

Title: Comfort for Forgotten Sparrows

Text: Matthew 10: 29-31

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Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Our text is found in Matthew 10. Our Lord is sending his disciples to preach the gospel. Christ promises them they shall encounter constant conflict and sorrow. He also assures all who believe on him, all who confess him publicly and all who serve him, shall be hated of all men for his sake. Our Savior assures us that our own families will rise up against us. That was true in their generation; it is true in our generation. Yet, in the midst of these things, he says, "Fear ye not!" What reason does Christ give for believer not to fear? Let's read Matthew 10:29-31 and we will see.

Matthew 10: 29: Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?

Among all the wild game that was sold, sparrows were sold at the smallest price—a half-Roman penny. Also, the sparrow was the smallest living creature offered in sacrifice under the Mosaic dispensation. It was the gift for the poor leper.

Matthew 10: 29:..and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

God protects all the birds that fly—even the lowly, little sparrow. They build their nests in his sight, hatch their young in his sight and leave the nest in his sight. God knows each sparrow: where it flies, feeds and rests. "And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father"—not by the bird hunter or by the cat, not by cold of winter or by old age. God numbers the sparrows, but, believer, catch this...

Matthew 10: 30: But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

God numbers the sparrows but, believer, the very hairs of your head are all numbered by God your Father.

Matthew 10: 31: Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Our Savior argues from the less to the greater. If God cares for the lowliest sparrow shall he not care for you, believer?—ye are of more value than many sparrows. Believing Christ's word, believers are assured that God our Father will not forget one of his children, but will care for us constantly.

We have brethren who are suffering various trials. I hope this word from our Savior will be a comfort. Our subject is "Comfort for Forgotten Sparrows." By the end of the message you will see why I have used this title.

GOD IS ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN

First, we are reminded that God is absolutely sovereign over all, "Not one [sparrow] shall fall to the ground without your Father."

Notice, who it is that rules all things, even the lowly sparrow, "Your Father."—"not one shall fall to the ground without your Father." It is not fate, luck or chance; it is not "mother nature"; it is not "impersonal providence"; it is not as some say, "All things happen for a reason." Those things do not exist—let's strike them from our vocabulary.

God our Father, himself, rules all things by his absolute sovereign power. God rules all inanimate matter: vapor, lightening, rain and wind. Our sovereign God rules all beasts, even the creeping things that came upon

Egypt. The Monarch of the universe rules all men, raising up kings and whole nations and putting down kings and whole nations. All things that come to pass is of God's sovereign hand.

Psalms 135:6: Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. 7: He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures. 8: Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast. 9: *Who* sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. 10: Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; 11: Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: 12: And gave their land *for* an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people. 13: Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever; *and* thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. 14: For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

What about wicked men? "The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." (Pro 16: 4) We will use the greatest example in all the world as our example—the crucifixion of God's own Son. Was God ruling wicked men by his sovereign hand to crucify his Son? Yes, God ruled over the death of our Substitute. Christ could never be touched the whole time he walked this earth because scripture says, "his hour was not yet come." (Jn 7: 30) But as he left the garden of Gethsemane, when the men came to arrest him, Christ said his name and they fell back. He showed he is sovereign God. Yet, he gave himself into their hands, saying, "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Lu 22: 53) Christ told Pilot, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." (Jn 19: 11) God our Savior was in sovereign control over the crucifixion.

God even rules the devil! The devil was cast out of heaven into the earth by God and the devil can do nothing but what God allows him to do. We see it in God's dealings with the devil concerning Job. Even the devil declared God's sovereign power to prevent him from touching Job.

Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that [there is] none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10: Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 10: But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he⁹ hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 11: And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath [is] in thy power; ¹⁰only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Some will ask, "What about man's responsibility?" A great deal of the time, when men raise this question it is to exalt man's will. But man is fully responsible to obey God. Yet, responsibility does not mean man has ability to obey. God gave the law knowing we would break it. We came under the curse of God's broken law in Adam for "by one man sin entered the world and death by sin, for that all have sinned." (Rom 5: 12) That is why we broke the law before Moses even came down out of the mount. The law was given to declare us guilty. (Rom 3: 19; Gal 3: 21)

How then are believer's obedient to God? The believers obedience—faith, repentance, and any good work a believer does—is brought to pass because "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph 2: 10) That does not mean that God ordained faith and repentance and various kinds of good works in hopes that sinners would walk in them. It means God before ordained that his child shall believe and repent and do each good work we do and that is the reason we do them. God receives all the glory and praise for sovereignly predestinating every good and working all things in his people to do them, "For it is God which

worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phi 2: 13) The man who God leaves to himself is responsible for all his sin.

Yet, God even overrules the evil of wicked men for the good of his people. Joseph’s brothers were responsible for their evil deeds against Joseph. But Joseph said to them, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.” (Gen 50: 20)

Another example is seen in the separation of the ten tribes from Judah. God told Solomon, it was his will the tribes of Israel would divide from Judah. But years later, when Jeroboam led the ten tribes to divide from their rightful King Rehoboam, God charged them all with sin saying, “So Israel rebelled against the house of David.” (1 Kings 12: 19) They were responsible for their sin but God overruled it to fulfill his purpose. When Judah attempted to war with Israel, God said, “Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me.” (1 Ki 12: 24)

Likewise, before the foundation of the world, it was God’s will and purpose for Christ to come into the world and redeem his elect from our sins. Therefore, Adam’s sin was no surprise to God. Yet, when Adam rebelled against his lawful King, it was all Adam’s fault because Adam was expressly commanded by God not to eat of the fruit. Yet the whole thing was of God. So we see “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.” Pro 16: 33)

Man cannot exalt our responsibility to refute the truth of God’s sovereign rule over all things. We condemn ourselves if we do so! By God’s grace, believers bow to God’s word; we do not question God. We praise God for his wisdom in only allowing man to work wrath which God works to praise him, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” (Ps 76: 10)

Now, let’s bring this closer to home. We have many brethren who are sick. What about disease? Yes, even our diseases are under God’s sovereign hand. We find several places in scripture where God caused men to have diseases. But we also behold the only one who can heal is our sovereign Savior.

On Calvary’s tree we behold our Savior healing God’s elect of the worst disease—sin! This is why sinful man despises the fact that God is absolutely sovereign. It is because God is sovereign in salvation. God chooses whom he will and passes by whom he will. (Rom 9: 15-21) Christ redeemed his particular people. (Jn 10: 15, 26) God must and shall give each of his children spiritual life, understanding and faith in Christ. He says, “I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.” (Is 57: 19)

God is God. The very name of God declares that there is none above him and none can stop God from doing whatsoever he pleases in the earth.

Isaiah 14: 24: The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, *so* shall it stand: 25: That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. 26: This *is* the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this *is* the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. 27: For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul *it*? and his hand *is* stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

My brethren, whatever you suffer, you may be asking, “Why would God have me suffer this?” Remember the blind man? “And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” (Jn 9: 2-3) Brethren, whatever we suffer, use it to declare to sinners the

wonderful works of God toward you. And knowing everything in the universe—in your life and mine—especially our salvation—is always under the total control of God our Father, then whatever comes to pass, we praise God and thank him—it is for our spiritual good. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” (Rom 8: 28)

GOD PREDESTINATED ALL THINGS

Next, we are reminded, not only does God rule all things, God predestinated all things before the foundation of the world, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered or “have been all numbered.” (Mt 10: 30)

God’s predestination includes all things from the first to the last, with man himself and with all that pertains to man. Again, we look to Christ’ crucifixion. Was it predestinated by God? Yes.

Acts 2:23: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Acts 4:27: For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28: For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Now, when good things happen men will sometimes attribute it to God’s hand. Occasionally, they will attribute big things to God, like a tornado or hurricane. Indeed, scripture says, “the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds [are] the dust of his feet.” (Na 1: 3) But in our text, Christ declares even the smallest things are predestinated by God, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Mt 10: 30; Lu 21: 18) Once, I was standing with a group of folks and made the statement, “That leaf fell by God’s foreordination.” Someone said, “Not a leaf?” Yes, “even a leaf.”

Remember, Christ is arguing from the least to the greatest. Seeing God predestinated the sparrow that falls and all the number of the hairs of our head, we can be sure God predestinated his people unto salvation and predestinated every least thing in our lives to bring us unto that salvation. As the apostle Paul wrote under inspiration of the Spirit of God “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” (Eph 1: 11)

God predestinated the hour Christ would come and “when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” (Gal 4: 4) God predestinated the hour when Christ would obtain the eternal redemption of his people and when “the hour was come” Christ laid down his life. (Jn 12: 23) God predestinated that he would send his child the gospel, promising, “I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” and when the hour was come God sent us the gospel. (Jer 3: 15) God predestinated that each of his children “must be born again” and as the apostle Paul said, “when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace.” (Jn 3: 7; Gal 1: 15) God shall keep us till he brings us home to glory because “in [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” (Eph 1: 11)

Furthermore, we find comfort knowing that all things which come to pass are according to God’s eternal purpose and foreordination to glorify his Son in the salvation of his people

Romans 8:29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30: Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified,

them he also glorified. 31: What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

Believer, there is great comfort in knowing that whatever it is you and I suffer at this minute, it is not only in God's control, it was determined before by God. If an enemy did it, we could complain. But our heavenly Father, who cannot be unkind or unjust, predestinated it and did it to conform us to his Son, to glorify our Savior! And if that is God's purpose in our suffering then it's certainly good and for our good!

THE FORGOTTEN SPARROW

Thirdly, let's learn from the "forgotten sparrow." In our text, Christ says, "two sparrows *are* sold for a farthing?" In Luke 12:6 his words are recorded, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?"

Sparrows are so common, so cheap, that if a man buys two farthings-worth then he gets one thrown in for free. The one thrown-in is not even counted by the merchant. It is so common, so worthless, it is the forgotten sparrow.

Believer, do you at times feel like the uncounted, worthless, unnoticed, forgotten sparrow? Think how many sparrows exist! Yet, Christ says of the sparrow which man forgets, the uncounted, forgotten sparrow, "not one of them is forgotten before God?" (Lu 12: 6) Believer, if God does not forget even one lowly sparrow, do you imagine God will ever forget you? Never! not one believer is forgotten before God?

Each of God's children are too precious to God for God to forget us! We are precious, not because of anything in us: we were conceived in sin, we came forth enmity against God and we would have remained in that state. But God did not forget us because we are precious to God by God's sovereign and free grace, by his electing love in Christ Jesus. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 Jn 4: 10) I will say it again. Sinners will cease fighting against God's electing grace when God makes them know that if nothing in me caused God to choose me then nothing in me can cause God to forget me. What a comfort! God will not forget those he chose by free grace.

God will not forget us because we are precious because of the precious blood of God's own Son! Christ speaking through the prophet Isaiah said, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me." (Is 49: 15-16)

Believer, hear this as done especially for you, as if you were the only one. The Son of God took flesh for you. Christ fulfilled the law for you. Christ bore your sin for you. Christ laid down his life for you. Christ was made a curse for you. Christ arose to heavens power and glory for you. Now Christ rules all things in heaven and earth for you, "Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; your walls of sovereign protection are continually before me."

God's child is precious because we are sons of God—because God is our Father. I call your attention again to the fact he says, "one [sparrow] shall not fall on the ground without your Father." (Mt 10: 29) Suppose a mother tends to her little canary in her bird cage, how much more will she tend carefully and lovingly to her little child in the cradle! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (1 Jn 3: 1) The manner of love the Father bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God is that he sent his only begotten Son to lay down his life and redeemed us from all iniquity. Now, suppose that mother gave another of her children to die so that her infant child could live. How much more will she care for that child in the cradle! If God your Father gave his only begotten Son for you, how much more shall God care for you than for a sparrow? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom 8: 32)

Believer, your heavenly Father will not forget you, you are his child! Your heavenly Father knows you and will not forget you. He knows the very number of all the hairs of your head. "There shall not an hair of your head perish." (Lu 21: 18) With Christ God freely gave us justification, wisdom, righteousness, redemption and holiness. Concerning all lesser things, your heavenly Father knows you have need of these things.

THE EXHORTATION

So lastly, let's heed our Savior's exhortation, "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Mt 10: 31) God says through the apostle Peter, "Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (1 Pet 5: 7) Whatever trouble you suffer, if God did not care for you then he would not have sent the trouble. The trouble is to turn you to cast all your care on him.

Is it family trouble? "Fear ye not! Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you!" Is it a failing business? Or money trouble. "Fear ye not! Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you! Is it bodily disease? Or a sick loved one? Or loss of a loved one? "Fear ye not! Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you!" Is it rejection because of the gospel? "Fear ye not! Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you!" Has God chastened you for your sins so that you mourn in repentance? "Fear ye not! Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you!" My suffering brethren, will you hear this poor sinner standing before you?

Psalms 34:6: This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7: The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8: O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him. 9: O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him. 10: The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

Amen!