

Merimna Part 6

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

Definition

The noun **μέριμνα** (merimna) is translated as *care*, *anxiety*, and *worry*. Its root is the Greek word **μερίζω** (merizō, Strong's 3307), which is translated *to divide*, or *to separate*. So **μέριμνα** represents a mental state or condition in which someone is *occupied with* or *dwelling upon* something.

Origin

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

Review

We have learned that a person who has been born of the Spirit of God belongs to Christ and as such is saved. After a person has been saved, he is then changed and transformed by the Spirit of God living within him. Each human being has been created with the capacity to serve only one realm – God or the material (Matthew 6:24); therefore Satan is looking for believers to devour through **μέριμνα** (merimna), *the occupation of the attention of the mind* (I Peter 5:5-8). Satan cannot penetrate or occupy a believer's spirit, so he attacks with the only weapon he has at his disposal – the distraction of a believer from God's Word so that the believer's growth and maturity are hindered.

Meaning Part Six ~ Philippians 4:2-7

In our study this week, we want to learn from God's Word what the believer is to do when the attention of his or her mind becomes occupied causing a distraction from God's Word. The textual basis for this study is Philippians 4:2-7:

- 2) I encourage Euodia, and I encourage Syntyche, to think the same thing in the Lord.

- 3) And I ask you also, genuine comrade, help them, who contended together *with me* in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are in the book of life*.
- 4) Be satisfied in *the Lord* always; again I will say, be satisfied.
- 5) Let your yielding be known to all men. The Lord *is* near.
- 6) Do not be anxious (*μεριμνάω*) for one thing, but in everything *by* prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God;
- 7) and the peace of God, the *peace* surpassing all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Frame of Mind

The theme of the letter written by Paul to the Christians in Philippi is fellowship. In this letter Paul presents changes to a believer's inner life that are necessary for Christian fellowship. The main command and focus of the letter is found in Philippians 2:5 where Paul says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The word for *mind* is the present passive imperative of *φρονέω* (phroneō, Strong's 5426), the *frame of mind* or the *mind-set*. Paul is commanding the believer to be receptive to the Lord creating within him that same frame of mind with which Jesus approached this earthly life. While being God, Jesus emptied Himself, humbled Himself, and submitted Himself to the Father's will, even to death on the Cross. This is the frame of mind that must be developed within the believer by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of fellowship with other believers.

Like Minded

In Philippians 4:2 Paul introduces two women who Paul considers to be precious to him and to the Lord's work. He describes them as women who have "contended together with me in the Gospel" and "whose names are in the book of life." However, they are in disagreement concerning something in the church at Philippi. Paul encourages them "to think the same thing in the Lord." The word used for *think* is the infinitive form of *φρονέω* (phroneō), the *frame of mind* or *mind-set*. Paul is telling them that their frame of mind or attitude in their approach to the issues of life must be the same, willing to give up what they want in order to seek what the Lord wants. Believers can only have genuine, spiritual fellowship when they are willing to empty themselves of their own desires and wants, humbling and submitting themselves to the Lord's leadership in the church.

Necessary for Fellowship

After Paul's encouragement, he lists four commands in Verses 4-6 that are necessary to come to the same mind in the Lord:

First Command

The first command is in Verse 4: "Be satisfied in the Lord always; again I will say, be satisfied." The Greek word translated *be satisfied* is the word **χαίρω** (charō, Strong's 5463) and is generally translated *rejoice* in most English translations. The entire family of Greek words coming from the root **χάρ** (char) carries with it the sense of gratification or satisfaction. This word is used to express the gratification or satisfaction of the soldier who is involved in war. It is also used to describe the satisfaction of an athlete when he participates in the Coliseum games. Paul is commanding that believers find their satisfaction in the Lord, not in getting their own way.

Second Command

The second command is in Verse 5. Paul says, "Let your yielding be known to all men." Believers are to be known for moderation and yielding, not for indulging in the things of the world. The things of this material world should not be important to the believer. Again, the satisfaction of the believer is to be in the Lord, not in the accomplishment of getting his own way.

Third Command

The third command is found in Verse 6. Paul says, "Do not be anxious for one thing." The word used for *anxious* is the word **μεριμνάω** (merimnao), *the occupation of the attention of the mind*. Paul commands that we are not to allow even one thing of this material realm to consume us, because it will preclude us from unity and fellowship in Christ. Instead, we are to be yielding, finding our satisfaction in what the Lord wants.

Fourth Command

In the fourth command, also found in Verse 6, Paul teaches what the believer is to do about the anxiety that occupies his mind. He says, "But in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Through prayer the believer is to submit any issue that is consuming him to the Lord. A very picturesque presentation of this is found in Peter's teaching in I Peter 5:7, "Having cast all your care (**μέριμνα**) upon Him, because it is a concern to Him about you." Peter instructs believers to cast their **μέριμνα** (merimna) upon the Lord. The word translated *cast* is the Greek word **ἐπιρρίπτω** (epirriptō, Strong's 1977), *to throw or cast upon*. The only other place this word is found in the New Testament is Luke 19:35, "And after they threw (**ἐπιρρίπτω**) their own garments upon the colt, they set Jesus upon him." This is a wonderful picture of the function of prayer with regard to **μεριμνάω** (merimnao). The believer is told to do more than just pray; the believer is told to throw or cast the issues that are consuming him upon the Lord through prayer. Thereby placing the issue into the hands of the Lord and asking for His will to be done (See I John 5:14-15).

The Peace of God

In Philippians 4:7, Paul presents the promise given to those who have given their concerns to the Lord. "And the peace of God, the peace surpassing all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." The believer has the promise that when he gives an issue to the Lord, the Lord will guard his heart and mind thereby allowing him to experience the peace of God in Christ Jesus.

Coming Up Next

With this study, we conclude our focus on the negative connotation of **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) - *distraction through occupying the attention of the mind*. As previously mentioned, the noun **μέριμνα** (merimna) and verb **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) can carry either positive or negative associations. Next we will begin a two-part study from Philippians 2:19-24 on how they are used in a positive understanding of *focused care*.

Notes

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