

Matthew 6:24-34 Part 3
Satan's Only Weapon Against a Believer in Christ Part 3
The Effects of Anxiety (or cares) in Everyday Life ~ Luke 8:1-18

We have a supplement study guide for today, Luke 8:1-18. Our foundational text from which we are studying from is in Matthew 6:24-34.

Remember that in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 it is all one sermon given by Jesus to religious Jews about the difference between religion and relationship. Religion is human centered, produced through human effort, and is external; whereas a relationship with Christ is produced by the Holy Spirit (not by people), it is internal, and the interaction produced by God's Spirit Himself. The results itself are the fruit of the Spirit. So Jesus is telling religious Jews that being religious is not enough, that everything is to point inward where Christ dwells. And so the emphasis is on the inner person. Doing one's alms or mercies, and praying, and fasting in secret, that is, in private between oneself and Christ on a personal basis on the inside. Same thing with treasures on earth. He says, "Treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven not treasures on the earth." So treasure up spiritual treasure that is eternal.

But in verses 24 to 34 of Matthew chapter 6 - again focusing on the internal, on the relationship - we saw three things in verses 24 to 34. Three things:

1) In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, **You cannot serve, you do not have the capacity to serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon.** Mammon, **μαμμωνα** (mammōna) the Aramaic, having to do with the physical life, and its wealth, and its possessions, even activities, even goals that have to do with the physical life. **You cannot serve two masters.** You cannot serve the earthly things of life and God at the same time. It is impossible because you only have the capacity to serve one thing.

The emphasis there is not only on one capacity but the word *serve*. That tells us that we can believe the right things, but in our personal life be serving something totally different than what we believe. And we think that because we believe the right things we can serve ourselves, or serve the pleasures of life anyway we choose, and we are okay. As we said the first hour, *we reap what we sow*. You can have the correct beliefs, but be pursuing the things of the flesh, and the things of the world, and that is what we are going to reap. So we only have the capacity to serve one thing, God, or the earthly realm.

2) So therefore, in Matthew 6:25 secondly, Jesus says - because of this, **Take no thought for your life. Do not be anxious for your life.** There is the word that we are studying, **μέριμνα** (merimna). Do not let the occupation of the attention of your mind be fixed on this life because you only usually have the capacity to focus and be fixed on one thing. Do not worry about your clothing, and your food, and all of the necessities of life. Do not worry about that. Do not be occupied with it.

3) And then thirdly, he said in verses 32 and 33 of Matthew 6, He says, verse 32, **All of these things the nonbelievers seek after.** It is survival mode for the nonbeliever.

The nonbeliever has to seek out and be focused on what they are going eat, and what they are going to wear, and where they are going to live, and how they are going to make it day after day, because they are their own sole source of provision. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, **All these things the nonbelievers seek after, but you seek first the kingdom of God, and all the other things that you need in life will be added.** That is a key: *will be added*. You do not have to seek for them. So you only have one capacity, so seek the things of the Lord, everything else will be added.

That basic principle is found all the way through the New Testament. The salvation issue is the first issue in life, coming to know Christ and being born of His Spirit. But then after salvation, there is growth. And we saw last week, Romans 12:2, that Paul says that we are to be continually being transformed by the renewing of our minds. We now have Christ living within. So from here on in, my mind is to be focused on learning of the things of Christ and Him. So that is why Satan, knowing we only have the capacity to focus on one thing, Satan himself uses that weapon against a believer.

Last week we took I Peter 5:5-9 to share with you how Peter took this concept from Matthew 6, and why we say to you that the occupation of the attention of the mind is Satan's only Weapon against a believer. That is why Satan scouts us. He studies us as to what activity, or what person, or what thing in this life we are susceptible to; and he will expose that just to get us caught up in it, to take our attention away from Christ.

So last week Peter said that to submit to God's humbling process is to give over to Him those things which occupy your mind. In other words the reason why we do not relinquish, and surrender, and give up, what we are worried about and occupied with, is because we are staying in control. The exhibit of surrendering to His humbling process is to give to Him, cast upon Him those things that we are occupied with. Because what we are occupied with has now taken the place of Christ in our mind, in our thinking. Not in our soul. And so the Lord saves us, and then He says, "Okay, from here on in there is going to be these opportunities we are going to get together, and we are going to be in the Word, and we are going to renew your mind; except when you get caught up in other things that occupy the attention of your mind and take you away from the Word." And we have to understand that concept.

Today, The Effects of Anxiety (or cares) in Everyday Life from Luke 8:1-18.

The first three verses of Luke chapter 8 are the people who are traveling with Jesus as He is going through Gentile territory. But as we get to verse 4 is what is called The Parable of the Sower. Now if that sounds familiar, we just talked about some of this in the first hour from Ecclesiastes. And no, I did not plan it, it is just how it rolled.

Verses 4-8 is The Parable of the Sower. It says in verse 4, **And while a large crowd was gathering together, and the people from city after city were traveling to Him.** So here is this throng of people that keep coming and keep coming. They are in the process of traveling to Him. **He spoke through a parable.** That is how it literally reads; **He spoke through a parable.**

The word *parable*, παραβολή (parabolē) in Greek, means *to place alongside of*. That is what the word means. So a parable is taking one thing and placing it alongside of something else using it as an example. In other words taking a spiritual truth and placing it alongside of some familiar illustrations, something that is familiar with the people of the landscape. Jesus used farming terms. He put spiritual truth alongside of that which they were familiar with in farming terms, and that is what The Parable of the Sower is. There is spiritual truth found in The Parable of the Sower.

Now what is interesting, as we are fixed and studied on this word for μέριμνα (merimna), *to have the occupation of your mind occupied with something*; there are many things about the Lord I am going to point out to you as we go through this text, that you might not have known about, or might not understand. But as we go through I will point those out to you.

In The Parable of the Sower (or the planter) there are four kinds of soil. Only one kind of soil receives the seed. The other three conditions of soil reject the influence of the seed. The seed is there, but its influence is choked and that is the whole point of this.

So He says in verse 5 as He starts off this parable, **The one sowing (or planting) went out to sow (or to plant) his seed; and in the process of him sowing, some seed indeed fell along the road, and was trampled down. And the birds of the heaven ate it.** I always picture, because the conditions of soil that are presented here, you can see it on these farm roads as you come in and out of town. Here along the pathway right off of the road itself, off of the asphalt road, there is a hard packed part of the road that you can pull off, the shoulder of the road, and it is very hard packed, hard to penetrate. Well, while he is sowing seed in order to reap a harvest some seed falls along this hard packed path. And there is no penetration, so it just sits there. And the birds come along, and they eat the seed. It is a feast for them if you scatter seed by the way and you do not have something to put on top of it, to cover it, like planting soil or manure. Birds will come and eat it, eat the seed that you spread down, and that is what happened here to this first person.

Verse 6, **And other seed fell upon the rock.** This is not rocky soil; this is on a slab of rock that has thin layer of dirt on top of it. As you move further off the road, you have the shoulder of the road, and then you have this rock slab off on the side. **And after growing up, it was dried up, on account of it did not have moisture.** I used to see that as I planted lawns. Some seed actually fell into the street and in the gutter. All it takes is just a little tiny bit of dirt. The next week I would show up and all of a sudden here is this grass popping out of this little bit of dirt that is in the gutter. It did not last because as we will see - and here is another of many truths we are going to study today on our way to the one topic that we are presenting to you - Jesus is going to emphasize the root system. Developing the root system, not the top, but the root system is what is important. A tree will survive a storm, survive the wind because of its root system. So some fell upon rocky soil and after it grew up, it had a quick start, it was dried up because it had no moisture and ran out of room.

Verse 7, **And other seed fell in the middle of thornbushes** (in the middle of thornbushes) **and after it grew up with it** (both the thorn bushes and the seed grew up together) **the thornbushes choked it**, stunted its growth.

And verse 8, fourthly, **And other fell upon good ground.** This is the Greek word **ἀγαθός** (agathos) for *good*, designating quality, spiritual quality of good. He is using the word *good* as a quality but later on is going to use it to show spiritual good. **Upon good ground, and when it grew up** (that is, the seed) **it produced fruit a hundred times.** It produced one hundred times more ~~seed~~ fruit than the one seed that was planted in the ground.

Now while He was saying these things, indicating to us that He said this thing intermittently, and this is very important. **While saying these things He was calling out, "The one having ears to hear, let him hear."** I think that is interesting. He does not mean, "Is there anybody in the back that cannot hear? Do I need to speak louder?" Because *let him that has ears to hear let him hear.* Jesus is actually differentiating between *listening* and *hearing*.

And if you notice in verse 18, if you look ahead, the whole emphasis here is take heed, or beware how you are hearing. Four different kinds of soil that are hearing / listening to the Word of God differently. So He keeps saying, "Let the one who has ears to hear let him hear." Everybody was listening, everybody could audibly hear what He was saying; but not everybody was hearing it. And notice, that is the end of the parable. He finished the parable without explaining anything. He just gave a parable.

In verses 9 and 10, The Purpose for Parables. **And His disciples were questioning Him.** Again, continuous action in the past. So they started following Him after He got through, and they are standing there going, "Uh, wait a minute, are You done? What does all that mean?" And they began following Him and they were questioning Him continuously. So you can imagine Him kind of taking this group aside, and while they were saying, "Excuse me, Rabbi, excuse me, Messiah, but can you...?" So they are following Him, and He is taking them off privately. And they are saying to Him saying, **"What might this parable be?"** What does it mean?

Now remember He said, "Let the one who has an ear to hear let him hear." That is what they are doing. They are pursuing Christ to find out what His word means. They heard Him. They are responding to the command. He is activating their hearing and they are coming to hear. So verse 10 says, **And He said to them, "To you (you, the disciples) it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God."** When Jesus began to experience opposition in His public ministry and teaching He taught in parables so that the general public would not understand, and they had to seek Him out personally and privately to find out. Know that about Jesus because look at the next phrase. After He said, **"To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, in order that,"** and He quotes from Isaiah 6:9, **"In order that: while seeing they might not see, and while hearing they might not understand."** In other words, "I am speaking in parables to prevent them from seeing and understanding." Did you ever know that about the Lord before? He actually keeps people from understanding. It depends upon their heart. How they are hearing.

So the disciples would understand. He said, "Let him that has ears to hear let him hear," all of a sudden these disciples came out of the crowd and started following Him. "To you it has been appointed to know," but to the rest of the general public all they hear is parables. And they

listen to it and just shrug their shoulders and look at each other and go, "What was that all about?"

"I do not know."

"Hey, let us go get something to eat."

And, you know, they just take off. But the disciples come to Jesus.

Interesting later on in Luke 10:21 Jesus prayed this to the Father, **In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these spiritual truths from the wise and the understanding, and You have revealed them to babes: even so, Father; for it was well pleasing for You in Your sight to do it this way."** To babes. People who cannot understand. God says to the people who think they are really intelligent, and smart, and wise, God has hidden it from them. That would be the religious leaders in Jesus' day. It would be the general public in Jesus' day. But *to the babes*, people of very little understanding. People who are willing to confess, "I do not get it. Lord, what do You mean?" Very, very interesting is not it that Jesus hides understanding from people at times.

So in verses 11 to 15, The Parable of the Sower Explained. So He explains to the private group, not to the general public. And you might, if you are taking notes, you might insert here - save yourself a lot of years of frustration and questions - someone once told me, I heard them say it many years ago, that somebody told them that you should not teach the parables until you have known the Lord or been in ministry for at least thirty years. And I am like, "I've got this! What do you mean? No problem."

Everybody has their version of what the parables mean, and people do not agree as to what they mean. But Mark 4:13 is the key. Mark 4:13. Because in the giving of The Parable of the Sower here - it is not in the Matthew or Luke texts, but it is in Mark, Mark 4:13 - in The Parable of the Sower Jesus says, "How is it that you do not understand this parable? Because understanding this parable you will understand all parables." He only explained one parable. But Jesus said what this one parable means applies to all of them; and I will point one of those things out to you as we go through.

Now Jesus said, **Now this is the parable: the seed is the Word of God.** So if the farmer is going out to sow his seed, the seed represents God's Word that God's Spirit is spreading, and it is touching people's hearts. And people's hearts are one of four conditions when the seed hits it, and responds to the influence of the seed, and its life in their midst in one of four different ways. So in all parables whenever you come across seed, it is the Word of God.

Verse 12, **And the seed that was sown along the road are the ones who are hearing,** (so we are talking about hearing the Word) **then afterward the devil comes and removes the Word from their heart, in order that, not after having believed, they should be saved.** The birds come and remove the word according to the beginning presentation. Here it is the devil. Birds represent the devil.

The reason why I am emphasizing that to you is because there is another parable where Jesus said, "Here is a tree that only grows to be a couple of feet high, except it grew abnormally into this large, large tree, and the birds came and lodged in its in the branches." And you hear different people saying what these birds are. Jesus did not explain it, He just gave the parable. And so you hear people say, "Well, the tree is the kingdom of God, and the birds are church members." Others will say, "No, they are not church members. In fact, the tree is not the kingdom of God at all," and they go off and give their explanations of it. Birds are evil. After that He talked about The Wheat and the Tares. The birds are in the branches of the kingdom. Everybody is together, the wheat and the tares. There is evil nesting within God's kingdom amongst God's people, who are not people of God, but they have the form.

But it is interesting that the seed that is sown by the farmer, some of the seed lands on this hard packed soil next to the road, on the shoulder of the road. Remember the birds came down and ate it. Some people's hearts are so hardened that the Word of God does not penetrate. Now know this, it is not because the Word of God does not have power. It is because God's plan is that His seed should work together with people's hearts.

Secondly, verse 13, **And some seeds fell upon the rock.** This is that slab of rock that has just a little bit of dirt. Remember it sprouted up, and then it withered away because it did not have any moisture. He says then, **Who, when they hear, they receive the Word with joy.** They are all excited, on fire, excited about Jesus. **And these do not have root.** Everything you see is on the surface, lots of noise, a lot of activity, lots of stimulation, but the root system is not there. **But these do not have root.** So they are not stable. See, this is the emphasis on the hidden person of the heart. That is why the Scriptures emphasize, establish the Lord Jesus in your heart. It is not religious, it is personal. And your relationship, which is the development of this root system that is in your heart, is what is going to carry you through the tough times and the trials of life. **These do not have root, who believe for a time, and in time of testing they fall away.** Interesting.

The word *testing* is also the word for *trials*. In fact, let me take it back a step further. The word for *trial* or *testing* in Greek literally means *to experience*. That is what it means, *to experience something*. **πείρα** (peira), **πειράζω** (peirazō). It is translated *trial* because usually what it is making reference to is *experiencing hardship*, so it is translated *trial*. Personally, I like the root word and what it means. Many different experiences - in the form of trials, many different experiences are going to come for me to experience Christ. That is what they are planned for. But the people that get all excited, have no root. Get all stimulated, look for emotional meetings, and stimulating meetings but they have no root system. When God says, "Okay, My life for you I have designed to have trials, hardships, so that you can experience Me." Well once they start having hardships, they fall away. They say, "Well, I am out of here." You know, honeymoon is over. No fun anymore. Go through regular boring life with all of its difficulties. Once they find out that the growth process from within that root system is developed through trials, they fall away, they leave. "Gee whatever happened to so-and-so? They were so on fire for Jesus, so excited." Yeah, well when the excitement wore off and getting down to the nitty-gritty of walking with Christ and learning to walk with Him they said, "Forget this," and they left. They were not of Christ to begin with. They fall away.

I have often said this over the years, who a person really is as a Christian, is who they are in response to their trials. Do they want to get rid of the trials? Do they say, "I want to think positive rather than go through reality"? Do they say, "I do not believe in that those kind of things. I think God wants us always to be happy and feel good, no trials in life."? There will be no spiritual growth. And when the trials come there will be no established root system in Christ.

I can remember my sister before she passed away, about a year before she passed away, she was telling me that she always felt bad being around some Christians. And I said, "Why is that?" She says, "They are always talking about the things that happen in the life on the outside. Miracles happening. Healings happening. And God doing these miraculous things in their life." She says, "I never see those things in my life on the outside." She says, "I am always fellowshiping with Him on the inside. I am growing spiritually on the inside, but nothing is happening out here." I said, "Do not worry about it. You are right on. God can do whatever He wants." And He does do things. He does work miracles and He does do things in the physical and human realm that are miraculous. But the real ministry that is taking place is on your inside. Nothing has to be happening out here as long as the root system is being developed on the inside. We go through hardships so that we look inside where Christ dwells. We learn to trust Him and we get to experience Him.

Verse 14, **And the seed that had fallen into the thorn bushes**, (Here is our focus) **these are the ones having heard, and, while going on**, I emphasize to you that there are two things happening at the same time. They are hearing the Word, and they are going on in the world, and getting caught up with the things of the world at the same time. **And while going on they are choked by** (three things) **the cares, and the wealth, and the pleasures of life**. The Word of God is not destroyed, its influence is choked.

The first word is the word *cares*. That is our word **μέριμνα** (merimna). They hear the Word but when they go out into life, they just get occupied with life, not Christ but life. Secondly, wealth, pursuing wealth. Thirdly, the pleasures of life. Now the word *pleasures* is the word **ἡδονή** (hēdonē), where we get our word *hedonism* from. *Hedonism* is deeper than *lust*. We know what *lust* is, but *hedonism* is *indulgence*. Some people do not just lust for things, they indulge in things. We live in a hedonistic society. So they are choked. The influence of God's Word is **choked by the cares, and the wealth, and the pleasures of life, and are not brought to completion**. That is salvation. They are hearing the Word and being occupied with the things of this earthly life at the same time.

Let me say this to you just as a side note - we will get to it in a moment. As a side note, guard what the Lord is ministering to you and doing to you in your life through His Word. Guard it. Satan is there to rob the influence of what God's Word says, and its effect, and to take us away from God's Word. Guard it.

And the seed on good ground, in verse 15, **these are whoever in a right and good heart**. The seed in the good ground and that the word good is **καλη** (kalē) not **ἀγαθός** (agathos) here. **καλη** (kalē) means the soil is *right*. **These are whoever in a right and good heart**- There is **ἀγαθός** (agathos), *spiritual good*. It is the right soil, and it is a spiritually good

heart. **After having heard the Word, they hold it down.** That is what I meant by *guard*. Literally that is what it means, *they hold it down*. I always think if I had a one-hundred-dollar bill and it was a windy day I would not put it out there on the top of my trashcan, and just let the wind blow it, and take it away. I hold it down, make sure that nothing interferes with taking from me what is in my possession and given to me.

We are told to meditate in God's Word, not just go to church and listen. Read the Scriptures. Pray about it. Have fellowship with the Lord in it. Know what God's Word is saying. Receive from His Spirit, not just at the occasion of studying and listening but throughout the day. You have been given that for the rest of your life. Take it! Let it minister to your heart.

They hold it down and they are producing fruit in endurance. That is the literal translation. The word *endurance*, ὑπομένω (hupomenō), means *to remain under circumstances*. See the trials of life come, and they remain under, and that is the cultivating process that causes the influence and the fruit of God's Word to come from the seed, and grow, and produce fruit.

So then after this, in verses 16 to 18, The Precaution About Hearing. **And no one having lit a lamp covers it with a container and puts it under a couch, but he puts this lamp on a lamp stand in order that the ones coming in might see the light. For there is not a thing hidden, which will not become manifest, nor anything secret, which will never become known, and should come into manifestation.** What he is saying is the Word of God is a light and a lamp that will manifest itself and shine in your heart and in your life and bring the light of the truth of God's Word.

We know from John chapter 3 that Jesus explained that those who are of the light come to the light, but those who are in the darkness try to get away from the light. Do you know one of the best ways to get away from the light of God's Truth a lot of times? Go to church. Go to Bible study. You say, "Wait a minute!" If God's Spirit is not taking God's Word as a light and shining it on a person's life illuminating them with truth, and manifesting, and bringing conviction, then it is not the ministry of God's Word. You can be involved in a Bible study, and it have no spiritual life to it whatsoever. You can hear sermons and the sermons do not have the Spirit of God ministering in it.

Know this, from Hebrews 4:12, **"The word of God is living and energizing, and is sharper than any two-edged sword, and is dividing in half between soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow, and comes and is a critic (a judge) of the thoughts and motivations of the heart."** That is what the Word of God does. It penetrates down. Brings conviction. It shines in the heart to show what my motivations are, and what my thoughts are in light of God's Truth.

I always like to think- again, I am a conceptual learner. I like to look at studying the word of God together, if God's Spirit is in it then God's Spirit through His Word is like an x-ray machine. Some people would like to find a place that gives sermons and Bible studies and Bible teachings where there is no conviction. It is just like, "Oh, that is nice." That is like going to the doctor's office and they say, "Well there is possibility you have some health issues in the chest,

maybe your heart, maybe it is cancer. Who knows what it is? But come on in and find out." So you sit in the waiting room. They have nice music playing. The receptionist is nice. The nurses are nice. Everybody is nice. You see the doctor and he says, "Well, take a couple aspirin, and come back in a month, and tell me how you feel." You go home and they ask you, "So you have these chest pains and they said it could be cancer, it could be heart problems, it could be any number of things, what did they do? Did they take x-rays?"

"No, no x-rays."

"Are they sending you over for blood work?"

"No, they are not sending me over blood work, there is no blood work. He just said, 'Take a couple of aspirin, go home, and come back next month.'"

God's Word penetrates and is the critic and judge of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. I have known over the years that people choose Bible studies where there is no conviction and is no ministry of God's Spirit. But because it is a Bible study it meets the criteria and justifies them avoiding the whole issue of walking with Christ. It must be God's Spirit through His Word, and every single person is one of these four kinds of soil. The Word of God is the same but its influence and effect is different depending on how the soil rejects it. Either it is hard packed and the Word of God does not penetrate. Or the Word of God sits there among all the other things that we are occupied with in life, and it chokes out the influence of the Word.

So he says in verse 18, **Therefore, observe how you are hearing.** Everybody is hearing in the sense of listening, but not everybody is hearing. Not everybody is receiving. **For whoever might have, it will be given to him; and whoever might not have, even what he seems to have it will be removed from him.** You are talking about Jew and Gentile here. The Jews said, "We are of God. We have it all." Yes, but if they do not respond to the truth of God's Word, even what they seem to have will be removed from them. The people that do not have, it will be given to them. **Even what he seems to have (what he presumes to have), it will be removed from him.** All depending how they respond to the truth of God's Word.

So the effects of **μέριμνα** (merimna) in everyday life. Doing two things at one time. Hearing the word and spending the rest of my life with the occupation of the attention of my mind filled with the things of this life. Whether it is wealth or satisfying pleasures, there are a lot of influences out there. So you have influence of the Word and influence of life. And how it works out, the influence of the world, because we spend so much time under its influence, chokes out the influence of the Word of God. It is not enough to hear it, listen to it; it is not enough to put in the time. There is a response from the heart to the Word of God.

Let's close with prayer.