

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis  
LESSON LIX : 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 DOXOLOGY (vv. 20, 21)**

**WHAT IS A DOXOLOGY?** — the quick definition of a doxology is 'a short, spontaneous ascription of praise to God.' The word comes from the Greek, δόξα = doxa, 'glory' + λογία = logia, 'word, saying.' "The doxology is a form appearing regularly in the NT but of uncertain origin.... It consists of three elements: the name or title of the addressee, a statement of praise, a period of time. Its simplest form (Rom 11.36) is 'to God' (be) the glory for ever'. It is not clear if the accompanying 'amen' belongs to the form or represents an expected response from hearers. Each basic element may be extended; the addressee may be unnamed but can be inferred from the context (e.g. Rom 16.25-7; Gal 1.5); normally it is God, but may be Christ, though the language can be ambiguous (Heb 13.21; 1 Pet 4.11). 1 Tim 1.17; Phil 4.20 are examples of extended references to the addressee. The element of praise may be limited to the single word δόξα [doxa, 'glory'] (e.g. Gal 1.5; Phil 4.20; Rom 16.27) but is often more extensive (1 Pet 4.11; Rev 1.6). The normal temporal reference is not the simplest form but εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων [eis tas aiōnas tōn aiōnōn, 'for ever and ever'; lit. 'to the ages of the ages'] (Rom 16.27 [sic]; Gal 1.5; Phil 4.20). Doxologies normally appear towards the end of documents but they can come at important breaks in the argument (Rom 11.36; Gal 1.5; 1 Pet 4.11); they also form a suitable ending to a hymn or prayer (Rom 11.33-6; 1 Tim 6.16)." [Best, 348f]

**THE LINK BETWEEN THE PRAYER AND THE DOXOLOGY** — "This first and 'theological' section of the letter concludes, as Romans, with a doxology (cf Rom 11.26). The only possible response in the light of what has been said about God in 1.3-3.19 is to voice his praise." [Best, 348] "The link between the doxology and the preceding prayer-report is found in the thought of v 20 that God 'is able to do infinitely more abundantly above all that we ask,' which reflects the transition from request to praise." [Lincoln, 198] "The apostle Paul was accustomed to asking God for extravagant blessings on behalf of his Christian readers (Phil. 1:9; 4:19; Col. 1:9-14; 1 Thess. 3:12; 2 Thess. 1:3; cf. 1 Cor. 1:5). Here he has just petitioned the Father for spiritual blessings of extraordinary value, including the request that they might be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.... 'No prayer that has ever been framed has uttered a bolder request.' Has the apostle, then, 'gone over the top'? No, for it is impossible to ask for too much since the Father's giving exceeds their capacity for asking or even imagining." [O'Brien, 266] "Paul's prayer had apparently reached a height beyond which neither faith, nor hope, nor even imagination could go, and yet he is not satisfied. An immensity still lay beyond. God was able to do not only what he had asked, but infinitely more than he knew how either to ask or think. Having exhausted all the forms of prayer, he casts himself on the infinitude of God, in full confidence that he can and will do all that omnipotence itself can effect. His power, not our prayers nor our highest conceptions, is the measure of the apostle's anticipations and desires. This idea he weaves into a doxology, which has in it more of heaven than of earth." [Hodge, 135]

### **FIRST ELEMENT OF NT DOXOLOGIES**

*The mention of the one to whom glory is given. This is the most variable.*

**v. 20** — **Now to Him who is able** — τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ [tōi de dunamenōi] — **NOW TO HIM 'WHO HAS THE POWER TO DO ...'** — "The doxology begins with an ascription of power to God. The literal rendering, 'to him who is able', obscures the link with power in vv. 16 and 20 (dunamenō, 'to be able', is cognate with dunamis, 'power'). He is 'the powerful One' (cf. Rom. 16:25; Jude 24, 25), who can accomplish incredibly great deeds on behalf of his people. Perhaps Paul has in mind the Father bringing 'every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' (1:3) to realization among his Christian readers.... In the earlier petition of chapter 1, God's effective power towards believers (1:19) was said to be nothing less than 'the operation of his mighty strength' exerted in the resurrection of Christ (1:20). Now that same power which raised Christ from the dead, enthroned him in the heavenlies, and then raised and enthroned us with him, is at work within us to achieve infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. In the doxology Paul thus praises God for the bestowal of strength by his Spirit on his people, and affirms that the full realization of God's gracious purposes for them and in them becomes possible." [O'Brien, 267] "Other ascriptions of glory to God which begin with τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ [tō de dunamenō], 'now to him who is able,' can be found in Rom 16:25; Jude 24, 25; and [the Martyrdom of Polycarp] 20.2. The English translation obscures the link there is in the Greek text here in v 20

between this verbal form δυνάμενῳ [dunamenō], ‘is able,’ and its cognate noun δύναμις [dunamis], ‘power.’ The preceding prayer had asked that the readers be strengthened through the Spirit with power (v 16). Now the doxology praises the one who possesses this power that is already at work in them, and at work in a way that is far in excess of anything they could request in their prayers or could even imagine.” [Lincoln, 215] “There is a play on words δυνάμενῳ – δύναμιν [dunamenōi, verb participle, ‘to be powerful, to be able’ – dunamin, noun, ‘power’] which is impossible to reproduce in English because the participle offers a shade of meaning which is absent from the English ‘power, might’; *God’s power is the central element of the praise.*” [Best, 349]

**‘HIM’ = GOD THE FATHER** — “The addressee is unnamed but God is the nearest reference (v. 19) and so the doxology is offered to him; it cannot be Christ since he is referred to in v. 21.” [Best, 349]

**above all things to do exceedingly abundantly** — ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπὲρ ἐκπερισσοῦ [panta poiēsai huper ekperissou] — “The adverb ὑπὲρ ἐκπερισσοῦ [huperekperissou] appears three times in the NT (Eph 3:20; 1 Thess 3:10; 5:13), it is the ‘highest form of comparison imaginable’ and can be translated ‘exceedingly, infinitely’ or ‘very far in excess of’.... It could be literally translated ‘to the one who is able to do beyond everything, very far in excess of that which we ask or think’. In other words, his ability far surpasses not only what we verbalize in prayer but also beyond our wildest imaginations.” [Hoehner, 493] “The word [huperekperissou] is made up of perissos, ‘exceeding some number or measure, over and above, more than necessary,’ ek, which is perfective in force here, intensifying the already existing idea in the verb, here adding the idea of exhaustlessness, and huper, ‘above.’ The compound word is a superlative of superlatives in force. *It speaks of the ability of God to do something, that ability having more than enough potential power, this power exhausted, and then some on top of that.*” [Wuest, 91] “Not even the immensity of the request in the preceding verses nor the unfettered ability of the human imagination can provide any limit to God’s mighty ability to act. As the readers are drawn in to share his prayer concerns, ‘all we ask or imagine’, the apostle’s language is stretched to its limits: he uses a comparison of a rare compound adverb which is best rendered by ‘infinitely more than’. There is no limit to what God can do.” [O’Brien, 267]

*‘exceeding some number or measure, over and above, more than necessary’*

PLUS

(intensifying prefix)

PLUS

‘hyper’ prefix

**what we ask or think** — ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν [hōn aitoumetha ē nooumen] — **PAUL BRINGS US INTO HIS PRAYER / DOXOLOGY** — “Whereas the prayer-report is expressed in the first person singular (cf. v 14), the doxology employs the first person plural in this clause. In this way, the readers are drawn further into sharing [Paul’s] prayer concerns — ‘we ask’ — and his praise. They are also drawn further into the breadth of his vision of God’s power. Not even the boldness of his earlier petition comes near to taxing such power. Neither the boldest human prayer nor the greatest power of human imagination could circumscribe God’s ability to act.” [Lincoln, 216]

**‘ASK FOR ONE’S SELF’** — “The word ‘ask’ is aiteō, ‘to ask that something be given’; it is a request of the will. The verb here is in the middle voice, ‘to ask for one’s self or in one’s own interest.’” [Wuest, 91] “Middle voice. ‘we ask for ourselves.’” [Robertson, Word Pictures]

**GOD NOT LIMITED BY OUR CAPACITY TO ASK** — “Has Paul sought too much from God for his fellow-believers — praying that they may be filled up to the level of the divine fullness? They might think so as they heard this letter read aloud, but Paul reassures them: it is impossible to ask God for too much. His capacity for giving far exceeds his people’s capacity for asking — or even imagining.” [Bruce, 330] “[H]e can do more than men ask for, as he did for Solomon: God knows what we want before we ask, and he has made provisions for his people before they ask for them; some of which things we never could, and others we never should have asked for, if he had not provided them; and without the Spirit of God we know not what to ask for, nor how to ask aright; this affords great encouragement to go to God, and ask such things of him as we want, and he has provided; and who also can do more than we can think, imagine, or conceive in our minds.” [Gill, Commentary on Whole Bible] “Humans can neither encompass and contain God by their thinking (cf Isa 55.8f) nor even imagine how all-embracing his care for them is. The greatness of his care is linked to his power, a theme which came to prominence in the first intercession (1.19), was renewed in the second (vv. 16-18), and occurs repeatedly throughout the letter.” [Best, 350]

**according to the power that is working in us** — κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν [kata tēn dunamin tēn energoumenēn en hēmin] — “Something of the force of [Paul’s] rhetoric can be captured by showing the build-up of the thought reflected by his language. God is said to be able to do what believers ask in prayer; he is able to do what they might fail to ask but what they can think; he is able to do all they ask or think; he is able to do above all they ask or think; he is able to do abundantly above all they ask or think; he is able to do more abundantly above all they ask or think; he is able to do infinitely more abundantly above all they ask or think. And what is more, says [Paul], this inexpressible power is at work within us! ... Earlier, God’s power, effective toward believers (1:19), was said to be actually at work (ἐνεργεῖν, energein) within Christ (1:20). Now that language is used of believers — τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν, [tēn energoumenēn en hēmin] — ‘which is at work within us.’” [Lincoln, 215f] “The infinite power of God, from which so much may be expected, is the same of which

we are now the subjects. It is that power which wrought in Christ when it raised him from the dead, and set him at the right hand of God, chap. i. 19,20; and which has wrought an analogous change in the believer, in raising him from the death of sin, and making him to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; and which still sustains and carries on the work of salvation in the soul. The past is a foretaste and pledge of the future. Those who have been raised from the dead, who have been transformed by the renewing of their minds, translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and in whom God himself dwells by his Spirit, having already experienced a change which nothing but omnipotence could effect, may well join in the doxology to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." [Hodge, 135f]

## SECOND ELEMENT OF NT DOXOLOGIES

### *The ascription of glory or its equivalent — honor, greatness, or power.*

**v. 21 — to Him be the glory —** αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα [autōi hē doxa] — “[This is] a statement of fact, rather than a wish or prayer. God already has glory and there is no need to pray for him to receive it. [Glory] belongs to God (3.16); it is because he has made his glory known, just as he made known his power and love, that humans can affirm his glory and praise him for it.” [Best, 350] “[‘Glory’] conveys the reflection of the essence of one’s being, the summation of all of one’s attributes. In this context it specifically refers to God’s splendor, power, and radiance. Paul gives glory to God because of his essential character, a practice which should be observed by all believers. We have a tendency to petition God while we ignore his right to praise, not only for what he has done but also for who he is.” [Hoehner, 494] “In the Old Testament [glory] was primarily the brightness or radiance of God’s presence. To give God glory is not to add something to him; rather, it is an active acknowledgement or extolling of who he is or what he had already done (Ps. 29:2; 96:8). Although many New Testament doxologies contain no verb, the indicative ‘is’ or ‘belongs’ is presupposed: the doxology is an affirmation rather than a wish.” [O’Brien, 268] “To give glory to God is either to praise him or to reveal his glory, i.e., cause it to be seen and acknowledged. Thus the doxology, ‘To Him be glory.’ may mean either, ‘Let Him be praised;’ or, ‘Let His glory be acknowledged.’” [Hodge, 136]

**in the congregation, assembly, church —** ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ [en tē ekklēsiā] — **UNUSUAL DOXOLOGY** — There are many doxologies given throughout the New Testament:

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men! (Luke 2:14)*

*who is blessed forever. Amen (Rom 1:25)*

*who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. (Rom 9:5)*

*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:36)*

*Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith — to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. (Rom 16:25-27)*

*to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Gal 1:5)*

*Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil 4:20)*

*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim 1:17)*

*to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen. (1 Tim 6:16)*

*To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! (2 Tim 4:18)*

*to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb 13:21)*

*to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 4:11)*

*To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 5:11)*

*To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. (2 Pet 3:18)*

*To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 25)*

*to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev 1:5,6)*

*You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created. (Rev 4:11)*

*Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever! (Rev 5:13)*

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever.  
Amen. (Rev 7:12)

**I listed the above so as to emphasize the uniqueness of Paul's doxology here in Ephesians 3:**

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the ecclesia by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:20,21)

**“What is so striking about this particular doxology is the way in which [Paul’s] dominant interests have shaped it, so that it becomes the only doxology in the NT to include both a reference to the Church and the phrase ‘in Christ Jesus’ (some have ‘through Christ Jesus’; cf. Rom 16:25-27; Jude 24, 25). Striking also, as the textual history witnesses, is the order in which the Church and Christ are mentioned. In line with [Paul’s] earlier emphasis on the Church as the sphere of God’s presence and rule (e.g., 1:22b, 23; 2:22; 3:10), his doxology sees the Church as the sphere in which God’s glory is acknowledged. Glory is ascribed to God in the worship and praise of the redeemed community, but this will be not only in its cultic activity but also in the whole of its existence (cf. 1:6, 12, 14).”** [Lincoln, 217] **“The wording ‘to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus’ is unusual. It does not imply that ‘the church’ and ‘Christ Jesus’ are placed on a level with each other. God is to be glorified in the church because the church, comprising Jews and Gentiles, is his masterpiece of grace. It is through the church that his wisdom is made known to the spiritual forces of the heavenly realm. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God’ but even greater glory is shown by his handiwork in the community of reconciliation.”** [Bruce, 331] “The second element of the doxology is extended. Christ, when not the one to whom the doxology is addressed, often appears as the one through whom God is approached (Rom 16.27; 1 Pet 4.11), but here however glory is said to be ‘in him’ and then, surprisingly, the church is set in parallel with him.... In the phrase ‘in the church and in Christ Jesus’, [the word ‘in’] must be given the same meaning on each occasion. Since it can hardly have any other than a local significance with reference to the church, it must mean the same when applied to Christ. Such a local significance is found elsewhere with the phrase ‘in Christ’. [Paul] appears to have come close here to equating Christ and the church, yet elsewhere he clearly distinguishes between them: Christ is head and bridegroom; the church is his body and wife or bride. As for the positioning of the church before Christ, the same order appears in 4.4f. In v. 21 [Paul] may be seeking a climactic effect. [The word ‘and’] does not necessarily imply equality [note ‘and’ is missing from Stephen’s Greek text]. God’s glory is both to be praised in the church and can be seen in the church, for the church is related to the fullness of Christ (1.23), and is his body and bride. In so far as the church is worthy, pure and immaculate, and this she is (5.27), she exhibits God’s glory, and the powers learn from her. She is his dwelling-place in the Spirit (2.22; 1 Cor 3.16) and where he dwells, his glory dwells, as it did in the temple in Jerusalem. The church however has no human glory for, of and in herself, she is weak and sinful. God’s glory is certainly to be found in Christ and may be ascribed to him (1 Cor 2.8; 2 Cor 3.18; 4.4; Phil 4.19). It is neither the statement that God’s glory is to be seen in the church nor that it is to be seen in Christ that is then exceptional, only their collocation. As for the collocation, Christ and the church are regularly related in this letter: 1.23, the church is the fullness of Christ; 2.21, Christ is its angle-stone; 4.15f, he is the head of his body which is the church; 5.22ff, he is the bridegroom (husband) of the church which is his bride (wife). It is their close relation which has led them to be put in parallel: ‘The glory that belongs to the Head fills the Body; the glory that belongs to the Husband shines in his Wife, whose status is determined by his. Thus the glory that is seen in the Church is not its own glory but derives from Christ’” [Best, 350f; quote is from his own work, ‘One Body’]

col-lo-ca-tion [kol-uh-key-shuhn] – noun: the arrangement, especially of words in a sentence

**‘THE ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS, THEN CHRIST’ — “[Marcus] Barth finds the order ‘startling’ because human beings are mentioned before their Messiah. In fact, the words are transposed in some manuscripts, but there is not very good evidence to support such a reading. However, the present order is not as much of a problem as it may appear. Paul simply wants to praise God for his creation, the church into which believing Jews and Gentiles are united. Furthermore, he wants to give glory in Christ Jesus who is the head of this church and in whom the union was accomplished (cf. 2:16, 19). Barth even admits that in 4:4-6 the church is mentioned before God because the church is the locus of God’s praise. Indeed, the church is central to the entire context. Christ Jesus is mentioned because the church could not have come into existence without him. He fulfilled all the righteous demands of the law, thus destroying the enmity between Jews and Gentiles (2:14). Praise is rendered for genuine reconciliation, not just cessation of hostility but genuine love for one another. Therefore, God is to be glorified in the church because his power and splendor are displayed there and he is glorified in Christ Jesus because Christ’s work, which pleased the Father, made the church possible.”** [Hoehner, 494f] **“Here the wording ‘to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus’ is unusual, for this is the only doxology in the New Testament where the term ‘church’ and the phrase ‘in Christ Jesus’ appear (though cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Jude 24, 25). But both are appropriate in the light of the immediate and wider contexts of chapters 1-3. As the community of the redeemed, both Jews and Gentiles, the church is the masterpiece of God’s grace (cf. 2:7). It is the realm of his presence and authority (1:22, 23; 2:22), the instrument through which his wisdom is made known to the spiritual powers in the heavenly realm (3:10).”** [O’Brien, 268] “As for the sequence in which the Church is mentioned before Christ, it is not unusual for [Paul in Ephesians] to move in his thought from the present visible sphere of God’s activity on earth to that on which it is ultimately dependent (cf. especially 4:4-6, ‘one body ... one Lord ... one God and Father’). So here glory is ascribed to God in the Church, which is the body of Christ and the primary sphere of his present activity, and in Christ Jesus himself, who is the exalted Head of this Church and the one upon whom its activity and indeed its very existence depend.” [Lincoln, 217]

**[and] by Christ Jesus** — [καί] λησιᾶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ [(kai) en christōi iēsou] — *“God’s glory ‘in the church’ cannot be separated from his glory ‘in Christ Jesus.’ This expression of incorporation signifies that believers are able to ascribe glory to God because they are ‘in Christ Jesus’. Just as ‘every spiritual blessing’ is given to us ‘in Christ’ (1:3), so our acknowledging the Father’s glory is wholly dependent on Christ Jesus; it is rendered by those who have been incorporated into him. He is the mediator of God’s activity to us, and the mediator of our response of praise to the Father. Just as our thanksgiving to God can only be given in the name of the Lord Jesus (5:20), so also glory can be ascribed to God only within the realm of Christ Jesus.”* [O’Brien, 268f] “God’s glory is also acknowledged in another locus, ‘in Christ Jesus.’ Because believers have been incorporated into Christ, he can be seen as the sphere in which their glorification of God takes place. This is [Paul’s] way of stressing that the Church’s ascription of glory to God is dependent on Christ, both as the mediator of God’s activity to humanity in the first place and as the mediator of humanity’s response of praise to God (cf. also 5:20).” [Lincoln, 217]

## THIRD ELEMENT OF NT DOXOLOGIES

### *The temporal expression.*

**to all generations, forever and ever.** — εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰῶνων [eis pasas tas geneas tou aiōnos tōn aiōnōn] — lit., ‘unto all the generations of the age of the ages.’ *“Eternity is conceived as consisting of ‘ages’ endlessly succeeding one another.”* [JFB, Commentary on Whole Bible] *“This ascription of glory to God will have no end. The present as well as the coming ages, when the incomparable wealth of God’s grace continues to be ‘expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus’ (2:7), provides the occasion for endless praise.... [T]hroughout all generations for ever and ever’ is without parallel in the New Testament, though characteristics of the style of Ephesians (lit. ‘to all the generations of the age of the ages’; the inclusion of the term ‘generation’ and its combination with the singular and plural forms of ‘age’ are unique features). Glory is due to God for generations to come and right on throughout all eternity. The more common eternity formula is ‘for ever and ever’ (cf. Gal 1:5; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18), which is an emphatic variation of the common LXX expression and means ‘for all eternity’ in an unlimited sense.”* [O’Brien, 269] “The third element of the doxology is again unusually lengthy, thereby emphasising the everlasting significance of God’s glory. One generation, γενεά [genea], is a limited period; many generations are an indefinitely long period and the plural is used in this sense in the OT (Exod 40.15; Ps 105.31; Dan 6.27 LXX; Isa 51.8; Joel 2.2) and, though not so regularly, in the NT (Lk 1.50). In it the plural of αἰών [aiōn] is more usual (Mt 21.19; Mk 3.29; Rom 1.25; 11.36; 1 Cor 8.13) or the extended phrase οἱ αἰῶνες τῶν αἰῶνων [hoi aiōnes tōn aiōnōn] (Rom 16.27; Gal 1.5; Phil 4.20; 1 Tim 1.17; 2 Tim 4.18). The singular of the noun followed by the plural, as here, appears in Ps 9.6. [The Greek words for ‘generations’ and ‘ages’] are often associated in phrases denoting an unlimited period (Exod 40.15; Ps 105.31; Isa 51.8; Joel 2.2; Dan 6.27 LXX). The precise phrase in v. 21 is not found elsewhere but a considerable number of variant phrases use its two nouns.” [Best, 351] “There are other unique features of this doxology. It stands alone among the NT doxologies in its inclusion of the term γενεά, ‘generation,’ and in its combination of the singular and plural forms of αἰών. There are other early Christian doxologies which use some form of γενεά. 1 Clement 61.3 has εἰς γενεὰν γενεῶν καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων, which is similar to the LXX idiom for ‘to all generations’ (cf. LXX Isa 51:8; Joel 2:2; 3:20; Judith 8:32; Ecclesiasticus 39:9), and the Martyrdom of Polycarp 21 has ἀπὸ γενεᾶς εἰς γενεά, another LXX idiom, ‘from generation to generation’ (cf. LXX Ps 10:6; 85:5). The usual NT formulation, which repeats αἰών, combines two plurals, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων, but the combination of the singular with the plural does occur twice in the LXX (cf. LXX Dan 3:90; 7:18).... [T]he dominant early Christian formula for eternity [was] εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων.” [Lincoln, 217] “The idea of eternity or of endless duration is variously expressed in Scripture. Sometimes eternity is conceived of as one, and the singular αἰών [aiōn] is used; sometimes as an endless succession of periods or ages, and then the plural αἰῶνες [aiōnes] is used. Thus εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα [eis ton aiōna], to eternity, and εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [eis tous aiōnas], or εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων [eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn], to the ages indefinitely, i.e., endless ages, alike mean ‘for ever.’ ... The peculiarity of the case before us is, that the apostle combines these two forms: εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰῶνων [eis pasas tas geneas tou aiōnos tōn aiōnōn], ‘to all the generations of an eternity of ages.’ This is in keeping with the cumulative character of the whole context. Finding no ordinary forms of expression suited to his demands, the apostle heaps together terms of the largest import to give some vent to thoughts and aspirations which he felt to be unutterable.” [Hodge, 136f]

**Amen.** — ἀμήν [amēn] — *“[Amēn] appears regularly in the NT as the final word in doxologies and prayers (e.g. Mt 6.13; Rom 1.25; 9.5; 11.36; 15.33; 16.27). While it can also denote the response of a congregation affirming agreement with a prayer which has just been uttered, this is hardly its function here or indeed in many other NT passages. When a letter was read aloud in a Christian gathering; unless believers knew it well, they would not have known where to respond with their ‘Amen’. It is [Paul’s] way of affirming the importance of what he has just said, ‘This is true’, and so adding emphasis. Yet it may be that a skilful reader, realising the change of subject-matter which is just about to take place, would see it as an appropriate place to halt for a moment and draw breath, and in the brief interval the congregation would respond with their ‘Amen’ to this.”* [Best, 351f] “The glory belongs to God in the Church and in Christ Jesus in history and on into eternity is to be confirmed by the readers with their ‘Amen.’ Originally Amen was not the ending for prayer or a way of strengthening one’s own prayer, and in the NT ἀμήν [amēn] is nearly always used after a doxology. When the pattern used here of intercessory prayer followed by doxology became the usual pattern for concluding prayer, then Amen occurred at the end of prayers and out of this came the custom of concluding every prayer with Amen.... This doxology with its Amen can be seen to be an entirely appropriate ending for the first part of the letter, as the writer encourages his readers yet again to share his vision of the God

whose final goal in accomplishing salvation in history is his own eternal glorification, the same vision that had dominated the berakah with which [Paul] had begun in 1:3-14.” [Lincoln, 218] “The spontaneous endorsement of the doxology by each congregation, as it was read in their reading, follows in their ‘Amen’. Glory does indeed belong to God in the church and in Christ Jesus in history and for all eternity. ‘Amen’ was the response uttered on solemn occasions in the Old Testament to confirm a curse or adjuration, to accept a blessing, or to associate oneself with a doxology. Each of the doxologies which concludes the first four books of the Psalter (Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48) ends with an ‘Amen’, while prayers and doxologies in the New Testament are strengthened and endorsed by it (Rom. 1:25; Gal. 1:5). The ‘Amen’ makes it clear that the ascription of praise is not simply a matter of th elips, but is the spontaneous response of the whole congregation. Elsewhere Paul strikingly connects believers’ response of ‘Amen’ to the faithfulness of God, who has said ‘Yes’ to all his promises in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). With this loud ‘Amen’ the first half of the letter is concluded.” [O’Brien, 269]