

SBC – April 17, 2022

“Fear of Death v. Resurrection Truth”

For over 2 years the world has been dealing with the Covid pandemic. And yes, it was terrible, but the FEARMONGERING foisted upon the masses was truly incredible and at great consequence. You see fear too is a killer in many secondary ways.

The wall thermostat of our forced air heating system works on the principle that when the temperature dips below a certain level the furnace kicks on again.

Our city newspaper works on the same principle: It cranks out scary headlines by some calculated mechanism lest COVID fear dip below an unacceptable level. I don't know how they do it, really. How many ways can you recombine the words *deaths, hospitals, surge, vaccine,* and *intensity* in a headline every day? – **Andree Seu Peterson** in World Magazine, Feb. 12, 2022 – p. 70

And the world was terrified! They were scared to death of death! Ironically, many experts are now arguing that lockdowns and mandates have actually been counterproductive when considering all the factors involved.

Certainly, we want to be wise and there is a place for proper “fear” in the sense of taking prudent precautions, etc.

Years ago, world famous boxing champion Muhammad Ali was on a plane, and he didn't have his seat belt on. The stewardess told him to buckle up his seat belt. He said, “**Superman don't need no seat belt.**” The stewardess snapped back, “**Superman don't need no plane. Buckle up!**”

Life is about balance and risk assessment. I reserve the right to do my own thinking and I hold to that for you as well. We don't want to be mindless clones in our thinking. The “experts” are often wrong! Conventional wisdom is not always right, and neither is it always wrong. When it comes to matters of health and well-being, I think we must give space and grace to let every person “**be fully convinced in their own mind**” (Rom. 14:5).

And yet the FEAR OF DEATH that governs the world should not govern us. Yes, we want to be WISE and yet not dominated by craven FEAR! Fear defines the world whereas FAITH is to define God's people and that is to make a difference in our lives. “**God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind**” (2 Tim. 1:7).

The FEAR of death is universal. This has been reflected in the headlines throughout the entire world for the last 2 years, so I don't have to make the case. People often like to talk BIG but in truth they are scared of DEATH!

People keep looking to the so-called EXPERTS to ease their fear of the death problem, but they can't find it. And this is where Jesus comes in!

Slide # 1

Hebrews 2:15 (NKJV)

15 and **release those who through fear of death** were all their lifetime subject to **bondage**.

Jesus not only came to free us from the penalty of sin but also to free us from the fear of death which is a form of bondage. And the whole world is held in this bondage including those responsible for the HEADLINES these last 2 years. They just can't get over it. The message is: DEATH, DEATH, DEATH; FEAR, FEAR, FEAR!

But Jesus brings another message. A message of LIFE and PEACE!

Peter, very full of himself, said even if all the others stumbled yet he would not, and claimed vehemently that he would be willing to die for Christ (Mt. 26:33-35). Jesus then went on to say to Peter, "***The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.***" (Mt. 26:41). And then a short time later Peter FEARING for his life denied his Lord three times.

In our human weakness we have a fear of death. When Satan was dealing with Job he said, "***all that a man has he will give for his life.***" (Job 2:4). Satan knows us pretty well – not perfectly, but pretty well. We cling tightly to life and when it is threatened the most natural reaction is FEAR!

Knowing our weakness, Jesus, the night before He was crucified, emphasized not being afraid to His disciples.

Slide # 2

John 14:1 (NKJV)

1 "**Let not your heart be troubled**; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

John 14:27 (NKJV)

27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. **Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.**

Christ left us His peace but on what basis? I would contend it was on the basis of the RESURRECTION. Yes, Christ's death and resurrection is a package but without the resurrection we are left without a living hope. In 1 Cor. 15:17 Paul said, "if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins." But Christ is risen and resurrection truth trumps the fear of death!

G.B. Hardy, in his book *Countdown*, said this is the ultimate question in the world. "Number one, has anybody ever cheated death? Number two, if he did, did he leave the way open for me?"

The answer is **YES** there is ONE Who has escaped the death trap and His name is Jesus. And **YES**, He has made the way of escape for us too!

After His resurrection when Christ appeared to the disciples in John 20, the first thing He said to them was, "**Peace be with you**". Then He showed them His hands and side and then again said to them, "**Peace to you!**" (Jn. 20:19-21. From there we go to the book of Acts. The disciples went from fearfully hiding behind closed doors to **BOLDLY** proclaiming the truth of the resurrection on the Day of Pentecost. Resurrection truth turned their fear into boldness!

This resurrection message went out from the early church as we hear it ringing out everywhere they went during the first 30 years of the Church age as recorded in the book of Acts. In almost every chapter the events recorded are centered upon the truth of the resurrection.

The resurrection changed everything!

The idea of bodily resurrection is unique to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Of course, Islam is a "*Johnny Come Lately*" not coming on the scene until the time of Mohammed - 600 years into the Church Age. Of the two (Judaism and Christianity) Judaism holds only to the OT while Christianity also holds to the NT in which the doctrine of resurrection is fulfilled and then developed in relation to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Several Eastern Religions teach the idea of reincarnation but that is different from bodily resurrection. Various religions teach some form of afterlife, but none believe in a personal bodily resurrection.

All the idolatry of the world is rooted in Babylon and the mystery religions which developed out of it. Nimrod founded Babylon (Gen.

10:8-12) and he had a wife known as Semiramis who founded the secret religious rites of the Babylonian mysteries.

Supposedly, Semiramis had a son via a miraculous conception who was named Tammuz. Tammuz, according to tradition, was killed by a wild animal and then restored to life, which amounts to a satanic anticipation and counterfeit of Christ's resurrection.

The legend of Semiramis and Tammuz spread around the world. Their names were changed in different places, but the basic story remained the same. In Assyria, the mother was Ishtar, the son was Tammuz. In Phoenicia, the mother was Astarte and the son was Baal. In Egypt, she was Isis and the son was Osiris, or Horus. In Greece, she was Aphrodite and her son was Eros. For the Romans, the mother was Venus and the son was Cupid.

– (Adapted from John Walvoord)

Satan is a deceptive counterfeiter. He never comes up with anything original. All he can do is want to be LIKE God. Even so, all the false religions in the world have nothing close to biblical resurrection.

Resurrections are very hard to fake. The thing about Christ's resurrection is that it is rooted in the combination of both prophecy and history. That is totally UNIQUE! We have prophecies given in the Psalms 1000 years before the time of Christ that speak of His coming resurrection. The four gospels are historical in nature. And there is outside "secular" history that also confirms the testimony of the early church.

Even the reality of the early church which came into being right after the resurrection affirms that it was the resurrection that spawned this entire movement. That is the great TESTIMONY of the book of Acts!

All this to say, the truth of Christ's resurrection is truly unique in the annals of history. It changed everything. It provided evidence that someone has defeated death and the grave and therefore we have answers and don't have to fear.

A key chapter that deals with WHY we don't have to fear death is found in Hebrews 2. It's in this chapter that we are told Christ has released His people from the fear of death.

Slide # 3

Hebrews 2 Profile

Jesus is our...

Status changer (dominion restored for mankind) 2:5-8

Substitute – 2:9

Salvation Trailblazer 2:10

Sanctifier – 2:11

Satan-Conqueror – 2:14

Sympathetic High-Priest – 2:17-18

Hebrews 2 begins with this warning....

Slide # 4

Hebrews 2:3 (NKJV)

3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

Without Christ there is no escaping the fear of death and the eternal judgment that will follow. Heb. 9:27 says, "***it is appointed for me to die once, but after this the judgment***".

Parable about Death "The Appointment in Samarra"

(as retold by W. Somerset Maugham [1933])

The speaker is Death

*There was a merchant in Bagdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture, now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me. The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the marketplace and he saw me (Death) standing in the crowd and he came to me and said, Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning? That was not a threatening gesture, I said, it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Bagdad, *for I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.**

You can't outrun your appointment with death! But you can reconcile with God through Jesus Christ beforehand and share in His victory over death!

This morning I want to consider with you the verses in Hebrews 2 leading up to that statement that Christ has released us from the fear of death in Hebrews 2:15.

Slide # 5

Hebrews 2:8–9 (NKJV)

8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

Right now, we don't see the original dominion mandate being fulfilled in mankind. But we do see Jesus Who ultimately will fulfill it on behalf of mankind!

Jesus is our champion. He is the one that comes forth on behalf of mankind to restore our dominion fortunes. He comes forth as our great representative. He comes forth as our Savior and Lord Who rights things in mankind's favor!

When it says, “***who was made a little lower than the angels***’ this is in reference to His incarnation. This relates to His being born a human being. This was a colossal step down for the eternal Son of God.

And He did this specifically for the purpose of suffering death. Jesus was born so that He might die. As Hebrew 10 indicates God prepared a body for Jesus specifically to the end that He might be a SACRIFICE.

But His death was not the end of the story – in the resurrection and exaltation He was crowned with **glory and honor**. Consistently the Scriptures tie Christ death for sin to His exaltation. Christ's reward for His sacrifice is His exaltation (cf. 1:3; 2:9; 10:12; 12:2; Phil 2:8-11; Rev. 5).

In verse 9 it is like the writer runs to the end of the story culminating in Christ's resurrection and exaltation and then comes back to add more detail to the fact of His death saying, “***that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.***”

Christ's death for sin was a GRACE payment. This is the GRACE of God on display. Grace means God's favor – His unmerited, undeserved favor. It's an undeserved gift. That is the essence of the cross!

If you are looking for a definition of GRACE, look no further than the cross. It's the love of God paying for our sins. We are guilty, we should have paid the eternal death penalty – but Christ voluntarily came and took our place.

And what specifically does the writer say is “***the grace of God***” – well it is that Jesus “***might taste death for everyone.***”

That is the GRACE of God. That is the gospel of grace. It's that Christ died for our sins. We don't pay for our own sins. Jesus paid it all – all to Him we owe. Now we do have to receive Him as our personal Savior, but He has done it all. The gospel is all about what Jesus has done for us and not what we do for God! Grace is God's doing! ***Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense!***

*It is because of Christ's total payment for sin that we need not fear God's judgment for sin. Christ has taken all our judgment – ALL OF IT! Hebrews 10:14 says, “***For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.***”

Slide # 6

Hebrews 2:10 (NKJV)

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in **bringing many sons to glory**, to make the **captain of their salvation** perfect through sufferings.

The great plan of God which involves the incarnation, including the death and resurrection of Christ, was designed by God to accomplish various things including “***bringing many sons to glory***”. This ties back to Jesus by the grace of God tasting death for everyone in verse 9 and back to “***so great a salvation***” in verse 3. One of the great objectives in the incarnation was the bringing many sons to glory. It could be accomplished no other way. But God designed a way that was consistent with Who He is and His Holiness.

When it describes Christ as “***the captain of their salvation***” the word ***captain*** means **pioneer** or **trailblazer** (cf. Acts 3:15, 5:31, Heb. 12:2). Christ has gone before us, in effect blazing the trail to glory for us and we follow in that train (cf. Isa. 53:12, Mk. 10:45). We are on the way to glory. Christ has gone before to prepare a place for us (Jn. 14:3). We are going to be with Christ and will behold His glory (cf. Jn. 17:24).

Has anyone ever conquered death? Yes, there is One. His Name is Jesus!
Has He made a way for others to follow?

Yes, He is bringing MANY sons to glory. He is not bringing just a few, but MANY with Him. Heaven is going to be filled with throngs of redeemed saints. In Rev. 7 John saw a great multitude which no one could number of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb (cf. Rev. 7:9).

Slide # 7

Hebrews 2:11 (NKJV)

11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Verses 11-13 emphasize Christ's IDENTITY with mankind as a human being. He is one of us! Oh, He is far more than us, and yet at the same time He is fully human.

He openly identifies with us as one of us in His humanness! The Savior – the Christ, is a MAN, and yet not merely man – but rather the God-Man. Both the Sanctifier and the Sanctified (that is Christ and believers) are all of one.

But note it carefully that it is not all people generally that Jesus calls “brethren” but only those who are sanctified by Him – only those set apart as belonging to Him – who are in union with Him by faith!

Only those who have come to have a life changing saving faith which demonstrates itself in obedience to God are the spiritual family of Christ. These are those who are being sanctified (cf. Heb. 10:10, 14). It's only these that Christ is not ashamed to call brethren.

Is it possible that the Eternal Sovereign of the universe should become man and identify Himself so closely with His creatures that He would call them brothers? – **William MacDonald**

Amazingly, the answer to that question is YES!

Slide # 8

Hebrews 2:12–13 (NKJV)

12 saying: “I will declare Your name to **My brethren**; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

13 And again: “I will put My trust in Him.” And again: “Here am I and **the children** whom God has given Me.”

This quote in verse 12 is from Psalm 22:22. Psalm 22 is called the “Psalm of the Cross”. It is the basis of the cross that allows Christ to call us “***brethren***”. But although the Psalm’s emphasis is the cross it also points to the resurrection which is the context of this quote.

Slide # 9

Psalm 22:21–22 (NKJV)

21 Save Me from the lion’s mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! **[Christ’s Prayer from the cross]**

You have answered Me. **[In the Resurrection]**

22 I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. **[Post Resurrection]**

During His earthly ministry prior to the resurrection Jesus never DIRECTLY called His disciples “***brethren***”. However, He did so after the resurrection (cf. Mt. 28:10, Jn. 20:17). Not until He made full payment for sin on the cross did Christ openly express His intimate identification with believers as “***brothers***”. The cross is the basis – the resurrection declares it fulfilled.

We are Christ’s “brethren” comes from the mouth of the triumphant Messiah in the resurrection in fulfillment of Ps. 22:22.

*It is because of our relationship with Christ as His “brethren” that we no longer need to fear death.

Slide # 10

Hebrews 2:14 (NKJV)

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might **destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,**

Just as being human means that we partake of flesh and blood, so Christ also likewise became a flesh and blood human being. And He did so that He might counteract and conquer the work of the devil. He did this through death. Christ’s death was the defeat of the Devil (cf. Jn. 12:31, 16:11).

Deception and death go together. The devil in deceiving the whole human race brought us into the clutches of DEATH. The word death means separation. In sin we are spiritually separated from a life relationship with God. And if we die in our sin we will be eternally separated from God in hell. Satan wants to keep us in the realm of death through deception.

In 2 Cor. 4 Paul shows that the devil has blinded the minds of those who don't believe the gospel lest they should see the truth and be saved (2 Cor. 4:3-6). The devil has the power to deceive people and thereby keep them locked in the realm of death.

But Christ through His death broke the devil's death grip on humanity. Christ conquered the power of death through death (cf. Col. 2:15). The devil holds people in death through deception, but Christ frees people through the truth of the gospel (cf. Mt. 16:18, Jn. 8:32, 36, 1 Jn. 3:8). As we believe the gospel we pass from death to life (cf. Jn. 5:24).

*In salvation Christ not only frees us from the penalty of sin but also from the power of the devil. And in that freedom, we have been released from the fear of death.

Slide # 11

Hebrews 2:15 (NKJV)

15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The great fear in life is the fear of death. It is called "***the king of terrors***". The fear of death speaks to the reality that we are moral beings with a God-consciousness. We fear accountability. The fear of death and what happens at death is a terrible form of bondage. That is where people without Christ live. If they are honest, dying scares them to death – at least it should.

From the time you were born your mother was afraid you would die; the household kept in touch with doctors – "through fear of death;" funerals passed your house, often carrying loved ones, filled with dread; the cemeteries you passed cried out, "You will soon be here!" The philosophers and the poets you read made your life "a brief passing moment," - and then death. The human race is today SUBJECT TO BONDAGE. They may talk peace – but yonder comes the undertaker! --**William R. Newell**

But praise be to God Christ has released us from the bondage of the fear of death. The blood of Christ now cleanses our conscience (cf. Heb. 9:14, 10:22). Now we know the truth that in Christ there is no condemnation (cf. Rom. 8:1). We know the truth that in Christ to die is gain (cf. Phil. 1:21). Christ has so overwhelmingly defeated death that the very term “death” is no longer really appropriate for believers. The NT speaks of it as a departure – to depart and be with Christ is far better (cf. Phil. 1:23). The NT now speaks of the body as sleeping as it is only a temporary condition that awaits the resurrection.

In Christ the sting of death has been removed – death has been robbed of its victory (cf. 1 Cor. 15:55). In Christ there is “**dying grace**”.

I find that many Christians are in trouble about the future; they think they will not have grace enough to die by. It is much more important that we should have grace enough to live by.

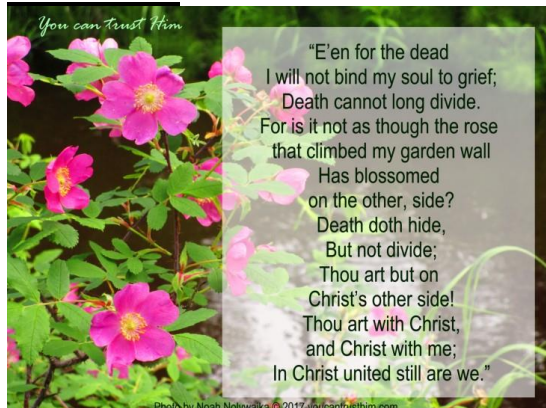
It seems to me that death is of very little importance in the meantime. When the dying hour comes, there will be dying grace; but you do not require dying grace to live by.

Death is simply a release to glory and for the Spirit-filled saints there is special supernatural grace that goes with it. – **D.L. Moody**

It has well been said that since death is “the last enemy” (1 Cor. 15:26) we should leave him till last. God gives living grace for living and dying grace for dying. When it comes time for you as a believer to die, God will give you grace! The bondage of the fear of death has been removed in Christ. If you are not afraid to die, then you can really enjoy living – living for Christ.

Part of not fearing death is knowing the promises of God and believing the promises of God. And what a great comfort this is concerning our believing loved ones who have gone on before us to the glory land.

Slide # 12



1 Corinthians 15:57 (NKJV)

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The early Christian martyrs went to their deaths rejoicing as if they were going to a marriage feast. One early historian wrote:

“When the day of victory dawned, the Christians marched in procession from the prison to the arena as if they were marching to heaven, with joyous countenances agitated by gladness rather than fear.”

John Wesley was right when he said, “***Our people die well!***” Indeed, those in Christ, “die well!” It’s part of God’s AMAZING GRACE!

Peter speaks of our resurrection hope as our “***living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead***” (1 Pet. 1:3). HOPE in the NT is a certain expectation!

The whole world lives in fear of death but we as believers don’t have to. We have our resurrected Lord’s word on it!

Slide # 13**Revelation 1:17–18 (NKJV)**

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “**Do not be afraid**; I am the First and the Last.

18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And **I have the keys of Hades and of Death.**

On this resurrection Sunday let me remind you that the resurrected Christ says to us, “***Do not be afraid***”.

In John 11:25-26 Jesus said, “***I am the resurrection and the life.***” And then He said, “***whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?***”

Ah, that is the ultimate question: DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?