

Barabbas and Me

When Jesus was on trial, Pilate was trying to think of any way he could let Jesus go and still save face with the people. He was too scared to simply stand up to the people. So, he knew during the Passover it was his custom to let a Jewish prisoner go free. He figured if he gave the Jews a chance between letting an innocent man that the leaders were simply envious of and a real convicted criminal, the people would let Jesus go free. He was wrong.

Pilate put forward Barabbas, who was truly everything the Jews had accused Jesus of being and worse. He was a murdering, rebellious, insurrectionist (**Mark 15:6-7**). Choosing Barabbas over Jesus would be like telling Rome they really wanted rebellion. But the leaders convinced the Jews that Jesus was worse than even Barabbas. The people cried out, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas" (**Luke 23:18**). Pilate pushed even harder saying, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving of death. I will therefore punish him and release him" (**Luke 23:22**). But the people continued to cry, "Crucify him" (**Mark 15:14**).

Barabbas was a convicted criminal. He was guilty. He deserved death. He deserved to hang on a cross. But instead, he walked free. In his place, Jesus went to the cross. Jesus bore the death that Barabbas deserved. Can you imagine the thoughts racing through Barabbas's mind when he understood he was being set free? A second chance. A new lease on life. Did it change him? Or did he go back to the activity that would just get him thrown back in jail with another death sentence hanging over his head? Sadly, we just don't know.

Do you know what Barabbas's name actually means? Son of the father. That's right. The true Son of the Father went to the cross instead of this other son of the father. What an amazing word picture.

We need to see ourselves in Barabbas. You see, Barabbas wasn't the only person Jesus died in the place of on that day. You and I are children of the Father as well. On that day, Satan put us up, not before a crowd of Jews, but before God and the crowd of the heavenly hosts. It was as if he said, "Why, God? Why kill Jesus, your only begotten Son? He hasn't done anything worthy of death. Why not just let me have Edwin and I'll release Jesus to you? There's no need for Your innocent Son to die. I'll just take the rest of these." And he motioned to all humanity. But God responded, "No, give me Edwin, give me Jim, give me Margaret, give me Tim, give me Sarah, give me..."

"But what about Your only begotten Son?" Satan responded. "What shall I do with Him?"

There was no jeering cry, like that of the Jews. There was sadness. "Crucify. Crucify Him!"

And we were carried out of our cell, blinking, into the sun. And we were set free.

The question is what we will do with it. Will we let it change us? Or will we simply continue in the activity that got us the death penalty in the first place and will bring us right back to it again (cf. **Romans 6:23**)?

Satan put you up on that stand. But God chose to crucify Jesus instead of you. What will you do with it?

--Edwin L. Crozier