

For Whom Did Jesus Die?

a sermon in the series
Hebrews: An Epistle of Encouragement

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Hebrews 2:9

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Inclusiveness is the rage! Dare not exclude anyone if you do not want to be criticized. No regulations, no qualifications, no limitations must be imposed, and then you will be known as inclusive and ascribed the noblest of titles that this post-modern era will bestow, “tolerant.” “All for one and one for all,” doesn’t it sound wonderful, and oh my, doesn’t it feel so good! It feels good to know that you can put down your biases and accept your fellow human beings without reservation. Accept one another, we must, but condone and accept one another’s sin, we must not. And the moment you do not condone and accept the sin of any individual, you will be immediately identified as a bigot who practices being exclusive.

Uphold this Book’s uncompromising legislation against unrighteousness, and someone will, sooner rather than later, inform you that you are mistaken and have completely erred in the interpretation of Scripture. They will quote isolated and carefully chosen verses and give commentary that God Himself is an inclusive God. His magnanimous love would preclude Him from ever banishing one of His creatures to hell. And then you will hear the infamous rhetorical question, “If God is a God of love, how could He send someone to hell?”

What will we answer? Do we stand and look like a calf who has never seen a gate before? Do we stammer and stumble, throwing out the absolutely foolish and unscriptural retort, “God doesn’t send anyone to hell. People choose to go to hell.”?

Shouldn’t we attack this fanciful and feel good notion that God is being so inclusive with His great love that He condemns no one and give them the Biblical view of God’s love? Shouldn’t we give them a biblical-centered proposition that God not only loves His own glory more than anything else, but such love will necessitate every vestige of wicked rebellion and disobedience be vanquished and eternally banished from His most holy and righteous Person? The answer is yes, ten thousand times, YES!

But how can we do so, if those who hold this inclusive view of God’s love look us square in the eye and say that they learned this view from us? Much of today’s inclusive philosophy owes its

roots to a skewed view of the Christian doctrine on God's love. Most of what the American church says about God's love and Jesus' atoning death has contributed to the concept of inclusiveness in American culture, politics and society.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to tell you that the church has not come to this proposition that God excludes no one because of the infiltration of the world, but rather the world got this from the church. It came from the church, not from the world.

Let me take the remainder of this message to explain why I state this. When we say to sinners and when we sing in our songs that Jesus died for all, we run the huge risk of leading someone down a spiraling theological path to great deception. Our text appears to create such an impression. It says that our Lord, "by the grace of God should taste death for every man." But I ask you, if Jesus died for every man, then is the inclusive sinner correct when he says that he cannot go to hell because God's love has provided an answer to hell's fury and flame? Isn't he right when he argues that God's love will not let him do anything else but go to heaven? Well, of course, he's not right, but can you see how he comes to that conclusion? If we say that this verse means Jesus literally tasted death for every person ever born then we have some serious problems to deal with. Verses that say Jesus only died for a limited number of people present a problem. How do you harmonize those Scriptures? Surely we don't say the Bible contradicts itself, do we?

Another problem is, if He died for every person, why do some people die and go to Hell? Why is it that today there are millions of people in hell if Jesus literally tasted death for everyone? Another problem, if we interpret our text to literally mean every individual born, then what about the generations of people who had already died and gone to judgment before Jesus died? So you see, the word "everyone" cannot mean every last human being without any distinction. So the question, which is the title of this message, "For whom did Jesus die?"

If we are to understand for whom Jesus died, we are going to have to understand certain elements of the atoning death that He died.

The first aspect of Jesus' atoning death that I want us to discuss is the satisfaction of the death of Christ. The word "atoned" that I am going to be using frequently this morning is a word that has the idea of satisfaction. The doctrine of satisfaction says several things. First, it says, God is infinitely just. But how does God's justice coincide with His love? The answer is not as difficult as it first seems. If God is just then we can also determine that He is a God of love, because divine love is just. The great love chapter, First Corinthians chapter thirteen, tells us God is both love and just. Paul says that love cannot rejoice in evil (1 Corinthians 13:6). In fact, a righteous love hates evil. Love hates? Absolutely! God's kind of love hates that which is evil. It cannot rejoice in it. Therefore, God's love is just.

God's justice is also infinite. You cannot measure it since it has no end. You could plumb the depths of the universe before you could find the limits of His holy justice. One sin brings upon your head the eternal wrath of a holy God. Your guilt attracts the unending displeasure of the

Almighty. All the attributes of God are infinite, therefore, His justice is infinite as it is one of His attributes.

He also dispenses justice perfectly. He will not accept from any sinner one drop less of His justice than is satisfactory. The flames of His anger against sin are fueled by a perfect justice. Therefore, if one has sinned against God, they incur a penalty that God in His justice will mete out. His justice demands it.

Secondly, the doctrine of justice being satisfied demands the payment or punishment of sin. Sin incurs guilt against God. Our guilt is a debt to God's justice that we owe. Every last person sooner or later puts into practice his or her nature and violates the law of God. Our very nature, as well as our acts of disobedience, incur guilt against God. That guilt is a debt that we owe to God. It is a debt that has to be paid. And the divine justice of God must mete it out. It will be satisfied.

God could not be just if He allowed one single sin to go unpunished. The debt owed to His great justice is going to be satisfied. Justice cannot be satisfied or paid as long as the debt of sin remains untouched. Justice must be paid in full. You must understand the thesis. You must understand this Biblical proposition, God's justice can only be satisfied when the sin debt is totally paid.

Now I must ask you, what is the payment for sin? God established the payment early on with man. Ezekiel said, "The soul that sinneth it shall surely die." This echoes what God said to Adam in the garden of Eden, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." God was not referring only to physical death, but also to spiritual death. Such dying is an eternal separation from God and His life and all that is holy. The debt that you and I owe to God is an eternal death that is much more horrible, in degree, and in pain, and in duration, than physical death itself.

Our text says that Christ has suffered this penalty for us. The satisfaction that there is in the death of Jesus Christ is that Jesus' death atoned, or in other words, satisfied the debt of sin that we owed to God. Jesus' atoning death on Calvary satisfied by paying in full the debt of sin we owed to divine justice.

Romans chapter three and verses twenty-four through twenty-six is the central text of all texts concerning the doctrine of satisfaction or the atoning death of Christ. Paul writes in these verses, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." God has legally declared us righteous through the death of Christ. The word "justified" means a legal declaration of being innocent of all charges. It is God declaring His acceptance of us. This is not merited by any sinner but freely given. As Paul says, "freely through His grace." No sinner can earn such a declaration because no amount of good works or labor can erase the guilt of our transgressions against God.

If a sinner could do the impossible and turn over a new leaf and never sin again, he would still owe God's justice satisfaction. All of the sins prior to his reformation are recorded against him as an outstanding debt. Therefore, we say the sinner cannot merit justification.

In verse twenty-five Paul continues to say, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood . . ." "Propitiation" is a word that means sacrifice, but just not any sacrifice. It means a sacrifice that appeases, that satisfies, that pays a debt owed. The Bible declares that Jesus has been sent forth from God, and that through His blood (that is His death), there is a sacrifice that appeases, or satisfies, the holy justice of God. God has done this, according to verse twenty-six, that He, God, "might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." God gave His Son as a substitute for us who would believe. Our Lord's death was a satisfying sacrifice that paid our sin debt, so that in turn God could be both just and justifier. He is just in that in Christ His justice was satisfied, and He is justifier of those who believe in Christ.

God did this. He sent a sacrifice that would satisfy His infinite justice which required our spiritual death. Justice cried for vengeance. It demanded the eternal death of souls that sinned against it. But the God of salvation offered His Son in order to declare that He was righteous in the forgiveness of the same sins that His infinite justice demanded we pay. We owed an infinite debt . . . Jesus paid it all.

When God forgave you, He was not excusing sin. He was not closing His eyes to our rebellion. He was not ignoring our filthiness before Him. Rather, in Christ Jesus, the debt has been paid, so that our God might be merciful toward us. In Matthew chapter twenty and verse twenty-eight we hear the good news that Jesus' death satisfies the debt. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." What is a ransom? It is a price that must be paid in order to gain back that which you have lost. In the Old Testament a person went into slavery because he could not pay his debts. A near kinsman could pay the ransom amount and free the enslaved relative.

We must make this sure. In our case of enslavement to sin, to whom was the ransom owed? To the devil? to sin? Neither. It was not to the devil, as some have ascribed. Jesus did not pour out His life as a ransom to the devil. Jesus' death did release us from the devil's grip, but not because He paid the ransom price to Satan. Jesus' death paid the debt to God's holy justice. The justice of a holy God is what we were held in condemnation by, not the devil. Hear me, satisfaction is in the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the debt.

Among men such satisfaction is made. Let's say I owed you a debt of one thousand dollars. As soon as I make satisfaction for that debt, the debt is gone. It has been removed. It is no more. That is what we mean by satisfaction. The effect of satisfaction is this; your debt is forever removed. Now I am sure you would like for me after paying the one thousand dollars to continue to make payments to you. But in order for this to happen a new debt would have to be incurred, because I satisfied the first debt. You cannot go back and make me pay the same one thousand dollar debt again once I have paid it. It can't be done. That is the nature of satisfaction. The debt is forever removed.

Our debt before the bar of God's justice has been forever removed! God, Himself, for the sake of His own justice and righteousness cannot hold the debt against any man, woman, or child

whose debt satisfaction has been paid. Because my sin debt has been paid in full, I have no fear of standing before God. It is gone. Not only has it been paid, but also the record of it ever existing is gone. This was accomplished in our Lord Jesus Christ's death. His death is the death of death. Praise God!

If what I have presented is the doctrine of satisfaction, which I am certain it is, then the idea of atonement has some crucial questions. The first one is, did Jesus satisfy all of God's justice against sin? Be careful, be very careful how you answer. Did Jesus satisfy all of God's justice against all sin? If you answer yes, then how could anyone go to hell? If every sin debt of every person born has been paid by Jesus' death that means the debt is paid and the debt is gone. If this is true, then, my dear friend, how can anyone go to hell? If Jesus' death on Calvary's cross means the sin debt is cancelled and that He tasted death for everyone, then God is more than arbitrary, He is a liar! He has gone back on His word. He is a deceiver. He has done that which jurisprudence would not think of doing, and that is, double jeopardy. Double jeopardy is causing someone to pay for a crime twice. That is not justice, that is maliciousness. It is cruelty of the highest order. God cannot do such.

Now it is true that the sinner that rejects the atoning death of Christ has not suffered for his sins twice, meaning, he the sinner did not pay infinite justice twice. But double jeopardy, in the spiritual sense, occurs when two men serve the same sentence for the same crime. In this case, Christ and the sinner. Either Jesus paid the sin debt or He didn't. It is just that simple. If Jesus died and paid for all the sins of a sinner, what sins are there for God to charge the sinner?

If you should say, "Well, God will charge the sinner with unbelief and rejecting Christ," I must tell you that God will condemn the sinner not just for the sin of unbelief. The Bible is clear the sinner will be judged for all of his sins including unbelief. The Bible says in Romans chapter two and verse sixteen, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." It says in Second Corinthians chapter five and verse ten, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The Word of God says men and women will be judged for sins other than unbelief in Christ in First Corinthians chapter six and verses nine and ten, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." If these sins are not atoned by Christ then you cannot say He died in every sense of the word for every man. Again, I do not deny in which there is a sense in which He has died for all. But I do not believe that He paid the sin debt of all men.

If you say Jesus satisfied all of God's justice against all sin, then I have to ask, why is not everybody saved? This is what you have said when you say that yes, He did taste death for every single person ever born. I know at this very moment we are now in an area where some of you may have never, ever traversed. You have always been taught from a small child that Jesus died for everyone. There is a sense in which we can say that, and it is true. The problem is what we usually mean by it is often unbiblical and incorrect.

I must now lead us to a second aspect of the atonement so that you can see this and understand. Not only was there satisfaction in the death of Christ, but also there was a substitution in the death of Christ. What do we mean by that? Let me first state again that the human race is unable to satisfy the justice of God. All of mankind combined could not satisfy the justice of God. We are totally unable because the penalty is eternal or infinite in proportion. It requires an eternity in hell from all who sin. Go to the end of ten million years in hell, but justice does not stop. The march of infinity continues, and with its every step there is the dispensing of God's justice. The ceaseless and countless ages will roll on ad infinitum and you will have as much sentence to serve ahead of as you do behind you. Go another multiple eons and it is the same. Oh what is eternity if it is not the ever present and endless now? The only way it, the perpetual motion of eternal justice, could be stopped is that you have finished paying it in full. But this is a contradiction in logic and the very word eternal. You cannot limit the infinite. You will not be able to finish paying it. At the end of ten million years another ten more million years will proceed to roll along. Still you will not have finished paying what you owe the infinite justice of God. Therefore, it is impossible for any of us to finally pay it all. It cannot be done.

Our depravity is another reason it cannot be done. Your depravity is the natural corruption with which you were conceived and born. You are imperfect in your essence, and you possess a will in bondage to perpetual defiance against God. Even if you would try to be perfect in all your ways, your very nature is in rebellion against God. Not only is your nature in defiance and rebellion against God, but, my dear friend, your heart and life are as well. Therefore, you can never do anything that could be considered as good or righteous. You cannot appease the justice of God. I maintain the faithful doctrine and our only hope... a substitute. Christ is our substitute.

Isaiah chapter fifty-three and verses four and five says, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." The venerable apostle Paul says in Galatians chapter three verse fifteen that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." How did He redeem us? By being made a curse for us and in our place.

So Jesus became our substitute. Jesus received, as he hung on Calvary's cross, all of the demand of righteous justice for payment of sin. He received it for those for whom He died. He was their substitute; it is very simple. Our Lord Jesus Christ stood in the place of those for whom He died. Before the bar of God's justice, He represented a certain people; He was their substitute in the legal sense. Let me give you another idea here. Here is an illustration to help you see this again. Go to a lending institution. Let's say a local bank. And let's say one man pays off the mortgages of ten men. In other words, the debts of ten men are paid. Not the debt of every mortgage holder in the bank. Only the debt of ten men that the generous philanthropist chooses. The ten men would own their homes because somebody substituted himself for their responsibility and obligation to pay it. Surely the Lord Jesus Christ is the substitute for the payment of sin that we owe to God. If we say He paid the penalty for every person without distinction then surely He has removed every person's guilt of sin. So again I ask my question, how is it if Christ is the substitute by tasting

death for every single individual that there could be the possibility of one single individual burning in the miseries of hell this very day? It is an impossibility. He is a substitute. God poured out on Jesus His hatred against the sins of those for whom Jesus died. It is very clear that Hebrews chapter two and verse nine cannot mean every last person ever born.

What purpose is there in the parameters of the atonement of Christ? What does it mean when the text says that Jesus by the grace of God should taste death for every man? Who are these for whom the Lord of glory died? Well, the question is whether “everyone” refers to every human being without distinction or refers to everyone within a certain group? The text gives us the answer. The context of our verse in question will shed light upon our distinctive group of redeemed. Verse ten tells us what group of people Jesus tasted death for. It reads, “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Now notice the pronoun “their.” Here is a definite number of people, a group. What is the group? “Sons unto glory.” The salvation that is being discussed is the salvation of the “sons of glory.” Therefore the “every man” of verse nine is all those who are “sons of glory.”

Let us proceed with the textual evidence in verse eleven. The writer says, “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” We have one big group here. It is “all for one and one for all.” Yes, it is called the family of God. “For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Jesus is not ashamed to call us His “brethren.” In verse thirteen the evidence for a select group is given. “And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” The pronoun “I” is Jesus. Christ is saying, “I and the children which God hath given me.” Not only do we see a number, but in this verse, this number or group of persons have been given to Jesus by the Heavenly Father. This number is a definite number of people. Jesus says these are the ones who are the heirs of salvation. These are the “sons of glory.” I cannot help but be reminded of a statement that Jesus made in John chapter seventeen and verse six. Jesus in His high priestly prayer before His arrest and betrayal says, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.”

Please, I beg those of you who may not be in agreement with me, and think I have fallen off the theological wagon again to be patient with me and indulge me but one question. I have to ask you, does it seem logical and sensible that Jesus is saying here there is a group of men out of the human race that God has given Him? I think so. Surely you would agree that twelve men, called the apostles were given to the Lord to be His appointed ambassadors. No doubt we are in agreement here, God chose twelve men to follow Christ. He gave those men to Christ, and they followed Christ. It is for these our Lord was praying. Now I bid you to look at verse eleven, “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” Who are these? Again it is the twelve. These are those whom God had given to Jesus.

Jesus continues in His prayer, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Please do not make a quick and inaccurate deduction that Jesus could keep eleven and He lost one. Although that would be pretty good odds, eleven out of twelve, that is not what He is saying. Jesus is saying He kept them all. The son of perdition, which was Judas, had been chosen before the foundation of the earth to be the betrayer. It was told in prophecy that one who would be the Messiah's familiar would be the betrayer. He was never of the redeemed, because John says in John chapter six and verse seventy, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" From the beginning he was a devil that had never been regenerated was the conclusion of John. He says as much about Judas in the sixty-fourth verse of the same chapter, "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." Judas was not redeemed and consequently not one of the ones to whom Jesus is referring in His prayer. Jesus had kept all them that had been committed unto Him.

Now follow with me to verse twenty and see that Jesus enlarges this group. It is not just the eleven He is praying for, "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Who was he praying here for? Every person who would believe the gospel since the days of the apostles. This would include you and me and every modern day believer, for the word that we have believed unto salvation is the same gospel they preached. It has come to us today and can we not safely conclude that He is praying for us?

Tell me, if you can, where did He in this majestic prayer of intercession pray for all people in the entire world? Will you search and please tell me. Surely He did, for if His death is for all men indiscriminately, then He must have prayed for all without distinction. Ah, but you search in vain; you can't find it, because He did not pray for all people everywhere. In fact, He refuses to do so. Our High Priest and Holy Substitute in verse nine prays, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." All them that believe are those whom the Father gives to His dear Son. It is given to them by the Father to believe upon Christ. Why would such a merciful Messiah not pray for all, but only them who will believe? Why is that? For one reason only, it is for these, and these only that He died.

While dialoging with the religious leaders, the Savior of men said specifically that He will give His life for the sheep. But the number of the sheep is an exclusive number. He says to the Pharisees, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:15-16). Our Lord concludes, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (John 10:26). The Lord who tasted death for every man says that He died for His sheep and then tells the Pharisees to whom He spoke that they were not His sheep. What can we conclude but that He died only for a select group.

Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians teaches that Christ died for a select group called the church. In chapter five and verse twenty-five, Paul writes, "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." There it is: clinch it, cinch it, tie it up, it is done. As far as I am concerned, the Lord of glory tasted death by the grace of God for everyone who is in the church. And by His death everyone enters this church. I do not mean membership of a local church somewhere; I mean the redeemed of all ages, those whom God covenanted Himself to before the worlds were ever made. Those whom He knew and loved, them He also chose. Amen and glory to God forever and ever! Holy God would know you before you would ever be known, and He still loved you and chose you. He separated us unto Himself, a people deserving His justice rather than His mercy, to be a people after His own name. He would love you and give Himself for you.

Oh friends, I cannot say and be scriptural that Jesus paid the sin debt for every person. I open up God to be the most unjust, unholy, and unlovable God, if I do so. If you believe that all people share equally in the death of our Christ, then you believe in a God who is not capable of the kind of love the Scriptures speak. Because I believe He is loving, I must believe this truth that He died for a specific number of folks whom the word "elect" describes. To think that Jesus would hang on a cross not knowing whom He was dying for quite frankly denies all sense of logic and reasonableness. To think that He just took a play of chance, a roll of the dice, to hang on a cross, thinking that maybe somebody somewhere would finally believe in Him, is to me far-fetched. Is this ethereal group those for whom He died? No, His death was very definite; Jesus went to a cross for a purpose, and He went to save those whom He loved.

Before we conclude this message, for the sake of those of you who may not see this or agree with me I want to share some of your argument, so that everybody will know what your argument is. I hope that I will rightly present it. There are people who argue for a universal atonement, meaning that Jesus' atoning death was not limited to the church, the elect, but was open to all men.

We probably all believed that at one time or another. First, let me say, I do believe that Jesus' death was sufficient and capable of saving every sinner in this world and ten thousands worlds beside. I believe the blood of Jesus Christ and His death is sufficient to save anybody who would believe. Not just the human race but also every other creation, if God intended to do so. His blood is that sufficient. Why? Because He is an infinite sacrifice. The Father infinitely loves Him. Whatever the Son does, the Father receives because of His infinite love. He is God, whatever He does is infinite in scope. He is sufficient to save every last sinner in hell or sinner walking on this earth.

But the sufficiency of Jesus' atoning death is not our question. It is for whom did He die? Who is His death applicable to? Who is it going to be effectual for? I say to you as Scripture says, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I reaffirm this. I subscribe to the entire Bible, including texts like First Timothy chapter four verse ten, "For therefore we both labour and suf-

fer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” I have no problem with that text. Why should I? It is the Bible; I should not have any problem with it. Neither do I have any problem with First John chapter two and verse two that says Jesus is the propitiation for our sins and not ours only but also the sins of the whole world. I have no problem with those texts. They do not contradict what I have said today.

We must understand His death cannot be shoved into a small theological box. But neither can we say these verses mean that Christ died in the same way for all men. He did not die the same for all people. His death will be, to those who reject it, their condemnation. For those whom He will save, it will be their eternal life and salvation. The Bible is not a book of contradictions. Because of these problematic passages some contend that Jesus died for everyone without distinction. Here are some of their arguments. The first one is, Jesus died for all, but only those who by faith receive it are saved by it. He died for everybody. He paid the price, but He left it up to us, and if you will receive it by faith then it applies to you. But I must say, dear friend, that your faith, like all other spiritual blessings, was purchased by the death of Christ. Your faith was bought and paid for by Jesus’ atoning death.

Is it a sin to not believe and to reject Christ? Will there be people in hell who have rejected Christ and do not believe? Yes, then evidently, He did not pay for that sin of unbelief if they are suffering God’s judgment. Your faith that allows you to believe in His atoning death was purchased by the mercy of God through the giving of His life on the cross. His death is sufficient to subdue your rebellion and to bring you to the Son. You did not make the cross effective in your life by faith; the cross became effective in your life by purchasing your faith. “For by grace are you saved through faith; that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” The Bible says he has purchased all spiritual blessings. Is faith a spiritual blessing? Absolutely, one of the foremost.

Dear Christian, I want you to glory today. I want you to glory that your sins are really covered when Jesus tasted death for you. Glory that your guilt really was removed when Jesus tasted death for you. The law that had restricted and condemned you and brought the wrath of God upon you has been broken and fulfilled in Christ who is now your all in all. Truly He is your treasure. It is Christ by His Spirit that gives you faith that you might believe. Christ tasted death for everyone who has faith, because the faith of everyone who believes was purchased by the death of Christ.

The second argument that Jesus died for everyone says that He died for everyone, but that you could reject that. This is much like the first argument, but a little different. One might say the only reason people go to hell is because of the sin of rejecting Jesus. Friends, that cannot be true either. I have already touched upon this but let me give a further blow to this misleading proposition. The Bible teaches the wrath of God is coming on the world. Not just because of its rejection of Jesus, but also because of its many sins that are not forgiven. For example, in the book of Colossians in chapter three verse five, Paul refers to immorality, to impurity, to passion, to evil desire, and to greed, then he says on account of these things the wrath of God will come. People who reject Jesus really will be punished for the specific sins they commit and not just for reject-

ing Jesus. Besides, there is another problem with that argument. If you believe that Jesus died for every person without distinction, then it would be impossible for that person to die and go to hell since Jesus died for him or her and paid the price of their guilt.

In our convoluted thinking let's say that happened, that people die and go to judgment even though Christ paid their sin debt. Now I ask you, what difference is God's love for the saved than His love for the unsaved? Are you going to tell me He loves those burning in hell the same way He loves those whom He will rescue and make His bride? If you demand that God loves saint and sinner alike, and the only difference between the two is that the saint was wiser and accepted Christ, while the sinner was not as wise, you have a distorted view of love. It would be like telling your wife, "Sorry, sweetheart, but I must love all women the same way I love you." How much would that kind of reasoning impress your wife?

Are you sure you want to insist that our Lord loved and sacrificed for the church no differently than He loved and sacrificed for all of the unredeemed? Are you sure you want to be adamant in this convoluted view of God's love, when in fact, the Bible says in Ephesians 5:25 that Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for the church? I believe, as I have stated on other occasions, that God does love the sinner. But it is not in the same way that He loves the redeemed. He loves us who are His children with an eternal love, a love that redeems us. The love that He has for the sinner who never will be redeemed is a benevolent kindness, but not the enduring love for a son or daughter, or as Paul says in Ephesians 5:4, the love for a wife. I would go so far as to say that the love that God has for the sinner is so strong that He takes no pleasure in their judgment, but I cannot say according to Scripture that He loves them as He loves the redeemed. So what is my conclusion? It is this, Paul writing to the Hebrews, writing to the church, says, "Your hope, your encouragement, your strength in the moment of your weakness, your hope in the moment of hopelessness, your encouragement when discouraged is that Christ has so loved you that He has tasted your death. He loves you so much that He paid the price of your ransom and has satisfied the infinite and holy justice of God on your behalf."

Jesus has tasted death for every one of His people, and God has no record of a debt held against you. You are free. If we believe that Christ died for all in the same way, then we have very little hope today of our future redemption. If He could allow a sinner whom He died for in the same way He died for us to go to eternal judgment, what guarantee have we He will not do the same to us? If He loves the perishing sinner the same way He loves us, how am I to be assured that in the final end I shall be saved? Oh no, dear friends, the Bible is not so "iffy." The Bible is not based on such probabilities. The Word of God is most definite, and it is absolutely clear here in our text, Jesus tasted death by the grace of God for everyone that He loved before the worlds were ever made, and for those He chose for Himself. That is our hope today. That is our means of encouragement.

May I put this Christmas holiday therefore in the proper perspective? The world will be celebrating this Christmas, but they have nothing to celebrate. I don't want you to misunderstand me, we are not special because of who we are. It is Christ who is special because it is He who could

love miserable wretches like us and save us by His marvelous grace. This is not a message of self-centered egotism, nor is it a message suggesting that we are some kind of exclusive group of people because of our unique abilities and talents. No, no, no! We are a unique people only because God out of the faceless mass of humanity chose to be merciful to us who deserve the same thing that all the unredeemed shall inherit . . . eternal death and condemnation. We have reason to celebrate because Jesus did love us and came to redeem us. He is that good Shepard that knows His flock and for His flock He gave His life. Will not His flock follow Him anywhere He will lead? May it be so for you and for me. Amen.