

“The SECRET” [*to mustērion*]

Studies in the later epistles of the apostle Paul

CHAPTER 1

In these studies of the apostle Paul’s later epistles, we are conscious that we seek to enter into the highest realms of God’s revealed purposes, God greatest secrets revealed to man, and Divine purposes stretching from infinity to infinity.

It is therefore with all humility that we submit these studies, in the hope that they may be of blessings to the reader and, above all, that they may truly magnify and give glory to our Lord and God, our risen Saviour Christ Jesus, now highly exalted at the right hand of God our Father, Who hath given Him a Name which is above every name,

- that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and
- that every tongue shall should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

Is it not self-evident and true, that IF *something*

- “...hath been **hid from** ages and from generations...”
- “...**from** the Beginning of the world hath been **hid IN GOD...**”
[*literally:* “having been hidden from the ages in God...”]

we cannot possibly find it or know it before at such time God reveals it to us?

And is it not self-evident and true, that IF this *something* includes

- “...**unsearchable** riches...”, and
- “...**completes** [*plēroō*: “fulfills; fills to the full”] the word of God”

we can *neither* search it out, *nor* do we have the full and completed word of God, before such time that

- God reveals this unsearchable to us, and
- God reveals to us that He NOW has completed His word.

And is it not self-evident and true, that when God *then* in His word finally proclaims to us, that:

“...BUT **NOW** ...”

these things are “*made manifest*” to us, with the purpose “*to make known*” and “*to make all men see*”, that such statements from our Almighty God should necessarily awaken in us the deepest desire to get to know and understand what is the nature and depths of such wonderful things hitherto hid *FROM* ages and from generations, and which *FROM* the Beginning of the world hath been hid *IN GOD*, and which contain unsearchable riches, and which completes [*plēroō*: “fulfills; fills to the full”] the word of God.

[“unsearchable”: *anexichniastos* is something "that cannot be traced out" (*a* (*alpha*) as a negative particle, *ex* (for *ek*) "out" and *ichnos*, "a track" - J. H. Thayer: “Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament” – *Thayer*).

It is rendered – regarding God’s judgments - “*past tracing out*” in Romans 11:33, Revised Version (RV) and in the King James Version (KJV) “*past finding out*”.

Similarly, we have the word in the Septuagint (LXX) in Job 5:9 and 9:10:

“I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: Which doeth great things and *unsearchable*; marvellous things without number”.
(Job 5:8-9, KJV).

“[God] Which doeth great things *past finding out*; yea, and wonders without number”
(Job 9:10, KJV).

Other main lexicons have the following meanings of *anexichniastos*:

1. “*that cannot be searched out, that cannot be comprehended*” - Strong’s Concordance, citing *Thayer* (*Strong/Thayer*);
2. that “*which cannot be explored, which cannot be tracked or followed out*” – E.W.Bullinger: *Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (*Bullinger*)
3. “*that cannot be traced out*” - W.E.Vine: *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (*Vine*)
4. “*unsearchable, inscrutable*” – Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott: *Greek-English Lexicon* (*Liddell & Scott*)
5. “*inscrutable, incomprehensible*”, literally: “not to be tracked out”; “*fathomless*” – W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich: *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated and adapted from Walter Bauer: *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (*Bauer*)

The Septuagint’s use of the Greek *anexichniastos* in e.g. Job 5:9 above, translates the Hebrew *cheqer* meaning *inter alia* “hidden, secret” - Wilhelm Gesenius: *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, translated and edited by S. P. Tregelles, LL.D (*Gesenius*) which Hebrew word we find in such texts as:

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and HIS greatness is *unsearchable*”.
(Psalm 145:3, KJV)

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. HIS understanding is *unsearchable*”.
(Isaiah 40:28, New King James Version –NKJV)]

When Almighty God reveals to us that “BUT NOW” this which previously “hath been hid *from* ages and from generations...” and “...*from* the Beginning of the world hath been hid IN GOD...”, that this is NOW revealed to us, we naturally ask:

WHEN and by WHOM was it revealed, and WHAT is it, that is now revealed?

[And failing to note in the Scriptures such important indicators as the Divine Author’s “but NOW”, that something has *changed* in God’s revelations to us, such failing inevitably leads to serious error similarly to the Sadducees “because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God”.

This is clearly illustrated in e.g. Luke 22:

“And He said unto them:

“When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?”

(our Lord referring to His command in Luke 9:2-3, q.v.)

And they said: “*Nothing*”.

THEN said He unto them: “*BUT NOW*, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one”.

(Luke 22: 35-35, KJV)

Likewise, when the apostle Paul spoke in Athens.

We quote from the American Standard Version (ASV) with *emphasis* in the Greek according to Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible (Rotherham):
(underscore = emphasis; **bold italics** = heavy emphasis).

“Ye men of Athens!...as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.
What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this **I** set forth unto you.

*The God that made the world and all things therein, **He**, being Lord of heaven and earth, [quoting from Isaiah 42:5] dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing **He Himself** giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us:*

For **in Him** we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are **also His offspring**.

Being then **the offspring** of God, we ought not to think that **the Godhead** is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.

The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; **BUT NOW** He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man Whom He hath ordained; **whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead**".

(Acts 17:22-32, ASV; *Rotherham emphasis*)

We leave it to the reader to consider the consequences, if the disciples or those who heard Paul in Athens, failed to believe Almighty God's then latest revelations (as spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ and Paul, respectively), but had instead insisted upon holding on to the Lord's earlier revealed will regarding their walk (as regards the disciples), or (as regards the Athenians) failed to take heed of what Paul revealed as regards God's will for them NOW]

WHEN and by WHOM was this new and latest revelation given?

By "**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus* by the will of God**" writing from his prison in Rome around AD 62, to "**the saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus**"

(Ephesians 1:1, KJV) *[according to all the critical texts].

Likewise: "**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus* by the will of God**" (with now the addition "**and Timotheus our brother**") writing from his prison in Rome around AD 62 (a few months after the letter to the Ephesians) to "**the saints and faithful brethren at Colosse**" (Colossians 1:1-2, KJV) *[according to all the critical texts].

Let us first note that Paul here, in both Ephesians and Colossians, explicitly confirms that he is "an apostle of **Christ Jesus**".

This gives us an important indication of what is to follow, because in *all* Paul's letters (excepting Titus*) written AD 62 and afterwards, he writes as an apostle (Ephesians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Timothy), or servant (Philippians), or prisoner (Philemon) of Christ Jesus, i.e. the now exalted One, Who once humbled Himself.

When Paul styles himself in his earlier letters, the reference is to "Jesus Christ"

*[Titus is the only place where Paul designates himself: "a servant [*doulos*: "slave"] of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ".

(In Romans he says: "Paul, a servant (*doulos*) of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God").

In our view, whenever Paul refers to himself as "servant", he deliberately and humbly emulates his Lord and Master Who "made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant [*doulos*]..." Philippians 2:7, KJV.

Regarding Paul's letter "To Hebrews" (so most critical texts), we hold - with several *Christian* scholars - that it was likely written around 54 AD, based on internal evidence and Hebrews' place chronologically (after 1st and 2nd Thessalonians) in 3 of the oldest manuscripts.

Paul did not identify himself as the author; this would have been counter-productive, given that so many of the Jews violently opposed his ministry to the Gentiles].

[Note (excerpted, with our emphasis and additions) from the Companion Bible:

"The name "Jesus" expresses the relation of Jehovah to Him in Incarnation, by which "*He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*" (Philippians. 2:8); Who, being God, did not deem His glory a thing not to be thus relinquished".

The name "Jesus" is the name associated with "*the shame*" which He endured in order to "*save His People from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21).

His People therefore never addressed Him as "Jesus", but always as "Master" or "Lord" (John 13:13, 14; Luke 6:46), and so should all His people to-day; not following the example of demons (Matthew. 8:29), or of His enemies, who irreverently called Him "Jesus".

Jesus Christ: In the combination of these two names, the former is emphatic by its position, the second being subsidiary and explanatory.

In the Gospels it means "Jesus the Messiah". In the Epistles [*after His death and resurrection*] it means Jesus Who humbled Himself but is *now* exalted and glorified as Christ.

Christ Jesus: The converse of "Jesus Christ" and denotes the now exalted One, Who *once* humbled Himself].

EVERY distinction in the Scriptures is important (including when the Scriptures refer to "*Christ Jesus*" or to "*Jesus Christ*"), because:

"Every Scripture is God-breathed"

["God-breathed" – as *Rotherham* (quoted above) and e.g. both *Young's* and *Green's Literal Translations* have it - is *theopneustos* (2 Timothy 3:16).

This is a unique word *not* found in the Greek language, but *created* by the Divine Author, combining *Theos*: "God", with *pneustos* (from *pneo*: "to breathe" – same as in *pneuma*: "spirit").

KJV has: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" which carries essentially the same meaning, except using the English word "inspiration" deriving from the Latin *inspirare*: "to breathe upon", from *spirare* ("to breathe") – whence we have the English word "spirit"].

HENCE the words of Almighty God are also *purified* – seven times - as it is written:

***"The words of the Lord* are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." (Psalm 12:6, KJV; *Rotherham emphasis*)**

[In fact, this well known text could possibly be translated as below though nearly all versions beg to differ. However, when one of the most eminent *Christian* Hebraists of his day commends this reading, we certainly offer it for the reader's delight and consideration.

The below rendering does bring out the typical contrast we so often find between God's doings, and those of man or pertaining to man – and also brings out, we believe, the intended even deeper teaching (as rendered in the note to Psalm 12:6 in the Companion Bible):

“The words of Jehovah are pure words:

As silver tried [i.e. pure silver] in a furnace [crucible].

By contrast:

[Words] pertaining to **the earth:**

Purified seven times”.

“The letter *lamed* is the sign of the Dative case, not the Genitive”; Hebrew *erez* (“the earth”), not *'adamah*: (“the ground”). Hence it is not “a furnace of earth”, but words pertaining to the earth”.

We may also add to the above, that because “*purified*” is in singular – corresponding to “*silver*” –, and recognizing that the verse would be a typical alternation (alternating subjects) of the thoughts expressed, an alternative meaning may then – in our personal view - be expressed as follows:

The Words of the Lord are pure words,

as pure as being likened to silver refined in a furnace (i.e. pure in themselves)

The words pertaining to the earth

are purified seven times, like silver [being refined] in a furnace.

(i.e. need to be *made* pure, because the words pertain to earth and fallen man)].

It is a highly important and solemn fact that we are *specifically* exhorted to mark and consider the distinctions or differences we find in God's perfect word.

“And **this** I [the apostle Paul] pray,

THAT [*hina*: implying purpose] **your love** may abound yet more and more

- in knowledge [*epignōsis*: full knowledge]
- and in all judgment [*aisthēsis*]

THAT [*eis*: “to the end that”, expressing purpose] ye may approve [*dokimazō*] things that are excellent [*diapherō*];

THAT [*hina*: implying purpose]

- ye may be sincere [*eilikrinēs*]
- and without offence [*aproskopos*]

till the day of Christ”

(Philippians 1:9-10, KJV; *Rotherham emphasis*).

This statement by Paul is so important, and so full of teaching, that we must take the opportunity to acquaint ourselves with the fuller meaning and impact of some of the Greek words used by the Divine Author.

We will also need this as we progress in these studies, and when we consider WHAT it was that Paul revealed, which had *from* the Beginning of the world been hidden IN God, *and* been hidden *from* ages and generations.

The word *epignōsis* is *epi* with *gnōsis* (*gnōsis*: “knowing, knowledge or recognition”);

[*epignōsis* denotes “exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition,” and is an intensive strengthened form of *gnōsis*, expressing a fuller or a full “knowledge,” a greater participation by the “knower” in the object “known,” thus more powerfully influencing him.

It is *not* found in the Gospels and Acts.

Paul uses it 16 times (*since we include Hebrews 10:26*) out of the 20 occurrences, and the apostle Peter 4 times, all in his 2nd Epistle. *Vine (our excerpt and emphasis)*.

For those readers who wish to trace the word – a richly rewarding exercise – we list here all the occurrences of *epignōsis*, since virtually all versions signally fail to reflect the Divine Author’s precise use of this special word, but translate the same as *gnōsis*.

“It is used with reference:

- to “God”, in Romans 1:28; 10:2; Ephesians 1:17; Colossians 1:10; 2 Peter 1:3;
- to “God and Christ”, in 2 Peter 1:2;
- to “Christ”, in Ephesians 4:13; 2 Peter 1:8; 2:20;
- to “the will of the Lord”, in Colossians 1:9;
- to “sin” in Romans 3:20
- to “every good thing”, in Philemon 1:6, (KJV translates “acknowledging”);
- to “the truth”, in 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25, 3:7; Titus 1:1; Hebrews 10:26;
- to “the mystery of God” in Colossians 2:2 (“(that they) may know” (RV); (KJV: “to the acknowledgment of”); *literally*: “into a full knowledge.”

It is used without the mention of an object in Philippians 1:9 and Colossians 3:10, “(renewed) unto knowledge” (RV)”. *Vine (our excerpt and emphasis)*.

Richard Trench (in his “Synonyms”), has this (*excerpted and with our emphasis and inserts*):

“Of *epignōsis*, as compared with *gnōsis*, it will be sufficient to say that *epi* must be regarded as intensive, giving to the compound word a greater strength than *gnōsis*; thus... if *gnōsis* is ‘cognitio,’ ‘kenntniss,’ *epignōsis* is ‘major exactiorque cognitio’ (*Grotius*), ‘erkenntniss,’ a deeper and more intimate knowledge and acquaintance...

...Paul...exchanges the *ginōskō* [the simple verb “to know” of *gnōsis* (the noun)], which expresses his present and fragmentary knowledge, for *epiginōsomai* [future middle deponent indicative of *epiginōskō*], when he would express his future intuitive and perfect knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:12).

...our Translators have made no attempt to preserve it [i.e. the distinction between the two words].

Bengel does so by aid of ‘nosco’ and ‘pernoscam,’ and *Culverwell* (*Spiritual Optics*, p. 180) has the following note:

“...*epignōsis* and *gnōsis* differ; *epignōsis*...is bringing me better acquainted with a thing I knew before; a more exact viewing of an object that I saw before afar off. That little portion of knowledge which we had here shall be much improved, our eye shall be raised to see the same things more strongly and clearly.”

[*Culverwell* also refers to that “this same intensive use” [by the apostle Paul] is “borne out the Septuagint (LXX), citing Proverbs 2:5 and Hosea 4:1; 6:6].

Finally, we can see the contrast between *gnōsis* and *epignōsis* in the well known section in Romans 1:18 – 32 (q.v.) regarding
“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...”

- “Because that which may be known [*ginōskō*: the simple verb “to know” of *gnōsis* (the noun)] of God is manifest to them” (v. 19);
- “Because that, when they knew [*ginōskō*] God, they glorified Him not as God” (v.21);
- “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge [*epignōsis*], God gave them over...” (v.28);
- “Who knowing [*epiginōskō* – i.e. knowing full well] the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death...”(v.32).

The word *aisthēsis* means “perception, not only by the senses but by the intellect; cognition, discernment” (*Strong/Thayer*).

[*aisthēsis* (the noun) occurs ONLY this once here in Philippians 1:9 in the whole New Testament.

In the Septuagint (LXX) *aisthēsis* translates the Hebrew *chokmah* (“skills (in war) or wisdom in various forms” – *Gesenius*), in the first occurrence in Exodus 28:3, when God says to Moses:

“And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom” (KJV).

(When we search the Scriptures, we generally find that the *first* time the Holy Spirit makes use of a word, He indicates to us the primary meaning of the word - because it is the Scriptures’ *own* usage of the word of God - that is purified seven times - that provides us with insight (and not how a word is used in classical Greek, which is utterly polluted by human philosophy, religion, depravity and fantasies.

Regarding Hebrew: this is a foundational language, virtually untainted by any pagan literature or influence, and with no record – contrary to classical Greek – of centuries of literature behind it).

All other usages of *aisthēsis* in the Septuagint are found in Proverbs, in the English generally translated “knowledge”, e.g. in 1:4:

“To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man *knowledge* and discretion”.

Here *aisthēsis* translates the Hebrew *da`ath*: “knowledge, intelligence, understanding, wisdom” (*Gesenius*).

Another example is this well known passage:

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of *knowledge* [*da`ath*; LXX: *aisthēsis*]:
but fools despise wisdom [*chokmah*] and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7, KJV).

The verb *aisthanomai*, meaning “to perceive by the bodily senses; with the mind, understand” (*Thayer*), also occurs ONLY once in all of the New Testament, namely in Luke 9:45 when our Lord said:

“*Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men*”.

But they understood not this saying, and it was HID from them that they perceived [*aisthanomai*] it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying”. (Luke 9:44-45, KJV)

Note: because it was *hidden*, they could not perceive it.

Whenever the Holy Spirit uses a word only once (or even only 2 or 3 times), it alerts us to something particularly important, because the Divine Author has specifically then reserved these words for a unique purpose – which it is our delight to “search” out and seek to discern!

The word *dokimazō* means “to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals; to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy” (*Strong/Thayer*);

[“...to assay, to make trial of, put to the proof, examine; hence to examine and judge of; prove by test; approve on trial” (*Bullinger*).

“In δοκιμάζειν, [*dokimazein*]... lies ever the notion of proving a thing whether it be worthy *to be received* or not.... In classical Greek it is the technical word for putting money to the δοκιμή or proof, by aid of the δοκίμιον or test;...that which endures this proof being δόκιμος, that which fails ἀδόκιμος...”

Resting on the fact that this proving is [often] through fire (1 Corinthians 3:13), δοκιμάζειν and πυροῦν [*puroun*: “fire”] are often found together [LXX: Psalm 95:9; Jeremiah 9:7].

As employed in the N. T. δοκιμάζειν almost always implies that the proof is victoriously surmounted, the *proved* is also *approved* (2 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 1 Timothy 3:10), just as in English we speak of *tried* men..., meaning not merely those who have been tested, but who have stood the test...” (*Trench*)

Vine has this note regarding dokimazō:

“approve, primarily, of metals (e.g. the Septuagint of Proverbs 8:10; 17:3), signifies "to prove," e.g. 1 John 4:1, more frequently to prove with a view to approval, e.g., Romans 1:28, where the KJV has "they *did not like* to retain God in their knowledge;" RV: "they refused;" (margin, "did not approve," [which is] the true meaning).

Their refusal was not the outcome of ignorance; they had the power to make a deliberate choice; they willfully disapproved of having God in their knowledge.

In the next chapter, the Apostle speaks of the Jew as "approving things that are excellent," (Romans 2:18).

The Jew knew God's will, and mentally "approved" of the things in which God had instructed him out of the Law”].

The word *diapherō*, which the KJV translates “*things that are excellent*”, is *dia* (“through”) with *pherō* (“to carry”), and hence the meanings of “to bear or carry through any place, to carry different ways”;

hence: “to differ, to test, prove the good things that differ”; and *hence* “to distinguish between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, to approve of things that excel, to differ from one” (*Strong/Thayer*, excerpted with our emphasis).

The first three occurrences in the New Testament indicate the *special* underlying meaning of *diapherō*:

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than [*diapherō*] they?”
(Matthew 6:26, KJV)

“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than [*diapherō*] many sparrows”.
(Matthew 10:31, KJV)

“How much then is a man better than [*diapherō*] a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath day”.
(Matthew 12:12, KJV).

[And this we also see in the following texts:

- “...ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:7, KJV);
- “Consider the ravens...how much more are ye better than the fowls” (Luke 12:24, KJV);
- “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest His will, and approves [*dokimazō*] the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law” (Romans 2:17-18, KJV);
- “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory” (1 Corinthians 15:41, KJV);

Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9-10 is therefore not only that "ye may approve [*dokimazō*] things that ARE excellent [*diapherō*]", but evidently contains the further sense that "ye may approve things that are MORE excellent", or things that differ (therein that they are of "more value", or "better than" some other things).

And that this is right, we can see in Romans 2:18, the only other place where we have *dokimazō* together with *diapherō*:

"..And knowest His will, and approves [*dokimazō*] the things that are more excellent [*diapherō*] being instructed out of the law"

Several translations therefore and correctly, bring this out in various ways in Philippians 1:10:

"...that ye may judge of and approve the things that are **more excellent**..." - Darby Translation (Darby)

"...that ye myght accepte thinges **most excellent**" - Tyndale New Testament (1525) (Tyndale)

"...that being capable to distinguish what is **best**" - Daniel Mace New Testament (1729) (Mace)

"...so that you may be able to discern what is **best**" - New International Version (NIV)

"...That you may approve the **better things**" - Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (Douay-Rheims)

"...so that you can approve the things that are **superior**" - Holmans Christian Standard Bible (Holman)

"...so that you may approve what is **superior**" - Lexham English Bible (Lexham)

"...for your proving the things that **differ**" - Young's Literal Translation (Young)

"...to the end that you may put to the test the things that **differ**" (Rotherham).

[The two last words to consider in Philippians 1:9 before reverting to the whole text, are: *eilikrinēs* (KJV: "sincere") and *aproskopos* ("without offence").

The word *eilikrinēs* is compounded from *heile* (the sun's ray) and *krinō* ("to separate", hence *inter alia* "to esteem, determine, resolve, and then to judge")

Thus *eilikrinēs* means "pure, sincere, unsullied; found pure when unfolded and examined by the sun's light" (*Thayer*)

Likewise: "clearness, pureness, genuineness as found so being judged of in the sunlight" (*Bullinger*); "incorrupt" (*Rotherham*).

The word *aproskopos* means *literally* "having nothing to strike against", from *a* (*alpha*) as a negative, *pros* "to or against, and *koptō* "to strike", i.e. of those who strike against a stone or other obstacle in the path, to stumble, or to strike one's foot against a stone" (*Thayer*)

Hence: "without offence", or "blameless, without stumbling" (*Vine*)

We have *aproskopos* in Acts 24:16:

“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience *void of offence* toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16, KJV).

If the reader bears with us, he will understand *why* we are examining this text so thoroughly, so we are able to see the full force of what Paul is saying in Philippians 1:9-10.

Thus we are now equipped to understand the text as follows:

“And **this** I [the apostle Paul] pray,

We note that Paul is praying to God, thereby enlisting the grace and power of God our Father for the purpose, he wants for us – without which grace and power we will *not* be able to achieve what Paul asks so emphatically for us.

THAT [*hina*: implying purpose] **your love** may abound yet more and more...

Who is the object of this love of ours, which Paul *prays* to “God our Father”, and “my God” (v. 3, 4) should abound more and more?

It is our Lord Christ Jesus (and *not* Paul, or our fellow saints), as we can see when we consider (below) the full sense of the express purpose of this love set out in the context following.

in knowledge [*epignōsis*: full knowledge]
and in ALL judgment [*aisthēsis*]

This love of ours towards the Lord Christ Jesus – Paul prays – should abound *more and more* (emphasized) in two areas:

(1) *epignōsis*, namely a *full, deeper and more intimate* knowledge and acquaintance and discernment with the object of such full knowledge.

This object is not stated *here*, but in every one of the other 18 instances (out of 20 occurrences) where the object of *epignōsis* IS stated, the object is identified as:

- “God” (5 times);
- “God and Christ” (1);
- “Christ” (3);
- “the will of the Lord” (1);
- “the mystery of God” (1);
- “the truth” (5);
- “sin” (1)
- “every good thing” (1).

[And those 5 times the object of *epignōsis* is identified as “the truth” it is:

- “unto the [full] knowledge of the truth FOR [*gar*: particle of affirmation and conclusion denoting “truly therefore, verily as the case stands” – *Thayer*] there is one *God*...” (1 Timothy 2:4, KJV);
-
- “*God* may give them repentance unto the [full] knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:25, ASV);
- “...traitors...lovers of pleasure rather than *lovers of God*... never able to come to the [full] knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:4,7, ASV);
- “Paul, a servant of *God* and an apostle of *Jesus Christ*, according to the faith of *God*’s elect and the [full] knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness” (Titus 1:1, ASV);
- “For if we *sin* [i.e. *against God*] wilfully after that we have received the [full] knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more *sacrifice* [i.e. *acceptable to God*] for sins” (Hebrews 10:26, KJV)

And in Philemon 1:6 it is:

“Hearing of thy *love* and of the faith which thou hast toward *the Lord Jesus*, and toward all the saints; THAT [*hopōs*: “denoting the purpose or end; *in order that, with the design, in order that*” – *Thayer*, citing this very passage] the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual, in the [full] knowledge of every good thing which is in you *unto* [*eis*: “toward”] *Christ*” (ASV)].

It is therefore evident, that in all the 18 passages where the object of *epignōsis* is identified, the “full knowledge” is about GOD, or pertains to, things of or from GOD.

Thus Scripture tells us that this is clearly also the case here in Philippians 1:10.

[And this is also the case as regards Colossians 3:10 (the only other passage where the object of *epignōsis* is not stated directly): “having put on the new, renewed into full knowledge according to the Image of Him that has created him” (Darby)].

(2) The second area (regarding which the love of ours towards the Lord Christ Jesus should abound *more and more*) is in ALL [*pasa*] *aisthēsis*, i.e. “perception, not only by the senses but by the intellect; cognition, discernment”.

Since *aisthēsis* (the noun) occurs ONLY this once here in Philippians 1:9, it is clear that the *object* of such all perception or discernment is the same as *epignōsis*, since:

- these words are directly and immediately stated *together*, and
- are both governed by the preposition *en* (“in”).

The literal Greek is:

“...the love of you yet more and more may abound
in full knowledge and all perception”
en epignōsei kai pasē aisthēsei.

Our love towards the Lord Jesus Christ abounding more and more in full knowledge and all perception of any things of God, cannot – self-evidently – so abound *except* our God, through the Holy Spirit, enables us. This is exactly *why* this enabling is the subject of Paul’s prayer to the Father our God.

[This necessary enabling is also indicated by the first occurrence - in the Septuagint - of *aisthēsis* in Exodus 28:3, when God says to Moses:

“And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted whom *I have filled with the spirit of wisdom*” (KJV)]

Now follows then the central part of Paul’s prayer, namely the PURPOSE of our love so abounding in *epignōsis* and all *aisthēsis*:

THAT [*eis*: “to the end that”, expressing purpose] **ye may approve** [*dokimazō*]...certain things, i.e. that we may test, prove, scrutinize, examine and judge with a view to deem them worthy – and thus put these things to the proof, with a view to approve.

And which things are these?

The clear answer is: “**things that are MORE excellent** [*diapherō*]”.

As we shall see, there *are* several things of God which are *more* excellent - and the Scriptures exhort us to search and seek such things. ALL things of God are blessedly glorious; but some things – His *Word* tells us - are more glorious than others!

Before turning to such things that are MORE excellent, we note the further purpose

- “THAT [*hina*: implying purpose]
ye may be sincere [*eilikrinēs*]
and without offence [*aproskopos*]
till the day of Christ;

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are **BY** [*dia*: “through”] **Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of GOD**”.

As any believer in our Lord Jesus Christ will know, that for us to “be sincere and without offence” and “being filled with the fruits of righteousness”, this we cannot achieve in ourselves and by our own efforts, but this is only possible *IN*, *THROUGH* and *WITH* our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is GOD – and not

ourselves - WHO "...hath made us accepted [*literally*: "en-graced"] in the Beloved, In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins..." (Ephesians 1:6-7, KJV)

HENCE, and when we know this, we then lift our eyes to the Heavens, to where our Lord is exalted at the right hand of God, and from that vantage point we then look, with our inner eye of faith, at the things ABOVE.

Let us finally emphasize the following:

It should be clear from the foregoing that our 'abounding' in love, effectuating and enabling increase of our full knowledge [*epignosis*] and perception of all things [*pasē aisthēsei*], that such enabling is NOT subject to, and has NOTHING to do with

- knowledge of Greek and Hebrew languages and grammar;
- years of deep so-called theological studies;
- education or intellectual capabilities etc. etc.

It has *only* to do with and is *only* conditioned by ONE thing: our love towards our Saviour and God Christ Jesus.

As we know HIM, and therefore love HIM, we may thereby – in God's will and immense grace – see more, know more fully and discern more, of the depths and heights of His riches as revealed BY Him and CONCERNING Him in the Scriptures.

And to know our Lord Jesus Christ, all we have to do – and any man, woman and even child can do this - is to obey His command:

"Search* the Scriptures...**they** are they which testify of ME".
(John 5:39, KJV)

* [The word "search" is *ereunao* in the Greek, namely "to seek out, trace, search or minutely explore"; (in classical Greek used for lions or dogs tracking down game); *eraunaō* can here in John 5:39 be read either as a command: "search!" – or as a statement: "you [are] searching", because the word is either in imperative or indicative.

The major versions are divided on which reading is the best. We hold with the minority view, that here in John 5:39 it is in the imperative (i.e. a command), because:

- John. 5:39 is the first occurrence; the next following occurrence is in John 7:52, where *eraunaō* is definitely in the *imperative* (aorist active), in a similar command;
- *the indicative* – without a noun or any other word – is otherwise *never* used in the NT to commence a sentence;

- the context is our Lord sternly answering those “who sought the more to kill Him” because He said “ that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (5:18); in that context, a command – issued with His customary authority – seems more likely to us, than a mere statement.

This view is shared by a minority of versions, which translate the *imperative*, including KJV, 21st Century KJV, CEB, Webster, Douay-Rheims, RV (margin), Luther (1545), Wycliffe (1395), Tyndale (1526), Coverdale (1535); The Bishops Bible (1568), Geneva Bible (1587) and Wesley (1755) – and amongst the literal translations: Concordant Literal Version, Godbey New Testament, Julia Smith Translation and exeGeses Companion Bible].

To know the Living Word, and therefore love Him more, we *search* the written Word.

Because the Living Word walks – as He did on earth – upon every page of the written Word.

(Continued in our next)

