



Weekly Devotionals: Barabbas' Perspective | March 26, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Week 2 of our Easter devotionals! Each week you'll be prompted to read about a character from the events leading up to Jesus' death, engage in a few questions, and then given a prayer prompt.

This week, you'll be reading about Barabbas' encounter with Jesus.

STORY

As he stewed angrily on the dirty floor of his tiny cell, Barabbas' jaw ached more from his constantly clenched teeth than from the bruise that was forming from his arrest. Every time the guard walked by his door, he saw it a reminder about how brutal, how evil, and how suffocating Rome was. And the reminders filled his mind with violence.

To be honest, violence had never been far from Barabbas' mind. Living under constant tyranny was the breeding ground of his hatred, no longer just for the Romans, but for anyone who lived according to the Roman way of life. He was a zealot after all.

So, what do you do when you have so much rage and no hope in sight? You take matters into your own hands. You fight. You steal. You kill. And you wait to die – either by retaliation or by punishment.

As Barabbas waited for his judgment, he wished he could have done more damage.

He sat alone with his hate until his name was called. It was time to face Pilate and to accept his sentence. Or perhaps, he fantasized, he might be able to deal a swift blow to Pilate in one glorious, last-ditch effort. To die like that would certainly surpass a flogging or death on a cross!

Taken from his cell, feet and hands shackled, Barabbas hobbled his way to the judgment stand. Pilate stood at a distance. There were too many guards. "*So much for glory,*" he thought.



When he reached the stand, he was shocked to see all the people. Were they all standing there watching for *him*?

“Maybe I’ve had made more of an impact than I realized,” he thought.

He saw Pilate in an intense conversation with another man. The man looked disheveled physically, but even Barabbas could see that Pilate was the one that was shaken.

He overheard a little of their conversation, “Are you a king?” “What is truth?”

He strained but couldn’t make out the whole conversation.

After Pilate and the other man finished talking, Barabbas expected his own interview with the governor, but it didn’t come. Pilate didn’t even acknowledge he was there.

What happened next felt like something from a dream.

“Who do you want?!” Pilate yelled.

The crowd began shouting. “Give us Barabbas! Give us Barabbas!”

Barabbas’ eyes widened as he heard his name.

“What should I do with Jesus, then?!” Pilate shot back.

“So, this was the man he’d heard so much about,” Barabbas thought, *“the famous teacher and miracle-worker who’d grown such a huge following.”*

The crowd shouted back: “Crucify him! Crucify him! We have no king but Caesar! Give us Barabbas!”

“As you wish!” Pilate bellowed.



And with that, Pilate released Barabbas.

The shock turned Barabbas' stomach. The pronouncement of his freedom rang in his ears. Making his way out, Barabbas couldn't help but look at Jesus. Jesus stood calmly and firmly. No crying, no begging, no shouting. Resolute. *What a fool!*

As Barabbas exited, he walked the darkened hall cracking his wrists and turning his ankles where the shackles once were. The crowd continued their murderous chant, "Crucify him!"

And as he stepped into the sun, a sobering realization hit him – the miracle worker from Nazareth just gave Barabbas a miracle of his own.

SCRIPTURE

Read **Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:18-25; and John 18:18-40.**

QUESTIONS

And so goes the story of Barabbas, a fierce zealot who desired to overthrow Rome and restore the nation of Israel to greatness. Can you imagine what would have been going through his mind as he sat in a jail cell awaiting his sentence? Can you imagine his relief when Jesus took his place? Can you imagine what he must have told people once he got out?

As you ponder this story, prayerfully reflect on the following questions:

- What do you think Barabbas would have been thinking or feeling when Jesus took his rightful punishment?
- Has someone ever taken the punishment for something you did wrong? What was that like? How did it impact you and your relationship with that person?
- Take a few moments to imagine you're Barabbas standing before a judge with your record of wrongs about to be laid bare. Imagine you know you're about to receive a



- punishment for those things and that the punishment is just. But just as you're about to be taken away, Jesus takes your place. How would that make you feel?
- What does this act of substitution tell you about God's love for you?

PRAYER

“Dear Jesus, thank you for taking my place! Thank you for your overwhelming love! I pray that not a day goes by that I won't remember how you stepped in and gave me a way out of my sin and brokenness when there was no hope in sight. Help me to love and honor and glorify you with a thankful heart! I love you and pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.”

EXTRA

As you go about your week, take some time to read and reflect on 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 and Romans 5. Sit with God in this passage each day. Allow the Scriptures to speak to you. Ask yourself, “Lord, what do you want to show me in this text today – about myself, about you, about Jesus taking my place?” Then, listen and finish in prayer.