

Merimna Part 7

– 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 seven in our eight-part study on the Greek word **μέριμνα** (merimna, Strong's 3308) and the verb form **μεριμνάω** (merimnao, Strong's 3309), which means *to have the attention of the mind occupied*.

Meaning Part Seven ~ Philippians 2:19-24

The first six parts of our study focused on the negative connotation of these words, conveying the idea of *distraction in occupying the attention of the mind*. In this article we introduce how these words are used in the Scriptures to convey the positive idea of *focused care*. Our textual basis for this is Philippians 2:19-24.

- 19) **But I hope in *the* Lord Jesus, to send Timothy to you soon, in order that I myself also may be encouraged, after having known the things concerning you.**
- 20) **For I have no one like-minded, who will genuinely care (**μεριμνάω**) for the things concerning you.**
- 21) **For all the ones are seeking their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.**
- 22) **But you know the proof of him, that *as a child to his father* he served with me for the gospel.**
- 23) **Therefore I hope to send this one at once, whenever I should see *about* the things concerning me;**
- 24) **And on the other hand, I have been persuaded in *the* Lord that I myself also will come quickly.**

Frame of Mind

Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Philippi outlining for them the things necessary for fellowship and unity. Paul commanded in Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The word translated *mind* is **φρονέω** (phroneō, Strong's 5426), which means *frame of mind* or *mindset*. The command is in the passive voice, which means we are to be receptive to the Lord developing this frame of mind and attitude within us. Paul is making the point that it is necessary for all believers to approach this material life with the same frame of mind and the same attitude with which Jesus did.

Breakdown

Beginning with Philippians 2:19, Paul reveals the hardships he and the rest of the Body of Christ face while serving the Lord. Paul desires to send Timothy to Philippi in order to find out how the Christians there are doing, especially in the areas of fellowship and growth. He anticipates being encouraged when he hears of their condition. In Verse 20, Paul reveals two characteristics about Timothy that make him usable for the Lord's work.

(1) Like-Minded

Paul said, "I have no one like-minded...." The first point Paul makes is that no one with him in Rome is of the same mind with him except Timothy. More than likely, Paul has many brothers and sisters in the Lord serving with him; but here he states that he has no one except Timothy who is like-minded with him. The word *like-minded* is **ἰσόψυχος** (isopsuchos, Strong's 2473), which means *to be of equal mind or soul with someone*. This word expresses a common motive with another person. Paul is saying that only Timothy shares the same motive for ministry. The motivation he is talking about is shown in every activity Paul does. Whether he is teaching or making tents, Paul functions in service to Christ. Evidently, so does Timothy.

(2) Concerned for Spiritual Welfare

The second characteristic attributed to Timothy is that he "will genuinely care for the things concerning you." The word for *care* is **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) - *to have the attention of the mind occupied*. Here the word **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) is used to describe a good quality about Timothy. Paul could send no one else who would be genuinely occupied with the spiritual welfare and condition of the Christians in Philippi.

Contrasting Character

In Verse 21, Paul presents a characteristic about the other believers with him in Rome. In contrast to Timothy, all the others "are seeking their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus." This characteristic is one that believers in general do not understand. They are deceived into thinking that they need only to attend church and fellowship with other believers; the rest of their time, they believe, is their own. However, life with Christ and service to Christ is not a portion of a believer's life; it is the *entirety* of a believer's life. This is Paul's motivation and understanding when he says in Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Focused Care

Our text this week shows a clear contrast in motive and approach to life among the believers in Rome. Paul and Timothy have a focused care (**μεριμνάω**, merimnao) to serve and support the spiritual welfare of the Body of Christ. While the other believers, those around Paul and fellowshiping with him, are focused on their own lives. Consequently, they are not available to focus on the spiritual needs of others and they are not available for the Lord's use.

Putting it All Together

Paul's life shows that he has a clear understanding of the fact that the Lord established three things for us. First, each human being has the capacity to serve only one realm – God or the material. Second, a person can be occupied with the necessities of life to the point of being consumed by those necessities. Third, in light of these truths, the Lord commands us to "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things will be added to you."

Spiritual Repercussions

What is true of Paul's day is true in our time as well. Many believers today are attending church and are fellowshiping with other believers out of a sense of duty. They may even be doing these things in order to fulfill their own needs for enjoyment, pleasure, and/or entertainment. Sadly, they do not realize that their attention has been diverted from seeking the mind of Christ and has become centered on seeking the things that are of importance to themselves. Of course, as we have learned in past lessons, this results in a lack of spiritual growth for Christians such as these.

Conclusion

In order to be useful to Christ and for Him to accomplish what He has planned for us; we must believe what Jesus says regarding the necessities of this earthly life. We must be of the same mind as Christ; trusting that if we first seek the kingdom of God, He will take care of the necessities related to our physical life. Only then can our minds be fully occupied with the things of the Lord. Only then will our motives and actions be led of the Lord.

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.