

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 20, Breathless Invocation, Ephesians 1:3-14

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 20, Breathless Invocation, Ephesians 1:3-14.

Welcome back to the biblical studies lecture series on Ephesians.

We have looked so far to the introduction of Ephesians, and in the past two hours of study, you have seen the wider background of Ephesians, and we have gone through the first few verses of Ephesians. If you remember the last session on Ephesians, I read through chapter 1 from verses 3 to 14. So, what we are going to do in this session is to begin to look at that particular line, which is actually one sentence in some Greek text, and begin to unpack some things now that you have a good sense of the outline that I showed you earlier on.

So, let's begin to look at some of the key things here, especially from verse 3. In verse 3 the passage begins with Blessed be God who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing. Let me draw your attention to the grounds here. Let's bless God.

What is the basis for it? Because he has blessed us. In other words, the blessed now bless God because he has blessed them indeed. The content there is he has blessed them with every spiritual blessing.

I remember as a student taking a class on Ephesians and a professor, a very famous professor even today who teaches in a very prestigious institution, trying to explain every spiritual blessing at the time as a graduate student. And I began to realize what a struggle it was, someone who grew up in a Western country, not so much involved in the sociological dimensions of what was going on in the ancient world, the social and religious activities of Western Asia Minor at the time, the struggle of spiritual blessings. And she explained it, and she did well to a great deal.

Later on, as I devoted my research to the Ephesians, I began to realize what a rich sentence this is. Blessed be God, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. So, let me just shed light on this.

Every spiritual blessing. If you lived in Ephesus by the first century, as you can recall from our introductory discussion, you begin to realize that everything about life is interlinked with spiritual activity. The farmer needs spiritual support to do well.

The young girl needs spiritual support to get a great husband. Business people need spiritual assistance. Even the athlete uses the magical charm to try to win.

In a society where one feels that they need a spiritual power on their side to excel because someone else is trying to use a spiritual power to bring them down or to compete or overtake them, spiritual blessings are very important. And whatever a person has and is able to do is understood as not only something they have done on their own, but that which shall also be granted them by the spiritual agency, be it the God they have in their homes, the deity or particular shrine that they offer sacrifices to. And some of them may even go back to offer thanksgiving sacrifices of some sort to these deities for the great things they have done for them.

Paul said that for the church in Ephesus, we should bless God because he has blessed us. One of the great things he has blessed us with that we should know before we even unpack the details is that he has blessed us with spiritual blessings. But not some spiritual blessings.

It's not a spiritual blessing. But he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Let's bless him.

What we would otherwise need from the shrine of Artemis, he has blessed us with that. What we would otherwise need from the shrine of Demeter, he has blessed us with. Oh, Zeus's shrine was in Ephesus.

You don't need to go there because God has blessed you with all the spiritual blessings you need. If it is protection, he has blessed you. You need not live in fear.

You can go about your life. Wow. Blessed be God, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in a particular locale, in a particular realm, in a particular space.

He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Wow. As long as we are in Christ, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing.

Let us bless God for that. Can you imagine why Paul would write a long sentence if the sentence begins like this? That is why I call it a breathless invocation. He looks at a city with 50 pagan temples, magical activity, and all these things, and looks at what God has done for the children of God.

And he goes on to say, you know what? God has blessed us. Let us bless his name. He has blessed us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he has blessed us in the heavenly realms. The heavenly realm is a concept that I hope, in the course of our discussion in Ephesians, I will have some time somewhere

to unpack even more. The concept of the heavenly realms is not a concept that is like a place or something.

It is a cosmological understanding of the ancient world that says, in the world, there is a spiritual dimension of the world. The spiritual dimension is in the heavenly realms. Sometimes, this realm is thought of in terms of stages.

In this realm are evil and good spiritual forces. It is the unseen realm of human reality. I remember doing research and talking to some scholars about what I call the other reality.

And one of the scholars said that it is not reality because reality is what we can assess with our senses. Yeah, that is true. But to the Christians in Ephesus in the first century, there was another reality.

The unseen reality has spiritual powers that are working and that can affect what we do on a daily basis, be it good or bad, Paul says. We are blessed in the unseen realms. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

He will show later on that God has the power to subject every spiritual power that will try to compete or harm us. He has power over them. In fact, he has exalted Christ above them.

And therefore, the church can relax. Whatever in the spiritual realm to be feared is no longer something to be feared. Let's praise the name of God.

We live in a world now where sometimes life is lived as if we don't need God. It is as if there is nothing of a spiritual realm here. I find it ironic that in a world where our anthropology or our view of humanity says that human beings are made up of body, soul, and spirit, or body and spirit, or body, soul, the same world makes us believe that when it comes to how we live our life, it is all about our body.

I have struggled with the thought, conceptually or philosophically, that the same people who say there is an aspect of humanity that is soul or spirit want to deny or ignore that there is something called a spiritual realm or a spiritual agency or spirituality that can shape the well-being of human beings. Paul's readers don't have that problem. They believe that the spiritual part of life could be energized, affected positively, or infested negatively by evil spiritual agents.

He said, bless the name of God. You need not worry about all that. You are in a good place.

Bless God because you know these gods that I showed you earlier on in the introduction. Asclepius, the god of healing, when you are sick and all that, yes, you

cannot go there because you are a Christian. You cannot go and pay allegiance or ask them or offer sacrifices to these gods. You don't need to go there.

You don't need to go to the goddess of wine. You don't need to go to Artemis' shrine, but you don't need the spiritual blessings of Artemis because you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. And I like it from this British scholar who put it this way best.

This is particularly the priority of the heavens, the uppermost part of which is Christ, talking about the heavenly realms. Below him is the church, opposed to the church, but still within the heavenlies are the powers. The heavenlies represent the dimension of the transcendent in human life through which possibilities of existence open up.

Possibilities typified by Christ and the powers with respect to which a decision must be made. If Christ is chosen, believers find themselves both in the heavens and above them since they are in Christ's body and under his headship. Blessed be God, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm.

Why? Let me try to unpack this in a way for you. Oh, blessed be God. Why? He chose us.

He chose us. He redeemed us, and he sealed us with the Holy Spirit. Let's bless him.

I would like to draw your attention to how this is playing out so that you can understand this brief outline I have put there because I will use this brief outline to unpack this one sentence and how it shows up here. Blessed be God because he chose us. Wow.

Verse 4. Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, we should be holy and blameless before him in love. He chose us. It is us.

Not everybody but us referring to believers in Christ Jesus. He chose all believers, including Paul. Paul is going to talk about Christians as a collective whole, not as some one group of people tucked somewhere so that when he talks about unity, the church will understand what God has done for the people who believe and trust in Jesus Christ is something that is true wherever Christians are found.

He has blessed us, us believers in Christ. And you, perhaps following this lecture series that is a Christian, you are included in the us. He chose us.

He chose us not as an afterthought. Let somebody think that is a coincidence. No.

He chose us before the foundation of the world. It has always been God's plan that he would choose us. Oh, if you are a Calvinist, you should say hallelujah about that.

This is not a coincidence. He chose us before the foundation of the world. It's not as though he saw these miserable people believing in false gods, dabbling in all kinds of religious activities, and saying, I feel so terrible for you.

Let me decide today to get you out of this situation. No, that's not what happened. It is not also a scenario like this.

Being on the shore as if God is on vacation, and while at the beach relaxing, he sees a child drowning, and he just runs and says, I have to do everything to try to save that child in that particular situation. No. It was part of God's plan.

He chose us before the foundation of the world. It has always been his intent and wish to bring Jews and Gentiles together into the community of faith. Paul will make more of that argument in the course of this letter.

God has had a plan that all people will be one in Christ. All things will come under the Lordship of Christ. That's exciting.

If this had not been extended, we would all be in trouble. He chose us in love, and he chose us to be holy and blameless before him. That is the part that gets dicey in today's church.

People don't want to talk about holiness and blamelessness. But Paul says you need to know in verse 4, he chose us to be holy and blameless. Let's try to look at what that means.

I gave you a vivid picture of holiness and blamelessness. To be holy is to be set apart for God's use. Separated by conduct in a corrupt society.

I gave you an Old Testament reference in terms of holiness from Deuteronomy, where the text shows how God's people should be holy. To say they are chosen or set apart to be holy, the Old Testament text in Deuteronomy reminds us that it means they should not be like the corrupt society they have become a part of. They should be set apart.

Being set apart means their conduct should be different. It reads like this. When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and He clears away many nations before you.

But this is how you must deal with them, namely the nations. Break down their altars. Smash their pillars.

Don't worship them. Heal down their scarred poles. And burn their idols with fire.

For you are a holy people to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be His people, His treasured possession. In other words, don't mingle during all these pagan activities.

He chose us to be holy, Ephesians says, and He chose us to be blameless, to be unblemished, untainted. The imagery is the imagery of an animal to be given for sacrifice. The animal must be blameless.

The animal must be unblemished. Blamelessness has a moral connotation of being morally blameless so that socially, people will find you not blameworthy. God chose us.

He chose us from a place that is not so good. But He also chose us to be holy and blameless. Wow.

Blessed be God who has blessed us, who chose us before the foundations of the world to be holy and blameless. From verse 5, 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—the word adoption I hinted at earlier on.

Adoption, especially among Romans, was a very common practice. Among other cultures, adoption was practiced as well. It is not significantly different from adoption as we understand it in today's Western world.

It is not the understanding that we have in the society that I grew up in. When we talk about adoption or adopting somebody's child, I can just adopt somebody's child by asking them to come and live with me. I take care of them, and I may help them to go to school.

I may give them education. I may be there as almost their parent until their married age. If they get married, they move on with their life.

They go by themselves. I am not their parent. I don't have any legal papers.

I don't have any requirement. Their parents are still their parents. They can go back at any time.

That is the culture I grew up in. So, as early as I was 21, I had two people under my wing in that kind of situation. They would say that's adoption.

That's not the sort of adoption we are talking about here if you come from some of those cultures as you follow these lectures. Adoption here is going through some legal proceedings so that the person becomes a legitimate heir to the one who has adopted them. This particular word Paul uses in efficiency here is the Greek word *uiothesia*.

Uiothesia, as a masculine, is normally used to refer to males who are adopted. I like how Tillman puts this. The term was common, however, in the Greco-Roman world, where it referred to a legal practice by which the father of a family accepted a male child who was not his own as his heir.

This child will have the right to inheritance. This child will have rights to all the privileges that the father has for his children. You will see in this long sentence Paul will remind them that not only are they adopted by believing in Christ Jesus to be the children of God, but they have also been partakers of an inheritance.

Their inheritance is waiting for them to take full hold in the future, in the second coming of Christ. But for now, they are so blessed with so many resources by just being these adopted children. And it's the cause for which they should bless God.

They should bless God and bless him for all the benefits he has given. He says we have been redeemed. He has blessed us with this sense of redemption.

Let's look at the word redemption. He has blessed us in him, Christ Jesus. He redeemed us by paying a great price.

That particular phrase, in him or being redeemed by or through Christ, is something that scholars struggle with. How do you translate that? Because if you say if you translate it as if the blood of Christ was a price paid for redemption, then you are saying a ransom was paid for salvation. Now, later on, something Paul did not know is going to develop in early Christianity.

Scholars and religious Christian leaders are going to develop a doctrine of atonement. And there will be multiple views of the doctrine of atonement. And one of those views will be what we will call the ransom theory.

The ransom theory will wrestle with the issue of whether the price was paid for our salvation and to whom the price was paid. St. Anselm of Canterbury will say, oh, I think I know whom the price was paid to. It was paid to Satan. No.

God had no business negotiating with Satan to pay the price. I don't think so. Paul's point here is not to show to whom a price was paid.

He was using language to help them understand the costliness of their salvation. To understand that they are redeemed not by cheap means. It was costly.

It cost God his only begotten son to make adoption possible for those who are in Christ. And if you understand this, why would it not be a good cause to bless God for such a blessing? In this redemption, he has offered something really cool. Let me read that.

In him, we have redemption through his blood. That is the price. The forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace.

Let's pause here. The forgiveness of our trespasses for all that we owe in terms of sin he forgave in Christ, through Christ, through his blood. At the beginning of chapter 2, Paul reminds his readers and perhaps us that we were once dead, lifeless, in sin and trespasses, before God intervened.

But here, in the spirit of praise, he wants them to rejoice over the fact that they have been forgiven. We have been forgiven through the great price on Calvary paid for us.

What did we do to end that? Paul will tell us later. It is just by grace that we have this success. He forgave so that he could buy us back.

Oh man, I like that. Redemption. The language of redemption is the language sometimes for being able to be used for buying a slave back to their original state when they owe a whole lot, and they are given into slavery to be able to pay what they owe to be able to get them back.

It is also a language of restoration. It is a language that is used to explain when a piece of beautiful jewelry is actually lost in a dumpster, stayed there for ten years, rusty, getting rusty and dirty, smelly, ugly, and being able to be picked up.

Send it to the goldsmith. The process of restoring that jewelry to its original state is also the process that the language of redemption is used to explain. Paul says, blessed be God because he has redeemed us and forgiven us of our trespasses.

Wow. And he has done this. In what way? By what motivation? Oh, verse 8. Which he lavished upon us.

He did this at the end of verse 7 according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. It is according to the riches. I like that word when they use the word bounty because it doesn't come out well in English.

The Greek word is the word that you use for wealth. So, think about this. God has an abundance of grace to the extent that the degree and magnitude of your sin can still not even run out of grace.

And it is in that grace he lavished that grace on us. Forgive all that we owe because he has enough to be able to forgive to redeem us, and bring us to a state of freedom. Perhaps Paul is thinking about all the things in the pagan world that people have dabbled in.

Perhaps Paul was thinking about all sorts of sins people have locked themselves in and said, just in case you thought it was too much. It was not beyond God's ability to pay. Yes, the price was costly.

But he was ready to do it by grace. He did not do that through negotiation or through manipulation. He lavished his grace on us.

In one of the schools I taught in, I once told a student in class talking about Paul that Paul is the kind of person who may say at the time Osama Bin Laden was alive that if ever Osama Bin Laden would give his life to Christ, accept him as his Lord and Savior, Paul would say, there is enough grace of God to forgive him. There is so much blood on his hands. But he could be forgiven, and he could be accepted into the family of God.

What you have done, what they have done in the context of every source in the vicinity, is not something God cannot forgive. The guilt we hold is not bigger than God's grace. Out of his riches, out of the bounty of his grace, which he lavished on us, he redeemed us.

Blessed be God, who has made this happen. Talking about redemption, one scholar puts it this way, Paul's use of the phrase the Greek word, *ten apolutrosin*, they are two *aimatos*, are two, which translates for the redemption by or through his blood, means that metaphor of redemption from slavery through the payment of a price was alive for him. It is unlikely that he failed to realize that this meaning would not occur readily to his Gentile readers.

Therefore, it is unlikely that he did not intend to communicate this meaning. Paul's primary concern in using the metaphor for redemption, however, was probably to communicate that in the death of Christ, God came powerfully to rescue, to the rescue of his people, just as he had done in former times when he rescued them from the Egyptians, Babylonians, and other nations. That is the motive there.

And if I would apply, as I would do in Ephesians, I can't talk about Ephesians without being personal once in a while, so please pardon me. No matter where you have gone, no matter how much sin you have found yourself in, no matter how much guilt

your actions have imposed on you, God is able to forgive and redeem you by his grace. I hope, as we go on with this book, you understand the nature of this grace.

Yes, this is real. Verse 8, that he lavished on us with all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to the good pleasure that he has set forth in Christ. As planned for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, the things in heaven and things on earth.

Let me just elaborate briefly on the mystery. God made the mystery known according to his good pleasure. He did not do this.

He did not show all that he did reluctantly. It is according to his good pleasure. In God's work of administering his plan, he made this mystery known.

I told you earlier on that it is not a coincidence. Before the foundation of the world, he had it all down. Paul says the plan was there, and he is just making the plan work out.

In God's ultimate purpose to sum all things up in Christ, he made this mystery known for that purpose. That one day, he will sum all things up in Christ. I was studying that word because that word, to sum things all up, has been a word that scholars have spent a lot of time trying to unpack what the word means.

Sometimes, we think that the word carries the sense of headship and summing up all things under headship. But in modern terms, the classicists have helped us to realize that the language which is not used elsewhere but perhaps once in the New Testament is found in classical literature. And it is the language that is used in the courtroom, for instance, when a lawyer or an individual is trying to close up a case.

They have the ability to sum up all the key points so that they can compress all the material to make sure they give the judge the key elements to influence the decision in a succinct way. In America, we call some of those closing arguments, except that some of the closing statements take too long. That is not the nature of the point that is being made here.

But the orator's ability to sum up the key points at the end is the kind of language that is used here. Or the lawyer's ability to do that is what is going on here. Paul says that God made the mystery known so that at the appropriate time, he could sum all things up in Christ Jesus.

Note, in Christ Jesus. Things will become clearer. The world will be seen more differently.

People will understand the world that God has made better. When that time comes, things in heaven and things on earth will all be summed up in Christ. And I hope, even as we go, especially in chapter 3, this concept becomes clearer.

But again, let me read to you a very good way of trying to present this in the most succinct way in a French commentary that was written fairly recently. Just as an orator or writer draws together the elements of an argument and shows how they demonstrate the chief point of the speech or composition, Christ will bring order to the universe. God will use Christ to bring together the disparate elements of creation, whether they are things in heaven or things on earth.

He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, for He chose us in Him. He also redeemed us.

Redeeming us was costly, yet He went that way and forgave. This makes His mystery known, and this mystery manifests in multiple dimensions. Well, the next thing I want you to think about in this one long line, depending upon the grief test you use, is the fact that, yes, He chose us, number one.

Number two, we have redemption in Him. Yes. But the other thing is, He sealed us.

Who is the us here? It's still important here. He sealed us, we who have heard the word of truth—verse 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of His glory. He sealed those who have heard the word of truth. Let's not take that word for granted.

Truth, not deception. I have often phrased it this way. To find the truth, one must come into contact with the one who can confidently say, I am the way, the truth, and life.

Jesus Christ. Yes. Those who have heard the word of truth.

And they are also those who are sealed and those who have believed because it is these people, those who have heard the word of truth and have believed the word of truth, that has been sealed with or by the Holy Spirit. Powerful imagery.

Let me point out a few things that sealing entails. Well, if you think about the Holy Spirit's work that Paul brings up in his law line, think first about deposit. The Spirit is the deposit guaranteeing the believer's inheritance.

Two, think about assurance. The Spirit is a seal that guarantees the redemption of the believer's possession. Wow.

In verse 14, he says, who is referring to the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it? And the Spirit's presence as a promise. That the Spirit is the promised Spirit.

Because he says, in fact, this is the Spirit that is promised ahead of time. At the end of verse 13, we believe in him, who was sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. Alluding to promises of the work of the Holy Spirit known in the Old Testament.

I want you to think about that seriously and realize that this allusion to the Old Testament is important. And so, I'll give you an example of such promises, at least one or two examples of such promises in the Old Testament, so that you understand how the value of studying the Old Testament and the New Testament together helps you to understand what Paul seeks to convey to the early Christian Church and to us. So, for instance, Joel 2:28-29, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions, even on male and female slaves.

In those days, I will pour out my Spirit. This is the passage that Peter quoted in the book of Acts—a similar one in Ezekiel.

I will give them one heart and put a new Spirit within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh. The Spirit, the promised Spirit has come into effect, Paul argues.

And that Spirit is a guarantee, is a pledge. The Greek word Arrabon. In this Greek word Arrabon, Andrew Lincoln tried to explain it this way.

Arrabon, or the word translated as pledge in a down payment, that which is given, is part of a greater whole and is of the same kind as that whole and functions as a guarantee that the whole payment will be forthcoming. The Spirit, then, is the first installment and guarantee of the salvation of the age to come, with its mode of existence totally determined by the Spirit. In other words, this down payment being made with God is real.

That is why one day, I provoked my colleagues at the Society of Biblical Literature to present a paper on Ephesians and began to couch Paul as an ultra-Calvinist because if he chose us before the foundation of the world and if he sealed us by the Holy Spirit assuring us that our guarantee for the future is intact then Ephesians chapter 1 through chapter 3 it's no wonder John Calvin loved Ephesians. For this claim I just wanted to know, I'm in the middle between Calvinism and Arminianism. But if you

read this, you can't help but accept the sovereignty of God and how God's work in the sons and daughters of men should make them understand that there's no need for insecurity for those who believe in Christ.

He has deposited and guaranteed his spirit's presence, knowing that the inheritance is not something that is there that may or may not happen, but it is a real hope, a tangible inheritance to obtain. Let's call it assurance of salvation in a church theology. Yeah, I know what you're thinking if you're Arminian.

Oh, so you mean nobody can lose their salvation? Oh yeah, that's not what I'm saying, but I don't want to go further than that. Paul's point is this is what God has done. He chose you, he redeemed you, and he has sealed you with the power of the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing an inheritance, a future possession that is there for you.

That is why we should best in what I have called a breathless invocation and say, Blessed be God who has blessed us, who has chosen us, who has redeemed us, and who has sealed us. Come on, church, let's go. Let's bless his name.

That makes Christianity exciting. I get all kinds of feelings when I'm looking through Ephesians. It's a great thing to be a Christian because for what God has done, we should be able to get up and bless his name every morning.

And talking about the Holy Spirit, let me draw your attention to a few things here. The spirit seal here identifies and protects against God's wrath. In the language Paul uses, dealing with the people with the spirit and the concept of the seal suggests that God can recognize his own and not destroy them and not kick them out.

He has marked them, and so in his wrath, he will not throw them away. Wow. The seal of the spirit is a down payment, also showing that God has his own stamp agreeing and endorsing that your inheritance is real.

The sealing of the spirit, though, occurs in Christ lest we take it to the marketplace and say for sale whether you believe and trust in God or not. Perhaps that is why those who believe in Christ today have to be very, very careful in trying to sell Christ cheap. Salvation was costly.

It cost God his only begotten son. The privileges are great, but let's not be in a hurry to try to tell other people about them. Make it look like it doesn't matter to take a good stand for your true identity and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this long sentence, it's amazing if you are underlining the word in Christ and you see how many times the word in Christ surfaces. I like how Frank Matera, a fellow scholar in the Catholic Biblical Association, teaches at Catholic University in

Washington D.C. I think Catholic University in Washington D.C. Frank may be retiring this year or next year. I like the way he puts this and so I would like to read his lines.

The role of Christ is absolutely integral to the mystery of God's will. Repeatedly employing the preposition in, Paul knows that God has blessed the Ephesians in Christ, verse 3, and elected them in him, verse 4. In his beloved, he has bestowed grace upon them, verse 6. In him, they received redemption, verse 7. In Christ, God has set forth his favor, verse 9, for he had determined to sum up everything in Christ, whether in heaven or on earth, verse 10. Therefore, in Christ, the Ephesians were chosen, verse 11.

For the first hoped in him, verse 12. And in him, they heard the whole truth, verse 13. Look at how many times in him, in Christ, appears.

And ask yourself, how many times do you hear about Christ in a sermon? In Christian conversations? Paul says that to bless God, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, is to understand that without Christ, we have nothing. But it is in Christ that we have all. Snowgrass, who teaches in North Park, will put it this way.

Awareness of the presence of God and living in Christ are the keys to all of life. People sin because they forget God. How strange that we forget the place we live.

If we know we live before God and in Christ, we know we live in a defining presence. Our lives become determined by the character of Christ and God. Christians must live out of their environment.

Out of an inner definition comes an inner definition that comes from being in Christ and empowered by his spirit. I think the North Park Theological Seminary professor was right. Snowgrass I found very interesting.

When you read Snowgrass's commentary on Ephesians, he makes no apology to lay out the need to look at one's walk with Christ to understand what is going on in Ephesians. After all, how could those who don't believe and accept the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ understand a text written by a Christian leader to fellow Christians? To empower and encourage them to live better Christian lives.

Snowgrass will argue. And if you understand all this, then towards the end of this long line of breathless invocation you understand, you also see a repeated sense of purpose statement that comes up again and again: verse 12 and verse 14 To the praise of his glory.

Let's bless him who has chosen us, who redeemed us, who has sealed us to the praise of his glory. Verse 12 and 13. Verse 6. To the praise of his glorious grace.

Then, you will begin to find this Trinitarian scope there. The Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit all surfaced in this discussion. Wow.

You see, what Paul is doing here is to say, look at what God has done. And bless his name. Let's start looking into this letter by understanding what God has done in a spiritually charged atmosphere.

Paganism, magic, fear of demons, fear of satanic activities, fear of getting sick, and not being able to have a healing place to go to because Christians cannot go to the shrine of Asclepius. He said, let's bless God, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. I should tell you that growing up in Africa and in an African village, paganism was real.

The demonic activity was real. In fact, I live in a village where a particular form of witchcraft is practiced by a particular tribe, a few of whom we had in my area. They call it Tukwe in the local language.

Someone could perform a particular ritual and mention a person's name, and they will claim that they have killed a person. The person could be hundreds of miles away. Later, we will hear that the person is dead either through a car accident or through something of some sort at relatively the same time.

Usually, these are people who are very healthy. The fear of these evil powers was real in the context in which I grew up. As a Christian boy, I had to deal with all that several times.

The other thing was real. People came to become believers and brought the voodoo, the witchcraft, or the pagan small shrines to be burned and destroyed. When I'm back in the village, and we are in church on Sunday morning, I observe something.

Those who were so dabbed into these things became Christians and found their freedom. They saw the power of God in greatness and saw how God was protecting them against all these sorts of things. The way they sing, the way they dance, sometimes they challenge me to the fact that I spent too much in the West, and I don't know what God has done. Paul's audience knew exactly what God had done.

Paul shared that conviction, and so he raised them to start in this letter to bless God. Who has blessed them with every spiritual blessing? The power of God is real. He has blessed us.

Let's take hold of the blessings. Let's be filled with that confidence and conviction. Let's get up every single day blessing God for the things He's doing in the unseen realm on our behalf.

If we don't see some of them, we can acknowledge He chose us. He redeemed us. He has sealed us and we have an inheritance with Him.

What a great hope. May we hold on to this. And I hope that as we go on in this study, you'll find this walk with Paul to be an enriching one indeed.

God bless you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 20, Breathless Invocation, Ephesians 1:3-14.