

THE HEART OF GOD



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A Place in the Wilderness

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Scripture quotations are from the
American Standard Version of the Bible (1901)
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Cover design: Nuggitz Creative Services (Nuggitz.com)
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Let us look at three seemingly straightforward verses in Matthew:¹

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Here the Lord is pointing out the immense worth of His children. They have more value than many sparrows. How many sparrows? As many as there are. That is how valuable we, His believers, are to Him. That is the unmistakable and hard-to-overlook main point of these verses.

But, as with so many things that have to do with God, there is more. There is much, much more. Let us examine these verses more closely.

¹ Matt. 10:29–31

The Lord says that not one sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. What does He mean when He says that no sparrow falls to the ground *without the Father*? This easily overlooked phrase—a kind of crevice in the surface of the earth of God's word—needs to be explored. Not one word of the Lord is meaningless. He does not waste words; He is not redundant; He is not shallow. All His words are not only full of riches, but full of God Himself, and eternally so—His words never pass away.

So then, what does He mean when He says that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father? It means that for every single tiny sparrow that dies, the Father is there with that sparrow. Such a realization has enormous implications. The Father is with every sparrow that dies, that falls to the ground. He is there, bearing that tiny sparrow's life as it dies. He is there with that little bird in its suffering of death.

Do we imagine the Father is watching from a distance? Do we think the Father is detached from that tiny sparrow's suffering? Do we think the Father is uncaring about what happens to what He

has created? I don't believe any of these are true. The Father is with every sparrow. He is there with them in their suffering and in their death, bearing them in His heart. Though they are but tiny sparrows, such small birds, He is bearing them. They too are close to His heart. Do we imagine that He only loves us and not the rest of the creation? No, of course not. He loves all His creation. Even the tiny birds, He bears in love.

This can be seen in the Old Testament. Look at the last verse of Jonah¹. God cared not only for the 120,000 souls of Ninevah; He cared for the cattle as well. Or consider the verse in Deuteronomy² where God told the Israelites not to muzzle the ox that treads out the grain. The apostle Paul rightly applied this to those who work for the Lord, but the Lord is also desirous that the oxen be properly treated and that our heart toward the animals be proper.

As our Father bears the sparrows in their death, what does He feel? Is He pleased? Is He

¹ Jonah 4:11

² Deut. 25:4

uncaring? Or, does He feel within Him what they are passing through? Our God is a God of life. How does He feel about the death of what He has created? How does He feel about the sparrows falling to the ground? For each and every sparrow that dies, our Father is wounded. We must realize that God's heart is so great that even the death of such a tiny creature pains Him.

So then, let us extrapolate from the Lord's speaking in these verses. If the Father is with and bearing the death of every sparrow, how about the other creatures on the Earth? How about all the other birds of various sizes and forms? How about the creatures under the sea? How about the mammals of so many kinds? How about the elephants, the lions, and the giraffes? How about the domesticated animals—the dogs, the cats, and so many others? Do the sparrows hold a special place in God's heart? Certainly not. God is love, and He loves all of His creation. When any single tiny part of His creation suffers, He suffers with it. When any of His creation dies, He is there with that creature in its death.

Now consider this: God is omniscient. He not only knows everything there is to know, He foresees every possibility under every circumstance, and is fully aware of all that will come to pass. Since we know this to be true, what kind of God who has such a capability would then create a universe He knew was destined to intensely suffer? Were He to sit at a distance watching His creation pass through such agonies while He Himself remained untouched and unmoved, what would we say about such a God? In the least, He would be considered callous. But much worse, He would also very likely be considered unrighteous, for He Himself would be unwilling to endure what His own creation is passing through. What kind of being would create something, all the while knowing it would suffer greatly? We might rightly consider such a God to be cruel and heartless.

But our God is not so. He does not stand by as that which He has created suffers in such agony. No! He is with every single creature as it passes through whatever it does during the time of its life. Which is harder, to suffer yourself, or to watch one whom you intensely love suffer while you are there

with that one? I believe that to anyone who truly loves, the latter is by far much more agonizing. And so it is with the Father. He is with every one of His creatures as they suffer and die. He does not withdraw Himself, or turn away, or ignore their suffering. With Him there is no shadow of turning.¹ He both tastes of their agony in full and sees His dear creatures suffer.

Ponder what this means. How many creatures are there on the earth? How many of them are suffering and dying? Our God is there with each and every one bearing them in their suffering and death. You may find this hard to believe, but if you pray and open your heart to God, you will find that this is so. We have such a God who can bear the whole creation in its suffering.

Based on these verses in Matthew, I firmly believe that when any one of God's creatures suffers, God Himself suffers with it. When any one of them dies, God is pained. God is not detached from His creation. Our Father is not an onlooker as the creation passes through the great turmoil and

¹ Jas. 1:17

agony in which it now is. Rather, He is with every part of it, caring for everything and every creature.

Why is God allowing this? Why hasn't our omnipotent and omniscient God put an end to this? Why has He been enduring this for seemingly millions, if not billions, of years?

The Adversary

We are in the midst of a great cosmic drama. In fact, we are in the concluding scene of the last act, and the climactic finale is about to occur. But to apprehend this incredible “play,” we must be aware of all the main actors. There is of course God, the chief protagonist. There is also man, who is in need of the heroic protagonist’s salvation. But, there is a third party—this one is the source of all evil and darkness in this drama.

In God's creation there are not only all the items of the physical universe, there are also innumerable items in the spiritual realm. Among these are the angels. The apparent greatest of all the angels was the one named Lucifer. The word of

God tells us much of him in Isaiah¹ and Ezekiel.² He was perfect in all of his ways. He sealed up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. He led the heavenly host in its praise to God. Among all the creation, his intelligence and insight were unmatched. He was the friend of God, walking with God in the heavenly paradise. He was a wonder among many wonders. In fact, it may be that a higher, more intelligent, and more beautiful creation could not be, if indeed that is possible.

But, beholding his own beauty, marveling at his own intelligence, and believing himself to be more than a creation, he aspired to ascend to the throne of God and displace God as the ruler and judge of all. In this grand delusion, he rebelled against the One who created him. In so doing he gave up all that is good, all that is moral, and all that comes forth from love. God is love, so to rebel against God is to abnegate that love which God is. What this angel became in his rebellion was a creature of darkness, evil, hate, and murder. There

¹ Isa. 14:12–15

² Ezek. 28:12–17

is no truth and no light in him.¹ Neither is there love, mercy, gentleness, kindness, or any of the great attributes of God. He is a being of darkness, hiding in it to mask what kind of person he has become. He is no longer Lucifer, which means bearer of light; rather, he is now Satan, the great adversary.

For eons Satan has attempted to thwart God at every opportunity and in every conceivable way. His astounding intelligence has allowed him to escape God's judgment, at least for a time. But he has made some dreadful mistakes, because he cannot grasp the depths of God's love and wisdom, because he cannot apprehend the light² since he is a creature of darkness.

First, he injected himself into humanity in the garden of Eden. Sin is the satanic nature within mankind for sin enters man,³ dwells in him,⁴

¹ John 8:44

² John 1:5

³ Rom. 5:12

⁴ Rom. 7:17, 20

abounds in him,¹ reigns in him,² has dominion over him,³ and even makes man his slave.⁴ Man was not created sinful; rather, man partook of sin in the garden of Eden when he opened himself to Satan's evil, rebellious, and blasphemous suggestions concerning God, and then ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.⁵ It was then that sin—the satanic nature—entered into man. This was an enormous mistake on Satan's part, since it guaranteed that judgment would eventually befall him, for by injecting himself into man, his satanic nature became locatable and therefore judgeable.

The second, and much greater, mistake was his crucifixion of the man Jesus, the incarnate God. He did not realize by putting Christ to death, he was actually destroying himself through death.⁶ And as Christ was on the cross dying, Satan must have seen

¹ Rom. 5:20

² Rom. 5:21; 6:12

³ Rom. 6:14

⁴ Rom. 6:20

⁵ Gen. 3:1–7

⁶ Heb. 2:14

his mistake. He led his followers in an attempt to persuade Christ to come down from the cross.¹ But it was too late: Satan's fate was sealed.

And so this great universal drama has played out over the years since Christ's crucifixion, heading inexorably toward the demise of Satan and the revelation of all that God has been doing behind the scenes during this time. Though his time is now short, Satan still fights in every way possible to avoid that end. Indeed, he must fight, he must continue to rebel, for that is his nature. He has no other way of being.

And in his hatred of God and all those who are of God, he seeks to destroy and cause as much damage as he possibly can. Truly, he rejoices—if such a word can actually be applied to him—in causing God pain by damaging, destroying, and inflicting pain upon God's creation. And this is particularly so of his actions toward the believers in Christ.

Satan knows that hurting God's creation causes God pain. Satan is aware that God cares

¹ Matt. 27:39–43

greatly about His creation. It is no wonder that when we look at the suffering and agony of the creation it seems to get more and more gruesome. From the horrific acts of the Roman Empire against the Christians, to the unspeakably horrible tortures inflicted upon the believers by Roman Catholicism in the Middle Ages, to the present-day slaughter of Christians, Satan seeks to hurt God in every way possible.

It seems Satan actually believes that he can cause God so much pain that God will surrender, that God will beg him to stop, that God will concede defeat. But Satan does not know God well enough. He does not realize that God is allowing all this with a purpose. God is willing to pass through all that He Himself is experiencing with the creation for a great purpose beyond not only our comprehension, but beyond His adversary's comprehension as well.

God's Heart Revealed

Many atheists justify their faithlessness by asking the question, "If there is a God, how could He allow the terrible things happening on the

Earth?” But since we know there is a God and given what has been shared earlier in this booklet, the real question is not what the atheists ask. Rather, the real question is, “Why would God create if He knew the evils that would befall His creation and the pain He Himself would have to endure due to this?” And a second question—a corollary to the first—is “Why does God continue to endure this pain?”

The answer to these questions can be found in God’s nature and in His heart’s desire. In eternity past, before He created, God had a desire, a good pleasure, in His heart.¹ He longed for many sons:² sons who would share His life³ and His nature;⁴ sons who would be like Him in every way. They were to be complete and perfect,⁵ just as He was. God is extraordinary, having many marvelous attributes. He is abounding in love, kindness,

¹ Eph. 1:9

² Eph. 1:4–5

³ Eph. 4:18

⁴ 2 Pet. 1:4

⁵ Matt. 5:48

gentleness, meekness, humility, forgiveness, longsuffering, care, righteousness, empathy, sincerity, honesty, patience, forthrightness, mercy, generosity, faithfulness, and who can say how many other most excellent qualities. His sons were to share all of these, His attributes. They were to be rich in these, even as He is. They would be genuine sons of the eternal God.

But herein lies a great problem. God chose to create a race of beings—man—that would be similar to Him, but *created*. He would give these beings free will, for He Himself has a free will, and His great heart could tolerate nothing less for the creatures He would fashion. He would then offer Himself to these beings to become something within them that not only matched them—for they and He were very similar—but was eternal and uncreated. By joining Himself to these beings in such a way, He would produce His many eternal sons.

Yet man has a free will. Man must not only choose to allow the Creator to indwell him in His life and nature; man must also choose to allow the various parts of his created being to be not simply

indwelt by God, but in effect to be “consumed” by the divine Being. For His sons to partake of God’s various attributes, they must allow this God with these attributes to become one with man’s created virtues. In this way, God’s sons would partake of all God is, manifesting His attributes in all they are and do.

Yet there is an enormous difficulty in this process. How can man partake of attributes that he cannot see and realize? How can he partake of God’s generosity without seeing, realizing, and experiencing that generosity? How can he partake of God’s care without experiencing that care? And so, here is the crux of the problem: how can God manifest His forgiveness to man if there is nothing to forgive? How can man experience God’s unfathomable mercy, if there is no need of mercy? How can man come to know the divine long-suffering without seeing it in the divine Being?

All that God creates is without flaw. It follows then that there is no need for Him to have to forgive anything He has created. What was God to do? God knew something profound: everything that is created is, by virtue of being a creation,

corruptible. Only that which is eternal is incorruptible. God saw that unless He somehow maintained a creation's state of incorruption, it would inevitably in some part or another corrupt itself. How then could God create anything knowing that it would eventually fall into corruption? How could God maintain a creation's incorruption and still give creatures in that creation a free will? God in His extraordinary wisdom found a way.

God created and, as God knew would happen, the creation became corrupted. The origin of that corruption in God's creation is Satan. He corrupted himself, and so brought the creation into a fallen state. But God saw in this the means to manifest to man all His wonderful attributes. The fall of Satan and consequently of man allowed God to show forth so much of Himself that would otherwise have remained hidden and unseen—for example, His mercy,¹ His forgiveness,² His longsuffering,³

¹ Eph. 2:4

² Col. 1:13–14

³ 2 Pet. 3:9

and His wisdom.¹ *This was necessary for God to produce His many sons.*

God is pouring out forgiveness to man. Why? To produce His many sons. God is showing untold mercy to man. Why? For His many sons. God is enduring the pain of watching His creation suffer. Why? For His many sons. God has been, and is, bearing and enduring all the pain in the universe for countless years. Why? Many sons! *God has done and is doing all this because of His unfathomably great love for us, His many sons!*

The Creation

Recall now the apostle's words in Romans:²

For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of

¹ Rom. 11:33–35

² Rom. 8:19–22

corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

It is true that the creation is suffering. But God in His wisdom foresees an end that is worth all the suffering both He and the creation endure: a universe in which His many sons—who are both part of that creation *and* divine—reign in glory, and through whom the universe is kept from corruption. These sons will bear His stunning attributes to a creation of which they have been a part—His gentleness, His meekness, His lowliness, His majesty, His brilliance. All of what He is will be expressed to the universe through His firstborn¹—Jesus—and through His many other sons. How great is God’s love and wisdom and glory!

But . . .

But in your good heart of love toward God’s creation, you might ask, “What about the present

¹ Rom. 8:29

creation that suffers? What about the faithful dog that gives its life to save its master? What about the creatures that are slaughtered for no other reason than the bloodlust of man? What of the little creatures who suffer an agonizing end due to fallen man's carelessness or greed for money or power?"

The Bible doesn't say much about this. But there is a verse in Luke,¹ a companion to the ones in Matthew with which we started this small booklet: *"Are not five sparrows sold for two pence? and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God."*

What does the Lord mean when He says the sparrows are not forgotten in God's sight? It means they are still remembered by God. God still sees them. To God they still exist. And if this is true of the sparrows, it must also be true of all the creatures. God remembers the faithful dog that died for its master. God remembers the little creature crushed under the wheels of the speeding and careless driver. God remembers!

¹ Luke 12:6



What this means for the future I do not know. Any pronouncement by me would simply be my speculation. But this I know: God remembers! And the God I know is full of care, compassion, and love. And this God is also absolutely righteous.