

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 19, Introduction to Ephesians, Part 2

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This is Dr. Dan Darko and his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 19, Introduction to Ephesians, Part 2.

Welcome back to the biblical studies lecture series on prison epistles. We have been going through Ephesians, and in fact, in the previous lecture, we did look at some key things about this letter's introduction.

I drew your attention to a few significant things among them or perhaps some of the main elements, which are the questions of authorship. Who wrote Ephesians? And I argued and drew your attention to the fact that there is still contention in scholarship about who wrote Ephesians. But the argument leans in favor of Pauline authorship.

So, most of us in Pauline scholarship today, at least in their most recent commentaries, all seem to argue for Pauline authorship of Ephesians. I must qualify that statement a little bit because if you pick up a commentary that is written by a non-evangelical, they tend to ignore even the evidence of many scholars supporting Pauline scholarship. And you may come across statements like most scholars think Pauline wrote Ephesians.

That is a gross exaggeration. It's no longer the case in the academy of Pauline scholarship. So let's look at this letter as we continue the discussion, as if it were written by Paul.

On the question of whether it is written to Ephesus or elsewhere, I pointed out some manuscripts that are old and perhaps some of our oldest manuscripts, not including the phrase in Ephesus or an Ephesus in the Greek text. But still, as we examine the evidence, the evidence seems to point to the fact that Ephesus was always part, or most probably was part of the original document. Some of the early church fathers and others who worked with this text earlier referred to the text as such.

If one still disputes where the letter is written to or addressed to, one thing is certain. All the hypotheses as to where the letter was written point to one small geographical area in modern-day Turkey. In the first century world, that place was called Western Asia Minor.

And so the issue is not actually an issue. We are recording these lectures in New England. If we say a letter is written to New England, or a letter is written to Boston,

and perhaps the letter spreads in different parts of New England, it still is in the wider region, addressing fairly general issues that are prevalent in the area.

So, I concluded in that discussion that we treat Ephesians in this class as written by Paul and written or addressed to the churches in Ephesus and its vicinity so that those in the wider metropolis of Ephesus would have access to this letter, read it, and perhaps that accounts for the general tone of this letter. If you remember our last lecture very well, I started pointing out some background issues in this letter. And perhaps, depending upon where you are following this lecture series online, you are probably quite surprised or perhaps wonder why all this religious stuff and all this magical stuff.

But if you are perhaps following this from Africa, Asia, or Latin America, you say, I always thought Paul should know this. Or I always thought that was what they were experiencing. Yes, that is the case.

It so happened that it was a world where religion was all over the place. In fact, pagan religious activities were integrated into the culture. There was no such distinction between culture and religion.

Religion and culture were intertwined. And so that is the world in which the early Christians were functioning in Western Asia Minor. I also referred to magic and astrology that were prevalent at the time and started showing you in the book of Acts how some of these things were actually surfacing in Luke's account of early Christianity in Ephesus.

Just to give you a window of what was going on in Western Asia Minor and some of the issues that were coming up in the letter of Ephesians and how this background is supposed to help us to be able to grasp what it is that Paul is trying to tell this church. Let's recap from the last, very, very last series of verses I read from the book of Acts to remind you about how Luke characterizes early Christianity in Ephesus. If you would remember, I drew your attention to the fact that Paul, coming to Ephesus, asked if they had received the Holy Spirit.

When questions were asked about that, and there was a suppression of uncertainty, Paul later baptized some people, they prayed for them, and there was an outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit. In early Judaism and with the Jewish Christians, it was important for them to see the power of the Holy Spirit at work, as well as among Gentiles, to authenticate the fact that God's work is indeed here, also among the Gentiles. A people group otherwise characterized as unclean, unworthy, and, in terms of interaction, minimal interaction if you are a very conservative Jew.

They experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the other things they experienced was that Paul performed miracles, or I should say God performed miracles. That's the language of Luke.

God performed extraordinary miracles through Paul. I like this story, especially my African students. We try to make a lot of fun about this when we talk about the sons of Sceva.

The sons of Sceva taught that the name of Jesus is a magical name. So they were going to pick this name, and they were going to call in the name of Jesus and use that to exorcise. But think about that first as you think about exorcism because we normally overlook that.

These are children of a Jewish high priest in Ephesus. What was the last time you saw in Judaism that exorcism was okay? Well, these guys had already bought into Gentile habits, and they thought, well, we are just going to go with this, and if this name Jesus that Paul is calling is causing great wonders to happen in town, we are going to use that name. It's a strong, magical word.

You remember I reminded you about the six magical words in Ephesus called Ephesia Grammata. They probably thought we had another powerful magical word. They went in, they said in the name of the Jesus that Paul and others talk about, demons came out, and in fact, that was a bad scene.

The demoniac jumped on them, beat them up, and we were told that they were running back naked. That is not a very good movie to think about. So that was all playing out in Ephesus.

Exorcism, Jewish high priest children involved in exorcism, demoniacs actually possessed by demons jumping on people and causing all kinds of problems. I also refresh your mind in the last part of the reading about chapter 19 of Acts, where a number of those who practice magic brought their books after they became believers to the apostles to bend them, and I show you in that text how they said the price of these magical books were very, very high. It also underscores the fact that there was magic in Ephesus.

Let's just continue a little bit and then begin to move on slowly into the text. Let me show you something more in the book of Acts that helps you connect with the background information I gave you in the previous lecture. So we know all these things, and when we come to the book of Acts, we see again Acts 19 from verse 23.

About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little

business to the craftsman. He gathered together with the workmen in similar trades and said, Man, you know that from this business, we have our wealth.

And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia, Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing and that she may even be disposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship. When they heard this from verse 28, they were enraged and were crying out, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.

So, the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed together into the theater. Do you remember I showed you the theater where 25,000 people were sitting? They rushed to the theater, dragging with them Gaius, Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. But when Paul wished to go in and among the crowd, the disciples would not let him.

But when they recognized that he was a Jew. For about two hours, they all cried out with one voice: Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians. Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians.

You remember I told you about the influence of the mother goddess of Ephesus, Artemis. This is the contest that the early Christians were going to deal with. Luke recorded an account that happened perhaps between six and seven years before Ephesians would be written.

And I mentioned to you that we are dealing with about 250 to 300,000 people in the city. So, think about maybe 2,000 Christians in town and other Christians in the other vicinity. The constant pressure of these thousands of people and all these influences.

So, what Paul met was the beginning, but the pressure was going to be greater as the numbers grew. That is the general background of early Christianity in Ephesus. Now, let me just move forward quickly to make an observation before we move on.

The relationship between Ephesians and Colossians. When we were looking at Colossians, I drew your attention to this similar material. And it's important that I refresh your memory before we go into this text because of what scholars make out of this.

The two are often treated together for a variety of reasons. Their style is similar to their theology, their linguistics, their worldview. They talk about spiritual powers.

In terms of style, they have longer sentences, which is what we call genitive case in Greek. They like to use a lot of genitive tenses. In the others, otherwise referred to as redundancies, we find those featured in these letters.

Their theological framework is very similar to a large degree. When we were looking at Colossians, I even drew your attention to the many words that these two books share in common. They have similar content material.

They address household codes. They talk about principalities and powers. They talk about the centeredness of Christ in these communities, with the assertion that Colossians is interested in forthright, dealing with false teaching in the church.

Ephesians is general in tone in that regard. If you have time, I will urge you to take some time to look at these passages. I would have for you.

Just compare them if you can pause your study and look at this. Just take your time to read Ephesians 1 from verses 1 to 2 and compare to Colossians 1:1 to 2. Read Ephesians 1, verses 3 to 18, and compare to Colossians 1:3 to 11. Ephesians 3:1 to 13.

You compare Colossians 1:24 to chapter 2, verse 5. Compare some of the material in 4:17 to 6:9 to especially when it comes to the household code to Colossians chapter 3, verse 5 to chapter 4, verse 1. And then, when you begin to read about prayer and others, look at Ephesians chapter 6, verse 18 to 20, and compare to how those prayer expressions are put together in Colossians 4:2 to 4. Ephesians 2, verses 21 to 22, the final greetings part of it compared to what is going on towards the end of Colossians. You begin to realize a lot of similarities, literally, similarities even with vocabulary. But I also reminded you, if you recall from the discussion on Colossians, it's been a while now that the two disagree in order 40%.

And the very agreement should not be confused with similar usage of words or the content. The same words are used in many cases, but the same words are used pretty differently. Similarities may actually be accounted for by the fact that the two letters are either dependent on each other or one person wrote them all.

And I would rather go for the case in which one person wrote both letters. Having said that, this one person will be Paul. So, let's move on to the occasion of Ephesians.

What events or what was behind the writing of Ephesians? Maybe you'll find that helpful. It is important for us to look at occasions because we cannot just pick this letter and presume that nothing happened and out of nowhere some letter just shows up in town and some people are working on it, lest we spend so much time wondering who is even behind this letter and who is this strange figure behind the letter that we don't even know and the person will not even tell us who he or she is.

The first thing about the occasion of the letter is that it was actually written by Paul from Roman jail to give new believers who have converted from pagan religions.

They were dabbling in astrology. They were dabbling in all kinds of pagan activities in town and had been converted to Christianity. This letter was written to speak specifically to them and make sure that their faith is grounded in the gospel.

It is also directed to some Jews even though the Jewish community, as we observe from the sources available to us, will form a minority in the church, but there were, in any case, some Jewish minorities in the church who may have their own issues. In fact, in Luke's account, I showed you that the sons of Sceva are no ordinary people. They were sons of Jewish high priests.

That is to say that some of the Jews in town were even dabbling into pagan activities. Evidence from the Greek magical papyri, a document or a compilation of ancient magical tests that some of us have copies and access to, show that some of the Jews in the diaspora were beginning to dab into some of these pagan magical activities. Paul writes this letter both to the Gentiles who come from all these pagan backgrounds and the Jews who were other Jews who are actually stuck with traditional Jewish ways and would not embrace the totality of Christianity or who are perhaps involved in some degree of syncretism to ground their faith firmly and strongly in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Try to remind them about what Jesus has come to do and how if you have Jesus and your life is in Christ, and your life is under the mastery, in other words, the lordship of Christ, then that is all you need. You needed not to fear, or you needed not to seek external sources for protection, guidance, or blessings of any sort. Paul is writing to make sure that they get this central element of the gospel intact.

The letter was also written to promote Christian identity, unity, and ethos in the churches. Paul is keen to point out that the church is not a church in a village of one particular ethnic group. The church is in a city that bear resemblance to some of the cities we have today.

I told you there were Jews there. There were Gentiles of many sorts. It's a major commercial city.

In fact, in the book of Acts, we were told that Apollos came from Alexandria to Ephesus. So, we have people who are coming from North Africa to Ephesus. We are in a Roman Empire, and the Romans are involved in all kinds of activities, government, and all kinds of activities in the ancient world.

So, you may have Romans there. I don't know if I mentioned this earlier on in our studies. The Romans did not like the Greeks a whole lot, and the Jews called everybody Gentiles.

The Greeks are so proud to call everybody barbarian and then think about a church that has all these people in the church. Paul wanted to make sure that they understood the true essence of Christian identity. Identity in which when we come to Christ, we do not pretend as though we don't have any ethnic origin.

We do not pretend as though we are of one race. Though we come from different ethnic backgrounds and racial diversity, we can still see ourselves as members of the family of God in the household where God himself is the father, and each one of us is a brother and sister. I have often said that if you want to understand what Paul is trying to promote in Ephesus, think about a family where the husband is black, the wife is white, and there are mixed-race children in that house.

They are still a family. When you see them in the marketplace in New York City in the United States, you may perhaps think they are these wonderful friends. One is black, one is white, and they probably have some Spanish friends.

Think about that. Paul's characterization of Christian identity is for the church to see itself as members of the family of God with all this diversity. They do not neglect or pretend they don't exist.

I mean, I am one of those who is arguing that the whole colorblind concept that is being promoted in some of our Western world is a joke. People should accept their race for who they are and pretend not to actually make it appear as if when other people see a black person, they will not see the person as black, or when other people see a white person, they will not see a white person. Paul would rather set a higher model for us to look at in terms of how Christian identity should look.

It is in that framework that he challenges the church, stating that identity comes with norms and internal group dynamics that strengthen unity in the church. He goes on to highlight what qualities and spiritual resources are needed, specifically the power of the Holy Spirit and personal responsibility, to make unity a reality in the community of faith. He writes also to call Christians to live to the high calling.

In fact, it is in Ephesians that he makes a profound statement in chapter 4, to live worthy of the calling. Elsewhere, like Philippians, he would say you live worthy of the gospel. In Ephesians, he would say you have to live worthy of the calling, not just the calling for which you have been called.

He would emphasize the fact that the community are people who are called to a privileged family setting, and to be in that privileged family setting, you come to

benefit from a great sense of honor. Yes, it is also incumbent on you to make sure you do your part to keep that honor intact so that your lifestyle, your attitude, your social interaction, and the way you relate with people in the community doesn't end up bringing shame and embarrassment to the household of faith. Paul, thinking about these three key things as I will try to put them, writes the letter to Ephesians.

Later, I will clearly spell out what I thought was the best, perhaps the well-articulated purpose statement for this letter. But before I do that, let me show you some key themes in this letter to get your mind going. You know, sometimes I just want to get you to start thinking, thinking, thinking before we go into this.

So, let's look at some of these key themes. As we go into this letter, if you are from the Western world, if you are following us in the United States or in Australia or in England, please be aware that though we do not live in a world where spiritual powers and all that and the mention of spiritual activities is part of our world, that is not a reason why we should put that away because that was the reality of Paul's world and the early Christians' world in Ephesians. He writes in this letter highlighting the theme that Christ is supreme over all creation, especially over the principalities and powers.

In other words, demonic powers could prevail in their influence and their power, but their power comes no near to the power of God. So, for those who are in Christ, there is no need to fear all the influences of these powers. And Christians don't have to live as if there are some demons trying to crush them every day and live in that sense of fear.

That is actually non-Christian life. The Christian knows what Christ has done, Paul would argue, in Ephesians. And they understand what Christ has conquered.

And they understand the victory that God has won in Christ. That theme is going to go, especially in the first three chapters of this letter, to show the early Christians that, yes, Christ is supreme over all creation. The second theme we will see in the discussion of Ephesians is that believers are called to participate with Christ in his death, in his resurrection, and in his fullness.

Third, we will see an emphasis on the church as the body of Christ. And that body will have many parts. A few moments ago, I was talking about ethnic composition and how people can still belong to one family of God.

Paul will highlight that the body of Christ is a united body. And he will use the body metaphor to show how different parts and different differences, be it ethnic, religious background, racial, or whatever, still contribute to making the body what it is. A point which he illustrates well in 1 Corinthians 12.

When he actually talks about spiritual gifts, he asks questions like, what if the hand ceases to be the hand? When I try to stretch Paul's point there, I like to say this. What if your fingernails cease not to function? Oh, in some cases, I think the pain on the wall will suffer. When some people are working, their backs are aching, and their fingernails refuse to function, they will go behind the wall and scratch their back against the wall.

Now, when you see the pain on your walls, that should remind you about the importance of your fingernails. Paul's point is that everybody is significant. No matter how we may perceive, we all form part of the body of Christ.

A powerful metaphor that he will unpack in this letter. And the last theme I'd like to draw your attention to is that Christians belong to the family of God. And this family of God constitutes the community of faith.

But towards the end of the letter, he's also going to challenge them to make Christ the Lord of their micro households. If time permits, in the course of our discussion on Ephesians, I'll be able to share with you a chapter that I contributed to a book fairly recently on this very topic.

The household of man and the household of God. In Ephesians. And how Paul actually shows this macro household of God.

And how the macro household should function under the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. And just towards the end of the conversation, he narrows down to say, I want this to happen in your home. This is how husbands and wives have to relate to each other.

This is how parents and children have to relate to each other. This is how masters and slaves have to relate to each other. If you are doing so, then the dynamics of the relationship in the macro household will have a direct impact on what is going on in the micro household.

And take it or not, actually, the micro households are the places where the churches meet. So, it begins to make all the more sense that he makes this picture so that whenever you come to meet, you see yourself as a family. But whenever you dismiss and you are going to your private homes, see Jesus as the Lord of your household.

This is a community that most households will have their own God. The God may be some agricultural God that helps them to do well in the agriculture enterprise. Some may contact some God that is helping them in the business arena.

If you are a wine drinker and you enjoy your wine and all that, you probably want to get some mini shrine of Demeter, the God of wine, and say, you know what, I'm just

trying to pour libation and celebrate and use that as part of the agenda to drink some more wine. I mean, it was very common to have a deity that is also the deity that presides over people's homes. Paul says that for Christians, Jesus should be the Lord over their homes.

And I'll show you that as we go on in this discussion on Ephesians. Wow, a lot of background material. Why have we been spending all this time? We will go on and look at the text very soon.

But let's look at Clint Arnold's final part of the discussion on introduction. How Clint Arnold carefully spells out the purpose of Ephesians. It is a commentary that was published, I think, a year or two ago.

He does well at picking scholarly discussions, synthesizing them, bringing them into his own research, and carefully putting into one long sentence the purpose of Ephesians as this. Paul wrote this letter to a large network of local churches in Ephesus and the surrounding cities to affirm their new identity in Christ as a means of strengthening them in their ongoing struggle with the powers of darkness, to promote greater unity between Jews and Gentiles within and among the churches of the area, and to stimulate an ever-increasing transformation of their lifestyle into greater conformity to the purity and holiness that God has called them to display. Keep this in your mind or remember these words, and then we'll go on straight to start looking at the text.

So, I ask you towards the end of the last lecture to read Ephesians, the whole of Ephesians at the go. I hope you did that homework. If you didn't, this is the time for us to pull your Bible and start with me.

Let us just start looking at the first few verses of this letter. Verses one and two will read like this. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is, in many ways, standard Pauline greetings, but it's important also to refresh your mind because Paul never ceases to use some of these greetings. Here, unlike what we find in other letters like Philemon where he introduced himself as a prisoner, like other Paul's letters, he says, I am Paul the apostle.

The word apostle can carry the sense of a messenger. The Greek word *apostolos* translates as someone who is sent. It can carry the sense of somebody who is sent with a mission or an office of an apostle.

Scholars tend to think that this concept could be intertwined in the way Paul uses the language. When he uses them, he's cleverly trying to show that he's a messenger, yet

he's a messenger of a higher authority, and so people have to listen to him. If you want to observe where he changes this kind of title in his greetings, he only changes them when he's dealing with very, very personal issues like when all personal communities that he has personal relationships with.

So, when he writes to the Macedonian churches, the Thessalonian correspondents or Philippians or Philemon, which are churches that he worked and he was very close to, or Philemon, whom he wants to establish they have a very close relationship with, he drops that and he says, we normally say, oh, Paul, the prisoner, and he will not use the word apostle. So, he carries the sense of, I am the one who is sent, but I am also the one who is sent with a high degree of authority. So, the power and the messenger thing is in there.

Maybe if I'm trying to illustrate it, though that's not the language Paul uses here, it is like a powerful ambassador. I have often said that if you go to a country and you are looking for ambassadors, you have ambassadors from all forms of countries there. But when you say you want to see the ambassador of the United States or you want to see the ambassador of Canada or the ambassador of Great Britain, oh, that's a tough job to be able to get access to them.

I could not imagine how difficult it would be for me if Mr. Nobody, like me, wanted to have a conversation with the President of the United States. Even when he was senator, to be able to arrange, to be able to get a personal meeting with him, to discuss, to have coffee and have all those meetings with him, no. But in one of the countries of Eastern Europe, for instance, it didn't take a whole lot for me to contact one of my friends to say, can you talk to this guy who is just about to be elected as the president? All the polls are showing so.

Every sign is working very well in his favor. But we were afraid that if he became a president agnostic, he would not give Christians the opportunity. And I spent a lot of time trying to do ministry in this particular country.

I called a friend and asked if you could arrange for me to have coffee with the president. He calls the president's office and says, my friend says, and so; he's who's been doing so and so. The good thing in my favor is that I was, and I'm still, one of the few black people who do a lot among churches in this particular country. So you don't see black people with strange accents around.

So, it's easy to notice who is around. So, in a nutshell, the guy said yes. And I could just go and sit down, meet with him for one hour, and spend some time getting to know him and asking him to do us a favor to promote religious freedom when he becomes president.

Since he's been president, I've been able to send notes. I've been able to work through friends. And he's really bringing religious freedom to this country.

I couldn't do that in the United States. To say I am a messenger, but I'm a messenger with authority. It's almost like saying I'm an ambassador or my president from a very important country.

The power that comes with it is stronger. That is the kind of thing Paul will be conveying with this title. He's dealing with people in Ephesus.

They are savvy. They know business stuff. They are in a city.

You know, inner city people. Some of you are following this from cities. You know the dynamics of cities.

Paul is trying to get across with these guys. He also wants to establish that he's not just an apostle in his own accord. He is an apostle by the will of God, by the wishes of God.

It is not out of any human agenda, but it is part of God's intent and design. The word he used for will can translate wishes or wants. He is actually an apostle because God wants him to be an apostle.

Do you remember how this guy became a Christian? He had no plan to lobby to get a position to preach the gospel. He didn't have any situation of unemployment, so he wanted to go and work for Christ so that he could get a job. No, he was busy going to persecute the church when Christ met him on the road.

Knock him down off the horse and ask him the strongest accusing question. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? That is how his life got turned around. He said he's an apostle by the will of God, by the wishes and wants.

Of God. You have to take him seriously. The one whose transaction he's performing is very important.

And all the people in the church recognize this God. He says he writes to these people who are saints. I mentioned, if you remember when we're talking about it, I think we were discussing Colossians; in the introduction, I talk about saints so that I wouldn't spend a lot of time here.

The word saint here does not mean papal beatification. In other words, when the Catholic Church has to go through religious criteria to be able to determine if somebody fits the criteria to be a saint, and the Pope goes through the necessary ritual to make the person a saint. That is not what we are talking about here.

The word saints is the plural form of the word holy in the Greek text. When Paul calls them saints, he's calling; he's talking about people who have been called by God, who have been chosen by God, and set apart by God for his use. And he refers to them as the faithful ones.

Sometimes, some translations in English don't turn out very well. They tend to seem as though they are conveying the message that to be, Paul is talking about those who have faith in Christ. But the language carries more of those who are saints and those who are faithful, those who are trustworthy with some degree of moral character.

So, they will have faith in Christ, but they are also faithful in their work with Christ. And this, the realm in which they are saints and faithful or trustworthy, is in Christ. And then Paul's standard greeting comes in here.

Grace to you. Grace to you. Peace from God.

I try to keep myself from being too excited about this letter, as I warned you in the beginning. But when Paul says grace to you in Ephesians, he is making no ordinary statement like the other letters he had written. In this letter, he's going to talk about grace as he has never done before.

He's going to outline the nature of the grace of God as never before. And if the church made up of multi-ethnic communities is going to work together, if unity is going to prevail in the church, it is important for the church to understand the grace of God. Grace, grace to you.

Peace, shalom. The well-being that God alone provides is your portion so that you don't have internal struggles that make you become problematic in the community dynamics. And this is from God, our Father.

Again, the kinship thing. Don't let me get too much into this. But God, our Father.

And the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. For me, the word Lord is one of the words we cross over easily reading Paul's letters. The Lord, the master, the one at whose commands we move, do, and obey.

He and God are the ones from whom grace and peace come to you. After he had written this, Paul was going to actually write what I call the breathless, breathless invocation. He will write a sentence that is remarkable.

In fact, in some of the Greek texts we have, the most recent one is Nestle Alan 28. Nestle Alan 28 divides this sentence into three and puts full stops. In some of the Greek texts, from verse 3 to verse 14 is one sentence.

Just imagine that. Just imagine me trying to read verse 3 to verse 14 in my strange African accent without breath. Can you get it? I think Paul was anticipating people to be so excited about what he had to say.

And it's how he puts it. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, we should be holy and blameless before him in love.

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 us in the beloved. In him, in Christ, 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.

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 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. Wow! Imagine this being one sentence.

That is how some of the Greek texts we have actually put it together but let's look at a few components of this particular sentence to prepare a more in-depth look at this sentence in our next study. First, I want to draw your attention to how Paul is going to set the tone for kinship. In the first few verses, look at verses three to five alone; he introduces this family concept that God is the father of the believers.

He is also the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, he introduces the word *euthysia*, which believers are adopted through Christ. It is one of those words I think the English translation does not help us a great deal.

Some English translators use the word *sans*. No, that word is not *sans*. That word, to translate it more literally, would be *adopted sans*.

When we get into the text, I will draw your attention to that. But look at how it's going. God is our father.

He's also the father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we, namely believers, are adopted children of God. And so, he's going to sandwich that in the course of the

conversation to say we who are fellow siblings and have fellow shared inheritance with Christ are now going to be seated with Christ and are now going to have these shared privileges with Christ.

And he's also going to assure and guarantee the protection of the church because of this standing with God. Think about it. Just imagine God is your natural dad, and you're in a home.

Would you be scared of some armed robbers coming in? The one who never sleeps, no slumber. The one who can speak and let their head drop. You know, the one who can just go and let an earthquake happen or something mysterious happen.

The God who has the power to do everything and anything. Would you feel insecure? Paul is introducing a strong concept there that if God is your father and your identity is in him and you are there, oh, I like that passage he puts elsewhere. If God is for us, who can be against us? Our Father in Heaven is indeed our true protection.

Take note of this overview of these few verses. Chapter 1, verses 3 to 14, is one sentence in some Greek text, as I pointed out earlier on. Some scholars have wondered whether this was some kind of Jewish blessing that was picked and introduced to the text.

But you want to know that the theology and the style of this particular writing are consistent with how Paul writes and discusses issues in the letter. So, most recent commentators actually ignore the idea that this must have been taken from somewhere. This form of blessing, which is one of the rich elements of the Old Testament, especially when you're dealing with the Psalms and others that we normally overlook, was an essential part of ancient Hebrew piety.

And even with the ancient Near Eastern culture. So I don't actually just refresh your mind so that when you read verse 3, you understand that the Jewish Paul, who had become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, born out of this culture, understands a common pattern in this culture. So, let's go to the Old Testament.

Don't get stuck so much with the New Testament, okay? And get some of these blessings or praise language you find in the Old Testament. In Psalm 72, verses 18 to 19, the Psalmist writes, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever.

May the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen. That kind of language that you find in Ephesians 1:3 says, Blessed be God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

That sense of language. In the Old Testament, the interesting thing we find is that even some of the pagans, when they are dealing with the Jews, begin to realize this and begin to use some of this traditionally called Barakah to also bless God and praise the name of God. I thought I should give you an example to give an idea that it may also resonate well with Gentile readers in Ephesus.

For instance, in Daniel chapter 3 verse 28, Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him and set aside the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any God except their own God. In 2 Chronicles, we also see something very interesting. Then Hiram, the king of Tyre, answered, in terms of dealing with Solomon, in a letter that he sent to Solomon, because the Lord loves his people, he has made you king over them.

Hiram also said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, who has discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for the Lord and a royal palace for himself. Now, I am not going to dwell on the Old Testament. My point here is to give you an idea that this tradition of praising God, and blessing God as part of a religious tradition is an essential part of a sense of piety among the Jews, and we know that in the ancient Near Eastern world in particular, that surfaces in the way we see in the biblical text.

It is likely that this was also showing up among Romans and Greeks. Now, as far as the Old Testament, especially the one I showed you in Chronicles, I find it intriguing because if you know more about Solomon and all these people, I think sometimes some of these kings are just business savvy. They can say wonderful things in praise of God, make Solomon feel good, give them business, and then things go well from there.

But that is just an excursus. Put it on one side, and let us get back to these verses. Getting too close on the introductory elements of this long sentence before we expand on it in the subsequent lecture series, let me give you a general outline.

If you were to pick these verses from verse 3 to 14 and start reading them, you will notice that an easier way to read them on how the sentence flows will be the outline I will give you. But what I would do after giving you the outline is to pick up this complex sentence and show you some key things that are surfacing in this so that we can reason together with it theologically and understand what Paul is doing here. So, in terms of the general outline, we find Paul making a case for this.

Blessed be God for making us his own people. And we will expand on that. He has adopted us, he will mention in those lines.

Blessed be God for his redemption and revelation. He has redeemed us and has revealed his mystery to us. Blessed be God for our inheritance and hope.

We bless God because not only did he save us now, but he also has an inheritance for us. And when we hope in the inheritance, it's not a guesswork. It is something we are sure we will attain.

And blessed be God for our salvation, present and future. Think about this general outline as you look at that text because we will start unpacking some elements of this text. May I close this particular session? And if you will permit me, let me just read two verses of this particular verse that I like so much from Esther.

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. Even when he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love, in love, he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

May you be blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places for this God who has called us and for whose cause perhaps you were inspired to join this study series. May you be blessed. And I hope that as we delve into this book, you will even feel more blessed to be the son, the daughter, the child of God, dearly loved, protected, an heir that has a good inheritance awaiting.

Thank you for joining us. And I hope you continue your studies with us. God bless you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko and his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 19, Introduction to Ephesians, Part 2.