

Merimna Part 1

– 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

This week we are beginning an 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** (merimna) 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*. In early Greek literature it is used to convey the concept of meditation.

Usage

The noun and verb forms of **μέριμνα** (merimna) are used in the New Testament and can carry either positive or negative associations. Used in the positive, these words convey the idea of *focused care*. By contrast, the negative conveys the idea of *distraction through occupying the attention of the mind*. We are going to study both of these uses in our eight-part study.

Method

In this study we are going to follow these two words through the New Testament in order to observe how they are used to reveal the tool by which Satan occupies the believer's mind. I Peter 5:5-8 is the fundamental Scripture text for our study. In this text, Peter presents **μέριμνα** (merimna) as Satan's **only** weapon against a believer in Christ.

Phases of the Christian Life

Before we study the text in I Peter, we have to establish an understanding of the phases comprising the Christian life: the first being Salvation; the second being Growth and Change.

This understanding enables us to perceive why **μέριμνα** (merimna) is the only weapon Satan can use against a believer.

Phase One ~ Salvation

As previously stated, Salvation is the first phase of the Christian life. The Bible teaches that a person must experience a spiritual birth from the Spirit of God in order to be saved. Just *believing* in the Lord does not establish salvation; a person must experience the Spirit of Christ coming into their spirit or soul. The presence of the Spirit of Christ within the believer was established as the proof of salvation by the Early Church. Paul said to the Christians in Corinth, "Test yourselves if you are in the faith, prove yourselves. Or do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? If not, you are unapproved." (II Corinthians 13:5)

Paul also said, "But you are not *in the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit, if indeed *the* Spirit of God dwells in you; but if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, this one is not of Him." (Romans 8:9)

John in his polemic style of writing said, "And the one keeping His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And in this we know that He abides in us, from the Spirit which He gave to us." (I John 3:24)

Again, John says, "In this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given to us of His Spirit." (I John 4:13)

Not only did the New Testament writers establish that a person must be born from above through a spiritual birth in Christ in order to be saved, but Paul also said, "In whom also you, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after having believed you were sealed *by means of* the Holy Spirit of promise, who is *the* guarantee of our inheritance, for redemption of the possession, unto *the* praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14) Here Paul states that Christ not only fills our soul or spirit, but our soul is additionally *sealed* by the Holy Spirit.

Peter said concerning the ones who have an inheritance in heaven waiting for them: "The ones being kept (guarded) in *the* power of God through faith, for salvation ready to be revealed in *the* last time." (I Peter 1:5)

John says, "We know that everyone who has been born of God is not continuously sinning; but the one who has been born of God He (God) keeps him and the evil one does not touch him." (I John 5:18)

So, the Bible teaches and establishes that a person who is saved belongs to Christ. He is a person who is born of the Spirit of Christ and has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in his spirit (or *soul*). This person's spirit has been sealed by the Holy Spirit. And this condition of salvation does not allow for penetration by any force or spirit into the spirit of the saved person.

Phase Two ~ Growth and Change

The second phase of the Christian life is that of Growth and Change. It is designated as Growth *and* Change because growth produces change. After a person is saved by receiving the Spirit of Christ, he begins to grow by the inward working of God's Spirit Who abides within him. The growth process takes place within the arena of the mind. Paul said, "And do not continually be conformed to this age but be continually transformed *by means of* the renewing of your mind, for you to prove what *is* the good, well pleasing, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2)

Paul also said, "*For* you to put off the old man according to the former lifestyle, the one being corrupt according to the desires of the deceit; and to be renewed *by* the spirit of your mind." (Ephesians 4:22-23)

Since a believer's spirit is saved and sealed, the only area in which Satan can attack is the mind. Consequently, Satan is fighting for the *occupation of the attention of the mind*, also known in Scripture as **μέριμνα** (merimna).

Meaning Part One ~ I Peter 5:5-8

Having discussed the phases of the Christian life, we can now understand the importance of Peter's teaching in I Peter 5:5-8 where He says,

- 5) Likewise, you younger ones be submissive to *the* older ones; and everyone put on humility while being submissive to one another; because God is resisting *the* proud, but is giving grace to *the* humble.
- 6) Therefore, be humbled under the mighty hand of God, in order that he might exalt you in time;
- 7) having cast all your care (**μέριμνα**) upon Him, because it is a concern to Him about you.
- 8) Be sober, be watchful, because your adversary *the* devil, is walking around as *a* roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

In this text, Peter presents **μέριμνα** (merimna) – the occupation of the attention of the mind as the *only* weapon Satan uses against a believer. Peter said in Verse 6 that we should submit to God's humbling process. The aorist participle in Verse 7 tells us that we are to submit to this humbling process having cast all of our **care** upon the Lord. We are to cast all of the things that are occupying our minds onto the Lord.

Peter, in verses 7 and 8, states that the Lord is concerned about us because our adversary, the devil, is walking around as a roaring lion. The Lord is concerned for us because Satan is looking to devour God's people, not spiritually, but mentally. How? By occupying the attention of our minds so that we are too busy and too worried about the things of this earthly life. Consequently, we do not have the time or the focus to study and receive from God's Word. The end result is that we fail to grow. We are saved but we remain unchanged.

We know from Job chapters 1 and 2 that Satan "scouts" God's people just as an army scout surveys the opposing army before an attack. Satan scouts us in order to accuse us before God. He plans his attack upon our minds using those things he perceives as our weaknesses. Our weakness could be our career. It could be someone with whom we are too emotionally attached. It could even be an activity for which we have a passion. Satan cannot attack and penetrate a believer's spirit, but he can and does make an all-out effort to distract us by drawing our attention away from the Word of God.

Conclusion

Paul said in II Corinthians 2:11, "In order that we should not be taken advantage of by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes." The Early Church was not ignorant of Satan's schemes or plots and ways of attack. In I Peter 5:8, Peter commands, "Be sober," and, "Be watchful." We are commanded to be alert and not be ignorant of Satan's schemes. The significance of the Growth and Change phase of a believer's life cannot be overemphasized; which is why Satan works so diligently to distract us from this process using his only weapon, **μέριμνα** (merimna).

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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