

Jesus predicted that the last days will be a time of unprecedented fear. His very words were, *"Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."* (LK 21:25-26).

Jesus also gave strong warnings about what else shall come: *"Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes... all these are the beginning of sorrows. (Men) shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many... iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold... then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders... watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come"* (MATT 24).

Causes of Fear

Today the whole world - saved and unsaved alike - is witnessing the birth pangs of the end times. Adding to the fear and worry is the very real possibility that the American and other world economies will collapse - and a new world monetary system will come forth! (1992 is the year proposed to form a united States of Europe - and this plan is rapidly being carried out, with far less resistance than anyone ever imagined.)

No one appears more fearful and worried about this forthcoming disaster than Wall Street, the bankers and the money manipula-

Freedom From All Fear And Worry

tors in this world! All over the globe, from Japan to Australia, England, Switzerland, Germany and the United States - there is a cloud of terrible fear that the good times are over.

We Americans can't even imagine what it will be like to sacrifice and do without. We are nowhere near being ready for this. Millions of Christians live each day in the constant fear they will lose their jobs, homes, cars - that a sudden financial calamity will devastate them!

Have you noticed the sudden unpredictability and changes in the weather? There has been an incredible number of calamities: hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tragic accidents. In the last five years, we have seen an incredible acceleration in these disasters. We can't understand it all - things are happening so fast!

Commenting on these recent events, a newspaper columnist asked, "Is God chastising us?" Another wondered, "Is God trying to get our attention?" Still another postulated, "The gods are angry!"

In just this past year we have seen the world turned upside down. The Berlin Wall is now full of holes! Hungary, Poland and now Czechoslovakia have thrown out the Communists! Gorbachev actually seems to be pushing democracy! Castro must be shivering in his boots!

Australia is on the edge of bankruptcy; El Salvador is shaking; Mexico is on the brink of a social revolution; and China is a giant that is awakening out of a thousand-year slumber!

The Pentagon proposed slashing the defense budget by \$180 billion. Defense is America's biggest business, and nothing could cause more fear and worry for defense contractors than talk of peace!

Dare I remind you of the AIDS plague, the crack epidemic and the near-collapse of our hospital system? It seems impossible to curb crime in our schools, subways and streets.

Society has gone mad! The times are fearful and perplexing because everybody knows that things can only get worse. No one seems to have any solutions!

Consider how fast movies and TV have become vile and corrupt. I am told that next year the public will see full nudity on soap operas! European television carries X-rated shows. Now Israel, for the first time in her history, has pornographic magazines on the news-stands. Man's lust has become a raging fire! Where will it all end?

Much New Knowledge Is Causing Fear and Grief

The Bible says, *"In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow"* (ECC 1:18).

Beloved, I simply did not want to know eggs could kill me, through cholesterol or salmonella poisoning! During years of blissful ignorance I ate bacon and eggs without fear. Now I can't even look at an egg without thinking, "You killer! You're going to clot and poison me!" Such sorrow in this knowledge!

Then, just as I began cutting back on cholesterol intake, I read that certain kinds of cholesterol were actually good for me!

I tried eating a little oat bran, some bran muffins and fruit-fiber cereals - yet now I'm told they're not all they've been hyped up to be.

Sugar has been termed a killer, so we are advised to use substitutes; but then we're informed the substitutes cause cancer in rats!

Now it seems antacids contain aluminum and are considered a cause of Alzheimer's disease! Beef has cancer-causing hormone additives! Chicken can contain salmonella poisoning; fish have iodine; and apples are dangerous because of a cancer-causing spray! For years the experts cried out against junk food, saying it was dangerous, but now a few "experts" tell me they're full of nutrients!

I'm becoming afraid to open the refrigerator! It's as if the cold fingers of death reach out saying "Preservatives! Cholesterol! Chemicals! Substitutes! Additives! We're all here!" We never needed to have all this "wonderful" knowledge. Honestly, it only adds to the fear and worry piled upon us!

Living Without Fear

While walking up a country road in New Jersey recently, I had a good talk with my Lord. I cried, "Lord, I can't live with fear and worry. Your Word is full of promises to keep Your people from fear and worry of all kinds. I want to face whatever the future holds with rest, joy and simple trust! I want total freedom from all fear and worry!"

The Holy Spirit quickened me: "The key to freedom from all fear and worry is found in two words - sparrows and hair." Remember what I said in Matthew 10:28-33. *"One of them [sparrows] shall not fall on the ground without your*

Father... But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (MATT 10:29,30).

It sounds so elementary, so very simple - but what Jesus tells us here is very profound.

In the Old Testament, King David could boast. *"He delivered me from all my fears!"* How did David find such freedom from fear? By obtaining a vision of the greatness of *"Him who made heaven and earth."* When David had his eyes on the creator of all things, he discovered how big God is!

I want to be like David - an example of a shepherd who has learned how to be free of fear and worry, able to lead a people into that same freedom.

I did a study on sparrows and hair. And soon I began to get a revelation of David's immense Creator God, who was interested in every tiny detail of His creation!

Sparrows - God's Little Messengers

Sparrows! There are 9,000 species of birds, and out of all them, Jesus referred to the sparrow. In America alone there are 35 kinds of sparrows. In Jesus' day, the term "sparrow" described all small land birds.

These delicate birds are recognized for their music, some warbling as many as 22 different tunes. There are song sparrows, larks, vesper sparrows, white-throated sparrows - all names having to do with music.

Like all birds, sparrows are wonderfully made. Their thin, small bones are strong and specially equipped for flying. Modern science still cannot copy the intricate wing system that allows them to migrate two and three-thousand miles. Each sparrow has from 1,300 to 2,600 feathers. How intricate and detailed they are! Our Creator God designed them perfectly. He designed every bone, every feather - and He counted every one of them.

Most sparrows build their nests in the ground - and in Christ's time they were trapped with trip nets into which they fell while preparing their nests. In Jerusalem Jesus saw sparrows being sold on a skewer, two for a penny. They had

all been trapped with trip nets because Jews could not eat those that died by themselves.

Of these birds Jesus said, *"Not one of them was trapped without My Father's knowledge."* He knew where each one of them was until its little lungs took their last breath. He fed them. He knew every sparrow - even those on the skewers!

Hair - A Symbol of God's Intricate Care For His Children

Hair! Every hair on our heads is counted by our Father in heaven.

Between 100,000 and 150,000 hairs blanket the human head. Even those who are bald still have the vellus variety hair which is unseen by the human eye!

God made hair useful, not just for the sake of appearance. Hair on our heads is for insulation during summer and winter. Our eyebrows keep sweat out of our eyes, and eyelashes protect our eyelids when dust or tiny insects get too near. Tiny hairs in the ears and nostrils filter incoming air of particles. The hair in the armpits helps reduce friction while we walk.

What a marvelous and intricate thing a hair is. If we could know what an awesome creation a hair is, how full of life, we would never doubt that God numbers what He has created.

Every hair is a cylinder of cells that has tunneled deep into the skin to reach the blood vessels that nourish it. Every hair has muscle, nerves and glands. If you even lightly touch the top of your head, your hair's nerves will alert your brain, and you'll feel it!

Look in an encyclopedia and find a drawing of a single human hair. A cross section reveals many different rings. These rings of tissue surround the trunk, which is surrounded as well by nerve collars. It contains a cuticle, medulla, cortex, papilla and root sheath. A small cluster of glands drains into every hair.

Melanin produces the hair's color. It is deposited in growing hair. God put an incredible color factory in the scalp. And, left alone, hair can grow to 25 feet in a lifetime!

It's no wonder David said, *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."*

that, my soul knoweth right well"
(PSA 139:14).

In the passage in Matthew about sparrows and hair, Jesus was teaching the disciples not to fear. He had created every sparrow, formed every human body and numbered every hair. *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth... All things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist"* (COL 1:16-17). But the disciples still did not understand. Oh, how Jesus must have longed to take them into such intricacies - of how He made the wings and bones of the sparrows and how He designed the hair. No mere carpenter could figure it all out - all of it so fearful and amazing!

He could have said, "Peter, what if I told you that you have 127,550 hairs on your head, 162 in your right eyebrow and 165 in your left. You have 165 hair follicles in your nostrils, 306 in your left ear and 319 in your right! Your beard is made up of 33,980 hair follicles. Now, since you know I have numbered every hair on your head, won't you trust Me with every detail of your life? Won't you believe that I know every step you take?"

What if He had said to James, "Beloved James, did you know there are 2,396,000,065 sparrows on the earth as of yesterday? In the last 24 hours 2,000,603 died a natural death and 986,152 are trapped or killed. In Jerusalem's marketplace today, there are 2,950 for sale."

"Not one falls to the ground without the knowledge of your Father in heaven. Knowing this, will you now be 'careful for nothing'? Will you now trust Me to take care of all your needs? Will you now give no thought as to what you shall eat or drink? Will you now believe that your heavenly Father knows what you need and will gladly supply it? Will you now trust Him to house you, feed you, clothe you?"

God's Thoughts Toward Us Can Not Be Counted

David said, *"Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them,*

they are more than can be numbered" (PSA 40:5).

"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I could count them, they are more in number than the sand."
PSA 139:17-18

God spoke to the Israelites in Babylonian captivity: *"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end"* (JER 29:11).

God thought of you before you were born - before your hair color or sex were determined! He thought of you when your life was breathed into a cell... when you were still in the womb!

"Thine eyes did see my [unformed] substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written... when as yet there was none of them."
PSA 139:16

"Thou... took me out of the womb. Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" PSA 22:9-10

The Lord thinks on our every part, over every member! We accept that He cares for our body, but He goes much farther - counting every hair, bone, muscle, cell, fiber.

He is aware of every tear you've shed. He has counted and bottled them all. *"Thou tellest my wandering: put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in your book?"* (PSA 56:8).

I can't comprehend it all. He counts my hairs; He counts my tears and He bottles and saves them. Think of it - not a wasted tear of sorrow, joy or repentance.

He thinks of us when we lie down in bed and when we rise. He thinks of us with every step we take. He knows and understands every thought we think. It is written *"Jesus perceived their thoughts"* (LK 5:22).

Heaven is populated with highly intelligent, created beings - angels, seraphim, cherubim and the four and twenty elders. They are witnesses to the faithfulness of our God. They know of all the promises He has made to us concerning His attention toward every detail. They hear Him tell of His minute, total

provision to keep and watch over us!

If God failed in a single one of these promises, all heaven would become chaos and ruin, for the heavenly host could say, "God failed to keep His Word! He can't be trusted!" Yet the fact that all heaven praises God, throwing their crowns at His feet, is proof that they behold and believe in His faithfulness. God can be trusted to do all He said He would!

Now let's go back and see what Jesus said would be the wonderful result of our "trusting away" all fear and worry!

Confessing Christ as All-Sufficient

"Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore, [in light of all of this] shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven"
MATT 10:31-33

For years I quoted this in my city-wide crusades! I said it at the altar call to provoke people to come forward and confess Christ. But trusting God is so much more than making a public confession - "Jesus forgive my sins. I believe in You!" Well-meaning millions have made that kind of "confession," and yet it did not stick.

The key to understanding what Jesus is saying is in Psalm 31:19. *"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou has wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"*

This "confession" is something the world must see and not just hear! *"And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord"* (PSA 40:3).

We often talk about "witnessing for Jesus," and we picture it as street preaching, passing out tracts, and telling friends and strangers that Jesus loves them. Beloved, that is only part of it!

The world is not looking for more doctrinal proof of the reality of God! It is not looking for greater proof of the resurrection or better arguments about creation. The

world is looking for Christians who can stand up to every crisis, fear, trouble and difficulty and who remain calm and at rest in the midst of it all. The world needs to see God's children trusting wholly in their Lord.

The world must be able to point to a Christian and say, "There goes one who is not a complainer! He doesn't fret or fear or run in times of trouble. He isn't worried about tomorrow! His faith holds at all times!"

Whether you know it or not, you are witnessing and confessing every day - to your fellow workers, your family, your lawyer, your hairdresser, your neighbor, your brothers and sisters in Christ! These people see you going through a difficult time, and they watch and listen, saying to themselves, "Will they live what they preach? Will this Jesus let them down? Will she talk and act just like the rest of us who do not confess Christ?"

What do those around you hear coming from your lips when things get tough? Continued sadness is a terrible confession for a believer. It makes the world think God has somehow failed you. Scripture says that Hannah, Samuel's mother, "...poured out (her) soul before the LORD, and as she went

her way her countenance was no more sad" (1.SAM 1:15,18).

How do you leave the Lord's presence after prayer. Still sad and burdened down? Do you look downcast? Then you have not truly cast your care upon Him. "*They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever*" (PSA 125:1).

The Great Creator God Is On Our Side

The majestic Lord who has done all these incredible works, and who has all power and might, is on our side! This is what Jesus has been trying to show His children all along! He says, If you can, comprehend the greatness of God and the fact that He is on your side!

"When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me" PSA 56:9

"The LORD is on my side, I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The LORD taketh my part with them that help me" PSA 118:6-7

The Holy Spirit has given us Psalm 124 as an antidote against

fear and worry: "*If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say: If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth."*

God wants us to be bad-news-proof! "*He shall not be afraid of evil tidings (bad news): his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid"* (PSA 112:7-8).

"When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid... thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken." PROV 3:24-26

Trust God with all your heart. To have freedom from fear and worry is to rest confidently in the Lord of Hosts. **Rest in the very One who created you!**

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