

# Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 20, Breathless Invocation (Eph 1:3-14) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 20, Breathless Invocation (Eph 1:3-14), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Daniel K. Darko's lecture, "Breathless Invocation," the twentieth session in his series on the Prison Epistles, unpacks Ephesians 1:3-14. He meticulously analyzes this lengthy opening sentence, emphasizing that believers in Christ are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. Darko contrasts this divine provision with the spiritual needs and fears prevalent in first-century Ephesus, highlighting God's choice, redemption, and sealing of believers through the Holy Spirit. He underscores the costliness of redemption and the guarantee of inheritance, urging listeners to bless God for these profound acts. The lecture emphasizes the integral role of Christ and the Trinitarian nature of these blessings, concluding with personal reflections on the reality of spiritual forces and God's protective power.

2. 9 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 20 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → Prison Epistles).



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ssion20.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 20, Breathless Invocation (Eph 1:3-14)

**Briefing Document: Ephesians 1:3-14 - "Breathless Invocation" by Dr. Daniel K. Darko**

#### **Overview:**

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Daniel K. Darko in his lecture on Ephesians 1:3-14, titled "Breathless Invocation." Dr. Darko meticulously unpacks the initial, lengthy sentence of this passage, highlighting the profound blessings believers have received in Christ and the appropriate response of praising God. He emphasizes the historical and cultural context of Ephesus, where spiritual forces were believed to permeate daily life, to underscore the significance of Paul's declaration that God has blessed believers with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

#### **Main Themes and Important Ideas:**

1. **The Grounds for Blessing God:** Dr. Darko begins by emphasizing that the very act of blessing God stems from the fact that He has already blessed believers. As verse 3 states, "Blessed be God who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing." The blessed now bless God because of His prior action.
2. **The Significance of "Every Spiritual Blessing" in the Ephesian Context:** Dr. Darko highlights the pervasive belief in spiritual forces in first-century Ephesus. He explains that in this society, spiritual support was sought for all aspects of life, from farming to marriage to business and athletics. People believed they needed spiritual power to succeed and protection against malevolent spiritual forces. Paul's statement that God has blessed the church in Ephesus with "every spiritual blessing" is therefore a powerful declaration that believers have all they need in Christ, surpassing anything offered by pagan deities like Artemis, Demeter, or Zeus. As Dr. Darko puts it, "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."
3. **The Heavenly Realms as a Spiritual Dimension:** Dr. Darko clarifies that the "heavenly realms" are not merely a physical location but a "cosmological understanding of the ancient world" referring to a spiritual dimension where both good and evil spiritual forces operate. He emphasizes that believers are blessed within this unseen realm and that God has exalted Christ above any powers to be

feared, offering the church security. He quotes a British scholar stating that the heavenlies represent "the dimension of the transcendent in human life through which possibilities of existence open up," with Christ being the uppermost part.

4. **God's Sovereign Choice Before the Foundation of the World:** Dr. Darko delves into 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 stresses that God's choice of believers was not an afterthought or a reaction to their plight but an eternal plan. This choosing was for the purpose of believers being "holy and blameless," meaning set apart for God's use and morally untainted, distinct from the corrupt society around them. He uses Deuteronomy as an Old Testament reference to illustrate the concept of holiness as separation and distinct conduct.
5. **Predestination to Adoption as Sons:** Dr. Darko explains the concept of adoption (Greek: *huiothesia*) in the Roman context as a legal process where an adopted male child becomes a legitimate heir with full rights and privileges. He argues that Paul uses this imagery to convey the profound status and inheritance believers receive through Christ: "This child will have the right to inheritance. This child will have rights to all the privileges that the father has for his children."
6. **Redemption Through Christ's Blood and Forgiveness of Trespasses:** Dr. Darko discusses the costly nature of redemption, emphasizing that it was achieved "through his blood" (Ephesians 1:7). While acknowledging later theological developments like the ransom theory, he asserts that Paul's primary aim was to convey the immense cost God incurred for salvation, highlighting that believers are "redeemed not by cheap means." This redemption brings the forgiveness of trespasses, a release from the debt of sin, based on the "riches of his grace." Dr. Darko uses the analogy of restoring lost jewelry to illustrate the restorative aspect of redemption.
7. **The Lavishing of God's Grace and the Making Known of His Mystery:** Dr. Darko underscores the abundance of God's grace, which He "lavished upon us" (Ephesians 1:8), enabling forgiveness and redemption. This grace revealed the "mystery of his will" (Ephesians 1:9), God's pre-ordained plan to "gather up all things in him [Christ], the things in heaven and things on earth" at the fullness of time. He explains that the "summing up" (*anakephalaiōsasthai*) can be understood in the context of an orator or lawyer bringing together key points to influence a decision, suggesting Christ will ultimately bring order and clarity to the universe.

8. **Sealing with the Promised Holy Spirit as a Guarantee:** Dr. Darko highlights the sealing of believers with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14) upon hearing the word of truth (the Gospel) and believing in Christ. He explains that this seal has several implications:
- **Deposit (Arrabon):** The Spirit is a "guarantee of our inheritance," a down payment assuring the full inheritance to come. He quotes Andrew Lincoln's explanation of *arrabon* as "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."
  - **Assurance:** The Spirit guarantees the redemption of the believer's possession.
  - **Promise:** The Spirit is the "promised Holy Spirit," alluding to Old Testament prophecies like Joel 2:28-29 and Ezekiel's promise of a new Spirit.
  - **Identification and Protection:** The seal identifies believers as belonging to God, protecting them from His wrath.
  - **Endorsement:** It is God's stamp of approval on their inheritance.
1. **The Centrality of Christ ("In Him"):** Dr. Darko, referencing Frank Matera, emphasizes the repeated use of the preposition "in" or "in Christ" throughout the passage, underscoring Christ's integral role in all these blessings: election, redemption, the bestowal of grace, the setting forth of God's favor, the summing up of all things, and the hearing of the truth. He quotes Matera highlighting the numerous instances of "in him" in verses 3-13. He also cites Snowgrass, who states, "Awareness of the presence of God and living in Christ are the keys to all of life."
  2. **The Purpose: To the Praise of His Glory:** Dr. Darko points out the recurring purpose statement, "to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14), emphasizing that all of God's actions in choosing, redeeming, and sealing believers are ultimately for the exaltation of His glorious grace.
  3. **Relevance to Contemporary Believers:** Dr. Darko draws parallels between the spiritual climate of Ephesus and the realities faced by believers today, including his own experiences with paganism and witchcraft in Africa. He emphasizes that the power of God is real and that believers should embrace the spiritual blessings they have received in Christ with confidence and praise, recognizing God's active work in the unseen realm. He encourages listeners to "get up every single day blessing God for the things He's doing in the unseen realm on our behalf."

### Key Quotes:

- "Blessed be God who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing." (Ephesians 1:3, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "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." (Dr. Darko's explanation)
- "The heavenlies represent the dimension of the transcendent in human life through which possibilities of existence open up." (Quoted British scholar)
- "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, we should be holy and blameless before him in love." (Ephesians 1:4, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "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." (Deuteronomy, referenced by Dr. Darko)
- "This child will have the right to inheritance. This child will have rights to all the privileges that the father has for his children." (Dr. Darko explaining Roman adoption)
- "In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." (Ephesians 1:7, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "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." (Andrew Lincoln, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "Repeatedly employing the preposition in, Paul knows that God has blessed the Ephesians in Christ, verse 3, and elected them in him, verse 4." (Frank Matera, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "Awareness of the presence of God and living in Christ are the keys to all of life." (Snowgrass, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "To the praise of his glorious grace." (Ephesians 1:6, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "To the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:12 & 14, referenced by Dr. Darko)

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Darko's lecture provides a rich and insightful unpacking of Ephesians 1:3-14. He effectively connects the theological truths of the passage with the social and spiritual realities of the first-century Ephesian context, making Paul's message of God's comprehensive blessings in Christ even more profound. The emphasis on God's sovereign grace, the security found in Christ within the spiritual realm, and the guaranteed inheritance through the Holy Spirit offer a powerful foundation for believers to respond with heartfelt praise and live with confident assurance.

## 4. Study Guide: Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 20, Breathless Invocation (Eph 1:3-14)

### Ephesians 1:3-14 Study Guide: Breathless Invocation

#### Quiz

1. According to Dr. Darko, what is the basis for believers to bless God, as stated in Ephesians 1:3?
2. Explain the significance of "every spiritual blessing" for the first-century Ephesian believers in their socio-religious context.
3. What does Dr. Darko mean by the "heavenly realms," and what is the significance of believers being blessed in this realm "in Christ"?
4. According to Ephesians 1:4, when did God choose believers, and for what purpose did He choose them?
5. Describe the nature of "adoption" (huiiothesia) in the Greco-Roman world, as explained by Dr. Darko, and its significance for believers.
6. What is the primary purpose of the "redemption" through Christ's blood, according to Dr. Darko's interpretation of Ephesians 1:7-8?
7. Explain Dr. Darko's understanding of the "mystery of his will" in Ephesians 1:9-10 and its ultimate purpose.
8. Who are those who are "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" according to Ephesians 1:13, and what are two aspects of this sealing?
9. What Old Testament promises does Paul allude to when speaking about the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (arrabon) of our inheritance? Provide one example.
10. According to Dr. Darko and the insights from scholars like Snowgrass, what is the central role of Christ in understanding the blessings described in Ephesians 1:3-14?

#### Answer Key

1. The basis for believers to bless God, according to Ephesians 1:3, is that God has already blessed them. The blessed now bless God because He has already bestowed blessings upon them.

2. In the first century, Ephesus was deeply intertwined with spiritual activity, with people seeking spiritual power for various aspects of life. "Every spiritual blessing" signifies that believers in Christ have received all that they would otherwise seek from pagan deities and shrines.
3. The "heavenly realms" refer to the spiritual dimension of the ancient world, an unseen reality with both good and evil spiritual forces. Believers are blessed with every spiritual blessing in this realm because they are in union with Christ, who is exalted above these powers.
4. According to Ephesians 1:4, God chose believers in Christ before the foundation of the world. He chose them to be holy and blameless before Him in love, setting them apart for His purpose and with moral integrity.
5. In the Greco-Roman world, adoption (huiothesia) was a legal process through which a male child not one's own was accepted as a legitimate heir with full rights to inheritance and privileges. This highlights that believers are not just taken in, but legally established as God's children with a guaranteed inheritance.
6. Dr. Darko explains that the "redemption" through Christ's blood signifies the costliness of salvation, not necessarily a payment to a specific entity. It communicates that God powerfully rescued His people from sin and its consequences, offering forgiveness of trespasses according to His abundant grace.
7. The "mystery of his will" refers to God's pre-ordained plan, determined before the foundation of the world, to unite all things in Christ at the fullness of time. This plan, made known according to God's good pleasure, culminates in Christ bringing order and clarity to the universe.
8. Those who are "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" are those who have heard the word of truth (the gospel of salvation) and believed in Christ (Ephesians 1:13). Two aspects of this sealing are the Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing the believer's inheritance and as a seal assuring the redemption of their possession.
9. Paul alludes to Old Testament prophecies concerning the outpouring of the Spirit, such as Joel 2:28-29 where God promises to pour out His Spirit on all flesh, enabling prophecy and visions. This highlights that the sealing with the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of these divine promises.
10. Both Dr. Darko and Snowgrass emphasize that Christ is absolutely central to understanding the blessings in Ephesians 1:3-14. All spiritual blessings are



received "in Christ," highlighting the believer's union with Him as the foundation for God's grace and transformative work.

## Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the phrase "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3) for the first-century Ephesian believers, considering their social, religious, and spiritual context.
2. Discuss the interconnectedness of God's actions in Ephesians 1:4-14 (election, predestination, adoption, redemption, sealing) and explain how these demonstrate God's sovereign grace and purpose.
3. Explore the meaning and implications of being "holy and blameless" (Ephesians 1:4) in light of Dr. Darko's explanation and the Old Testament references he provides. How might this concept be understood and applied by Christians today?
4. Compare and contrast the concept of redemption as presented in Ephesians 1:7-8 with different historical and contemporary understandings of salvation. What are the key aspects that Dr. Darko emphasizes?
5. Examine the role of the Holy Spirit as the "seal" and "guarantee" (Ephesians 1:13-14) for believers. How does this understanding provide assurance and shape the Christian understanding of their present and future hope?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Blessed:** (Greek: *eulogētos*) Praised, worthy of blessing. Used here to describe God as the source of all blessings.
- **Heavenly Realms:** (Greek: *epouraniois*) The spiritual dimension of reality, conceived in the ancient world as a realm inhabited by both good and evil spiritual forces.
- **Election:** God's sovereign choice, before the foundation of the world, of those whom He would bring into a saving relationship with Himself through Christ.
- **Predestined:** (Greek: *proorisas*) God's predetermination of the destiny of believers, specifically for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.
- **Adoption:** (Greek: *huiothesia*) The act by which God legally makes believers His children, granting them the full rights and privileges of sonship, including inheritance.
- **Redemption:** (Greek: *apolutrōsis*) Deliverance or liberation from sin and its consequences through the payment of a price, understood in Ephesians as the costly sacrifice of Christ's blood.
- **Forgiveness of Trespasses:** The cancellation of sins and offenses against God, made possible through Christ's redemptive work.
- **Grace:** (Greek: *charis*) God's unmerited favor and love freely bestowed upon humanity, particularly evident in the gift of salvation through Christ.
- **Mystery of His Will:** God's eternal plan and purpose, previously hidden but now revealed in Christ, to bring all things in heaven and on earth into unity under His headship.
- **Sealed with the Holy Spirit:** The act by which God marks believers as His own through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, signifying ownership, security, and the guarantee of future inheritance.
- **Guarantee (Pledge):** (Greek: *arrabōn*) A down payment or first installment that serves as a pledge and ensures the full payment or inheritance will be received in the future.

## 5. FAQs on Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 20, Breathless Invocation (Eph 1:3-14), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Ephesians 1:3-14

**1. What is the significance of Paul beginning his letter to the Ephesians with the phrase "Blessed be God who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing"?**

This opening, which Dr. Darko describes as a "breathless invocation," immediately sets a tone of praise and gratitude. It highlights that the believers in Ephesus, and by extension all Christians, have already been recipients of comprehensive spiritual blessings from God. This is particularly significant given the cultural context of Ephesus, a city saturated with pagan temples and the perceived need for spiritual support from various deities for everyday life. Paul asserts that believers in Christ have access to *every* spiritual blessing, surpassing anything offered by the pagan spiritual marketplace.

**2. What does it mean to be blessed with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms"?** Dr. Darko explains that the "heavenly realms" are not simply a physical location but represent the spiritual dimension of reality, the unseen realm where both good and evil spiritual forces operate. By stating that believers are blessed in this realm, Paul assures them that God's power and blessings are active in this spiritual dimension on their behalf. Furthermore, these blessings are "in Christ Jesus," emphasizing that these spiritual benefits are mediated through their union with Christ. This means believers don't need to seek spiritual fulfillment or protection from other sources, as all they need is found in Christ within this spiritual reality.

**3. Why does Dr. Darko emphasize the historical and cultural context of Ephesus when discussing "every spiritual blessing"?** Understanding the first-century Ephesian context is crucial because the inhabitants were deeply immersed in a world where spiritual forces were believed to directly influence all aspects of life, from farming to marriage to business. People sought favor and protection from numerous gods and goddesses through rituals and sacrifices. Paul's declaration that believers have "every spiritual blessing" through Christ directly confronts this worldview, asserting that Christians possess a superior and complete spiritual provision in God, negating the need to rely on pagan deities or practices.

**4. What does it mean that God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world"?**

This statement underscores the pre-ordained nature of God's plan for salvation. Dr. Darko clarifies that this choosing was not a reaction to humanity's plight but was God's

intentional design from eternity past to bring believers into a relationship with Him. This act of choosing, rooted in love, was for the purpose that believers "should be holy and blameless before him." Holiness means being set apart for God's use, distinct from the corrupt society, while blamelessness signifies being morally untainted, like an unblemished sacrificial animal.

**5. How does the concept of "adoption as sons" (uiothesia) in Ephesians differ from modern understandings of adoption in some cultures?** Dr. Darko highlights that the adoption Paul speaks of is rooted in Greco-Roman legal practice, not the more informal caregiving arrangements that might be considered "adoption" in some other cultures. In the Greco-Roman context, adoption was a formal, legal process through which the adopted son gained full rights as a legitimate heir, including inheritance and all the privileges of a natural-born child. This imagery emphasizes the complete and secure status that believers receive as children of God through Christ.

**6. What is the significance of "redemption through his blood" and the "forgiveness of our trespasses"?** Dr. Darko explains that "redemption" signifies a costly rescue, drawing parallels to the buying back of a slave or the restoration of something valuable. The phrase "through his blood" indicates the immense price paid for this redemption – the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This redemption results in the "forgiveness of our trespasses," meaning the cancellation of our debts of sin, accomplished not through human effort but according to the "riches of his grace" which God "lavished upon us." Paul emphasizes the abundance of God's grace, sufficient to cover even the most significant sins.

**7. What does it mean to be "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit"?** The sealing with the Holy Spirit signifies God's definitive mark of ownership and security upon believers who have heard and believed the word of truth (the gospel). Dr. Darko outlines several aspects of this seal: it acts as a deposit or down payment (Greek: *arrabon*) guaranteeing the believer's future inheritance; it provides assurance of their redemption; and it is the promised Spirit, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. This sealing assures believers of their salvation and their future possession of all that God has promised.

**8. What is the recurring purpose behind God's blessings, as highlighted in Ephesians 1:3-14?** Dr. Darko points out the repeated phrase "to the praise of his glory" (and "to the praise of his glorious grace") in this passage. This underscores that the ultimate aim of God's choosing, redemption, and sealing of believers is the exaltation and acknowledgment of His glorious character and grace. Everything God has done in Christ for believers is ultimately for His own praise and glory, inviting believers to join in this "breathless invocation" of blessing and adoration.