

Three Rivers Fellowship

The Pauline Boot Camp (Session 10)

*The Work of Mastering Paul's Gospel:
The Role of ΕΠΙΓΝΩΣΙΣ*

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1. Introduction

All saints in every Dispensation (Gentile, Jew, and Body of Christ) are compelled by regeneration to master their eternal hope and its corresponding details. This detailed grasp of one's stand in Christ is called ἐπίγνωσις. In this module we define important terms, define the concept of ἐπίγνωσις (pronounced "epig-nōsis"), and examine its relationship to Paul's Gospel.

2. Definitions and Concordance

In this section we examine the word family ἐπίγνωσις, related word groups, and provide a complete concordance of the ἐπίγνωσις word family.

The following discussion includes some of the Greek words translated "knowledge".

Important Words for Knowledge¹

(1) οἶδα or εἶδῶ

To know something intuitively.

Mark 9:4 "And Jesus **knowing** their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?"
Philp 1: 17 But the other of love, **knowing** that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

(2) γινώσις or γινώσκω

To know a fact about an object. More intense than number 1 above, in that a more thorough participation on the part of the knower is required. Someone ascertaining facts about something or the facts known of some object. This Greek word family is the source of our English word "knowledge".

Mark 13:28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye **know** that summer is near:
Rom 1:21 Because that, when they **knew** God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
Eph 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth **knowledge**, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

(3) σύνεσις

This word is used for intelligence, insight, understanding, or cleverness.

Luke 2:47 And all that heard him were astonished at **his understanding** and answers.
Eph 3: 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand **my knowledge** in the mystery of Christ

(4) ἐπίσταμαι

To know well, to fix one's mind upon, to have knowledge. From which we get our English word "epistemology".

Acts 10:28 And he said unto them, **Ye know** how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.
1 Tim 6:4 He is proud, **knowing** nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

(5) ἐπίγνωσις is a compound Greek word from ἐπι (meaning - upon) and γνῶσις (meaning - knowledge). Thus, "upon knowledge" or more specifically "detailed or full knowledge". This word family occurs 62 times in the New Testament. The verb (ἐπίγνωσκω) occurs 42 times while the noun (ἐπίγνωσις) occurs 20 times. According to Moulton and Milligan, the Papyri also uses this word family (mainly the verb form) to mean "directed knowledge".²

¹ For additional details of this fascinating subject see the following works.

Bullinger, E.W., **A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament**, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1975;
Bullinger, **The Companion Bible**, App 132, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI; Robertson, A.T., **Word Pictures in the New Testament**, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; Vincent, M.R., **Word Studies in the New Testament**, Eerdman's Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI; Kittel, G., **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, Eerdman's Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1963

² Moulton, J.H., Milligan, G., **The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament**, Eerdman's Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 236. The idea is knowledge directed toward "someone or something".

The following is a complete concordance of the ἐπίγνωσις word family:

Verb:

Mat 7:16,20; 11:27(2); 14:35; 17:12; Mk 2:8; 5:30; 6:33,54; Lk 1:4,22; 5:22; 7:37; 23:7; 24:16,31; Acts 3:10; 4:13; 9:30; 12:14; 19:34; 22:24,29; 24:8; 25:10; 27:39; 28:1; Rom 1:32; 1 Cor 13:12(2); 14:37; 16:18; 2 Cor 1:13(2),14; 6:9; 13:5; Col 1:6; 1 Tim 4:3; 2 Pet 2:21(2)

Noun:

Rom 1:28; 3:20; 10:2; Eph 1:17; 4:13; Philp 1:9; Col 1:9,10; 2:2; 3:10; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7; Tit 1:1; Philemon 6; Heb 10:26; 2 Pet 1:2,3,8; 2:20

3. Paul's Gospel and the Role of ἐπίγνωσις

Examining the Pauline usage of ἐπίγνωσις shows that Paul's Gospel is in fact the message of salvation for the Body of Christ.

1 Cor 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him **acknowledge** (ἐπίγνωσκω) that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

This verse states that the doctrine taught by Paul is in fact the very gospel in which we are saved and the mechanism by which we manifest our regeneration to other saints. We are to acknowledge that the Gospel given to Paul is in fact commandments of the Lord (e.g., the Lord's Gospel).

Elsewhere, Paul states that we are to follow his (Paul's) footsteps as he (Paul) followed Christ.

1 Cor 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

We are to follow Paul *as he followed Christ*. In both doctrine and deed Paul is the template and pattern by which the Body of Christ is to mimic. Indeed, the gospel given to Paul by the post-ascended Christ is the very salvation by which men are saved and assessed in the Body-age.

Rom 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ **according to my gospel**.

Furthermore, Paul tells us that he is the *chief architect* of his Gospel and that Christ is the chief cornerstone.

1 Cor 3:10 According to the grace of God **which is given unto me**, as a wise masterbuilder (super-architecton), I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.
11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Paul states that he has laid the foundation of the gospel for the Body of Christ and that the foundation is Christ Himself. How could Paul have designed and laid down the foundation of a gospel, if that gospel was preached before he came on the scene? Would this not be like building a house before the foundation is poured? This is yet another piece of evidence that Paul's gospel is distinct from the gospel preached by the Twelve or by Christ in His earthly ministry, or by the Old Testament Prophets. Paul's gospel is distinct from any gospel preached before.

What is Paul's gospel? If we are to have a "detailed knowledge" of Paul's gospel, then we ought to know specifically what it is. The remainder of this section provides a brief overview of Paul's gospel. For more information refer to the earlier modules in this Pauline Bootcamp (especially Session One).

Col 2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the **acknowledgement** (ἐπίγνωσκω) of the **mystery of God**, and of the Father, and of Christ;
3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge

Col 2:2 states that as members of the Body of Christ we are to come into a "detailed acknowledgement" of the mystery of God. Paul's gospel is in fact the "Great Mystery" kept secret from before time began (creation - the foundation of the world).

Rom 16:25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you **according to my gospel**, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to **the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began**,

Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Eph 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 If ye have heard of the **dispensation** of the grace of God **which is given me** to you-ward:

3 How that **by revelation he made known unto me the mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, **ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ**)

5 **Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;**

6 **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:**

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable** riches of Christ;

9 And to make all *men* see what is the **fellowship (οικονομια = dispensation) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:**

Col 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is **given to me** for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 **Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:**

The Body of Christ

Paul's gospel defines the Body of Christ as the righteous extension of Christ's non-Incarnate Humanity. As the wife is the human extension of her husband during the marital union, so the "Church" is the extension of Christ' non-Incarnate Humanity.

Eph 1:22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to **the church**,

23 **Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**

Eph 5:30 **For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.**

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they **two shall be one flesh.**

32 This is a **great mystery**: but I speak concerning **Christ and the church.**

Sinners saved today are saved into the Body of Christ, not as a member of the nation of Israel, nor as a righteous Gentile (e.g., Enoch, Ninevites, and Cornelius). The Body of Christ is unique in that the relationship, which the Body will share in eternity is non-ethnic.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in **knowledge (ἐπιγνῶσις)** after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there is **neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian**, bond *nor* free: but Christ is all, and in all.

The Body of Christ is that portion of God's elect, which in eternity shares no ethnic, sexual, economic, or political relationship. While the Church is made up of many members, it is of one Body.

The Body of Christ is One Organic Unit joined to its Head Member Christ; the Body is the personal fulness of the non-Incarnate Humanity of Christ.³

The Hope of the Body of Christ⁴

The Hope of the Body of Christ is to be equally seated with Christ in the Third Heaven, equally glorified with Christ's Humanity, and with Him ruling the entire created order as the extension of His non-Incarnate Humanity.

Equally Seated with Christ

Eph 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and **set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,**

³ Rodabaugh, S. E., **A Dispensational Survey of Scripture Centered Around the Seven Ones of the Body of Christ**, Trinity Grace Fellowship, Pittsburgh, PA, 1983, p. 19

⁴ A more complete definition is found in Rodabaugh, S. E., *Ibid*, p. 23.

"The hope is the personal and eternal union and identification with Christ, both in His holy state and His exaltation over all powers and authorities including cherubim, seraphim, and the angelic hosts. In its administrative position over all God's eternal created order, the Body is the direct, personal, and full expression of Christ's administrative position over God's eternal created order. Everything manifested in the Humanity of Christ, as He now sits in the Third Heaven is manifested both individually and corporately by members of His body."

21 **Far above all principality**, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Eph 2:6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made ***us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus***:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Equally Glorified with Christ

Rom 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also **glorified together**.

Ruling and Heading Up the Entire Created Order

Rom 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

1 Cor 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels

Eph 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he **might gather together in one** all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: (See Greek Text)

We are to ascertain a “detailed knowledge” of our hope

Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the **knowledge** of him:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what **is the hope of his calling**, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

Summary

The gospel to which we are to believe, understand, master, and obey is the gospel given to Paul by the post-ascended Christ. The gospel given to the Body of Christ - the mystery hidden from before the foundation of the world; that a group of redeemed sinners is to be saved to an eternal heavenly hope, equal to the righteous Humanity of Christ, and ruling the entire created order, including the angelic realm (Eph 3:10).

Eph 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

4. The Connection Between ἐπίγνωσις and Paul's Prayers

Paul's prayers indicate that Body saints are to progress in understanding the details of their hope. These prayers are found in Eph 1:16-21; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9,10.

Eph 1:16-21

Eph 1:16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the **knowledge** of him:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what **is the hope of his calling**, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

The importance of this prayer cannot be overstated. Paul never ceases mentioning the Ephesian saints in his prayers and by extension all Body saints (vs. 16). He enumerates his desires for the saints in the next several verses. (Verse 17) The Father would give to every saint “a spirit of revealed wisdom”. The Greek text is constructed in the form of a Figure of Hendiadys “wisdom and revelation” and ought to have been translated as “revealed wisdom” emphasizing the nature of the wisdom. The fact that it is “revealed” wisdom means that the source of this wisdom is from God and is thus linked to regeneration. The working out of this “revealed wisdom” is sanctification. This revealed wisdom is directed toward having a “knowledge of Him”. The Greek word for knowledge is ἐπίγνωσις, meaning of course “detailed knowledge as stated in the sections above. Paul's desire for Body saints is to come into a “detailed knowledge” of Christ. (Verse 18) He continues to enumerate the subject of this ἐπίγνωσις.

THREE RIVERS FELLOWSHIP

1. That Body saints might come to know *specifically what* the hope of the Father's choosing is - that God has ordained certain ones to be the righteous extension of Christ's Righteous non-Incarnate Humanity (i.e., to be the Body of Christ).
2. And to know *specifically what* the "riches of the glory" of His Inheritance in the most holy heavenly place.
3. And *specifically what* is the exceeding greatness of His power toward the Body saints.

Paul is praying this prayer "in the text" and thus praying for Body saints by inspiration (θεόπνευστος - God-Breathed [2 Tim 3:16]). As an integral part of the Biblical text, this passage categorically implies that the prayer is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and thus is a prayer of the Holy Spirit. If the prayer is a prayer of the Holy Spirit, then by its very nature must be answered in the affirmative. Thus, every Body saint will sufficiently succeed in each of these areas so as to fulfill the desire of the Third Person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. **What a joyful, securing thought!**

Phil 1:9-11

Philp 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in **knowledge** and *in* all judgment;
10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;
11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

As in the case of Paul's prayer in Ephesians, this prayer cannot be understated. (Verse 9) Paul explicitly links ἀγάπή love with ἐπίγνωσις. Indeed, he categorically states that the love of Body saints ought to abound in ἐπίγνωσις. The connection between ἐπίγνωσις and ἀγάπη is also seen in Eph 4:13 (context). (Verse 10) That this ἐπίγνωσις "documents" those things that are excellent. In other words, having ἐπίγνωσις allows the mature saint to discern that which is good, right, and proper. Allows the mature saint to differentiate between false doctrine and true doctrine, bad behavior and good behavior.

This fundamental link between Pauline love and "detailed knowledge" is not an accident. As will be seen below, Pauline love is partly defined by each Body saint helping other Body saints grow in their faith and knowledge of Christ as Head of the Body (Eph 4:13). If all one does is "preach the gospel" as defined by "getting saved" then those hearing this so-called gospel are being robbed. They are forever trapped in an environment of milk and pabulum and never allowed to partake of the meat, the filet, the Porterhouse, the prime rib. Maturity in Christ includes a knowledge of Christ *beyond the basics*. Modern Evangelical churches are filled with milk but devoid of meat.

Col 1:9-11

Col 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the **knowledge** of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the **knowledge** of God;
11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;
12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Yet another prayer that cannot go understated. This prayer contains Paul's request for (Verse 9) Body saints be filled with "the" ἐπίγνωσις of God's will with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. If we are to be filled the "detailed knowledge" of God's will, then it follows that God's will must be knowable. How often have we heard of professing Christians wanting to know "what the Lord's will is for their lives". Should I become a physician or an attorney? God's will for the Body saint's life is to progress in a detailed knowledge of Christ. (Verse 10) That in every good work growing in the ἐπίγνωσις of God. ἐπίγνωσις is a necessary prerequisite to walking worthy of the Lord. (Verse 11) The appropriation of ἐπίγνωσις is intrinsically linked with perseverance and eternal security.

Summary Comments on the Prayers of Paul

Paul never prays for saints receiving colored television sets or other mundane items. He prays for the maturity and sanctification of the Body saint. He prays that each Body saint mature and grow in a "detailed knowledge" of Christ as He is Head of the Body. The relationship that the saint has today in the Body age with Christ is *not as Messiah*. Rather the relationship that the Body saint has with Christ today is as *Christ as Head*. This relationship is fundamentally distinct than that of Israel's Kingdom and generates a completely different walk and world-view, which is in complete compliance with God's Trinal nature and moral law. As briefly discussed above the Body saint's hope is heavenly and not earthly. Thus,

ἐπίγνωσις requires a detailed knowledge of one's hope, where they will spend eternity, and what they will be doing. All of this wonderful information is detailed for us in Paul's epistles written to the Body of Christ.

5. Progress and the Nature of ἐπίγνωσις

There are those who say that within the concept of ἐπίγνωσις there is no sense of "progress"; that once regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the saint possesses ἐπίγνωσις in total. In this section we show that this notion is utterly false and that ἐπίγνωσις contains and indeed requires the very notion of *progress*.

For the Jewish saint, progress in "detailed knowledge" and behavior is clearly seen in **Mat 11:25-30**.

Mat 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.
 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.
 27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.
 28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
 30 For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

Christ gives to the Jewish saint detailed knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of the Father. But it is clear from the context that this does not happen overnight. Those to whom Christ gives the ἐπίγνωσις of the Father are said (vs. 28) to be the heavy laden ones (Present Tense, Active Voice) and those that are laboring (Present Tense, Active Voice). These people are described with "participles", which are in the Present Tense and Active voice, clearly showing the current activity and progressive nature of the work of ἐπίγνωσις. Indeed, "progressive" in nature for they are to "learn" - a progressive activity - (vs. 29) the details of *Christ as Messiah*.

For the Body saint, the context of **1 Cor 13:12** seems to shut the case does it not?

1 Cor 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.
 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.

Partly discussed in Chapter 13 is the progressive nature of the revelation of Paul's gospel. It had been revealed over time through the Body Apostles and Prophets and by the time of the completion of the Pauline canon, Paul's gospel was completely revealed. As the revealing of the Paul's gospel was progressive (not all at once), so is the maturation process of the Body saint. At the moment of regeneration we were children, thinking childish things. But as we mature we put off childish things and slowly become mature adults thinking mature thoughts and behaving in a mature way. The very discussion in which Paul is involved details the progressive nature of ἐπίγνωσις - the process he describes as being similar to the maturing process from child to adult. Having put away childish things the Body saint becomes an adult.

Regarding the aspect of progress within ἐπίγνωσις, **Eph 4:13** (and its attending context) cannot be ignored for a moment.

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, **forbearing one another in love;**
 3 **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**
 4 **There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;**
 5 **One Lord, one faith, one baptism,**
 6 **One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**
 7 But unto **every one of us** is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?
 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)
 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of **the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:**
 14 **That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,** by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

The context of Eph 4 includes, "what the purpose of the local assembly is" - to build up (edify) each individual Body saint in ἐπίγνωσις. The doctrinal statement that Body saints are to master is outlined in verses 4-6, and the local assembly is given officers for the "official" edifying process of the individual saints of the assembly. Moreover, each of us is given grace to mature in ἐπίγνωσις and help other Body saints mature in Christ (e.g., ἐπιγνωσις). This maturing process and coming to a "mature male" (vs. 13) does not happen over night as the context of Eph 4 demands. As Eph 4 explicitly states, Body saints are to come into a detailed knowledge of Christ as he is the Head of the Body, not the Messiah of Israel, nor the Last Adam of the Righteous Gentiles. The Body of Christ shares a unique relationship with Christ as His Body, not his nation, nor His NationS (Gentiles). The Body of Christ is a non-ethnic entity, ordained to spend eternity in the third Heaven, seated upon the Father's Throne with Christ, and ruling the entire created order. This is not Israel's hope, nor is it the hope of the righteous Gentiles.

Moreover, as seen above, Paul's prayer in **Philp 1:9** makes no sense if ἐπίγνωσις is not progressive. To "abound more and more" does more than simply imply the notion of progress, it explicitly states the case.

In light of Paul's prayers and the progressive nature of ἐπίγνωσις, we make a very important observation in 1 Tim 2:4.

1 Tim 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto **the knowledge** of the truth.

1 Tim 2:4 is actually addressing the desire of God for Body saints to progress in ἐπίγνωσις and is not stating that He desires everyone without exception to be saved from hell-fire. Paul is explicitly stating that everyone who is to be saved into the Body of Christ will in fact progress in ἐπίγνωσις. Can there be any more comforting of a passage when properly understood in context? This passage is usually ripped from its wonderful context and made to teach that damnable Arminian heresy – that God wishes that all men without exception be saved. The context however, clearly teaches that the passage is discussing "salvation" in the sense of progressing in ἐπίγνωσις. For Paul states that God wills all men (in context His Elect) to come unto a "detailed knowledge" (ἐπίγνωσις of the truth). This passage is not teaching that God wants everyone to be saved from hell-fire, but rather that each saint is to progress in ἐπίγνωσις. Salvation in the sense of real sanctification!

6. The Relationship between ἐπίγνωσις and Behavior

There are those who wish to make the notion of ἐπίγνωσις a dead, intellectual, academic effort only. Those who claim such things are ignorant of what the Scriptures teach regarding ἐπίγνωσις.

It is clearly taught that ἐπίγνωσις leads to living a righteous and moral life that is pleasing to God and honors Christ as Head of the Body.

ἐπίγνωσις results in a behavior and life-style that is pleasing and honoring to Paul's gospel (**Col 3:1-4:6**), i.e., Christ as Head of His Body. Every item that Paul mentions in this text is within the context of ἐπίγνωσις:

Col 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

14 And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.
 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; **teaching and admonishing** one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.
 18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.
 19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.
 20 Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.
 21 Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged.
 22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:
 23 And whatsoever ye do, *do it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;
 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.
 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Col 4:1 Masters, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.
 2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
 3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:
 4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
 5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.
 6 Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

- (1) Keeping from fornication, uncleanness, etc. (vss. 5,6) is a necessary consequence of ἐπίγνωσις.
- (2) Putting off anger, wrath, malice, etc. (vss. 8,9) is a necessary consequence of ἐπίγνωσις.
- (3) Meekness, humbleness of mind, forbearing each in love, etc. (vss.12-14) are necessary consequences of ἐπίγνωσις.
- (4) Teaching and admonishing each other via songs and hymns (vs.16) is a necessary consequence of ἐπίγνωσις.
- (5) Wives submitting to their husbands, husbands loving their wives, children obeying their parents, servants obeying their masters, masters properly treating their servants (vss. 18-4:1), are a necessary consequence of ἐπίγνωσις.
- (6) Speaking and preaching Paul's gospel (the Mystery) is a necessary consequence of ἐπίγνωσις.

Women are exhorted (**1 Tim 2:9-15**) in the context of ἐπίγνωσις (vs. 4) to behave in such a way that is honoring to Paul's gospel.

1 Tim 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto **the knowledge** of the truth.
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 1 Tim 2:9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;
 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.
 11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.
 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.
 13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.
 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.
 15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Philemon was a brother who's behavior was admirable because of ἐπίγνωσις (**Philemon 6**).

The consequence of having no ἐπίγνωσις is seen in **Rom 1:28**.

Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in **their knowledge**, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;
 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,
 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:
 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

The result of a lack of ἐπίγνωσις is adultery, fornication, theft, murder⁵, etc.

⁵ It is interesting to note that the very next sin specifically enumerated in Scripture after the Fall is not "the child stealing from the local candy store", but rather the heinous crime of murder.(Gen 4:8)

7. **ἐπίγνωσις and the Religious Reprobate**

Perhaps no greater doctrine is as sobering as that of the Doctrine of Manifest Reprobation. By "manifest" reprobation we mean the "mechanism" by which an individual today manifests himself/herself as a reprobate (i.e., one who will never be saved).

An equivalent statement of this great doctrine is seen in the word *apostasy*. *Apostasy*, is a transliteration of the Greek word ἀποστασις, which itself is a compound word from απο (meaning "from") and στασις (meaning "state") - so that the root meaning of this word is "from a state", i.e., "departed from a state".

(1) This fundamental principal of reprobation is seen in **Luke 9:62**.

Luke 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

While the context here is the Jewish earthly kingdom, the general principle of reprobation is developed. The context in Luke is regarding an individual, who publicly identifies himself with the truth (in Israel's case, the Kingdom gospel and in the Body's case - Paul's Gospel) and then turns around and denies (or preaches against) that Gospel has **in this life** manifested himself to be a reprobate. Indeed, the word for "having placed" is a very poor translation of the Greek word ἐπιβαλλω, which means to "cast upon" or "throw upon". The intention is to "cast one's lot" with the truth and to identify oneself with it. Thus, manifest reprobation is another way of stating the notion of "traitor-hood" - identifying oneself with the truth, then turning back on it or even preaching against it. An individual who manifests himself as a traitor manifests himself as a reprobate.

(2) Two comments are in order here. Nowhere in scripture is it the job of the saint to generate ministries looking for reprobates. If a saint is aware of individuals that he/she believes through rigorous and careful examination have manifested themselves as reprobates, that saint can only make an **operational decision** regarding the alleged reprobate(s). We are not to judge (in the sense of condemn), but we are compelled to judge (in the sense of discern), i.e., make operational decisions so that we know how we are to behave.

(3) Biblically there is a distinction between traitor-hood and enemy-status. An enemy is someone who is against you, but who has never allied himself with you. In this way, this individual is not necessarily a reprobate - he has not manifested himself as a traitor, for he never identified himself with the truth in the first place. We (the Body) were once called enemies, but never traitors.

Rom 5:10 For if, when we were **enemies**, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Israel's Second Generation were called friends, yet ultimately rejected and killed Messiah. Messiah's friends, quickly manifested themselves as reprobates.

Zech 13:6 And *one* shall say unto him, What *are* these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, *Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*

(4) Paul discusses the characteristics of the religious conservative community at the end of the Age of the Body of Christ (**2 Tim 3:1-17**). A characteristic of the so-called "anti-body" is provided for us in verse 7.

2 Tim 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.
 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;
 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.
 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,
 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to **the knowledge** (ἐπίγνωσις) of the truth.
 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.
 9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all *men*, as theirs also was.
 10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,
 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.
 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The reprobates at the end of the Body Age are described as always learning new things, but they are never able to "nail things down". Indeed, the Greek text actually reads ἐπίγνωσις for our English word knowledge. They are not able to grasp the "detailed knowledge" of the truth (in context Paul's Gospel). Yes, they excel in ascertaining "general" knowledge, but are incapable of ascertaining the "detailed knowledge" of Paul's gospel. Indeed, they hate it! Thus, they are not included in the audience of 1 Tim 2:4.

There seem to be two ways in which a reprobate manifests himself. (1) To openly display his traitor-hood with respect to Paul's gospel; (2) Never persevering in understanding in a detailed way (ἐπίγνωσις) Paul's gospel. The first is easier to nail down, the latter requires much more observation.

8. Summary Comments

The relationship of ἐπίγνωσις to the Body saint's walk is fundamental. Regeneration drives one to master and obey the Scriptures and in particular Paul's gospel for the Body saint. Today, many professing Evangelicals are preaching "that we should be following Israel's Kingdom gospel", thus robbing true Body saints of maturity and consequently robbing Israel of her hope. This confusion trivializes the words of Paul and indeed the words of Christ.