

# INTO THE MYSTERY

A STUDY IN EPHESIANS

Ephesians 1  
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UNITED WITH CHRIST

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## Parable: ‘What the heck is water?’.

Paul is like the older fish... who wants to awaken us to the great MYSTERY of life UNITED WITH CHRIST - and how it changes everything about us.

Ephesians is the most densely packed NT book with this phrase “IN CHRIST”

- ❖ 1:3-14 alone— 11X’s
- ❖ Paul’s entire book is framed around this central idea.
- ❖ 1-3 it’s all about who we are IN CHRIST. 4-6 is about WHAT WE DO through Christ.
- ❖ the hinge point... the heart beat... the white-hot core: 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

*Union with Christ touches on the highest and most profound truths of the gospel and at the same time reaches down into the depths of the human heart to fill us with more joy and hope, more comfort and strength than anything else ever could.*

--Rankin Wilbourne, Union with Christ

Paul begins with this profound truth in vs 3.

**READ 1:3** All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

FOCUS: What does it mean that you are UNITED WITH CHRIST? And What blessings does Paul want to awaken us to?

### **FIRST BLESSING: We are RE-UNITED to God’s Original Love:**

**vs 4** Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

Before you ever said or did anything... before the world... before time... before Original SIN ... God loved you.

Your identity is grounded first and foremost in God’s love for you. It is the reason you exist. It is the ground of your being. It is the deepest truth about who you are.

*“Whether we realize it or not, our being is grounded in God’s love. The generative love of God was our origin. The embracing love of God sustains our existence. The inextinguishable love of God is the only hope for our fulfillment. Love is our identity and our calling, for we are children of love.” -- David Benner, The Gift of Being Yourself*

Paul states— **Eph 1:5** “In love 5 [God] predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.”

God’s ORIGINAL LOVE— is COMPLETELY- TOTALLY based on God’s choice... his great joy... and his power.

That’s what Paul means by “predestined...”

Predestination is the way Paul describes God's unwavering determination to not allow anything in you to keep him from loving you.

Paul calls this the GLORIOUS GRACE of God's love for you!

A love that cannot be threatened by any sin in your life— there is no hidden fault, no failing, or weakness in thought, word or deed that can diminish God's love for you.

And this brings us to the problem of ORIGINAL SIN.

### **THE BLESSING OF REDEMPTION: FREEDOM FROM OUR ORIGINAL SIN.**

**Vs 7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.

When we are united with Jesus— we are set free from what theologians call Original Sin.

Original sin refers to the universal-fundamental defect in: 1) human nature and 2) all of creation— caused by the Fall. In Genesis 3 we see how sin entered the world through two people.

Original Sin is human nature divorced from God's Original-gracious love.

Which leaves us forever trying to prove WE are worth loving and requiring OTHERS to prove to us they are worth loving.

As much as we hate to admit it— without God's love at the center of our life  
People must prove, perform and constantly earn our love

Without Jesus— conditional love is the best humans can do.

### **THE BLESSING OF BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**vs 13** When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.

The presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in our life marks us as true followers of Jesus.

Through the Spirit we are begin to access to the heavenly realms and the blessings Jesus has given us... In vs17 Paul explains that through the Spirit we are given:

- ❖ Wisdom and revelation- the ability to see all things through God's perspective.
- ❖ The ability to experience a growing intimacy with God... not static...
- ❖ And in vs 19— access to God's incomparably great power...

Later in Chapter 3 Paul comes back to the need for this power: "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

What does it mean for your identity to be rooted in this kind of love?

What does it mean that sin is not the deepest truth of who you are... God's love is.

How does this free you to love others right where they are?