

## Nous Part 4

– *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

This is the fourth part of our study of the word **νοῦς** (nous, Strong's 3563) which has to do with the perceptive ability of the mind and is applied to the believer's spiritual perception.

### Review

In the first three parts of our study, we focused on Paul's teachings about **νοῦς** (nous).

In Romans 12:2 Paul teaches that every believer is to be **Continually being transformed through the renewing of his mind.**

In Ephesians 4:17-24 Paul says the same thing in different words: **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,** but that you should **be renewed in the spirit of your mind.**

In I Corinthians 1:10 Paul further explains believers should be in the process of **being knit together in the same mind and the same judgment.** Paul is correcting quarrelling Corinthian Christians telling them their spiritual growth should be bringing them to unity through a shared perception and judgment of spiritual matters. On the contrary, he says their quarrelling is evidence they are fleshly and functioning as immature Christians.

### **νοῦς** (nous) Part Four

While continuing our focus on the word **νοῦς** (nous), we will now explore the function of the saved person compared to the unsaved person and how the saved person develops spiritual perception. Our text for this study is I Corinthians Chapter 2 with special focus on verses 14 through 16.

### **Inability and Dependence**

Paul begins this chapter by presenting his own inability to minister from out of himself. He expresses his complete dependence on the ability of God's Spirit to give him spiritual perception and insight, as well as the capacity to minister. Paul wants those he is teaching to be established in the things of the Lord by God's Spirit, not by human wisdom and ingenuity. He understands that a person is only established in the Lord when drawn to Him by God's Spirit.

### **Depravity and Ability**

Paul continues the chapter with teaching about the spiritual depravity of man and the ability of God's Spirit. He says he speaks wisdom to those who are mature, not with the wisdom of the world, but wisdom in a mystery which has been hidden from natural human perception. Paul presents that God reveals these truths through the Spirit of God, who searches all the deep things of God. Additionally, he says that we who are saved have received the Spirit of God so that we might know the things freely given to us by God.

### **Verse 13 ~ Interpreting Spiritual Things**

Verse 13 functions as a transition. Paul writes, **comparing spiritual things to spiritual people**. The Greek word translated *comparing* is **συγκρίνω** (sunkrinō, Strong's 5591) and it literally means *to interpret*. The same word is used in Genesis 40:8 about the interpretation of Joseph's dream. Paul is saying the Holy Spirit ministers and reveals the spiritual things of God to spiritual people, that is, those who have been born of the Spirit of God. This statement is the basis for the explanation of the function of both the saved and unsaved in verses 14-16.

### **Worth Noting**

In the Greek manuscripts verse 14 begins with the phrase: **ψυχικός δὲ ἄνθρωπος**, which most English versions translate: **but the natural man (or person)**.

More specifically, a translation of *natural* does not accurately express the full meaning of the Greek word used here. **ψυχικός** (psuchikos, Strong's 5591) literally means *the function of man at his highest level without the Spirit of God*. It is an adjective that describes the appetites of the sensuous nature of the human being without the Spirit of God. The Scriptural definition can be found in Jude 19: **having not Spirit**.

Additionally, **ψυχικός** (psuchikos) comes from the Greek words **φυσικός** (phusikos) for *natural* and **ψυχή** (psuchē) for *psyche*. **ψυχή** (psuchē) being the thinking function of the mind, having to do with the human sensory (sensual) experience of this life.

In an attempt to convey this complex meaning, we will translate all usages of **ψυχικός** (psuchikos) as *natural-thinking*.

## Meaning Part Four ~ I Corinthians 2:14-16

**14) But the natural-thinking man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know them; because they are being spiritually discerned.**

**15) But on the one hand the spiritual man is discerning all things, but on the other hand he himself is being discerned by no one.**

**16) For who knew the mind (νοῦς) of the Lord, who will instruct Him? But we ourselves have the mind (νοῦς) of Christ.**

**(Literal English Translation)**

### Verse 14 ~ Natural-thinking at Best

In verse 14, Paul is teaching that a human being, functioning at his highest level, is natural-thinking in function at best. Such a man, thinking according to his own senses without the Spirit of God, does not have the ability or capacity to perceive or understand the spiritual things of God. Paul tells us this is because the spiritual things of God are *spiritually discerned*, that is, the Spirit of God must reveal them to people.

### Verse 15 ~ Discerning all Things

Verse 15 says **the spiritual man is discerning all things**. Having had a spiritual birth and being indwelt by the Spirit of God, the spiritual man now has the ability to recognize and understand the spiritual things of God. In sharp contrast Paul says, **but he himself is discerned by no one** meaning the natural-thinking man is not able to examine or understand the spiritual man.

### Verse 16 ~ The Mind of Christ

Paul closes his teaching on this subject by quoting from Isaiah 40:13, **Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him?** Not only is the natural man unable to understand or discern the spiritual man but Paul says no one has known the mind of the Lord. The word for *mind* is νοῦς (nous), *the perceptive abilities of the mind*. Here νοῦς (nous) refers to perceptions of the Lord, no human being in his physical capacities is able to perceive and understand life the way the Lord does. However, again in sharp contrast, the spiritual man has the mind (νοῦς, nous) of Christ and is therefore able to perceive the spiritual things revealed by God.

### Unsearchable Riches

Paul has spent much time and effort emphasizing the fact that human beings have no capacity or ability to understand the spiritual things of the Lord. In Ephesians 3:7-8, Paul says that he became a servant of the Gospel by the grace of God and that this grace was given to him to proclaim among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ**. The Greek word translated *unsearchable* is **ἀνεξιχνίαστος** (anexichniastos, Strong's 421) and means *unable to be traced or searched*. People in the natural human condition are not able to search out or investigate the things of the Lord. The Holy Spirit must reveal the spiritual things of the Lord. Only through His Spirit are believers able to perceive the wisdom of the Lord in life.

### 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

### I Corinthians 2:14-16 Literal English Translation

14) But the natural<sup>1</sup> man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able<sup>2</sup> to know *them*; because they are being spiritually discerned.<sup>3</sup>

15) But on the one hand the spiritual man<sup>4</sup> is discerning all things, but on the other hand he himself is being discerned by no one.

16) For who knew the mind (**νοῦς**, nous) of the Lord, who will instruct Him? But we ourselves have the mind (**νοῦς**, nous) of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Most English translations translated **ψυχικός** as *natural man*. However, the Greek word for *natural man* is **φυσικός**. The Greek word used here is **ψυχικός** and means *the function of man at his highest level without the Spirit of God*. The Scriptural definition is found in Jude 19: **having not Spirit**. **ψυχικός** is an adjective describing the appetites of the sensuous nature of the human being without the Spirit of God.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word translated *is not able* is **δύναμαι** (Strong's 1410) and means *capacity or ability*. It is not that the psychical man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, but rather does not have the spiritual ability or capacity to receive them.

<sup>3</sup> The Greek word translated *discerned* used here and twice in verse 15 is **ἀνακρίνω** (Strong's 350). It is a judicial term that applies to a judge examining legal papers in order to arrive at a judgment. This is the same word used in Acts 17:11 to describe the Christians in Berea as **examining the Scriptures daily**. They were more noble-minded because they received what Paul had to say and examined the Scriptures like a judge would examine legal papers in order to come to the proper conclusion.

<sup>4</sup> The adjective **πνευματικός** (Strong's 4152) is translated *spiritual man*. It is derived from **πνεῦμα** (Strong's 4151) which means *wind or spirit*. **Πνευματικός** is known from being used in Classical Greek during the Fourth and Fifth Centuries B.C. It was mostly used of things *pertaining to the wind or breath*. Christian literature uses **πνευματικός** to describe things *spiritual or pertaining to the spirit*. Of the twenty-four times Paul used this word in the New Testament, fifteen of them are used in I Corinthians. Paul uses the word in two ways:

- 1) to describe someone who is saved as opposed to someone who does not have the Spirit of God (the **ψυχικός** of verse 14).
- 2) to describe the mature believer in comparison with the **σαρκικός** (Strong's 4559) or *fleshly man* of I Corinthians 3:1.