

# Sparrows in the Church

by Vance Havner

---

*God cares for the smallest details and invites us to trust in his sovereignty, even in difficult times.*

**Duration:** 30:30

**Scripture:** Psalm 46:1, Psalm 84:3, Psalm 91:1, Matthew 5:11-12, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:6

**Topics:** "Mortal Body", "Eternal Life"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the limitations of our physical bodies and senses. He emphasizes that our eyes can only see the external appearance of others, while our ears can only hear the sounds around us. He also discusses the temporary nature of our physical bodies, highlighting that when our bodies die, our souls continue to live forever with Jesus. The preacher then shifts his focus to the mysteries of life, acknowledging that there are things we may not fully understand, but we can still find joy in the knowledge we have. He mentions his experience of writing a book and receiving messages from people who have experienced loss, emphasizing the comfort and richness he has found in his faith. The sermon concludes with the preacher mentioning his intention to talk about sparrows and nature as depicted in the Bible, but also humorously mentioning the need to be cautious of Bible scholars who may correct his interpretations.

---

## Transcript

I've had an odd experience this morning. I meant to preach a sermon and somehow I can't get away from talking, of all things, about sparrows. Three times in the Word we have some very wonderful things said about sparrows.

And so I, if I was going to say it at all, it ought to be out here in the hillside with the trees and the birds and the mosquitoes. Here I am in a regular congregation like this and yet I feel like saying a word from this direction. The Bible refers to nature many, many times now.

The Lord used many illustrations from that field. You have to watch these Bible scholars, though. I prepared a sermon on the spider taketh hold with her hands and is in king's palaces.

Then I learned from the Bible scholars it wasn't a spider at all, it was a lizard. So I had to throw away all my spiders and start working on lizards. I never have got up a sermon on lizards yet and don't think I ever will.

John Stott is quite a bird watcher. He, some time ago, announced as he takes to consider the fowls of the air and he said that means watch birds. Well, that sounds like a bird watcher for you.

And he's on a vacation now, I think, and he says one thing he wants to do, catch up with his bird watching. I grew up in the hills, and I mean way back in the hills, and I remember that mama always sent me up that little old dirt road to the little bitty grocery store with about a dozen eggs in the basket. We traded in eggs in those days and chickens and anything.

And I was told, she said, now if there's any money over, if eggs had gone up, it was over, you can buy candy with what's left. I went up there just practically praying that the price of eggs would go up. But if we had candy, it was just stick candy, very ordinary looking candy, but that was, that beat all the fancy stuff I've eaten in the last few years.

And Arm and Hammer soda had a bird card in every box in those days. And I started collecting them, and that started the fever, the bird fever. And I got a bird guide, and my father didn't see much sense in a thing like that, and birds were plentiful and didn't buy a book about it.

But then that led on to binoculars, one thing after another. Now I've got all the paraphernalia and still listening to the birds. But there's always been something about the sparrow.

Of course you have plenty of English sparrows. They're everywhere. They're town birds.

They don't care for the country, and they have some of the characteristics of town folks. You know, a country boy can learn town ways, but a town boy just can't learn country ways. You've got to be born there and grow up to know anything about that.

Well, we read in the Word of God, our Lord tells us that two sparrows are sold for a farthing, and five sparrows for two farthings. Now if you pay two farthings, you get a bargain. You get an odd bird.

You get an odd sparrow. And what in this world is more inconspicuous and apparently more unimportant than an odd sparrow of all things? And yet our Lord uses it to say that God knows when the odd sparrow falls. Think about the odd sparrow.

There are other kinds, of course, but the one I like most is not the white-throat, although he sings, starts off, some of the bird lovers think that it's the first few notes of the wedding march lifted several octaves. And it does have that sort of similarity. And then the song sparrow who sings all day long.

But my favorite is always the field sparrow, because when I was a boy working in that hot field with corn or cotton or whatever it might be, the other birds all stopped. But the odder it got, the better the field sparrow liked it. And he sang for me all day long.

I developed an appreciation for him. But here we have the odd sparrow. God cares for what seems unimportant.

The hairs of your head are numbered, the lilies of the field. God knows what the stock is in his store. He knows what's on every shelf in the story, the store of the universe, and he never loses anything.

Nothing disappears. And the cynic says, well, so what? You see sparrows lying dead. What's that got to do with God and caring about us when we get into trouble? That sounds very cynical, but it says God knows about it.

No matter what happens, even the smallest detail never escapes his notice. Nothing ever goes out of existence anyhow. They move around and change appearance and change form.

You burn a stick of wood in the fireplace and some of it goes up in smoke and some of it remains in the ashes, but everything's around somewhere. And they just change form. The whole world does like that.

And I read that my tears, Psalm 56, 8, are in God's bottle. Did you know God's in the bottling business and that he's keeping bottles of your tears? Velma Daniels, who's a newspaper religious writer down in Florida, told me some time ago she got overexposed in a TV studio to the bright lights and her eyes gave her trouble. And she went to the eye doctor and he said, you know what the best formula for the eyes is in the world? No.

He said tears. We don't know how to make them, but that's the best formula of all because God made it. And sometimes you learn your best lessons and see your best visions through the tears.

Nothing goes out of business. We're fearfully made after all. I've never seen you.

You've never seen me. We see each other walking around with a suit of clothes on, but we look in each other's eyes, the windows, and that's the nearest you ever get. Your eyes can't see.

You see with your eyes. There's something behind all this little apparatus. And when it goes out of business one of these days, they bury it, but they don't bury you for keeps because you're going to live forever.

And your ears don't hear. You hear with your ears. Your tongue can't talk.

You talk with your tongue. You could take your tongue out and lay it on the table. What would it talk about? You do the talking.

And when that little tenement that you've been living in these years goes to pieces or an automobile and puts it out of business or something, and they lay it away, what happens to the tenant when the tenement is disposed of? Well, the Christian goes to be with Jesus. And that ought to be enough for the present. There'll be a lot more discovered later on.

But remember, friend, that we're fearfully and wonderfully made. And I spend a lot of time wondering about those dear ones. And you do too.

The Bible doesn't tell us an awful lot about the Christian between death and the resurrection. What does he look like? The old body's in the grave. He doesn't have the resurrection body.

And folks say, well, what form of manifestation does he take? Well, I'm not getting into all that, but God will take care of it. I guarantee you that. Well, we know our loved ones over there.

Well, you don't think we'll have less sense over there than we've got over here. I expect to know them. And I think that we won't all be like eggs in a crate or just alike.

I think that the peculiarities of personality to some extent, no doubt, will be manifest. And remember that he's not the God of the dead. He's the God of the living.

And all live unto him. Nobody's dead in the sight of God. Everybody's alive as far as he's concerned.

That ought to cheer us up. And we are waiting for the final restoration. And there won't be any odd pieces.

Everybody's going to be somewhere. Every knee shall bow first. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

That's not universal salvation. But everybody will be accounted for. They'll all have to recognize that Jesus is Lord.

And whoever's lost, that's for the garbage heap and where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched, but accounted for, not non-existent. I have a wonderful friend, great Presbyterian brother David Petty in Greensboro. We get together every little while.

The other day he just laid something down the table when I was eating at his house. It's from Hilarion Belong, the writer who probably is not a Christian at all. But this unbeliever, speaking of hell, said, oh, we laughed today at it.

We make our wry remarks about it. We use it as a byword. But he said, between here and there, there's a great gulf.

If we could see over it, there would be millions and millions and millions of faces and not a smile on one of them. That moved me somewhat. And yet, from an unbeliever, that's a strange but true comment, it seems to me.

Does God care for the fallen spade? Does God care for you when the mishap comes? And then there's the lonely sparrow. The psalmist wished in Psalm 102, 7, said, I'm like a sparrow alone on the housetop. Now, when the sparrow's alone up there, probably the nest has been destroyed or the mate has been killed.

And when sometimes in your life there comes that day when the nest has been destroyed and the mate killed, you know what this means. I know what this means. I walk down these streets and many times I see two going along.

I assume man and wife, and I say, well, they still have each other. And then I sort of grip that hand as though reaching out for one that isn't there. But I know that, as I've told you before, I haven't lost her because I know where she is.

But Holmes, Robert G. Lee, oh, when my dear one passed away, that great preacher wrote a great long two-page letter to me. And he used to say at the latter part of his life, I'm not going home now, I'm just going back to Memphis. So Saturday I'll be leaving not for home, I'll just be leaving for Greensboro.

And so here's the sparrow on the housetop. And like that grand old spiritual that the black saints have given to us, sometimes I feel like a motherless child. Oh, that's a tremendous thing there.

I remember down in Florida, one night they brought out the kids from a children's school and the little folks sang. And that's a song I can't quote it here, but I'm glad I belong to the family of God. And in that family of God, there aren't any orphans.

And because God has made arrangement about all that. They asked me over to Travis Avenue, that great Baptist church in Fort Worth some years ago for a conference. And when I got there, some of the folks came to me and said, there's one thing we'd like for you to talk about.

Now they seem to have everything. We had our first meeting in the country club and it looked like they didn't lack a thing in this world. Pretty well fixed, most of them.

But they said, talk to us about loneliness. Do you realize that with all our amusements and all our entertainment today, we've got more lonesome folks than we ever had on the face of the earth? They've got plenty, but that doesn't meet the need. Well, like little Amy lying in the hospital and she was kind of unhappy that day.

Little Annie said, why don't you pray? She said, how would God know it's me? And he said, put your arms out on the counterpane and say, Lord, I'm the little girl with her arms out on the counterpane. That might identify you. Oh, did you ever feel that way sometime when trouble comes and hits hard? Well, God's got trillions of stars to look after and billions of people.

How can he ever take time out to think about me? Well, it's because he's omnipotent and omniscient and omnipresent. And those big long words mean that he's everywhere, knows everything, and can do anything he wants to. And you can leave all that with him.

Just settle this one question in your head. Is God infinite? If he's infinite, then you don't put any stops anywhere because God's infinite. And that's what the odd sparrow means.

And my Lord, when he was on earth, I've wondered so much about the fact that he didn't mix with the upper crust much. Why didn't he go to Rome and Alexandria and Athens and say, I'm the son of God? Why did he start in this poor little country, no bigger than New Jersey over there across the sea? And why did he, when he had only 40 days left to stay after he came back from the grave, wouldn't you have thought, then he would have gone and said, I'm back. I'm the only person who ever died and came back and I'm here.

No, all he does is comfort a poor weeping woman at a sepulchre, have dinner with some lonesome Emmaus disciples, and tell some poor fishermen, those disciples, that fish don't out and caught nothing. That's one fish tale, I believe. And tell them how to fish.

Lord, couldn't you have used your time, those 40 days, at something else? No, no. That leads me to believe that he's interested in the little things that I do and the little things that you do. And there's a place for it in the economy of God.

After the resurrection, just went about as usual in many ways, and yet not as usual. I'm glad his eyes on the sparrow. I know he watches me, Ethel Waters used to sing that in the Billy Graham meetings.

Oh, she blessed her soul. She'd sometimes sing it, I was on the little bitty sparrow. Well, she wasn't little bitty herself, but somehow, somehow we said, I don't care.

She knew what she was saying. My, what a spirit she had. And then finally, Psalm 84, 3, tells about the sparrow that builds in the temple.

And that is a refreshing thought. The temple of the Lord. Now, God dwells not in temples made with hands, but the psalmist said here, I want to abide, I want to stay in the temple of God.

The heart of man still longs for a hiding place. Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly. Rock of ages cleft for me.

Let me hide myself in thee. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the almighty. You're never, you can't hide from God.

That's for sure. Except in one place, you can hide from God when you're in God. That's when he's your home, when you're homed in God.

I think of the mother of Augustine who wanted to go with him on a trip and she was old. He said, mother, you mustn't go. It's a long trip and you might not make it.

You might die away from home. And she said, no, my life is hid with Christ in God and I'm homed in God. And when your home's God, you can't die away from home.

That does me a lot of good because I'm a lonely, poor mortal for eight years now, wandering around over the country and staying in motels. And the other night when the preacher and his wife brought me up to that, when she said, there ought to be a special medal in heaven for traveling preachers who have to live in motels and go in and turn the door, nobody there, stare at the wall, wake up in the middle of the night and the old, it's human to say, what would happen to me if I went on in a situation like this? And a thousand folks can come to you. But somehow, beloved, out of all this in the past eight years has become the richest period of my life.

I wrote that little book that nearly every other person has bought, I think, though I walked through the valley. And they call me and they write to me from everywhere saying we buried our son, I buried my wife, we've lost this one, that one, and so on. And your little book, somebody gave us your little book, or I've got your little book.

And sometimes I'm, I sit down and get kind of low sometimes, of course you never do, but I get a little low sometimes. I feel like the last rose of summer in a hailstorm sometimes. And about the time that I do, why some time ago I was sitting in my room and I wasn't in the best position, the phone rang, and some dear brother at the other side of the country went to all the long-distance trouble to call me up and said, doesn't have anything to ask of you in particular, just wanted to tell you, you've been a blessing.

Brother, that's the best paycheck a preacher ever gets. That's the best paycheck anybody ever gets. Does anybody, you don't have to be a preacher, does anybody tell you you've been a blessing? You ought to be.

Everybody can be a blessing, that's one vocation that's open to all of us. And we can get into it. But you cannot rest in God until you nest in God.

Two words in the Bible that keep reminding me, abide, abide, abide. That means you settle down. Don't go running just when you get in the jam.

He's gracious and loves you and he'll help you then, but it'll mean a lot more if you just stay there. Abide in the secret place of the Most High and the others dwell. Abide, dwell, put some, stay with it there.

It doesn't mean you've got to be a recluse or a hermit. The sparrow doesn't stay in the nest all the time, goes about his business, but the Savior is not only our Savior, he's our sustenance. And we must feed upon him, and he'll meet every need.

Sidney Lanier lived down in the last days of his life, dying of tuberculosis near Brunswick, Georgia. I had meetings there some time ago in the First Baptist Church and across, across the marshes, had a great meeting ground, old-fashioned Methodist campground. And the tree out here where Lanier sat and wrote his wonderful poems about the marsh hen secretly builds her nest on the watery sod.

I'll build me a nest on the greatness of God. That's a mighty good place to stay. And you think of Mr. Penny, the great millionaire, when he was very ill.

You've heard it, you've read it, we've all read it dozens and dozens of times, and I'd like to read it again. And then he heard some, some of the saints singing down below his room in the hospital. Got up and put his robe on, went down there, and they were saying, be not dismayed, whate'er be done, God will take care of you.

That did him more good than all the pills he'd been taking all those weeks at the hospital. Oh, it's a good thing to remember with Madame Guillaume. To me remains nor place nor time.

My country is in every clime. I can be calm and free from care on any shore since God is there. And you have learned in whatever state you are to be content.

Romans 8:28 doesn't say we understand how all things work together for God. Doesn't say that. Understand it or not, it says we know it.

Now can you quit worrying about understanding it and get around to knowing it? Understand it or not, I don't understand how a black cow can eat green grass and give white milk, but I still like ice cream. I'm not putting it all together. I know a few things and I can enjoy them.

Oh, God's greatness flows around our incompleteness, around our restlessness, his rest. And I recall that, well, the other day I was in New Orleans Baptist Seminary for some days, and along with the others who came up to shake my hand was one of the faculty, a dear man of God. Sometimes we get on Bible conferences together, but I didn't know the latest.

And I preached on why, and I want to talk about that one time here. Not that I can explain why, but thank God there is a word in the book that it's all wrapped up in one great big why in this book. My God, my God, why? Thou shalt forsake.

And he said, it did me not a good considering the fix I'm in. Well, I didn't know what kind of a fix he was in. He'd been away holding a meeting, and some fiend broke into his home and murdered his wife.

Now, that's something to come home to. Explain it? I can't. I don't know how to, I don't know why, and I couldn't tell him why, of course, but thank God he knew the Lord.

And in an hour like that, it's a mighty good thing to be homed in God. And when you're homed with him, yours is the forgotten beatitude, because my dear one went to heaven at 2:15 Sunday morning, and I preached at 11, and I didn't know whether I could or not, but I did. You've heard me tell it maybe before.

John the Baptist in jail, and sending, of all things, a delegation to Jesus. Are you the one, or do we start looking for somebody else? Now, that was a low mark for John the Baptist, a man who had stood on the banks of the Jordan. Behold, the Lamb of God, that rugged man with his camel's hair, garments, and his grasshopper salad that he lived on.

What a character. And yet now he's in the dumps, he's in jail, and it's one thing to stand on Jordan and give it, and another thing to stay in jail and take it. And he couldn't take it very well.

Jesus didn't ball him out. He didn't ball out old Simon Peter for denying him. He just asked him, do you love me? He didn't ask him, do you love sheep? Ron Dunn, my dear friend, this coming young preacher, said when my dad and mother, dad loved, mother loved cats, but dad couldn't stand cats.

But he said after mother died and went to heaven. One night we were all in front of the fireplace talking, and the old cat came in, tail up in the air, very happy, came around, rubbed up against every one of us. When he got to dad, guess what dad did? Picked him up, held him on his lap, and stroked him all during the rest of the conversation.

Said dad still wasn't fond of cats, but mother had been fond of cats, and dad loved mother. Jesus said if you love me, you'll love the sheep. You try to work up a love for this miserable, these wolves today, some of them, apart from that you won't get very far.

But Jesus said, go tell him, go tell John the Baptist that I'm running on schedule. Blind are seeing, deaf are hearing, lame are walking, poor are having the gospel preached, and then the forgotten beatitude, nobody ever knows this one. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Blessed is the man who never gets upset by the way I run my business. Now if God's business involves something you can't figure out, and you say, Lord, you must have been looking the other way, where were you? No, no. Claim the forgotten beatitude.

It'll work. And then after all this, I had two years in my life when I couldn't sleep. I don't know how I lived, and nervous, exhausted, and depressed, and I hadn't learned what Martin Lloyd Jones, being a doctor and a preacher both, and speaking from both standpoints, said, don't let yourself talk to you, you talk to yourself.

That's a terrific thing. The old Adam in you, you start raising all these awful questions. Stand up and say in the name of Jesus Christ, sit down.

I'm going to live it whether I feel it or not. Something will happen. Then, and my doctor, after I was left alone, he gave me a bottle of Valium and said, brother, if you can't sleep, take this.

Well, I said, now, Lord, I'm not going to become a Valiumite. I'm not getting hooked on that stuff. I threw my bottle away, and I said, if I'm going to preach, I've got to sleep.

And thank the Lord I've been sleeping. Sometimes it's the other way now. Like that old boy out in the country, the country I came from, went to the doctor and said, I'm having trouble sleeping.

The doctor said, how does it work? I said, I do all right in the night and pretty well in the afternoon, but it seemed like in the morning I'd just roll and talk. So, so I just want to tell you, thank God it works. Thank God it works.

If you're alone on the housetop, you feel like it. You don't know where to go. People come and some of them don't say the right things.

And all alone with the pillow wet with tears in the middle of the night, you can't tell folks they've got enough burdens of their own. Thank God the watchman of the universe never goes to sleep. He's night and day on

the job.

And I'm like the old bishop who read that he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. Read that in the middle of the night and he looked and said, Lord, if you're sitting up, I'm going to bed. Good night.

So all the way my Savior leads me, what have I to ask beside? Can I doubt his tender mercy, who through life has been my guide?

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/9/SID9575.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/vance-havner/sparrows-in-the-church/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**