

HE TASTED DEATH FOR ALL OF US

At the beginning of his past week in our New Testament Studies, we were assigned to read the last two chapters of Luke's gospel. This is the place in the text in which you read of God's eternal plan reaching its critical point; the place where Jesus is put to death on the cross for the sins of mankind. Keep in mind that was for those sins which had been committed in the past, those that were being committed at that very moment and those that would be committed in the hours and weeks and years and ages to come. Luke 23 contains the record of Christ's trials and crucifixion; chapter 24 tells us of his resurrection and parting words to His disciples.

As we proceed through this year following this study, we will read about that moment three more times as we get into our reading of the gospel of Mark, and then of Matthew and finally of John. It is important, I believe, that we read and think about what happened that day at least that often, and more often if at all possible.

My lesson this morning I am calling, "He Tasted Death for All of Us." That is borrowed from the wording found in **Hebrews 2:9**, where the writer there makes this statement: "*But we see [Jesus] him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*" My purpose in this lesson is to explore with you what that means; that He tasted death for everyone.

I will not be spending much time on what might be called *the gory details* of Christ's death. I know there are some who do that. Books have been written about the excruciating horrors associated with death by crucifixion. I don't know, but I have my doubts if any of those have been written by people who actually died themselves in that cruel manner. Nevertheless, our imaginations being what they are, it is very easy to devote a lot of time and thought to those things. Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion* is undoubtedly the most dramatic example of focusing on Christ's physical suffering and death.

However, it may escape our notice, but the gospel writers themselves do not make much of an effort to bring out all of the pain and suffering that day. None of the writers of the epistles labor over that much at all. From the moment when Christ is delivered over by Pilate to be led away and crucified, Matthew (27:31-50) devotes only 20 verses to it. Mark (15:15-37) gives it to us in 23. Luke (23: 25-46) covers it in 21, and John (19:16-30) does so in 15. That is less than 2% of the total material written by each of the gospel writers and that includes everything surrounding the crucifixion. None of them offer any conjectures concerning how painful any part of the crucifixion was. While that sort of thing may transfix our attention, it drew almost no attention from the gospel writers themselves.

My purpose is not to get you to "feel" anything this morning. What I am wanting is for you to leave here this morning with a better, deeper understanding of what the Hebrew writer was talking about when he said Christ tasted death for you, and for every man.

Let's see what the Scriptures tell us about that.

First of all, this expression of "tasting death" is not unique to the text here in Hebrews 2:9. It is found in a couple of other places, three times it is used in passages that are parallel passages in the gospels: Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1, and Luke 9:27. Jesus said to those who were his disciples, *"Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."* The context seems to bear out the idea that the events that Jesus had been talking about, which was the coming judgment of God upon Judaism which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem would happen with the lifetime of at least some of the men who were hearing Jesus' words. Tasting death was the equivalent of dying.

In **John 8** we find Jesus embroiled in a discussion with some Jewish rulers after being accused by them of having a demon. In **verse 52**, we read, *"The Jews said to him, 'Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'*" Actually what Jesus had said, in **verse 51**, was, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."* Again the idea of tasting death was the same as dying in their minds.

But I submit to you, the Hebrew writer meant much more than simply dying when he spoke of Jesus tasting death for every man.

But before I pursue that thought further, let us quickly recognize that to speak of Christ tasting death "for every man" means that he did something on behalf of every man. The word "for" implies "on behalf of." It is opposite the idea of doing something against us.

He did something for us; in our behalf; something to benefit us, to bless us. It was a kindness or gift if you will. He did this for every man. **John** tells us, in **chapter 2 and verse 2 of his 1st epistle**, *"He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."* Notice that the tasting of death is for every man, and the propitiation is for the sins of the whole world. That tells us that the tasting of death mentioned in Hebrews 2:9 is tied up within the idea of the propitiation, the offering of a sacrifice for the purpose of securing God's favor, primarily referring to His forgiveness.

It is important, however, to recognize that both ideas—that of tasting death and that of being a propitiatory sacrifice point towards a benefit intended for every man, the whole world. Nevertheless, it is a benefit that most people have not enjoyed. Luke 19:10 teaches that Christ Jesus came to seek and save the lost, but unfortunately not many of the lost will be saved. In **Titus 2:11**, the apostle Paul wrote: *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people."* Paul wasn't saying that all people are going to be saved. That would contradict Jesus' words in **Matthew 7:14** where He said that only a few people would find the way that leads to everlasting life. What Paul meant in Titus 2:11 is that the way of salvation is open to all. The opportunity is present for all. *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him*

that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17

I want to return to the point I was working on earlier that Christ tasting death for every man means more than that he simply died for us. That is clear from the implication in that phrase. To speak of tasting death for every man, the implication is that he was doing something for every man so that every man would not have to do it for himself, or herself. But every person is going to die. That is something that cannot be avoided, unless one happens to be living at the time of Christ’s second coming. According to what Paul wrote in the 4th chapter of his 1st letter to the Thessalonians, there are some saints who will not taste of death, but the common experience of mankind is that all die.

Jesus did die for us physically. There is no doubt about that and it was thrilling this past week to read just how difficult it was for even the apostles and Jesus’ closest friends to believe that he was alive following his resurrection! They had watched him die. They had seen the stiff and cold body taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. When the tomb was found empty they were beside themselves wondering what someone had done with the body. They laughed at the reports that he was alive. In John’s account of what happened, we read that even after most of the others had seen Christ following his resurrection, one of the disciples, Thomas, was still reluctant to believe. He was so sure that it couldn’t be true that he said, *“unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe!”*

There is no doubt that Jesus died on the cross that day. There is no doubt that he suffered much in a physical way before death came and he yielded up his spirit. But that isn’t what the Hebrew writer was talking about when he said that Jesus tasted death for every man. No, that was something else. It was that death described in Romans 6:23 as the wages of sin. Keep in mind, however, this death that he tasted was not for any sins he had committed. He was tempted in every way like all of us, the Hebrew writer reminds us, but yet he was without sin. At each and every turn in life, He listened to and He obeyed the voice of the heavenly Father.

It was not for any sins that he had committed that he had to drink that bitter cup. It was for our sins that he died. That was in keeping with what the prophets had foretold. If you haven’t done this already, you need to mark **Isaiah 53**. Mark it in some way that will remain. Put a bookmark there or fold that page half in two so that it becomes a doubly thick page. That will make it easier to go there again and again. You need to read this scripture from time to time. Read it knowing that this was something that God prophesied through Isaiah hundreds and hundreds of years before Christ was born. Listen to these words:

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2) For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. 3) He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and

acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5) But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8) By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9) And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10) Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11) Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12) Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Notice Isaiah says,

- *“he was wounded for our transgressions.”*
- *“he was crushed for our iniquities;”*
- *“upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,”*
- *“with his stripes we are healed.*

Isaiah says, we were *“the sheep that went astray.”* We were the ones *“who turned—every one—to his own way”*, and so, *“the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*

Moreover Isaiah tells us, *“it was the will of the LORD to crush him”* *“he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt,”* and *“he bore the sin of many.”*

In **2 Corinthians 5:21**, the scriptures say, *“For our sake he [God the Father] made him (Christ the Son) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* Is that the reason why at one point Christ cried out from the cross, *“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”*

We may never know fully, at least in this life, what really Jesus really experienced that day out there on Golgotha. But we know this much, He was taking your place, and mine. Never did a man speak truer words than did that penitent thief that day,

"But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41) And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

Tasting death for every man meant that Jesus did something for every man that they would not want to do for themselves. It was a bitter cup that he drank. It was a bitter cup and it was your cup that he drank, but he did so because he didn't want you to have to.

When that hour came, Jesus was faced with a terrible decision to make, whether to drink that cup or not. He resolved it like this: He said, *"Not my will but yours be done."* This morning you too are faced with a great decision to make. Are you going to do what you know is the will of God, or will you turn your back on that sacrifice he made on your behalf?

Think about that and if your soul is in any need at this hour, please, please bring it to the Lord. If you are ready to be baptized, or if you have some things you need to confess, or perhaps you just need and want the prayers of brethren for something going on in your life, we encourage you to come right now while we stand and sing.