



Matthew 10:29-31

(29) Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. (30) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (31) Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Luke 12:6-7

(6) "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. (7) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

New King James Version

The two instances of Jesus' comments about sparrows say much the same thing, although a few minor details are different. As [Jesus](#) often does, He uses an example that His contemporary audience would have easily understood. Vendors sold sparrows in first-century markets as food for the lower class, and Jesus draws on this common marketplace transaction to make His point.

Sparrows are tiny; they typically weigh less than an ounce. One would hardly be a mouthful, and what is more, their nutritional value is meager. The sparrow was indeed a poor man's food, and even several of them would hardly make a decent meal.

It is easy to understand how little value they had in the Roman-era marketplace. No one would get rich selling pairs of sparrows for a copper

coin, typically the lowest-value coins, similar in value to our modern penny. These tiny birds hold even less value today since modern people do not use them as food.

Luke takes matters a step further by saying that for two copper coins, one could buy not only the expected four sparrows, but the merchant would throw in a fifth sparrow for free! It is as if the fifth sparrow had no value at all. The fifth sparrow was literally worthless, yet Jesus says [God](#) does not overlook even it. Luke writes, “And not one of them is forgotten before God.”

It is difficult to comprehend how this is possible. But we can take this amazing watchfulness of God even further.

Matthew phrases what Jesus says a little differently: “And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will” ([Matthew 10:29](#)).

The word “falls” (*Strong's* #4098) is translated from the Greek word: *pipto*, which has the basic meaning of “to descend from a higher place to a lower one,” thus, “to fall.” For example, when the young man Eutychus “fell” from the third story of a house in Troas, the word Luke uses is a form of *pipto*. Luke also uses it to describe a donkey or an ox falling into a well ([Luke 14:5](#)), and Matthew uses it for a house falling or not falling due to flooding ([Matthew 7:25](#), 27).

Alternatively, it can mean “to light upon.” The more common usage in Scripture is “to fall,” but this connotation is worth considering.

Most people assume that Jesus means that God notices when a sparrow falls to the earth and dies. This understanding is natural. But William Barclay's commentary on [Matthew 10:29](#) and this particular word are noteworthy:

The Revised Standard Version—and it is a perfectly correct translation of the Greek—has it that not one sparrow will fall to the ground without the knowledge of God. In such a context, the word *fall* makes us naturally think of *death*; but in all probability the Greek is a translation of an Aramaic word which means to *light* upon the ground. It is not that God marks the sparrow when the

sparrow falls dead; it is far more; it is that God marks the sparrow every time it lights and hops upon the ground. So it is Jesus' argument that if God cares like that for sparrows, [H]e will care much more for men and women. (Emphasis his.)

Jesus is declaring that if God cares enough to notice and acknowledge when the millions and millions of these little, brown-feathered birds light upon the ground, then how much more does He care for us, His children, whom He has made in His image?

His point is that we should never consider God distant and uncaring. No matter what we may be experiencing in life, God is aware of it. When we experience suffering, sorrow, persecution, hardship, separation, or even death, God is not somewhere else. He is right there with us.

We do not know if the disciples grasped what Jesus was telling them then, but in time, they learned from their experiences and the guidance of God's [Holy Spirit](#). We can see it in [I Peter 3:13-14](#) where the apostle encourages the church with the same thought:

And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”

Peter had no doubt that God knows everything; nothing escapes His recognition or understanding. He knows our every thought, action, circumstance, and experience—good or bad. And he adds, “you are blessed,” knowing God's protection and compassion are endless.

We live in an age when God's [love](#) and care are continually questioned, privately and publicly. But if we believe God's Word, we show a lack of [faith](#) when we allow ourselves to think He has less compassion for us than He has for the little sparrow.

— Ted E. Bowling

To learn more, see:
[Do Not Be Afraid!](#)

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