

Nous Part 1

– *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.

Preface

So far, we have studied three words describing the different thinking processes of the Christian mind. The important teachings embodied within these words give valuable insight into an aspect of life; an aspect in which the Lord works once someone is born of the Spirit of God. When a person receives Christ, he experiences a spiritual birth wherein the Spirit of God fills and seals his spirit (see Ephesians 1:13). This "born again" person then begins to grow through the inward working of God's indwelling Spirit. By now, we also understand that this growth process takes place in the mind, also known as the arena.

Introduction

To further our understanding of the Christian maturation process, we are beginning an eight-part study on the Greek word **νοῦς** (nous, Strong's 3563). **νοῦς** (nous) refers specifically to the mental ability and capacity of perception.

Meaning Part One ~ Romans 12:1-2

Our first text of study is Romans 12:1-2 (Literal English Translation):

1) Therefore I encourage you, brothers, through the mercies of God, that you should present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your reasoning-process service.

2) And do not be continually fashioned with this age but be continually transformed through the renewing of your mind (νοῦς, nous), so that you might prove what is the will of God, which is good and well pleasing, and complete.

In these verses, Paul presents two important concepts. First of all, he states the way a believer is to function after being saved. And secondly, he describes the process that a believer must go through, in order to reach the stage of maturity wherein he is able to perceive the way of the Lord.

Overview

In verse 1, Paul begins by encouraging believers to offer themselves as living sacrifices in response to the Lord's mercy and provision. He goes on to explain what he means by *living sacrifice*. When a believer reasons out the issues of life and makes decisions to be obedient to the Lord's will; he is functioning as a living sacrifice. Then in verse 2, Paul describes the renewal process the Lord takes a believer through; and how a believer arrives at the place where he possesses the ability to discern the Lord's will.

Process

Notice, Paul uses two present imperative verbs. This expresses the believer is to be continuously obeying two different commands at the same time.

The first command tells what the follower of Christ is *not* to do. He is not to be continuously fashioned and shaped (**συσχηματίζω**, *suschēmatizō*, Strong's 4964) with the age in which he lives. This compound verb describes a forming and shaping of one's person – his attitude, speech, mental approach, even the way he dresses – from the outward influences of the age in which he lives.

The second command (**μεταμορφόω**, *metamorphoō*, Strong's 3339), denotes an inward transformation.

Additionally, both commands are in the passive voice indicating that the believer is the recipient of the action. Therefore, Paul is teaching that the believer must continually resist the shaping and forming influence of this age; while he is simultaneously and continually transformed by the Spirit of God dwelling in him.

Transformation

Lastly, Paul designates *renewing of the mind* to be the instrument of transformation for a believer. The word translated *mind* is our word **νοῦς** (*nous*), the focus of this study. In this text, Paul is teaching that a believer must have the perceptive ability of his mind renewed in order to be able to prove what God's will is. The word translated *prove* is **δοκιμάζω** (*dokimazō*, Strong's 1381), which means *to prove something is genuine by putting it to the test*.

Summary

In conclusion, Paul teaches a believer is to submit to the Lord's process of transforming his mind after he has received Christ. This transformation process is what develops the ability to serve the Lord from out of the reasoning processes. That is, spiritually perceiving and then obeying the will of the Lord. Consequently, serving the Lord in this way is how one functions as a living sacrifice, which is the highest form of worship (see John 4:24).

Technical Notes

Romans 12:1-2 Literal English Translation

1) Therefore I encourage you, brothers, through the mercies of God, that you should present¹ your bodies a living sacrifice,² holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your reasoning-process³ service.

2) And⁴ do not be⁵ continually fashioned⁶ with this age but be continually transformed⁷ through the renewing⁸ of your **mind (νοῦς)**, so that you might prove⁹ what is the will of God which is¹⁰ good and well pleasing, and complete.

¹ The literal translation of **παραστήσαι**, the infinitive of purpose, is **νὰ παραστήσητε**, *that you should present*.

² The antecedent of the implied **ἥτις εἶναι** (which is) is **θυσίαν**, *sacrifice*.

³ **λογικῆν** is variously translated *reasonable* or *spiritual*. Its literal meaning is *the reasoning process*.

⁴ Two present tense (continuous) imperatives (commands) express two simultaneous processes in which a believer is to be involved.

⁵ The first command, **μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε**, expresses what the believer is not to be participating with.

⁶ The compound word **συσχηματίζεσθε** is made up of the preposition **σύν**, meaning *with* not *by*, and **σχηματίζω**, meaning *to be fashioned* or *shaped*.

⁷ The second command is from the verb **μεταμορφόω**, which is made up of the preposition **μετά**, used in compound words denoting transition, and **μορφόω**, *to change form*, or *to transform*.

⁸ The instrumental dative **τῇ ἀνακαινώσει**, expressing the means by which the transformation is to take place, is translated by **διὰ τῆς ἀνακαινίσεως**, *through the renewing*.

⁹ The purpose clause of the preposition with the articular infinitive **εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν**, is translated **νὰ δοκιμάζητε**, *that you might prove*.

¹⁰ The second article **τό** in the long form of the attributive position is translated by **που εἶναι**, *which is*.

Notes

- Nous is the English font spelling of the Greek word **νοῦς**.

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