***Full Knowledge, No. 2

Colossians 1:1-2

COL-082***

Our subject is "Prayer for the Colossians," segment number 16 in Colossians 1:9-14.

It is not uncommon, as all of you know, to find someone who has a lot of Bible instruction in his background, who proceeds to violate the Word of God in very serious ways. This is someone who sits under good sound doctrinal instruction, and then practices the very evils which God forbids. The sin nature is able to cause such a person to practice the patterns of lust of the sin nature. The world system of Satan is able to draw that kind of a Christian into its wicked lifestyle. The guile of Satan is able to deceive such a disoriented Christian into its wicked lifestyle, and into rejecting God's instructions.

**Full Knowledge**

Such a dysfunctional Christian is one who lacks the full knowledge of doctrine in his human spirit reservoir – that which the Bible refers to as "epignosis" (ep-ig'-no-sis) knowledge. This is Bible doctrine which has been learned under the instruction of the pastor-teacher, and taught to the believer by the indwelling Holy Spirit, as that believer is in temporal fellowship, and in a learning condition. A Christian who responds to that instruction in doctrine with reservations, and does not respond with a positive "Amen" of acceptance, is a Christian who has rejected what he knows. He knows something, but having rejected it, or having mental reservations about it, it is of no profit to him. The Bible instruction that he has received then remains in the perceptive mentality of his mind has no effect on that Christian's life.

It's always helpful to know how this system works, because this is very critical. This is where the Christian life is all at, in these two verses. And those who learn it will be blessed for all eternity, and those who don't will be the poorer for it. The doctrinal instruction has given you what the Bible calls "gnosis" – plain knowledge. It is here that you will decide to go for it, or not to go for it.

I had a telephone call this afternoon from someone who, at the other end of the country, wanted to inquire on some questions of the Bible, and the subject of salvation came up. This person had uncertainty about the nature of the permanence of salvation, and I pointed out that what the person has to understand is that the issue is the person of Christ, and how He has acted in His payment for our sins – not how we in as individuals act. And after several minutes of discussion, I finally said, "Here's the thing you must remember." This was what this person needs to know: "God can only give salvation by a gift." And I said, "Ephesians 2:8-9." She said, "Yes, yes. I know that." If it's not by grace, you can't get it. And if you proceed to pay God for it, then it's not grace. You've taken that away from him. You say, "I must trust Christ as Savior, and I must have water baptism. You have now added a human work, and you will not be saved.

Now, undoubtedly, there are people who would hear that sentence, and a dramatically important thing would take place. In their minds, they would say, "Whoa, wait a minute. I've always been reared to understand that water baptism was important." In the case of this particular lady, they have just concluded a christening on the latest child born into the family. They called it water baptism, which, of course, it is not baptism unless they dunk the baby in a tub of water. But why did they do that? It's the first step toward protecting that child away from the consequences of Adam's sin. They wiped out original sin nature guilt the minute that pastor sprinkled the water on the child. And I said, "That is the first step of error that this lady is confronted with." This is the imagination that something done as a ritual to that infant will cause that child to be saved.

Now, this is what we're talking about. We have just told you that God saves by grace. He will not save any other way. He gives it to you as a gift. You come along and say, "Whoa, wait a minute, I have to take the Lord's Supper. That's what we Catholics all know. We have to have the Mass, or we don't go to heaven. I trust in Christ as Savior, as a good Catholic, but I also practice the Mass. I have to offer that." You're going to hell: "I have to have water baptism. I believe that water baptism is essential. I take that, and I offer that to Christ to save me. You're going to hell." And in the back of your mind, you're saying, "No. Wait a minute." What has happened? You have information. And there are thousands of people in denominations that believe exactly that. And what they have is a knowledge of salvation of Christ up here in the head, but they've been told you can't add any human work to it: Romans 11:6 makes it very clear: "If it's of works, it's not of grace. If it's grace, it's not of works." You can't say it any better than that. Take the grace basis away from God, and you have zero.

And if you balk at that, that's where that knowledge stays. It never comes down to become "epignosis" – something that will grab your life, and will transform you. In the case of the doctrine of the gospel, it will transform you from heading for hell to heading for heaven. It's a very dramatic change. But it's a good illustration.

So, a Christian who takes the Word of God, and receives the instruction, and rejects it – he knows doctrine, but it doesn't affect him. That is the explanation for people who do horrendous things, after sitting in church and being taught and being taught and being instructed. As they sat there, they listened to people around them. They watched what they saw on the television. They watched what they saw at the movies. They read things in publications. And all of these things said, "No, no, no. God has it all botched up. He's doing just like the devil said to Eve: "He just wants to keep you from being what you really are. You are a goddess, Eve. And He doesn't want you to find that out. The minute eat of that tree, you'll discover what you really are. And she fell for it. She had reservations about what God had told her.

So, the carnal Christian, who will be in this state, may have years of instruction in the Word of God, but he has neutralized that in his mind by his reservations of accepting what he has been taught. The carnal Christian is no better off than the unsaved believer in terms of resisting the destructive effects of the sin nature; the world; and, the devil. The believer who, however, responds to doctrinal instruction with positive volition of faith, converts the information that he has been taught, and kicks it down into his human spirit.

Remember that your soul is your contact with the personality of people – the mind; the emotions; and, the will. Your body is your contact with the world around you in a physical way. But it is your human spirit which is your contact point with God. That's why the human spirit has to come alive. You are born with a dead human spirit. When you become a Christian, you are regenerated. Now you have a living human spirit. Now you have the capacity to learn doctrine, and you have the capacity to put it down here in that human spirit where it is stored for your use, and for your effectiveness – for something that will take hold of your life, and you will function upon it.

This is what kids need to know. This system that God provided for His son is what kids need to know. And they need to know the great danger, and the great potential destructive effect of having mental reservations about what God has said.

If you are sworn into the military service of the United States, and you take that oath of office, one of the things that is included in that oath is that you'll promise to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, internal and external. And you take this oath without any intent of evasion or any mental reservation – any mental reservation to evade this oath. Now, why do they put that in there? They understand the same thing – that you may hear the oath; you may listen to it; and, you may even take it, but in your mind you're saying, "No way. I'm not going to obey this oath. I'm pretending I'm listening. I'm hearing it. But I'm not going to do it. When the time comes to put my life on the line in defense of this nation, I'm not going to do that." And if you have mental reservations about that, that's exactly what will happen. That oath then will not take hold of your life as a soldier.

**Knowledge**

So, the believer who responds to doctrine is the only one who is capable of living a life of blessing. This believer has full knowledge ("epignosis") – knowledge which works. This is knowledge which is stored into various categories that he has here in his human spirit: the moral categories; the categories of dealing with government; and, categories of social life – all kinds of categories of doctrine that the Holy Spirit puts together in that human spirit. At this moment, if we were to ask you to give a report on what's down in your human spirit, you probably couldn't remember all those things. But the minute something comes up that requires that knowledge; you have a decision to make; or, are in a situation where that information is important, I guarantee you the Spirit of God, if you are in fellowship with Him, will kick it up to your memory.

Have you ever had the experience that suddenly you get into a spiritual discussion with some people – people who may be unbelievers, or people who may be uninformed Christians, and they're asking you questions, and you look back, and you say later, "I can't believe it. They would put me on the spot, and they would ask questions, and I knew just what to say. Things kept coming to my mind, and I knew what to say. I remembered this. I remembered that. And you were amazed. What was happening? The Spirit of God was working the system. You knew these things, and you were positive to those doctrinal principles, so that the Holy Spirit had something with which to guide you. That's the important thing.

This full knowledge ("epignosis") is able to control the believer to affect his life for godliness and for divine good works. While the believer maintains his status of temporal fellowship with God the Father, the Holy Spirit will cycle up the information from the human spirit up to his directive capacity in his mind, where decisions are made, and will give him a frame of reference. It will give him a conscience that's right, and he'll be able to meet life successfully. The believer is then controlled by the indwelling Holy Spirit this way so that he makes right decisions in dealing with anything that has to do with spiritual things and temporal things. Now that is the prime of life that everybody should seek.

The "epignosis" that this kind of a believer possesses enables him to maintain his moral integrity in his mind and in his body. This "epignosis" knowledge content in his human spirit enables him to deal with material things to the glory of God.

Unsaved people and carnal Christians are a sorry lot, because they lack a functioning human spirit reservoir of categories of doctrine. That's what makes the difference. These are the dysfunctional people who are out of touch with God, and they are the victims of the devil. Isn't it amazing that now we're hearing that large numbers of people on the White House staff are drug users; and, that there has been a deliberate covering up and a collusion of the highest authorities, even when the FBI is saying these people are dangerous; they're doing this; they need to be examined; that they avoid the testing; and, they find ways to keep these people out of reach of all of the surveillance for the nation's protection? Can you imagine a group of people who run the lives of American citizens, who are on drugs, and people who tolerate and condone that? That's crazy. That's right. Anybody who is not functioning on this "epignosis" in the human spirit is crazy. He doesn't make any sense. He is he out of touch with reality, and certainly out of touch with reality spiritually.

So, nothing is more important in life than accumulating a solid supply of "epignosis," full knowledge, of doctrine in your human spirit reservoir. How do you do that? By attending an expository preaching service such as this. It's done by means of that grace system of perception that you're all well-acquainted with for learning and accumulating spiritual phenomenon that has nothing to do with your spiritual IQ. It has only to do with your willing to be present; to be taught; and, say "Amen" to that which is confirmed to you in Scripture.

Now, one of the nice things about the controls of the Holy Spirit is that He will not put anything in your human spirit which is false. False doctrine will not be reserved in there. False doctrine will not come up to guide you. Anybody who has false doctrine, like the Mormons or the Catholics – they're functioning from the knowledge up in their heads – "gnosis." They have rejected the doctrines that counter that false knowledge. They're not operating from their human spirit. Most of them are spiritually dead, so they can't operate from that area anyhow.

So, this use of this great word "epignosis" (full knowledge – clear knowledge – this is used of moral and religious knowledge ("epignosis"). Thus it is Bible doctrine. It refers to the deep things of the Spirit of God– mature doctrine. And it refers to the full counsel of the Word of God – no blind spots. I hope you brought your Bibles today. 20 times in the New Testament, this important word is used. We're go through each one of them.

Romans 1:28: "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper." He is speaking about the pre-flood generation: "Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God." There's the word: "to recognize" the "epignosis" of God. To have God in full knowledge ("epignosis") is what it means. Just as they did not want to have God in full knowledge ("epignosis"). They didn't want to learn doctrine, and they didn't want to say "Amen" to the doctrine. So, what did God do? He gave them over to a depraved mind – a mind which was twisted out of reality, and to do all those things which are not proper. And then it goes on and lists a series of terrible things, improper things that these people were doing.

Notice that Romans 1:22-23 says, "Professing to be wise, they became fools." They had information from God, but they were so smart that they said "No" to it. And what they did was made themselves fools. And in verse 23, it says: "They made themselves their own Gods" – animals, and they worshiped that; and then the sun; the moon; and, the stars. And then the once God gave them over to that depraved mind, He washed His hands of them. The result was that they degenerated morally, and in came homosexuality and the lesbianism that brought them to the lowest levels of human experience.

Don't ever make any mistake about the fact that the United States Supreme Court was wrong when it's struck down the rights of the people of the state of Colorado to say that homosexuality is not a right – it is something that people choose to do, like sometimes people choose to murder, and it's not a right, and people who go around being murderers do not get special treatment for that evil. And people who are homosexuals do not get special treatment for that evil. They have civil rights like anybody else, but they have no special rights.

Can you believe that seven members of the United States Supreme Court said, "No, that's wrong?" And like Justice Kennedy, who wrote the summary for the majority, said, "That's only because you have an animus toward homosexuals. That's why the people of Colorado have this law. They have an animus toward homosexuals." No they don't. They have an animus toward this moral depravity that God condemns and says, "This is an abomination." Do you see what happens when you have people in authority over you, sitting up there at the highest levels of government without "epignosis" in the spirit? What else can they do? But the worst kind of degeneracy that brought enormous judgment from God, just remember Sodom and Gomorrah, and yet here people, in the highest court of the land strike down a state's right to establish moral conduct that is going to protect the wellbeing of the people of that state.

Can homosexuals practice their degeneracy? Yes they can, in the privacy of their own circle, and their own homes, they can do whatever they wish, like anybody else. But they cannot do it publicly, and require that they be defended as someone who has the right to do it.

What is the next thing going to be for these men and women who lack "epignosis" in the human spirit? Don't be surprised, before very long, pedophilia will also be declared to be a human right. Why not? Why not take little boys and abuse them sexually? What's the difference? And just watch and see the North American Boy / Man Association is gearing up to challenge the courts on that very thing. And now the Supreme Court is going to have to say "No, that's only because you have ill-feeling toward men who want to play with boys like that. You can't say that they can't do that. And you can't pass laws such that they don't get special treatment."

They wouldn't have full knowledge of God, and they had the information. That's the point. They had the information. They didn't have full knowledge. And they made fools of themselves.

Notice Romans 1:32, "And although they knew ("epignosis") the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hardy approval to those who practice them." What is happening in our society today – in the entertainment world and everywhere? They know that this is the ordinance of God? And they play with little words like: "Oh, I know this is sin, but it's so fun." And they know that this is worthy of death. Does a homosexual not know that his actions are potentially worthy of death because of the AIDS epidemic, and of the deadliness of AIDS? Yes, they know that. But why would they do that? Because they have no "epignosis" (full knowledge) in their human spirit. When God condemned that kind of action, they said, "Oh, wait a minute. Wait a minute. I have to think this over. I don't know if I want to say that homosexuality is bad, and that it must not be treated as something dignified." And it's all because there's no full knowledge. Isn't that amazing? That's what transforms one human being from another.

Romans 3:20 is the next one: "Because by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in His sight. For through the law comes the full knowledge ('epignosis') of sin." It is through the Law of Moses that we get a full grasp of how terrible sin is, and the consequences of sin."

Notice Romans 7:7-13: "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be. On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known ('epignosis') about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" Now you remember that the apostle Paul said, "Hey, I am perfect on the Law. I haven't broken any of those 10 commandments. I am head-and-shoulders above my peers." And then, as he came to a knowledge of Christ, it hit him right between the eyes that all those sins that he was so proud of that he didn't do, they were all external. He didn't do the adultery. He didn't do the stealing. He didn't worship idols. But concerning the one mental attitude sin that's in the 10 commandments, "Thou shalt not covet," he suddenly realized that he coveted left and right. He was shot through with covetousness. And that's what crushed him, and he realized how sinful and how condemned he was before God.

So, he said, "But sin (the sin nature), taking opportunity through the commandment produced in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the Law, sin is dead, and I was once alive, apart from the Law. But when the commandment came, sin came alive, and I died." Once I learned the truth, and I accepted it, I said "Amen." Then "epignosis" hit me right between the eyes. And this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me: "For the sin nature, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it, killed me. So, then the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and righteous, and good. Therefore, did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be. Rather it was the sin nature, in order that it might be shown to be sin by affecting my death through that which is good; that through the commandments, sin might become utterly sinful."

Paul said, "Through the good thing (the holy thing – the Laws of God – the 10 Commandments), that's what finished me off. There's nothing wrong with the Law. Paul said, "The problem was with my sin nature." So, what the Law gave was that suddenly Paul had the knowledge of how bad sin was. It suddenly took hold of him.

Romans 10:2: "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge ('epignosis')." The Jews, to this very day, have a great zeal for God. They go through their rituals, and they go through their forms, but they reject Jesus Christ. John 6:65: "No man comes the Father, but by Me," Jesus says. These Jews have great "gnosis" knowledge about Jesus Christ, but they reject it. They say, "No, He is not the Savior. He is not the Messiah. He is not Yeshua Messiah." But they're wrong. And when they resisted that – they have knowledge about Christ, but because they rejected him, they do not have full knowledge ("epignosis") of who he is. He does not capture their loyalty.

Ephesians 1:17 is the next one: "For the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you a Spirit of wisdom, and of revelation in the knowledge ("epignosis") of Him." When you have full knowledge of Jesus Christ, you will have wisdom (how to apply knowledge), and you'll have information that only comes from God – the revelation of God. You will understand what God thinks. That comes through "epignosis".

Ephesians 4:13: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge ("epignosis") of the Son of God to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

Back up to Ephesians 4:11." How in the world are we going to become in the full stature spiritually of Jesus Christ – and we're talking about now, here on earth? "And He (God the Father) gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastor-teachers." These are the great communicator gifts which were given to the body of Christ. We no longer have prophets who predict the future. We no longer have the gift of apostles. But we do have evangelists now who proclaim the gospel – men with special ability to proclaim the gospel. And we do have pastor-teachers.

Now, why do we have these pastor-teachers? Ephesians 4:12" "For the equipping of the saints" (military terminology for giving them the equipment that a Christian soldier needs). And what is that equipment? ""Epignosis", the knowledge of doctrine which is transformed to "epignosis". And then the Greek uses a preposition that hooks onto" equipping the saints" with: "For [pros (pros): advantageous] the work of service," so that the Christian may serve God." If you don't have "epignosis," I don't care what your mission is that God has called you to, you're not going to do it. You're not going to be capable of doing it. You're not going to be able to perform divine good service. And the purpose of that, another preposition in the Greek [eis (ice) implying penetration ("unto union") to a particular purpose or result] hooks it to that. The consequence is the building up of the body of Christ.

So, if that pastor-teacher in the pulpit is not giving you your right to the knowledge of Bible doctrine by taking a book of the Bible, and going verse-by-verse through it, and periodically stopping and summarizing whole doctrines for you, then there is no possible way that you'll be equipped for the battle. There's no way.

Okay, how many Christians out there in all these nice churches, with the numbers and the money, are equipped for the battle? Not many. That's because that's not what's coming out of the pulpit. The game is success, and the success does not come with proclaiming doctrine. And when that doesn't happen, then those Christians cannot serve God. There's no work of service that they're able to do. And when there's no work of service, there's no building up of the body of Christ. The Lord's work is not being done.

That's why you people, who understand this, and who understand this system of knowledge "epignosis" in the human spirit, and who understand how God works through the doctrines of Scripture, are the people who are equipped to do the battle. And if you are not going to do it, I guarantee you that all those people who are running through programs aren't going to do it. Do you see what I mean by programs? They are substitutes for people to be able to walk through their lives with some impression that they're taking care of their relationship to God who do not have a knowledge of doctrine. And I guarantee you that God is not going to send those people into the battle, because they're not going to be able to win it.

Now, He has a great purpose for this congregation, and that's why I'm asking you to be very faithful in that three-times-a-day praying for that final technical problem to be worked out. It's on the line this week. That will give us the means to turn that dream into reality, and we will make such an impact for God as you cannot believe. Why? I learned this all over again in summer camp, when I had strangers who were saying things to me that my eyes were jaded to. And I realized what God does because of those people who have full knowledge in their human spirits, who can pull off a thing like summer camp with the equality, and the sophistication, and the spiritual impact that they did. And I don't apologize for saying that. I doubt there's any other church in this area that could have done it. Is that a matter of pride? No. It's just a matter of understanding that when you don't follow the system, God cannot use you.

Now, that's the way it is in real military life. During the Gulf War, General Schwarzkopf needed to have an objective taken. And the army commander was bogging down and muddling around. So, he finally called him in, and he said to him, "Everything is now dependent upon this objective. And if we don't have it, we're going to be in big trouble. I'm going to tell you once more. You get your troops out there, and you get that. And if you don't, by God, I'm going to put the Marines in there, and let them take it." Well, that's all the army needed to inspire them. They weren't about to take that humiliation. And they went back, and they got the objective. Now, what was Schwarzkopf saying? He was saying, "If I'm finding that you are not equipped to do the job, then I'm going to find somebody who is equipped to do it." And that's how God works. There are plenty of churches that are equipped to run a YMCA entertainment program. But there are not many who can come to grip with the human soul, and transform a person into the image of Christ. And isn't it great to have a young person that you can transform into the image of Christ before their lives get botched up, and beaten up, and all scarred up? And that's the business that we're in – building up the body of Christ.

Then Ephesians 4:13 says, "We're going to attain to the full knowledge ("epignosis") of the Son of God." We're going to know Him in depth, so that we are up to His measure of His manhood. Isn't that something – to be up to the measure of the humanity of Jesus Christ?

The next one is Philippians 1:9: "And this, I pray: that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge ('epignosis') in all discernment." There the translators kicked in the word "real." I don't understand why they don't usually say "real" or "full," but it's the same Greek word. Sometimes they point it out. There they did. And they made it very clear that this is "epignosis" knowledge: "I pray that your love may still abound more and more in real knowledge in all discernment." It is when you have "epignosis" knowledge that you really are a person who is capable of loving. Don't be fooled by somebody who pretends to love, and who expresses love, who does not have "epignosis" knowledge. The guy's a dog and a pig. He's a lowlife, and it is a great deceit. But if "epignosis" is there, then it is genuine love. And if you have "epignosis", you'll have the discernment to know when it is genuine love.

Colossians 1:9 (there's the verse we're studying): "For this reason also, since the day we heard of your love, we have not ceased to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with full knowledge ('epignosis')." The full knowledge ("epignosis") of what? Here, of the will of God, in all spiritualism and understanding.

Colossians 1:10 is the next one. Why? "So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respect, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the full knowledge ("epignosis") of God." Aha! When you have full knowledge ("epignosis"), as we shall learn next time, you develop a frame of reference so that you have the capacity to go into the deeper things of God. The reason most Christians are so shallow that they cannot grasp the deep things of God is because they have no foundation of "epignosis" knowledge. Paul says, "I pray this for you so that you will know the will of God. You'll have all spiritual wisdom and understanding." And we've studied those words. For what reason? So that you can be the decent representative of Jesus Christ. You'll walk in a way that (in all respects) you please Him, and your life is not wasted. You are bearing the fruits of your spiritual gift. A Christian without "epignosis" has a spiritual gift that lies dormant. And once "epignosis" gets countered by the world; the sin nature; or, the devil, the first thing that comes up is dysfunctionality: "I'm not using my spiritual gift." It is neutralized in some way. Be on guard for that.

Colossians 2:2 is the next one: "That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance and understanding, resulting in a true knowledge ("epignosis") of God's mystery; that is, Christ Himself." There they translate it again with the word true, indicating that it is "epignosis" knowledge. What is it that Paul is praying for? He's praying for these Christians who are at Laodicea – that they may be able to overcome the terrible things that were true in that church. And that they may indeed have their hearts governed by "epignosis" knowledge, so that they may come to a real knowledge of Jesus Christ Himself." Instead, they had the picture of Christ knocking at the door of their hearts, trying to get in. That's how disoriented the Laodicean Christians were. Paul says, "I have to pray for them, that that can be overcome." There is only one way: true knowledge.

Colossians 3:10. Notice how often this comes up in this book of Colossians. What is Paul trying to do? He's trying to counter the misinformation of the false teachers that have swept down upon the Colossian Christians. And what's the protection? "Epignosis", "epignosis", "epignosis," again and again. Here it is. Colossians 3:10, "And have put on the new self, who is being renewed to a true knowledge "epignosis" according to the image of the One who created him." Here he is calling upon the believers to conduct themselves as Christians. The verses before list a great number of evils that they are not to do: immorality; impurity; passion; evil desires; greed (which is idolatry); anger; wrath; malice; slander; abusive speech; and lying to one another. And in verse 10, he says, "Get rid of all that. You have put on the new self who is being renewed to have true knowledge "epignosis." You put on Christ, and you are being renewed in true knowledge "epignosis" according to the image of one who created you."

So, here he says, when you have "epignosis" knowledge, and you do, now live according to that. Get yourself back in temporal fellowship, and let the Spirit of God function in your life with that true knowledge."

Let's go ahead to 1 Timothy 2:4: "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge ("epignosis") of the truth." This is what God wants. This is what's acceptable. He wants everybody to be saved. They're not all going to be. Most will not find the Way. Most of them are going to get "gnosis" information, either by a direct testimony of the gospel, or from their sense of God-consciousness through natural creation. And they're going to say "No" to that. And they're never going to get "epignosis" that leads them to salvation, so that they will come to a full knowledge ("epignosis") of the truth about Christ, and the salvation in Him.

2 Timothy 2:25: "With gentleness, correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them to repentance leading to the full knowledge "epignosis" of the truth." Here he is talking about Christians who have stepped out of line of the will of God, and people who have knowledge of God, but they're turning their backs upon it, and they're going for foolish ignorance speculations. They produce quarrels, and so on. And he said, "What we are called to is to be something totally different because of our "epignosis" knowledge. Now, he says, you have to correct people like that: "With gentleness, correcting those who oppose what is right, if perhaps God may grant them repentance, leading to a full knowledge "epignosis" of the truth. And God in his mercy can give you a change of mind.

2 Timothy 3:7, "Always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge "epignosis" of the truth." Here are these who are false teachers. Here are these apostates. What are they doing? They're always learning something about religion. They're always learning something new, but they're never able to come to the "epignosis" of the truth. They never come to a full knowledge of the truth. These people are not born-again. They don't have the first step of being able to understand spiritual things. And when they are given information, then they reject it.

Back in 2 Timothy, 3:2 by the way, the preceding thing that causes all these terrible sins, it says: "For men will be lovers of selves." This is self-esteem; self-love; self-this; and, self-that. You hear it today. The best preachers you know are standing up in their pulpits, and proclaiming self-love as the first step to being able to deal with people. And the Bible says that: "Those who are lovers of themselves will be lovers of money. They'll be boastful. They'll be arrogant. They'll be revilers," and on and on. Who are the people who are straight? 2 Timothy 3:7 says that it is not these who are always learning something religious, and never coming to the knowledge '"epignosis" of the truth. But those who have "epignosis" knowledge.

Titus 1:1: "Paul, a bond servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of those chosen of God, and the knowledge "epignosis" of the truth, which is according to godliness." Some of you people have been chosen to come into a knowledge of the deep things, the "epignosis" things of God. And because you are chosen, God led you to salvation. He gave you the Holy Spirit to be your teacher, and He brought you into an instructional situation in a church that gives you the exposition of the Word of God, so that you are capable because you have been chosen of God to have "epignosis" knowledge.

We rejoice when we have it, but we can't compliment ourselves for it. Other Christians in other assemblies are just as nice as we are. But the difference is up there in that pulpit, and in the knowledge of church ministry. That's what the difference is. That is what a church is supposed to be doing. And once it gets all balled up with all the things it shouldn't be doing, it is very, very hard to change it. It has happened more than once that pastors have called me, who got a line on our tapes, and when they get that Philippian series that explains what a pastor-teacher is supposed to do, and the triple connection of those three prepositions, and how God goes about doing is work, suddenly they realize what on earth they're supposed to be doing as pastors. And suddenly, they look at themselves, and see what they do all day long, and the thing that is not at the heart of what they do is study the Word of God such that they can walk in before that congregation, and tell the people what they learned, and to explain the Scriptures to them.

On more than one occasion, I've had pastors say, "This has been thrilling." Sometimes they say, "Thank you. I now know what I'm supposed to do as a preacher. And they proceed now to give expository doctrinal sermons. And then they call me later and say," I've been kicked out." Or they tell me, "I went to do this, and now I don't have a church anymore. They want somebody to tickle their ears, and they don't want this heavy stuff of doctrine." It's very hard to change a congregation that's gotten in the habit of being shortchanged on "epignosis," and to be treated as if they were a bunch of intellectual idiots.

In Philemon 1:6 (the next book over), Paul says, "And I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the full knowledge "epignosis" of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake." Here's Philemon, the owner of the slave Onesimus. Paul is sending Onesimus back to him. Onesimus ran away. And Paul thanks God for his memories with Philemon. And he prays for him: "That the fellowship of your faith (the fellowship of Christian faith) may become even more effective with this man through the full knowledge "epignosis" of every good thing which is in you for the Lord's sake." He says, "Every good thing that you're capable of doing." Why is he doing this? Well, he's calling upon Philemon's knowledge of "epignosis" doctrine to forgive this slave, and take him back, and not beat him up.

Hebrews 10:26: "For if we go on sinning willfully, after receiving the full knowledge "epignosis" of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin." Ah-ha! Somebody gave you the gospel and said, "No works." And you said, "Whoa, wait a minute. I have to think that over." Bingo – mental reservations. And he says, "After receiving the full knowledge "epignosis" of the truth, and you reject it, there's nothing more for you." He says that there's nothing more that can be done for you. You cannot waiver from that which is the truth, if you go on sinning willfully. And what he's talking about is somebody who was positive; somebody who took the doctrine and said "Amen" to it, so that he has "epignosis;" and, now he goes on sinning willfully? He says, "There's nothing more for you except the consequences of what you're doing.

2 Peter 1:2: "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the full knowledge ('epignosis') of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Here it's involved in a greeting of what Peter, the pastor-teacher elder, is wishing for these people: "That they may have the full knowledge ('epignosis') of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ." Without that they've got nothing.

2 Peter 1:3, "Seeing that his divine power was granted to us, everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge ('epignosis') of Him who called us by His own glory and experience." Through "epignosis" knowledge, God's divine power has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness. What a wonderful promise! If I have "epignosis" in my human spirit, I'll have everything I need in life supplied to me, and I will have the capacity to be a godly person. That's what "epignosis" does. I won't be a fool. I will be a godly person. I will not be turning my back upon the Word of God; upon the assembly of believers; or, upon the fellowship of God (God's people upon the Christian service with the work of the Lord). I will know true knowledge "epignosis," and I will be part of life and godliness.

2 Peter 1:8 also uses it: "For if these qualities are yours, and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge ('epignosis') of our Lord Jesus Christ." If you have these qualities that he describes in these verses, Christian character qualities, then you will not be useless. Your life will be significant. You will not be unfruitful because of the true knowledge "epignosis" that you have.

Finally, 2 Peter 2:20 is the last time "epignosis" is used in the Bible: "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world, by the full knowledge ('epignosis') of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them, and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first." Did you ever see a fine upright Christian: somebody that's an impact in the Lord's work; somebody that we all esteem; and, somebody that's accomplishing great things because they obviously have "epignosis" understanding in their human spirit? And then, like Demas, they go off into the world, and they get tangled up with the world system, and the world things, and the world activities – fun and games, or things that the world should be doing while the Christians are about their Father's business. If after they have untangled themselves again with the full knowledge "epignosis" of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they become entangled again, there is disaster upon disaster.

So, this word "epignosis" is repeatedly used in the Word of God for everything that a believer should be, in terms of the image of Christ. And without it, it is impossible to be His man and His woman. And those who had the Word of God, and have received it with a willingness that they're going to live by it, those are the people that for all eternity are going to look back, and they're going to be glad that they were taught, and that they said "Amen," as there are going to be multiplied thousands of Christians who stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and they will look back, and they will grieve that they were never taught; and, who would have been eager to say, "Amen, Lord," if only somebody gave them a chance.

So, do not take lightly the fact that you're elected and chosen to have the chance. The Bible, in Luke 12:48, says, "To him much has been given. Of him shall more be required." And that's every one of you.

Thank you, Lord, for this time in the Word. And may we live up to that which is our heritage, and our potential. May "epignosis" be our way of life. May we breathe it in, and breathe it out, and exhale it upon all the world about us. And may people know that we have therefore been with Jesus. We pray in His name. Amen.

If you have not had a chance to help us at the offering boxes at the door, please do. We need your help. Say hello to somebody. Thank you. We're dismissed.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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