



Love Incorruptible
#2 In Christ (Part 2)
Sunday, April 30, 2017
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

We are studying the book of Ephesians, taking it on section by section each week... The series is called "Love Incorruptible" and we got that title from the very last thing that Paul says in this letter, He says: (6:24) "Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with **love incorruptible.**"

Paul says that the church needs to love Jesus with a love that is not even capable of dying. It is not even capable of decaying, or growing cold, and turning into something else. But as we found out last week, Paul spent the first half of this book showing us how that is exactly the way that God loves us, and that is exactly the way that He demonstrated that love for us by sending His only Son to die for us, in the greatest act of love the world will ever know.

And it is amazing, because the second half of Ephesians, chapters 4-6, are so practical... when we get into them, every week is going to feel like you are getting hit with an incredibly healthy dose of practical ways to live... he covers everything from marriage to managing your feelings... he talks about the relationships we have in the marketplace between employers and employees... He talks about Spiritual warfare, and parenting, and being generous... He says more about the church in the book of Ephesians than probably anywhere else in the entire bible.

But the entire first half of the book, chapters 1-3, are all about what Jesus did for you... what Jesus did for the church... and WHO WE ARE IN HIM, not on account of anything that we have done.

Because when we try and put our identity in ourselves and into the things that we accomplish on any given day, we will constantly live this roller coaster life, where we are really high one day, and really low the next.

But a person whose identity is found in Jesus, they can live their lives in confidence knowing that they are justified not by anything that they have done or anything that they may do, or accomplish, but simply by what was **ALREADY DONE FOR THEM.**

And that is what Ephesians is all about. It is Paul, writing this church in Ephesus, telling them who they are. Which can be very easy to forget in our world, that is absolutely filled with clutter, and noise, and things from every direction telling you that **IF YOU DON'T DO THIS, or YOU DON'T DO THAT...**

OR IF YOU "DO" DO THIS...

then you are in trouble... you are messed up... you have no hope...

But the gospel is simply this: There is hope for everyone. And its not a hope like the world has... the kind the says "I SURE HOPE _____ happens" - no... what we have is **AN ASSURANCE.** This **IS** going to happen." - and there is a very big difference between the two.

And Ephesians is an amazing echoing of that truth.

So lets get into it, please open your bibles to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3-14

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 to himself 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 Christ¹⁰ 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 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.**

Lets Pray.

What we just read is one of the most loaded passages of scripture in the entire bible. It is the source of an absolute ton of debates... Calvinism vs. Arminianism... Free will vs. predestination... (which we are not planning on diving too deeply into here)

Christians, at least the nerdy ones, LOVE to debate about these things, which can be healthy... but in all of our “trying to prove one side or the other,” it can be very easy to miss the point in the first place.

See, when Paul wrote this to the church in Ephesus, he was in prison... on house arrest chained to a guard 24 hours a day.

But before being put in Prison, He had spent a LOT of time in Ephesus. It was one of the places that truthfully, Paul’s ministry saw a lot of immediate fruit... obviously the harvest was plentiful there. People really needed Jesus.

Ephesus was known for its HUGE TEMPLE, “the temple of Artemis” which was built to the “goddess” Diana, who in that day was considered to be the greatest, most powerful goddess in the world. This temple was filled with pagan activity, absolutely awful things took place there... prostitutes were sold in this temple in what was considered to be “an act of worship to Artemis”

just awful stuff took place there. There was a whole economy built around the temple of Artemis, and during Paul's time in Ephesus, He took some bold moves to proclaim the gospel in this pagan place, and it had a lasting impact both on some people being converted, AND OTHERS BEING REALLY MAD AT HIM.

You read about it in Acts 19, you read about Artemis, and the way that things were in Ephesus, and the way that Paul would always face things head on rather than hide in the shadows.

And some amazing things were happening through the Holy Spirit working in Paul's life in Ephesus... the bible says that during his time there, people could bring Paul a handkerchief or an apron, and he would just touch it, and they would take that piece of cloth back to their sick friend or relative, and the person would be healed.

At the sight of the many miracles being done, and particularly the way that Paul dealt with some sorcerers and evil spirits... many of the cities residents came out who had previously been a part of magic, and sorcery, and they all burned their little magic books all together, and they started confessing JESUS. It was just an incredibly fruitful time for the apostle Paul.

BUT the idle worship that was taking place there had become incredibly profitable for a LOT of people. Artemis was a business of its own... it was an economy of its own. Tourists visited... locals believed and frequented..

and the bible says (verse 23) that this was the result: "there arose **no little disturbance** concerning the Way."

"The Way" was the name given to this new, growing movement, that would later prove to be literally unstoppable... that we now call the church.

There was a silversmith who made shrines of Artemis and profited heavily from those shrines, and his business was being affected, and HE WAS MAD... so he starts gathering other people with similar businesses, and He rallies this group against the Apostle Paul... He he basically explains, that

not only is their business affected, but also that through the message Paul was teaching, the temple of Artemis would be counted as nothing...

that if they did nothing, it was possible that she would be stripped of her magnificence, and suddenly the whole world would no longer view her in the light that they wanted her to be viewed in... as the "greatest goddess in the whole world."

So these merchants and Artemis worshippers hear this, and they join the revolution... and they all gather into this HUGE theater and start chanting: "**Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!**" and the whole town goes into confusion.

and even then, Paul WANTED to go INTO the theater and start preaching (Acts 19:30) but the disciples stopped him... because he likely would have been killed in there by thousands of angry idol worshippers.

But do you want to know what the bible says that Paul told these guys, making these dumb shrines to this bogus goddess?

He said this (and this is so powerful): "gods made with hands are not gods at all." (Acts 19:26)

Now hear this... this is really important...

it wasn't long after that, that Paul meets with the elders of the church in Ephesus, and he basically says (Acts 20:22) that He is compelled by the Spirit to move on to Jerusalem... and He gave them, through the Holy Spirit, the care for this new church in Ephesus.

Those were the footprints that they had to follow... the guy who looked the idol makers in the face and said "gods made with hands are not gods at all." (People still sometimes tell me that I HAVE BIG SHOES TO FILL, taking over for Pastor Chilly) - this group of elders had to follow Paul... who said things like THAT to the people who held all the authority. and then this is what He said to the elders:

“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29)

So they are already in a town who thinks the greatest, most powerful goddess on the planet is this Artemis chick who they build shrines too and thinks controls everything, and beyond that, they are going to have wolves come even among the church, and they are NOT GOING TO HOLD BACK.

and to the church in THAT CITY, with THAT DEEP of a misunderstanding of what God actually is, and what power actually looks like... Paul writes the passage that we read at the beginning.

Paul didn't write these words to give us something to argue about... He wrote them to remind this young church in the middle of this pagan town, that their hope is found in Jesus.

That Artemis will fall, and Jesus has risen, and THEY HAVE A DESTINY, and a purpose to change that city for Jesus and show them something better.

Now, this is interesting... The whole passage we read at the beginning, Ephesians 1:3-14... where we in English break it up into several sentences, in the original Greek language, this entire thing is actually written as ONE LONG SENTENCE.

It is actually the longest (Greek) Sentence in the entire New Testament, and it is all about how extravagantly God loves you and I. That He thought about us before we even existed...

the longest sentence we get in the whole thing is about HOW MUCH GOD LOVES US!!!!

So lets look at it a little at a time...

Verse 4 and 5:

“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 to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will”

First of all, just a reminder of what we learned last week... the phrase “In Christ” and similar words... phrasing that says “WE ONLY HAVE WHAT WE HAVE, BECAUSE OF JESUS” - that “in Him” phrasing shows up in the book of Ephesians 43 times!

So if it feels like I am getting repetitive with this “we are only who we are because of what Jesus did, stuff... you can blame the Apostle Paul for that one!

That is a lot of times, in those six short chapters... it is obvious that the writer is trying to tell us something.

but Please don't forget that... because the gospel IS as simple as this... IT IS IN CHRIST.

We are ONLY saved because of WHAT HE DID... that is it. and IN HIM... meaning, Because of what He did and because He met us in the broken places of our hearts and did something wonderful in us... now, WE HAVE ACCESS TO EVERYTHING THAT HE IS. If we are IN CHRIST. but this is the line that people have a lot of trouble with... well, it is one of the lines:

he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ.

and what people like to argue about this, and we won't get terribly deep into it because the truth is, we can debate in circles our whole lives and there are some things that we won't know for sure until we get to heaven... but what some people think this is saying, is that because God chose us from the beginning of time to be His sons and daughters... that we don't have the free will to decide whether we want that or not... that only the ones that God chooses to save will be saved, AND HE DOESN'T CHOSE EVERYONE.

Now, we don't believe that... we believe that ANYONE who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved... we believe that God wishes that no one

perish (1 Tim. 2:4), and we believe that He sent His only son that WHOEVER believes in Him receives eternal life. (John 3:16)

But we DO BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS A PLAN. We believe that He is all knowing, all powerful, and CAN DO ANYTHING THAT HE WANTS. But the pattern throughout the scriptures seems to be one in which people are empowered to make decisions... in two places in Matthew (16, 18) Jesus GIVES US the keys to the kingdom... In 2 Peter 2:9 it says that God is patient toward us, SO THAT everyone can reach that point of repentance. Even all the way back to the garden there was a *choice*.

And I just want to just give us a simple way to look at this. Think about the word “destined” or perhaps say it this way: “destiny.”

If you read chapter 2 of Ephesians, it says that we were created for good works, and God prepared that for you beforehand... God has a plan for your life... a destiny... and it has always been the plan for your life...

one of the most famous passages in the Old Testament, in Jeremiah 29:11 when God tells Israel, WHILE THEY ARE IN EXILE IN BABYLON... a place that they did not want to be... He tells them:

I know the plans that I have for you! and they are good plans. They are plans for a future and for a hope.

well, Paul is writing a church who is going through some crazy times, they have wolves in their midst, they constantly seem to living in the shadows of one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world just towering over Ephesus... that awful temple...

and Paul is writing them saying “guys, don’t you get it... Those guys build statues... Do you remember what I told you? gods made by man are not gods at all!!!” YOUR GOD KNEW YOU BEFORE YOU WERE EVEN IN YOUR MOTHERS WOMB. He called you to greatness. HE CALLED YOU BY NAME... and he loved you so much, that He sent His only son to die for you!!!

He is just going over and over speaking purpose into their lives. YOU ARE CALLED!!! YOU ARE DESTINED!!! YOU ARE LOVED!!!

If you read Ephesians 1 and 2 closely, you notice something very crucial.

Ephesians 2 shows us what Salvation looks like through Jesus' blood... BECAUSE OF THE SINS OF MAN. It says "well you were dead in your trespasses, you used to be of the same spirit that the sons of disobedience has... but because God sent His son, Jesus, to stand in your place... now, IF YOU JUST BELIEVE THAT, and have FAITH IN THAT... then you will be saved... completely by grace, through faith, and on account of NOTHING THAT YOU HAVE DONE... and when that happens, suddenly, your destiny changes...

suddenly, you get this amazing destiny that God has always had for you. Because you were always His workmanship.

That is chapter 2... but chapter 1 shows us God, The Father's role, in our salvation. Because He sent His son. But before He ever did that, He chose us to be His children... the only problem with that, was we needed to be redeemed... So He sent Jesus.

Now, look at what He says He predestined us for:

adoption.

When you are adopted, you are not born into the family... BUT YOU ARE PART OF THE FAMILY.

and hopefully this gives you some clarity... I don't know if any of you have ever gone through the process of adoption... but especially in our society, the system is pretty broken and way more complicated than it should be... but at any rate, in order for someone to adopt a child, a lot of steps have to be taken. It is not something that happens overnight, it takes planning... it takes "pre-determining" THIS IS WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO... it takes creating space in your life for a child, and it takes creating space IN YOUR HEART to LOVE THIS CHILD like you would had you birthed Him yourself.

Adoption is not a small thing, that is why they don't let ANYONE just jump into it.

It is a process, and God went through that process, FOR YOU.

Okay, lets jump to verse 7-10... it says:

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

Redemption literally means “to buy *out* of slavery.”

It means that In Christ, we are set free, not made captive to new laws and bondages and a life that we will never be able to live up to... We are set free of the guilt and the shame that comes with each and every time we fall short... now, because of His incredible grace, he lavishes His love upon us in ways that we will never deserve...

Before Christ... We were slaves to our sin. We didn't have any way out... we were bound to them. They were US... But God bought us out of that.

But I want you to see this... Because something significant happens here...

He makes known the mystery of His will.

Something that was once lost to everyone... was now available to everyone... and its not for some, elect few... the plan... the hope... the big dream... IS TO UNITE ALL THINGS IN HIM.

I love what Peter says, I quoted it earlier... Peter says that God is so patient with mankind, that He is taking His time coming for us because He wants everyone to find Him. He doesn't want people to be lost...

He doesn't want people to hurt each other.
He doesn't want people to live their lives for themselves...

He doesn't want people to live thinking that they DO ENOUGH, and that is ENOUGH.

He wants to world to call on the name of Jesus. So that all things can be united in Christ.

He bought us out of slavery TO SET US FREE!!!

Last section... quickly...

verse 11-14:

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. **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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.**

In Him... we have it all... we get it all. We get the inheritance... we get the whole thing. And catch this... WHEN YOU HEARD THE WORD... AND WHEN YOU BELIEVED IN HIM... you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit... who says "they are in." They called on the name of the Lord... They have something coming.

Its like when Jesus says "blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" - Blessed are the ones who stop believing in themselves, and put all of their hope and trust in Jesus Christ... because the Kingdom of Heaven and all of its promises BELONG TO THEM.

Here is the reality... people can choose Jesus... or they can reject Jesus... but most people, they just don't want to choose him... because they like their lives... they like control... they like making their own decisions based

on what makes them feel the best... and truthfully... most people LIKE TO THINK that they are good enough to get to God without needing a “savior.”

to a lot of people, you try and explain that, and they will say “okay... but what do I need saving, FROM?” “Am I dying?” “Is there something wrong with me?” because the message of grace is offensive. It says to people who don’t even know that they are broken... HEY!!! You are broken!

And I do believe that God reveals Himself to many different people in many different ways... and sometimes it leads to repentance and other times it doesn’t... But God Loves all of His children. And He wants them all to receive the inheritance. And we don’t know why some people accept it and others reject it... we don’t know why it seems like God makes himself more evident to some than He does to others... why some hearts are open while other hearts are hard...

the only thing that we know is that we can’t make it on our own. We can’t do enough good on our own... and yet, in God’s infinite mercy and grace, WE STILL HAVE HOPE.

I want to share with you a story that Pastor Brad tells, and it resonates with me so much.

Pastor Brad was visiting a prison, and they were doing a Q&A session with him... it was *meant* to be that at least, but one particular prisoner got up, and, he didn’t really ask a question, he more made a statement... and maybe it was one of those things where he was asking “am I right to think this?” but this is what He said to Pastor Brad...

He said to him:

“I know that day is coming, the day when I will stand face to face with my Lord... and I’ll be a man, and I will take whatever judgment He passes on me...”

and then the man said this, He said:

“I am just hoping, that on that day...

On the day that I die and I face my Lord... and He weighs all of the good things that I have done against the bad ones... that the good ones outweigh the bad..."

and I don't know if this was what he was thinking, but I know that if that were me in there, being punished SO SEVERELY for the BAD THINGS that I have done... how easy it could be to think along these lines "The bad things that I did landed me here... but I have done so many good things since I got here... and I DID SO MANY GOOD THINGS BEFORE I DID THAT BAD THING..."

See when you reach that rock bottom state in life, a place like that, but you reach it WITHOUT JESUS... you begin to think that you can make up for all the wrong that you have done, by working the rest of your life for good... and its a noble idea, and it should be encouraged...

we should do good with our lives...

but that thinking is a travesty.

And this is how my pastor responded to the man... and it hit so close to home for me... First of all, He said that the man's statement just crushed him... it broke him, he wanted to break down and cry right there in the prison...

and He looked at that man and He said:

"Sir... I can't speak for you... but I know this, IF my life was weighed on a scale of all the good that I have done, against all the bad, and I was judged on that... I don't think that those scales would tip in my favor..."

and that is a pastor speaking... that is a man who has mentored my wife and I, and trained us, and poured into us and been patient with us, and is someone that I would trust just about anything with.

to me, if I was to think of someone who I could say, they are good!!! He would be on that list...

but from the perspective of the person who knows him better than anyone, himself... He knows... somethings just not there.

He helps people for a living... He pastors people, he meets with people, he counsils people and serves people... but at the end of the day He goes home knowing that if weren't for what JESUS did for Him, He would be absolutely nothing.

Yes, He does good... but the good won't outweigh the bad!

Think about that... someone who is so good, to so many...

The book of Leviticus, chapter 16 tells us about Yom Kippur... the day of atonement, where the people bring two goats to the high priest as the sin offering and scape goat on behalf of their sins... and these two goats are sacrificed, one killed and one sent away, as the sin offering for the entire town for the entire year...

and one thing that is so fascinating about that, is if you read it carefully, you notice that everything that the priest put on that day was linen... (v.4) He puts on a holy linen coat, He shall have a linen undergarment on His body, he is to tie a linen sash around his waist, and even wear a linen turban... because these are the Holy garments...

The priest always wore linen... but the way it is described for Yom Kippur is different... he is wearing different linen...

and we could do a whole teaching... maybe even a series on all of the reasons WHY the priest wore linen... its a whole study in and of itself... but just think about linen in today's context and line it up with the way that Yom Kippur is a foreshadowing image of the gospel:

Linen is one of the best options for clothing, when you want to avoid sweating.

See, the Priest is up there sacrificing an animal... doing a laborious job that takes energy... I know for me, in those rare instances when I partake in

hard labor, when I leave a situation drenched in sweat knowing that I worked for something, I feel good... I feel accomplished...

I can't speak from experience but from what I hear, there is something about finishing a marathon... our pastor in Los Angeles completed 7 of them in 7 straight days on 7 continents... He is a beast.... and when you saw him, and his sweat, and the toll that it took on his body it was obvious that *in His strength* He had accomplished something that not many others have done...

and there is nothing wrong with that, except when it comes to salvation. Accept when it comes to the forgiveness of sins.

Think about it... the priest, by wearing clothes that prevent that... His sweat is not a part of the process... It is NOT by WHAT the priest is doing, that the sins of the entire nation are forgiven for the entire year... its an act of a Holy God showing unbelievable mercy to incredibly sinful people who deserve something horrible and are getting something great...

AND EVERYTHING THAT COULD BE DONE TO MAKE THAT CLEAR... that it is ONLY by the grace of God... God ensured those steps were taken, all the way back to Leviticus.

but we like to convince ourselves that when it comes to this "forgiveness" thing, God and us are in on it together...

No... the PRIEST IS NOT THE REASON that the sin goes away... the PASTOR, who brings a hopeful message and yet is a human just like you... IS NOT THE REASON THAT THE SIN GOES AWAY.

GOD chose us, SO THAT we could choose Him.

we later read in the New Testament... that those goats could never actually wash away our sins (Hebrews 10:4)... instead, they were just an image POINTING AHEAD to what Jesus was going to accomplish... AND POINTING BEFORE to when God called us by name, formed us before we were ever formed, and gave us a destiny... a purpose, a hope and a future.

I know for me, knowing my life, and all that I have done... for me to be able to say that at the core of who I am is someone who is *deserving* of eternity with Jesus... I would have to be walking through life with my eyes closed.

I am not!

And if what that man in prison was describing were true, and I have to stand alone on that day before God, then those scales are not going to tip in my favor...

but thank God that we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.. (Hebrew 4:15) and He promises that if we come to him broken, then when that day finally comes, He will stand with us on that scale, and all the broken pieces will be made whole, because His good will always outweigh any amount of bad that you or I can do... and that is what it means to be justified in Christ... it is not just that we get a brand new start... where we can mess it all up again... no... we also inherit everything that He already IS!

Because JESUS DIED FOR WHAT WE DID... GOD NOW TREATS US AS IF WE LIVED THE WAY THAT JESUS ACTUALLY LIVED.

God the Father looks down on us, and He see's children whom He loves. People who have a hope unlike any hope that the world has ever hoped for... because for the world, hope is "I hope that something good will happen to me"

But Hope in Christ says "SOMETHING GOOD ALREADY HAPPENED TO ME... and now I get to live it for someone else until the day that I die, and I meet Jesus face to face..."

and He will stand on that scale with me... and it will tip the right way, because of HOW GOOD HE IS. and I think thats the point... I think the whole essence of Chapter 1 can be summarized with that bold statement Paul made in Acts 19... "gods made by human hands are not gods at all" - even the sacrifices of goats wasn't actually enough to do anything for anyone... it was just an image.... ONLY GOD could actually do that... and He did!

Ephesians one is a HOPE that you can take to the bank. its a sure thing.
and it changes everything.