

Philippians 2:19-24 Part 5
The Importance of the Occupation of the Attention of the Mind Part 5
also I Peter 5:5-9

Philippians chapter 2, the section we are in is verses 19-30. The theme of Philippians is our participation together in fellowship as believers. We are in this particular section 2:19-30, The Proof of Character in Fellowship. Not only does fellowship prove, that is, put a person's character to test but it also forms character, and develops character, as Paul is attempting to do.

In verses 19-24 he is introducing Timothy to the believers in Philippi as well as to us. First of all, in verse 19 Paul expresses his concern for their spiritual welfare. He says, **Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you quickly, in order that I also might be cheered up after having known about the things concerning you.** And then he focuses on Timothy's character in verse 20. **For I have no one likeminded, equal minded, who will genuinely care about the things concerning you.** And the word *care* is our word that we are focusing on in this study, **μέριμνα** (merimna), which means *to occupy the attention of the mind*. I have no one likeminded who will genuinely be occupied about the things concerning you. Timothy's contrast to others, **For they all are seeking the things of themselves and not the things of Christ Jesus.**

And so he is concerned about them so he is sending Timothy to them. Timothy is likeminded, that is his psyche, the arena in which all things take place in his life is like Paul, equal to Paul as far as involvement and thinking goes. He says Timothy who will genuinely be occupied about the spiritual things concerning you and so he is sending Timothy.

The contrast is that all the others are seeking the things of themselves and not the things of Christ, which he will minister to later on in the book.

The emphasis as I have laid out for you the last few weeks is this little phrase *seeking the things of ourselves versus the things of Christ*. It is natural, customary in the human to be occupied with the things of this life, especially the things of ourselves. We are very self-centered. And the most important thing in our life is ourselves and so we are concerned about them.

Now please note that as we have mentioned to you before from Job chapters 1 and 2 that Satan scouts God's people. God said to Satan - because we know from Revelation chapter 12 that Satan is the accuser of the brethren day and night. So Satan is before the throne of God and God says, "Have you considered My servant Job?" The word *considered* in Hebrew is a military term meaning "Have you *scouted* My servant Job, who is an upright man?" And Satan says, "Yes, I have but You have blessed him so much in the physical material world, no wonder he praises You." Then Satan says, "Let me attack the physical things of his life and I will show you that he will curse you to Your face." So that is the challenge, you see?

Once I belong to Christ, Satan cannot take me away from Christ. But what he can do is study me as to what is important or who is important to me in this earthly life and try to seduce me into it, try to draw me into it, and then attack it so that a lot of things go wrong, so that I

become distressed and frustrated to the point that I turn against God. That is what he wants. And it is not that I will turn against God and lose my relationship with Him but my fellowship with Him. He is always with me and always will be with me. But when Satan takes things and twists things, especially people or things that mean the most to me and causes me to be in anguish it occupies the attention of my mind, my unhappiness and my distress. So Satan chooses specific things, to pick the things that mean the most to us. If it does not mean anything to us, it does not do him any good to attack it because we just say, "Oh well, I will just serve the Lord," because it does not mean anything. But let it be an attack on a person, or a thing, or an activity that means the most to us or a lot to us, then he has my attention. Then he can get me occupied by alluring me in, or seducing me in, soliciting me into whatever situation he has planned to pull me away from Christ.

We know from Matthew 6:24 that Jesus said that God has created every human being with the capacity to serve only one master. And the key there is *serve*, not just capacity but serve. It did not say *believe*, it says *serve*. I can believe in the Lord Jesus with my mind, but be serving the very things that I am obsessed with all week long. I am in service to whatever I am submitted to, whatever I am focused on, whatever I am committed to, whatever I am dedicated to.

And so Timothy is occupied about the spiritual things of the Philippians and he has a genuine care for them. So Paul is sending Timothy, in contrast to the others who are occupied with the things of themselves and not the things that are of Christ Jesus. That is the trap and that is the deception of thinking - because we have the freedom to go to church whenever or wherever we wish - that if we go to church that is the fulfillment of our Christian duty. That all week long I can be occupied with the things of myself. Maybe while I am occupied with the things of myself I can call on God to get involved because things are getting pretty serious now, you know, as I am wrestling with this thing. "God, I think I need some help here. You need to change some people, or change me, or change the situation. I need You to intervene." Then we call on Him and then all of a sudden we get Him involved and now we are distressed with Him because, "What you are you doing? You know I prayed. What am I supposed to pray to get you to do something here?" And we get all frustrated with God. We get all disturbed with God over the things that mentally we are involved with.

As I said the first hour, the Bible says that **as a man thinks so is he**. Whatever my mind is focused on, whatever I am meditating on, whatever I am obsessed with is who I am. That will be the expression of my life. Whether it be at a given moment when there's something that is disturbing me or whether it is a period of my whole life. What is the focus of my whole life? What is my mind fixed on? And how easily am I distracted from that? We only have the capacity to serve one master. And as a person thinks so is he.

So once Christ saves me, once Christ saves a person, my soul belongs to Christ. But the psyche, the psyche is now the arena in which I entertain thoughts about God. I receive those energy impulses by the Holy Spirit about the things of God through His word. I also receive impulses from my emotions and reactions. I also receive thought impulses from the world. Even Satan gives input at times, "Hey, look over here," and try to seduce me or allure me into

something that God does not want me into because He knows it is going to occupy the attention of my mind. Once we are saved the battle is over the mind.

Now it is not psychology. It is the reason why positive thinking works. Did you know positive thinking works? You know, if you are in a situation you chant within yourself in your mind positive things, rather than the negative things that you are experiencing in life. And so you think positive and you have a positive frame of mind, rather than on the reality that you are experiencing. It works because the mind is a powerful tool for that.

That is not the point, the point is that is not a relationship with Jesus Christ. He is my peace. Not me trying to create my own peace by how I practice using my mind. And there are people out there that make it a practice to use their mind to overcome, at least escape from the reality of the difficulties of their situation and to think more positive thoughts. And that is not a relationship with Jesus Christ. That is an escape, it is a psychological drug rather than a chemical drug. It is not facing reality with Christ and in Christ. It is not focused on Him as an anchor point. It is me using my own mind on myself and for myself to escape the difficulties of the realities that I am going through.

So we saw from Luke 8:4-15 that when the word of God falls in amongst a person's heart that is involved with the cares and the riches and the pleasures of life that these cares, these things that we are occupied with, choke out the influence of the word of God in a person's life.

We saw from Luke 10:38-42 about Mary and Martha. That even service to Christ can be a distraction. It is a matter of priority. Martha is in cooking while Mary her sister is listening to the word of God. Listening to the word of God is top priority. Remember the two words from that text that are found in I Corinthians chapter 7: (1) *distraction* - Martha was distracted with much serving; (2) and **μέριμνα** (merimna) - Jesus said, "Martha, Martha you are anxious," that is, the occupation of the attention of your mind is filled with cooking and it has gotten to the point that it has boiled over, no pun intended, boiled over into the expression of your life. You can tell on your face. You can tell [from] your anger, your disposition, your whole demeanor shows that you are occupied with this thing and it has finally gotten to you.

Well, in I Corinthians 7:29-35 Paul used the same two words *distraction* and *occupation of the mind* to talk about the principles of life. He used marriage as an example but he stated it factually. The single person is occupied with the things of the Lord, how they may please the Lord. The married person is occupied with the things of the world, how they may please their spouse. He said it factually. That is just what happens. And he says, "I am not saying this to put a noose around your neck but so that you are attending to the Lord. Your service to the Lord can be without distraction."

So take heed if you are going to get into that relationship, if you are going to get involved in interaction with the world. Get involved with the world just do not over use it. He even said to the husbands to be married as though you have no wife. That is your devotion to the Lord is to be the same whether you are single or married. There should be no compromise there now because we have other people that we think we have to care for.

For today, I want us to turn to I Peter 5:5-9. This is why we have entitled a series that we have, Satan's Only Weapon Against the Believer in Christ. Satan only has one, that is the occupation of the attention of the mind. Once we are saved and Christ indwells us, the battle is for the attention of the mind. Why? Because the second phase, after we are saved the second phase according to Romans 12:2 is to be continually renewed in the spirit of your mind. Be transformed in your mind. And so if we are busy and occupied with other things we cannot be hearing God's word and being focused on the things of Christ. So Satan's only weapon is to scout us, find out how he can try to occupy the attention of our mind, and get us distracted.

Peter says in I Peter 5, **Likewise, you younger ones.** Because in verses 1 to 4 he talked about the leadership and how they are to lead, and be submitted, and others are to submit to them. **Likewise, younger ones, be subjected to older ones. And all of you being submissive to one another, put on humility: because God is setting himself against the proud, but He is giving grace to the humble.** Proverbs chapter 3 verse 34, a verse that is quoted often, **God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.** God is always opposing the proud, the self-sufficient, the self-reliant person, and He resists [in order] to bring them down low because it is only the humble who will be receptive to God's grace.

And so, in His evaluation He sees us and it says, **Therefore be humbled** - that is, be receptive to the humbling process - **under the mighty hand of God, in order that he may exalt you in time.** And so it is a picture of God's hand coming down on us to bring us low to where we are not self-reliant and self-sufficient. We do not rely on human resources but we reach out to God's grace and experience His faithfulness and His grace to minister to us, which is the whole purpose of trials and tribulations. To strip us of our self-reliance and self-sufficiency and cause us to depend on and trust more in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But he says in verse 7 as part of what it means to be humble. **Having cast all your anxiety** - that is our word **μέριμνα** (merimna), casting all of the things that occupy the attention of your mind - **upon Him; because it is a concern to Him concerning you.** Now the term *cast* or *throw* all your anxiety upon Him, is only found one other place and that is where Jesus, before He rode into Jerusalem they put their clothing on the back of the donkey, you remember? And then they put Jesus on the donkey and let Him ride into Jerusalem. The putting the clothes on the donkey is this *casting* your care or anxiety upon Him. It does not mean to pray about it and hold on to it. It literally means to cast your care upon Him. Put it on Him.

There is a game we used to play when I was a kid back in 1916, and it was called hot potato. The potato really was not hot, but that the general idea was that if somebody passed you the potato you have to get rid of it or you get burned. And the idea of Scripture is that when Satan loads us down and causes us to be occupied with the things of this life, is to get rid of it. Give it to God. Give it to Him. Literally. "Lord, I am giving it to you. It is a hot potato for me. I am going to get occupied with it. I am going to get obsessed with it and I have to entrust it into your care. You work it out the way You want to according to Your will," whatever the situation is. So having cast all your anxiety, the things that you are occupied with upon Him, **because He is concerned for you.**

It says in verse 8, **Be sober, and be watchful.** *Be sober* has to do with *sober minded* and we will get into that in a couple of weeks. Did you know that you can be "drunk" mentally with the things of this life? Where it is influencing the thoughts? What I am occupied with, what I am obsessed with. My mind is drunk with the influences of whatever it is I am obsessed with. I am not sober minded. He says, **Be sober minded and be watchful.** That is *be on the alert.* Why? **Because your adversary the devil is walking around as a roaring lion, seeking someone whom he may devour.** Does that mean *destroyed*? No. Psychologically, that is his only weapon. He is walking around looking how he might cause, allure, solicit people with their thinking of their minds to be occupied with things and draw them away from Christ.

This is said to Christians and it says that Satan scouts us. And it says that Satan tries to find things that are going occupy our mind other than the things of Christ. Along with the natural things that occupy our mind. Obviously we have to pay attention to what we are doing, when we are driving or cooking or whatever we are doing during the day, we have to pay attention. Or as Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 7, **Use the world, only do not overuse it.** So my thinking, that which I must guard.

He says in verse 9, concerning Satan walking around as a roaring lion, **Whom resist by being firm or solid in the faith.** I am not supposed to fight Satan. I am to be solid by trusting the Lord. The word *solid* or *firm* is the word **στερεός** (*stereos*), *to be solid in the faith.* Putting my confidence in the Lord about whatever it is that is bothering me and I put my confidence in Him by giving it to Him. Because I am not supposed carry it around. It becomes a distraction, even when I try to bring the Lord into things.

I had a chance to share a couple weeks ago with someone about these very same principles. I said to them, because I am a conceptual person I said here is the picture that is painted for me. You have your home. You have your living room. What would your husband - or wife or family member that you are living with or friends that you have - what would be their reaction if they came to your door and knocked on the door and somebody said, "Come in," and they opened the door and the living room was filled full of Hell's Angels bikers sitting there drinking and talking and laughing it up. And here you are standing over in the corner, "Hey, come on in!" Do you want that influence in your living room? Do you want that influence around your family? You have no choice of who comes to the door but you do have a choice of who you let in. It is a matter of choice.

Do I choose to get obsessed with this thing that is knocking on my door? Or do I choose to entrust it to the Lord and let Him take care of it? And keep my arena clean and clear so that I can seek and receive and interact with the things of Christ. Again this is not psychology. This is pointing out that once Christ dwells in your spirit the **ψυχή** (*psuchē*), the psyche is now the arena where it all takes place. All of life is taking place in the arena. And the battle is for the attention of the mind, even using important things or things that we call *necessary* things. Satan is walking around as a roaring lion seeking whom he may psychologically devour by the attention of their minds. So we are encouraged, according to Peter, that in this humbling process - because the opposite of humility is pride and pride exhibits itself by us taking care of our own things, us being in control of our own life.

As I shared with you the first hour, you learn as you get older that you do not want to live to be too old because then you are so humanly feeble that you have to trust the Lord more and you have less control over your own life, even your own faith you have less control of. There are more human resources involved in our faith today than we realize. Once we start losing our health and losing our human resources, we find ourselves looking for things for security. And it is God down through the years causing us to be placed in a position where we are totally dependent upon Him. I have found that when I was younger it was easier to trust the Lord, which means I was not trusting the Lord. It means my human resource said, "Oh yeah! I can trust the Lord, no problem." But as you lose your physical capacity and your mental capacities, where you are not in control, you cannot remember the Scriptures you used to remember all the time, you cannot muster up that human reserve to trust the Lord, you start losing the human and you realize just how much of you you were trusting, and not Him. And the more you lose the human capacity the more the Lord is teaching us that you have to let go. You do not have the ability to hold on anymore. And you now must trust the Lord.

The elder saints that I have known over the years, that was their greatest difficulty. Some of them, I would put them right up there with the apostle Paul as far as relationship and occupation of the mind and spiritual maturity. Yet when they reached the elderly age, get in the 70s and 80s, they began to experience the frailty of the human frame and the difficulty of letting go. I cannot be in control like I used to. That is right. And you realize how much control you have over your own life. You think you are trusting the Lord but you are trusting Him on the side because we are still trusting our human ability, our human reserve.

So Satan is looking for people, knocking on the mind's door. Hoping that by choice we allow into the living room of our psyche people and influences that ought not to be there, both for our sake, for the people in the household that we live with, for the people that we come in contact around us. The battle is for the occupation of the mind not for religious practice. Satan loves it when believers just think, "Well, I am fulfilling my duty by going to church and Bible study," and yet with their minds allowing the influences to come in that are destructive to themselves and everybody around them. These are the things it says, **Be sober, be watchful**, your adversary, your enemy, the entire time, the whole time, twenty-four hours a day is looking for opportunity to devour the attention of your mind.

You do not how many people, well you can imagine over the years, how many people I have come across and said, "Well, we have missed you in fellowship."

"Well, so many things just come up."

Yeah. If you wait for your schedule to clear up it will not clear up. You have to make choices, not wait for it to be convenient. And Satan will find plenty of things to keep us busy. Busy to some people is an acronym for burden under Satan's yoke: busy. Keeping us busy for absolutely nothing. We will see in Isaiah 26 in a couple weeks that it gets frustrating when all you do is give birth to wind, a nothingness. You stay busy and it accomplishes nothing. It has nothing to do with what life is all about.

Let's close in prayer.