

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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God & His Word – An Enigma "We See in a Mirror Dimly"

(10) But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. (11) When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. (12) For now **we see in a mirror dimly** [*ainigma*], but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:10-12 NASB)

Recently, I was having some fellowship with a brother in Christ, and he shared with me that, in the above verse, the word *dimly* is better translated as *enigma*. To me, the implications of this are profound. It is unfortunate that most translations avoid the word *enigma*, for it speaks volumes about God and His Word.

Most all translations use the words *darkly*, *cloudy*, *blurred*, *obscurely*, *puzzled*, or *similitude*; however, the *Concordant Literal New Testament* actually uses the word *enigma*.

For at present **we are observing by means of a mirror, in an enigma** [*ainigma*], yet then, face to face. (1 Corinthians 13:12 CV)

In Greek, the word for *enigma* is *ainigma*, which, according to *Strong's Concordance*, is "an *obscure* saying ("**enigma**"), that is, (abstractly) *obscureness*: - X darkly" (G135), and it is a derivation of *ainos* (G136), which refers to a **tale** or story. According to the *New Englishman's Greek-English Concordance & Lexicon* (George Wigram), *ainigma* is a "**riddle**, an obscure thing, dimly perceived."

Webster's Dictionary states that "*enigma* comes from the Greek *ainigma*, to speak in riddles < *ainos*, tale, story," and defines it as "a perplexing statement; **riddle**; hence, a perplexing, baffling, or seemingly inexplicable matter, person, etc. synonym **mystery**." Further, the word *riddle* is defined as a "a problem or puzzle in the form of a question, statement, etc, **so formulated that some ingenuity is required to solve or answer it**; conundrum; any puzzling, perplexing or apparently inexplicable person or thing, as a difficult problem or enigmatic saying; *enigma*."

Given these definitions, it seems that the word *dimly* and the other words used by most translations do a disservice to understanding Paul's meaning. The words *enigma*, *riddle*, *tale*, and *mystery* imply something much greater than simply something obscure, dim, or dark, which makes it sound as if Paul was stating that in this life we could never understand or discover the deep things or mysteries of God, and perhaps, we should not even try.

Over the years, I have met many people who actually think this way, especially when it comes to knowing the truth or searching out God's Word for the truth. It is not uncommon to hear: "No one can have a lock on the truth"; or "Many say they have the truth, but they all cannot be right"; or "All the truth that God wants us to know has been revealed already"; or "We will know the truth when Jesus comes"; or "Jesus is the Truth; we don't need anything else." To this last point, some commentators claim that when Paul wrote this, his understanding was dark or obscure but that the mystery was unveiled to him later; at which time, it was no longer dim. It is like saying: "End of story; no need to search any further."

The implication is that we should not try to seek for the truth or seek to unlock as much as we can of God's secrets or truths hidden within His Word. Unfortunately, it goes deeper, for some do not even think there is anything for which to search out in the Word as if all truth has been revealed.

God & His Word – An Enigma

However, Solomon would not agree with this thinking. Wisdom says: **Those who diligently seek me will find me** (Proverbs 8:17). Regarding discernment and understanding, he tells us: **For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God.** (Proverbs 2:3-5). Further, the prophets would not agree either, for they know: **Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets** (Amos 3:7).

In other words, God loves to reveal His secrets to His people, especially to those who diligently seek Him in His Word.

In the Hebrew text, the word *riddle* appears in four settings: Samson propounded a riddle (Judges 14:12-19); David inclined his ear to a proverb and expressed his riddle on a harp (Psalm 49:4); through Ezekiel, the Lord propounded a riddle to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 17:1-2); and Solomon wrote: **A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.** (Proverbs 1:5-6).

The Hebrew word for *riddle* is *chiydah*, which, according to Strong's Concordance, means "a *puzzle*; hence a *trick, conundrum, sententious maxim*: - dark saying (sentence, speech), hard question, proverb, riddle" (H2420). *Chiydah* is made up of four Hebrew letters with a gematria of 27.

| Hebrew | Numeric Value | Literal Meaning | Symbolic Meaning |
|--------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Cheth | 8 | Fence, hedge, chamber | Private, to separate |
| Yod | 10 | Closed hand | Deed, work, to make |
| Daleth | 4 | Door | Pathway, to enter |
| Heh | 5 | Window, Fence | "the," to reveal |

The letters alone give the impression of something hedged in, a private place into which one must enter. It may require ingenious work to enter into this place; however, there is a pathway by which to enter; and once inside, there is revelation. Putting these meanings together in a sentence yields something quite instructive: **"A private work to make the way to enter into revelation,"** or **"Entering the private chamber is a work that leads to revelation."**

Obviously, there are many ways to approach God's Word. However, the word *enigma* implies that there are hidden treasures of truth in the Word that need to be mined like silver. The Word of God is an enigma. It is a puzzle to be put together or a riddle to be solved. The whole of the Bible is one huge riddle that stares at us saying: "Search me! Solve me!"

God wrote it this way and encourages us to search and study His Word to discover the many truths that He has hidden within His Word. He wants us to search, and He wants to give us revelation. **His Word is like a puzzle with many pieces that need to be put together or a riddle that takes ingenuity and imagination to solve.** It may be baffling or perplexing at times, but we are to diligently keep at it until He opens the eyes of our understanding. Actually, God Himself is an enigma or riddle, hiding around every corner to see if we can find Him. He is there at every turn, but we must seek to find Him.

Consider this; during WWII, the Germans had a cipher machine, a code breaker that was broken (decoded) by the British, based on early work done by Polish mathematicians. Some say this achievement shortened the war by two years because the Allies often knew German battlefield orders before the German generals did. The cipher machine was called *Enigma*.

Think of the implications. We have an enigma decoder within us called the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. God is pleased when we search His Word, seeking to solve His riddles, coming to know His heart and His truth, and His plans and purpose. Don't run from the enigma; seek to solve it! And, if you cannot do it or are not inclined to do it, do not despise those who do; learn from them.