

FEAR GOD AND FEAR NOTHING ELSE

When people speak pejoratively of us and threaten us, the most natural thing in the world is to be AFRAID! But Christ tells us not to be afraid. In Matthew 10:28 we have the second “**do not fear**” admonition from Christ in this context (cf. vv. 26, 28, 31).

Matthew 10:28 (NKJV)

28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

In the face of persecution, Christ calls on us to maintain an eternal perspective. People may indeed kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul (cf. Prov. 29:25).

For the believer, death is a release from this world of strife to the experience of glory. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:8, “absent from the body...present with the Lord”.

Instead of fearing those who can merely kill the body, Christ says that we should rather, “**fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**” It has often been said that we should fear God and fear nothing else.

Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV)

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV)

10 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

To “fear” God means to reverence Him. It is to hold Him in awe. Such a reverence for God is often closely linked with saving faith (cf. Neh. 1:11; Ps. 2:11; 34:9; 61:5; Mal. 4:2; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 12:28).

Psalms 2:11–12 (NKJV)

11 Serve the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Hebrews 12:28 (NKJV)

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Romans 3:18 says that people in their wickedness come to a place where they have no fear of God (cf. Ps. 36:1; Jer. 2:19). Now that is a very scary place to be.

Psalm 55:19 (NKJV)

19 God will hear, and afflict them, Even He who abides from of old. Selah Because they do not change, Therefore they do not fear God.

Proverbs 1:29–30 (NKJV)

29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord,

30 They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke.

And the reason Jesus gives as to why we should FEAR God is that He is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. After the body is dead, there is nothing more that people can do. They might foolishly try.

John Wycliffe was so hated by the Roman Catholic hierarchy that 43 years after his death, they dug up his body, burned his remains, and threw the ashes into the river. But you know what? They never affected his soul, which was safely tucked away in God's hands.

The soul (Gk. psuche) of a person refers to the immaterial part of a person that refers to conscious life. People can only kill the body, but in effect God can kill both soul and body in hell.

To “destroy” (Gk. apollumi) means to bring to ruin. Hell is not a place of annihilation but a place of eternal ruination. It is a place of everlasting destruction where things eternally deteriorate and never get any better.

When a person dies, their soul leaves their body. This is the definition of death. It means “separation”.

James 2:26 (NKJV)

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

But the soul lives on. The soul of the believer goes to be with Jesus, awaiting the resurrection when the soul will be reunited with the body in glorified form. The soul of the unbeliever at the moment of death goes to a

holding place of torment called Hades. There is also going to be a resurrection of the lost when their soul will also be reunited with their body – only to appear before the great white throne judgment of God. From there whoever is not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the final destiny of all the lost.

Revelation 20:15 (NKJV)

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

This is what Christ is talking about here. God has the power to destroy both soul and body in hell. In effect, both soul and body will be eternally killed in hell.

Sometimes people wrongly say that everyone has eternal life – they are just going to live in different places. But that is inaccurate. Believers have eternal life – but unbelievers will experience eternal DEATH. They will exist forever but in the realm of a conscious death (as it were). They will experience eternal destruction, forever separated from the presence of the Lord.

The word translated as “hell” here in Matthew 10:28 is the Greek word “Gehenna”. Gehenna is the transliteration of the Hebrew ge-hinnom meaning “Valley of Hinnom”. It was a deep valley just south of Jerusalem where in the OT child sacrifice took place (cf. 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6). It became a huge dump where refuse burned all the time and corpses of criminals were disposed of there (cf. Isa. 66:24; Jer. 31:40). As such it became a prophetic symbol of the place of eternal judgment (cf. Isa. 31:9; Jer. 7:31; 32; 19:6).

Hell is Gehenna which is spoken of as a place of eternal and unquenchable fire (Mt. 3:12; Mk. 9:43); a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10, 14, 15); an eternal fire (Mt. 18:8, 9, 24:41); a furnace of fire (Mt. 13:42); a place of outer darkness (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30); and a place of eternal punishment (Mt. 25:46).

In summary, HELL is a dark place of everlasting fire indicating eternal suffering. Jesus spoke more about hell than any other NT writer – simply because He didn’t want anyone to go there.

But the thing to note in relation to what Jesus is saying in Matthew 10:28 is that there is a resurrection of the unjust as well as the just. And in the end God is going to destroy both the body and the soul of the lost in Hell. The point is HELL is an eternal place of torment for the whole person. Both soul

and body will suffer there for eternity. God designed us to live in a body. And everyone is going to get their body back in resurrection form. The saved will have glorified bodies suited for glory for all eternity. The lost will have resurrected bodies suited for torment for all eternity. The saved will experience eternal life – the lost will experience eternal death. All will exist forever in one capacity or another.

Daniel 12:2 (NKJV)

2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Acts 24:15 (NKJV)

15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

Jesus says to His people not to fear because in the end all will be revealed; not to fear because people can only kill the body in contrast to God who can destroy both soul and body in hell. The great issue is to be right with God. That is what really matters in the end. Someone has well said, “The fear of God is the fear that cancels fear.”

When the reformer John Knox was lowered into his grave, it was declared: “Here lies one who feared God so much that he never feared the face of man.”

Martin Luther in his famous song “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” wrote...

Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God’s truth abideth still,
His Kingdom is forever.