

Merimna Part 5

– care, anxiety, worry –

Concept

The Greek concept of **μέριμνα** (merimna) describes a state in which someone is mentally occupied with something. It manifests as an anxious, troubled, and distracted mind. The attention consumed with the cares of this life. The Bible teaches this is Satan's only weapon against a believer in Christ, one that he employs to hinder spiritual growth.

Introduction

We are continuing with part five in our eight-part study on the Greek word **μέριμνα** (merimna, Strong's 3308) and its verb form **μεριμνάω** (merimnao, Strong's 3309).

Origin

Derived from the noun, the verb form **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) means *to be anxious, to be troubled, and careful thought*.

Review ~ Jesus' Teaching

For review, we need to remember that Jesus introduced, in Matthew 6:24-34, the concepts embodied within the teaching of **μέριμνα** (merimna). He taught that each human being was created with the capacity to serve only one realm - God or the material. Because of this, Jesus commanded, "Do not be anxious (**μεριμνάω**, merimnao) for your life, what you should eat and what you should drink; nor for your body, what you should put on." He also gave a second command: "But you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." When Jesus gave these two commands, He did so knowing that if we occupy ourselves even with the necessities of life, we will not be able to serve Him, seek Him or be able to focus on His Word. He first tells us which realm to function within and then reassures us that God will take care of our material needs. Next Jesus said, "Therefore you should not be anxious (**μεριμνάω**, merimnao), for tomorrow will be anxious (**μεριμνάω**, merimnao) for the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the adversity of it." Here Jesus teaches that we will be tempted to be occupied with the things concerning tomorrow before the things of tomorrow get here.

Review ~ Others' Teachings

Both Paul and Peter based their teachings concerning **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) and **μέριμνα** (merimna) on this teaching of the Lord's in Matthew 6. Peter did it in I Peter 5:5-8 where he presented that the only weapon Satan can use against those who belong to Christ is to attempt to occupy the attention of their minds. Satan's goal is to distract believers from God's Word so that their growth and maturity will be hindered.

Review ~ Meaning Part Four (Luke 10:38-42)

Last week we studied from Luke 10:38-42, the only place in the Scriptures presenting a detailed description of the function of **μέριμνα** (merimna) and what it looks like from an observer's point of view. This text presents the three phases of Satan's psychological attack against believers:

- (1) The first phase is **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) – the occupation of the attention of the mind. Martha noticed that she had been left alone to serve while Mary went to hear the Word of Jesus.
- (2) Martha dwelt upon her circumstances until she reached the second phase, **περισπάω**, (perispaō, Strong's 4049). This is the point at which her circumstances captured her mind just as a net would have captured a fish.
- (3) This set her up for the third phase that is expressed by the Greek word **τυρβάζω** (turbazō, Strong's 5023). This is the outward expression of frustration and/or anger in speech, facial expression, and body language. Martha stormed into the room, stood over Jesus, expressed her frustration, and demanded that He do what she wanted done about it.

Meaning Part Five ~ I Corinthians 7:29-35

This week we are going to study from the writings of Paul in I Corinthians 7:29-35.

- 29) **And this I say, brothers, the time has been shortened; the remaining *time* is, that even the ones having wives, should be as not having;**
- 30) **and the ones weeping, as not weeping; and the ones rejoicing as not rejoicing; and the ones buying, as not possessing;**
- 31) **and the ones using this world, as not overusing *it*. For the fashion of this world is passing away.**
- 32) **I desire you to be without care (ἀμέριμνος). The unmarried man cares (μεριμνάω) for the things of the Lord, how he will please the Lord;**
- 33) **but the man who has married cares (μεριμνάω) for the things of the world, how he will please the wife.**
- 34) **The wife and the virgin have become different. The unmarried woman cares (μεριμνάω) for the things of the Lord, in order that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but the woman who has married cares (μεριμνάω) for the things of the world, how she will please the husband.**
- 35) **I say this for your own benefit; not in order that I may cast *a* noose around you, but toward that which is proper and devotion to the Lord without distraction (ἀπερισπάστως).**

It is apparent that Paul is familiar with the teaching recorded in Luke 10:38-42 concerning Mary and Martha because he uses two key words that are found only in Luke 10:38-42 and in I Corinthians 7:29-35. The two root words are **μέριμνα** (merimna), *to have the attention of the mind occupied* and **περισπάω**, (perispaō) *to draw up and around*.

Starting with I Corinthians Chapter 7, Paul begins answering some of the questions posed to him by the Corinthian Christians. Specifically, Paul addresses marriage relationships among those Gentiles who are not under the law. Some are having problems because they themselves have received the Lord, but their spouses have not. The point of Paul's directive is to make sure that the Christian in the relationship does not cause a break-up of the marriage unless his/her devotion to Christ is the offense.

Five Basic Principles for Dealing with the World while Walking with Christ

In Verse 29 Paul presents the first of five basic principles for dealing with the world while walking with Christ. He begins Verse 29 by presenting the motive for these principles when he says, "The time has shortened." Then he tells believers how to approach life in the time that is remaining.

Principle One

The first of these principles is that those who have wives should be as not having wives. Paul is not teaching that a married man should conduct himself as if he is single, but rather is saying that a man's devotion to the Lord should not change after he gets married. The Lord must remain his first devotion and love.

Principles Two through Four

Verse 30 incorporates the next three principles. In the first of these, those who weep are told to weep without being consumed by their weeping. Paul acknowledges that there will be times when it will be natural and even necessary to grieve, but he is instructing that we are not to become consumed by grief. The next principle found in this verse is an instruction to those who are rejoicing. They are told to rejoice as not rejoicing. Again Paul is presenting the fact that even times of joy are temporary here on the earth, and that we should not be consumed with rejoicing. The last principle found here tells those who purchase things from out of the world not to possess them. Paul is saying that we should approach our worldly possessions as though not possessing them. They, like everything else earthly, are just temporary. We could lose them just as quickly as we purchased them.

Principle Five

Verse 31 contains the last of Paul's basic life principles. He says that those who use this world should use it only for their necessities. We should not indulge ourselves or overuse it. He then gives the reason for these principles: "For the fashion of this world is passing away." The world and the things of this world are temporary, including our human relationships as we know them here upon the earth.

Purpose

In Verse 32, Paul presents the purpose for his counsel given in the preceding verses. He says, "I desire you to be without care." The word translated *without care* is the Greek word **ἀμέριμνος** (amerimnos, Strong's 275). It is the adjective form of **μέριμνα** (merimna) with the negative particle **α-** (alpha, Strong's 1) placed in front of it. Paul is saying that he desires for them to be "without having their minds occupied with the things of the world."

Marriage and Merimnao

In Verses 33 and 34, Paul returns to focus on the marriage relationship issue addressed by the first basic principle in Verse 29. He says that the unmarried man and the unmarried woman are free to **μεριμνάω**, *be occupied with*, the things of the Lord, each considering how he or she may please the Lord. The married man and the married woman are **μεριμνάω**, *occupied with*, the things of the world, each dwelling on how he or she may please the marriage partner. Paul did not say that this should not happen. He is simply presenting the facts about life. Since a person does not have the capacity to be devoted to both pleasing the Lord and the things of earth, the marriage of a believer must be to another believer; and the main devotion of both husband and wife must be to the Lord. Nevertheless, they are still subject to the natural distractions that take place in marriage.

Without Distraction

In Verse 35, Paul summarizes his motive and concern for them. He says he is not saying all of this to put them on a leash or to rope them into misery, but to instruct them in that which is proper for the believer in his or her handling of the world, so that the believer can be devoted to the Lord **ἀπερισπάστως** (aperispastōs Strong's 563), *without distraction*. This adverb is from the Greek word **περισπάω** (perispaō, Strong's 4049), *to draw around*, and the negative particle **α-** (alpha).

Conclusion

Paul knew that his counsel would be difficult for some to receive. But he also knew the teaching of Jesus as recorded in Luke 10:38-42 and perceived the necessity for believers to understand this most important concept: once a person belongs to Christ, Satan will use every aspect of this worldly life to occupy the attention of his mind in order to distract him from devotion to the Lord and His Word. Although Satan cannot possess a believer's spirit, he can rob him of God given opportunities for growth through the hearing of the Word.

Notes

- Merimna is the English font spelling of the Greek word **μέριμνα**.
- Merimnao is the English font spelling of the Greek word **μεριμνάω**.
- 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.