

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis  
LESSON LV : 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 (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.*

## **PAUL'S FIRST PRAYER PETITION (vv. 16~17a)**

<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,*

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

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

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

*“At the heart of Paul’s first petition (vv. 16-17a) for his readers is a request for power. He has already prayed that they might know God’s incomparably great might for them as believers (1:18-19a). Now he asks for divine power more directly — that God may strengthen them inwardly through his Spirit. If the apostle had urged his Christian readers not to be discouraged on account of his sufferings (3:13), then his prayer for them to be strengthened by God’s power was in order to meet this need.”*

[O’Brien, 256] *“Paul had declared that believing Jews and Gentiles are one new person in Christ (2:11-3:13). Although positionally that is true, Paul now petitions God for unity among believers who come from such different backgrounds.”*

[Hoehner, 476] *“This first major request of the prayer-report recalls the language of the earlier prayer-report in chap. 1, esp. 1:17, ‘that ... he may give you,’ and 1:18, ‘the wealth of the glory.’”* [Lincoln, 204]

**v. 16** — **that He would grant you** — ἵνα δόξη ὑμῖν [hina dōiē humin] — “[T]he conjunction [‘that’] normally indicates purpose (cf. Rom 1:11; Eph 2:7), but sometimes it denotes result (cf. John 9:2; Gal 5:17; Rev 9:20). In the context of prayer, however, it can denote content (Matt 24:20; 26:41; 1 Cor 14:13; Eph 1:17). This is the case here. In the case of prayer, it is difficult to distinguish between purpose and content.” [Hoehner, 477]

**CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LIFE OF GRACE** — *“The increase, as well as the commencement, of everything good in us, comes from the Holy Spirit. That it is the gift of Divine grace, is evident from the expression used, ‘that he would give to you.’ This the Papists utterly deny. They maintain that the second grace is bestowed upon us, according as we have individually deserved it, by making a proper use of the first grace. But let us unite with Paul in acknowledging that it is the ‘gift’ of the grace of God, not only that we have begun to run well, but that we advance; not only that we have been born again, but that we grow from day to day.”* [Calvin, Ephesians]

**according to the riches of His glory** — κατὰ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ [kata to ploutos tēs doxēs autou] — *“The resources available to fulfil this confident request are limitless: they are (lit.) ‘according to the riches of his glory,’ an expression similar to one used in the earlier prayer of 1:18, where the readers, who are God’s own inheritance, share in ‘the riches of his glory.’ ... Here this preposition [‘according to’], which Paul often uses in petitions and thanksgivings (Eph. 1:19; Phil. 4:19), draws attention not simply to the idea of source, thereby signifying ‘out of the wealth of his glory,’ but also indicates that his giving corresponds to the inexhaustible riches of that glory. It is on a scale commensurate with his glory: he gives as lavishly as only he can. It is not surprising, therefore, that the apostle frequently speaks of ‘fulness’, ‘riches’, and ‘abundance’ in his prayers (Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 1:11; note also Jas. 1:5). The one to whom he directed his requests gives richly and generously: ‘And my God will fully meet every need of yours in accordance with his riches in glory in Christ Jesus’ (Phil. 4:19). By formulating his prayer along these lines, the apostle assured his readers that the Father was wholly able to meet their needs.”* [O’Brien, 256f] *“God is the source of any strengthening in love that the readers are to receive and this because of his inexhaustible riches.... The wealth of God’s resources is there to sustain the readers in their daily lives.”* [Best, 339] *“[H]e does not give ‘out of’ but ‘according to’ the wealth of his glory.”* [Hoehner, 477] *“[A]ccording to,” indicates the norm or measure of God’s giving. For [Paul], God’s giving corresponds to the inexhaustible wealth of his radiance and power available to humanity, and that alone sets the limit for his prayer. In this way [Paul’s] formulation of his request is meant to evoke further the confidence of the readers in God’s ability to grant what is asked in a fashion more than adequate for their needs.”* [Lincoln, 204]

**GLORY** — *“That glory is God’s radiance or splendour, which conveys the ideas of the perfection of his character and activity. His glory is often conjoined with power (Rom. 6:4; Col. 1:11) and paralleled with his goodness (cf. Exod. 33:22 with v. 19).”* [O’Brien, 256f] *“[Glory] conveys the idea of the reflection of the essence of one’s being, the summation of all of one’s*

attributes.... In essence, he asks God to grant that forthcoming request according to the wealth of his essential being.” [Hoehner, 477f] “The phrase ‘the riches of (his) glory’ occurs in Paul in Rom 9:23 (cf. also Phil 4:19) and in Col 1:27. Glory can be synonymous with power (cf. Rom 6:4, where Christ is said to have been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and especially Col 1:11, which asks that the Colossians be empowered with all power according to the might of his glory). Here the term incorporates elements of both radiance and power as it conveys the perfection of God’s activity.” [Lincoln, 204] “δόξα [doxa, ‘glory’] in its biblical usage carries two flavours: radiance, power. The former predominated in the refrain of the eulogy (1.6, 12, 14), the latter is more appropriate here and was prepared for in 3.13.” [Best, 339]

**to be strengthened with might** — δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι [dunamei krataiōthēnai] — “*This prayer, like the counterpart of 1:15-23, is loaded with terms for power (vv. 16, 18). God’s mighty activity is stressed, first, by means of the relatively rare Greek word rendered ‘strengthen’, and then by the addition of the words ‘with power’ (a Semitic manner of expression; cf. 2 Kings 22:33), as Paul petitions God for their inner strengthening.*” [O’Brien, 257] “*Two words for power are used here. The first is [dunamis], which has the meaning of ‘power, ability, capability of acting,’ denoting capacity in view of its ability as already defined in 1:19 (cf. also 1:21; 3:7). The dative is instrumental and thus translated ‘with power.’ The second word is the complementary infinitive [krataiōthēnai] .... Outside the Bible it is found only in Philo where it means ‘to strengthen’ by exercise. In the LXX it occurs sixty-one times and in the canonical books it appears fifty-six times and translates twelve Hebrew words. Thirty times it translates [hāzaq] which means ‘to be or grow firm, strong, strengthen’ (1 Sam 4:9; 1 Kgs 20:22, 23,25; Neh 6:9). In the NT it is used only four times and always in the passive voice: Luke 1:80 and 2:40 state that Jesus grew and ‘became strong’ in spirit and wisdom; in 1 Cor 16:13 Paul exhorts believers to stand firm in the faith, be courageous, ‘be strong’; and in the present context Paul prays that God may grant the Ephesians ‘to be strengthened with power or ability.’ The passive voice reinforces the idea that it is God who gives the strength; it is not self-endowed.*” [Hoehner, 478]

**AVAILABLE AND NECESSARY FOR ALL BELIEVERS** — “*When the ‘inner man’ is fed regularly on the Word of God and seeks the Spirit’s will in all the decisions of life, the believer can be sure he will be ‘strengthened with power through His Spirit.’ Spiritual power is not the mark of a special class of Christian but is the mark of every Christian who submits to God’s Word and Spirit. Like physical growth and strength, spiritual growth and strength do not come overnight. As we discipline our minds and spirits to study God’s Word, understand it, and live by it, we are nourished and strengthened. Every bit of spiritual food and every bit of spiritual exercise add to our strength and endurance.*” [MacArthur, 105f] “[T]his is the petition which the apostle puts up on his bended knees to the Father of Christ, that he would strengthen these saints, that so they might not faint at the tribulations which either he or they endured. Believers in Christ need fresh supplies of strength to enable them to exercise grace, to perform duties, to resist Satan and his temptations, to oppose their corruptions, and to bear the cross, and undergo afflictions cheerfully, and to hold on and out to the end: this is a blessing that comes from God, and is a gift of his free grace; a “grant” from him who is the strength of the lives of his people, of their salvation, of their hearts, and of the work of grace in their hearts.” [Gill, Commentary on Whole Bible]

**through His Spirit** — διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ [dia tou pneumatos autou] — “*The fact that it is God’s power is further underscored by the following prepositional phrase ... ‘through his Spirit.’ While in 1:17 the Holy Spirit bestows insight and disclosure into the knowledge of God, here the Spirit acts as agent. In this capacity God enables believers to be strengthened with his power. This is not new or unusual, for already in the first prayer (1:15-23) Paul prayed that believers might know God’s power that he directs toward them. Hence, it is through God’s Spirit that the believer is to be strengthened with God’s ability to act.*” [Hoehner, 478] “This divine empowering will be effected through God’s Spirit, the same Spirit who, according to Paul’s prayer of 1:17, imparts wisdom and revelation so that the readers may know God better. The agency of the Spirit in dispensing divine power is in line with other New Testament teaching where the Spirit and power are intimately linked (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:4; 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5).” [O’Brien, 257] “Power is to be mediated to believers by the Spirit, who has been previously mentioned as the one by whom believers are sealed, as the guarantee of the full salvation of the age to come (1:13,1 4), and as the means by which God is present in the Church (2:22).” [Lincoln, 205]

**THE THIRD PERSON OF THE TRINITY** — “His Spirit: The Holy Ghost; everywhere present in the doctrine of this Epistle. He is so to deal with ‘the inner man’ as that the presence of Christ shall be permanent in the heart. Cp. Rom viii. 9, 10, where observe the transition from, ‘the Spirit of God dwelleth in you’, to, ‘Christ is in you.’ And see, too, the Lord’s words, Joh. xiv. 16, 18, 21, 23, xvi. 7, xvii. 11. There we find that while He is ‘no more in the world,’ and it is ‘expedient that He go away,’ yet ‘the Spirit of Truth’ shall not only come, but so come that the disciples shall not be ‘left orphans’; their Lord shall ‘come to them’; His Father and He will ‘make Their abode’ with each faithful believer. We thus get fragments of a Divine comment on the glorious passage now before us; to the effect that this Presence, this permanent Indwelling, of the Saviour, is essentially a Presence in and by the Spirit, mediated by the Spirit.” [Moule, 96]

**in the inner man** — εἰς τὸν ἕσω ἄνθρωπον [eis ton esō anthrōpon] — “*Paul now specifies that this was to be an inner strength as opposed to a physical strength.... The adverb ... ‘inner’ occurs nine times in the NT. Six times it is used as ‘inside’ a building, such as when Peter was ‘inside’ the courtyard of the high priest (Matt 26:58; Mark 14:54), when Jesus was brought ‘into’ the palace (Mark 15:16), when the disciples were inside the room at the time that Jesus appeared to Thomas (John 20:26), when the guards of the jail reported that the apostles were not ‘inside’ the jail (Acts 5:23), and when Paul exhorted the Corinthians to judge those ‘inside’ the church (1 Cor 5:12). The other three times Paul uses ‘inner’ with reference to a person.... In Rom 7:22 Paul refers to the law of God as being in the ‘inner’ person which is also called ‘my mind’ and is the opposite of the law of sin in the flesh (vv. 23, 25). In fact, later in Rom 12:2 Paul uses the term to exhort believers to be transformed by the renewing of the ‘mind.’ In 2 Cor 4:16 Paul speaks of our ‘inner’ person being renewed day by day while our ‘outer’ person is perishing. Hence,*

***the inner person is the heart or mind of the believer whereas the outer person is the physical body that is wasting away. In the present context it is the innermost being of the believer which is to be strengthened with God's power. That innermost being corresponds with the heart of the believer in the following verse.... Both in Rom 7 and 2 Cor 4 Paul depicts the believer as helpless without God's power. This corresponds with the present context where it speaks of the inner person's need to be strengthened with power through God's Spirit. In summary then, Paul prays that the Father from whom every family originates and by whom each is named would grant strength to the believers in Ephesus (according to the wealth of his essential being) with active power through the Holy Spirit in the inner person.*** [Hoehner, 478ff] “The sphere in which the strengthening is to take place is ‘the inner person’, a uniquely Pauline phrase in the New Testament (cf. Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 4:16). Some have understood this expression to denote ‘the new creation inwardly begotten by the Spirit in those who are united by faith to Christ’ (cf. Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). [e.g., F. F. Bruce] However, it is better to understand the inner person as ‘the interior of our being ... the seat of personal consciousness, ... [and] of our moral being’. [G. D. Fee, ‘God’s Empowering Presence, 695f] It is the focal point at the centre of a person’s life where the Spirit does his strengthening and renewing work. Indeed, the inner self stands in need of empowering given our struggle against sin (Rom. 7:22) and the need for daily renewal (2 Cor. 4:6). When the ‘outer person’ of the believer is wasting away, the ‘inner person’ is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). In the context of both 2 Corinthians 4 (v. 6; 5:12) and the following verse here (v. 17) heart is parallel to the ‘inner person.’” [O’Brien, 257f] “In the inner man: Lit., ‘into the inner man’; as if to say, ‘deep in it’; ‘penetrating far into it.’ — ‘The inner man’: — see for the same phrase, Rom vii. 22; 2 Cor iv. 16. Here it means, practically, the regenerate human spirit. In itself, the phrase may mean no more than the invisible as against the material man; but the three N.T. passages thus before us indicate its actual reference, in St Paul’s vocabulary, to the regenerate self.” [Moule, 97]