

## Luke 12:4-7 Do Not Fear Persecution

Jesus strengthens our faith to overcome the fear of persecution.

### 1) Jesus strengthens our faith by reminding us that life is eternal (12:4-5).

- a) Contrast “kill the body” with “cast into hell”—
  - i) “hell” points to “life” beyond the grave
  - ii) “hell” points to “life” more than material (cf. 12:23)
- b) Jesus does not trivialize material existence and suffering.
- c) Jesus reminds that life is more than material existence.
- d) **Application:**
  - i) Warning: Naturalistic evolution and materialism teaches that life is reduced to here and now, therefore, we strive for immediate survival and prosperity. Materialist eschatology is concerned with posterity and ecology. Such a worldview shapes priorities and behavior. It also promotes anxiety over temporal needs.
  - ii) Consider heaven and hell. Foster a longing for heaven (“a world of love”—Jonathan Edwards). Maintain a sober realization of hell.

### 2) Jesus strengthens our faith by reminding us that human authority is limited to the temporal life (12:4).

- a) “Do not fear”—must hear this word of Christ, for faith comes from hearing, and faith is required to look beyond the fearmongering threats of men
- b) “those who kill the body”—humanity has the power to do real harm; suffering and death is no illusion
- c) “and after that have nothing more that they can do”— death is not ultimate
- d) **Application:** Live with realistic awareness of evil, but do not be controlled by fear of man.

### 3) Jesus strengthens our faith by reminding us that God’s authority is unlimited and His care is meticulous (12:5-7).

- a) “I will warn you whom to fear”—godly fear; controlling respect
- b) “Him who, after He has killed”—even our temporal death is in God’s hands; human beings, diseases, catastrophes, and such, are instruments of a sovereign God who governs all things by His all-wise providence
- c) “has authority to cast into hell”—Gehenna
  - i) OT: Valley of (the Son of) Hinnom—place cursed by God because Ahaz and Manasseh sacrificed their sons there to Molech; a graveyard where corpses would be exposed for birds and beasts to feast (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; cf. Jer. 7:30-33; 19:1-13; 32:34-35; Isa. 31:9; 66:24; 2 Kings 23:10)
  - ii) Other Jewish Literature: equated with place of final judgment; fire, darkness, gnashing of teeth
  - iii) NT: place of punishment prepared for the devil and his angels and the wicked who do not repent and believe in Jesus; eternal conscious torment
    - (1) Some argue for annihilation as the final punishment due to the use of words such as “destroy” (Matt. 10:28) and “burning” (Matt. 7:19; 13:40, 42, 50).

- (2) Jesus says “the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched” in hell (Matt. 25:41; Mark 9:48), implying ongoing suffering.
- (3) Jesus contrasts the final estate of the blessed and the cursed, referring to both as eternal (Matt. 25:46).
- d) *God’s authority is unlimited; thus, His vengeance is more terrifying than anything humanity can dole out.*
  - i) Sobering for self
  - ii) Comforting for sense of justice
- e) “Not one [sparrow] is forgotten before God”—God’s delight (“good”) in all His creatures
- f) “You are of more value than many sparrows”—understatement; God’s higher esteem for humanity, especially for His children
- g) “Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered”—‘He so preserves me, that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head’ (Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 1)
- h) *God’s care is meticulous.*
  - i) He does not sleep, but keeps watch over you (Psalm 121).
  - ii) He looks after the mundane things (Luke 12:28-31).
  - iii) He governs everything for the sake of your salvation (Eph. 1:22; Matt. 24:22). ‘yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation’ (HC Q & A 1)
- i) **Application:** When persecutions come . . .
  - i) rest assured in the sovereignty of God who loves you.
  - ii) enjoy the friendship of Jesus above all others (12:4 “my friends”). His instruction comes from His love for you.

**Doxology:** “Your name, O LORD, endures forever, Your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages. For the LORD will vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants.” Psalm 135:13-14