

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a tiny bird called the sparrow. This bird is mentioned four times in the N. T. Scriptures (Matt. 10:29, 31; and Lk. 12:6, 7). The Greek word is "strouthion" which is a diminutive of "strouthos". Jesus did not just make reference to "sparrows", but to "little sparrows".

Here is the account in Matthew: **"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows"** (Matt. 10:29-31).

Here is Luke's account: **"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows"** (Lk. 12:6-7).

Mao Zedong learned the hard way the value of sparrows. He became the first Chairman of the People's Republic of China in 1949. From 1958-1962 he championed the "Great Leap Forward" which he believed would propel China into the future with great economic success. After confiscating privately owned farms, however, the food supply dwindled. In fact, it was not sufficient to feed the most populous nation on earth. Mao, however, did not blame himself, he blamed the sparrow for the problem. Every sparrow was said to consume 4 pounds of rice every year. So Mao initiated a campaign in 1959 to eliminate the country of sparrows. All nests were destroyed and sparrows were killed by every method possible. The Polish embassy refused to participate in this program and thousands of sparrows flew there for refuge. The Chinese, however, beat drums without stopping outside the embassy until the sparrows inside died of exhaustion. The dead sparrows were then cleared off the floor with shovels.

The problem was, that in addition to eating rice, the sparrows also ate locusts. By 1960 the locusts became so plentiful that they devastated the rice fields. This resulted in a nation wide famine. While statistics vary, it was estimated to have starved to death between 15 – 55 million people. To try and put the eco-system back into balance the Chinese imported 250,000 sparrows from Russia.

The apostles of Christ, as you know, were uneducated peasants. Not one of the original twelve apostles had a formal education. They were considered by the elite as "unschooled and ordinary" men (Acts 4:13). Not one was wealthy! Not one had ever held a position of power! Not one was famous or popular! Not one had ever influenced even a small group of people to say nothing of the whole wide world! In the eyes of God, however, they were more valuable than many sparrows.

The fact that God chose unknown and insignificant people was not an accident. God's plan to use poor and insignificant people is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 1:27-29. The late Justice Anton Scalia commented on this verse and said: *"God assumed from the beginning that the wise of the world would view Christians as fools ... and he has not been disappointed,"* Yes! God deliberately chose the weak to confound the wise. The Bible is filled with examples of individuals whom God rescued from obscurity and gave them prominent positions in the Bible's Hall of Fame. While this principle is of universal application, for today's letter we will mention only women. Some feel the Bible denigrates

women, exactly the reverse is true. It is where the Bible has been taught that women are most respected!

While many examples could be given of God honoring women, for the sake of brevity we will mention only three: # 1 Mary, the mother of Jesus who was young. # 2 Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus who was older. # 3 And an unnamed widow who was old.

1 - Remember! The eyes of the Lord range to and fro throughout the whole earth in search of those whose hearts are perfect toward him (2 Chron. 16:9). God found such a young woman in the obscure village of Nazareth. Though she was neither rich nor famous he selected her to be the mother of Jesus. Mary recognized her good fortune with these words: **“He has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed for the Mighty One has done great things for me”** (Lk. 1:48-49).

2 - After Peter correctly identified Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, we are told: **“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day raised to live”** (Matt. 16:21). For some reason, the apostle’s didn’t understand this, but Mary of Bethany did. When this sad reality came upon her she took a bottle of expensive perfume, poured it on him. It was valued at a year’s wages. When she was criticized for this Jesus recognized that she had anointed him for his burial and promised: **“I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her”** (Matt. 26:13).

3 - **“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”** (Mark 12:41-44).

Yes! We come from a poor and insignificant spiritual family. Please, however, do not believe the devil’s lie that you mean nothing to God! **“even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows”**.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce