

# Doxology in 1 Timothy

*Godliness and Baptism*

<sup>15b</sup> ... He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

<sup>16</sup> who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

(1 Timothy 6:15b-16)

## Praise and Glory

Probably the most sung lyric on any given Lord's Day in America is what is known by most simply as *The Doxology*. The famous lines say,

*Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him, all creatures here below  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

It would be easy to think this a most ancient song. However, it was penned relatively recently, in 1674, and published in 1695 by one of the fathers of modern hymnody, **Thomas**

Ken. It was the last of fourteen stanzas for his hymn, “[Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun](#),” which was written to be sung during morning and evening worship at Winchester College.

Far older is [the Gloria Patri](#) (“Glory be to the Father”), also called the *Lesser Doxology* (*doxologia minor*), forms of which go back to at least [the fourth century](#). The Greek version says,

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,  
Both now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

(Δόξα Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι,  
καὶ νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.)

At some point, the Latin church seems to have added the words “[as it was in the beginning](#)” (*Sicut erat in principio*) before “[both now and always](#),” which begs the question, [to what does the “it” refer?](#) Today, everyone understands it to be talking about God receiving [glory](#), which makes sense of the earlier version. However, in 529, the [Second Synod of Vasio](#) said the words were added as a protest against Arianism, meaning, “it” referred to [the Son](#) (*Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto*) or in other words, “[As He was in the](#)

beginning, so is *He* now and so shall *He* be forever,” which is a clear allusion to John’s Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the case, this *Lesser Doxology* is even younger than the *Greater Doxology* (*doxologia major*), which is also much longer. Also called, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, the version in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662) reads,

*Glory be to God on high  
And in earth peace, goodwill towards men,*

*We praise thee, we bless thee,  
we worship thee, we glorify thee,  
we give thanks to thee, for thy great glory  
O Lord God, heavenly King,  
God the Father Almighty.*

*O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ;  
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
that takest away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.*

*Thou that takest away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.*

*Thou that takest away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer.*

*Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father,  
have mercy upon us.*

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<sup>1</sup> For more see “Doxology,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: 1909), <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05150a.htm>.

*For thou only art holy;  
thou only art the Lord;  
thou only, O Christ,  
with the Holy Ghost,  
art most high  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.*

Perhaps you can hear in these words an echo of [the angels' song](#) at the birth of Christ in Luke's Gospel.

## **Doxology**

### *Paul at the End of 1 Timothy*

These three songs are simply among [the best-known examples](#) of hundreds of doxologies that the church has been singing in its worship since the very beginning. So why do we sing them? Why do we evoke them and when? What function do they serve in our lives and the life of the church? As we enter our last sermon on 1 Timothy, [doxology is a great way to conclude](#). After all, just five verses from the end, Paul calls up one last word, not to Timothy, but to God. [“He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen](#)

or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen”  
(1Tim 6:15-16).

Why would Paul proclaim a doxology now? Why does he choose the things he chooses to say here rather than something else? What is the purpose? Is it purely a spontaneous praise? If so, what brought that about? If not, could there be more going on here than simply praising God? To answer these questions, I want us to look at doxology today, both as an idea and as a formal liturgical element of the church's worship.

### *Defining a Doxology*

A good place to begin is by defining our term. What is a doxology? You have heard many words in your life that end *-logy*. For example, eulogy, trilogy, apology, analogy, biology. The thing is this ending can be difficult to pin down.

- Biology = the study (*-logy*) of life (*bio-*)
- Analogy = according to (*ana-*) ratio/words (*logos*)
- Apology = a defense (*apologia*) or away from (*apo-*) words (*logos*)
- Trilogy = three (*tri-*) stories (*logos*)
- Eulogy = well (*eu-*) speaking (*-logy*)

From these you can see that the ending can refer to a study of something or to a ratio or to words, stories, or speaking.

So what is a doxology? Doxology comes from *doxa* (glory/praise; from *dokein*—to seem good) and *logos* (a word). So a doxology is literally **the speaking of a good or glorious word**. Biblically speaking, a doxology **is not a good word about just any old thing**. The Proverbs give us many good words, including words about the good. “Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor, but evil comes to him who searches for it” (**Prov 11:27**). “A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of evil devices he condemns” (**12:2**). And so on. These are literally speaking of good words, but **no one would call them doxologies**.

Rather, doxologies are good words that are **spoken to someone**, not about something. But still, this is not enough. David spoke good words to Mephibosheth saying, “Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan...” (**2Sam 9:7**). **No one would mistake this** for a doxology. Rather, doxologies are words that **give blessing and praise** to a person. Along these lines, David tells Abigail, “Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand!” (**1Sam 25:33**). But this *still*

doesn't properly define a doxology. For the "someone" being praised is not just any old person. Rather, a doxology is a word of praise or blessing ... to God.

## *Doxology in the Bible*

There are many doxologies in the Bible. James Hamilton identifies twenty-one of them in the NT (see Appendix 1) and there are undoubtedly more. But doxologies are hardly a NT phenomenon. Sometimes they are found on the lips of individuals after matters of the utmost significance in their lives. For example, Abraham's servant said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the way to the house of my master's kin" (Gen 24:27), or David said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!" (1Sam 25:32). Have you ever had an experience where you couldn't help but praise God?

Other times, they are more formal doxologies that are incorporated into the corporate liturgical settings of the people of God. For instance, Moses' great song at the end of Deuteronomy begins, "I will proclaim the Name of the

LORD; ascribe greatness to our God!” (Deut 32:3), or David in Psalm 41, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen” (Ps 41:13). Formal doxologies are not spontaneous, but they serve as a weekly reminder of our purpose for existing, to give praise to God. Sometimes they even lead us to spontaneous doxology in worship. But even if they do not, if they are said by faith, then the emotional attachment of a spontaneous praise for something that God has just done for us is not needed, for God loves any praise we give him by faith.

In the NT, many doxologies either begin or end one of the NT letters, while others end a major section of the book. Most of them end with the word “Amen.” Perhaps two of the best known are in Romans and Jude. At the end of perhaps the greatest theological treatise ever written (Romans 1-11), just before he launches into the implications of this theology for God’s people in their personal and corporate lives, Paul it appears almost uncontrollably cannot help but conclude, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his



counselor?’ ‘Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Rom 11:33-36). Deep theology is never to be an end to itself, for we are not studying for the sake of a head trip; we study to know God better. The point is to learn what God is like and when that is done properly, there is no other possible proper response. Like many doxologies, this one feels spontaneous and yet, ironically compulsory, for he has been subdued by this God. He can’t help himself!

Jude, on the other hand, sets his at the end of his letter as both a doxology to God and a blessing to God’s people. “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 1:24-25). That should tell you a little something about how their purpose is not merely to praise God, but that doxologies also exist for us, as we find ourselves swept up in the majesty of incomprehensible Deity. As we learn what God is like and as we praise him by faith, God takes this very praise and uses it to bless his people because he loves to show

his glory and loving kindness to them. For this brings him even more glory which starts the cycle all over, leading us to more doxology!

### *The Focus of Doxology: The Character and Acts of God*

These two doxologies should make us want to ask about the focus of the content of doxologies. When we begin looking at them, they really fall into two categories—the character or nature of God and the acts of God in history and for his people. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel” (Luke 1:68), says Zechariah, as he sees baby Jesus—the Redeemer of Israel. “Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation” (Ps 68:19) says the Psalmist. God comes into history. He is not some Watchmaker in the sky who makes his creation-clock, winds it up, and goes off to work on more important things than this earth. He is not a god who looks upon the woes of his people and sits there aloofly or helplessly or vindictively. He enters into our condition and rescues us, personally, through the agency of his Son and Spirit.

It is these acts that often cause the most spontaneous doxologies to arise from the heart and off the lips of his

people. When **some unexpected blessing** or even a seeming miracle takes place in your life—your child is saved from being hit by a speeding truck, the exact amount of the mortgage you couldn't pay this month shows up unexpectedly in your mailbox, someone brings you an surprising meal when you've been sick, or gives you a car so you can get your kids to school, a friend's cancer vanishes suddenly ... these kinds of things generate spontaneous praise and doxology to God in the life of a believer. **It isn't being "thankful to the universe,"** it is the heart-felt acknowledgement that God is working in your life. He hasn't left you. He cares about you and loves you. And he shows you through his Providence.

But **his long-terms acts** bring forth praise on **a more consistent and enduring basis**, though usually less emotional. You continue to be free to worship God in a nation full of wickedness and evil that deserves punishment; his faithfulness to his people has been on constant display for thousands of years through the testimonies of the saints who suffered and still praised; your marriage has now lasted 60+ years to your spouse; most of all, when you were not looking for him, you look back at how God arrested you in

your sin and showed to you his mercy in Christ and saved you.

Someone who has never known the mercies of God in their life, who takes for granted his blessings, who doesn't realize what the acts of God in [the history of salvation](#), from the Flood to the Exodus to the Captivity to the sending of the Savior—such a person will never know the first thing about praising God in doxology. For, doxology first and foremost is something that you say because you realize what has happened *to you*. [True doxology necessitates a personal change in your own life](#) and history by the God who has entered into history since the beginning. Otherwise, it is just paying lip-service, especially in a liturgical setting.

The second thing we find in doxologies are praise given to God for his [character and nature](#). In two doxologies above, we see the wisdom, knowledge, judgments, and mind of the Lord. We see his giving nature, his omniscience, his omnipotence, and his everlasting existence. His glory, majesty, his dominion, his authority over all things are all praised. These attributes are spoken back to God as a kind of thank offering that revels in the sweet savor of such a God as this. I'm not sure any of us truly understand much of these things. But we can glimpse them through participating in doxology.

A thought occurred to me in this regard. **How can one even know about such a God?** Only a very few things can be known about God by just observing creation. His eternal power and divine nature are clearly perceived, but that he makes right judgments, that he has all dominion on earth, or in other doxologies, that he loves us, enters into our condition to rescue us, and so many other things, this we could only know **because he tells us and shows us** in space and time, corporately and individually. God especially does this in his word. Let's turn to 1 Timothy to see how the doxology at the end of the letter serves all of these purposes and more.

## **Doxology in 1 Timothy 6:15-16—Context**

As we look at our doxology at the end of 1 Timothy, we want to notice just a few things about its **context and makeup**. The **immediate context** is that Paul has been talking about how to deal with riches and the **love of money** (**1Tim 6:6-10**). After this, he will talk **more about the love of money**, thus creating a sandwich between the doxology and riches.

**A. Contentment vs. the love of money (6-10)**

**B. Instructions to Timothy and a doxology (11-16)**

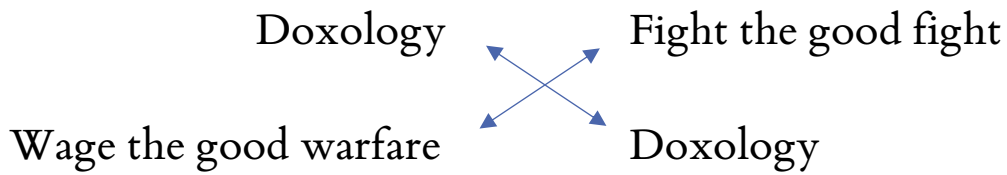
**A<sup>1</sup>. Having money and good works (17-19)**

The **middle** of our sandwich has two parts. The **first** compares the good confession of Timothy to the good confession of Jesus at his death (**11-15a**). Timothy is to remember his baptism even as Jesus was **baptized into death**. In doing so, he will come to understand better how riches are fleeting in light of the eternal Gospel that brings life to the dead. The end of this encouragement to fight the good fight takes us past Christ's death and resurrection to his **Second Coming**, for Timothy is to fight this fight “**until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time**” (**14b-15a**). Curiously, it is the Second Coming that then launches Paul into his doxology. He can't wait for it!

The bigger context, that of **the whole letter**, is also important. The entire book is written chiastically, with a **center on 3:16** and the great Confession of Faith that is found in six intimately linked doctrines about the Son of God. At the **end of Chapter 1**, Paul has **the other doxology** in the letter. It reads, “**To the King of the ages, immortal,**

invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1Tim 1:17). Interestingly, whereas Paul launches into his doxology at the end of the letter having just thought about the Second Coming which ushers us into the fulness of eternal life, it is eternal life that is also the catalyst for the first doxology, as the words immediately preceding it were, “I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” (16). Note also how it is *Christ Jesus* who is the immediate cause of the praise to God that follows. Jesus is always the cause of our praise to God, because there is nothing greater that we could ever be thankful for than his work that brings eternal life, whether it be his First or Second Comings.

Also important is that this first doxology is followed by the words, “This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, *my child* ... that by them you may wage the good warfare...” (18). “Wage the good warfare” is clearly parallel to “fight the good fight” (6:12) that comes before the second doxology. Also, “Timothy my child” in the first parallels “O man of God” (11) in the second.



Furthermore, after the first doxology, Paul tells Timothy he has *entrusted a sacred message* to him that he must guard (1:18). Similarly, after the second doxology he says “*guard the deposit entrusted to you*” (6:20). This is followed by those who have rejected this in the first chapter having “*shipwrecked their faith*” (1:19) and likewise in the last chapter as have “*swerved from the faith*” (6:21). In fact, all this is paralleled also by the central part of the book. The point is, Paul begins, centers upon, and ends the letter with the same ideas looked at through different lenses, thus giving us a triple reinforcement of the importance. And a chord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecc 4:12).

1 Timothy 1:18-19	1 Tim 3:15-4:1ff	1 Timothy 6:20-21
This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child...	... you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God...	O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you.
... holding faith and a good conscience.	<sup>16</sup> Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.	Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge,"



By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith ... whom I have handed over to Satan...	Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons...	for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. <sup>2</sup>
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Probably the **most important** thing to see for what we are doing here in this bigger context is how similar the two doxologies are. **“Both doxologies recognize God to be the sole king over all things, who is immortal, invisible, and to be greatly honoured.”<sup>3</sup>**

Similarity between the doxologies in 1:17 and 6:15–16 <sup>4</sup>	
1 Tim 1:17	1 Tim 6:15–16
King of ages	King of kings
Immortal	The only one having immortality
Invisible	Who dwells in unapproachable light, who no one has seen or is able to see
The only God	Only sovereign
Be honor and glory for ever and ever,	To him be honor and power forever,
Amen.	Amen.

<sup>2</sup> See also the chart from **Ray Van Neste**, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 280. London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 142; in **Charles Oscar Hetzler**, *Our Savior And King: Theology Proper in 1 Timothy, A Dissertation to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (2008)*, 65. [3357130.pdf \(2.260Mb\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> **Tim Marshall**, “A Sovereign & Transcendent God: The Doxologies of 1 Timothy,” *Semănătorul The Sower: The Journal of Ministry and Biblical Research* 1.2. Emanuel University of Oradea, Romania (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 54.

<sup>4</sup> **William D. Mounce**, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 352.

Mounce notices that “The vocabulary of this section ... draws heavily from the Hellenistic world and finds more parallels in the writings of Luke and Greek thought than in Paul’s writings,” then suggests that the doxologies seem to be **composed in opposition to emperor worship**, where Jesus is the true manifestation of divinity, not the emperor; where God alone has immortality, not the dead emperor; where God alone is King and Lord and the only sovereign to whom belongs all these ascriptions of glory.<sup>5</sup> While we haven’t seen much by way of pressure being put upon Timothy from the state, it is certainly not out of the question that Paul, who has already been taken to Rome once to face charges and will end up being beheaded there in just a handful of years is using a kind of **worst-case scenario** to encourage Timothy to stay the course and steady the ship. Mounce is worth hearing here,

When Paul tells Timothy to persevere until the appearing of Jesus Christ that will come in God’s own time and then moves into a grandiose doxology, extolling the power and transcendence of God (vv 15–16), he has really moved to the ... ultimate reason that Timothy must persevere: no matter

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

how intense the opposition, how powerful his opponents, Timothy serves the God who is truly powerful, who is King over all kings and Lord over all lords, whose transcendent glory is overwhelming. Therefore, it is essential that Timothy persevere because, as biblical eschatology teaches, the fact that Christians serve the true God is motivation for ethical behavior here and now.<sup>6</sup>

This is the **practical use**, or the ethical purpose of the doxology at the end of the letter, and you must see it here. To make that point stand out just a bit more, consider two more things. **First**, I've said a lot about how this is a letter addressed to Timothy the elder of the church. As such, there are a few things in it that apply to those who have his office and not to all Christians in the same way. However, something that few have taken notice of is how **the very last words of the letter** "Grace be with you" are not addressed to Timothy, but **to the church**. "You" in Greek is not singular, but **plural**. In other words, what he has just said and said throughout the letter is in fact addressed to all Christians! Hence, the doxology is indeed of practical use for us today.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 351.

Second, right after this last doxology, Paul returns to his instructions on how to deal with wealth, “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy” (1Tim 6:17). There are two connections here with what we are talking about. First, it was Jesus’ Second Coming that caused the doxology in the first place. And yet, now, that eternal state that we will be ushered into is contrasted with “this present age.” In other words, because you know that you will live with God forever, consider what this means for how you live today. Doxology leads to orthopraxy (right living) because today and eternity are inseparably linked together. As our Lord said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:19-21).

Second, notice do not set your hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides... What God? The God he has just broke out into praise and proclaimed in worship. This God has such attributes, which we will discuss in a moment, that you may be certain that resting on him in

the present life will be worth it. But this leads to a more immediate question. **Who is the subject of the doxology?**

## **Subject of the Doxology in 1 Timothy 6:15-16**

In searching for work done on these doxologies, I came across a **Unitarian** or Arian who calls himself a “Biblical Monotheist.” In reality, he denies the Trinity. On this last doxology in Timothy, he writes,

We cannot hastily suppose that this ... doxology refers to Christ just because he is mentioned in v.14. A look at the internal content of this doxology reveals that it cannot refer to Christ. First, the term “only Sovereign” can hardly refer to Christ since the earlier doxology, in 1:17, speaks of God as “the only God”. Second, the earlier doxology, in 1:17, speaks of God as “immortal,” a statement that is mirrored in “who alone has immortality” in the later doxology. The fact that Christ died means that he is not immortal. But if despite this fact we still insist that Christ is immortal, we would make Paul’s statement to say that Christ “alone” has immortality, ruling out God the Father as immortal! Third, the clause “whom no one has ever seen or can see” can hardly apply to Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> **Eric H. H. Chang**, “Ch. 7: Doxologies in the New Testament,” *The Only Perfect Man: The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, Second Edition* (2017), <https://christiandiscipleschurch.org/content/the-only-perfect-man-chapter-07>.

I agree with him that [this doxology is not about Jesus Christ the Person](#). However, for him, God and the Father are the exact same thing in every respect. The Son is not God. Thus, he presupposes that “God” must mean “Father,” as he does in every doxology in the New Testament. This leads him to make arguments that are so absurd to orthodox Christians that they hardly need refutation.

But what I want to point out here is how this felt need to [press the word “God” into one of the Persons](#) is quite common, even among Trinitarians. Many conclude the same thing, that this doxology is about [the Father](#), not the Son, but for much better reasons that the Unitarian did.<sup>8</sup> [So who is the object of the praise? Let’s compare two parallel parts of the two doxologies.](#) The first praises the “[only God](#),” while the second praises the “[only sovereign](#).” Only refers to [One](#), not many. As Christians, we believe in One God and Three Persons. Therefore, by definition, these two doxologies are not singling out the Persons, but [the One Being](#) we call God.

This is [not the case with all NT doxologies](#). Sometimes, [the Persons](#) are very clearly singled out. Sometimes the

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<sup>8</sup> [Marshall](#) lists K. L. Schmidt, H. A. Kent, D. F. D. Moule as examples. See Marshall, 58.

Father is praised (1Pet 1:3). Sometimes the Son (Rom 9:5) is praised. Sometimes the Spirit (1Cor 6:20).<sup>9</sup> Sometimes they make distinctions and praise multiple persons (see 2 Cor 13:14;<sup>10</sup> Rev 1:5-6). But in this case, it isn't the Persons, but the One God, of which all three Persons fully and completely partake that is in view. Or to put it another way, Paul is praising the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit not as Three Persons but as One God.

It is my belief that this is precisely how the early church saw doxologies like this, which is why they then so easily created such explicitly trinitarian doxologies in their liturgies. We've seen some of these today. They are doing nothing but singling out the Persons of the Godhead who all Three deserve—as the One God—the same praise and adoration and blessings that they are given here. They make explicit what is here implicit. And Glory be to God that we can praise the One or the Three for they are all Three One God.

## Praise God for What?

This leads to the last thing I want to talk about in this letter. What are those things that Paul picks out in our

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<sup>9</sup> On this see the excellent paper Keith E. Johnson, "Pneumatological Doxology: A Scriptural Case for Worshipping the Holy Spirit," 14, [https://ibs.cru.org/files/4315/6149/3275/Pneumatological\\_Doxology.pdf](https://ibs.cru.org/files/4315/6149/3275/Pneumatological_Doxology.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, 10-12.

doxology? If God is worth praising, worth trusting, if he makes us rich so that we do not need earthly riches, if he is the kind of God that we can rest in so much that it will impact our lives here and now and not just in the future, then what kind of God must he be? He must be unlike all other gods, be they real or imagined, be they real spiritual entities like fallen angels or demons or idols that captivate your heart like money.

Paul lists **eight things** here that teach us about our God. They form three sets of 3, 3, and 2. The first three match up. God is **Sovereign, King, and Lord (1Tim 6:15)**. Those three things have much conceptual overlap. All three deal with **ruling and authority**. But their similarity is also to be contrasted with their distinctions. The last two are comparative. “**King of kings**” and “**Lord of lords.**” As **comparisons**, they must compare God to other kings and lords. Who might those be? Obviously, someone like Caesar or Pilate could be in mind. These are human kings and lords. However, there are also angelic entities given such titles as “rules,” “authorities,” “thrones,” “dominions,” “powers,” “princes,” “principalities,” and so on. These are rulers in heavenly places. This must also be in mind for two reasons. First, he has just talked about heaven indirectly, as he



referred to the Second Coming. Second, the parallel with shipwrecking the faith and men handed over to Satan appears right after this with those who have gone astray from the faith.

Therefore, God is both King of these lesser kings and Lord over these lesser lords. And of course, this means he has power over them. What **kind of power?** This is where the first word comes into view. He is “**Sovereign.**” Reformed people love to talk about God’s sovereignty. Sovereignty is here **a title** for God, just like King and Lord. The word refers to **the one who has all things under his rule.** Nothing is outside of his control. “**No one can thwart him or say to him, ‘What have you done?’**” as the highest king of earth once had to admit. He exercises all power whenever and however he chooses.

Two **adjectives are ascribed** to this single title. The first is “**blessed.**” God is only called the “**blessed God**” twice in the NT—here and in **1:11**. Many times the doxologies say, “Blessed *be* God” or “Praise God.” But this time **God is himself the blessed God.** What does that mean? Someone says you are to think of this as “**God containing all happiness**”

in Himself and bestowing it on men.”<sup>11</sup> “Blessed” is often translated as “happy.” All happiness is contained in the Triune God, period. He is in need of nothing else to be fully blessed and happy, not in heaven, not on earth, not the church, not you or I. And yet, it is out of his infinite happiness that he bestows this same glory upon his people in Christ, so that they become blessed and happy. This is the Beatitudes. “*Blessed are the poor in spirit...*” Thus, it is the fullness of God that overflows rather than the emptiness of a God in need which is in view. Is this not good news for those who have such difficulty finding happiness in this life? Come to the Blessed God and you yourself will know true happiness.

Second, he is the “*only Sovereign.*” If King and Lord were comparisons that necessitated others that share something of ruling, this is a *superlative* that necessitates no other being has it. Thus, ruling sovereignty is juxtaposed with ruling King and Lordship. He both rules over all other kings and lords, but does so as *the only* Sovereign, High King in the universe—never ascending to his throne, never being deposed by others. His sovereignty is *not threatened* by Satan.

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<sup>11</sup> Lock, as cited in [George W. Knight](#), *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 269.

It is not threatened by you. It is not threatened by human freedom. It is not threatened by creaturely actions or sins. Such as God as this is therefore **in total charge of his creation**. He is capable of sending Christ back precisely when he wants. He is capable of giving you all the riches of wisdom in Christ when you come to him by faith.

The **second set of attributes** also share a theme. Again, there are three: immortality, unapproachability, invisibility. These focus in on **God's utter uniqueness**, which is, quite honestly, terrifying. God is not like you. God is not like me. He is utterly and wholly unique.

The first of these is **immortality**. It shares something in common with the first of the first set of three. God is the “*only*” Sovereign. He “*alone*” has immortality. Immortality, like Sovereignty, is something that he alone has. The word means that **he never came into existence**. There was no beginning for God. This, of necessity, includes God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He is immortal. We heard earlier from the heretic that Jesus isn't immortal because he died. It is true that as a human, Jesus was mortal. And yet, Jesus said that *he* would raise himself from the dead (**John 2:19; 10:17**). Dead mean don't raise themselves. Only the God who is immortal has power over

death. **Jesus is immortal**, and his resurrection and eternal life in that newly acquired body in the mystery of the incarnation proves is to our eyes. God has no beginning of life nor end of days. This is true of the Father. This is true of the Son. This is true of the Holy Spirit.

Like the second two of the first triad, the second two of the second triad are also **very similar**. Both deal with **sight**. God **dwells in unapproachable light**. **No one has ever seen or can see God**. Now, it is very common for people to argue that this must mean that the doxology isn't talking about Jesus, since he was clearly seen, therefore it **must be talking about the Father**. What people seem to forget, however, is that Father is in fact seen and visible from time to time. Daniel says, **"I saw ... and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days"** (**Dan 7:13**). Jesus tells us, **"I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven"** (**Matt 18:10**). **"He who sat [on the throne] had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald ... and I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll ... I saw a Lamb standing ... and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the**

throne” (Rev 4:3, 5:1, 6, 7). So, very clearly, the Father is in fact being seen, just like the Son and the Spirit are seen throughout the Scripture.

John Frame explains that this means that “God is essentially invisible.”<sup>12</sup> “Essentially” isn’t just slang for something like “basically.” Rather, it refers to his Essence, his Oneness, the Divine Nature of the One God. He continues, “This means, not that he can never be seen under any circumstances, but rather that, as Lord, he sovereignly chooses when, where, and to whom to make himself visible.”<sup>13</sup> God makes himself visible through the Persons, usually through the Son, sometimes through the Spirit, and once-in-a-blue-moon through the Father.

What Paul is talking about then is the utter uniqueness of the God who created all things. No one, not even the Angels, can see him. He alone sees himself. Why? Because he dwells in unapproachable light. Indeed, God is light (1Jn 1:5). The Father is Light (James 1:17), the Son is light (John 1:9), the Spirit is light (Ex 3:2; 13:21; Acts 2:3).

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<sup>12</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 590.

<sup>13</sup> For more on all this see Douglas Van Dorn and Matt Foreman, “Appendix III: Review of *Knowing Jesus in the OT*,” *The Angel of the LORD: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Publishing, 2020), 344-54.

It seems that this kind of thinking about God may have been very **personal to Paul**. People have long speculated what Paul's "**thorn in the flesh**" (**2Co 12:7**) might be. One of the best arguments I've heard is that Paul was **going blind**, and that this was brought on by some kind of perhaps "**radiation**" that accompanied losing his sight for three days on the Damascus Road (**Acts 9:9**). It is very probable that Paul was in fact going blind (**Gal 4:15; 6:11; 2Th 3:17; Phn 19**). He says he bears the mark of Jesus branded on his body (**Gal 6:17**). Was this just referring to **some kind of torture** he received in the name of Christ by those persecuting him? Or could it be that he was **slowly losing his eyesight as a result of his encounter with the God of Light**?<sup>14</sup> If this is the case, then Paul knew in a way few do what it was to see this light, for Acts only mentions that **scales** were on his eyes, no one else saw the light. God is unapproachable. But the God of light can very much approach you! And as he even said, soon he will "at the right time" cause Jesus to "appear" to all in the Second Coming.

This leads to **the last two elements** of the doxology. The praise is rendered, "**To him be honor and eternal dominion**"

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<sup>14</sup> **Patricia Nisbet**, "The Thorn in the Flesh [1 Tim 6:16]." *ExpTim* 80 (1968) 126.  
<https://www.deepdyve.com/lp/sage/the-thorn-in-the-flesh-4VU1Wk61ms>.

(1Tim 6:16). These are also pairs. **Honor** is what is due to **the King** because of the dignity of his office.<sup>15</sup> How much more the only Sovereign? **Dominion** refers to the extent of his realm and power. In this case, it is everywhere. And so, the Apostle gives him honor and knows that through it, God will honor Timothy out of the fullness of his Essence, that the man of God might know fully how to live and teach others to do the same in Christ's church.

1 Timothy, as we have seen, is a letter to both **a man and a church**. It is a letter detailing both **heresy and orthodoxy**. It is a letter explaining how to set the church's affairs the right way and how to deal with those who weasel their way in and attempt to overthrow them especially through legalistic religiosity and a false Christ appears to be wise but are incapable of leading to godliness. In turn, they shipwreck their faith and run straight into the arms of Satan. The only corrective to this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, summarized in the middle of the letter, that teaches you about that which cannot know unless you are told. God has entered into history in the form of the God-man who was born supernaturally, lived perfectly, died sacrificially, was raised

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<sup>15</sup> S. Aalen, "Glory," *TDNT*, Vol.2, 50.

miraculously, and will return gloriously to judge the living and the dead.

Those who **look to this Christ**, this God of the doxology, and who understand his shared nature and essence with the Father and Spirit, will be shown light and life. They will be turned into new creatures who are capable of delighting in the law and obeying God out of thankfulness. Most of all, they will understand in a way others cannot, what it means to praise and bless God. They will see its power for their lives, its beauty to transform, and its singular object who alone is worthy of all praise and worship in this fallen, dark world. Look to him and give him praise in his church today.

Amen.



## Appendix 1: Doxologies in the New Testament<sup>16</sup>

Luke 1:68	"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel."
Rom. 1:25	"... the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen."
Rom. 9:5	"... the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen."
Rom. 11:33–36	"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."
Rom. 16:25–27	"Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen."
2 Cor. 1:3	"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
2 Cor. 11:31	"The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever ..."
Gal. 1:4–5	"... our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."
Eph. 1:3	"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
Eph. 3:20–21	"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, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."
Phil. 4:20	"To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."
1 Tim. 1:17	"To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."
1 Tim. 6:15–16	"... he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen."
2 Tim. 4:18	"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."
Heb. 13:20–21	"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."
1 Pet. 1:3	"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"
1 Pet. 4:11	"To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."
1 Pet. 5:11	"To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen."
2 Pet. 3:18	"... our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."
Jude 1:24–25	"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."
Rev. 1:5–6	"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."
Cf. 1 Clem. 20:11–12; 34:6; 38:4; 43:6; 45:7; 50:7; 58:2; 61:3; 64; 65:2; Diogn. 12:9	

<sup>16</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., "Table 6.7: Doxologies in the New Testament," *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 538–539.

## Appendix 2: The Theological Centers of the Chiams of 1 Timothy

In this appendix, I simply want to put into one place the various structures we have observed throughout this letter. The critical point is to notice how the centers are usually upon the rich theology or the living God himself who becomes the focus and grounding of our obedience.

### Book as a Whole

**A. 1:1-2.** Paul greets Timothy as a true child of the Faith, and blesses with grace, mercy, and peace.

**B. 1:3-7.** Timothy is urged to command against **heresy**.

**C. 1:8-11.** The reason the Law is established. List of sins.

**D. 1:12-17.** Jesus came to save sinners. Doxology.

**E. 1:18-20.** Wage the good war.

**F. 2:1-8.** Pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or quarreling.

**G. 2:9-15.** Instructions to women.

**H. 3:1-7.** Concerning bishops.

**I. 3:8-13.** Concerning deacons and deaconesses.

**J. 3:14-16.** Instructions to Timothy as a pastor in the Household of God.

**K. 4:1-5.** Heresies will arise.

**K'. 4:6-10.** Teach against heresies.

**J'. 4:11-5:2.** How Timothy should conduct himself as a pastor.

**I'. 5:3-16.** Concerning elders.

**H'. 5:17-25.** Concerning widows.

**G'. 6:1-2a.** Instructions to bondservants.

**F'. 6:2b-11.** Against **heresy** caused by envy and greed. Quarrelling.

**E'. 6:12.** Fight the good fight.

**D'. 6:13-16.** Keep the commandment. Doxology.

**C'. 6:17-19.** Store up treasure with God, so to take hold of true life.

**B'. 6:20-21a.** Timothy commanded to guard against **heresy**.

**A'. 6:21b.** Grace.

**A)** 1 Tim 1:1-2, Paul to Timothy, a true son: Grace, mercy, peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ;

**B)** 1 Tim 1:2-20, Timothy's charge: **guard sound doctrine** from which some have strayed:

**C)** 1 Tim 2:1-8, Prayers + intercession for those in authority (exercise of authority):

**D)** 1 Tim 2:9-15, Proper exercise/ care of church authority:

**E)** 1 Tim 3:1-13, Qualification of bishops + deacons:

**F)** 1 Tim 3:14-15, I write that you may know how to conduct yourself in the house of God;

**central axis of the book) 1 Tim 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels; Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory;"**

**F')** 1 Tim 4:1-16, Instruction for Timothy as church pastor:— 1b.4) 1 Tim 1:7b-8a, Exercise

**E')** 1 Tim 5:1-19, Qualifications of true widows/ treatment of elderly + elders:— 1c) 1

**D')** 1 Tim 5:20-25, Proper exercise/ care of church authority;

**C')** 1 Tim 6:1-2a, Proper honor between bondservants and masters (exercise of authority);

**B')** 1 Tim 6:2b-21a, Timothy's charge: **teach sound doctrine** from which some have strayed:

**A')** 1 Tim 6:21b, Grace be with you. Amen.

### Individual Chapters and Units:

**A)** 1 Tim 1:2-3, To Timothy, a true son in the faith: charge some that they teach no other doctrine;

**B)** 1 Tim 1:4, Fables + endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification;

**C)** 1 Tim 1:5-6, Purpose of Law: pure love + good conscience + sincere faith, some having strayed;

**D) 1 Tim 1:7-9, The excellence of the Law toward the unrepentant;**

**E)** 1 Tim 1:9-10, Meant for the lawless, unrighteous, those things contrary to sound doctrine;

**F)** 1 Tim 1:11, According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust;

**central axis) 1 Tim 1:12, I thank Christ Jesus;**

**F')** 1 Tim 1:12, He enabled me, counted me faithful, put me into the ministry;

**E')** 1 Tim 1:13, Although formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man;

**D') 1 Tim 1:13-17, The excellence of the King and His mercy toward the repentant;**

**C')** 1 Tim 1:18, This charge I commit to you, my son Timothy;

**B')** 1 Tim 1:18, Prophecies concerning you, which cause you to wage the good warfare;

**A')** 1 Tim 1:19-20, Having faith + good conscience, which some rejected + shipwrecked their faith.

- A. "I thank him [Christ Jesus our Lord]" (1:12-13a)
  - B. "I received mercy because" – the Lord's grace (13b-14)
    - C. **A Trustworthy saying (15)**
  - B'. "I received mercy for this reason..." – Jesus' patience (16)
  - A'. Paul praises the Father (17)
    - A. Timothy [Paul], prophecy (with tongue) (1:18a)
    - B. You may wage the good warfare (18b)
      - C. **Holding the faith (19a)**
      - C'. **And a good conscience (19b)**
    - B'. Some have made shipwreck of their faith (19c)
    - A. Hymenaeus and Alexander (Satan), blaspheme (with tongue) (20)
  - A. "Therefore," "first," "prayers," "quiet," "all godliness," "saved" (2:1-3)
  - B. "Truth" (4)
    - C. **"One God" (5a)**
    - C'. **"One Mediator" (5a-6)**
  - B'. "Truth" (7)
  - A'. "Therefore," "pray," "godliness," "all," "quietness," "first," "saved" (8-15)
- 
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| A. (3:16) He appeared in a body,           | Manifestation on earth (mortal)                     |
| B. was vindicated by the Spirit,           | Acceptance in spiritual realm (justification)       |
| C. <b>was seen by angels,</b>              | <b>Comprehension by heavenly beings (witnesses)</b> |
| C'. <b>was preached among the nations,</b> | <b>Comprehension by human beings (witnesses)</b>    |
| B'. was believed on in the world,          | Acceptance in earthly realm (faith)                 |
| A'. was taken up in glory.                 | Manifestation in heaven (immortal)                  |
- 
- "a". 4:1-2 (faith) (teachings)
  - "b". 3 (reception) (thanksgiving)
  - "c". **4a Because all creation of God is commendable and nothing is to be-rejected,**
  - "b". 4b-6a (being-received) (thanksgiving)
  - "a". 6b (faith) (teaching)
- 
- 1a) 1 Tim 4:1-5, Some will depart from the faith, heeding deceiving spirits + doctrines of demons;
  - 1b) 1 Tim 4:6-8a, Instruct + good minister + word and doctrine + exercise godliness:
    - 1c) 1 Tim 4:8b, The promise of eternal life;
    - 1d) 1 Tim 4:9, This word is faithful and true;
      - central axis) 1 Tim 4:10a, For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach;**
      - 2d) 1 Tim 4:10b, We trust in the living God;
    - 2c) 1 Tim 4:10c, The Savior of all men, especially those who believe;
  - 2b) 1 Tim 4:11-15, Command and teach + good example + word and doctrine + exercise gift:
  - 1a) 1 Tim 4:16, Take heed to yourself + doctrine, so you will save yourself + those who hear you.
- 
- A. 5:1-2 Older man (*presbuterō*), encourage (*parakaleō*), brothers (*adelphous*) (1), older women (*presbuteras*), sisters (*adelphas*) (2)
  - B. 3-9 Truly widows (*ontōs chēras*) (3), (*echei*), first learn (*manathanō proton*), family (*oikon*) (4), truly widows (*ontōs chēras*) (5), household (*oikeōn*), faith (*pistin*), unbeliever (*apistou*) (8)
    - C. 10a Works (*ergois*)
    - D. **10b brought up children, shown hospitality, washed feet of saints, cared for afflicted**
    - C'. 10c Work (*ergō*)
  - B'. 11-16 former faith (*prōten pistin*) (12), learn (*manthanousin*), family (*oikias*) (13), (*echei*), truly widows (*ontōs chērais*) (16)
  - A'. 17-25-6:1-2 Elders (*presbuteroi*) (17), elders (*presbuterion*) (19), encourage the brothers (*adelphoi parakelei*) (6:2)
- 
- A. Doctrine, words, understanding, controversy, truth (6:1-5a)
  - B. Contentment vs. the love of money (6-10)
    - C. **Timothy's Confession, Christ's Confession, and a doxology (11-16)**
  - B<sup>1</sup>. Having money and good works (17-19)
  - A<sup>1</sup>. The deposit: words, contradictions, knowledge (20-21)

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