

# Brynmawr Family Church Sermon

Pilate and Barabbas  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2009

## Intro

The incident where Pontius Pilate is pressurised by the crowd to release Barabbas and crucify Christ was important enough to be covered by each of the 4 gospels. We will read it in Luke and bring out some important lessons for us today.

## Read Lk 23:1-25

### 1. Peer pressure can be a killer- v23-24

- Pilate's horrendous actions are confirmed by Roman historian, Tacitus (annals 15:44) "Christ, while Tiberius was emperor was capitally executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate". But what led up to Pilate giving in to the crowd? Here are 4 events prior to this that had a bearing on things:
  - i. When he moved his military headquarters from Caesarea to Jerusalem his soldiers at night bought their standards with them (which had idolatrous pictures of the emperor). In the morning many Jews went to Caesarea to protest. After 5 days Pilate had them surrounded by soldiers and was about to have them executed. They all lay on the floor and beared their necks saying they would rather die. Eventually Pilate let them go- Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII, iii, 1; *BJ*, II, ix, 2, 3.
  - ii. When Pilate was in his residence of Herod's palace he hung up gilt shields inscribed which were dedicated to the emperor. A Jewish rebellion almost took place, because Pilate would not remove them, but the shields were ordered to be removed by Tiberius when the Jews appealed to him (Philo, *ad Caium*. 38, ii. 589).
  - iii. Pilate took the temple tribute money ('Corban') to build a 30 mile aqueduct. A Jewish riot ensued, which Pilate stopped with plain clothed soldiers with concealed daggers. Many Jews were killed, including spectators (Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII, iii, 2; *BJ*, II, ix, 4).
  - iv. Mentioned in Lk 13:1-4 Pilate mingled the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices (probably at the temple in Jerusalem). This may be related to a rebellion against the aqueduct. Jesus refers also to the collapse of the tower of Siloam. The tower may have been part of the aqueduct & the Jews may have seen this as God's judgement for using the temple money for the project.
- In Lk 23:v23-24- The crowd are insistent to crucify Christ. Pilate knows He is innocent & is warned by his wife, who had a dream, he should not harm the innocent man Mt 27:19, but he still does. Perhaps previous traumas had left their mark on Pilate. How are we towards peer pressure? Are there traumas in our life that have resulted in us compromising to peer pressure? Do we have habits today that began with peer pressure? Confession+repentance & acknowledging our acceptance by God will break the hold.
- Peer pressure can make us become the 'Mirror Man' as in the Human League song- never being 'us', just a reflection of what others want. It can affect any age group or social grouping. Are we different in certain company? Elijah's challenge re:wavering between 2 opinions. Laodicean Church- lukewarm- better to be hot or cold.
- The trauma of going against the crowd is eventually less than the results of going with it- it takes a living fish to swim against the tide. In A.D. 36 the governor of Syria brought serious accusations against Pilate after Pilate went at war with the Samaritans. He was ordered to account to Caesar (Caligula) for his actions. After

this, according to tradition (Eusebius) Pilate 'wearied with misfortunes' killed himself. History records Pilate as the man who ordered the execution of Christ- what will be our epitaph?

## **2. Jesus has taken our condemnation -v25**

- What do we know about Barabbas' character? Who do you know who is notorious? 'Notorious'-Mt 27:16. 'Robber'- Jn 18:40. Luke 23:19- in prison for 'rebellion in the city' & 'murderer', Mk 15:7 'chained with his fellow rebels'. He was a notorious jailbird, but Jesus paid for His release.
- Whatever our sin is Jesus bore it on the cross. What is the worst sin? Murder? We were all transgressors & wages of sin=death, all murderers in that our deliberate sin has resulted in Jesus' death. The prince of life was exchanged for a murderer- Acts 3:14-15. If Barrabas can be set free so can we. Barabbas though guilty was acquitted. Same for us- Rom 8- There is now no condemnation for those in Christ. God is just- He won't punish His Son and also you- it is finished! Jesus has already taken our punishment! Assurance of salvation.
- Many Christians know assurance of heaven, but still feel bound by sin. Jesus came 'to proclaim liberty to the captives' (Lk 4:18). Sin is a prison that binds those who do not know Christ, but one from which Jesus sets us free- Jn 8:32-we shall 'know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'. A christian has the prison door open- all that is needed is to realise and walk out of it. Jn 8:36 'He who the Son sets free is free indeed'
- Jesus is still releasing the Barabbas' today- Shane Taylor, Alpha News no.46 pg 5. Many have been transformed in prison by Alpha. Alpha for Prisons was launched in 1995 in response to demand from inmates. It is now registered in 80% of the prisons in the UK as well as running in the prisons of over 74 countries on all the continents around the world. BBC News 27 June,2000- 'Prison evangelist Paul Cowley takes the Alpha programme all over the country and says he knows it works, because it changed his life. "I've been married for six years, I'm not a womaniser anymore, I don't drink, I'm not involved in violence, I'm not in trouble with the police , I'm now a pastor and I'm studying at theology college."
- How would Barabbas have felt towards Jesus? Huge gratitude- we should continually remember that someone was executed in our place.

## **3. Jesus has arranged our adoption**

- Barabbas means 'son of the Father'. The crazy thing is that the real Son of the Father was sent to be condemned and forsaken and someone who only had the name but was not the true Son of the Father was released. However, the result was symbolic to us that we are released to become true children of God- adopted into His family- John 1:12- '...He gave the right to become children of God to those who believe in His name'. Rom 8:15 ' For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you recieved the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out 'Abba, Father''
- The realisation of Daddy's acceptance of us melts our rebellion and releases us from our prison. We no longer relate to God as a harsh taskmaster and us as slaves (although Paul still also uses the term bondservant to talk about our love inspired dedication to God). We are now privileged Sons & Daughters and have intimacy of relationship. Hes has not left us as orphans (Jn 14:18). How much rebellion & striving is there in the world which could be melted by a revelation of the Father's love?

**Conclusion-** We, like Barabbas have been set free by Jesus to be true children of God  
*Song: How Deep the Father's Love for Us*