

## **Nous Part 2**

*– mind, thought, understanding, spiritual perception –*

### **Concept**

The Greek concept of **νοῦς** (nous) has to do with our perceptive abilities – a way of understanding or interpreting something, a mental impression. Humanly speaking it is being aware of something by way of the senses - seeing, hearing, feeling, etc. While spiritually speaking it refers to the believer's Spiritual perception, which is necessary for discerning the will of God. The Bible teaches that man, in his natural human state, does not have the ability to perceive and understand the things of God. Furthermore, it is only the Lord by His Spirit who is able to open man's mind in this way; thereby allowing him to see, and to hear, and to know.

### **Introduction**

We are continuing with our series of words that describe the thinking processes of the Christian mind. Most recently we have been focused on the teaching of Paul wherein he says that once a person has been born of the Spirit of God, all of his growth and interaction with Christ takes place in the mind. Paul is not presenting a teaching involving the practice of psychology, but rather is showing that the believer's life and maturity comes from interacting with the Living Word of God, an interaction that takes place within the various areas of the function of the mind.

### **Definition**

Last week we began our study of the word **νοῦς** (nous, Strong's 3563) which has to do with the perceptive ability of the mind. In Scripture, it is applied to the believer's spiritual perception.

### **Review ~ Meaning Part One**

We have understood from Paul, in Romans 12:1-2, that in light of what the Lord has done for us, we are to be continually not being fashioned with the world; but rather we are to be continually being transformed through the renewing of our minds (**νοῦς**, nous). Paul teaches that this transformation of the perceptive process is necessary in order for Christians to be able to test things so that we can rightly perceive what the will of the Lord is for us. According to this text, it is spiritual perception, not logic or reason that is necessary for knowing the will of the Lord.

### **Meaning Part Two ~ Ephesians 4:17-24**

Our second study is taken from Ephesians 4:17-24, where Paul continues to present the necessity of the renewal of our perceptive process.

### **Verse 17 ~ Dulled Perception**

In the fourth chapter of Ephesians, Paul encourages believers to walk worthy of the calling with which they are called. After spending the first part of the chapter emphasizing growth and maturity, he goes on to say:

**17) Therefore this I say, and testify in *the* Lord, that you should no longer walk according as also the rest *of the* Gentiles are walking in *the* emptiness of their mind,**

While not being a command, Paul's words do show that believers have a choice as to the direction in which they walk. He says that we should not walk in the emptiness of our own minds (**νοῦς**, nous), because to do that would be to walk as the non-believers are walking with their spiritual perception devoid of truth. Paul is introducing here the fact that a saved person can choose to live in a way that produces futility of mind where spiritual perception becomes dull.

**18) Having been darkened in the understanding, while being alienated from the life of God, on account of the ignorance being in them, on account of the hardness of their heart;**

#### **Verse 18 ~ Condition**

Verse 18 contains two present participles describing the condition of the Gentile mind. First, their understanding has been darkened. The word for *understanding* is **διάνοια** (dianoia, Strong's 1271). This is one of the words used in the New Testament that is translated *understanding*. It is a compound word from the preposition **διά** (dia, Strong's 1223) that means *through*, and the focus of our study, **νοῦς** (nous), *the ability of perception*. Paul is saying that the Gentiles, or nations of the world, have their spiritual perception, which passes through the mind, darkened.

The second present participle denotes that the non-believers of the world exist as aliens who have been separated from the life of God. Paul is saying the life of the Spirit of God does not dwell in them, therefore there is no spiritual life or spiritual perception in them.

#### **Verse 18 ~ Reason**

Next Paul presents a prepositional phrase telling us the reason for these two conditions: it is because of the spiritual ignorance that is in them. Then Paul follows with a prepositional phrase describing the reason why they are spiritually ignorant: it is because of the hardness of their hearts. The word for *hardness* is **πώρωσις** (pōrōsis, Strong's 4457), which means *callous*. He is saying that their hearts have become rock-hard, consequently no knowledge of God can penetrate, and spiritual darkness is the result.

**19) who having ceased to feel, they gave themselves over to sensuality in order that they might work all uncleanness in greediness;**

### **Verse 19 ~ Past Feeling**

Verse 19 describes the decision unbelievers make after arriving at a condition of being past feeling: after they can no longer sense or feel in their conscience, they give themselves over to sensuality, for the purpose of working all uncleanness found in greediness. The word *sensuality* is **ἀσέλγεια** (aselgeia, Strong's 766) and describes a condition that is beyond any standard of morality.

**20) but you yourselves did not learn Christ this way,  
21) if indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him,  
according as truth is in Jesus;**

### **Verse 20-21 ~ But You**

In Verse 20 Paul says that believers who have been taught the truth by the Lord have not learned "Christ this way," referring back to verses 18 and 19 which describes the process of the direction of the life of the non-believer. He then puts a disclaimer in Verse 21 saying that it is possible for someone in Christ to have not been taught by the Lord according to the truth as it is in Jesus.

### **Verses 22-24 ~ Three Things**

Verses 22-24 present the true teaching of Christ that is comprised of three things.

**22) that you should put off, according to the former lifestyle,  
the old man which is being corrupted according to the desires  
of deceit;  
23) and that you should be renewed *in* the spirit of your mind;  
24) and that you should put on the new man, which has been  
created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the  
truth.**

#### **1) Put Off the Old**

First, in verse 22, Paul teaches that we should "put off" the former lifestyle, or the "old man," which is continually being corrupted according to desires of deceit. He calls the desires of the old sin nature, or flesh, deceitful. The person following and indulging in the desires of the flesh will be in a continuous process of being corrupted through deceit.

#### **2) Be Renewed**

The second teaching is that the believer is to be renewed in the spirit of his mind. The word for mind is the word **νοῦς** (nous). Paul is emphasizing here, as he did in Romans 12:2, that the believer is to be continually having the spiritual perceptions of his mind renewed.

### 3) Put On the New

The third teaching Paul presents is the putting on of the new man that has already been created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Having put on this new man, you are to make decisions to walk in the new life that God has already created, which is being revealed and worked out in the believer's life through the renewing of his mind.

### No Longer Slave to Sin

There are two parts and three teachings that form Paul's presentation of the teaching of Christ. The first part is also the first teaching, "to put off" the old nature and lifestyle. The second part consists of the second and third teachings: "to be renewed in the spirit of your mind," and "to put on the new man."

The first and third teachings tell us to "to put off" and "to put on." These are terms used for taking off and putting on a coat, or piece of clothing. The Bible is clearly teaching that a person who has received Christ has been born of the Spirit of God and is no longer a slave to sin.

### Romans 6:11-14 ~ Sin Will Not Rule Over You

In Romans 6:11-14, after saying that Jesus died to sin once and for all, Paul says:

- 11) In this way you yourselves also account yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but living to God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 12) Therefore, let not sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its desires;
- 13) neither be yielding your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as living from out of *the* dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God;
- 14) for sin will not rule over you; for you are not under law, but under grace.

He explains that believers are to put to their account that they are dead to sin through Jesus Christ. Therefore a Christian can obey the command to not let sin reign in his body. We are to not let sin reign nor are we to yield the members of our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness, but rather to yield them to God as instruments of righteousness. Notice Paul did not say, "for sin *should* not rule over you," but "for sin *will* not rule over you." The believer cannot say, "The Devil made me do it." We are free from the bondage of sin through Jesus Christ. Because sin will not rule over us, our actions are from out of our own choice and habit.

### Conclusion

In Paul's teachings, he presents that the believer has been set free from sin through Jesus Christ. We should not be making the decisions to give ourselves over to the same

lifestyle that produces darkness in our understanding. We are to yield ourselves to being transformed by renewing the spirit of our minds, growing in spiritual perception, so that we can know what the will of the Lord is. The choice to grow through the renewing of our minds is a choice between yielding to the old sin nature with its darkened understanding and putting off the sin nature as one would a coat while putting on the new life which God has already created for us in Christ.

### Notes

- Nous is the English font spelling of the Greek word **νοῦς**.
- All Biblical quotes contained herein are a Literal English Translation of the Bible produced by BTE Ministries - The Bible Translation and Exegesis Institute of America.

### Technical Notes

#### Ephesians 4:17-24 Literal English Translation

- 17) Therefore this I say, and testify in *the* Lord, that you should no longer walk<sup>1</sup> according as also the rest *of the* Gentiles are walking in *the* emptiness<sup>2</sup> of their mind,  
18) Having been darkened *in* the understanding, while being alienated from the life of God, on account of the ignorance being in them, on account of the hardness<sup>3</sup> of their heart;  
19) who having ceased to feel,<sup>4</sup> they gave themselves over to sensuality<sup>5</sup> in order that they might work<sup>6</sup> all uncleanness in greediness;<sup>7</sup>  
20) but you yourselves did not learn Christ this way,  
21) if indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him, according as truth is in Jesus;  
22) that you should put off,<sup>8</sup> according to the former lifestyle, the old man which is<sup>9</sup> being corrupted<sup>10</sup> according to the desires of deceit;  
23) and that you should be renewed<sup>11</sup> *in* the spirit of your mind;  
24) and that you should put on<sup>12</sup> the new man, which<sup>13</sup> has been created<sup>14</sup> according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

#### Romans 6:12 Literal English Translation

Therefore, let not sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey<sup>15</sup> it in its desires;

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<sup>1</sup> The present infinitive **περιπατεῖν**, *to walk*," with the accusative subject **ὑμᾶς**, "you," is translated **να περιπατήτε**, "that you should walk."

<sup>2</sup> The word translated "emptiness" is **ματαιότης** (Strong's #3153) which means to be "void of substance" and is from the adjective **μάταιος** (Strong's #3152) that means to "be useless, of no purpose, devoid of truth."

<sup>3</sup> In verse 18 the word translated "hardness" is **πώρωσις** (Strong's #4457) and means to be covered with a callus. It comes from **πῶρος**, a kind of hard stone.

<sup>4</sup> The Greek word for "having become past feeling" is **ἀπαλγέω** (Strong's #524) and means to "to cease to feel." This word in this text is a perfect participle, which denotes that when they arrived at a state or condition of having lost feeling or sensitivity, they gave themselves over to sensuality.

<sup>5</sup> Sensuality," is the translation of **ἀσέλγεια** (Strong's #766) which means "without restraint," "uncontrolled immorality." The word represents an attitude where people do not care what others say or think, as long as they can satisfy their desires. Josephus combined **ἀσέλγεια** with **μανιάς**, "madness." He said that **ἀσέλγεια** was the sin of Jezebel (Antiquities 8.13.1).

<sup>6</sup> The prepositional phrase of purpose **εἰς ἐργασίαν**, "toward working" is translated **διὰ νὰ ἐργάζωνται**, "in order that they might work."

<sup>7</sup> The Greek word translated "greediness" is **πλεονεξία** (Strong's #4124) and means "to have more." It is a compound word from the comparative adjective **πολύς** (Strong's #4119) "more," and **έχω** (Strong's 2192) "to have." A greedy or covetous person is one who wants to "have more" than what he already has.

<sup>8</sup> The aorist infinitive **ἀποθέσθαι**, "to put off," with the subject in the accusative case **ὑμᾶς**, "you," is translated **νὰ ἀπεκδυθῆτα**, "that you should put off," as taking off a garment.

<sup>9</sup> The second article **τὸν** in the long attributive position is translated **που εἶναι**, "which is."

<sup>10</sup> The present participle, **φθειρόμενον**, "being corrupted," denotes that the old man or old nature is currently and continuously in a process of being corrupted.

<sup>11</sup> The present infinitive **ἀνανεοῦσθαι**, "to be renewed," is translated **νὰ ἀνανεόνησθε**, "that you should be renewed."

<sup>12</sup> The aorist infinitive **ἐνδύσασθαι**, "to put on," is translated **νὰ ενδυθῆτε**, "that you should put on," as a garment.

<sup>13</sup> The second article **τὸν** in the long attributive position is translated by the relative pronoun **που**, "which."

<sup>14</sup> The aorist participle **κτισθέντα**, "has been created," denotes an action, which has already taken place. The believer has already had the new man, or the new creation, created in him.

<sup>15</sup> The prepositional phrase of purpose with the articular infinitive **εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν**, "for to obey," is translated **νὰ υπακούητε**, "that you should obey."