

Title: You Are Precious in His Sight

Theme: God cares for you



Object: A pair of binoculars and a book about birds

Scripture: 29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father... 31 So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:29 & 31)

What are some hobbies that people enjoy? I thought of a few **-S-** reading, **-S-** sports, **-S-** stamp collecting, and **-S-** photography are popular hobbies. Some people like to build things like **-S-** model ships or **-S-** airplanes. Others may enjoy outdoor activities like **-S-** fishing, **-S-** hunting or **-S-** hiking. **-S-** Do you have a hobby? What is your hobby?

Do you think God has a hobby? OK, I know the Bible doesn't tell us that God has a hobby, but if He did, do you know what I think it might be? I think it might be Bird Watching! If I use my imagination, I can see God sitting in heaven with a pair of **-S-** binoculars. He is trying to see how many birds He can find with His binoculars. If I really stretch my imagination, I can even hear Him saying, "There's a **-S-** Bluebird, and that's a **-S-** Cardinal. God tells the angels, "Oh look, there's an **-S-** Eagle, a **-S-** Meadowlark, and a **-S-** Sparrow." A Sparrow? Of course He would see a Sparrow, there are millions of them. You've seen them -- common, ordinary, brown Sparrows -- but God must have loved them, because He made so many of them.

One day Jesus was teaching His disciples that they should not be afraid. "Don't be afraid when people threaten you" Jesus said. "Two sparrows are sold for a penny, but not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father knowing it. **-S-** So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows."

It has been said, "God must have loved the common people, because He made so many of them." I don't think that God sees us as common or ordinary. If He did, He would not love us in such an uncommon and extraordinary way! The Bible says,  "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:6 & 7)  We are more precious to Him than a whole flock of sparrows -- and we know how much He loves the sparrow.

Father, we know that we are precious in Your sight. Thank you for loving us with such an uncommon and extraordinary love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

-S- Believe In Jesus

PRAYER

Our passage this morning in John chapter 8 is well known and often preached upon. Many sermons are given to Christians on John 8:30-32 to encourage them to live like Christians. There are sermons on this passage to those who do not believe - urging them to believe in Jesus and be saved. What about when this passage is preached to those who accept the doctrines of Christianity, as an intellectual decision, but they have never come to the point of accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Studies indicate this last situation may be the majority of Americans who call themselves Christians. These people are NOT genuinely born-again, but they are not hostile to Christianity either and they fill churches on Sunday for a variety of reasons. Often one can see a difference in how they live Monday to Saturday. Why are their lives different the rest of the week? What should be done about this horrible situation of spiritually dead people who believe they are Christians?

The answer comes from Jesus, God the Son, when He addressed those around Him who said they believed, but had not wholeheartedly committed themselves to Him. Jesus made it very clear when He said, **-S-** *“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”* (John 8:31-32)

-S- Two Kinds of Belief

To understand what Jesus is saying here in verse 32, we need to first understand there is a big **-S-** difference between believing Jesus and believing “in” Jesus. Many Bible translations do not deal well with this distinction. Words are important and John, directed by the Holy Spirit, chose them with care. Let me back up to verse 30 to make my point. After Jesus had been speaking to the people the Apostle John clarifies by writing, **-S-** “As He (*Jesus*) spoke these things, many came to believe **in** Him.” John chooses the word **-S-** εἰς “*eis*” in the Greek or translated “in” in English. **-S-** “*eis*” means: into, on, inside, in order, to a deep degree and completely. John is saying these people have completely committed themselves to Jesus. Now verse 30 is followed by verse 31 where Jesus says to the **-S-** “Jews who had believed Him.” In the Greek the distinction is clear between those in verse 30 who believed “in” Jesus unto salvation and those in verse 31 who had merely believed certain things that Jesus had said and taught. This is **not** the only place where the difference between these two groups of people is shown, one example, is found in John chapter six, verse 29 where Jesus says, **-S-** “This is the work of God, that you believe **in** Him (*Jesus*) whom He has sent.” Making the same point that one is to believe completely “in” Jesus as the Son of God and this is true salvation. The people immediately respond to Jesus in chapter 6, saying, **-S-** “What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?” (John 6:30) They believed some of the teachings of Jesus but did not believe “in” Him unto salvation. Is it possible to believe Jesus’ teachings and signs and yet fail to believe “in” Him unto salvation? This is the point - and the answer is, “Yes.” There are a number of examples in the scriptures. One clear example is Judas. **-S-** Judas lived in the inner circle of

those following Jesus and he certainly believed, at least, some of the things about Jesus and some of the things Jesus taught. Judas believed enough to be a preacher, for early on he went out with the other disciples to preach the gospel two by two. So we know that Judas preached the gospel, yet, we also know from the scriptures that he was not saved. He followed Jesus for, I am sure, a number of reasons, but he had not given his heart and soul to believe “in” Jesus as the Messiah. **-B-** Early in my ministry I was working and teaching at church for week to help them with their Missions Ministry. Towards the end of the week the pastor in private admitted to me he was not saved; he had become a pastor because his grandfather and father had been pastors. I was in total shock – how could this be? The good news that he and I later prayed together and he truly gave his life to Christ. I have run into this several times in my ministry and every time I am saddened, but no longer in shock. When the Apostle James wrote about the relationship between faith and works he said, **-S-** “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.” (James 2:19) Even the demons believe certain things about Jesus, but not unto salvation. This truly is the bottom-line – believing in one’s heart, soul and mind – which means believing “in” and living for Christ. Paul made his heart’s desire known to the Philippians when he wrote, **-S-** “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21) This is a life committed to believing “in” and living for Christ.

These two levels of belief remind me of the story of **-S-** Jean Gravalet, born in France in 1824. He became famous acrobat, known by the name stage name of Blondin. In America he walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope 1,100 feet long and 160 feet above the water. To add flair after crossing a number of times one day he pushed wheelbarrow across. Another time he stopped at halfway and

cooked an omelet. Then to the amazement of all he announced he would walk across Niagara Falls carrying a man. This drew a large crowd and newspaper reporters. As promised, he walked across carrying a man on his back, once he reached the other side he then turned around and brought the man back. After setting the man down he asked another man nearby in the crowd, “Do you believe I could do the same with you?” “Of course,” the man replied, “I just saw you do it.” Blondin then said, “Well, hop on my back and I will carry you across.” The man answered, “Not on your life!” You see, this is the difference between believing something on an intellectual level and believing in the same sense the Apostle John tells us in the Bible – to believe “in” Jesus unto salvation. True Christians believe “in” Christ and trust Him to carry us over the churning waters and whirlpools of life, thus fulfilling what Jesus said, **-S-** “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.” If one continues living out the words of Jesus in their life and is obedient to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, then verse 32 becomes true in the very living out of their lives, **-S-** “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

-S- Eye for Faith

The next point I wish to make, which is a very important point, is this; **-S-** Jesus takes notice of everything, not just the sparrow that falls from the sky, as taught in the Children’s Moment. He sees even weak faith and through God’s holy scriptures, history, creation and His faithful witnesses - Jesus seeks to encourage weak faith to grow. Intellectual faith is not saving faith, but saving faith may grow from this beginning. This is why in our passage Jesus spoke to those who only believed His teachings, but not “in” Him unto salvation. He spoke to them in order to encourage them to grow in faith.

God is the only One who knows whom He has called. God chose not to awaken the dead soul and hard heart of Judas, thus allowing Judas to have the desires of his self-seeking sin filled heart. Judas was without excuse for his actions and disbelief, **-S-** “For since the creation of the world His (God’s) invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20)

So while Jesus does not disparage small faith, He does not praise it either. As Jesus began He said, **-S-** “If you continue in My word.” (John 8:31) Jesus does not send the people away for their shallow faith, but neither does He promise them the blessings of Christian life without the condition of true faith. They must perform a task – they must believe and this will be evident by their **-S-** “continuing in My word” and living out Jesus’ words in truth, and this will lead a true believer to know beyond doubt that **-S-** “you are truly disciples of Mine.” Jesus is saying one must believe “in” Me unto salvation and rest in Me as your Savior.

This passage reminds me of Jesus’ words at the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew, **-S-** “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14) Jesus is not saying here that salvation is by works or if a Christian slips up and sins they will lose their salvation. In a historical view we must realize that this is early in Jesus’ ministry. The people He was talking to had no concept of His coming death and resurrection and of course, they were not saved. They believed the things Jesus was teaching, as did the people Jesus was speaking to here in John chapter 8, which is much later in His ministry. However

in Matthew Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and glorification, the absolute proof of His deity is almost three years away, while in our John passage it is now less than six months away. The excitement of Jesus' early ministry would fade and give way to hostility and this would lead to open persecution. Jesus is concerned about these believers and hearers of His teachings and wants them to become believers "in" Him as the Christ. He is telling them when discouragement comes and it will, they need to stay on the narrow path, stay on the path until the end. It is at the end of the path or journey when the Cross of Christ will be behind them that they will pass through the same gate into eternity that Jesus holds open to all the Father calls to be His. Jesus' message has not changed, here in John, Jesus is telling people do not be discouraged by difficulty, by the lost world who would soon openly show their hatred for Jesus and all who follow Him. Jesus is saying the truth of the gospel, the truth of Himself, the truth of the empowering Holy Spirit will by the grace of God the Father set them free – free of this lost and dying world and ultimately free from damnation. Nothing has changed – Jesus is speaking these very same words to us this day. You must believe – **-S-** "LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH." (Mark 12:30) This is what Jesus demands as saving faith.

-S- Three Results of True Discipleship

Jesus encouraged His listeners to remain faithful, to continue in good and hard times and the result would be that they would experience peace and freedom. Jesus gives His listeners three reasons and results that they should hold steadfast and keep on living out true faith.

-S- First – Discipleship Is Verifiable

Jesus tells His Jewish crowd, **-S-** *“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.”* Jesus is saying your faithfulness and the proof of your love for Me, the Messiah will be verifiable. True disciples are not disciples in word only as found in so many churches today, but they are true disciples who live by true faith. As a true disciple your life is different that it was prior to being saved; you think differently, you see the world differently, you see the purpose of mankind differently, you speak differently and you act differently. These changes are the evidence of the Holy Spirit working in your heart and soul. I was a very different person before God got a hold of me and saved me – just ask my precious wife, Joyce. I had very few of the Fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians – now I have more, much more, but still far from the goal of exhibiting all of them the majority of the time. Just as a reminder the **-S-** Fruit of the Spirit is like an orange – one fruit made up of many slices. Paul writes to the Galatians saying, **-S-** *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”* (Galatians 5:22-23) I count 9 slices that make up this fruit. When we live these slices of evidences out in our lives – the fruit is sweet indeed. When we are living with this kind of faith there is no need for laws to control us because we are living by faith and love of Christ and as His ambassadors we live to love and serve others in His stead. We have no desire to break the laws of God given in the Old Testament. By the power of the Holy Spirit we **-S-** *“have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* We are no longer selfish and self-absorbed, and we have overcome the majority of our sinful traits we possess by our fallen nature and those we were trained in growing up – we are now, most of the time, able to **-S-** *“live by the*

Spirit” and this enables us to **-S-** “walk by the Spirit.” True believers are not hit-or-miss, one thing on Sunday and another the rest of the week. True believers are not part-time, but their spiritual lives engulf career, family and everything that they are. True believers have a passion for the spiritual things that make up being followers of Christ – a true believer desires Christ over and above all else in life. As Paul continued in Galatians, **-S-** “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24) I hope I have just described most of the people here this morning. My brothers and sisters, **-S-** “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25) Showing the world what we are, by living out our love for Christ.

-S- Second – You Will Know The Truth

Jesus is promising true belief “in” Him will give His disciples eternal truth; they will know the truth of spiritual things. A true believer will not know all things, for only God knows all. But, they will know enough to believe “in” Jesus as the Christ and what they do come to know, by the power of the Holy Spirit and Word of God, they will know for certain. Many who call themselves Christian have beliefs that are in a state of flux. Instead of being rooted solidly in the scriptures, the very Word of God, they let what they believe be swayed by the teachings of people who are always searching for a new discovery or twist to the scriptures. These teachers or preachers do this to promote themselves as being called by God and being special and being set apart from other believers by God or they change the Word of God to make it more appealing to the social desires of our corrupt society. This is so very sad, just like the pastor I met that was not saved. Jesus promises a true believer will know and know for certain. What is true, was true in the past is true today and will always be true in the future and the truth is found

in the Bible. I also want to make clear that any inspiration of the Holy Spirit is **always** consistence with the Word of God. Jesus spoke to God the Father about and on behalf of those who would believe “in” Him and be His disciples – you might want to turn in your bibles to John chapter 17, beginning in verse 13, where Jesus is saying, **-S-** “**But now I come to You** (*Jesus coming to and speaking to His Father*); **and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.** This is exactly what Jesus has been doing here in John chapter 8. **I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.** We are to be in the world, but not of the world. **Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.** We are to live as ambassadors of Jesus to the fallen world. **For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.** We are seen as righteous and are sanctified by the grace of God through our true faith in Jesus. **I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;** (Jesus is saying people will come to believe “in” Him unto salvation by the preaching and sharing of their testimony by true believers.) **that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us,** (True believe are in the process of what we call sanctification or becoming more and more as one with God – this is the life process of a true disciple.) **so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”** (John 17:13-21) The result is the world will know - Jesus was sent by God the Father – He is the Christ. This describes the life of a true disciple.

-S- Third – You Will be Set Free

It is Jesus who sets people free; it is Jesus' teaching, His regenerating a person's soul, and the gift of the Holy Spirit that sets one free. Therefore, the **-S-** freedom one experiences as a true Christian is on a higher and greater level than that which men and the world can offer. One is not free to do anything they want, but as a Christian we are free from the corruption of the world and God frees our spirit to pursue Him and the truth of His Word. Most people did not understand what Christ said here in John over two thousands years ago and most people do not understand it today. It is true Christians that believe "in" Jesus as Lord and Savior that come to understand His grace and that the freedom He speaks of is not the freedom that the world seeks or understands. The world seeks it's own destructive pleasure and believes it is freedom, but the truth is that they are enslaved to their sin.

Do not hesitate! If you have not come to believe "in" Jesus as your Lord and Savior, whether, you accept some of His teachings or do not know Him at all – now is the time to give you heart to Him fully! Your hope is in Jesus, **-S-** "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*" (John 8:31-32) Truly believe "in" Jesus unto salvation and be His disciples set free from your sin and this world!