

Series: John

Title: Not This Man but Barabbas

Text: John 18: 39-19: 9

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Pilate found no fault in the Lord Jesus. He thought he had found a way to release him. They had a custom where they released a prisoner at the passover. So we hear Pilate speak.

John 18: 39: But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 40: Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber. 19: 1: Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*. 2: And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put *it* on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3: And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. 4: Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. 5: Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man! 6: When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify *him*: for I find no fault in him. 7: The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. 8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; 9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

God is very different than most people imagine. Some worship a god that does not resemble the living and true God.

The God of scripture is *sovereign*. God is the absolute authority with absolute power to do as he pleases. Man cannot control him. God is not answerable to man. All is God's creation and God's creation does as God is pleased. To any man who would object, God says, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Rom 9: 20).

God is *holy and just*. He requires perfection. God will by no means clear the guilty. The Almighty knows every sin, even of the heart. God keeps record of every sin of those outside of Christ. He never forgives until he has punished sin, either upon the sinner or upon the Substitute

But God is also the God *of grace*. The same God who is inflexibly just, and never pardons sin without punishment, is yet a God of immutable, everlasting love. In fact, God is love. He is full of grace. The LORD God of heaven delights in mercy.

In our text, we have an illustration of how holy God can be just and gracious. It is in and by his Son, Christ Jesus. In our text, our sovereign God is ruling everything. Everything is all coming to pass exactly as he foreordained. The purpose is because God is holy, just, and gracious.

The Romans had a custom to release a prisoner on the day of passover. Pilate asked "*will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*" This is a strange scene. A ruthless Roman governor is trying to save the life of one who he considers only a Jewish teacher. He is trying to save him from the Jewish leaders and the crowd the religious rulers have worked up.

THE LORD JESUS

First, behold the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is innocent of these charges. Pilate knew he was without fault. He had just told them so. Pilate's wife said, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." The scribes and Pharisee's knew he was sinless. They crucified him out of envy. And God the Father declared his Son's perfection from heaven,

Matthew 3: 17: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Hebrews 7:26: For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

There was no sin in the nature of the Lord Jesus. He is holiness. The Lord Jesus is the only one in this whole scene who knows no sin. He is the only man in the entire world who knew no sin. This Man, Jesus of Nazareth, is God. He himself is that sovereign, holy and just and gracious God. The Lord Jesus is God and Man, the GodMan. He is Immanuel, God with us.

BARABBAS

Barabbas was guilty and in prison. *"Now Barabbas was a robber."*

Barabbas is an example of every elect child of God by nature. He is a guilty sinner. They have him locked up. He is unable to free himself. He is about to die. Barabbas is guilty of robbery.

Every son of Adam is guilty of robbing God of the glory due to his name. We robbed God of honor and worship due to his holy name. We robbed God by stealing what God has created. He made all of it to glorify him. Yet, we use it for our own glory, with no regard to him. We have robbed our fellow man. The Pharisee's and Pilot were guilty by rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ and so were all those God saves. The very nature we received from Adam is sin! Whether these sins are acted out or not--they are all in the heart.

Matthew 15:19: For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20: These are *the things* which defile a man:

Like as Barabbas was locked in his jail cell, so we could do nothing to change our state. But Barabbas means "son of the father." Each one God saves, by divine election, is a "son of the father." We come forth into this world no less guilty than every other sinner and no less defiled in our nature. Every son of Adam is born in sin and unbelief in a pit wherein is no water just like every other sinner in this world. But due to nothing but the sovereign grace of God, he chose to save a multitude no man can number.

Still, we come into this world criminals deserving of punishment and God will not spare the guilty.

SUBSTITUTION

Here we have a beautiful picture of substitution. Pilot said, *"will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas."* After they scourged him and mocked him, when he came forth, *"When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him."* Five days before these same ones were putting down palm branches and shouting, "Hosanna." As Christ entered Jerusalem. Now these same ones are crying, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" What happened? He would not put the least work of salvation in their hands. The Lord Jesus would not let them make him a king. He declared them sinners in need of God to save them.

Now picture Barabbas somewhere in that jail cell when suddenly he hears his name from this angry mob, "Barabbas, Barabbas!" He moves closer to the bars so he can hear what they shout next. Then he hears, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

How Barabbas' heart must have sank! He knows he cannot deliver himself. There is no escaping his execution. He is about to pay the wages of sin which is death. When God makes his child hear the law reach to our very nature, it is more powerful than what Barabbas was feeling. We began to cry to God for mercy.

Psalms 51: 1: Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2: Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3: For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. 4: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou

mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest. 5: Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6: Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8: Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. 9: Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Now picture Barabbas hearing the jailor coming. His keys are rattling. Barabbas thinks he is about to die. But the jailer opens the cell door and says, "Barabbas, you are free to go. The Lord Jesus has taken your place." That is the good news of the gospel--SUBSTITUTION!

God provided his own only begotten Son to take the place of his people. The Son of God entered covenant to do so. He did it purely voluntarily. Christ Jesus was willing to stand in the place of his people. He was willing to drink the cup of wrath his people deserved. It was a perfectly lawful substitution because sovereign God did what only sovereign God can do.

2 Corinthians 5: 21: For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

The Lord Jesus had perfect love for God and his people. He was obedient to God even unto the death of the cross. That is the righteousness God requires. That is the righteousness of Christ that God imputes to all who believe on his Son. God is perfectly just to show his child mercy and set us free because Christ satisfied justice, justified his people and made us perfect in Christ's righteousness.

God's child never grows weary of hearing how Christ our Substitute took our place. It never grows old hearing how we were given eternal life freely by God's grace, all in harmony with his perfect justice. This is the word that rebukes and chastens. This is the word that strengthens the weak. This is the word that humbles the proud. This is the good news God's children want to hear

Isaiah 53: 8: He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9: And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. 10: Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11: He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12: Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors

Romans 8: 1: There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2: For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death...33: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. 34: Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us

One more thing, another aspect of Christ's love that constrains his people is this--this one who is our Substitute, is also the one who sent the gospel, regenerated us, and called us out of our bondage.

Isaiah 49: [I will] give thee for a covenant of the people,...9: That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.

The good news he sends into the new heart is this, "I chose you freely by my grace; I redeemed you from the curse freely by my grace; I regenerated you freely by my grace; Now, I'm setting you free freely by my grace!" That is how Christ makes us willing in the day of his power from the first hour till we are with him

in glory. Believe on Christ today and you shall be saved. If you believe on Christ then walk by faith. Look to Christ dying in place of his people--this is the power of godliness.

Amen!