“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).

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 if 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.