

Matthew 6:24-34 Part 2
Satan's Only Weapon Against a Believer in Christ Part 2
also I Peter 5:5-9

This is our second part on the study of **μέριμνα** (merimna). And the title of the series is Satan's Only Weapon Against a Believer in Christ. He only has one and it is taught throughout the Scriptures, which is why it is found in multiple parts, because it is found in multiple places. Because it was after the issue of salvation, this issue of Satan's only Weapon was the major teaching and issue in the church.

In Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 Jesus is teaching religious Jews that in reality it is not about being religious, but about having a relationship, personal relationship with the Lord. That it is not about external religious practices, it is about internal interaction with the Spirit of God. That it is not about religious activities for other people to see, but it is about a personal and private relationship between the believer and the Lord. Personal and private. It is between us and Him. Jesus says, "Whether it is your acts of mercy, whether it is your prayer time, whether it is your fasting time, whether it is your going out into life getting possessions time."

We saw in verses 19 to 23 the same theme is there. It is not what is external, it is not what is religious, the focus is upon one's inner life, inner person where Christ dwells. Do not treasure up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, but rather treasure up for yourselves treasures in heaven, because verse 21 Jesus says, "For where your treasure is there is where your heart will be." And He says, "That is what we are focused on." Not external religious practice but the internal heart. Where your treasure is your heart will be. So that brings up a question in the minds of those listening. If I am to treasure up for myself treasures in heaven, and not on the earth, how might I go about this earthly life?

Three things from last week. Last week we took all of verses 24 to 34. I want to highlight three things before we get into I Peter 5. If you do not have it there is a second supplemental study guide in the back for I Peter 5:5-9 back in the foyer on the table there.

1) The first thing we saw in verse 24 from last week is, **No one is able to serve two masters.** The word *can* - *no one can*, or *no one is able* - that word in the Greek has to do with *capacity*, *ability*. A human being has been purposely created by God to be only able to serve one thing. Not two things. And notice, the emphasis is on *to serve*. It does not say *believe*. It is *to serve*. You are not able to serve God and mammon. **μαμμωνα** (mammōna) is the Aramaic word for *the physical realm*: money, ambitions, goals, activities. Anything that has to do with this physical realm. He says **You cannot** - you do not have the ability to - **serve God and mammon.** And we took away from that the importance, not only does man only have the capacity to do one thing, to serve one thing, but also it is the emphasis on the word *serve*. We can be deceived into thinking that as long as I believe the right things from the Bible I can serve life anyway I choose. That is not true. Because Jesus is talking about a personal relationship of serving involves realizing that we only have the capacity or ability to focus on and serve one thing and that is it.

2) The second thing we take out of this text is verse 25, **On account of this I say to you, "Stop being anxious for your life."** The word *anxiety* is our word **μέριμνα** (merimna). And **μέριμνα** (merimna) means *the occupation of the attention of the mind*. It does not mean *to occupy the mind*; it means *to occupy the attention of the mind*. Now remember, we just were taught we only have the capacity to serve one thing. Therefore we are serving whatever we are focused on. And Jesus says, "Stop continually being anxious for your life, even the necessities: your food, your clothing. Do not be anxious for these things."

3) And then the third thing we want to highlight is verse 33, the solution for all this. After saying in verse 32 that the nonbelievers seek after all these things. They are worried about their survival. So all nonbelievers are seeking out their food, their clothing, their housing allowance, the whole thing. They have to worry about that because they are providing that for themselves. But you, verse 33, **Be continually seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.** Emphasis on *will be added to you*. Why? Because seeking the kingdom of God means that I am occupied with one thing. So God says, "You do not have to worry about the rest, I will add to you whatever you need. I will provide that for you. But you need to focus on seeking first the kingdom of God." Now you cannot seek both kingdoms. You can only seek one thing because you are only created with the capacity to function one way.

Now this brings us to the importance of what the Bible teaches based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6. Peter in I Peter 5:5-9 presents to us that **μέριμνα** (merimna) - or holding people occupied with the attention of their mind - is Satan's only weapon against a believer in Christ. The absolute only one. And you might be thinking to yourself, "I can think of a myriad of ways that Satan can attack my life." But no matter what way he attacks, it is for one reason: it is to get the attention of our mind occupied with it, whatever it is. And it can even be for a good thing, as we saw last week, and we will see again today at the end of this lesson.

But, quickly, in I Peter 5:5-9 three things about Satan's only weapon against the believer: the what, the who, and the why. What, who, and why.

1) The What

What am I to do about this predicament? I have only been created with the capacity to be able to be occupied with and to serve one thing. And yet I am told stop being anxious. So what am I to do?

Peter in I Peter chapter 5 is speaking to the leaders about leadership, and he says in verse 5, **Likewise, you younger men be subjected to older men (or the elders); and everyone by being submissive to one another, be clothed in humble mindedness.** A humble frame of mind. The word *humble* means *lowly*. A mind that has been brought down low. Humbleness in the Scripture does not mean that I present myself in a very humble manner, that is to say, "Oh I am such a rotten person. I am just so no good. I am not really worth anything." In Greek philosophy and thought that is not humbleness, that is pride. The definition of *pride* in the

philosophical realm of the Greek language, the definition of *pride* is *self-centeredness*. Some people have high self-esteem, and they say, "I am pretty good, I am great, I am better than you." Low self-esteem says, "I am not good at anything. I fail at everything. I am no good." Both are self-centered. Neither one is humble. To be *humbled* means *to be brought down into a lowly position*.

Be clothed in humble mindedness... a frame of mind that is lowly, not a humble mind that is up above everybody else **...because God is resisting proud ones, but He is giving grace to humble ones.** That is a quote from Proverbs 3:34 that has been quoted several times in the New Testament. God resists proud people. He resists them but He gives grace to lowly people, who take the low road, the low position in life, the reality about themselves. So God is resisting the proud ones.

Now what does it mean to be proud? Self-centered, yes. But more specifically in detail: self-reliant, self-sufficient. You and I are guilty of that every day. We go by our own resources, our own ideas, our own way of doing things, until we get into trouble and then we contact the Lord and say, "Boy, did I miss this thing up." But we do not stop and seek the Lord until we get in a mess. Most of the time for the believer Satan is not the one who is causing all the trouble. The one that is causing the trouble is God. God resists people who are self-reliant and self-sufficient on their own resources. God will oppose that person. Most of the time we are fighting against God rather than fighting with Satan. Why? Because God is bringing us down. It says God's grace goes to the lowly ones, so therefore if I am not humbled or lowly I am not in a position to receive God's grace.

Look what the next verse says, verse 6, **Therefore in conclusion, be humbled under the mighty hand of God.** Not *be humble* but *be humbled*. You say, "What is the difference?" *Be humble* implies that the person is to do the humbling. The Greek text is the passive voice meaning the humbling comes from God: *be humbled, receive your humbling*. God is bringing you down, receive it, submit to it. Because look what the next ~~sentence~~ phrase says, **Be humbled under the mighty hand of God.** Do you see how all of that makes sense? If you look up here for a moment, Peter is saying that the hand of God is coming down on you to bring you down low because only when you are down low can His grace minister to you. So if you are up here, His mighty hand is coming down on you, to bring you down, because His grace is only ministered to the lowly.

In order that he might exalt you in time. Literally *in the proper season*. Someday I am going to be exalted; that is when I am brought up to heaven. Here, it is my humbling. Every believer is being taken down because we function in self-reliance, and self-assurance, and self-sufficiency all the time. So God is continually resisting us, so that His grace can minister to us.

So then he says, this submission to God's humbling process is found in verse 7, **By having cast all your anxiety upon Him, because it is a care to Him concerning you.** The act of casting all of my care, all of my anxiety, upon the Lord is part of the humbling process.

Now the word *casting*, **having cast all of your anxiety**, means *to throw*. The word is found only one other place in the New Testament. In Luke 19:35 where the disciples put their

clothes over the donkey so Jesus could ride on that donkey into Jerusalem on that Passover week to die for our sins. They put their clothes over the donkey. Picture that picture in your mind of casting all of your anxieties upon the Lord. It does not mean hold onto it and just pray about it. "Lord, I am really in a jam here." Let go. Put it on Him. See, to trust the Lord with all of our situations means to give it to Him. It does not mean, "I am holding on down here and You have to give me some help!" No, let go. If you are going to give it to Him, it is His. That is the whole point of this.

What should I do about anxiety? God is bringing me down into a lowly state and condition. We call it discouragement and depression because we failed, and our self-sufficiency did not work, and our resources did not work. So God by His mighty hand has brought us down low so that we trust in His grace, and we trust in His grace by just turning it over to Him.

Now, you know what is going to happen. Here is the picture. I love word pictures. I study word pictures of the Greek text as it presents a whole picture for you. As God's mighty hand brings us down in order that we would cast all of our care, our anxiety upon Him, we say, "Okay Lord, I give up, it is Yours." But then we get right back up again, and go right back at it again, same as usual. So He has to keep bringing us down. And we have to keep trying to turn it over. Most of the time we are brought down, and we say, "Okay Lord, I see, I give up," but we still have not turned it over to Him. So He has to bring us down again because we just get right back up again and rely on our self-sufficiency and our self-reliance and our resources, and so He has to bring us down. And again the word *anxiety* means the very thing that you are occupied with. That is what I am to do. Cast it all upon the Lord.

2) The Who

Now who is causing this? Secondly, verse 8, **Be sober and be watchful.** It does not mean do not drink. You have to understand that both Paul, and Peter, and John all used the term to denote sober mindedness. Do not allow your thinking to be affected by wrong thinking. Be sober here about your thinking.

Be watchful (be on guard) **because your adversary** (your opponent) **the devil as a roaring lion is walking around seeking whom he might devour.** That is Christians. What I am to do is to cast it on the Lord, whatever it is. It comes into my life, I get occupied with it, it has nothing to do with Christ, it has nothing to do with His Word, it has nothing to do with seeking first the kingdom; I am now occupied with something that Satan is doing in my life. He is doing it. He is the source.

Now I do not know if you know it or not, I have mentioned it many times, but Satan scouts people. Job chapters 1 and 2 tells us that Satan scouts people. He himself does not do it, his demons do, his minions do, and they report back to him before the throne of God. God said to Satan, "Have you considered (studied, scouted) my servant Job?" And Satan said, "Yes, I have. And he praises You and blesses you because You have just made him materially so rich and so blessed, more than anybody else in his whole area that he lives. Let me touch his possessions, in fact let me touch his family, and I will show you that he will curse You to Your face. He only praises you because of human and material blessings. You let me touch those and

I will show you that he will turn on you." So God says, "Go ahead. But you cannot touch his life, but go ahead." Many of his cattle were stolen, some of his children were killed; all through raids that the enemies brought upon his ranch and his land. And even in his devastation and in his grief he said, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. I came in the world naked I am going to leave the world naked. All these people and all these things belong to the Lord, not to me, so blessed be the name of the Lord." And the Bible says that Job did not sin with his words in response to the tragedy that he experienced.

But then Satan came back and said, "Well, I see Job passed that test but let me touch his health." God says, "Go ahead." Of course we know that he broke out in boils. The richest man in the country is now sitting down at the garbage dump scraping the boils on his skin with pieces of pottery, and people walking by looking at him just shaking their heads saying, "Wow. There is the richest man that we know in the world and look at him now." Satan scouts people. He requests permission based on what he thinks people's weaknesses are. And so Peter is saying, **Be sober and be watchful.** It is your adversary the devil that is walking around looking to make you anxious, looking to cause the attention of your mind to be occupied with things, and your mind taken away from Christ.

He says in verse 9, concerning Satan, **Whom resist by being solid in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are to be fulfilled in your brotherhood that is in the world.** Everybody is going through sufferings. So what am I to do? Cast all of my anxieties upon the Lord. Who is doing it? Satan is the one who is bringing these areas of anxiety to my life.

3) The Why

Now the big question: why? Why? This is very important. Why is **μέριμνα** (merimna) Satan's only weapon? Only weapon as presented by Peter here in I Peter 5. Well, there are two parts to the Christian life. We have to understand those two parts.

Part 1: Salvation

The first part is salvation. Part number one is salvation. The salvation experience happens in a person's life at regeneration, or rebirth, spiritual regeneration, or rebirth. When this happens, two things happen.

1) When I am born of the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Christ comes into my spirit. That is what saves me. Not my beliefs, but the coming and being born again spiritually by the Spirit of Christ in my spirit.

2) And the second thing that happens at salvation experience, Paul says in Ephesians 1:13, that not only does the Holy Spirit fill my spirit, but He seals my spirit from the outside.

So in conclusion, [to] a person who is saved and is filled with the Holy Spirit and sealed by the Holy Spirit, Jesus said in Hebrews 13:5, **"I will never leave you nor forsake you."** So His Spirit is in my spirit permanently throughout eternity. From the very

moment that I receive Christ and all the way through eternity it never stops, He is always in my spirit. He will never leave me nor forsake me.

And then John says in I John 4:4 that you do not have to be concerned about the spirit of antichrist that is in the world, because **Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.** Nothing is going to overcome you. Nothing is going to penetrate your spirit and take Christ away from you. It is impossible.

Part 2: Growth

So Satan cannot take your salvation away. He has to take Christ away in order to take your salvation away and he cannot do that. And this brings us to the second part of the Christian life, growth. And this is the area that Satan attacks. Because he cannot take Christ out of my life, he cannot remove me from Christ, or remove Christ from me, he has to work through the physical realm to get my mind occupied with things to take me away from the growth process. He cannot take me away from salvation. I am always saved. So after being saved and the Spirit of Christ lives within, He begins to work from within now that He lives there. It is from inside. And He works to heal, and to change the affects of sin upon the cortex of my brain. Can I be more specific than that? Christ from within - His Spirit, His function and desire now is to work, and heal, and change, and transform the effects of sin that I have been saved from and delivered from; to heal, and change, and transform the effects of those sins on the cortex of my brain.

And by the way, as a side note, that is why many Christians go to church, participate in Christian systems in Christian churches, and their lives never get changed. Their lives are a mess. Why? Because they say, "I believe in Jesus. I do not know what the problem is." They are supposed to be getting ministered to by the Holy Spirit through God's Word to have their mind transformed, to be healed from the effects of that old life. But people are not being healed, they are being channeled through programs, and made to be church workers. It is like you showing up to the doctor after a major operation and they say, "Well, while you are waiting in the waiting room, here is a mop, can you go do the restrooms?"

"No, I came here for therapy, excuse me, not to be put to work."

So the growth process, listen to this, Romans 12:2 Paul says, **Stop being conformed to this world... Stop! ...and be continually being transformed by the renewing of your mind.** *By the renewing of your mind.* Be involved in the process of having your mind renewed. So the mind is renewed through the hearing of the Word of God ministered by the Holy Spirit. Notice how I said that. I did not say *Bible study*. I did not say *going to church and listening to the sermons*. The mind is transformed as God designed it to be through the hearing of the Word of God ministered by the Holy Spirit. Many sermons and many Bible studies are not ministered by the Holy Spirit - it is just human beings interacting with the Scriptures. If God's Spirit is not in it, if it is not a ministry there for the healing and transformation of the mind, then there really is not anything happening.

Or as one person said to me this week, "You can go to Bible study and get educated, but educational is not transformational."

So putting it in medical terms as I did the first hour, your operation - salvation is your operation - where God comes in and He gets rid of the source of the problem: Satan himself and dealing with the sin nature, by putting Christ in our spirit. But after that it is therapy, to learn how to function.

I had an operation on my shoulder a few years ago and had to go to therapy after the surgeries in order to get my function back. I could have the operation and say, "I had an operation, now it is fixed, I just cannot use it. I did not do what was necessary in the therapy to use it."

I have a new life in Christ. How am I to walk with Him? It all comes through therapy.

So in summary, Satan cannot take away our salvation. Impossible. So he works to keep our minds occupied with things and to keep our minds away from the Word of God. And it does not make any difference what it is. It can be something very important, or not.

Last week we told you about what Jesus said in Luke chapter 9. At the end of the chapter people came up to Him and said, "I want to be Your disciple," and He said, "Well, you come and follow Me now." And one guy said, "Well, let me go say goodbye to my family at home first," and Jesus said, "No, you come now." If you put your hand to the plow and say, "I am going to walk with Christ," you cannot plow forward while looking backward. Once you put your hand of the plow, you are gone. He said, "I want you to go out and preach the kingdom." Going out and saying goodbye to your friends and family - Jesus was not trying to be inhumane, He was not trying to be cruel. What Jesus was saying was, "Your mind can only be occupied with one thing at a time, and if you go home and take care of those obligations you cannot follow Christ."

One guy said, "I would really like to follow You, but first let me stay at home, take care of my dad, so that when he dies, I can bury him." And Jesus said, "Let the dead (the spiritual dead) bury their own physical dead. You come now." He was not trying to be cruel or inhumane. He was saying, "You know, it is just like Satan to keep your dad alive for the next fifty years and you will never be able to follow Christ. Come now."

These are all important things but is it God's Spirit leading us? Satan causes problems. Satan causes circumstances to occupy the attention of our mind, to make our lives totally focused on and taken up with these circumstances, and it takes us away from Christ; on a personal basis, on an everyday basis, as well as learning the therapy that we need. The renewing of the mind as we receive God's spiritual healing and therapy. That is why it is Satan's only weapon. There is only one thing he can do. He cannot come up and take me away from Christ. He has to work through the physical realm so that he appeals to my physical senses: my mind, and my emotions, and my physical body - and I naturally respond to all these aspects of the physical life around me. So he has a lot of avenues to work that one weapon.

So Peter says, "When you find the attention of your mind occupied with something and it consumes your life, cast it upon Christ." Get rid of it like a hot potato. Let the Lord work it out to free your life; so that the attention of your mind is not occupied with these things, and you can stay in focus and in fellowship with Christ.

Next week we will study from the parables of how anxiety works in everyday life. How does Satan use the various aspects of life to occupy the attention of our minds?

Let's close with prayer.