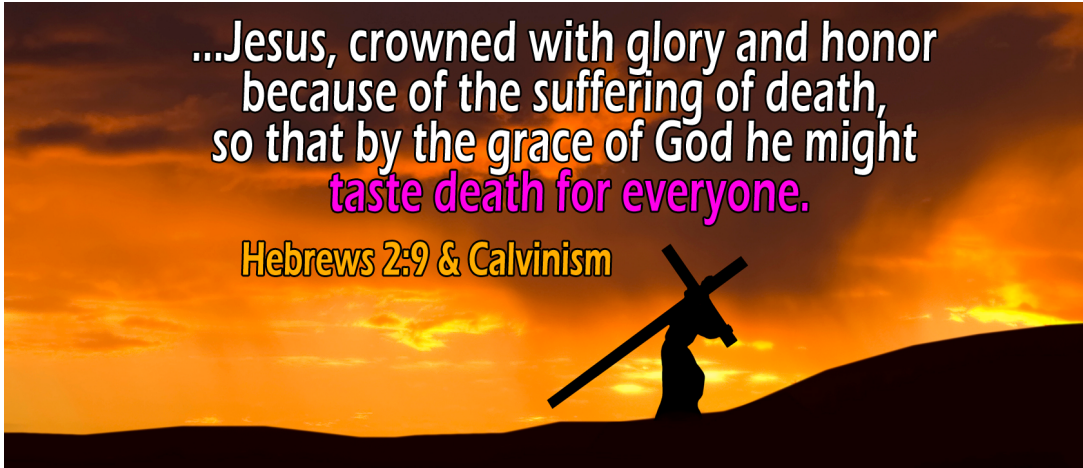


HEBREWS 2:9, 'TASTE DEATH FOR EVERYONE'

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HEBREWS 2:9-10[1]

But we see 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**. 10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in **bringing many sons to glory**, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. (ESV)

(For a better and more recent defense [see here](#).)

“**Taste death for everyone**,” if we understand this to refer to every single individual then the logical conclusion is Universalism, which has lots of biblical problems. So let us dig a little deeper in the context of this verse.

The question is— If **everyone** (πᾶσι, G3956, “all, any, every, the whole”) in verse 9 is meant to be taken as in “*every single person without exception*,” then we have a problem on our hands. The problem is that the passage would then mean that everyone will be saved, or that Christ has atoned for the sins of everyone, even those in Hell. It will totally destroy the picture of Christ being the mediator/intercessor/High Priest of **His people** in Hebrews chapters 9 and 10. Interceding for a **specific people** whom He has perfected.

Let us now consider the surrounding passages. In verse 10 we see that that the Lord Jesus has brought “**many sons to glory**.” If the “**everyone**” of verse 9 is to be taken as “*every single individual without exception*” then verse 10 should’ve read something like: “*bringing all to glory*” or “*brining all sons to glory*.” “**Many sons**” has a limitation, it does not refer to every single individual. We read further in Hebrews 2:11-13

For he who sanctifies and **those who are sanctified** all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them **brothers**,¹² saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”¹³ And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Behold, I and the **children God has given me**.”

Who are being sanctified? We’re told in Heb 10:14 “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified,” those are Christians, people who have put their faith in Him, those for whom He intercedes (Heb 7:25). “**Children God has given me**” echoes John 6, specifically verses 37-39.

ESV Study Bible explains:[2]

- **Heb. 2:9** But we see **him**, that is, Jesus. At this point all interpreters agree that the focus of the passage is Jesus (cf. notes on vv. 7, 8). The phrase **little while** and the sequence of events in vv. 7-8 (cf. Ps. 8:5-6) demonstrate that, after first being **made lower than the**

- angels**, Jesus was subsequently **crowned** and exalted. While Jesus' sufferings indicated his humiliation and subjection, his **suffering of death** was also the reason for his being crowned with **glory and honor**. Jesus tasted **death** as a work of God's grace done on behalf of **everyone** (i.e., all who follow him; Heb. 9:15, 28; 10:39). **Jesus**. This is the first mention of Jesus' name in Hebrews (see 3:1; 4:14; etc.; "Christ" first appears in 3:6). "Crowned with glory and honor" echoes the same phrase used in 2:7. Though the human race generally did not fulfill God's plan to put everything on earth under man's feet (vv. 6-8), there is one man who is fulfilling God's great plan for human beings, and that is Jesus.
- **Heb. 2:10 he, for whom and by whom all things exist.** This is God the Father, who acts to "make perfect" the "founder of their salvation" (Jesus). **many sons**. The followers of the one unique Son of God are now also called "sons," for they are adopted into the glory of the newly redeemed human family (see "brothers," vv. 11-12; and "children," v. 13; also 12:5-8). **founder**. The Greek can designate either an originator or a leader (see 12:2). **salvation**. See 1:14 and 2:3. **suffering**. Especially Jesus' suffering of death (v. 9, see vv. 14-18). The concept of making **perfect** is applied elsewhere in Hebrews both to Jesus himself (5:9; 7:28) and to his work in sanctifying his followers (10:14; 12:23). In saying that Jesus was made perfect, the author is not suggesting that Jesus was sinful (cf. 4:15; 7:26) but that as he lived his life, his maturity and experience deepened, yet always with full obedience to the Father. As a human being, he needed to live his life and obey God (which he did perfectly) to become the perfect sacrifice for sins.
 - **Heb. 2:11 he who sanctifies.** Jesus makes his people holy through his blood (13:12). **those who are sanctified**. Jesus' true followers, who are made holy by his sacrifice (10:10, 14; 13:12). Some commentators think **one source** is a reference to the common humanity shared by Jesus and those being saved (see 2:12-18), or to their common descent from Abraham. Others think that the "one source" is God the Father. **That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers**. Since they share a common descent (or, since God is their common Father), they are members of the same family, and therefore brothers.

ESV Reformation Study Bible^[3]

- **2:9 we see him.** Jesus has the crown of glory and honor. It must now be shown that He received it as a man, and so can satisfy the words of the psalm quoted.
- **made lower.** The expression can refer to status or to time (that is, "a little later," Luke 22:58; Acts 5:34). If it refers to time, it indicates the temporary character of Jesus' humiliation.
- **taste death for everyone.** Here, "everyone" must be understood in the light of the context and of the results of Jesus' death described elsewhere in Hebrews. It refers to the "many sons" whom God brings to glory (v. 10), whom Jesus calls "brothers" (v. 11). Those for whom Jesus tasted death were made holy and perfect once for all by His sacrifice (10:10, 14), their consciences cleansed from acts that lead to death (9:14), so they are freed from the fear of death (2:14, 15). By contrast, there are those (even within Christian congregations) who do not trust the Son but subject Him to ridicule (6:6). For them, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment" (10:26, 27). Thus "everyone" here includes all those (but only those) who persevere in trusting Jesus (3:6, 14).

John Gill said the following about the phrase "for everyone/man":^[4]

- **that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man; that is, Christ was made a little lower than the angels by becoming man, and assuming a body frail and mortal,**

*that he might die for his church and people: to "taste death", is a Jewish phrase, often to be met with in Rabbinical writings; [See comments on Mt 16:28] and signifies the truth and reality of his death, and the experience he had of the bitterness of it, it being attended with the wrath of God, and curse of the law; though he continued under it but for a little while, it was but a taste; and it includes all kinds of death, he tasted of the death of afflictions, being a man of sorrows all his days, and a corporeal death, and what was equivalent to an eternal one; and so some think the words will bear to be rendered, "that he by the grace of God might taste of every death"; which rendering of the words, if it could be established, as it is agreeable to the context, and to the analogy of faith, would remove all pretence of an argument from this place, in favour of the universal scheme: what moved God to make him lower than the angels, and deliver him up to death, was not any anger towards him, any disregard to him, or because he deserved it, but his "grace", free favour, and love to men; this moved him to provide him as a ransom; to preordain him to be the Lamb slain; to send him in the fulness of time, and give him up to justice and death: the Syriac version reads, "for God himself through his own grace tasted death for all"; Christ died, not merely as an example, or barely for the good of men, but as a surety, in their room and stead, and that not for every individual of mankind; for there are some he knows not; for some he does not pray; and there are some who will not be saved: the word "man" is not in the original text, it is only *ὑπερ παντος*, which may be taken either collectively, and be rendered "for the whole"; that is, the whole body, the church for whom Christ gave himself, and is the Saviour of; or distributively, and be translated, "for everyone"; for everyone of the sons God brings to glory, Heb 2:10 for everyone of the "brethren", whom Christ sanctifies, and he is not ashamed to own, and to whom he declares the name of God, Heb 2:11 for everyone of the members of the "church", in the midst of which he sung praise, Heb 2:12 for every one of the "children" God has given him, and for whose sake he took part of flesh and blood, Heb 2:13 and for everyone of the "seed" of Abraham, in a spiritual sense, whose nature he assumed, Heb 2:16.*

[1] <http://youtu.be/m6sRICZCWDY>

[2] ESV Study Bible, 2008 (Crossway). Taken from the Online Version at www.esvbible.org

[3] R.C. Sproul, The Reformation Study Bible ESV 2005, Ligonier Ministries. Taken from the free online version at BibleGateway

[4] John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the Bible software The Word. See "[Resources](#)."