

Luke 12:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

Analysis

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?—Jesus shifts from God's power to judge to God's care for the insignificant. The rhetorical question expects the answer "yes." Five sparrows (strouthia pente, στρουθία πέντε) sold for two farthings (ἀσσαρίων δύο, two assaria—the smallest Roman copper coins) illustrates minimal economic value. Sparrows were the cheapest available meat for the poor. Matthew 10:29 mentions two sparrows for one farthing; here five for two suggests the fifth was thrown in free—utterly worthless. Yet **not one of them is forgotten before God** (ἐν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιλελησμένον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ).

The verb epilelēsmenon (ἐπιλελησμένον, forgotten) is perfect passive participle—God has not forgotten and will not forget even one worthless sparrow. The phrase before God (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ) emphasizes divine perspective and attention. If God tracks every insignificant bird, how much more does He care for His image-bearers? This is classic qal wahomer reasoning (light to heavy, lesser to greater)—the foundation of verse 7's "of more value than many sparrows." God's comprehensive providence extends to creatures humans consider trash, guaranteeing His care for those made in His image.

Historical Context

Sparrows were abundant in Palestine and sold as food for the poor who could not afford larger animals. Two assaria (Roman copper coins worth about 1/16 of a

denarius) was pocket change—the price of the cheapest protein available. The rabbis debated whether God's providence extended to such insignificant creatures. Jesus decisively affirmed comprehensive divine care reaching to the smallest, cheapest, most numerous birds. This teaching would encourage disciples facing persecution and martyrdom—if God tracks worthless sparrows, He certainly knows and cares about His faithful witnesses. No suffering is unnoticed, no sacrifice unremembered. The early church embraced this comfort during waves of persecution.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's attention to worthless sparrows demonstrate the comprehensive scope of His providential care?
2. What anxieties or fears in your life seem too small or insignificant to bring to God, yet this verse declares He notices?
3. How does understanding God's care for creation's least valuable creatures inform Christian environmental and animal ethics?

Interlinear Text

οὐχὶ πέντε στρουθία πωλεῖται ἀσσαρίων δύο καὶ ἐν
not five sparrows Are farthings for two and one
G3780 G4002 G4765 G4453 G787 G1417 G2532 G1520

ἔξ αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιλελησμένον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ
of them not is forgotten before G3588 God
G1537 G846 G3756 G2076 G1950 G1799 G2316

Additional Cross-References

Luke 12:24 (References God): Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

Matthew 10:29 (Parallel theme): Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

Psalms 147:9 (Parallel theme): He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.

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