

Do Not Be Afraid: The Most Frequent Command of Scripture

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[0 : 0 0] that we do frequently and something we do so often and that's to be afraid afraid of what's beyond our control afraid of those who appear to be stronger than ourselves afraid of those who yes who are able to hurt and cause you to suffer for your faith we can be afraid of course we are afraid even at this moment of the the microscopic virus that's caused devastating suffering to millions we are afraid fear grips our hearts fear can paralyze our thoughts fear can minimize our actions and doing good for the the sake of the lord jesus fear can cause us to hide our lights instead of shining for the savior fear can grip our hearts hearts that should be trusting in god at all times and yet fear can have that devastating impact on our faith and we rely on our own self-assessment of god and even claim that god is is not with us or for us because of our fear and you know when we realize that some of the people whom jesus was giving this command this most frequent command of course the command not to fear not to be afraid and realize to whom jesus has given this command in the first instance well it's his disciples it's those who had been with jesus for for jesus entire earthly ministry it's to them that jesus is giving this command those who'd heard jesus speak those who'd heard jesus preach those who'd seen jesus perform miracles it's the same ones whom jesus is saying don't be afraid don't fear don't be anxious but trust in me trust in me to know that all things do work together for good to those who love god and it's that theme of not fearing of of not being afraid particularly from this perspective of knowing god knowing god who's sovereign sovereign in all things it's that theme that we want to spend some time on this morning and to do it for your encouragement to do this for your strength strengthen your heart as you you navigate the so many circumstances in life that god puts before you to trust in him the more in all these circumstances jesus has given us this word his word to give you that encouragement to know that you have more worth more value than many sparrows again we'll look at the details in a moment so we're going to look at these well-known words of jesus i'm sure all of you have heard them these words that of course we need to look at in context because of course given to those who are jesus disciples even to you to me who seek to follow follow the lord jesus because these words are given to those who are with jesus on mission jesus has sent out his disciples jesus sends you out sends me out to tell of the glorious gospel of the lord jesus so we're on that mission as the disciples we're on that mission to show forth jesus and in that mission you're to show love to him and to others you're to exercise faith that that commitment to him and that faith that commitment requires you it requires me it requires us not to be afraid yes to realize what's out there what is real what's challenging what's uncertain from a human perspective but to realize at all times god is in control god is sovereign and therefore as jesus commands us not to be afraid let's read the words again just to re-emphasize the focus of our thoughts

this morning are not two sparrows sold for a penny and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father but even the hairs of your head are all numbered fear not therefore you have more value than many sparrows let's think first of all of the giver of this command who's giving this command because it's very very important we realize who's saying these words i mean we read earlier before verse 29 we read really at the beginning of these words to his disciples that we see in verse 16 that Jesus is giving them a reality check he's sending them out on a mission and he's doing that with a reality check because they're about to they're going to be sent to do God's will they're going to be sent to do God's work they're going to be involved in acts of mercy acts of grace acts of healing they're going to be in Jesus name and for what they're going to be doing they're going to face opposition they're going to be as Jesus said they're going to be sheep amongst wolves they're going to face persecution for their commitment to Jesus they're not to be anxious they're not to be afraid because as Jesus tells them they're not alone they're not alone in the mission that Jesus is sending them on as you're not alone as I'm not alone in that work that you've been given to do for the sake of the kingdom and so as we see just in a few sentences as Jesus particularly focuses on how the disciples are to respond and being told what they're being asked to do we see repeatedly Jesus saying don't be afraid fear not don't be afraid of those who are who are persecuting you don't be afraid of those who've got the power to kill the body but have no power to deal with the soul but it's for the disciples Jesus saying it's for you to truly yes to do another kind of hearing to fear the Lord to revere him to honor God to have that righteous fear that that abides in our Lord and Savior so that when Jesus talks about sparrow somebody talks about you know God's care over these tiny creatures he's telling them you're so much more valuable infinitely more valuable than even these tiny creatures so don't be afraid don't be afraid when you're going out and mission in the name of Jesus go out in courage go out in boldness go out in faith go out in trust in the Lord who's with you always now we're going to look particularly the care of God towards those whom he sends out to to speak in his name we're going to look at that in more detail in a moment but realize who's giving these words not to fear it's Jesus it's the son of God it's the sinless son of God it's it's the one whose word is sure it's the one whose word is utterly reliable it's the one in whose word we can have absolute confidence it's the one whom you follow and so yes as Jesus is telling his disciples you're going to face many difficulties you're going to face hostile opponents but you're to be strong in me strong in the Lord strong as you exercise that calling that that I'm giving you these are the words of Jesus whose word we trust absolutely fully completely because these are words of command this is no option this is no take it or leave it word if Jesus is giving a command then we follow that word of course at the moment the times that we're living in we've

been given many commands many commands to keep safe in this in this pandemic and this virus these are commands that aren't given lightly these are commands that are to be followed these are commands given by those who've been given that the common grace of God to to look after the citizens of the country so we obey our leaders we do as they tell us to do they they have our well-being or certainly our physical and even a mental well-being at stake and how much more then do we follow the command of the Lord Jesus how much more do we realize that the command that Jesus gives to you is for your well-being is for your well-being of body mind soul for all that you are he's giving this command not to fear for your sake for the sake of your for the sake of your for the sake of your well-being for the sake of his kingdom so how much more than to obey the word of Jesus not to fear don't be afraid of those who are maligning you for your faith don't be afraid of those yes who who will hurt you verbally and even hurt you physically and do that because of your commitment to the Lord Jesus remember as we said this command is giving given for your well-being your spiritual well-being and because it's given to you for your good then listen and obey do as God commands you to do do it as what we find Jesus telling his disciples not to fear because God cares for you as Jesus tells us in that illustration in the in the with regard to the sparrow so what about the reason for this command well as you see in the the illustration this reason not to fear it's because God loves you because he cares for you so much and see the illustration I mean as Jesus says if God knows so much about these tiny little sparrows if he cares for these these these tiny creatures these birds that certainly in the Middle East were considered just the smallest and least valuable if God as Jesus goes on with that another illustration then if God counts the very numbers of your hair strands that seem so so minimal minimal in terms of worth if God cares for you that much then realize that he loves you he cares for you knows you and he provides for you and everything for you or me of little faith let's just probe this illustration a little more because there's much more to be considered in this illustration because Jesus in giving this illustration he's spelling out just exactly how much God cares for you and he's giving this illustration to tell that particularly context as we said of the message giving the message of the gospel and Jesus is telling them as he's telling you you're valuable that you're precious that you're worth more than many many sparrows so don't be afraid don't be afraid see what Jesus is saying here

I mean in the marketplace at the time that Jesus was was given this word the cheapest the least expensive birds well even used for for food in these days we might say and I hope not too irreverently this was the the least expensive one to buy one get one free in the in the Jewish market two sold for a penny a penny was a well it was a tiny little copper coin it was worth hardly anything worth just a throwaway coin even but enough to buy two little sparrows two sold for that tiny amount of money so these animals considered so insignificant little importance in the bigger scale of things not one of these little sparrows that fell even at that time in in Palestine not one of them was beyond the knowledge of God not one of them would fall as it were without God's involvement in in that creature's life because even tiny little sparrows matter to God people thought they were practically worthless they were part of God's creation and they were of real value to God as somebody said God isn't so busy running the universe there's no time for little birds that's how God looks at these apparently worthless little creatures and care for them how much more does he care for you you part of humanity you who are the crown of God's creation and yes you who know him and who are known of him you who are the object of his saving love for whom God sent his one and only son to die for you to give his precious life for you that's the measure of of God's love for you so believe it you are worth more than many sparrows as the Lord's people as you who speak and live and testify and witness to the Lord Jesus you're going out into a difficult world you're going out into a world that is so hostile to the gospel remember you're not on your own remember that nothing but nothing can separate you from the love of God that's in Christ Jesus nothing but nothing whether it's words spoken against you whether it's actions against you whether it's whatever level of persecution you face for being a Christian nothing but nothing can remove you from the love of God so that when you even might even feel worthless even before the world and the world ridicules you for your faith and you might even feel utterly insignificant and you feel as if you're no value to anyone remember what Jesus is saying you're of great worth before your father your heavenly father he is your heavenly father he's your father now and father forever so God cares for you and God cares even for the most minute of details as Jesus says even the very hairs of your head are all numbered in other words

God cares for every single detail of your life the very fact that he knows every single hair in your head my head is my receding hairline he knows absolutely everything about you he cares for you utterly completely in every single detail and so when you're tempted to think that how could God possibly be interested in me how could he possibly be caring for every detail of my life when you're tempted to think like that then return to God's word and realize that before God if every hair of your head is numbered then God cares for every aspect of your life it's not a sporadic care it's not a momentary care a minimal care you have to go to let's say a doctor or hospital for example that care is wonderful but it's you don't go every day every moment of every day to the doctor but the Lord Jesus he cares for you always at all times in every circumstance just as Dylan sang then onward on my journey

[16:00] I come to understand that every hair is numbered like every grain of sand and that should give you the most utter encouragement that every hair is numbered like every grain of sand the Lord God our sovereign one cares for you in every aspect of your life what if you're not on that journey as we sang onward in my journey I come to understand that every hair is numbered like every grain of sand what if you're not yet on that journey what if you haven't yet given your life to God well think carefully about what Jesus already has been saying to the disciples when he's telling them that what we're real fear must be is is fear of God that true honouring and revering of God and if we don't have that fear that true fear of God that true honouring of God then yes there is that proper fear and to fear the one who has power over your very soul the one who has that power to cast as Jesus says into hell and hell of course isn't any kind of medieval fantasy to to make people afraid but hell is real

Jesus spoke of hell on a number of occasions and if we said that the command that Jesus gives not to be afraid if that is utterly reliable then we know of course all of his word is reliable and true and if Jesus speaks of hell then we know that hell is real a place of eternal punishment and so listen to the words of Jesus listen to as he calls you to himself to come to him to trust him always to trust him for your very life you who know him you who have given to him your very life then again we have to emphasise this truth you are loved by God you know how much God loves you how much he cares for you when you think of you put you in capital letters he cares for you you know there are times when we don't fully believe that word there are times when we when we have that doubt even of God's love for ourselves there are times when we do doubt that God's care for us in every detail there are times when we can even you know cry out with David the psalmist how long Lord will you forget me forever there are times even when we think that God is forgetting us but no

God loves you always he cares for you always you have more value than many spars because God's love for you is an eternal love as we read in Jeremiah where God says to his people I have loved you with an everlasting love and remember you have more value not in yourself but because of the value God places on you through through his sending the Lord Jesus to die for you that value that you've been given through grace through the grace of the Lord Jesus and his coming to save you the grace of God in sending Jesus to to bear your sins and you bearing his righteousness that makes you so valuable so let's think finally of the key aspect of this command the key the key aspect why Jesus has look at the big picture why is Jesus given this command not to fear the most frequent of commands in the Bible why are we not to fear well surely it's to encourage you to encourage all who follow Jesus as we said the disciples they were going to go into enemy territory they were afraid they were going to meet evil they're going to meet with evil spirits they're going to meet evil people they're going to face hardships they're going to face rejection they're going to face persecution later they would face trial and in many cases they were going to face death for the sake of the kingdom so at that point as Jesus sends them out, they're needing this assurance that to God they were valuable.

They were of superior worth to even the very animal kingdom, even the tiniest of God's creatures, even the tiniest creatures whom God cares for.

You know, man has been made in the image of God, man to whom the Son of Man came to redeem and to save for all eternity. And so the disciples at this point needed that assurance of God's care for them as Jesus was sending them out to tell of the Saviour of the world coming and the Saviour who had come to give his life for many.

[21 : 14] And you who've been sent, you've been given that commission to stand for truth, speak for Jesus, to live by the gospel and uphold the gospel, to abide by the law of God.

Well, you're entering, you've already entered enemy territory. You've been given particular work to do as God has given you for his sake, for the sake of the kingdom.

Are you afraid as you've been given that commission? Well, you may well be afraid, scared of what certainly isn't any kind of weak opposition. The enemy is powerful.

Words are hurting. I can even say, even in recent experience or experience in the past, many a believer has been knocked off balance, as it were, and by fear from those who can, yes, hurt the body and torment the mind by words of hurt and hatred.

Be assured that God knows and that God cares. And that God won't let you suffer beyond what you can endure because he loves you.

[22 : 28] Because you're more valuable than even the tiniest creatures that God cares for. And so have that assurance, that assurance even now of his presence with you now and always.

You know, I can just picture Jesus when he was giving these words to his disciples. I can just picture him there in the marketplace with the disciples. And these sparrows being sold in the little cages, sold for that tiny amount of money.

And Jesus giving that visual picture of the disciples there confirming Jesus' words as he's speaking these words and gazing on them in love.

Well, let's not be too trite about this, but let's be realistic. Next time you're out and you're walking this afternoon, you might see a sparrow, you might see a tiny creature, any creature.

Then remember the word of Jesus. You have more value than that creature whom you're going to see later this afternoon, later this week. You have more value than that animal.

[23 : 34] Because God knows you. God cares for you. He cares for every detail, every aspect of your life. He's not going to allow you to be overwhelmed by fear.

He sends you to be his witness before a watching and hostile world. Be encouraged. Be someone who takes heart at the word of Jesus, the word given and truth given in love.

And so be encouraged. Be renewed and vigorous as you take your stand for truth. As you face the world with courage, that strengthening that God gives you, even by his word.

Even as you hear Jesus speak to your heart to make you realize that you're his, that you're not your own. But you're his through his redeeming love.

And so in response then, yes, give him praise. Give thanks for that love that's raised you to that status that, well, that means that you're never forgotten.

[24 : 37] You're always remembered, always remembered by our great God and Savior who's loved you and who loves you with that everlasting love.

Fear not then. You're of more value than many souls. Amen. Our Heavenly Father, we give thanks for that word of comfort, that word of assurance, that word that tells of your Heavenly Father's love towards your people.

May it be, Lord, that even this morning there have been those who have been comforted by your word. You may have had that sense of unworthiness, of even not being loved of you.

Lord, encourage them by your word to know that they are yours and that they have been loved by you from all eternity. So hear us, Lord, as we continue in worship before you now.

Hear us as we offer up unto you the praises of our hearts. Even as these words reach heaven itself, may you bless all that has been done in your name this day, both here and elsewhere.

[25 : 54] So go before us now, Lord, we pray. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's close now in prayer of the benediction.

Amen.

Amen.