

**"THAT I MIGHT KNOW HIM"
PHILIPPIANS 3:10a**

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PREFACE

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The purpose of this paper is to set forth the meaning of the phrase "That I might know him" as recorded in Phil. 3:10a.

The writer wishes to dedicate this paper to his wife who has greatly helped in the grammatical construction.

The writer wishes also to express appreciation to Professor Herbert Bess for his counsel and valuable assistance. Acknowledgement is also given to the authors of the commentaries which were consulted for their work done in explaining this phrase.

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INTRODUCTION

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For some time I have been interested in the subject of knowing Christ. Not the knowledge necessary for salvation but the knowledge of Christ in a more intimate manner after one is born again. The Bible has much to say about the person of Christ and information concerning His life and work, both as incarnate and before His incarnation. There are also passages that deal with man's relation to Christ in this area. It is one of these passages that I will be concerned with in this paper.

The apostle Paul knew Christ intimately. Therefore, he is an authority on this very subject of the knowledge of Christ. Since this is true it is important that we find exactly what Paul meant by his words, "That I might know him," as recorded in Phil. 3:10a. Having searched out the real meaning of this phrase, we shall come to understand more fully the knowledge of Christ which man can possess.

GREEK TEXT

GREEK TEXT

According to The New Testament in the Original Greek,
edited by Westcott and Hort

ΤΟΥ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν
τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ
κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ,
συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ,

There are no variant readings affecting the problem in
this critical monograph.

ENGLISH VERSIONS

ENGLISH VERSIONS

King James Version, 1611

That I may know him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Woodruff's New Testament, 1852

And may have a knowledge of him, and of the power of his resurrection, and the participation to him, in his death.

Twentieth Century New Testament, 1900

My aim is to get to know Christ, and to learn the power that is in his resurrection and what it means to share his sufferings in the hope that, if I grow like him in his death,

American Standard Version, 1901

That I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death;

Weymouth's New Testament, 1914

I long to know Christ and the power which is in His resurrection, and to share in His sufferings and die as He died;

Moffatt's Bible, revised edition, 1935

I would know him in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, with my nature transformed to die as he died.

Wuest's Expanded Translation, 1956

In order that I might come to know Him in an experiential way, and to come to know experientially the power of His resurrection and a joint-participation in His sufferings, being brought to the place where my life will radiate a likeness to His death,

Amplified New Testament, 1958

(For my determined purpose is) that I may know Him - that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding (the wonders of His Person) more strongly and more clearly. And that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection (which it exerts over believers); and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed (in spirit into His likeness even) to His death, (in the hope)

Berkeley Version, 1959

(9) based on the faith,
That knows Him and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of His sufferings becoming like him in His death,

New English Bible, 1961

All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings, in growing conformity with his death.

ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

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Philippi was a city located ten miles inland from the harbor city of Neapolis. Philippi had previously existed under the name of Krenides and was finally made a real city by Philip of Macedon. The town of Philippi was well known for its gold mines which were worked by Philip. Some two centuries later the rich mines were exhausted. The Romans moved in and at the Battle of Pydna in 168 B.C. the Romans won and took over control of the city. Later Augustus transported a large number of Roman veterans to the colony and raised the status of Philippi by granting it the so-called *jus Italicum* which placed it on a par with the Roman colonies of Italy.

Thus, Paul found an entirely Roman city. It's citizens were Roman citizens and enjoyed all the rights of such. Since he was a Roman citizen, Paul also received protection.

Paul, in the midst of a Missionary journey, was directed to Macedonia (Ac. 16:9) after the doors to Asia (Ac. 16:6) and to Bithynia (Ac. 16:7) were closed to him. The start of the church at Philippi began by the river side. Its first members were women,

the first convert being Lydia. Paul left Philippi in the year 52, leaving Timothy and Luke to build up the infant congregation. As the church grew, its members consisted mainly of Gentiles. There were few Jews in Philippi. At least there were not enough to warrant the building of a synagogue in the city. There is no record that there were any Jews who made up the membership of this church.¹ The membership was predominately women and there were probably Roman soldiers who also attended. The church is noted for its sending of gifts to Paul and for the high regard that Paul held for this church.

Having briefly discussed the historical background of the city and the church let us turn our attention to the letter itself. The letter was written by Paul to express his appreciation for the gifts sent by the church. Paul also wanted to encourage the church concerning the condition of Epaphroditus, as well as to supply information about himself and to, in this small way, fellowship with those whom he loved.

As Paul wrote this letter he was in prison in Rome. It evidently was written while Paul was under more trying circumstances than when he wrote Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.

¹Herman A. Hoyt, The Epistle to the Philippians (Unpublished notes for Philippians class at Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Ind., n. d.) (Mimeographed)

Yet, even in these trying circumstances of being in prison, the future dark with uncertainty, and maybe a martyr's death waiting for him, Paul is writing a letter full of joy. Surely Paul had found the true secret of happiness. Truly, Paul was just the man to write such an epistle as we have here. It is easy for someone not experiencing trials and tribulations to be joyful, but when one who is experiencing troubles can be joyful in the Lord then truly he has the answer to practical Christian living. Paul had found this answer and is writing about it to those in Philippi.

The chapter that especially interests us is chapter three. In this chapter Paul gives practical warnings against Judaism. In making this practical, he uses an example from his own life. Starting with verse eleven the warning is against perfection and again he uses his own example.

The last section of the chapter is against Antinomian profligacy. We are concerned especially with the warning against Judaism. The key to protection seems to be summed up in the knowledge of Christ of which Paul speaks in verse eight and again in verse ten. Although we, as Gentiles, in this age are not bothered by Judaism as such, we are bothered by other "isms" which makes this section still practical to us today. Thus, it is important that we know just how Paul meant this knowledge of Christ to be understood.

This paper will attempt to show and prove Paul's meaning in his speaking of knowing Christ.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

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Major Problem: To What Part of Paul's Life-Experience
Does the Phrase "That I might know him" Relate?

Minor Problem: What is the Meaning of the
Word γῶρα?

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Minor Problem: What is the Meaning of the
Word yvāral?

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Minor Problem: What is the Meaning of the
Word γυναικα?

Progressive View

A. T. Robertson states this view in this way:

Genitive of the articular second aorist (ingressive) active infinitive (purpose) of γυναικα to have personal acquaintance or experience with. This is Paul's major passion, to get more knowledge of Christ by experience.¹

Other commentators who hold this view on the word γυναικα are Lenski,² Nicoll,³ Wuest,⁴ Green,⁵

¹A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1931), IV, 453.

²R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians (Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1946), pp. 840, 841.

³W. Robertson Nicoll, The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), III, 455.

⁴Kenneth Wuest, Philippians in the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1953), p. 93.

⁵Samuel G. Green, Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1912), p. 374.

Lange,⁶ and Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown.⁷ These are just a few who hold to this view.

⁶John Peter Lange, Philippians, trans. Horatio B. Hackett, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, reprinted, n. d.), p. 54.

⁷R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, Commentary on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n. d.), IV, 106.

Completed Action View

H. C. G. Moule has this view of the word:

The Greek seems to imply a decisive act of knowledge rather than a process, a life-long process is sure to result from the act. But the act, the decisive getting acquainted with what Christ is, is in immediate view.⁸

Of the many authors Moule was the only one who felt this way about the word γινωσκω. However, he even admits that a process will result from the decisive act.

⁸H. C. G. Moule, "Philippians," The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1893), p. 95.

WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

Minor Problem: What is the Meaning of the
Word yvaval?

WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

Minor Problem: What is the Meaning of the
Word γινῶσκει?

It is very important that we discover the correct meaning of this word γινῶσκει. All Greek dictionaries and grammars agree that the noun form means knowledge and when the word is used as a verb it means "to know." The problem is to just what kind of knowledge does this word refer. The answer to this problem could help greatly in the solution of our major problem. Joseph Thayer in his Greek-English lexicon has this to say about γινῶσκει:

γινῶσκει means to become acquainted with, to know, is employed in the N.T. of the knowledge of God and Christ, and of the things relating to them or proceeding from them.¹

From this information it would seem that γινῶσκει involves more than just a passing or surface knowledge of the person spoken of. Rather, it seems to speak of a thorough and true knowledge which can be gained only by close fellowship with the person known. Such a knowledge cannot be gained from one meet-

¹Joseph Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Co., 1889).

ing but needs many times of meeting in order to grow and mature into real yv̄ōis.

Jean Daille supports Thayer by adding:

For he speaks not here of a dead and naked knowledge; of an idea conceived in the mind without any impression made upon the heart. But according to his usual style he means to express a lively knowledge which is confirmed by feeling and experience.²

yv̄ōis then is more than intellectual knowledge.

It goes deeper than merely a surface knowledge. It concerns a deep inner knowledge of the person. Therefore, this type of knowledge spoken of in Phil. 3:10 will certainly take time to develop.

²Jean Daille, An Exposition of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, n. d.), p. 333.

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Major Problem: To What Part of Paul's Life-Experience
Does the Phrase "That I might know him" Relate?

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Conversion View

R. C. H. Lenski states for us this first view
as follows:

The great purpose of the loss that snatched everything away from Paul was in that very instant to make him gain Christ and in that instant to be found in him as having the true righteousness; and this means then and there, in that very instant, Paul got to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, etc. Paul is restating God's great purpose as it was actually accomplished at the time of his conversion as recorded in Acts 9.¹

H. C. G. Moule² explains this phrase by saying that the act, the decisive getting acquainted with what Christ is, is in immediate view.

¹Lenski, loc. cit. ²Moule, loc. cit.

Progressive View

Joseph Exell feels this view to be correct by stating that "He who of mortal men knew Christ best confesses that he knew Him but imperfectly."³ Exell goes on to say that Paul wanted to know Christ increasingly, experimentally and superlatively.

Kenneth Wuest states this view as follows:

The words "to know" are again "to know by experience." The term causes us to translate "to come to know by experience." Paul wants to come to know the Lord Jesus in that fullness of experimental knowledge which is only wrought by being like Him. He wants to know also in an experiential way the power of Christ's resurrection.⁴

Other commentators who take this view are Robertson,⁵ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown,⁶ Alexander MacLaren,⁷ and Spence.⁸

³Joseph Exell, The Biblical Illustrator (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n. d.), IV, 203.

⁴Wuest, loc. cit. ⁵Robertson, loc. cit.

⁶Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, loc. cit.

⁷Alexander MacLaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture, "Philippians." (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, n. d.), p.

⁸H. D. M. Spence (ed.), Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), XX, 118.

Future View

F. W. Beare states for us his thinking concerning this phrase as follows:

The emphasis in the phrase, accordingly, is not on a gradual growth in knowledge, but on its final attainment, which must await the resurrection of the dead (v.11). He knows Christ now, and his knowledge of Christ deepens with the years of service and of suffering in his cause; but the partial knowledge which he has attained and is attaining only intensifies his longing for the fulness of knowledge, that he anticipates in the "Day of Christ Jesus"; when he will come to know Christ as Christ knows him.⁹

One other commentator, Charles Erdman,¹⁰ agreed with this view. However, he was not so dogmatic in his view.

⁹F. W. Beare, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1959), pp. 122, 123.

¹⁰Charles Erdman, The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1932), p. 107.

WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

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Major Problem: To What Part of Paul's Life-Experience
Does the Phrase "That I might know him" Refer?

Exegesis Argument

This argument naturally centers around the verb γινωσκω which is the root of γινωσκει, the verb found in the phrase, "That I may know him." Thus, if the true tense of this word can be found then the problem is resolved. At first glance, when the verb form γινωσκει is broken down, it seems as if the problem is immediately solved for γινωσκει is Aorist 2, infinitive, active. Upon seeing that the verb form is aorist it would appear that the problem is solved. Almost always the Aorist indicative active is a past act. If this is the case, then Paul is speaking of a knowledge gained at his conversion. Some stumble and fall at this point for they inquire no further. However, although the verb is aorist it is not indicative but rather an infinitive. This means trouble for the function of the aorist that was just expressed. If our verb would be indicative, then, in most cases, the statement of aorist being punctiliar action in past time would stand. However, we do not have indicative but

infinitive. Therefore, the aorist does not have to mean punctiliar action in past time.¹

There is also another item to consider. There are three main types of aorist. First is the constative aorist, which treats the act as a single whole, entirely irrespective of the parts or time involved. The second type is ingressive which is concerned with the beginning of the particular action. The third type is the effective or as some call it the resultive aorist. In this type the emphasis is laid on the end of the action as opposed to the beginning.

The problem is to know which type of aorist Paul was using. Upon close examination the reader will find that the three views given in this paper hinge on these three types of aorist. The supporters for the various views take one of the types of the aorist and claim that the verb ὑπώρκα is of the particular type they claim.

For example, R. C. H. Lenski states his feelings very clearly:

The infinitive with τοῦ is epexegetical whether it is considered final (continuing the idea of ἵνα in vs.8) or consecutive to the ἵνα clause. Either case it is ingressive.²

As a result of this view, Lenski naturally

¹A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), p. 857.

²Lenski, loc. cit.

holds to the Conversion view. Even though he feels this verb to be ingressive he gives no facts to support this view. The reason probably is that from the verb itself one cannot usually tell just what type it is. That is our problem in this case. From the verb itself we cannot tell whether Paul meant his knowledge was that which came about at his conversion, or was a progressive thing, or that he was looking beyond this life to the knowledge that would be gained when he met Christ face to face. Thus, very little has been proven but we have covered much ground. The verb γινῶσκει is helpful to us from the standpoint of its usage as to meaning but not as to the area of time. I believe that the usage of this verb will be helpful in drawing some conclusions later in this paper. One other thing is proved and that is that one cannot base the answer to this problem on the construction of γινῶσκει.

I will close this section with what is the only help that the aorist as used in this verb can give us. Dr. Hoyt, in his notes on Philippians, states it in this manner: "The aorist suggests definite, decisive, and lasting experience."³

³Hoyt, loc. cit.

Contextual Argument

The next area of discussion will center on the context of this phrase. The phrase "that I might know him" is located in the midst of a long sentence starting back in verse eight and ending with the end of verse eleven. In chapter one of Philippians, Paul pictures Christ as our life; in chapter two Paul pictures Christ as our mind. Then, in chapter three Paul pictures Christ as our goal. In developing this chapter, Paul, in the first verse, warns the church of Judaizers. In verse four he gives a personal testimony pointing up the value of having Christ. In verses four to six Paul shows that he, if anyone, had real reason to rely on his good works to save him. Yet, in verse seven he shows how he compared these fleshly achievements with the acquiring of eternal life, through Christ. All these fleshly achievements he counts but loss, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." In verse eight Paul speaks of his justification. In verse nine he speaks of sanctification. Then, in verse ten, he speaks of his desire. This is not a desire for a saving knowledge of Christ for he has spoken of his conversion in verse eight. Then verse eleven gives his prize which he will some day win.

Upon examination of the verbs in this passage, consisting of verses eight through twelve, we find some-

thing very interesting. In verse eight, the last phrase, Paul says, "that I may win Christ." Paul uses the Greek word κερδῶ. This is aorist subjunctive. In verse nine the phrase is "and be found in him." The verb used in this case being εὑρεθῶ which is aorist subjunctive. In verse eleven the phrase "I might attain" is found. The verb καταρτῶ is used and it is aorist subjunctive. Then, once more in verse twelve, "if that I may apprehend," the verb used being καταλάβω which is again aorist subjunctive.

These four verbs used by Paul in this passage are all aorist subjunctives.

The aorist subjunctive has only relative time involved. However, "the subjunctive is future in relation to the speaker."⁴ Thus, it would appear that Paul, in these four instances, is referring to a future thing in relation to himself. Not that there is a chance these things might not happen but that they are sure to happen, though they are yet to come.

If Paul used aorist subjunctive four times in these few verses, certainly he would have used aorist subjunctive for γυνῶναι in verse ten if he had in mind a knowledge which would be completed at some time in the future. But instead he uses the aorist infinitive.

I realize that we cannot set a hard and fast

⁴Robertson, op. cit., p. 848.

rule for the translation of the aorist subjunctive. However, there still remains the fact that the phrase "that I may know him" is aorist infinitive. It would seem that Paul meant for the phrase in verse ten to signify a different time sequence than in the other verses.

One other item should be considered in regard to context. What relation does this phrase "that I might know him" have to the other phrases which follow it? The prevailing feeling is that these phrases "the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death", describe the means by which one can know him.

A. D. Batchelor says:

The knowledge of his sufferings and death and resurrection are to be experienced in order to be understood. So he writes, "that I may know him."

But this knowledge, it is immediately pointed out, is dependent upon a knowledge of His suffering and death.⁵

Lightfoot also holds this view and expresses it as follows:

That I may know Him. And when I speak of knowing Him, I mean, that I may feel the power of His resurrection; but to feel this, it is first necessary, that I should share his sufferings. The essence of knowing Christ consists in knowing the power of his resurrection.⁶

⁵A. D. Batchelor, The Mind of Christ (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1912), p. 77.

⁶J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1953), p. 150.

Many other scholars hold this opinion such as Calvin, Ellicott, Lange, Tyndale Series, and the Pulpit Commentary, to name a few.

Thus, since these phrases help define what Paul meant by knowing Christ, they, in turn, help us with the solution to our problem. It would be virtually impossible to learn of these things in an instant of time. Something of this nature would take years to plumb its depths.

Conclusion

As I bring this paper to a conclusion, I would like to state that as I answer the problem with which this paper deals that I do not answer it dogmatically. During my study of this problem and consideration of the matter I feel that there are very few definite, concrete facts that point to any one of the three interpretations to the exclusion of the others. I am sure that you will agree that none of the three views are heretical or un-Biblical. Certainly in a real sense we must agree that each one is true of our own experience with Christ. At our conversion we certainly came to know Christ as our Savior and guide. And in a real sense we gained much knowledge concerning Him. As we progress in our Christian lives we come to realize that day by day we come to a fuller knowledge of Christ. But, we must admit that we will never know Christ completely until we meet Him face to face in Glory. Therefore, it would seem that the answer to our problem is to combine the three interpretations. However, this is not the type of answer that the author wants or the reader would like to have.

Neither would it seem that Paul did not have such a general idea in mind. I feel that one of these interpretations can be considered as the one which Paul meant his readers to understand.

The procedure I will use will be to show why the other two views are not used and then give proofs and supporting testimony from other writers for the interpretation I believe to be the correct one.

First, let us deal with the conversion view. Lenski is the main proponent for this view. He definitely feels that Paul is speaking of his conversion. The only other author I found that held this view is Moule.

It is very evident that Lenski based his interpretation on the verb γρῶναι being aorist. However, we have shown already that the verb γρῶναι has nothing to do with the time of this knowing but can only give us information concerning the true meaning of "to know." Thus, I believe that this interpretation is wrong in that if Paul had meant to give this idea he would have used the aorist indicative instead of the aorist infinitive.

Next, we will turn to the third interpretation. Very few men considered this as the true view and the two who did were not very dogmatic about it. I could not find their proofs for this view but rather that they simply stated this as their idea without proof to back it up. My reasoning against this view is found in the contextual argument. I will admit that this constitutes very little proof, and yet it is more than Beare and Erdman have set forth in proof of their view. One other thing should be mentioned and I do it with great

caution. One can be skeptical of a view that has so few to support it.

I realize that this must be regarded very carefully because sometimes commentators merely parrot other commentators instead of studying the matter thoroughly.

Having disproved the conversion view and the future view I feel that Paul had in mind the Progressive view. From our study of γινωσκει we found that the word is used in cases of more than mere intellectual knowledge but rather of far deeper knowledge. This helps to prove that Paul had the Progressive view in mind.

Secondly, from the matter of context I feel that the support for this view is greater than for the other two, especially concerning the phrases which follow "that I may know him." These phrases were put there by Paul to show the Philippian church how they might better know Christ. The knowledge of these things could not be gained in a moment's time but are rather a matter of development in the spiritual life of a Christian as he grows in his knowledge of Christ.

In order to back up the Progressive view let us see what some of the scholars have to say.

A. T. Robertson states his view as follows:

"To have personal acquaintance or experience with. This is Paul's major passion, to get more knowledge of Christ by experience."⁷

⁷Robertson, loc. cit.

I believe this man's view is important since he was such a master of Greek and would not be led astray by Greek tenses and verb forms.

Rev. B. C. Caffin, the writer on Philippians in the Pulpit Commentary states:

This knowledge is an experimental knowledge. It is an ever-increasing acquaintance with Christ, a realization of the life of Christ in his sufferings and in his exaltation.⁸

Lange says this about our problem: "The excellence of this knowledge lies first of all in its object, the person of the Lord, a practical, experimental acquaintance with him."⁹

One other support comes from Kenneth Wuest who says that the term "to know" causes us to translate "to come to know by experience."¹⁰

As we bring to a close this discussion, I feel that we find in this phrase a wonderful revelation. What a wonderful Lord we have. What depth and magnificence can be found in His person. Paul was a man who knew Christ as well as any man knew him, yet he desired to know Him better.

Fitting are these few words of Joseph Exell: "He who of mortal men knew Christ best confesses that he knew Him but imperfectly."¹¹

⁸Pulpit Commentary, loc. cit.

⁹Lange, loc. cit. ¹⁰Wuest, loc. cit.

¹¹Exell, loc. cit.

What better way to close this paper than with

Rom. 11:33-36:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.

Amen.

ENGLISH PARAPHRASE

ENGLISH PARAPHRASE

Continuing to know more of Christ, not merely intellectually, but in a progressive and more intimate manner,

Phil. 3:10a

NOTE: The writer of this paper has not paraphrased the second half of this verse. Since research was not directed toward the last half, the writer feels unqualified to paraphrase said section.

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