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Go and make disciples!

E-votional 105

Freedom in Forgiveness

Matthew 27:15-23 (ESV),

Now at the feast, the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" And he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

You know, I have heard a lot of teachings that use natural occurrences to explain salvation and forgiveness in Christ Jesus. What I mean is that teachers often use illustrations to show what receiving forgiveness and salvation is like. One such occurrence they use to illustrate is that of a man charged with a crime and brought before the judge. When standing before the judge all of a sudden Jesus steps in and says something like, '*your honor I have paid the price let them go.*' Whenever I have heard this teaching and coinciding illustration I never thought to just take this one directly from the Bible with no need to really illustrate it.

Let me explain. Here in Scripture is the story of Barabbas standing guilty of crimes and on the other hand, a completely innocent Jesus who has done absolutely nothing wrong. Even Pilate, who essentially was the judge here finds no fault in Him. So the verdict is that it is completely obvious to the judge and all the rest who were at the judgment of Christ that Jesus did nothing wrong and that Barabbas was a known criminal.

I find this story so complete in that it accurately portrays salvation and forgiveness. It does this by showing us that in fact, Barabbas was a sinner and criminal not only in earth's court but in God's court. Here we have an innocent man standing literally in his place and thus letting him go free. Absolutely free.

The people here at this court hearing were the ultimate judges yet at the same time, it was appointed for Jesus by the Father to go to the cross. Here we have a great illustration of God's heart. In saying that, the people chose that even though they knew Jesus to be innocent that they were given the choice of letting Him or Barabbas go free. In the end, they chose to let a known criminal go free and sent Jesus viciously to the cross.

The point of this quick teaching is to break it down and take it home to our hearts. In short, we are all Barabbas and guilty of crimes against God. Yet even still and before the foundation of the world, God foreordained that this moment in human history should take place to pay once for all for the sins of the people and to let them go free. Get this and let it sink in, that you and I are criminals and sinners in God's court and we were literally just let go. I have to be honest, this was a clear and present reminder for me and moved me to understand the depth and the love of the richness of God's grace toward us. But remember, the price for our freedom put an innocent man on the cross.

Picture it with me, if you will. I mean really put yourself in this story. You are Barabbas. You are on trial about to be handed over to the executioner by hanging on the cross for your crimes against God and man. Then totally unbeknownst to you, another entered the court who is completely innocent of any wrongdoing and went to the cross in your place. How do you feel?

Thank You Jesus for Your indescribable gift! I tell you the truth brothers and sisters. Personally, I feel a level of gratitude that binds me to this innocent Man in servitude forever, but not as one who owes a debt. Rather it is an indebtedness that was not placed on me by the Giver but one that was born out of this response of gratitude. Freely we have received so freely we should give.

I am so amazed and growing in this amazement more and more when I survey that wonderful cross. But that cross has a story and that story is supposed to continue on through you and me in the way we love and in the way we live. We love the way Jesus did who asked nothing of Barabbas but went to the cross in his place. In fact, it is said of Jesus's going to cross in this way in Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the

right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus counted the cross joy, hallelujah! And we live the way He did because He still lives in us. Ask the Lord with me brothers and sisters to really cause us to walk as He walked in true self-sacrifice and love not expecting anything in return. We have a job to do church from the overflow of gratitude that we have for He alone took our place on that cross and let us go completely free and forgiven. Hallelujah!

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In Christ's Love,
Chris and Jeanne
Lights and Perfection, Inc

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