

AT THE CROSS

It Should Have Been Me

5-Day Devotional Handout

It Should Have Been Me

A five-day journey through Barabbas's story, helping you face your guilt honestly, behold Christ's substitution personally, and respond to grace with faith and gratitude.

Sermon Text: Mark 15:6-15

Introduction

This week, you will stand beside Barabbas and see yourself in the story. Sunday's message reminded you that the guilty went free because Jesus took his place. These readings will help you face your bondage honestly, receive Christ's substitution personally, and respond with grateful surrender, renewed faith, and worship daily.

This Week's Journey

Day	Focus
Monday	Bound by more than chains – recognizing the ruin of sin and admitting how deeply you need Christ's freeing grace.
Tuesday	The cross with your name on it – beholding Christ's substitution personally and resting in the truth that He took your place.
Wednesday	Released to live free – rejoicing that freedom from condemnation was purchased by Christ, not earned by you.
Thursday	Do not walk away unchanged – responding to the cross with repentance, faith, and wholehearted surrender.
Friday	Grateful for the great exchange – living in worshipful gratitude because Jesus bore your guilt and set you free.

5-7 MINUTES EACH DAY | READ SLOWLY, PRAY HONESTLY, RESPOND PERSONALLY

Day 1 - Monday

Bound by More Than Chains

Scripture Reading: Mark 15:6-10

Reflection:

Barabbas begins the story where sin always leaves a person: bound, guilty, and waiting for judgment. His chains are not only about Rome; they picture what sin does to every heart apart from Christ. You may not share Barabbas's crimes, but you know what it is like to be pulled by wrong desires, wrong voices, and wrong choices. Sin promises freedom, but it always leaves a person smaller, weaker, and more confined than before. That is why the first gift of grace is honesty. Before you can rejoice in release, you have to admit your ruin. The cross does not let you compare yourself favorably to the worst sinner you can imagine. It makes you face the truth: apart from Jesus, you are not free. Today, ask God to show you where sin still chains your thinking, your habits, or your heart. True freedom begins where truth stops being resisted.

Application Question: Where in your life do you need to stop minimizing sin and honestly admit how deeply you need Christ's freeing grace?

PAUSE FOR PRAYER: ASK THE LORD TO MAKE TODAY'S TRUTH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL IN YOUR LIFE.

Day 2 - Tuesday

The Cross with Your Name on It

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53:4-9

Reflection:

Barabbas did not walk out of prison because he had changed. He walked out because Jesus was condemned in his place. That is the heart of the gospel. God does not save you by pretending your sin does not matter. He saves you by judging your sin in His Son. Jesus stepped into the place reserved for the guilty so the guilty could go free. That means the cross is more than a moving scene; it is a saving exchange. When you look at Jesus bearing shame, suffering, and judgment, you are looking at love that takes your place. The more personal that becomes, the more precious grace becomes. You do not simply say, "Jesus died." You say, "Jesus died for me." Today, stand still and let that truth settle in your soul. The cross had your name on it, but Jesus stepped forward and said, "I take your place."

Application Question: How would your worship, obedience, and gratitude deepen if you truly lived today as someone Christ personally stood in for?

PAUSE FOR PRAYER: ASK THE LORD TO MAKE TODAY'S TRUTH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL IN YOUR LIFE.

Day 3 – Wednesday

Released to Live Free

Scripture Reading: John 8:31-36

Reflection:

Imagine Barabbas feeling the morning sun after expecting only death. His chains are gone, his sentence is lifted, and his cell is behind him. That picture helps you understand what Jesus does for every believer. Salvation is not self-improvement or a chance to impress God. It is release secured by Another. You do not open your own prison door. Christ does. You do not pay your own spiritual debt. Christ has. When He said, “It is finished,” He was not beginning your rescue; He was completing it. That matters on days when guilt tries to drag you back into an old cell. If you are in Christ, condemnation is no longer your address. Shame may shout, and memory may still sting, but the chains no longer own you. Today, thank God for freedom that was purchased, not earned, and ask Him to teach you to live like someone set free.

Application Question: What old chain of guilt, shame, or fear are you still wearing in your mind even though Christ has already set you free?

PAUSE FOR PRAYER: ASK THE LORD TO MAKE TODAY'S TRUTH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL IN YOUR LIFE.

Day 4 – Thursday

Do Not Walk Away Unchanged

Scripture Reading: Acts 16:25-31

Reflection:

The sermon asks a searching question: what should a person do when another has died in his place? The first answer is consideration. You stop, look at the cross, and refuse to rush past it. The second is conviction. You let the cross tell the truth about your sin without arguing back. But neither of those is the final response. The proper response is conversion, a turning of the heart to Jesus Christ. It is possible to admire the story of Calvary and still remain unchanged. It is possible to feel emotion and still never surrender. Barabbas could have walked away without understanding the mercy he had received. You do not have to do that. Today, let the cross become personal. Tell the Lord where you have stayed near Christian truth without truly trusting Christ. Ask Him to move you from admiration to faith, from reflection to repentance, into surrender.

Application Question: Where have you been content to feel moved by Jesus without fully yielding your heart, habits, and future to Him?

PAUSE FOR PRAYER: ASK THE LORD TO MAKE TODAY'S TRUTH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL IN YOUR LIFE.

Day 5 – Friday

Grateful for the Great Exchange

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:21-25

Reflection:

By the end of this week, the right words rise naturally: it should have been me. That confession is not meant to trap you in shame; it is meant to deepen your gratitude. You were guilty, but Jesus bore your guilt. You were condemned, but Jesus endured your condemnation. You were bound, but Jesus has set you free. The cross humbles you because it tells the truth, and it lifts you because it reveals grace greater than your sin. A heart that truly sees substitution cannot stay cold for long. It begins to worship. It begins to surrender again. It begins to live with softer pride, deeper gratitude, and greater mercy toward others. Today, do not merely remember what Jesus did. Respond to Him. Thank Him for taking your place. Offer obedience, and carry this testimony into worship: the cross that should have held you was carried by your Savior.

Application Question: What practical expression of gratitude can you offer Jesus today that shows you have not forgotten what it cost to set you free?

PAUSE FOR PRAYER: ASK THE LORD TO MAKE TODAY'S TRUTH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL IN YOUR LIFE.

Weekend Reflection

As you look back over the week, let Barabbas's story become your confession: you were guilty, but Jesus took your place. Bring that gratitude with you into gathered worship, and join the church in praising the Savior who still frees the bound, forgives the guilty, and welcomes sinners by grace alone.

Prepared for congregational use and personal reflection.