

Sermon Title: "We are the Happiest of All People – Praise God Our Savior is Risen from the Dead!"

April 21, 2019

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:12–28 [12] *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. [14] And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. [15] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. [16] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. [17] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. [18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [19] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

*[20] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. [24] Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. [25] For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. [26] The last enemy to be destroyed is death. [27] For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. [28] When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. (ESV)*

Introduction: Stephen Hawking was perhaps the world's most intelligent atheist. Some called him the hero of atheists for how he approached the end of his life. Because he was diagnosed with motor neurone disease at 21 he faced death on a daily basis. How did he do it? Why did he not commit suicide early on? He did it by trying to find meaning to his life in the pursuit of science and what science could do to benefit society, but his view of death and the afterlife can only be described by us as Christians as "the greatest hope vacuum" possible. Here is what he said about death:

*"Science predicts that many different kinds of universe will be spontaneously created out of nothing. It is a matter of chance which we are in. I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark."<sup>1</sup>*

It doesn't really matter how effectively Stephen Hawking can anesthetize his own soul with irrational logic, he cannot escape what the Bible says about what God has put within every man's heart. According to the Bible, (which by the way is the world's only source of absolute truth) every individual on the planet has a sense that they will live on somewhere forever. Here is what Solomon says:

*"He has made everything beautiful and appropriate in its time. He has also planted eternity [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://qz.com/1228831/stephen-hawkings-death-why-he-inspired-atheists/>

can satisfy, except God] – yet man cannot find out (comprehend, grasp) what God has done (His overall plan) from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11 AMP).

Main point: We Christians have the greatest joy because we have the greatest and only Hope.

A few comments about that joy:

- Death is mankind’s greatest joy-killer. If Christ has conquered death then every other joy-killer pales in comparison.
- If our daily joy is being quenched by a tiny joy-killer, we need to visualize how small that joy-killer really is. Is it ant-size?
- Now compare that worry, fret or fear to the prospect of spending eternity in hell. Which is greater? “Can’t pay the light bill vs. screaming in anguish is unrelenting pain”.
- Since Christ has rescued us from that eternity, will he not also pay the light bill?

Our passage:

Paul assures Corinthians who had lost hope that their doubt was 1) disrespectful, 2) illogical, 3) mean, 4) slanderous, 5) damning, 6) hurtful and 7) deceptive.

1. Doubting the resurrection of Christ is **disrespectful** to the apostles who saw him alive. *[12] Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*
  - All 11 apostles plus Paul = 12 had seen the Lord alive after his death. This was what they preached to thousands. Are you calling them liars? Scammers? Profiteers? They all died broke, beaten, tortured and then crucified, beheaded.
2. Doubting the resurrection of Christ is **illogical**. *[13] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.*
  - You argue that all there is to this world and dimension is what we can see and touch and measure so therefore there is no afterlife. That’s illogical since logic requires all the known facts. Only a person who has all the facts about this dimension and others can truly rely on their own reason and logic to come to correct conclusions. Since your illogical reasoning demands no afterlife, then how do you account for 500 eyewitness accounts of his bodily resurrection?
3. Doubting the resurrection of Christ implies Paul was **mean** or deceived or insane. *[14] And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.*
  - The Apostles could have been charged with false advertising. They promised people things that were not true. That is mean. Especially when people surrender everything including their lives and being burned at the stake for a lie.
  - Others lost their homes, their families, their jobs all because the Apostles were scamming them and making fun of them, if Christ was not raised.
  - Did these doubters really believe that what they heard from Paul and what they saw in terms of their own life-changes were fictional? Was it just their imagination running wild or did their faith actually change their lives?

- Here are two people who today believe that our faith is in vain. Their names are Christian Valerie Tarico (former evangelical) and atheist activist David Fitzgerald. According to them, “The Christ at the heart of Christianity is a figure woven from the fabric of mythology,” they state. “The stories that bear his name draw on ancient templates imbedded in the Hebrew religion and those of the surrounding region.”<sup>2</sup>
  - Paul asks the Corinthians and doubters today, “Do you really want to say your faith in Jesus Christ and his resurrection are for nothing like these two claim despite the overwhelming evidence that He existed and was raised from the dead? Are you willing to pay that big of a price?”
4. Doubting the resurrection of Christ implies Paul **slandered** God. [15] *We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.*
- The very character of God is now in question. Is God in league with the scamming Apostles and is involved in a great conspiracy to cover up Christ’s continuing death? Looks that way, if you believe there is no resurrection.
  - Were the Apostles including Paul willing to slander God (wow, that would be a hell-worthy sin) by saying He did raise Jesus when in reality his didn’t?
  - Ever wonder how long the Apostles would stay alive if they went around slandering God by telling lies about Him. Not for long.
  - B.T.W. if you can’t trust God and His revelation through the Apostles, then you can’t trust anything. You can’t even trust your own brain. God is the ultimate truth, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life.
5. Doubting the resurrection of Christ means you are still going to hell (**eternally damning**). [17] *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*
- If you believe that Jesus was not raised from the dead, then you need to be honest with yourself. You also need to believe that every sin you have ever committed is still recorded against you and you will be punished in hell for all eternity.
  - Why wasn’t Jesus’ death on the cross enough to pay for my sins? Because 1) he would have been found to be a sinner himself, lying about His resurrection and 2) The Father would have been indicating that Jesus’ death didn’t satisfy Him. The resurrection was the sign that Christ made God happy by paying for the sins of the bride. Matthew 16:1–4 [1] *And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. [2] He answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ [3] And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. [4] An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed. (ESV) and, Psalm 16:[10] For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. (ESV)*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.breitbart.com/faith/2019/04/20/atheists-exploit-holy-week-claim-jesus-did-not-exist/>

6. Doubting the resurrection of Christ is **hurtful** to those who are trusting that their loved ones are in paradise. *[18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*
- We comfort one another by saying “you will see them again”. If believers go around teaching there is no resurrection, look how hurtful it is to those who thought there was.
  - Do you like a belief system that tells you all your relatives who trusted in Christ are currently in Hades suffering and will spend eternity in hell eventually? I bet not Paul thinks.
7. Doubting the resurrection of Christ is sad because we have been **deceived**. *[19] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*
- The world will have a right to laugh at us because we have believed a lie. We have suffered at great cost because we believed a lie. We have lost jobs, promotions, houses and friends because we believed a lie. Because we were deceived and lived like fools we are of all people most to be pitied.
  - But, the opposite of that statement is the truth. We of all people are most to be envied. If all that we have said above about our belief in the resurrection is true and we are not the ones to be most pitied but most envied, then why are we not the most envied by the world?
    - It could be that they think we are fools for believing what we do.
    - But, could it be that we are not living out our beliefs?

#### Application

We should be the happiest of all people. How do we make that so? Take a walk through a cemetery with me. Walk among the grave stones. Look at the names. Some you may recognize. Others you won't. Can you spot a believer's head stone? Can you walk over to it and put your hand on that stone and say to the Lord of Lord's thank you for taking this believer home to yourself. Thank you that when I get to this point in life I won't dread the worms and the cold but my spirit will live on in eternity with you. Then go home and put your hand on any item you treasure. Then say to yourself, this item will rust, or rot or be sold or be stolen. Here Lord it's yours. Look at your children or spouse and say, even if you take them to yourself today in an automobile accident Lord they are yours and I will see them again because you live.