

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 12- Luke 12:1-12**

230- Who to Fear and What to Fear- Part 2

February 23, 2013

Luke 12:1-12

1 Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first *of all*, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

3 Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.

4 "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? *Yet* not one of them is forgotten before God.

7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

8 "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God;

9 but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him.

11 When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say;

12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

To the Glory of God

Now in the last sermon on Luke back in December of last year- we looked at verses 1-5, and I went over the issue of godly and reverential fear and why we are to reverence God and just how this godly fear will keep us from being like the religious hypocrites that Jesus warns us about in verse 1.

And we allowed the words of the Apostle Peter in **1Peter 3:13-21** to help us understand this Passage that Dr. Luke wrote as he was moved upon by God the Holy Spirit. And, as we examined that Passage- we saw that we are to be holy *because* God is Holy. So God's Holiness is the Ground or the Basis for our holiness. And God's Own intrinsic Personal Holiness is also the Pattern of our holiness. So God's Personal Holiness is both the Ground and the Pattern for our own holiness.

And that is why we are meeting such strange things in these verses. We are being called to be like God in His Holiness. And we have said that God's Holiness is His Uniqueness or His Otherness. God's Holiness is what makes God to be one of a kind. So it shouldn't be surprising that the implications of this are so surprising:

Live in hope and live in fear so that you become like God and live in Holiness.

And this is what we want to impart to our children! We want them to taste what it is to hope fully in the Grace that is coming to God's children when Christ returns. So we want them to obey this admonition:

... fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We want them to grow up unshakeable in their ultimate optimism for what God will make of this world. They are coming into a world that is flaunting its evil more openly than Americans have been accustomed to. What we see around us today is not new in many parts of the world. There have been many cultures all throughout history that were much more blatantly immoral than ours. But as Christianity and

Biblical Morality continues to have less and less impact on the American culture- our children will have to deal with manifestations of human depravity that were more restrained in previous decades in this country. And therefore we want to raise them not as flimsy optimists whose hopes sink with every new outrage- but as ultimate, unshakable optimists- whose hope is full and strong, because of the Grace that is coming to them at the Return of Jesus Christ, in addition to all the Grace that comes to them every day before that great Day comes.

And we want our children to taste the holy fear of God- Who is both their Father and their Judge. We also want them to obey this Biblical command:

...conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*;

We don't want to raise emotionally fragile children who can only be told to hope because if they are told to fear they collapse with no emotional capacities for such a thing. We don't want to raise children who have no concept of holy fear living alongside of hoping fully. And we don't to raise children whose hope is the kind that vanishes when they fear God. We want to raise young people who are as strange as this text is strange; Children who are as odd in their emotional capacities as the Holiness of God demands.

And we want our young people to actually taste the Holiness of God implanted in their own souls as children born again by the Holy Spirit, who now bear the family traits from the Father of Holiness. Therefore we want them to obey **1Peter 3:15&16** that says,

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;

16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

We want strange and wonderful and hopeful and fearful and courageous and strong and joyful and wise young people- who are shaped by the glorious "otherness" or Holiness of God, so that their lives are a joyful exception to the unsaved people of this world.

And this is why we who are the teachers of children immerse ourselves in the Bible- the holy Word of the holy God. This is why we linger long over strange and wonderful things that we find in God's

Word- in the prayer and expectation that God will free us from our former ignorance and give us mental categories we never knew before, and awaken emotional capacities that we never thought we could have. That is what Jesus was talking about in **Luke 12** and that is what Peter is talking about in his Epistle. And so we saw last December that there are three Commands to us in the arena of this godly fear. We are to:

1. Live in hope
2. Live in holiness
3. Live in holy fear

So now we move into **Luke 12:6-12** and in that we see the practical application of just why we are not to fear Man and why we are to fear God- Who has not only the Power to kill our bodies but to also kill our souls in eternal damnation in hell.

And it will help us to consider the context of the situation as the Apostles and Disciples heard Jesus say these words. At that moment- this so-called new religion of following Jesus was not accepted by anyone outside the small group who actually loved and served Jesus. So while it is true that there was a sea of humanity that followed Jesus to be healed and fed- there was only a handful who followed Jesus because they honestly loved Him and loved what he said and wanted to obey and serve Him.

And the same thing is true today. There are many who will lift up the Name of Jesus as long as they are receiving something beneficial for themselves from Jesus- like healing or material possessions or financial blessings. So they are following Jesus for what Jesus will do for them to make their lives down here on earth better and safer and more secure. But for God to take away from these people any of those financial blessings or any of those material possessions or any of that physical healing- and those people will leave Jesus standing in the middle of the road. And that is because people like that have not been truly born again; they are not regenerate; they have not had the change of nature and they love themselves more than they love Jesus.

For Jesus Christ to have the audacity to actually place His Lordship demands on these people and expect service and obedience and faithfulness will turn them away from the Lord faster than anything else. And yet true Biblical Salvation is about nothing else but

a miraculous transformation of the human nature from being fallen to being Divine and the forceful imposition of eyes that now see and ears that now hear and a heart that can believe and so truly saved people delight in God; they relish serving Jesus Christ; they thrive on decreasing in their own importance and allowing the majesty of the Person of Jesus Christ to increase in value and importance in their minds and hearts to the degree that obeying Jesus is the pathway to the fullness of joy and so His Commands are no longer grievous but a source of satisfaction and contentment that nothing else and no one else on earth can come close to.

Now if you listen to the pillow prophets and the modern Church growth gurus and the snake oil salesmen on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television network- you would think that the straight and narrow pathway would be hindrance to people coming to Jesus. That to actually preach and teach that not only does Jesus expect a change in the way you live your life after you are saved- but that He demands it and will hold you accountable to it- that all that would be a barrier to people coming to the Lord for Salvation.

These Judas goats teach that we should alter the Gospel to make it more appealing to lost and lukewarm churchgoers; that we need to sell them a gospel that is softer and more palatable than the one that Jesus and the Apostles preached; that to make people uncomfortable with the Lordship demands of Jesus Christ will cause people to become offended and may even turn people away from the only way of Salvation.

These people say that they are not sure if Hindus are Buddhist are lost; they call Muslims "brothers" on the great path to eternity; they embrace ancient heresies that deny fundamental essential Doctrines that the Christian Church confronted and defeated many centuries ago. These people pronounce a kinder and gentler way to approach people and have invented a concept called, "relationship evangelism" that denies that the Gospel must be preached and believed on; that denies that individuals must come to the end of themselves in order to be saved; that denies that people must reject and abandon their former sinful lives; that denies that we are required to obey Jesus after Salvation; that denies that after we are saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone- without any human works- that we are required to produce godly and good fruit and that

our fruit should not only remain but it should increase and be evident to all.

They will argue that Christianity is all about "Love" as they use the glorious concept of godly love as an excuse for a life that does not follow; and that does not obey and that lives to itself for its own glory. To which we will agree that Christianity is absolutely all about Love and the Love that saves us is the Love that regenerates us and that changes us and that sanctifies us and that compels us to love Christ and His Glory more than we love our plans and our dreams and our ambitions and even our own lives.

Now keep in mind, dear friends that preaching and teaching the Biblical Gospel does not create the differences or the distinctions between those who are saved and those who are not- that difference and that distinction already existed before the Gospel was preached. But preaching the Biblical Gospel identifies and makes clear the division and the distinction between those who believe and those who do not believe; between those who are Sovereignly drawn to Jesus and those who are repelled by Jesus; between those who love the Lord and those who love themselves; between those who are children of the devil and those who are children of God; between those who have been chosen from before the foundation of the world to magnify the Glory of God's Grace and Mercy in Salvation and those who have been chosen to magnify the Righteous Judgment of an infinitely holy God against sin in hell; between those who are fish on the right side and those who are fish on the left side; between those who are children of light and those who are children of darkness; between those who are with God and those who are against Him; between the sheep and the goats; between those who are the recipients of undeserved Mercy- that is patently unfair and those who are treated fairly by God as they receive from God what they have earned through their unrepentant sin.

And from the very beginning- this division has existed and this division exists right now- today- and there will *a/ways* be this division until Jesus returns and puts an end to it. And God uses this division between the saved and the lost to facilitate all the tension and the persecution and the violence and the evil and the afflictions that are perpetrated by the lost on the saved.

In some countries and during some epochs of time- that tension resulted in Christianity being made illegal and those who were the

Lord's suffered unmercifully- filling the afflictions of Jesus Christ- or in other words- showing the infinite Value and Worth of the Sufferings of Jesus Christ through their own sufferings to other people around the world. And that Suffering involved several aspects that we have studied before such as:

- ✓ Having their personal goods and possessions confiscated
- ✓ Having their wives and children taken from them
- ✓ Having the Leaders of the Church removed
- ✓ Being imprisoned
- ✓ Being tortured
- ✓ Banished from a city or nation
- ✓ Death

One of the best example of this in the Bible is found in a very obscure Passage found in **Hebrews 10** that we studied some years ago- please turn there with me. That Passage says:

Hebrews 10:32-39

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.

38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

We must realize that some of the most important people in Church History were the recipients of horrible persecution- people who we would be good to learn about and follow their faithful example as the writer of Hebrews urged us when he said in **Hebrews 13:7**:

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

Now we who love and follow Jesus in this country basically suffer with words that are spoken against us. Our integrity may be attacked; our character may be slandered; our words can be twisted; and our teachings misunderstood or purposefully maligned. And while I see on the horizon a new persecution that will no doubt involve both civil and criminal penalties against those of us who remain faithful to inspired Scripture- that may even result in jail time and the confiscation of our goods- that time- for the most part- has not happened here yet.

But all across the world- our brothers and sisters suffer horrific persecution and it has been estimated by people who follow and track such things- that the 20th Century saw more genuine persecution of believers than all of the 19 centuries before it and that we are on pace in the 21st Century to surpass the 20th Century in assaults against God and His Church.

But however all this pans out remains to be seen. What is not in doubt is that at the moment that these inspired Words left the Mouth of Jesus here in **Luke 12** and went onto the pages on Scripture- persecution was the normal way of life for believers. And at the time that Jesus said these words- there was no reason to believe that things would ever be any different until He came back.

So we can see that just like Love- the concept of Fear has both negative and positive traits. There is godly love that glorifies God and encourages us and there is that ungodly thing that people call "love" that dishonors God and is destructive to us. So too there is a "holy" and an "unholy" fear that Jesus speaks about in this Passage.

Holy fear- is that reverential respect of God and His Word that alters the way we think which in turn alters the way we live our lives. That kind of holy fear compels us to do certain things that brings Glory to God and encourages us and to not do certain things that dishonors God and brings destruction to us.

Unholy fear is the opposite and it always dishonors God and it always brings destruction to us. And so Jesus speaks these Words to His followers to comfort them and to re-align their fear in the proper place and with the proper Person. And this means that there is a real kind of "holy fear" that does not destroy strong and confident hope in the Promises of God- but it walks *beside* that hope and it *deepens* that hope and it *strengthens* it and it leads to a strange and wonderful and holy life. And I would describe *holy* fear like this in distinction from *unholy* fear:

- *Unholy fear* runs away from the Judgment on sin and looks for safety in all kinds of excuses and moral and religious camouflage.
- *Holy fear* runs away from the sin itself, and looks for safety in pardoning and empowering Grace of God.

... or here is a more provocative way to put it:

- *Unholy fear* runs away from the One Who judges those who don't hope fully in God.
- *Holy fear* runs away from not hoping in God into the Arms of the Judge- Who is his Father.
- *Unholy fear* ignores the preciousness of the Ransom and trembles at the Judgment of God.
- *Holy fear* cherishes the Ransom and trembles at the prospect of insulting the Goodness of the One Who paid it.

Or in the Words of our Lord Jesus:

Luke 12:5

I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

So then our Lord goes into several examples of aspects that are seemingly insignificant that shows them and us why we are to fear God and what he can do with us and to us and not to fear Man and what he can do with us and to us. And the first example is with the sparrow. Read **Luke 12:6&7** again with me:

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? *Yet* not one of them is forgotten before God.

7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Now as you read these two verses- keep in mind what the main subject is. The main subject of this entire Passage is *not* God's Provision or even His Great Love for us. The main Purpose of all that Jesus is talking about here in **Luke 12** is the correct placement of our fear- or in other words- the correct placement of who we respect and admire and desire to please and why.

And remember that these people feared the hypocritical Pharisees and what these religious men could do to them if they crossed them and surrendered all and followed Jesus. Remember back in **John 9**- when Jesus healed the man who was born blind. Please go there with me- **John 9**. And the religious hypocrites questioned the man about how he was healed and when they couldn't shake him- they went after his parents. And look what **John 9:18-23** says:

18 The Jews then did not believe *it* of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight,

19 and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?"

20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

21 but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself."

22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

23 For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So because these people standing there on that day feared what the religious hypocrites could do to them if they trusted in Jesus and obeyed Him- Jesus tells them in **Luke 12:4&5**:

4 "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

So Jesus is telling thee people to fear God because God will punish the hypocrites in hell. So who can kill the body? People can kill each other- they do it all the time. I mean we go through life trying to prevent being killed. And so all this means is

"do not be afraid of those who kill the body"

... which refers to those religious leaders when the worst they can do is kill your body. Now this is not saying that we should not buy life insurance to protect our families or that we don't need to put locks on our doors or that we are sinning if we are afraid of murderers. Jesus is simply saying here that the worst that the Pharisees can do to you is in this life. And that might be real bad. They can take things away from you and they can beat you and they can imprison you and they can even kill you. But they cannot touch your soul. The damage that they can do to you ends with this life. Their hardship on you will not follow you into eternity.

And that's not the worst thing that can happen to you. Hell is worse than being poor. Hell is worse than being imprisoned and being beaten. Hell is worse than even dying. And if you are a true believer- death is nothing more than a door into the very Presence of God. So the very worst that an evil person can do to a true believer by ending their natural life is to usher them into the very Presence of God where they will live forever in a perfect body.

But the character of hypocrisy is that it fears Man. Hypocrisy is preoccupied with what people think about them and how other people perceive them. True Salvation is preoccupied with what God thinks about them and how God perceives them.

So religious hypocrites were all about trying to gain the trust and gain the favor and gain the confidence of the people so they could take their money. The Pharisees did what they did for money. All religious hypocrites do what they do for money and for power and for prestige. Always. Jude and Peter said that they do what they do and they teach

what they teach so that they can fleece the sheep and make merchandise of simple minded people.

Jude 11

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

2Peter 2:2&3

² Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

³ and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Balaam was the Old Testament guy who prophesied for money. You pay him enough money- you get a good prophecy. You cross this guy and he will prophecy damnation on you. And you have people all over this country today who will sell their prophecies to the highest bidder. I received literature from one of these shysters who wanted to sell the anointing of the Holy Spirit. According to his liar- \$33.33 will get you an anointing; \$66.66 will get you a *double* anointing and \$99.99 will get you a triple anointing, a new car, and new job- all in six months! I met a man who said he had a gift of the Holy Spirit to find oil under the ground and I was present on the day that a man from Texas offered him a percentage of the oil revenue if he would go out to Texas with him to find oil. This so-called man of God went to pray about it and I went in and told him that first of all- I didn't believe that anybody had such a gift because nothing like that is in the Bible- but even if he did have such a gift that would give him information like that- why wouldn't he use it to help people be saved and to walk holy before God rather than sell it for money? That conversation got me the left foot of fellowship with that man and his ministry.

Still others today sell water from the River Jordan; some sell pages from an original King James Bible that you can't even read; and still others will give you an autographed apostolic blessing from the pope to hang in your restaurant for only \$5,000.

All false teachers and false prophets and heretics and apostates do what they do for money and for fame and for power. Jesus said in **Luke**

16:14 that the Pharisees were lovers of money. All false teachers are lovers of money. They want the chief seats; they want the high places; they want to hob nob with the politicians and the elite. Jesus said they want the accolades; they want all the elaborate greetings in the marketplace. They want to wear all the fancy stuff because they want to appear to be nobler, more spiritual, more elevated, more transcendent than everybody else so that you'll bow at their feet and give them all that you have so that they can connect you to God.

The entire fabric of a hypocritical religious system is to train people to fear the leaders- to fear men- to put on a show for people. And that's the heart of hypocrisy. And it strikes fear into the heart of the average person- so much so- that the parents of John 9 were willing to betray their own child to stay in good graces with the religious leaders.

But Jesus says in verse 5:

"I will warn you whom to fear. Fear the one who after he's killed has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him."

Now this is not Satan. Satan doesn't cast anybody into hell. Satan himself is cast into hell. And we must know, dear friends that satan is not the king of hell either- God is the King of hell- God is Sovereign- not satan. God is the only One Who has the power to kill and the authority to cast into hell.

Do you know there's nothing in the Scripture that tells us ever to fear Satan? Not one word. So you can run around in a panic- afraid of satan; worried that satan will come to your house and possess your sheetrock and make you sick and kill your children and you can spend your whole life "binding the devil" and "casting him out" but there's nothing in the Bible about any of that.

The bottom line is- if you're not a Christian- if you're not truly born from above- then satan is already your master. He is already your lord and your father. Lost people are already living totally in satan's world anyway- why worry about being possessed? But if you're a believer- the Holy Bible teaches that you've been delivered from satan and his power completely.

"Well, Brother Blair- what should our attitude be toward satan?"
It is very simple.

James 4:3-8

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Nowhere in all of Scripture are we ever told to fear Satan. It just says in 1Peter 5:8-11,

8 Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

9 But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.

11 To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Do not yield to satan; do not give him space in your life; do not agree with him; do not listen to him; do not follow him; do not surrender to him; do not accept what he says or what he offers- even if it might benefit you in some way.

And Jesus says here that we are not to fear false teachers or false prophets who try to place fear in your hearts so that you will never cross them or even disagree with them. But who are we told to fear over and over and over in Scripture?

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Everything starts with fearing God. And the English word, "Fear" here is from the Greek word, *phobasete* from where we get our word, "phobia"- which means: *a clinging, gnawing, nagging, overpowering fear*. Let our fear be of the One Who can not only kill our bodies but cast our souls into hell. So do not fear Man- not even the religious hypocrites- fear God.

Now there are some people who don't believe in hell. But this passage makes havoc of their idea by virtue of the contrast. Some people say that it just means the grave- that hell here means the grave; that God has the authority to cast you into the grave. So these people say that Jesus was saying, *"Don't fear men who can just kill you, fear God who can kill you and cast you into the grave."*

But that's just nonsense because if there is no hell, and there is no eternal torment- then God can't do anything to you that man can't do. What difference is it if a Man kills you and you go out of existence or if God kills you and you go out of existence? That would be the same thing. So the fact that Jesus says here that we should not fear that evil men can kill us but that we are to fear God who can kill you...and here's the key word...and after that cast you into hell- by Jesus saying it like this- that makes it very clear that there is something after death that is infinitely worse than death or there's no contrast between what God can do to you and Man can do to you if there is no eternal punishment.

So Jesus is saying that what God can do is far worse and far greater and more lasting than death. All that men can do is kill you. But what God can do is far worse than that because God not only can kill you physically but send you to eternal punishment. And by the way, the word here for "hell" in the Greek is *Gehenna* from *ge*, which means: valley and *hinom*. So *Gehenna* means: *the valley of Hinnom*.

And if you go over to Israel today- you can see the Valley of Hinnom. It's south and west of Jerusalem- down off the plateau where Jerusalem sits. And during the Old Testament days- when the Jews got into idolatry- that's where they set up their high places to worship Baal and Molech. So it was a place of perversity and blasphemy and idolatry. It was also called Tophet and Tophet, according to many of the lexicons means a place of spitting out, or a place of vomiting, a place of abhorrence. And some indicate it could be connected to words that mean a place of burning.

But in each of those cases Gehenna is representative of what happened there. And the Jews built a place to sacrifice to idols and the sacrifices were just staggering. What they did was create a massive pit at this high place of idol worship down in the valley. And it had a very deep hole and they just poured wood into that deep hole and wicked kings, Ahaz and Manasseh actually sacrificed their children there, threw them into the fire pit as offerings to the gruesome idol Molech. You can find this in **2Chronicles 28&33**. And **Jeremiah 32:35** talks about how other people copied it and they had these babies being sacrificed to Molech.

And so the Prophet Jeremiah came along and predicted that God was going to bring Divine Judgment on this horrible place and this horrible practice and said that God was going to come against this terrible wickedness that occurred in the Valley of Hinnom in Gehenna and He was going to come with mass destruction and the Valley would become known as the Valley of Slaughter.

And, of course that happen when Israel's enemies and Judah's enemies came and destroyed them. And God-fearing King Josiah came along and for a moment and there was a short respite because Josiah obliterated all the idolatry out of the place. And you remember the reforms under Josiah- he stopped all the abominations and he stopped all the idol worship- that's found in **2Kings 23**.

And he turned Gehenna into the Jerusalem city dump. And the smoldering fires kept burning day and night. And so the Valley of Hinnom known as Gehenna was a place of constant burning, constant smoke, constant inhaling of brimstone. And it was also associated with blasphemy and cursing.

And so the Jews picked up the word Gehenna and made it the descriptive word for God's Wrath in hell. So hell is an everlasting lake of fire combined with smoke and darkness- indicating great evil and wickedness and abomination. So it refers to the Divine Judgment and slaughter of God against unrepentant sinners. And the Lord Jesus Christ had so much to say about hell- like weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, darkness, blackness, aloneness, torment, burning.

And so our Lord says us- you want to fear somebody? **Fear the One Who can send you to a place like that. Yes, end of verse 5, I tell you, fear Him.**

So how can we avoid being a hypocrite? We must stop fearing men and start fearing God- the true and living God Who will uncover everything that is hidden and Who has the Authority to send you to hell.

And all of that is the background as to why Jesus talked about the sparrows in verses 6&7.

Luke 12:6-7

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? *Yet* not one of them is forgotten before God.

7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

So all that Jesus was saying here is that these religious hypocrites are false- they do not have any real power over you. Sure they can hurt you and imprison you and even kill you- but they cannot touch your soul and the extent of their ability to harm you lasts only to the end of this life.

But God knows everything. He is Omniscient. God knows everything about everything. Sparrows were little tiny birds that the poor picked up, caught in nets and ate, plucked them, skinned them, roasted them and ate them like tiny little hors d'oeuvres and they fed the poor. They were so cheap you could buy five for two cents. In Matthew it says they were two for a penny. So what happened is for two pennies you got an extra one thrown in...two for a penny, or five for two pennies. And a penny back then was one-sixteenth of a day's wage- a denarii is called an assarion, it was a copper Roman coin.

So these were cheap food for the poor. Nobody cared about sparrows. The only reason the poor cared about sparrows was they could eat them. So the normal person would never think that a completely Almighty God would bother Himself about sparrows. Couldn't there be one sparrow somewhere on the planet that God didn't know about? No. And if He knows about sparrows- if God takes knowledge of the most insignificant of birds- then this same God knows about you.

In fact, in **Matthew 10:29** it says that God knows when the sparrow falls and that word can mean hop. So God not only knows every sparrow- but He knows when every sparrow hops. That is just another

example to the degree that God orders the Universe and the level of His absolute Sovereignty. And this is the God that holds you in His Hand and from this we learn two things:

- A. Nothing takes God by surprise- He is Omniscient
- B. You do not want to cross this God

What's the point of saying that? The point of saying that is- *"Look, you better fear God because He knows everything...EVERYTHING, absolutely everything!"* Now back in the Old Testament, **1Samuel 14:45**, **2Samuel 14:11**, and **1Kings 1:52** is a familiar Old Testament phrase,

"Not one hair of your head shall fall."

... by the way, that same phrase is in **Luke 21:18**. This was God's way of saying when the Wrath of God is poured out on the earth- I'll protect you. God knows every hair on every person on the planet. He knows the minutest, most inconsequential details because if it is, He knows it. So don't think somehow you don't need to fear God because in the end something will slip by Him- because nothing slips by Him. The Truth will be uncovered and hell awaits the hypocrite, and God knows everything.

And then I love this, verse 7,

"Do not fear...do not fear," because some of them were starting to get nervous. "You're of more value than many sparrows."

And this is a precious way of saying that the Lord knows those who are His. And that's where the transition comes in this Passage. Not before verse 6 but here. And you can see it in their eyes... *"If God knows everything- how will I ever survive?"* And Jesus says in verse 5, "Fear," and then in verse 7, He says "Don't fear." So if you've already feared God in Salvation- don't fear God in Judgment because you are of more value than many sparrows.

So if you have already feared the Lord enough to repent and trust in Jesus for Salvation- then do not fear what Man can do to you. God has your name in His book. So the way out of fearing these religious hypocrites is to fear God. And if you are truly fearing God- then do not

fear what Man can do to you because God knows everything and He knows you are His.

Now if you are not His- then it is time to fear God- Who will uncover the Truth and Who will sentence you to hell. So how do you come to know God? What is the only way to come to know God? You cannot honor God unless you honor the Son. And Lord willing- we will get into that next time.

Let's pray.