

Merimna Part 4

– *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 four 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*.

Origin

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

Review ~ Jesus' Teaching

So **μέριμνα** (merimna) represents a mental state or condition in which someone is *occupied with or dwelling upon* something. Jesus introduces the importance of the lesson of **μέριμνα** (merimna) in Matthew 6:24-34. Here He presents four basic principles:

- (1) The first is found in Verse 24. Jesus says that man is created with the capacity to serve only one master, God or the material realm. Therefore, man cannot serve both.
- (2) The second principle is found in Verse 25. It is a command. Jesus says, "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."
- (3) The third principle, also a command, is found in Verse 33. Jesus says, "But you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Jesus gives these two commands because He understands that if we occupy ourselves with even the necessities of life, we will not be able to seek, serve, or focus on His Word.

(4) The fourth principle is presented in Verse 34. "Therefore, you should not be anxious (**μεριμνάω**, merimnao) about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious (**μεριμνάω**, merimnao) for the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the adversity of it." Jesus is teaching here that we will be tempted to be occupied with the things pertaining to tomorrow before tomorrow even arrives.

Review ~ Others' Teachings

Both Paul and Peter minister concerning **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) and **μέριμνα** (merimna) basing their teachings on the Lord's in Matthew 6. In I Peter 5:5-8, Peter presents that the only weapon Satan can use against those who belong to Christ is the occupation of the attention of the mind. Satan attempts to occupy the attention of a believer's mind with worldly things in order to divert the believer from God's Word. This distraction away from the Word hinders spiritual growth and maturity.

Meaning Part Four ~ Luke 10:38-42

Luke 10:38-42 is the only text in the Scriptures that presents 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 the believer.

38) And it happened as they traveled, that He Himself entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, Martha by name, received Him into her house.

39) And there was a sister to her being called Mary, who also when she sat beside the feet of Jesus, was hearing His Word.

40) But Martha was being distracted concerning much service; and when she stood over Him she said, "Lord, is it not a concern to You that my sister left me alone to serve? Therefore speak to her in order that she might give help to me."

41) And when Jesus answered He said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious (μεριμνάω**) and troubled concerning many things;**

42) "but one thing is necessary; and Mary chose the good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Breakdown

This important portion of Scripture is best understood in four sections.

(1) Introduction ~ Verses 38-39

Luke sets the scene by introducing the two main people in this teaching, the first being Martha, who welcomes Jesus into her home. The second is her sister, Mary.

Luke uses an aorist participle in Verse 39 to show that when Mary hears the Lord, her

position is beside or alongside of His feet. Luke also uses an imperfect tense verb to indicate that the habit of Mary's life in the past has been that of "continually hearing His Word."

(2) **The Circumstance Reveals the Problem** ~ Verse 40

Verse 40 describes Martha as being in the kitchen and she is "distracted" concerning much "service." The word *service* is the Greek word **διακονία** (diakonia, Strong's 1248) and is properly translated *service*. This word comes from the Greek word that is translated *deacon*. In this text, Luke is not calling her a deacon but rather is describing the kind of work she is doing; she is in service for Christ. It is important to notice that this text is pointing out that self-imposed, humanly motivated "service for Christ" can be a distraction from the top priority of the believer, which is the hearing and studying of God's Word.

Martha is serving as she does every time Jesus comes for dinner. But at this particular time Jesus isn't just eating dinner, He is teaching.

Luke describes Martha as being "distracted." The word *distracted* (**περισπάω**, perispaō, Strong's 4049) means *to draw around* as in pulling a net up and around fish. The facts of her circumstance catch Martha's attention. She is working in the kitchen alone and Mary is not helping her. Instead, Mary is with the others enjoying the Lord's teaching. The circumstances then surround her or draw a net over her. The attention of her mind has been distracted and her circumstances have captured and consumed her.

The situation is so upsetting to Martha that she comes in and "stands over" Jesus saying, "Lord, is it not a concern to You that my sister left me alone to serve?" Martha thinks she must do all of the work herself because Mary is sitting down listening to Jesus.

Apparently, Jesus nods His head yes in answer to Martha's question because Martha's next statement is, "Therefore speak to her in order that she might give help to me."

(3) **The Cause of the Problem** ~ Verse 41

In His response to her, Jesus says, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled concerning many things." The Greek word translated *anxious* is the word **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) - *the occupation of the attention of the mind*. The Greek word translated *troubled* is **τυρβάζω** (turbazō, Strong's 5023) and means *to stir up and trouble the mind*.

Luke is here presenting the three phases of Satan's psychological attack on God's people. The first phase is **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) - *the occupation of the attention of the mind*. Martha notices that Mary is not helping her. Instead, Mary is listening to Jesus' teaching. Martha dwells on this until she reaches the second phase **περισπάω**, (perispaō). In phase two, her concerns draw a net around her and capture her to the

point that her attention is consumed by the situation. This leads to the third phase **τυρβάζω** (turbazō), which is the outward expression of frustration and/or anger in speech, face, and body language.

This entire incident starts with the attention of Martha's mind being occupied with her circumstance. Her circumstance then captures her as a net would capture a fish. The end result is that she storms into the room and stands over Jesus expressing her frustration.

(4) The Cure for the Problem ~ Verse 42

Jesus continues speaking to Martha telling her the cure for the problem. "But one thing is necessary; and Mary chose the good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Summary

Luke's text describes for us in detail the Lord's teaching on the psychological attack Satan mounts against a believer in Christ. He tempts a believer to become occupied with something. If the believer takes the bait allowing himself to be distracted, that distraction then becomes consuming to the point that the believer expresses the stress and frustration of his state of mind. The outward expression of the believer demonstrates what is occupying his mind.

Luke also points out that believers can even be consumed by serving the Lord. Sometimes service for Christ is given priority over hearing the Word. Some believers are tired and spiritually starving because, as they serve so sacrificially, they are not feeding on the Word. Satan knows that the design for a believer's growth is "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). Therefore, he will use any method at his disposal to occupy the attention of the mind, effectively robbing the believer of any growth.

Conclusion

Understand that Satan is not fair. He will use loved ones. He will use life's circumstances. He will even attempt to use service for Christ as a way to divert a believer's attention from the hearing of God's Word.

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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