

“Whom (And What) You Should Fear”

Luke 12:4-7

Introduction:

- A. Jesus prepares disciples to cope with persecutors.
 - 1. Do not fear them as much as you do God (vv. 4,5).
 - a. A “not, but” passage: Emphasizes greater (“but”) without eliminating lesser (“not”).
 - b. Other “not, but” passages. (Matt. 6:19,20; John 6:27; 1 Pet. 3:3,4)
 - 2. Do not fear them because of God’s care for you. (vv. 6-7).
- B. Jesus establishes fear as a legitimate motivation for obeying God.

Discussion: *Three aspects of fear:*

I. The Motivation of Fear.

- A. Life in this world without fear would be tragic and chaotic.
 - 1. How would you like to drive on a highway where there was no fear?
 - 2. How would you like to live in city where there was no fear?
- B. God has used fear to motivate obedience from the beginning.
 - 1. Used fear of death to motivate Adam and Eve. (Gen. 2:15-17).
 - 2. Used fear of flood to motivate man in Noah’s day. (Gen. 6)
 - 3. Used fear of losing land to motivate Israel. (Josh. 23:14-16)
 - 4. Uses fear of hell to motivate us all. (v. 5; Mark 9:42-48).
- C. Government without fear (threat of punishment) cannot be effective. (cf. Rom. 13:1-5).

II. The Implementation of Fear. (vv. 4,5).

- A. As deterrent to sin - emphasize eternal over temporal consequences. (cf. Gal. 5:19-21)
 - 1. *Sexual immorality*: Fear of AIDS, pregnancy, social stigma not primary, but fear of God’s wrath.
 - 2. *Drug and alcohol abuse*: Fear of related physical and social problems not primary, but God’s wrath.
 - 3. *Dishonesty, stealing, lying, cheating, etc.*: Fear of losing reputation not primary, but losing soul.
- B. As incentive to obey.
 - 1. *Obey gospel*: Fear of losing any earthly relationships or advantages not primary, but losing soul.
 - 2. *Remaining Faithful*: Fear of losing family or friendships not primary, but losing God’s favor.

III. The Minimization of Fear.

- A. By undercutting fear.
 - 1. Removing threats of punishment.
 - 2. Conditioning self to ignore all threats, warnings, and dangers. (cf. Lk. 18:2).
- B. By rising above fear.
 - 1. By obeying, thus having no reason to fear punishment. (cf. Rom. 13:3).
 - 2. By increasing love and faith.
 - a. Fear decreases as love increases - if love were perfect would have no fear. (1 John 4:18).
 - b. Fear decreases as faith increases - If faith were perfect would likely have no fear. (Matt. 8:25,26)

Conclusion:

- A. Let us fear God above anyone or anything.
- B. Let us obey God, not out of love or fear for anyone or anything other than God.
- C. Let us minimize fear by increasing our love and faith - not by ignoring dangers and warnings.