

Philippians 2:19-24 Part 2
The Importance of the Occupation of the Attention of the Mind Part 2
also Luke 8:4-15

We are in Philippians chapter 2. We are in the section of Philippians 2:19-24. After speaking in verses 17 and 18 of Philippians chapter 2 about the procedure for fellowship, and that is that we are to lay down our lives as sacrifices for Christ and for one another, Paul in verses 19 through 30 is presenting to us The Proof of Character in Fellowship. Very important. The Proof of Character in Fellowship.

In verse 19 Paul's Concern for the spiritual welfare of the believers in Philippi. He says, **Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you quickly, in order that I also might be of good comfort, after having known the things concerning you.** After mentioning his concern he presents Timothy's Character, explanation for why he is sending Timothy. **For I have no one like-minded, who genuinely will care for the things concerning you.** We saw last week that the term *like-minded* is *equal souls together*. In other words if you talk to Paul, it is like talking to Timothy. If you talk to Timothy, it is like talking to Paul.

Equal souls together who genuinely will care for the things concerning you. The word *care* is a very important word that we studied over the years, and some of you have sat through a couple of times going through the word series on Satan's only Weapon, **μέριμνα** (merimna), *the occupation of the attention of the mind*. Not the occupation of the mind, but the occupation of the attention of the mind.

After a believer is saved and Christ's Spirit comes to dwell within, the second phase of the Christian life is to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. So when Satan loses our soul to Christ, knowing that any healing, any learning, any growing, any maturing in our relationship with the Lord comes through the transformation of the mind, it only stands to reason and gives us understanding that he would make every effort to keep the attention of our mind busy so that we cannot have time nor the mental strength to hear the Word of God. So that is why we have entitled the series, Satan's Only Weapon Against a Believer. He cannot take our soul, but he can take the attention of our mind so that we are too busy, or too tired, or too occupied to give our mind to the things of Christ.

Now over the years we have introduced to you that this word **μέριμνα** (merimna) - **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) is the verb form - was introduced by Jesus in Matthew 6. We took it last week, verses 24-28. And Jesus introduced to us the principles of capacity. First of all, in Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, **You cannot**, that is you do not have the ability, **to serve two masters.** God did not create you that way. **For either you will hate the one, and love the other; cling to the one, and despise the other. For you are not able to serve God and mammon.** **μαμωνά** (mamōna), the physical world in which we live. We have to function in the physical world in which we live. But to serve it is something completely different.

Timothy's Character was that he was occupied - the attention of his mind was occupied with the spiritual things, and the concerns, and ministry of the Philippian believers. His Contrast to the others in verse 21, **For all the ones are seeking the things of themselves and not the things of Christ Jesus.** It does not mean that they are not saved. It just means, I do not have anyone who genuinely is concerned for you and is occupied with taking this letter and ministry of the Lord to you. Everybody else is too busy.

But I want you to notice how it is worded. **But all the others are seeking the things of themselves and not the things that are of Christ Jesus.** If we understand that statement that just cuts everything in life right down the middle, divides everything from left and right. Most of the time when we come together and share the things that are troubling us, or the things that are burdening us, it is because of the things of myself.

"Well, I do not know if I like this."

"I want this to happen."

"I am trying to make this work out."

"He will not leave me alone" or "she will not leave me alone."

We are continually occupied with the things of ourselves.

That is why in Christian counseling anyway, the first question the counselor is to ask after hearing what it is about ourselves that bothers us, the question is, "And what do you want done?" I mean are you seeking the things of yourself? Or are you saying, "Here is what is going on in my life and I am seeking the things of Christ." There is the difference. If I am seeking the things of myself that is the problem. "Oh! but all these things bother me, and worry me, and cause me great anxiety." Well, commit them to the Lord. Of course we cannot do that because if we could do that we would not be going to counseling. So what do you want out of this? Are you telling me all of this because you are seeking the things of Christ? Or are you telling me all of this because you are seeking the things of yourselves, and you are trying to get life to work out for you?

Now here is a key that we are going to be focusing on for the next couple of weeks and it is very important. We are always occupied with something. We have always got something that is occupying the attention of our minds. It is Satan's only Weapon. But in the past we have introduced you how many scriptures over and over again - from Matthew chapter 6, Luke chapter 8, Luke chapter 10, I Corinthians chapter 7, Philippians chapter 4 - where all of the brothers of the New Testament were led to take that teaching from Matthew chapter 6 and use it to say, "This is Satan's only Weapon against a Believer so pay attention." Do not allow your mind to be occupied with the things of this life. Easier said than done.

But one thing we did not emphasize to you, is something we introduced to you last week. It is one thing to make sure that your mind is not occupied with the things of this life, but there is a positive direction. But rather the attention of our minds are supposed to be occupied with

Christ. It is not just a prevention from allowing myself to get caught up in the things of life. I come across a lot of people that are continually battling to keep from having the attention of the mind occupied with the things of the world, and the things of themselves, and it is a continuous effort for defense, prevention. But what is your mind occupied with in the positive direction?

Paul says in II Corinthians 11:28 that the attention of his mind is occupied with the things of the churches. How they are doing and the teaching that is taking place.

In I Corinthians 12:24-26 the same word is used that we are to have the same care for one another. In other words I am not to be occupied with the things of myself, but rather be sensitive to the needs of my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Even in the world they preach this. It is not even Christian. It is psychology. When someone is so obsessed with thinking about themselves, a good counselor would tell them, "You need to be busy helping other people. Volunteer work. Be involved in helping someone else to take the attention off of yourself." That is the way the world teaches because there is a knowledge that man only has the capacity to serve one thing.

Man only has the capacity to be occupied with one thing. Either God or the things of the world. The hard part for a believer is the fact that we belong to Christ, we have to deal with the world. We have to interact with the world. We have to take care of our necessities in the world. And later in Philippians Paul will say, "Let your moderation be known to all people, the Lord is near." Be moderate. Do not be indulgent, be moderate. Handle the necessities. We are only passing through. And sometimes we forget that.

But in Matthew 6 for last week - we took 24 to 34 - introduced to us that man was only made with one capacity, to serve one master at a time. Okay, here we go, second time around, what is the principle of deception in light of the truth of Matthew 6:24 that a man cannot serve two masters, you cannot serve God and mammon? Anybody want to volunteer? What is the principle of deception? Using the things of the world, indulging in the things of the world, and then using the Lord's name for it. *For His glory.*

"I am going to go out and make a great name for myself, for the glory of God."

"I am going to go out and try to become rich, for God's glory. I will give Him the credit if He makes me rich."

So that way there does not have to be one capacity. I can serve the world, and I can go out and indulge in the world, and just do it for the Lord. After all, who is going to convince me that God does not want me to be there in order to witness to other people? And you say, "Well, that is a good principle." Well, what if you found out that I was down in Elmer's bar doing that? Might be a little question there. Questionable activities of myself.

So in Matthew chapter 6 verses 25-34 Jesus said, "Therefore in light of the fact you only have the capacity to serve one master, therefore take no thought for your life." Do not even allow it to start. It will snowball on you. But what was He making reference to? The necessities

of life. Do not even worry about the necessities of life. Do not allow the necessities of life to occupy the attention of your mind. God is going to take care of you. That is the basic message.

For this morning, Luke chapter 8, if you will turn there, if you have your Bibles. Luke 8:4-15. Every time I make reference to Scripture and tell people turn to their Bibles I remember the old days. The old days of guilt. And I would say, "Now how many of you have not brought your Bibles to church with you?" And people would raise their hands, and some people would not raise their hands. And I would say, "You know, coming to church without your Bible is like a farmer going to plow without his plow." Guilt. So whenever I say, "Open your Bibles," I try not to notice who is turning and who is not because I have this bad habit ingrained.

In Luke 8:4-15, this is the parable of the sower, and in the Gospel of Mark Jesus said, "If you understand the parable of the sower, you understand all parables." So what the birds mean here does not mean something different somewhere else. It all means the same. **And when much people were gathered together, and came to Jesus from out of the city, he spoke by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed: and in his process of sowing, some seed fell along the way side; and it was trodden down, (trampled down, so it was hard-packed) and the birds of the air devoured it.** If you understand this road system out here in the country, you see this. You see the shoulder of the road is hard packed from cars and tractors and people walking. So any seed that falls on that ground is going to sit on top of the ground and when the birds see it, they are going to come along and pick it up. There is no penetration to it.

And some fell upon a rock (or rocky ground); and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. I used to see that in gardening. In fact, if I reseeded a yard the week before, when I came back little tiny blades of grass are starting to poke through, but if you looked in the curb in the gutter, there is just a little bit of dirt, little tiny bit of dirt and it has grass growing up in it. That is what this is talking about. Some fell upon the rock, that is the foundation underneath the soil was rock so there was not much earth. So it took root quickly, but it died out because it lacked moisture and the root systems did not develop.

And some fell amongst the thorns; and the thorns sprung up with it and choked it. That is its influence.

And others fell on good ground - ἀγαθός (agathos) ground: good spiritual ground, that is what he is making reference to - **and it sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He called out, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear."** Now that is very important to understand what that is saying. There are some ears that listened, but they did not hear; and some people their hearing was activated. See what it says. **And his disciples asked him, saying, "What might this parable mean?"** Interesting, notice the stages here. Jesus spoke in a parable to the general assembly and then gave a command, *let the one who have ears to hear, let him hear.* So the disciples come to Him, this is like phase two.

And He said to them, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others I speak in parables; in order that in seeing they may not see, and in hearing they may not understand." So He purposely spoke in a parable (a story) without explanation,

without teaching, because it was not for the general assembly. It was for His disciples, the people who would seek Him out and say, "I do not understand, what does this mean?"

And by the way, that is always the characteristic of the one who belongs to Christ. At some point in time in their life they have this inquisitiveness to find out, "What does that mean?" It is put there by God. Just going to church or listening to messages, it provides us information and some understanding, but in reality you have to dig in. You have to come to the Lord, and you have to go and ask and find out, "What is it talking about?" And that is when Jesus says, "It is for you to know, not for them to know." That is why you have come to find out what it means.

Verse 11, **Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.** So the seed falls upon four kinds of soil, which we will see in a moment represents people's hearts, the condition of people's hearts. **Those along the wayside are they that hear; and then comes the devil** (that would be the birds) **and takes away the Word from out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.** No penetration in the heart, the effects of the word are just laying on top of the heart. The heart does not receive the Word.

They upon the rocky soil are those which, when they hear, they receive the word with joy. That does not mean the person that you came to church with. You do not receive it *with Joy*. You are talking about the fact that receiving Christ in an excited manner, *with joy!* That is that little blade of grass, you come back the next week and there it is, sticking out of that little tiny little plot of soil. Everything you see on the top of the ground is growing fast, and it is like, "Wow! look at that person. That person really belongs to Christ!" But in reality it says that after the excitement wears off, **And these have no root, which for a while they believe, and in time of trials they fall away.**

We are constantly concerned about what our Christianity looks like. When in reality it is what people do not see that is the most important part of our Christianity. The root system. The tree will hold up in the storms if there is a strong root system. So the emphasis here is on quick outward manifestation of excitement and joy over the things of the Lord but when trials come - and it is through trials that the plant or seed is cultivated. Weeds taken out. Trials are the process in which the root systems grow. So as soon as the honeymoon is over, "Okay, it is time for trials so that we get that root system to grow," they leave, they fall away. It was all exciting. Trials are not exciting.

And that which fell among thorns - and notice, the Word of God did not produce the thorns, the thorns were already there. **And that which fell among the thorns are they, which, when they have heard, they go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and the pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to completion.** We all know what the weeds can do to our plants and flowers. We know that they can grow hearty and strong, and even choke out the plant life that we want to preserve.

Those weeds are described in the text as three things: **they go out and are choked with (1) the cares and (2) the riches, and (3) the pleasures of life.** The word *cares* is our word **μέριμνα** (merimna). Hearing the Word at the same time as having the attention of one's mind occupied with the cares of this life will choke out the influence of the Word. That is not a rap

against the effectiveness and power of God's Word. This is how the Lord designed it. I can come today and be occupied with the things of the world next week, and come back next week and it is like, "Yeah, I remember something. I like that, whatever it was I heard last week." Because the attention of our minds is occupied. You realize that when you come here it is to gather in information and take that and develop that in one's personal relationship with Christ. It not just to go and listen and say, "Well, I went to church." No, it is for the transformation of your mind. It is for the transformation of your life.

They go out and they are choked. The influence of the Word is choked out with the cares **and the riches**. Remember we studied the first hour where Paul says, "What was gain to me I consider loss for Christ." The more I gain the more I lose. But Paul says he makes a decision to lose all things that he might win the things of Christ. **With the cares, and the riches, and the pleasures.** That is our word *hedonistic* - ἡδονή (hēdonē) - *to satisfy the hedonistic desires of this life*. **And brings no fruit to completion.** Process is not brought to completion. I want you to see the contrast between the influence of being occupied with the things of this life and the seed of God falling upon your heart at various times during the week.

Verse 15, see the contrast, **But then on the good ground are they, which with an honest and good heart.** The word *honest* has to do with *right*, the soil is right. **And a good heart, having heard the Word, they keep it.** That is, they hold it down, they take it in, and they hold it down. That is the seed burrowing itself into the ground. **And bring forth fruit with endurance, remaining under.** So again the trials, remaining under the trials cultivates the soil and causes the effectiveness of God's Word to bring forth fruit.

Only one out of the four bore fruit to where the salvation process was complete. Everybody, the condition of our hearts is one of these four. In every group, in every church, in every fellowship, there are these four represented. The seed is the same. But God allows there to be a response to the seed and its power and its effectiveness. God's Word is not the problem. God's Word is there implanted within me for God's Spirit to transform my mind and renew my mind. So Satan says, "Let us get occupied all week long with the things of this life. The things of yourself. Let us put the effectiveness of the Word aside. You don't want to meditate on that."

Why do you think Paul - and he is going to tell us at the end of Philippians to **Think on these things**. Things that are pure and righteous. In Isaiah it says, **As a man thinks so is he**. What we are influenced by, what we watch, the places we go, the things that we do, the people that we are with, influences our thinking, influences who we are as a person, because as I think so I am. And so the emphasis in Scripture is focus on having our minds occupied with the things of Christ while going about our business and the things of the world. Living moderately so that the world does not take us in and occupy the attention of our minds with the things of the world. Because that is who we are. That is who we will be.

So we are beginning to understand how important the mind is. That is why Paul says it is the arena, the ψυχή (psuchē) is the arena. This is where everything is happening in our life. The evil influences and the good influences are all energy impulses and thoughts being passed to the brain. I expose myself to things, and to programs, and to people, and to activities that influence

me; cause me to be occupied, cause me to act out and respond to life by the influences that I have been around.

That is why the psalmist says in Psalm 1 to meditate on the Word of God, meditate in the law of the Lord day and night. It is not just psychology. God does not want our minds to be occupied with the attention of this life. But on the plus side He wants our minds to be occupied with the things of Christ, not the things of the world. Because we only have one capacity. We can go and physically sit somewhere a couple times a week and call it church. But it is God's Spirit and God's Word interacting with our minds, influencing our minds, transforming our minds, that is the true essence of the influence and power of Christianity.

Let's close with prayer.