

them away into the wilderness where it would never be seen again. The goat is “the scapegoat” – all the guilt of the people transferred to it, forever bearing their sins away.

B) Applied to Barabbas

1. What he deserved

How does this apply to Barabbas? Everything Jesus received, Barabbas deserved. And everything Jesus deserved, Barabbas received. Which meant what?

2. What he received

Justice had been satisfied. Barabbas was pardoned. The death sentence upon him had been removed. He was no longer liable to judgment or punishment. And he was free.

Application:

Things were that bad. But things are now that good. In Christ, God’s justice has been satisfied. Our sins have been removed. And we are now freed. Let me read you some passages from the Old Testament that capture this so beautifully and let them settle into your soul (**READ Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 38:17b; Isaiah 43:25; Psalm 130:3-4; Micah 7:19**). Look out over the camp. The scapegoat is gone. He has borne your sin away!

Do you believe that? Can you grasp it? Do you believe Jesus has carried your sin away, that God has removed it as far as the east is from the west? Do you lay hold of the wondrous reality that He has put it behind His back, blotted it from His record, and remembers it no more? Do you know He has hurled your sin into the depths of the sea?

Ah, then let your life be one of infectious joy! Let gospel optimism reign over your days! Be filled with wonder anew and delight and smile over His delight and smile over you! (**READ John 8:36**) You have been pardoned! You have been freed!

CONCLUSION:

We’ve been pardoned by “the great exchange” and should then live as pardoned people! We don’t deserve it but we have it nonetheless. But too often we live as those who have no idea what we have been given. We don’t know what to do with it. “*But that’s too dangerous!*” we’re told. “*You can’t tell people that. You’re taking this ‘grace thing’ too far. They’ll run wild. They’ll just do what they want.*” That’s true. They will. They will do what they want. But having been freed, what will they want to do?

There’s such a thing as “the expulsive power of new affections.” Our hearts are warmed and our lives are changed. I recently heard the story – I have no idea if it’s true – of the day Abraham Lincoln went to a slave auction. There on the block was a young slave woman, about to be sold and bought yet again. She’d been treated as an object, a thing, all her life – used and subjected to the whims of her masters. Lincoln bought her. And as they walked away, he stopped, looked at her and said, “*Young woman, I’m setting you free.*” And she, a bit confused, said, “*What do you mean, ‘I’m free?’*” He smiled and said, “*I mean you’re free to go.*” “*I’m free to go? To go anywhere I choose and to do anything I like?*” she replied. “*Yes,*” he answered. “*Well,*” she said, with tears brimming in her eyes, “*if that’s the case, then I choose to go with you.*” You’re free. Let the expulsive power of your new affections change you. And then go do what you want.

You are pardoned. You are accepted. You really are. Not because of anything you’ve done for Him but because of what He’s done for you. You were really condemned. Things really were that bad. But now you’ve been freed! Things really are that good. Now go live that out. You are pardoned. You are freed. Go live that out.

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Because we have been pardoned by “the great exchange,”
(anchor) we must then live as pardoned people.

Barabbas was pardoned as well – one has stood in the place of another, God’s justice being satisfied and we are pardoned and set free. Which means what? We must then live as pardoned people, people who live it out, who live according to their freedom.

I. THE MEANS OF THE EXCHANGE

Think with me about the imagery of this “great exchange.” First, the means of the exchange. What did it involve? How would God’s justice be satisfied? By substitution.

A) Pictured by the Sacrifice

1. What it involved

Again, there were two goats. We’ll get to the second one shortly. But the first was to be put to death. Look with me at what we see in Leviticus 16 (**READ Leviticus 16:15-16a**).

2. What it signified

What did this signify? What were the Israelites to take to heart? How heinous sin really is, how offensive the LORD finds it to be, that it cannot be overlooked, that it has to be dealt with. What it deserves. And that their only hope would be in a substitute for them.

B) Accomplished by Jesus

1. Jesus as the substitute

Now, shifting forward from these ceremonial practices to the events recorded in the Gospels. We have no idea where Barabbas went or what he did upon his release. But if he had hung around Jerusalem, if curiosity got the best of him and he followed the crowd to the crucifixions, as he saw the nails driven into Jesus’ hands and His body displayed upon that cross, what would he have surely realized? That that should have been him.

2. Jesus as the Savior

Jesus was his substitute. Jesus was the fulfillment of the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, all pointing to Him. Listen to the words of Isaiah (**READ Isaiah 53:4-6**).

Application:

Back to the images and the idea of a need for a substitute. Things really were that bad for us. And if you’re not a Christian, they still are. The slaughtered goat, the gore of the crucifixion – that’s how seriously God takes us and our sin. Do you believe that?

Do you believe the problem was that deep? Do you understand what it took to save you, that you needed a pardon? Does your life demonstrate that? If a hidden camera was recording your comings and goings, would anybody be able to tell? Are you demanding of God – that He do what you tell Him and how and when? Are you boastful and prideful within – especially in comparing yourself to others? Are you condemning in your thoughts? Sharp with your tongue? You see, those things are completely out of place for those who know their only hope is a substitute, that they are in desperate need of a pardon, that they could not free themselves but need to be freed.

II. THE EFFECT OF THE EXCHANGE

Things were that bad. But hear me. There’s something else. Things are now that good. Think with me now not just of the means of the exchange but its effect. Yes, a substitute is what it took to make you free. But what are you now? Freed.

A) Pictured by the Scapegoat

1. What it involved

Back to Leviticus 16 (**READ Leviticus 16:20-22**). What did all this signify?

2. What it signified

Hands are laid upon the goat’s head. The sins of the people are confessed over it. And by doing so, the priest symbolically transferred those sins to the goat, which then carried

April 3, 2005

“Seeing Ourselves as Pardoned – Reflections on Barabbas” Mark 15:1-15

FCF: Little appreciation of the freedom we have in Christ

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Because we have been pardoned by “the great exchange,”
(anchor) we must then live as pardoned people.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Sometimes in assessing where we are in our struggles and our understanding of the Christian life, the asking of a few insightful questions can be helpful. I was exposed to one just this past week – “*Are you more or less free now than you were before you became a Christian?*” Jesus said He came to set us free. Well, are we?

Steve Brown tells the story of a Salvation Army volunteer who was asked to share what it was Jesus had done for him. At first the man said he’d be glad to but then he got to thinking. “*Before I became a Christian, I had fun. I was loud. I laughed. I went to parties. Life was great,*” he said. “*Now all I do is stand here and ring this stupid bell.*”

I wonder how many of us feel that way – that all we do is stand here and ring some stupid bell. That’s not what it’s about. That’s not why Jesus came for us.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Mark 15:1-15](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

What do we know about this man, Barabbas? Mark and Luke tell us he had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in Jerusalem and for murder. John adds that he was a “*robber*” and Matthew describes him as a “*notorious prisoner.*” Some, no doubt, regarded him as a freedom fighter. Others likely saw him as a terrorist. In any case, he had been arrested and was awaiting execution for his crimes. But it was not to be. There was a tradition in those days – what has been called the “paschal amnesty.” At the time of the Passover, a prisoner would be pardoned – absolved of his crimes and set free. Fully aware of this, Pilate saw it as a way out of this sticky situation with this Nazarene, Jesus. But some of the crowd no doubt saw it as a chance to get their hero back. The chief priests seized on it to do away with this renegade. And so, given a choice between the two men as to who would go free, Pilate was stuck and Barabbas was chosen.

We know little else. His name meant “*son of Abbas*” or, literally, “*son of father.*” No small irony there. Certain lessons can be gleaned from these events – how jealousy brings blindness, the reality of the suffering of the innocent and days when all seems out of God’s control. Such could be gleaned from these events. But there are other lessons as well – more along the lines of analogies but still just as real as what took place – that this Son, not the son of Abbas, but this Son will set you free. And we are free indeed.

Think with me of the imagery of the Old Testament. How right Augustine was when he said ([READ Augustine quote](#)), “*The New Testament is in the Old concealed; the Old Testament is in the New revealed.*” I’m thinking here of Yom Kippur and Jesus as the fulfillment. “The Day of Atonement” – the day once a year when the elaborate system of sacrifices inaugurated by God for the Jewish people reached its climax. On that day, two male goats were selected and the high priest cast lots over them. One was to be killed and its blood sprinkled on and before the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. The other was prayed over and released into the wilderness. What did it all mean? It was a picture of “the great exchange” – a transferal, substitutionary atonement, where the wrath of God was satisfied and the sins of the people cast away. That was the message, year after year, of that day. And, in a very real way, it was the message the day