

Would You Release Barabbas?

As Pontius Pilate is trying to find a way to get the Jews to agree not to kill Jesus, he offers them a choice: he can either release Jesus, who has done nothing wrong, or Barabbas, who is guilty of murder and sedition (Luke 23:13-25). The Jewish leaders cry out, not for the release of the innocent Lord, but for the vicious criminal. It is with disbelief that men often shake their heads and wonder how such a decision could have been made, even with the level of hatred that the Jewish leaders had for Jesus. But ask yourself a question: would you release Barabbas?

The automatic and incredulous answer of most people would be, "Of course not!" But consider the question from another perspective. The Jews knew who Jesus was, there was no way to deny what he had done and the effect he had on the people (John 11:47-54). The problem was that Jesus stood in the way of the power of the Jewish leaders and the direction they wanted to go. Therefore, they were willing to take the evil to remove the interference.

How many Christians make decisions that do the same thing? Consider the words found in Hebrews 10:28-29, "Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" This passage emphasizes that the individual that knows who our Lord is and has pledged to serve him, yet willfully decides to turn his back on Christ and accept a life of sin has metaphorically walked all over Christ again in his own life. Hebrews 6:6 describes it as crucifying the Son of God again. He has done the same thing the Jews did and chosen the evil (Barabbas) instead of the righteous Lord.

When man is faced with a choice of direction, and willfully chooses evil, he has chosen Barabbas. This is not a mistake: something done out of ignorance, or an accidental transgression. It is an intentional, premeditated decision to put the Lord's influence to death in one's life.

Unfortunately, such decisions are not as uncommon as one might think. We see Christians make them in their entertainment choices, their views on Biblical and moral topics, the priorities they allow to take precedence over the church, and so many other things. They see what God's Word says and consciously, intentionally go the other direction.

The faithful Christian cannot "look Christ in the face" and choose Barabbas. He cannot have Christ as his Lord, see what direction God would have him go, and walk the other direction. So, let me ask the question again: would you release Barabbas? ~~*Adam Cozort*