given all insight in order to understand His eternal purpose for us!

The Goal of History

The mystery of God's will was not to remain hidden! But he makes “known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (vs. 9-10).

That is God is going to bring everything in the universe under one Head, that is Jesus Christ! In the fullness of time, God revealed what His purpose would be for the planet!

God holds the future in His hands!

We talk about the Aztec prophecies of 2012. Or in years past it was the prophecies of Nostradamus. Take no thought of these things! God from the beginning had a purpose and a plan for the planet. I promise you, the world will not be destroyed by nuclear bombs or wars or as a result of some Aztec prophecy! The world and the universe will be destroyed by Jesus Christ Himself when He unites all things to Himself and puts all His enemies under His feet!

Listen to the Apocalypse of Peter

2 Peter 3:6–10 (ESV) — Speaking of the days of Noah, Peter says, “the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and

a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”

God lavishes all of this on us in His wisdom and understanding. We live like we don't belong here because we can see it! It frees us from this wicked world. And one day we will be completely set free!!

Our destiny is LIBERTY! We will be set free from sin and sorrow. The former things will pass away!

IV. Our destiny is **GUARANTEED**
– From INSECURITY to IN CHRIST.

All three pictures display God's ownership of us.

A. We are **marked** as God's **inheritance** (11)

English Standard Version

Verse 11, (ESV) – “In him we have [been] obtained [as] an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will”.

We are a predestined inheritance. God chose us before the foundation of the earth for Himself and he predestined us to be part of His family. In addition to all of this we are also predestined to be His inheritance or heritage.

He made us an inheritance for the praise of His glory. This reminds me of Isa. 43:7 which states “everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” We are made for God's glory and not our own. We seem to have the problem in understanding that and think we deserve special treatment because we're the best thing since sliced bread. NO! God has made us for His glory, so get over yourself.

B. We are **marked** with God's **seal** (12-13)

Verse 12-13, “...so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit”.

What is Sealing?

This idea of sealing comes from what a King used to do to document hundreds and thousands of years ago. The King would melt wax on a scroll of some sort of document and he would put his signet ring on it to seal it. This is what is being spoken of here. Now there are three reasons for this sealing.

1. This sealing **authenticates**

See with the king if someone had gotten a document with a law they didn't just go through with it unless it was really from the king that's why the seal proved this. Our seal states that God has said that we have eternal life and that comes straight from God. So it is an authentic thing.

2. This sealing **marks one's property**

The sealing of the document shows that that document actually belonged to the king and that it was his property. The sealing of the Spirit shows that we are actually God's property. That we are not children of anyone else except for God.

3. This sealing **protects from tampering or harm**

This seal also protected the document from being tampered with or harmed. If someone tampered with and changed something in the document then the seal would be broken. The same is with us. Once we have been sealed we cannot be tampered with or taken from God. It has been shown what God's intent for our lives is and it cannot be altered.

- a. Sealed through the **Word of Truth** (v. 13a- In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him...)”

Something that we have to understand when we look at the scriptures is that in order to be a Christian you had to hear the word of truth and believe. This word of truth that is being spoken of is the Gospel. The fact that (give the gospel here)..... We must know that Romans 1:16 is true that the gospel is the power unto salvation. This gospel is what saves, the blood of Christ! Not anything that you can do or have done. Nothing but Christ. We must understand that even though we heard and believed it wasn't our work. Jesus makes it clear in John 6:29 that it is the work of God for us to believe the one that was sent. This idea is clear from the context when Paul writes that God chose us before the foundations of the earth. It was the work of God. The way God does this is through hearing His word and the Holy Spirit acting in changing our hearts.

- b. Sealed by the **Holy Spirit** (v. 13b). Ephesians 1:13 (ESV) — “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit”.

God Himself lives inside of you. You have it better than Moses who met with God at the burning bush and at the Tent of Meeting. You have it better than all the high priests of the Old Testament that entered into the Holy of holies. We have God in us. His Spirit has sealed us, and through Him we have power over sin, and assurance, and hunger for the Word of God and the world to come.

C. We are **marked** with God's **down payment** (14)

Verse 14, “who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

The word “guarantee” has the idea of DOWN PAYMENT.

This is essentially a down payment which will assure us of our future in Christ. I believe this story explains it rather well. A wealthy man called his faithful assistant into his office one day and said, “I’ve put your name in my will, and someday you’ll receive \$100,000. Since it may be a while before you get that legacy, I want to make you happy now by paying you the interest on that amount each year. Here is a check for \$1,000 as a starter.” The surprised clerk was doubly grateful. The prospect of the inheritance was certainly good news, but the money he received in advance gave him complete assurance that someday the entire \$100,000 would be his.

The word “guarantee” also has the idea of ENGAGEMENT RING.

Not only does it mean a down payment but in the truest sense this word speaks of an engagement ring. The Holy Spirit is the engagement ring for the believer who upon conversion is engaged to Christ and has become his bride for the future wedding feast. Now if a guy goes to a girl and says hey I love you, she shouldn’t go crazy and make all her future plans. However, if he say hey I love you will you marry me and gives her a diamond that’s a commitment. The same commitment that God has made to Christians by giving us the Holy Spirit. This commitment will one day be redeemed.

Our full destiny will become clear when we stand before God and are judged. Those who are Christians will have the Holy Spirit testifying that they are a possession of God by the seal which we saw earlier. What will be your story when you come before God?

Conclusion: Some of you are struggling because you cannot yet see our full destiny! What we are doing here at Living Hope is not some temporary thing. We are trusting in the promises of God. Where is Living Hope Church going? God has already determined it! Our destiny is ETERNITY, SANCTITY, LIBERTY, and it is all GUARANTEED!

Ephesus was a place of sin and slavery and much insecurity. Be we are not in sin slavery or in this world. We are in Christ! We are rooted in Christ. And our destiny is guaranteed in Him!