



AND Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: ¹⁵ No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. ¹⁶ I will therefore chastise him, and release him. ¹⁷ (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) ¹⁸ And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: ¹⁹ (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) ²⁰ Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. ²¹ But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. ²² And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. ²³ And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. ²⁴ And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. ²⁵ And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will. (Luke 23:13-25)

The events of that Good Friday, two thousand years ago, were fully orchestrated by the fore-ordained workings of the Holy Spirit. He works in the same knowledge and purpose in every believer's heart. It is interesting to note that He who was guiltless of any crime or sin was pronounced innocent by the Roman Proconsul, while the condemned murderer who was guilty as charged was set free.

We often read of Adam, Noah, Moses, Abraham, Joseph, or David as anti-types of Christ. Very seldom do we look solemnly enough in the Mirror of God's Word and find there antitypes of ourselves even though they are found in proliferation in God's Word. For example, the Woman at the Well is a picture type of those who earnestly seek truth and the Water of Life. The Woman taken in Adultery is a perfect type of all of us err we came to the Throne of Grace in Christ. Peter, in his loss of courage outside the court of the High Priest typifies us all at some point in our walk when we deny Christ either by

word or deed. And we have before us, in the account of Barabbas, the perfect anti-type of each and everyone of us! How so?

WE have all hated others with a hate that emerges from envy and covetousness. That is the birth of murder in our hearts whether carried to fruition or simply dormant. We have all lied, stolen something that does not belong to us either overtly, or covertly through our failure to work a solid eight hour shift for which our employer paid us in currency of the realm. We have looked longingly at some person of the opposite sex. We have many times dishonored our mothers and fathers. We have taken the Name of the Lord in vain either in profane language, or in praying in the Lord's Name for purposes of impressing others only. So, we are just as despicable in our sins as was Barabbas. In fact, prior to our being drawn powerfully by the bonds of the Holy Spirit to Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2) Unless you are some special kind of mortal angel (and there are none), you were a condemned sinner in the old man. (see Romans 3:23).

Dead men can do nothing good to EARN their salvation. Their spirit and heart is as silent and still as the heart of Lazarus as he lay in the tomb at Bethany. The wages of sin is death, and we were dead in our old and unwashed souls. (see Romans 6:23)

We all stood condemned on Good Friday though we had not yet breathed the Breath of Life. We were just as much in bondage and condemned to death as was poor Barabbas.

Lying in a Roman prison in the company of his fellow conspirators, Barabbas had doubtless given up all hope of pardon or reprieve. He was guilty as charged, and he faced the horrible death of crucifixion. There was absolutely no escape in the terms of the law – no provision for forgiveness under the law for the law cannot forgive by virtue of its own nature. If there had been some weakness of the law as to provision of justice, pardon might have been possible; but there was not. God's Law, too, demands absolute justice for sin (death). Since we have all sinned, that justice will be satisfied. Since God's Law is perfect, there are no terms for pardon. The debt must be paid! Our sins were not pardoned on Good Friday – they were satisfied under the terms of the Law by our Redeemer. He atoned for our sins and made it possible for us to be accounted righteous by the imputed righteousness of our Lord who died that day in our stead.

The story of Barabbas is parallel in its physical outcome to our own.

Barabbas lay on the cold floor of that Roman dungeon awaiting the time of crucifixion. He would have been totally startled in hearing his name called by the Captain of the Guard. Barabbas, come forth! This sounds very much like that Voice that Lazarus heard while lying on a stone-cold slab in the tomb at Bethany. Barabbas likely considered this the call to come forth for the beatings and tortuous death that typified the hours of crucifixion. He must have recoiled at that call just as many Christian fearfully recoil when the Holy Spirit plants a hook in their jaws as He draws them where they may not have wanted to go. Resist as we may, the Hound of Heaven will not lose our trail. He pesters us until we answer.

Perhaps Barabbas had to be forcefully moved from the cell for the very purpose of setting him free. His tortured mind could not comprehend the enormity of what was happening. He was confounded and confused, if I judge the man aright, when he was released by the Roman governor. He may have staggered out wondering what the meaning of this wonderful liberty was all about. He saw our Lord pronounced innocent and then sentenced to death at the consensus of the crowd incited by the conspiratorial demands of the Jewish rulers. He may have wondered, "Why am I being set free while this just man is condemned?" Or he may have had his conscience so seared with the hot iron of lust and cruelty that he merely did not care why.

Some have speculated Barabbas was so affected by this event he became a follower of Christ. I do admit that this conclusion is possible, but not revealed in the Word of God. For all we know, he reverted to his old, reprobate self.

Now, when I pronounce the name, Barabbas, I mean everyone reading this message. We have all sinned and would have suffered the fires of Hell were it not that we had a substitute under the law who paid our penalty. We were set at liberty, as was Barabbas, without any effort or good deeds of our own. We had nothing to do with our preciously purchased freedom. The debt was too great for any of us to pay. But it was PAID by the only one who could have been eligible to purchase our freedom and die in our stead – our Lord Jesus Christ.

If we have been drawn by that great Magnet of the Cross under the power of the Holy Spirit to the Throne of Grace, our lives will be changed and we will become new creatures. Though we may stumble and stagger, the Holy Spirit is with us to lift us up as we seek forgiveness. There may always exist tares among the wheat. The evidence will be in the fruit. The Christian character is like a sterling silver spoon. Regardless of its age and use, it will always bear the character and properties of pure silver. But those who are silver-plated are the playroom Christians – they are not truly Christians at all. With time and use, the silver plate will wear off and the baser metal will be revealed.

Which kind are you, the old Barabbas, or the Paul of the Damascus Road?