

# Matthew 10:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

## Analysis

Jesus reorders fears: 'And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (Greek: φοβεῖσθε δὲ μᾶλλον τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι ἐν γεέννῃ, 'fear rather the one able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna'). The command distinguishes temporal versus eternal threats. Humans can only kill the body (σῶμα) - temporal harm. God can destroy both soul (ψυχή) and body in hell (γέεννα, Gehenna) - eternal judgment. This isn't fear as terror but reverent awe that prioritizes eternal over temporal consequences. Right fear of God eliminates paralyzing fear of humans.

## Historical Context

Disciples faced persecution from religious authorities (Acts 4:1-3, 5:17-18) and civil powers (Acts 12:1-3). Jesus prepares them for martyrdom by establishing proper fear hierarchy. 'Gehenna' referred to Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where refuse burned, symbolizing final judgment. Jewish martyrdom theology (2 Maccabees 7) emphasized faithfulness despite bodily death, trusting resurrection. Early Christian martyrs embodied this teaching, fearing God more than execution. The promise addressed real threats, not hypothetical persecution.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does proper fear of God eliminate unhealthy fear of human threats?
2. What is the relationship between reverent awe of God and confidence in His protection?
3. What temporal fears need reordering in light of eternal realities?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ μὴ φοβηθήτε ἀπὸ τὸν ἀποκτεῖναι· τὸν σῶμα  
And not fear G575 him which kill him which body  
G2532 G3361 G5399 G3588 G615 G3588 G4983

τὸν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυνάμενον ἀποκτεῖναι· φοβηθήτε  
him which but soul not able kill fear  
G3588 G1161 G5590 G3361 G1410 G615 G5399

δὲ μᾶλλον τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα  
but rather him which able And soul And body  
G1161 G3123 G3588 G1410 G2532 G5590 G2532 G4983

ἀπολέσαι ἐν γεέννῃ  
to destroy in hell  
G622 G1722 G1067

## Additional Cross-References

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**Revelation 2:10** (Parallel theme): Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

**James 4:12** (Parallel theme): There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

**Jeremiah 5:22** (Parallel theme): Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

**Isaiah 51:12** (Parallel theme): I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;

**Ecclesiastes 5:7** (Parallel theme): For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

**1 Peter 3:14** (Parallel theme): But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

**Isaiah 66:2** (Parallel theme): For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

**Psalms 119:120** (Parallel theme): My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

**Matthew 25:46** (Parallel theme): And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

**Hebrews 10:31** (Parallel theme): It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.