

HE DIED FOR YOU

Over 1900 years ago, a man waited in prison. He had been arrested on charges of sedition and murder. His name was Barabbas and he was infamous for his criminal deeds. He surely had no right to expect to be set free; but a very strange thing happened. Someone else was chosen to die in his place.

You, no doubt, remember the story. Pontius Pilate, the governor, had found no fault in Jesus, who had been brought to him for trial. In an effort to have Him released, he offered the people a choice. He asked, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas or Jesus?" The mob in their hatred demanded that Barabbas be set free and that Jesus be crucified. Pilate agreed to their demand. The criminal was released and the Saviour was sentenced to die.

There is no description in the Scriptures of what happened when they released Barabbas; but we can easily imagine what might have occurred. The guards came to his cell. Hearing them, he may have supposed they had come to take him for execution. But, instead they released him. "Why?" he asks. "Because someone is dying in your place. " "But who?" " A man called Jesus, of Nazareth!"

Yes, Jesus died for Barabbas. He also died for you. But Barabbas was a sinful man. And so are you and I, and all men. The Bible says: "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Again we read: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." (I Peter 3:18) "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time." (I Timothy 2:5-6) You see, all men are under the condemnation of sin. The justice of God demands death. But in His mercy, Christ died in our place.

Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15:13-14) While the atoning power of His sacrifice has been offered to all; all have not received it. The saving effect of His blood is for His friends. His friends are those who do His commandments.

Beloved, our emphasis this morning is not so much that Christ died for all men, but that He died for YOU. It was for the salvation of YOUR soul. This is the truth that must be believed. God so loved YOU that He gave His only begotten Son that if YOU believe on Him, YOU will not perish, but YOU will have everlasting life. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." I John 3:16

It is not enough, however, to simply know this or even to just be thankful for it. Believing on Jesus is more than simply accepting the facts. The faith that saves is the faith that serves. Until you love Jesus Christ so much that you are ready to yield in humble submission to His commandments, you have not learned what it means to be His servant.

When Jesus died in the place of Barabbas, Barabbas was being freed, for the time, from the penalty of physical death. But, thanks be to God, when Jesus died for us, He was making it possible for us to be freed from the penalty of eternal death-that is the alienation of our souls in hell.