

August 28, 2005 by Steve Brandon



The Roman Trial

Matthew 27:11-26

Jesus is ...

1. The Sovereign One (verse 11).
... Submit to Him.
2. The Silent One (verses 12-14).
... Wait for Him.
3. The Rejected One (verses 15-25).
... Believe in Him.
4. The Substituted One (verse 26).
... Submit to Him.

In recent years our nation has become increasingly interested in our judicial system. Sadly, the interest doesn't center around court cases involving great matters of principle or morality. The interest has revolved around the trial of celebrities. Much of it started with the trial of O. J. Simpson. I remember listening to the trial on the radio as I worked as a computer programmer. Frequently there would be updates. Much of the time the radio station broadcasted the trial itself. When the verdict was announced, I was standing in a room with twenty other people, watching the television. When O. J. Simpson was declared innocent, there was a shock in the room. Some said, "I can't believe it!" Others said, "I knew it!" During those days, I was working at a hospital. The head cook made arrangements that there would be free orange juice for the rest of the week in the cafeteria. (Get it? Free O. J.?)

Since the O. J. Simpson trial, there have been other high profile court cases. Recently, it has been Scott Peterson and Michael Jackson. Surely there will be more to come in the future. Today we have cable channels that are devoted entirely to showing court in session. This morning, we have the opportunity to hear about the most famous, the most interesting, and the most important trial of all time. I'm talking about the Roman trial of Jesus Christ.

This trial is filled with drama. We have an innocent man, who is accused by an envious group of men. The accused stands before the highest court in the land. The outcome seems to hang in the balance. At one moment, it appears that He will be let free. At another moment, it appears as if the crowds will get their way. Before the trial is over, the entire nation is involved, helping to decide the verdict and punishment.

The account that we will exposit is found in Matthew 27:11-26. In this passage, we find Jesus standing before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Jesus had already been tried by the Sanhedrin and found guilty of blasphemy. I called this, "The Religious Trial." In our text today, our attention will be focused upon "The Roman trial. Let's first consider the text. As you read it, please notice what it teaches us about Jesus Christ.

Matthew 27:11-26

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He made no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so that the governor was quite amazed. Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the multitude any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they were holding at that time a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that because of envy they had delivered Him up. And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes to ask for Barabbas, and to put Jesus to death. But the governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let Him be crucified!" And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified.

Jesus is ...

1. The Sovereign One (verse 11).

In verse 11, we find Jesus standing before Pilate, being asked, "Are You the King of the Jews?" From Matthew's account, this question appears to have come from nowhere. But, I remind you that the gospel accounts aren't complete narratives of everything that happened. These writers have been selective in their material. Matthew gets right down to his main point - Jesus is the King of the Jews. Or, as I have said, "Jesus is the Sovereign One."

Luke fills us in regarding what happened before this. The Jews had come to Pilate and had told him of the wrong that Jesus had done. They knew that "blasphemy" wouldn't fly as a charge in the Roman Courts. Would this have been the charge, Pilate would have dismissed the case as a religious matter, which the religious leaders could decide (see Acts 25:18-19). So, these religious leaders came up with another charge before Pilate. They said, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King" (Luke 23:2).

I believe that Pilate understood clearly what was going on with this conversation. These religious leaders were presenting Jesus to Pilate as one who was against Rome! Such an accusation would come across strange to Pilate. This is like a group of terrorists coming to president Bush, accusing a native country man of being against the government of the United States of America. Are you kidding me? This is the type of guy that the terrorists would love get to know and to train to accomplish their purpose of bringing down the United States of America.

Just imagine these Jewish leaders saying, "Hey, Pilate, we have here a man who is clearly against your government. He has told us not to pay taxes. He has said that He, Himself is our Messiah! -- the One who will help deliver us from your sovereign rule over our nation. He has said that He is a king! He claims that He is going to overthrow you! You need to deal with Him, before He gets you in trouble with Rome." I trust that you see the irony in these words. Should these things prove to be true, certainly this man is no friend of Rome. But, such things aren't the things that would cause the religious leaders to be at odds with Jesus. There must be something deeper going on.

Of all the accusations that were brought before Pilate, he picks up on this aspect of Jesus claiming to be a king. Pilate asked, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "It is as you say." Jesus responds with clarity and affirmation. "Yes, Pilate, I am king of the Jews." I want for you to notice that this was the official charge in the death of Jesus. The Romans used to place placards above those who were being crucified to detail the crimes that they had committed so that those who walked by to observe the crucifixions would know clearly why the criminal was being put to death. Notice in verse 37 that the sign placed above His head during the crucifixion read, "This is Jesus the king of the Jews." Jesus Christ was killed for being the king of the Jews. Pilate got it exactly right. Jesus is the king. He is the "sovereign one." He is the one who rules and reigns over all!

When Jesus walked this planet, His teaching was saturated with "the kingdom of heaven." The main message of Jesus was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Jesus went about Israel "proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). In the most famous sermon that Jesus ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, it was all about the characteristics of those who were in the kingdom and those who were out of the kingdom (Matt. 5:3, 19, 20; 6:33; 7:21-23). Nearly an entire chapter of Matthew is devoted to Jesus teaching about the nature of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13; See also Matt. 22:2). Jesus told His disciples of how the Son of Man will come in His kingdom (Matt. 16:28). Jesus spoke about who is the greatest in the kingdom (Matt. 18:3, 4). Jesus challenged a rich man of how he might enter the kingdom (Matt. 19:23-24). Jesus spoke of who would be in the kingdom and who would be out of the kingdom (Matt. 8:12; 21:43; 25:34). In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus spoke about His return, when he would establish His kingdom (Matt. 24-25). When celebrating the Passover with His disciples one last time, again the kingdom was the focus. Jesus said, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29).

Why was Jesus speaking so much about the kingdom? Because He, Himself is the King of that kingdom! Frequently Jesus presented Himself as the One who would determine who would get into the kingdom and who would be left out of the kingdom. As the king of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus is "the Sovereign One."

I do not believe that it was an accident that Jesus was crucified for being king. Do you remember the outcome of the religious trial? Jesus was charged with being the Messiah! The Jews got it exactly right, while getting it exactly wrong. Here, the religious trial is exactly the same. Jesus was charged with being the King! Pontius Pilate got it exactly right, while getting it exactly wrong.

John's gospel tells us that Jesus told Pilate how His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). Jesus told Pilate that he had no authority over Jesus unless it had been given to him "from above" (John 19:11). Pilate should have bowed his weak and feeble knee to Jesus right then and there. But, he refused. Instead, "he delivered Him to be crucified" (Matt. 27:26), and in so doing, got it all wrong.

Now, Jesus hardly looked like a king at this moment. When we think of kings, we think of royal crowns and majestic robes and authoritative words coming from his mouth! We think of servants scurrying around the throne, doing whatever is requested. We think of power and might. But here, we find Jesus, beaten down, humbled, and seemingly not in control. But, looks can be deceiving. Indeed, Jesus is the Sovereign One. In Matthew 28, we shall see Jesus raised from the dead. We shall see Jesus in glory and honor and power.

This is a great picture of Jesus at the current moment. Though Jesus is the sovereign one right now, it doesn't look like He is reigning right now. First of all, we don't see Him. Second, the world appears to be in such rebellion against Him. His commands are not being carried out. There is little respect for Him now. Rather than a name used with reverence, the name of Jesus is often used as a curse! This is what it looked like on that day when Jesus stood before Pilate. So obvious was this that the charges of Him being a king should have been dismissed. But, I guarantee you that there is coming a day when the Sovereign One will begin to assert His reign. All of His subjects will be glad on that day. But, those who have rebelled against the King of kings and the Lord of lords will find themselves in trouble on that day.

The lesson for us is quite clear. He is "The Sovereign One" and so, submit to Him. This is the only way that you will obtain salvation: by submitting your life to Him. You do that by turning from your ways and trusting His ways. You do that by bowing your knee and loving and worshiping Jesus. He is the sovereign one who is worth of our affection and praise. Submit to Him!

Not only is Jesus the sovereign one. Jesus is also, ...
2. The Silent One (verses 12-14).

This is amazing. Matthew records for us in verse 12 that "while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He made no answer." I can picture these chief priests and Pharisees in the presence of Pilate saying one thing after another about Jesus in attempts to make Him

look really bad!

"Jesus, you said that you could tear down the temple in three days and build it again. When exactly are you going to desecrate this wonderful building that Herod (may he live forever) built for us? How do you possibly think that you will do this? Will you desecrate public property?"

"Jesus, you told us that you are our king! Pilate is our governor. Caesar is our king! We have no other (John 19:15). How can you claim to be king? You are being tried in a Roman court! What do you have to say for yourself now? You aren't even a lawful citizen! You never told us never to pay taxes to Caesar (Matt. 22:21). Why don't you come out and tell this to Pilate? Are you scared?"

"Jesus, you are a law breaker! We have specific traditions that have been handed down to us by our fathers, and you transgress them. You eat your bread without first washing your hands (Matt. 15:2). You don't fast like our fathers have told us to (Matt. 9:14). Many times you have broken the Sabbath. You have picked grain on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1). You have healed sick people on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:10). You associate yourself with sinners (Luke 7:39). You are no Jew! You have betrayed our nation!"

"Jesus, we saw all of those wicked things that you did. You cast demons out of people! Surely, you are ruled by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (Matt. 12:24)."

"Jesus, we are the leaders of the Jewish people, and yet, on countless occasions, you have refused to obey us. We have asked you to give us a sign, and you have disobeyed (Matt. 12:38; 16:1). We have told you to stop people from worshiping you, but you have allowed it to continue (Matt. 21:16). We have asked you many questions, but you have refused to answer us (Matt. 22). We have asked you to give us the source of your authority, but you have refused (Matt. 21:23). You are a rebellious citizen of Israel. You are a disgrace to our people and ought to be ashamed to be called a 'Jew.'"

"Pilate, we present this man to you. He has been rebellious to our authority all along. You will certainly find him rebelling against you and your reign as well. We suggest that you dispose of Him today."

And among all of these accusations, Jesus never once opened His mouth. "He made no answer" (verse 12). As Pilate watched all of this, he asked Jesus, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" (Verse 13).

It is the natural response of people to defend themselves. I know that when I am accused of a wrong that I did or a sin that I committed, my natural tendency is to put up my defenses and tell this individual why it is that he is wrong in what he is saying. It is my tendency to point out the speck in his eye, while ignoring the log in my own. It takes a great deal of self-control to remain silent when being accused. Especially when such accusations are so obviously false.

I've been falsely accused. On one occasion, an individual had called me up and was quite angered at what I had done. This person began talking to me about the wrong that I had done in this particular situation. It took a while for me even to understand what was wrong, because the facts were all wrong. He wanted to come and speak with me about it. Between the time of the phone call and my meeting with this individual, it was very difficult for me. I remember having several conversations with my wife about it. I remember losing sleep over it. Everything in my flesh wanted to lash back at the one who falsely accused me. Everything in my flesh wanted to tell him how wrong he was to assume those things about me. The Lord was gracious to allow me to deal with this person in a calm manner, seeking to clear up our misunderstandings. However, even in our meeting, I remember being unable to control my tongue, as I spoke a few words in anger against him.

In the case of Jesus here, He was fully capable of refuting every single one of these accusations. He could have demonstrated how each one of them were false. He could have demonstrated how it was that He was being slandered in such things! He could have turned the tables and caused the chief priests and elders to look like fools. But, to do so would have meant that He wouldn't have gone to the cross. And so, Jesus was silent.

Jesus didn't even respond to Pilate. Matthew writes of how amazing this was. "He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge" (verse 14). Though it is difficult to write with emphasis, I believe that Matthew wrote this verse in such a way that attempts to show us how remarkable such silence was. Jesus didn't answer "to *even a single* charge"! Obviously, many of these things would have been so obviously wrong, that it wouldn't have taken much to set them right. And yet, Jesus didn't even set the most obvious matters straight. He didn't even begin to try to defend Himself. This amazed Pilate as well. We read in verse 14 that "the governor was quite amazed."

This is so contrary to human nature, which is exactly the point. Jesus was truly divine in this moment. James said, "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man" (James 3:2). At this moment, Jesus was demonstrating His perfection as a man. He was able to keep silent when being accused unjustly.

In remaining silent, Jesus fulfilled yet another Scriptural prophecy regarding the Messiah. The prophet Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

Thus ends the first phase of the Roman trial. From other gospel accounts, we learn that Jesus was carted off to Herod, who questioned Jesus as well. Jesus refused to say anything to Herod as well. Listen to Luke's testimony:

Luke 23:8-11

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

Thus ends the second phase of the Roman trial of Jesus.

Through it all, Jesus was silent. He was the meek and humble lamb, who was prepared to be a sacrifice for our sins. Should Jesus have spoken, His words would have stopped the trial in its tracks. Remember when the religious leaders all came up to Jesus to ask Him their most difficult theological questions that they were sure would stump Him? He answered the questions so well that "no one ... dared from that day on to ask Him another question" (Matt. 22:46). Should Jesus have defended Himself, "no one would dare from that day on to accuse Him anymore." And He never would have died for our sins! How important it was that Jesus remained silent.

Again, like our first point, this is such a good picture of our Lord right now. He is "the Silent One." Right now, His voice doesn't boom out! Right now, Jesus isn't thundering wrath to the world for all of its rebellion against Him. His word is in the pages of the Bible. They are waiting to be read. They are being expounded by men across the planet. He is quietly waiting at the right hand of God. There will be a day when He returns to set things straight.

In the meanwhile, our application is clear: He is "the Silent One," we ought to wait for Him. As Jesus was patient and meek and humble, so ought we to wait for him in patience and humility and meekness. This is often the testimony of God's people. Consider the following Psalms:

Psalm 130:5, "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word do I hope."

Psalm 25:5, "You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day."

Psalm 37:7, "Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him"

Thirdly, ... Jesus is ...

3. The Rejected One (verses 15-25).

This couldn't be any clearer. Verse 15 begins the third phase of the Roman trial. At this point, Pilate knew two things. First, he knew that Jesus was innocent. Pilate's wife calls Jesus a "righteous Man" in verse 19. In Verse 23, Pilate said to the crowd, "what evil has He done?" Second, Pilate knew that the religious leaders were trying to pull a fast one on him. In verse 18 we read that Jesus was delivered over to him "because of envy." In other words, it's because the religious leaders hated Jesus that they turned Him in. And so, Pilate initiated His plan to free Jesus.

The Passover was "national amnesty day." It was the day in which Rome would extend an act of kindness and good will to the Jewish people in an effort to keep them happy. They would release a prisoner of choice to the Jews. "At the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the multitude any one prisoner whom they wanted." (Verse 15). This might sound a bit strange to us. We don't usually release any criminals until they are demonstrated to be innocent or guilty. (Though, admittedly, the president can offer full pardons). But, this type of thing still takes place in Israel today. The land of Israel today is much like it was during the days of Jesus. The Israeli government controls the entire land, but, they do give a bit of self-rule to the Palestinians, who live in the land. This is much like it was in the days of Rome's occupation of Palestine. Furthermore, the Palestinians hate the Israelis who govern them. This also is much like it was for Israel when under Roman occupation. As a result, there are many Palestinians who are captured doing things against the Israeli government. Israel has captured these men and have imprisoned them. From time to time, Israel will release a bunch of these prisoners. It's an effort to show that they are interested in peace.

In the days of Jesus, such a thing happened on a yearly basis. In this case, Jesus was a prisoner. Pilate considered Him to be a great candidate to be released. I'm sure that as Pilate would have presented to this crowd this choice between Jesus and Barabbas, "a notorious prisoner" (verse 16), that surely, they would choose Jesus. Though this is all that we know of Barabbas, we certainly can deduce that he was known for his crimes. He was probably in and out of jail on many occasions that he was on a first-name basis with all of the prison guards. He was the scum of society. He was no-good, dirty, rotten scoundrel. And everyone knew it. Pilate knew it. The religious leaders knew it. And the crowds knew it. He was your Al Capone. He was your Charles Manson. He was your Jeffrey Dahmer. Names so familiar to us that their crimes need not be mentioned.

And so, Pilate gathered everyone together and put this choice before people. He said, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ" (verse 17). I believe that he was fully expecting the crowds to say, "Release Jesus! Barabbas deserves to die!" "Release Jesus! Barabbas deserves to die!" This is the point of verse 18, "Pilate knew that because of envy they had delivered Him up." Surely the crowds would notice the innocence of Jesus. Even Pilate's wife noticed the innocence of Jesus. Verse 19 tells us that while Pilate was in the middle of deciding this case, she told him (perhaps by a written note) of a nightmare that she had concerning Jesus. She said, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man" (verse 19). I believe that Pilate thought that this was the best way to "have nothing to do with Him." When the crowd would shout for Jesus, all of his tensions would be resolved. Jesus would be released and the political crisis would be over. But, alas, it didn't quite work out for him.

Persuaded by these chief priests and the elders, "the multitudes asked for Barabbas, and to put Jesus to death" (that comes in verse 20). Pilate couldn't believe it. Verse 21 records that he asked the question again. I believe that it was with a note of incredulity. "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" (verse 21). Almost as if to say, "Did I hear you right? I thought for a moment that you said 'Barabbas.'" Perhaps my hearing is going out. Surely, you meant, 'Jesus.' Perhaps you merely had a slip of the tongue." But, they confirmed it. "Barabbas" they cried (verse 21). They said, "We want Barabbas."

In a quandary now, Pilate asks them (as verse 22 records), "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let Him be crucified!" (verse 22). Even when Pilate tries to reason with the crowd by asking "Why? What evil had He done?" (verse 23), it didn't work. They continued shouting all the more, "Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified!" This became their chant.

Regardless of what Pilate said, they responded with this chant. The conversation went a bit like this...

"What shall I do with Jesus?" (verse 22) ... "Let Him be crucified."
"What wrong has He done?" (verse 23) ... "Let Him be crucified."
"I have found in Him no guilt demanding death" (Luke 23:22). ... "Let Him be crucified."
"I will punish Him and release Him" (Luke 23:22). ... "Let Him be crucified."
"Behold Your King!" (John 19:15). ... "Let Him be crucified."
"Shall I crucify your King?" (John 19:15) ... "Let Him be crucified."

Pilate was getting nowhere. The mob mentality was taking over. In fact, he was losing ground. This is what verse 24 tells us, "Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather ... a riot was starting." The last thing that Pilate needed was a riot, which would get back to Rome that he wasn't doing a very good job governing the nation. So, to pacify the situation, he gave in to their demands. He delivered Him over to be crucified.

Before delivering Jesus up, Pilate took one last opportunity to declare how innocent Jesus was. He took out a pitcher of water and washed his hands for all to see, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood." (verse 24). "I have found Him to be innocent. You have resisted my findings. Here, have it your way. But realize that you are the ones killing Him, not me! I'm innocent of this whole matter." The Jewish crowd clearly understood what Pilate was saying. They accepted full responsibility for the death of Jesus. They said, "His blood be on us and on our children" (verse 25). In other words, "We accept full responsibility!"

Clearly, Jesus is "The Rejected One." Can you see the contrast between these two men? Jesus was the pure and righteous one. Barabbas was the evil and wicked one. Jesus had done no wrong and deserved to be set free. Barabbas had done much wrong and deserved to die for his crimes.

Here is our lesson: Jesus is "the Rejected One," so we ought to believe in Him. Don't be like the crowds who chose Barabbas over Jesus. In reality, You make this same choice every day when you are confronted with a decision of whether or not you will sin. Every day and in every way, you are constantly making a choice between these two. Whenever you are confronted with an opportunity to sin or to walk in righteousness, it is a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. These crowds were unbelieving and haters of Jesus, as they chose Barabbas instead. So too, when you choose sin, you are choosing Barabbas over Jesus.

We sang a song in our service this morning made allusion to this crowd, "I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers." When you sin, your mocking voice cries out, "Let Him be crucified." But the good news of the gospel is this: Many of those who shouted out, "Let Him be crucified!" repented fifty days later. On the day of Pentecost, which is 50 days after the Passover, Peter preached to a crowd of people who had assembled in the temple. He said, "Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Peter said that "you crucified" Jesus Christ. I believe that many of the same people who heard Peter preach were in the same crowd that shouted, "crucify Him." On that day, three thousand souls repented of their sins, were baptized and added to the church.

The same is true for you. Though you sin and choose Barabbas over Jesus, there is still hope. It's in the crucified and resurrected Messiah! Believe in Him!

I have one last point this morning. It is the point that stirred my heart more than any other this week in my study. Jesus is ...
4. The Substituted One (verse 26).

Look at verse 26, "He released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified." I want for you to notice here how the one who deserved to die was set free. Notice also that the one who deserved to go free was delivered over to be killed.

Scripture tells us that Jesus wasn't the only one who was killed on that day. In verse 38 we read that "two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left." I'm sure you have seen the pictures or seen monuments with these three crosses. The Romans had prepared these three crosses for these three criminals. I believe that these three crosses were for the two thieves and for Barabbas. Catch this, not only did Barabbas go free, but Jesus took his place on the cross.

When you see these pictures or monuments of the three crosses. I know that you rightly think about the two thieves and Jesus. And this is good. However, I think that it would do you a world of good to think of their original intention. It was two thieves and Barabbas to be crucified upon the cross. But somehow, in some way, by some miraculous turn of events, Barabbas never made it to the cross. Jesus became his substitute, dying in his place.

This is a great picture of what Christ has done for us who believe. He has taken our place. Every single one of us without exception deserve to be nailed to a cross and to die for our own sins. But Jesus willingly took up the cross for us. He became our substitute.

Charles Spurgeon once summarized the theory of atonement by one word. He said, "There are in the world many theories of atonement; but I cannot see any atonement in any one, except in this doctrine of substitution." [\[1\]](#) This is the good news, Jesus, dying in your place as your substitute. An often quoted verse is 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This is the glorious truth that compels us to gather each week on Sunday mornings. This truth is what drives

us to meet with other Christians and to spread this news. We believe that Jesus took our place on the cross.

The number of passages in the Bible that contain this concept is amazing. This morning I will give you ten verses that say this. However, understand that I could give you three times as many!

1. John 10:11 - I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life **for** His sheep. (i.e. He lays it down in our place).
2. Romans 5:8 - God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died **for** us. (i.e. Christ died instead of us dying).
3. 1 Corinthians 15:3 - Christ died **for** our sins. (i.e. our sins deserved death. But, Christ died instead of us).
4. Galatians 2:20 - The Son of God "loved me and delivered himself up **for** me.
5. Ephesians 5:2 - Christ gave Himself up **for** us. (i.e. He was delivered up in our place).
6. Titus 2:14 - Christ gave Himself up **for** us.
7. Hebrews 10:12 - Jesus offered one sacrifice **for** sins for all time.
8. 1 Peter 2:21 - Christ suffered **for** you.
9. 1 Peter 3:18 - Christ died **for** sins, once for all, the righteous **for** the unrighteous.
10. 1 John 3:16 - He laid down His life **for** us.

I want for you to think about the freedom that Barabbas experienced. One moment he is on death row, awaiting his cruel death. The next moment, he is set free! He can go home to see his mother. He can get on his donkey, and ride into town, where he can order a falafel at his favorite restaurant. He can go carousing with his friends once again. The freedom that redeemed souls face is no less real than the freedom that Barabbas faced. If you have trusted in Christ, you are free from your sin! Jesus took all of your punishment. You no longer have a sentence of death against you! You are free! How are you going to use that freedom?

The lesson for us is clear. Jesus is "the substituted one." So, we should trust in Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 28, 2005 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] This quote by C. H. Spurgeon was found in a sermon entitled, "The Death of Christ," delivered on Sunday Morning, January 24, 1858, at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.