

Matthew 6:24-34 Part 5
Satan's Only Weapon Against a Believer in Christ Part 5
also I Corinthians 7:29-35

We are continuing our series on Satan's only Weapon Against a Believer in Christ.

And I would have to say to you, and you have heard me say this before at various times, that if you learn anything, or pay attention to any piece of Scripture, it has got to be this one. It is one of those times this morning, where if we did not have the rest of the Bible and had just these Scriptures in I Corinthians 7:29-35 it would be all we need to understand our walk with Christ. The foundation Scriptures that we have used for this study are Matthew 6:24-34. The teachings of Jesus laid the foundation for the apostles and prophets of the New Testament to share this important teaching down through the history of the church.

In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said that a human being, a person, has been created to only have the capacity to serve one thing. Not *believe* one thing but to *serve* one thing: either God, or the physical realm in which they live.

So then He said in verse 25 of Matthew 6, based on this fact, this truth, **Do not take thought for your life**. That is our word **μέριμνα** (merimna), *to occupy the attention of the mind*. Since we only have the capacity to serve one master, He is saying, "Do not let your mind be occupied with even a thought about the cares of this life." Even your clothing, your food, your housing, whatever, even your necessities, take no thought for it. Do not let those thoughts occupy the attention of your mind. Because if the attention of your mind is occupied with those things, then you cannot focus on and cannot be occupied with Christ. It is a very simple principle, very difficult though.

So He says, the answer to this in Matthew 6:33, in light of this, **Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness**. Let the center focus of your life be seeking the Lord in His kingdom and He says, **And all these other things**, whatever you are concerned about, whatever your necessities are, **they will be supplied to you**. You do not have to worry about it. You do not have to think about it in order to get them. God will supply. Because we only have the capacity to be occupied with one thing.

So we saw then, from I Peter 5:5-9 that Peter picked up on this teaching of Jesus, and mentioned the fact that Satan is our adversary who is walking around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. And he is talking to Christians. And he says the answer to this is cast all of your care - all of your **μέριμνα** (merimna) - on Christ. Because Satan, number one, when he walks around and scouts people, he looks for things or people that he can use to get us distracted and occupied with those things instead of with Christ. Satan is not going to attack and test and tempt us with things that we are not interested in. He is going to use people, and activities, circumstances, to get our attention. Therefore he is walking around looking, looking to exploit.

He studies us, first of all. Every single believer has been studied. There is a scouting report on every believer by Satan. We get that from Job chapters 1 and 2. He knows what our weaknesses are. He knows who our weaknesses are. He knows what our weaknesses are. And

he exploits those to occupy the attention of our minds. Satan is satisfied if we have the proper beliefs, we just cannot serve Christ if we believe in Him. He wants us to serve our anxieties, and our worries, the things that occupy the attention of the mind.

That is why I appreciate the word - there is a translation that the King James uses for *anxiety* and *worry*, it is called *care*. It does not sound as bad as *worry* and *anxiety*, but that is what the word means. You do not have to be worried and anxious about something, it is just that you care. You care enough to be occupied with it.

So then we saw, last time in Luke 10:38-42 Mary and Martha. Jesus came to their home and was teaching in the living room and Mary was sitting at His feet while Martha was in the kitchen cooking. And Martha became distracted, cumbered, distracted with much cooking and much serving. So she came in, and was frustrated, and said to Jesus, "Do not you care that Mary has left me?" It is not the same word *care* by the way, not the same Greek word. "Are not You concerned that Mary has left me in the kitchen to serve alone?" And Jesus must have nodded His head because she says, "Well, then tell her to come out and help me!" Well, He was concerned but He says, "**Martha, Martha, You are anxious (μέριμνα, merimna) and troubled.**" It has really gotten to you. Not only are you occupied with it, but now it has really gotten to you. You are starting to express it in your life. "**You are anxious and troubled about many things but Mary has chosen the good portion.**" The good part. In other words, Martha you should be doing, you should turn off the stove, come here and hear the Word.

The moral of that teaching is that even serving Christ, something that is very natural, taking care of work that needs to be done; Martha has a house full of people that she has to feed and host. Where Jesus said, "No, service to Christ can occupy your attention and take you away from the word of God." And He went on to say in the last verse, Luke 10:42, that there is only one necessity in life. Can you imagine that? I can list a whole bunch of them. I can think of more than one necessity. Jesus said, "No, there is only one." One. That is it. And Mary has chosen that good portion. He used food terms to say you have been in the kitchen cooking, she has been here eating, feeding spiritually. "**She has chosen the good portion, which shall never be taken away from her.**"

Now the reason why this is important in Luke chapter 10 - and I will repeat it here in a moment - is that the only place where the two words for distraction and anxiety - or μέριμνα (merimna) are found is in Luke chapter 10, first used by Jesus in verses 38 to 42. The only other time except for Luke 10 that those two words are used is here in Paul's writings in I Corinthians 7:29-35. It indicates to us that Paul was aware of the teaching of Jesus back in Luke 10. And he takes that same principle, and that same teaching and he applies it to all of life.

In I Corinthians chapter 7 for today, it is entitled The Marriage Instructions for Gentiles. That is not really what we are talking about, the first twenty-eight verses that talk about marriage instructions for Gentiles. Why do I emphasize it? Because in Matthew that everybody usually quotes, those are marriage instructions for Jews. I Corinthians 7 is the only thing of marriage instructions for Gentiles.

In verses 10 to 16, he is talking about a Christian who is married to a nonbeliever. And these are all questions by the way. I Corinthians 7:1 Paul gets to their questions, and they had questions, "Well, I received Christ as a Gentile nonbeliever, now I am a believer but my spouse, my marriage partner, is not saved. Should I divorce them? Should I leave them? What do I do with them?" That is verses 10 to 16 of chapter 7. In verse 17 Paul basically says the theme of the chapter: In whatever situation you are called, serve the Lord in it. But if the nonbeliever wants to leave, let them leave, but you serve the Lord in it.

In verses 18 to 20, he says you do not have to become circumcised. If you are an uncircumcised Gentile, you do not have to become circumcised. And if you are circumcised, you do not have to become uncircumcised. Whatever circumstance you are in, serve the Lord. You do not have to change.

In verses 21 to 24 concerning slaves, he says if God saved you while you were a slave, then serve Him and it. Do not try to get out from being a slave because you are the Lord's slave. But if you are offered your freedom, go ahead and use it. But while you are a slave serve Christ in it. That is verses 21 through 24.

In our section today, in verses 29 through 35, he now summarizes for us all of life. And let me, first of all I want to take you, if you turn with me please first, to verse 35. I want you to see the flavor here, Paul's motive for what he is doing. In verse 35, he says, **Whatever I am saying to you it is for your own benefit.** These are not commands. This is for a person's life, the quality of life. **Not in order that I might throw a noose over you.** I am not trying to put a noose around your neck and bind you up with ropes. But for two things. Number one, **For proper conduct**, proper behavior in dealing with life, and number two, **and devotion to the Lord without distraction.** There is our word that was back in Luke 10:40, where Martha was distracted or cumbered with much serving. And through this section Paul is going to use **μέριμνα** (merimna). But the reason why he is dealing with **μέριμνα** (merimna) is so that a person's devotion can be to Christ without distraction. Just so you know where Paul is coming from, because as we go through here you are going to have some responses like, "Well, that is kind of hard to do. It sounds legalistic." Paul says, "This is for the quality of your life."

So in verses 29 to 31, Paul's Summary of Life Itself, and first of all, The Premise. There are three sections in this text, each text has a premise or foundation statement. The premise is **Now this I am saying, brothers, that the time has been shortened.** That is the literal translation, *the time has been shortened*. There is not much time. In Paul's day he said we are in the last days, Christ is going to come at any moment. The end is going to come at any moment. So we are to approach life and live life with that in mind. Well, if it was short in Paul's day, it is even more short now. Time is short. There is not much time left.

Therefore, in verse 29b-31, The Principles of Life for the Believer. These principles apply to every area of life, every single one of them. Any problem, or struggle, or difficulty that we are having with life, it is because of not taking heed to one or more of these principles. And it covers every area. So the principles of life for the believer. Paul says, **It remains**, that is, *the summary is this*. He is summarizing everything with five principles. **In order that even the ones having wives should be as not having**, that is, wives.

I want to emphasize to you because the text emphasizes it, in all of these principles the *-ing* words, the *having*, are present participles. *The people who are in a continual condition of having wives should live their life as though continually they do not have a wife*, is what he is saying. Now that does not mean, as I have said before when I have mentioned this text, that does not mean that the husband can go out and date, or live as a single man, or as a bachelor because I am supposed to live as though I do not have a wife. Remember what verse 35 said. He is saying these things for your healthy relationship with Christ, so that your devotion to the Lord can be without distraction.

In other words, once you get married - and he is going to show this - there is a natural process of being distracted for both the husband and wife. How do you focus on the Lord when you have another person that you share life with? And then the two of you bring in other little lives that you share life with? And how do you live life where there is no distraction from Christ? It is impossible. So you see what he is saying? Keep this in mind about the living of life.

That those who have wives should be as though they had none. In other words, if you are following the Lord as a single person and he is going to share this in a moment; if you are following the Lord as a single man, when you get married you should be able to follow Christ, and your devotion to Him should not change out of compromise to another human being when they want to humanly or fleshly go their own way. You have to just let them go. You cannot let it be a distraction.

Secondly verse 30, **And they that weep**, literally *and the ones crying*, it is a present participle. **And they who are weeping as not weeping** (crying). So those who are in a condition of crying should be as though not crying. What does that mean? Well first of all, it does not say it is wrong to cry. In fact in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, especially emphasis on verse 4, Solomon says there is a time to be born, and a time to die, but he says in verse 4, **There is a time to cry and there is a time to laugh; there is a time to mourn and there is a time to dance.** There is an appropriate time for everything. So the Bible does not say it is wrong to grieve, or weep, or cry. It is basically saying, "Do not be consumed by it." Do not get obsessed with it. Go through the natural process of the human being, and cry when you need to cry, and grieve when you need to grieve. Just do not live in it. Do not let it control you, do not let it occupy you.

Thirdly, **And the ones rejoicing**, notice the present participle, **should be as not rejoicing.** So just as crying and weeping would be sorrow and mourning, so rejoicing would be happiness and laughter, and he says, "It is not wrong." You have times of rejoicing. Just do not get into it. It does not say it is wrong. Just do not get consumed by it. The natural human thing is at times of happiness and rejoicing, is we like to look back and say, "What did I do to cause that?" And we put it into a formula, put it into a bottle, and keep practicing that over and over again because we would rather be happy and rejoicing than sad and mournful. It does not work that way. There is a time to rejoice. So he says, "Go ahead and rejoice, but do it as though you are not rejoicing." Like you know it is going to stop at any moment, it might go away, and that is okay. Be ready to move on.

Fourthly, **And the ones buying** (or purchasing) **should be as not possessing**. Now, that is a big one. He is not saying it is wrong to own things, or to purchase things. He is not saying that at all. He is saying you have to purchase things as long as they do not possess you. The big consuming thing for us is either a new car, or a new house, or something new or big or expensive that we purchase. We have to guard it with our life. We have to maintain it with our life, and give it our time and attention. He says **As ones who are buying but are not possessing**. He says, in other words, "Go ahead and purchase things, but if you approach it as if you are the owner you have problems." Because you do not own it. You should be ready to give it up and even lose it. If you find that it is occupying your time and attention and taking you away from Christ, then it is best just to lose it. Give it back, or sell it, or do whatever you need to do.

But this builds us up to the fifth one, verse 31. **And the ones using this world, as not overusing it**. Again, present participle. We are always using the things of the world, always. Food, clothing, housing, jobs, roads, cars, whatever the case may be. We are to live as ones who are using the world and yet not overusing it. In other words it is normal to use the world for our necessities. Do not overuse the world to go beyond the necessities and to indulge.

The reason for these five things, He says, **For the form** (or fashion) **of this world is passing away**. Same thing we studied in Ecclesiastes: everything is temporary, everything is passing away. We are to be like - and I am sure we have all gone on vacations before - but if you have a destination, and you are on your way to that destination, and you are traveling through other towns, you might stop to get something to eat or get gasoline. Might even spend the night. But then the next day you pack the car up, and you are on the road. Just passing through. Making use of the necessities. You would have a problem if you stayed in a town and all of a sudden the people that you are going to go see called you and said, "It has been a week, where are you?"

"Well, we came into this little town and we really enjoyed it, so we just decided to stay here, and really soak up everything this town has to offer."

You got you distracted, occupied. It is possessing you. It is taking you over. You did not reach your destination. In this life - and that is what the Scripture is saying, in this life we are just passing through. Use the world for what you need. Do not overuse the world.

Now, I tell you today that in all of my conversations with others about myself and my own life, and with them about their life it all falls into one of these five problems, principles. "Well, she said this to me."

"He said... do you know what he did?"

Okay. If you read Paul's verses prior to this section you will know that he told everybody in all their relationships - in fact he told virgins, and those who have been divorced, if they remarry or they get married they have not sinned, but such will have trouble in the flesh. That is his advice. That is the answer to everything. Well, you are with another person. Paul promised you will have trouble in the flesh. The problem is you got married. So you are married now, so that is

just the way it is. You are with another human being, of course you are going to have problems, struggles in the flesh. But do not let those struggles occupy you. Do not let it take you away from your devotion to Christ.

The same with every one of these principles - that either I have shared, or people have shared with me that they have, the reason we have to go and share those problems is because we have become occupied in one of these areas of life. Either with relationships, or with situations of sadness or happiness. In the situations of our possessions, occupying all of our time and attention because we own so many things that demand that we serve them. We do not own them, they own us. My favorite bumper sticker, I have shared with you often, is the one of the back of the car bumper that says, "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go." That is not an owner, that is a person who is owned. Not a one who has possessions, but something that possessions have owned them. And then the general use of the world. And we look back and say, "Well, you are occupied. You got involved and now you are occupied with all of these things. That is the problem." So you know what the answer is, get unoccupied. Easier said than done.

In verses 32 and 34, Paul's Sincere Desire. Again, starting with the premise. **Now I want you to be without care.** The word *care* is our word **μέριμνα** (merimna). I want you to be without being occupied with these things, that is why I am telling you this. It is not law, this is for your own good. He says in verse 32, **I want you to be without care.**

In verses 32b through verse 34, The Presentation of Two Contrasts. He says **The unmarried man is caring**, there is **μέριμνα** (merimna) present tense, *is continuously caring*. **The unmarried man is continually occupied about the things of the Lord, how he will please the Lord. But the married man is occupied (is caring) about the things of the world, how he will please his wife.** I want to draw your attention to the fact that we are now introduced at the end of verse 32 that the unmarried man is occupied. This is now the flip side. We have heard about not being occupied with different things, the negative. Do not be occupied. This is giving us the positive. The unmarried man is occupied with the things of the Lord. That is what the text is teaching us. It is not about preventing ourselves from being occupied with things, but rather being occupied with the Lord and not letting anything interfere with that. The married man is caring. He is presenting this as a very real, natural, state of fact. The married man is caring, is occupied about the things of the world how he will please his wife. He does not say it is wrong, he says, "This is just fact, folks." We only have one capacity to serve one thing. We can have our beliefs, but the question is, what are you serving?

Verse 34, **And he has become divided.** Now if you have the King James text, the beginning of verse 34 is going to be a little difficult because of a great difficulty in manuscripts, so I have tried to straighten it out with a literal translation. **And he has become divided.** That is, the married man has been divided in his devotion between the wife and the Lord. **And he has become divided. Now the unmarried woman and the virgin is caring about the things of the Lord. Positive thing. The unmarried woman and the virgin is occupied with the things of the Lord in order that she might be holy both in body and spirit. But the married woman is caring - normal, natural, statement of fact - is caring about the things of the world how she will please the husband.**

So verse 35 is Paul's Motive. Again, with the premise. **And this I am saying for your own benefit.** So he said, I am saying this because the time has shortened. I am saying this here for your own benefit and he goes on to talk about the purpose. **Not in order,** that is, I am not saying this **in order that I might throw a noose over you but for proper conduct.** First of all, *proper conduct*, how Christians are supposed to behave in this world. And secondly, **I am saying these things to you that your devotion to the Lord to be without distraction.** Here is where the word devotion and **μέριμνα** (merimna) come into play in the same teaching from Luke 10:38-42. Now Paul is using the same teaching from Luke 10 to apply to all of life, all areas of life.

So it is not a matter of legalism. It is not a matter of rules and regulations. It is a matter of presenting and promoting a healthy spiritual and psychological relationship with Jesus Christ. How healthy spiritually do you want to be? That is basically what he is saying. He says, "Here is the road to go down. I know it is a hard road." And you might say, "Well, that is just beyond my capacity." That is fine, but your life will be taken up with these various struggles that Paul is talking about. He says, "I want you to be without care," that is, distraction from Christ. I want you to be as occupied with Jesus Christ as you can.

And I think it is interesting that over the years the Lord has started to change my thinking in my decision-making. One of the considerations is: is this thing I am going to buy, or is this thing I am going to do, is it going to occupy me to the point that it is going to take me away from the things of the Lord? Most of the time it is yes, and I have to make decisions based on that. Because again, it is my own healthy spiritual and psychological relationship with Christ that is at stake.

The principles of life for every believer, everybody who believes, is found right here. I would encourage you - if you were to learn and to know any text would be this one, I Corinthians 7:29-35. After being saved all the texts and scriptures about salvation, this one is the most important for a Christian. Live life, just do not get consumed by it. Do not indulge. Do not get into it. Do not let it get into you. Just pass through. You are headed for a destination. The world has the necessities that we need that the Lord says He promises to give to us if we just focus on Him. Do not have to worry about it. Do not have to be occupied.

Let's close with prayer.