

Philippians 2:19-24 Part 6
The Importance of the Occupation of the Attention of the Mind Part 6
also Philippians 4:1-7

Philippians chapter 2 we are in section verses 19 through 30. Remember the theme of Philippians is fellowship, participation together. And in Philippians 2 verses 19 through 30 we are studying about the proof of character in Christian fellowship. Not only is a person's character brought out as we fellowship together, but character is actually formed, and shaped, trained in our fellowship together.

First up is Timothy in verses 19 to 24, the introduction of Timothy and his character. And how Paul uses Timothy in the situation there as a teaching for us about proof of character in fellowship. Verse 19 Paul expresses his concern for the spiritual welfare of the believers there in Philippi. 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 Timothy's character in verse 20, **For I have no one likeminded, who will genuinely care about the things concerning you.** So he is going to send Timothy to find out about their well-being and bring him back. But Timothy is likeminded, he has a genuine care about the things concerning them. And the word *care* is the focus of our word study actually from this text and how important it is, **μεριμνάω** (merimnao), which literally means *to occupy the attention of the mind*. Something we have been studying also in Isaiah 26 about a mind that is fixed, a mind that is focused on the things of the Lord.

Interesting, in the past as we have given this series a couple of times in the past, in the past we emphasized how that even Jesus said, "Be not anxious for your life, not even for your necessities." And last week in I Peter 5, about how the occupation of the attention of the mind is the only weapon that Satan has against a believer. And so the importance of understanding this is important but before we have studied it from a negative standpoint, that is, do not allow your mind to be occupied with these anxieties and worries and fears. But it does teach us that we are to be occupied with something, that is, of the Lord.

And we have shared here that Timothy genuinely cares. He is genuinely occupied with the spiritual things of the believers there in Philippi. And so Paul is sending him, because sending him is like sending Paul himself, they are likeminded. He will genuinely care about the things concerning you.

Verse 21, Timothy's character in contrast to others. He says, **For they all are seeking the things of themselves and not the things of Christ Jesus.**

It is important to bring you up to date of where we have come and where we are going today. Again in Matthew 6:24 the Lord introduced to us that we only have the capacity to serve one master. We have only been created with that one capacity. Secondly, in chapter 6 of Matthew verse 25, Jesus said, **Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink or what you shall put on. Life is more than this.** So just with our one capacity we can be occupied with just the necessities of life. And there are some people around the world that are, that is all they think about all day long is surviving. With the hundreds and thousands of

people that die each day because of starvation, or starvation and disease around the world, they are focused on one thing: keep breathing, keep functioning, try to find the necessities. Jesus said for His people that we are to seek first the kingdom of God and all the necessities would be supplied.

Which by the way, that is the answer to the question: why does God allow such suffering in the world? I can remember quite a few years ago being down in Los Angeles and there was a great exodus out of Thailand. And *the boat people* as they were known, would crowd into these boats and try to make it to land somewhere else. But many of the boats sank and a lot of people drowned because there were too many people in the boat, they were overloaded. But on the front page of the Los Angeles times there was a man who had made it to shore, and it showed him on the beach on his knees in praying position thanking Buddha for his safety. And the Lord will not intervene and help and give another false god credit. Will not do that. God promises for His people that if you seek first the kingdom of God all your necessities will be taken care of. Supplied for you. You do not have to worry about it. You do not have to be occupied with it. You do not have to be fearful about it. It will be supplied for you, which is the importance of Matthew 6:25.

Then we saw in Luke 8:4-15 about the parable of the sower. In one instance seed fell amongst the weeds and the weeds choked out the influence and growth of the seed. And Jesus called these weeds representative of the cares, and the riches, and the pleasures of life. And the word *cares* is this word **μέριμνα** (merimna), *occupation of the attention of the mind*. It chokes out the influence of the word of God to be focused on these things.

In Luke 10:38-42 Mary and Martha. Very detailed learning experience for Martha who was even serving the Lord by preparing the food in the kitchen. But Mary chose the priority, she was sitting at the feet of Jesus hearing His word. And Martha was occupied with the fact that she was serving alone and there was nobody to help. And Jesus told her that you are anxious and troubled about many things, but Mary has chosen the only thing that is necessary in life, that is to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His word.

We studied from I Corinthians 7:29-35 where Paul actually took the language out of the Mary and Martha situation of Luke chapter 10. Where Paul used the word *distraction* and the word **μέριμνα** (merimna) for *occupation of the attention of the mind*. He says natural normal relationships are going to produce distraction and occupation of the attention of the mind. And so he says, "I am not trying to tell you do not get into relationships." He basically says, "I am trying to make it so that your attention and attending on the Lord and serving the Lord will be without distraction."

And then last week I Peter 5:6-9 where Peter presents to us that Satan, as a roaring lion, is walking about seeking whom he may devour. So therefore all of your cares, all of the things that occupy the attention of your mind, all the things that you are anxious about, all the things that you are fearful over, cast it upon the Lord. Because Satan is looking for people who are just psychologically, mentally, holding on to the cares of this life, so that he can use it against them and psychologically and emotionally impact their lives.

Our text today is Philippians chapter 4. We are in Philippians 2, but we are over a couple of chapters to Philippians 4:1-7. Philippians chapter 4. In chapter 3 Paul had said to the believers in Philippi that there are some who are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly. Their human appetites are what they serve, and they do not serve Jesus Christ. They are enemies of the cross of Christ. He says, "But we are citizens of heaven." Therefore our conduct should be as citizens of heaven, just passing through. We are just pilgrims passing through.

So he says in Philippians 4:1, **So then my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and my crown.** So he is sharing with them his deep compassion for them, his deep affection for them. He calls them *brothers*, calls them *beloved*, *the ones whom he longs for*. That they are his joy and crown, which is a totally separate subject. But is interesting is that when we talk about the crowns and the jewels in heaven that we are going to get as a reward, Paul says, "They are people." And when Paul gets to heaven and Paul comes to be with the Lord, the various people that came to know Christ, the various people that he labored for in Christ that they might walk with Christ, they are his joy and crown. **In this way** - that is, the way he just spoke of in chapter 3 as citizens of kingdom of heaven. **In this way so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.** So stand and stand firm.

Verse 2 he has an encouragement. He says, **I appeal to Euodias, and I appeal to Syntyche**, literal translation, **to think the same thing in the Lord.** That is that word $\phi\rho\nu\acute{\omicron}\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ (*phroneō*), *the frame of mind*, that we saw back in Philippians 2:5, **Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus**, this attitude, this approach to life.

He says, **I appeal to them.** Obviously two women in the church in Philippi who were not getting along, and so he is appealing for them to think the same thing in the Lord. That does not mean *think same thoughts*. It means that the frame of mind must be the same. Whatever the issue is, what is the motive of it?

In other words, and I have used the example in the past about people debating over the color of the church, or the color of the rug in the nursery. I mean people in churches and everywhere debate. Everybody has their own opinion. Everybody has their own feelings about what they want done. Nothing wrong with that. The point is that I can share with you what color I want the church to be, I can share with you what color I think the color of the rug of the church should be, but when it comes to a division and dissension amongst the people it should not mean anything to me. That is just my opinion. I like to see it that color. I like to see it pink with purple polka dots, that would be a nice-looking church on the outside. That would attract the crowds, would it not?

But to think the same thing in the Lord means to have the frame of mind of wanting whatever the Lord wants. So, if we are satisfied in Him, which is what he is about ready to get to. If we are satisfied with the Lord and whatever He wants then we are not going to have divisions. We will have differences of opinions but not divisions because we are willing to give up whatever our opinion is, whatever our feeling is, for the sake of Christ and whatever He wants. It is what He wants as far as the color of the church, or the rug, or whatever the case may be.

In verse 3 he says, **Yes, and I request also you, genuine yokefellow** - genuine believers whom I am yoked together with - **help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.** He said, "These are believers," that are having these differences between themselves and so therefore help them. Their names are written in the book of life. They have labored with me along with my other fellow workers, so you need to take care of one another, and encourage them to have the same frame of mind in the Lord. Same approach together.

With verse 4 we have the beginning of four commands. Four commands for believers as far as our participation together. The traditional English text translation of Philippians 4:4 says, **Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I will say, Rejoice.** There is even a song out, we used to sing that all the time in church. The word *joy* and the verb form *rejoice* in Greek has to do with satisfaction, not happiness, but satisfaction. If you translate that into the text it fits in context with what Paul is saying. Think the same things in the Lord. Want the same thing in the Lord. You want what the Lord wants. If that is your attitude, if that is your frame of mind, then that should solve the problem.

But he says, **Be satisfied in the Lord always: and again I will say,** that is, I am going to continue to keep saying, **Be satisfied.** Be satisfied with the Lord. Let Him be your satisfaction. And that is true for everything in life, straight across the board. To be satisfied with Him means I am not going to be co-dependent upon other people. I am not going to be looking for things outside of my personal life for my happiness and for the satisfaction of my life. **Be satisfied in the Lord always: and again I will continue to say, Be satisfied with Him.**

So with Euodias and Syntyche and for everyone else, be satisfied with the Lord. Do not be satisfied with getting your own way, or saying, "I am not satisfied because I did not get my own way." Be satisfied with Him and it will solve all the differences amongst believers.

Secondly, verse 5, **Let your moderation become known to all men. The Lord is near.** Moderation: opposite of indulgence. We have a reputation. People close to us know us very well. Either we are indulgent in certain areas in the human and in the world; or we are not if we are just moderate. And you can tell by how much we insist on our own way whether we are living in moderation or not. Usually Satan will try to exploit things in which we are indulgent in, because we are occupied with it and maybe even addicted and obsessed with it. And Satan will exploit that area of life. **Let your moderation become known.** Be known for being a moderate person, a temperate person, a person under control. Only living out in this earthly life, the necessities of life where our satisfaction is the Lord. And if I lose things in this physical life, if I do not get my own way, if I am a moderate person it is not going to matter because those things do not matter to me. **The Lord is near.** The Lord is coming at any moment. He is coming back. So just lightly touch, and go through, and handle the things of life out of necessity.

In verse 6 we have commands three and four. **Do not be anxious for one thing,** literal translation. **Do not be anxious for one thing.** The word anxiety is our word **μέριμνα** (merimna), **μεριμνάω** (merimnao) the verb form. Stop being anxious. He is presenting as though it is already happening, as it always does because it is just natural. Stop being anxious

for one thing. Do not even let one thing grab the occupation of the attention of your mind. If it knocks on the mind's door, do not let it in.

But in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, the fourth command is, **let your requests become known to God.** So stop being anxious, even over one thing. But it is in everything through prayer and petition. In other words, by prayer we express our submission to these things to God. We give them to Him.

Last week we saw Peter say, **Cast all of your care upon Him because He's concerned for you.** So how do I cast all my care upon Him? Through prayer I say, "Lord, it is all yours." And again, how many times do I have to pray? I do not know, how many times before we give it up to Him? Sometimes we give it up to Him and we take it right back again. We are going to have to keep praying until we are ready to let go, and stop being double minded about it. Remember the double minded person in James 1 does not receive anything from the Lord, because of vacillating back and forth. "Well Lord, you take care of it. No, give it back to me, let me worry about it. No, You take care of it. No, let me worry about it." It is a back-and-forth thing.

So, **In everything through prayer and petition, with thanksgiving.** That does not mean at turkey time. *With thanksgiving* is not a practice, but something to express to Him. You know I can give everything to Him, that is something to be thankful for. I do not have to carry that burden around. That burden does not have to stress me out. I can give that to Him. Lay it in His hands and leave it totally up to Him. **Let your requests be made known to God.**

And then he says in verse 7 about the promise of all of this, **And the peace of God,** where have we heard that before? **And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, this peace of God will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.** He guards us and it is the peace of God, His presence that is with us.

Let me close with this one thought, **The peace of God which surpasses all understanding.** Sometimes we require understanding before we can feel right about an issue. It is very insecure; it is very unsure to be able to trust the Lord without understanding anything. That is what faith is. Faith is trust without having to understand. I do not need to understand. I do not need to know. Somebody can come in and take all my Bibles, I am at this stage you just come in and take all my Bibles and have them outlaw the Bible in the United States or anywhere else in the world; I would miss it, I miss learning about the Lord, but it would just be that much less that I would understand, and I would just trust Him. That is all. Put it in His hands.

And the promise is that His peace, it is the peace of God Himself, He gives me Himself, His presence. And His peace is there as I confidently lean on Him as we studied from Isaiah 26:3 this morning. **And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding,** it is beyond what we can understand. And if we require complete understanding before we trust the Lord we are going to be in big trouble. Because there is so much about Him and His ways and the reasons why we go through what we go through that it is beyond our human understanding. And it is best just to trust Him and experience His peace, which will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

So do not be anxious for one thing, not even for one thing. Whatever it is that is so important - not just to think about it, but to occupy the attention of our minds, to be anxious, to worry, to fear - is to cast it upon Him through prayer. Going to Him and entrusting it into His hands as well as ourselves. And that is when He will guard our hearts and minds with perfect peace, because we continually put our confidence in Him.

Let's close with prayer.