

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis  
LESSON LIV : PAUL'S PRAYER AND DOXOLOGY (3:14-21)

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Eph 3:14-21 KJV)*

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph 3:14-21 NIV)*

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in the heavens and on earth is named, that He may give to you, according to the riches of His glory, with might to be strengthened through His Spirit, in regard to the inner man, that the Christ may dwell through the faith in your hearts, in love having been rooted and founded, that ye may be in strength to comprehend, with all the saints, what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, to know also the love of the Christ that is exceeding the knowledge, that ye may be filled — to all the fulness of God; and to Him who is able above all things to do exceeding abundantly what we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us, to Him [is] the glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus, to all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen. (Eph 3:14-21 Young's Literal Translation)*

## PAUL'S PRAYER

### PAUL STARTS TO PRAY FOR HIS READERS BUT DIGRESSES:

<sup>1</sup> *For this reason, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the Gentiles ....*

### PAUL RETURNS TO HIS PRAYER:

<sup>14</sup> *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,*

### PAUL SETS FORTH HIS PRAYER WITH THREE REQUESTS FOR HIS READERS, THE FIRST BEING FOR GOD TO GRANT THEM SOMETHING:

<sup>16</sup> *in order that (hina) he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory,*

**INFINITIVE CLAUSE #1 (an infinitive is a verbal noun, a verb not restrained by number or person)**

*to be strengthened (infinitive) with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*

**INFINITIVE CLAUSE #2**

<sup>17</sup> *and that Christ may dwell (infinitive) in your hearts through faith —*

**TWO PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPIAL FORMS, EITHER (1) EXPRESSING THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST TWO REQUESTS AND THEREFORE FORMING THE CONDITION FOR THE NEXT REQUEST, I.E., 'SO THAT YOU, HAVING BEEN ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, MIGHT BE EMPOWERED...'; (2) OR THEY MAY EXPRESS WISHES OR COMMANDS, AND IN PRAYER IT COULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS HAVING THE FORCE OF A PRAYER-WISH (a participle is a verbal adjective):**

*being rooted and grounded in love,*

### PAUL'S SECOND REQUEST ALSO HAS TO DO WITH STRENGTHENING BUT USES A DIFFERENT WORD THAN ABOVE:

<sup>18</sup> *in order that (hina) you may be able, may be empowered*

**INFINITIVE CLAUSE #1**

*to comprehend (infinitive) with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,*

## **INFINITIVE CLAUSE #2**

<sup>19</sup> *and to know (infinitive) the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,*

### **PAUL'S THIRD REQUEST FORMS A CLIMAX TO HIS PRAYER:**

*in order that (hina) you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

### **PAUL'S DOXOLOGY (a liturgical formula of praise to God)**

#### **PAUL BEGINS WITH THE MENTION OF THE ONE TO WHOM GLORY IS ASCRIBED ...**

<sup>20</sup> *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,*

#### **BUT HIS ELABORATION ON THE POWER OF GOD BECOMES LENGTHY ENOUGH THAT PAUL FINDS IT NECESSARY TO BEGIN THE DOXOLOGY AGAIN WITH THE REPETITION OF THE ONE TO WHOM THE PRAISE IS ADDRESSED:**

<sup>21</sup> *to him be glory in the congregation and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

**OVERVIEW** — “The digression on the apostle’s stewardship of the mystery had developed the notion of the Church as God’s instrument for demonstrating to the powers his purpose of unifying the cosmos. [Paul] senses that if the Church is going to become in history an effective preview of God’s purposes for the end of history, then God is going to have to help it in a big way. Adopting an attitude of deep reverence and fervent entreaty, he makes three major requests, with a subsidiary one between the first and second. As he begins the intercessory prayer-report, however, he first extols God the Father as the Creator and Lord of all family groupings in the cosmos and then, as he launches into the first request, reminds himself and his readers that this God’s giving in response to supplication is in accord with the inexhaustible wealth of his glory, that is, of his radiance and power active on behalf of humanity. This first main request is that the readers should be strengthened through the Spirit in their inner persons, which need to be renewed constantly by the Spirit’s energy. The request is then spelled out in different terms as [Paul] asks that Christ might take up permanent residence in their hearts, at the center of their personalities, so that through a relationship of faith Christ’s character and the pattern of his death and resurrection increasingly shape their values and their living. A subsidiary prayer follows, which asks that the readers be rooted in the soil and built on the foundation of the love that is the principle of the new age.

“The second major request concerns the readers’ knowledge. [Paul] desires that, as they are strengthened, they will be enabled to grasp in company with the whole Church the vast dimensions of the all-embracing love of Christ and then, stating a similar wish, that, despite its ultimate incomprehensibility and mystery, they might know this love of Christ personally and in a way that controls their lives. The final and climactic request is that the recipients of the letter be filled up to all the fullness of God, that they experience to their capacity the life and power of God himself.

“These are no small petitions; but both at the beginning of this section, in the address to God as cosmic Father, and now at the end, as he moves from intercession to doxology, [Paul] expresses his conviction that he has a great God. He ascribes glory throughout history and for evermore to the God whose power infinitely transcends all human praying or imagining. This is no merely theoretical statement about the omnipotence of God as an attribute, but an assertion of praise that springs from experience. For, as [Paul] says, this inexpressible power of God is the same power that believers know to be at work within them. [Paul’s] own characteristic ecclesiological and Christological emphases mark off this doxology from any Jewish counterpart. Glory is due to God in the Church and in Christ Jesus. It belongs to God in the Church as Christ’s body, the one new community out of Jew and Gentile, and it belongs to him in Christ Jesus as the Head, the one through whom this community came into being and on whom it depends for life....

“In many ways the substance of the different requests amounts to the same thing. To be strengthened through the Spirit, to be indwelt by Christ, to be rooted in love, to know the love of Christ, and to be filled to the fullness of God involve different aspects of the experience of the same reality. Perhaps the central part of the prayer, in which the quality of love dominates, indicates that here [Paul] sees that reality as best summed up in the costly, self-giving love of Christ.

**“Certainly it is the emphasis on love that is the most noticeable difference between this intercessory prayer-report and the earlier one in the thanksgiving period of 1:15-23. Both include a stress on knowledge and power. The first asked for greater knowledge, a part of which was to be knowledge of God’s power. The second begins with the concern that believers be strengthened by power, and then indicates that it is this empowering that will enable comprehension. Clearly, [Paul] holds that the relationship between understanding and being strengthened works both ways, that intellectual knowledge and actual experience of God’s power are mutually sustaining. [CP JAMES 2 - FAITH + WORKS ‘WORKING TOGETHER’ — OUR KNOWLEDGE, BELIEFS + PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE]**

“God, Christ, and the Spirit all receive mention in this section. In the one reference to the Spirit in v 16 it becomes clear that in the believer’s present experience his role in the inner person is functionally equivalent to that of Christ in the heart. But, as in other sections of this first part of the letter, the triad that dominates [Paul’s] perspective is that of God, Christ, and the Church. His intercessory prayer-report is on behalf of his readers as members of the Church, as those with its calling to fulfill, and they are explicitly reminded of that ecclesiological context through the phrase ‘with all the saints’ in v 18. The Church will become more what it ought to be as it experiences more of the one who mediates God’s purposes in salvation, more of Christ’s presence through the Spirit, and more of his all-embracing love that surpasses knowledge. But the prayer is address to God the cosmic Father who is

able to grant its requests and, despite the substantial similarity of the realities requested, the theocentric language of the final climactic petition is significant. Even greater than knowledge of the incomprehensible love of Christ, for which [Paul] can ask, is participation in the fullness of God himself. This pattern of relationship between God, Christ, and the Church is summed up by the doxology. How striking and how characteristic of [Paul's] belief in the importance of the Church that it should be mentioned in the doxology as the locus for God's glory! Yet the glorification of God in the Church is immediately said to be dependent on the glorification of God in Christ Jesus, and, of course, the doxology is addressed neither to the Church nor to Christ but to God. The theocentric perspective remains ultimate as the doxology underlines that what has happened in history for the salvation of the Church through Christ is for God's own glory and will redound to that glory throughout eternity.

*“In this way, the first part of the letter ends on the same note with which it had begun — a note of worship and praise of the God who is not only the initiator of salvation but also its final goal. [Paul's] major concerns in this half of the letter have been taken up into his prayer and praise. Just as the opening eulogy was meant to draw his readers into appreciation of a theological perspective that could be a vital inspiration to them, so also the closing doxology is intended to function in this fashion. In the second half of the letter he will exhort his readers to carry out their distinctive calling to be the Church in the world. He knows, however, that nothing short of an experience of the generous love of Christ, which roots and grounds them in love, will enable them to walk in the love to which he will exhort them (cf. 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2, 25, 28, 33; cf. also 6:23, 24). He knows also that nothing short of an experience of the greatness of the power of God at work within them and nothing short of a vision of the glory that belongs to God will sustain them in fulfilling the task to which God himself has called them. In other words, he has written to them in this particular way because he is aware that, ultimately, the profundity of their theological appreciation, appropriated in worship, will be far more effective in helping them to be what they were meant to be than merely piling moral exhortation upon moral exhortation.”* [Lincoln, 218ff]

**v. 14 — For this reason, for this cause —** **Τούτου χάριν [toutou charin]** — Exact same wording as that of verse 1, resuming the sentence he began but interrupted by the long digression of verses 2-13. ‘For this reason’ therefore relates back to what Paul had previously said, specifically 2:11-22 about the Jews and Gentiles being part of ‘one body.’

The word ‘**metonymy**’ itself is from ‘*meta*’ indicating ‘*change*’ and ‘*onoma*’ meaning ‘*a name, noun*’. A **metonymy of adjunct** is when the writer puts the ‘*adjunct*’ or ‘*attribute*’ or ‘*some circumstance pertaining to the subject*’ for the subject. An example where the attribute is put for the thing or object: “Then shall you bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” (Gen. 42:38) Here the ‘gray hairs’ refers to Jacob in his old age.

**I bow my knees — κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου [kamptō ta gonata mou]** — “The verb κάμπτω [kamptō, ‘I bow’] is used only four times in the NT (Rom 11:4; 14:11; Eph 3:14; Phil 2:10). In Rom 11:4, Paul quotes 1 Kgs 19:18 where God tells Elijah that 7000 men have not bowed the knee to Baal; in Rom 14:11 Paul quotes Isa 45:23 where God declares that he alone is God and every knee will bow and every tongue will give praise to him; and in Phil 2:10 (again quoting Isa 45:23) Paul states that God has highly exalted Christ and that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow whether they are in heaven, on earth, or under the earth. Hence, in these passages the bending of the knee conveys worship or submission to a supernatural power. In the present context Paul prostrates himself before God, who is called ‘Father,’ in order to petition him in prayer. In 3:12 Paul mentioned that all believers have access to God and here he exemplifies this. The words κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου

[kamptō ta gonata mou, ‘I bow my knees’] are a ‘*metonymy of adjunct*’ simply meaning ‘I pray.’” [Hoehner, 473] “Apart from Eph 3.14 it is only in OT quotations that kneeling is mentioned in the NT (Rom 11.4; 14.11; Phil 2.10). It is not known what the normal posture of worshippers in the early church was when praying. Mk 14.35; Lk 5.8; 22.41; Acts 7.60; 9.40; 20.36; 21.5 yield no certain answer but do not exclude the possibility of kneeling; Mt 26.39 implies prostration; the soldiers kneel in Mk 15.19 before Jesus but this is in mockery and not prayer. By the time of Origen there are references to the suitability of kneeling.... Since there is no word for prayer in v. 14, kneeling must have been instantly recognisable as indicating that a prayer was about to commence; had [Paul spoken] as standing in the Jewish manner, his Gentile readers might have needed an explicit reference to prayer. Probably kneeling conveyed to them a greater sense of humbleness than would standing.” [Best 336f] “The more usual posture in Jewish and early Christian prayer was standing (Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11), although kneeling was not uncommon (1 Kings 8:24; Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:41; Acts 21:5). The latter signified great reverence and submission, especially marking the humble approach of the worshipper who felt his need so keenly that he could not stand upright before God (cf. Ezra 9:5, 15). Here Paul’s language suggests that he may be echoing the words of Isaiah 45:23 (cf. Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10), where the bowing of the knee was a sign of homage to the universal King. With an acute sense of need and head bowed down to the ground he brings his earnest request to this powerful King.” [O’Brien, 255] “The mention of the posture of kneeling in the terminology for prayer is significant, since the more usual Jewish and early Christian practice was to pray standing (cf. Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11,13). Kneeling in the ancient world could signify subordination, servility, or worship, as well as being the posture of a suppliant before the gods. The last usage, as part of prayer, is attested more in Judaism than in Greco-Roman writings.... Intercessory prayer and worship are obviously not mutually exclusive activities, and it could well be that both connotations combine here in Eph 3:14 to suggest an attitude of deep reverence for God the Father, who is addressed. It could also be that describing the activity of prayer in terms of kneeling would have had more emotive force and conveyed a greater fervency of entreaty on [Paul’s] part than the earlier reference to his praying in 1:16.” [Lincoln, 201f]

**IS POSTURE IMPORTANT IN PRAYER?** — Scripture has examples of various prayer positions:

**STANDING** — (Solomon’s prayer when he dedicated the Temple) ‘Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven’ — 1 Kings 8:22

(Hannah before Eli in the temple) *'And she said, O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord.'* — 1 Sam 1:26

*'And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.'* — Matt 6:5

*'And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.'* — Mark 11:25

*'The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.... And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner!'* — Luke 18:11,13

**KNEELING** — *'Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.'* — Psalms 95:6

*'At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God.... O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!'* — Ezra 9:5, 15

*'I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.'* — Isaiah 45:23; quoted in Rom 14:11 and Phil 2:10

*'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.'* — Dan 6:10

*'And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.'* — Luke 22:41,42

(the stoning of Stephen) *'Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not charge them with this sin. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.'* — Acts 7:60

*'But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.'* — Acts 9:40

(Paul when meeting with the Ephesian elders) *'And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.'* — Acts 20:36

(disciples with Paul on his trip to Jerusalem) *'When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.'* — Acts 21:5

**HEAD BETWEEN THE KNEES** — (Elijah awaiting the rain after Mt. Carmel) *'So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees'* — 1 Kings 18:42

**LAYING PROSTRATE** — *'And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. And they fell on their faces.'* — Numbers 16:44,45

(after the defeat at Ai) *'Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.'* — Josh 7:6

*'Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down ['casting himself down', ESV, YLT] before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly.'* — Ezra 10:1

*'He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.'* — Matt 26:39; see also Mark 14:35

So I repeat the question: **IS POSTURE IMPORTANT IN PRAYER?** *I almost hesitate to ask since I can imagine the howls of 'legalism' from our modern American Christian culture. But I think the question should be considered. A very good friend once made the comment that history / culture is like a pendulum, swinging from one extreme to the other, and I believe him to be correct. Perhaps at one time in American Christianity too much emphasis was placed on the posture when praying, regarding some as 'spiritual' while believing others to be 'unspiritual' due to outward form. But as the pendulum swings, I believe we are now at the opposite extreme where prayer and approach to God has seemingly lost all reverence and could almost be considered flippanant.* Some thoughts to consider:

*"[A] man is not tied to any particular gesture or posture in prayer, the main thing is the heart; mere postures and gestures are insignificant things with God; though where the mind is affected, the body will be moved; and this gesture may be expressive of reverence, humility, and submission in prayer."* [Gill, Commentary on Whole Bible]

*"The words, doubtless, do not impose a special bodily posture as a necessity in spiritual worship; physical conditions may make kneeling impossible, or undesirable, on occasion. But they do impose the spiritual attitude of which the*

*bodily is type and expression; profound and submissive reverence, perfectly harmonious with the 'boldness' and 'confidence' of ver. 12. And so far as body and spirit work in concord, this recommends the corresponding bodily attitude where there is no distinct reason against it.* [Moule, 94f]

*"Posture affects the mind, and is not therefore unimportant."* [JFB, Commentary on Whole Bible]

*"It is a posture which indicates reverence, and should, therefore, be assumed when we come before God. It has been an unhappy thing that the custom of kneeling in public worship has ever been departed from in the Christian churches."* [forgive me; somehow I neglected to record where this quote was found]

**ADDRESSED TO THE FATHER** — *"The term 'Father,' with reference to God, is used frequently in Ephesians (1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23).... God is rarely addressed as 'Father' in the OT (fifteen times out of 1448 occurrences) but in the NT this title is frequently used (245 times out of 413 occurrences). Believers are the sons of God and address God as 'Father; Abba' (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) as Jesus had addressed him (Mark 14:36). For example, in Eph 1:17 the prayer is addressed not only to 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,' but also to 'the Father of glory.'" [Hoehner, 473f] "The one to whom he bows in homage is called Father, which in the ancient world was not only a term of intimacy but also one that had overtones of dignity and authority. A father not only sought the good of his family but also ruled the clan or family unit ('When Jews spoke of God as Father, they meant he ruled the world which owed him its obedience.'). The God whom the apostle approaches in prayer is a powerful and loving heavenly Father. Paul has already asserted that through Christ believers have access 'in one Spirit to the Father' (2:18; cf. 3:12); here he boldly and confidently avails himself of this access to make intercession for his readers in their need. Because the Father will surely respond to the petition of even his lowliest servant, as Paul himself was (v. 8), his prayer may confidently be addressed to him."* [O'Brien, 255]

**of our Lord Jesus Christ** — τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [tou kuriou hēmōn iēsou christou] — these words are wanting in most of our modern translations, the exceptions being those based solely on the Textus Receptus. Those rejecting these words support their belief by manuscript and Church Father evidence but also on the basis that it interrupt the 'play on words' given by Paul (see below). Ernest Best defends the omission as follows:

"The variant reading which defines Father by adding 'of our Lord Jesus Christ' though having some good support is not as widely supported as its omission. Its insertion would serve to draw attention away from the word play πατέρα – πατριά [patera – patria, 'father – family], limit the reference to God as Father to his fatherhood of Jesus whereas v. 15 implies a wider reference, and destroy the coherence of the argument. It is hard to see why it should have been omitted if originally present; its addition could easily have been made by a careless scribe accustomed to its association with 'Father' or by one deliberately attempting to exclude any idea of a universal Fatherhood of God." [Best, 337]

John Gill on the other hand defends the inclusion of the words:

"[T]hough these words are wanting in the Alexandrian copy, and Ethiopic version, yet are rightly retained in others; for God is the Father of Christ, not by creation, nor adoption, but by generation, being the only begotten of the Father; and as such he is rightly prayed to, since not only Christ prayed to him as such; but he is the Father of his people in and through Christ; and there is no other way of coming to him but by Christ; and all spiritual blessings come though Christ, and from God, as the Father of Christ." [Gill, Commentary on Whole Bible]

I have no strong conviction either way, nor am I studied enough to justify the retention or omission of the words. But I would like to give a couple thoughts on the subject of manuscript evidence:

*While we may have our convictions and those convictions should be based on available evidence, no one after 2000 years knows without question in many of these instances.*

*The question of manuscript evidence is not, 'would I like it best if the words were omitted or included,' but rather, 'what did the author write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?'*

*Regardless of any textual question, no doctrine of the Christian faith is affected by the different readings.*

**v. 15** — **from whom** — ἐξ οὗ [ex hou] — *lit., 'out from whom,' denoting the source from whence the name is derived.* [Salmond, 312; Wuest, 87; Moule, 95]

**PLAY ON WORDS** — **the whole family** — πᾶσα πατριά [pasa patria] — Paul uses a 'play on words' here that is impossible to bring from the Greek into English. Our English version (NKJV) reads as follows:

*'For this reason I bow my knees to the Father ... from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.'*

The underlined words are forms of the same word:

*'For this reason I bow my knees to the Patera ... from whom the whole patria in heaven and earth is named.'*

While no translation brings Paul's 'play on words' over into English, I found William Tyndale's translation very interesting:

*'which is father over all that ys called father In heaven and in ertth'.*

*"It is difficult to convey in another language any trace of the deep connexion of πατήρ [patēr, 'father'] and πατριά [patria, 'family'] here expressed. Had the sentence been 'the Creator, after whom every creature in heaven and earth is named,' all*

would be plain to the English reader. But we must not thus render; for it is not in virtue of God's creative power that the Apostle here prays to Him, but in virtue of His adoptive love in Christ. It is best therefore to keep the simple sense of the words, and leave it to exegesis to convey the idea." [Alford, 108f] The Greek text has a play on words between πατριά [patria], rendered as 'family' in v. 15 and πατέρα [patera], 'Father,' in this verse, which an English translation is not able to capture. [Lincoln, 196]

**'FAMILY' = 'A GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH A COMMON ANCESTOR'; E.G., A FAMILY, A TRIBE, EVEN A NATION** — "God, to whom the prayer is made, is described as the Father (cf. also 1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23). As in the earlier intercessory prayer-report in 1:17 ('Father of glory'), there is an expansion here on the notion of God's fatherhood in line with the letter's elaborate liturgical style. There has been much discussion of the meaning of the relative clause containing this expansion and of the play on words it introduces: πατριά [patria], 'family,' relates back to πατέρα [patera], 'father.' *Sometimes the main point of the introduction of the clause, viz. that it is [Paul's] attempt to extol the fatherhood of God, is lost sight of in the discussion of the details.* πατριά [patria] stands for a group derived from a single ancestor and in its use in the LXX can denote a family, one's father's house, a clan, a tribe, or even a nation. Elsewhere in the NT the term is employed only in Luke – Acts. In Luke 2:4 it is synonymous with οἶκος [oikos], 'house,' in the phrase 'of the house and family (line) of David,' while in Acts 3:25, quoting Gen 12:3, it is used of 'all the families of the earth.'" [Lincoln, 202; see also O'Brien, 255] "English translations frequently use 'family' but this is too limiting; '(social) groupings' is to be preferred as less exact.... While it is easy to imagine different groupings on earth whether defined as nations, tribes, peoples which use a common language or inhabit an area with boundaries, it is more difficult to think of such groupings in heaven where there is neither physical consanguinity (cf Mk 12.25) nor limited geographical area. Yet in heaven there are rulers, powers, principalities, seraphim, [and] cherubim.... Believers would be reassured when they realised that the powers were dependent on God, and this may be why [Paul] has not simply described God as the Father of every family in heaven and on earth but has said that God named them, so setting him in a closer and authoritative relation to them." [Best, 338f]

**con-san-guin-i-ty** – noun: (1) relationship by descent from a common ancestor; kinship; (2) close relationship or connection

**'FAMILY' CANNOT MEAN 'FATHERHOOD'** — "The Vulgate and Syriac translate the word as if it were an abstract noun meaning 'fatherhood' and those interpreters who follow them justify this on the grounds of the word play πατήρ – πατριά [patēr – patria, 'father – family']. We do not however need to see such a direct play on words; having used πατήρ, πατριά [patēr – patria, 'father – family'] may have come naturally into [Paul's] mind when thinking of a word for a social grouping. More importantly 'fatherhood' is not a recognised meaning of πατριά [patria, 'family']." [Best, 338] "Although some have interpreted v. 15 to mean that God is the archetypal father and that all other fatherhood in the universe is derived from his, this is based on a false rendering of [patria] as 'fatherhood'." [O'Brien, 255]

**SHOULD IT BE 'THE WHOLE FAMILY' OR 'EVERY FAMILY' ?** — A question arises whether this phrase should be translated 'the whole family' or 'every family.' This variance of opinion may be seen in our translations: the Geneva, KJV, YLT and NKJV versions translates this as 'the whole family' while the RV, ASV, RSV, NASV, NIV and ESV versions translates this as 'every family.' Most of the commentators I have studied consider the correct rendering to be 'every family'; e.g.,

"What is named is every πατριά [patria], not the whole πατριά [patria]; the latter would be πᾶσα ἡ πατριά [pasa hē patria]. In any case such an understanding would not suit the context which with its reference to heaven and earth implies πατριά [patria] indicates a multiplicity. But a multiplicity of what?" [Best, 338]

It is important to note all these translations are using the same Greek words; the question of how it should be translated is not a question of a variance in the texts. H. G. T. Moule sums up the differences between the two as follows:

"The alternatives then are, (1) to understand the Apostle to diverge to the thought that God's spiritual Fatherhood is the Archetype of all family unions, in earth and heaven; the source from which every other 'father' draws his 'name,' his title and idea; (2) to understand the Apostle to dwell on the thought of the oneness of the family union of saints and angels under the Eternal Father of Spirits Who gives 'name,' designation as His children, to the whole company." [Moule, 95]

**IF PAUL MEANT 'THE WHOLE FAMILY' THEN IT MUST BE LIMITED TO THE REDEEMED** — "If Paul intended to refer to the various orders of angels, and the various classes of men, ... then he contemplates God as the universal Father, and all rational creatures as his children. But the whole drift of the passage shows that it is not God in his relation as creator, but God in his relation as a spiritual father — who is here contemplated. *He is addressed as the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and therefore our Father. It is plain therefore that those who are here contemplated as children, are those who are by Jesus Christ brought into this relation to God. Consequently the word πατριά [patria, 'family'] cannot include any but the subjects of redemption. The whole family in heaven therefore cannot mean the angels, but the redeemed already saved, and the family on earth, the company of believers still living.*" [Hodge, 125f] But in response to those commentators who limit the text only to the redeemed, Andrew Lincoln concludes the following: "But these restrictions to redeemed families have to be read into the text." [Lincoln, 202]

**THERE IS NOT A SINGLE, GREAT 'FAMILY' OF ANGELS AND MEN** — "Further, ... [all families] grammatically can only mean 'every family', not 'the whole family.' All such ideas, therefore, as that angels and men, or the blessed in

heaven and the believing on earth, are in view as now making one great family, are excluded.” [Salmond, 312] “The various classes of men on earth, Jew, Gentile, and others, and the various orders of angels in heaven, are related to God, the common Father, and only in virtue of that relation has any of them the name of family.’ But we must be careful here to note that the fatherhood of God over all created intelligences is in the sense of Creator, as in Paul’s word to the Athenians, ‘We are the offspring of God,’ not at all in the sense of salvation where only saved individuals are children of God.” [Wuest, 87]

**‘EVERY FAMILY’ REPRESENTS GOD AS THE ORIGINAL AND PROTOTYPE OF ALL PATERNAL RELATIONS** — “The Apostle seems, regarding God as the Father of us His adopted children in Christ, to go forth into the fact, that He, in this His relation to us, is in reality the great original and prototype of the paternal relation, wherever found. And this he does, by observing that every πατριὰ [patria, ‘family’], compaternity, body of persons, having a common father, is thus named, from that father, — and so every earthly (and heavenly) family reflects in its name (and constitution) the being and sourceness of the great Father Himself.” [Alford, 109]

**GOD AS CREATOR AND LORD OF ALL FAMILIES INCLUDES GENTILES AS WELL AS JEWS** — “The God who is Father of all families is the same God who is Father of Jesus Christ (cf. 1:3, 17) and who is at work to redeem a cosmos which has become alienated from him (cf. 1:10, 21, 22; 3:10). Some have seen the significance of the reference to God the Father as Creator and Lord of all families at the beginning of this prayer-report in relation to the earlier theme of the inclusion of the Gentiles, suggesting that the universal scope of salvation is underlined, because God calls all families by their name, not just Israel.” [Lincoln, 203f] “The apostle alludes to that relationship which the Jews had with each other, through their father Abraham, to whom they trace their lineage. He proposes, on the contrary, to remove the distinction between Jews and Gentiles; and tells them, not only that all men have been brought into one family and one race through Christ, but that they are enabled to claim kindred even with angels.” [Calvin, Ephesians]

**GOD THE FATHER IS A GREAT GOD OVER ALL OTHER POWERS** — “Probably the primary reason for this elaboration in this address to God, however, is simply that it serves to stress the Father’s greatness. Elsewhere in the NT, Luke has the early Christians praying to God as Creator when they need to remind themselves that there is no opposing power that does not come under the superior sovereignty of its Creator (cf. Acts 4:24-30). Here too, where [Paul] is about to pray for the Church with its big role and intends to pray big prayers for its members (cf. vv 18, 19), he begins, as he ends in vv 20, 21, with a reminder in the address that he is praying to a big God, the scope of whose influence as Father extends over every grouping in the cosmos because he is the Creator and Lord of them all.” [Lincoln, 204] “This seems to me plainly to allude, and to be urged in opposition to Diana of Ephesus, who was the common goddess of the Asiatic cities, in whose worship they were united, and by whose common contributions her temple was built, which was the common temple of those incorporated cities, so that all Asia (as we have it, Acts 19:27) ‘worshipped her;’ which was therefore strictly and properly her family, over which she presided as the common mother and patroness; and there are models and ancient inscriptions remaining to this day, that abundantly prove it. Now the apostle tells these Ephesians, that, as Christians, they belonged to a nobler family, which took its denomination from, and was immediately subject to, God as a common Father; of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” — [Chandler; quoted in Calvin, Ephesians]

**in heaven and earth** — ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς [en ouranois kai epi gēs] — “In rabbinical thought the angels constitute the ‘family above,’ and men and women on earth — whether the people of Israel particularly or the human race as such — constitute the ‘family below.’” [Bruce, 325] “It is worth observing that the word ‘family’ was used by the Rabbis in a sense somewhat akin to the sense of this passage. With them ‘the upper family’ and ‘the lower family’ meant, respectfully, the Angels and Israel. Wetstein here quotes a Rabbinic comment on Jer. xxx. 6: — ‘All faces; even the faces of the upper and lower family; of the angels and Israel.’ And again; ‘God does nothing without counsel taken with His upper family.’ This is not a perfect parallel here, where, as we take it, the idea is strictly of one united brotherhood; but it is near enough to have had, possibly, a share in moulding the phrase here.” [Moule, 95f] “‘Every family in heaven,’ which is mentioned first, is best taken as referring to family groupings or classes of angels. This need not be taken to imply any notion of procreation among them (cf. Mark 12:25) ... but simply that all such groupings have their origin in the One who created such beings and is their Father. It is not only good angels who are in view. For [Paul] all such spirit powers, even the rebellious ones, owe their origin to God.” [Lincoln, 202] “But then, what are πατριαί [‘families’] in heaven? Some have treated the idea of paternity there as absurd: but is it not necessarily involved in any explanation of this passage? He Himself is the Father of spirits, Heb. xii. 9, the Father of lights, James i. 17: — may there not be fathers in the heavenly Israel, as in the earthly? May not the holy Angels be bound up in spiritual πατριαί, though they marry not nor are given in marriage?” [Alford, 109]

**THE WORD ‘HEAVEN’ USED HERE IS NOT OUR WORD FOR ‘IN THE HEAVENLIES’** — note the word for ‘heaven’ is not the same word for ‘the heavenlies’ that we have seen often in Ephesians; this is the normal, typical word for ‘heaven.’

**is named,** — ὀνομάζεται [onomazetai] — “In ancient times a ‘name’ was not just a means of distinguishing one person from another; it was particularly the means of revealing the inner being, the true nature of that person (cf. Gen. 25:26; 1 Sam. 25:25). So for God to give creatures a name was not simply to provide them with a label, but signifies his bringing them into existence, exercising dominion over them (cf. Ps. 147:4; Isa. 40:26), and giving each their appropriate role. The verse thus affirms that the Father is the Creator of all living beings (cf. Eph. 3:9; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-18), so that their existence and significance depend on him. His greatness and thus his sovereign power and authority in both heaven and earth are stressed. The readers, then, who fear the threat of hostile powers, would be further reassured that God is indeed able to fulfil the petitions addressed by the apostle on their behalf.” [O’Brien, 256] “The notion that all such family groupings, heavenly and

*earthly, derive their name from the Father not only underlines the play on words, but also evokes some of the OT connotations of 'naming' in terms of exercising dominion over or even bringing into existence (cf. Eccl 6:10, 'whatever has come to be has already been named,' or Ps 147:4 and Isa 40:26, where God's calling the stars by name shows him as their Creator and Lord). The Father, then, is Creator and Lord of all family groupings; their existence and significance is dependent on Him.... To extol God the Father as father of all family groupings in heaven and on earth is to set his fatherhood in the context of creation and of the cosmos.... Explicit statements of God's universal fatherhood are not found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, but a similar formulation occurs again later in this letter in 4:6, 'one God and Father of all,' and the thought has been prepared for by the reference in 3:9 to 'God who created all things.' It is certainly not surprising that it is Ephesians, which has already firmly set its Christology and its ecclesiology in a cosmic context, that also sets the fatherhood of God in such a context. God is not only Father as Redeemer but also as Creator." [Lincoln, 203] "As Father God is the one who gives names. In biblical thought this does not imply that those he names take on his name. A name is a means of identification, but it is much more. In the creation story Adam is given a responsibility for what God has created and gives names to the animals. Name-giving is thus associated with creation and to possess a name implies existence (cf Ps 147.4; Isa 40.26; Eccles 6.10); the name is also associated with redemption for believers are baptised into the name of Christ and so come under his authority. V. 15 is then saying something more than that God puts names on people and things .... It is the source of the naming that is stressed rather than action of naming." [Best, 337f]*