




The Gospels: Grace and Substitution Revealed



Explore the powerful story of Barabbas' release and Jesus' condemnation, unveiling God's grace and the beauty of substitution.



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Introduction

The Gospels present an extraordinary narrative that reveals God's love, justice, and mercy. At the heart of these accounts is the story of **Barabbas being freed while Jesus was condemned**. This moment, found prominently in *Matthew 27:15–26*, paints a vivid picture of **substitution and grace**—Baing the essence of the Gospel message.

Barabbas was a criminal, guilty and deserving punishment, yet he was released by the choice of the people, representing sinners set free. Meanwhile, Jesus, innocent and pure, was sentenced to die in the place of others. This exchange is not just an ancient courtroom drama—it symbolizes the deep spiritual truth that Jesus bore our sins on the cross, taking our punishment so that we could receive God's grace and forgiveness.

Through this Bible study plan, we will journey through the Gospel narratives, diving deeply into the layers of meaning behind this substitutionary act. The Gospels don't only recount history; they invite us into a relationship with Jesus, who gave Himself up for us **out of love**.

As you engage this study, expect to be challenged by the justice of God, marvel at His mercy, and be invited to respond with faith and gratitude. Each day will center around Scripture passages and reflections designed to enrich your understanding of Jesus' role as Savior and Substitute for all humanity. Prepare your heart to see grace in action in the courtroom of Pilate where Barabbas walked free and Jesus faced condemnation.



May this study strengthen your faith and deepen your awe of God's wonderful plan revealed in the Gospels.





Day 1: The Gospel Promise: Good News Begins



Your Verse

Matthew 1:21 - "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Supporting Scriptures

- *John 1:14 - "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory..."*
- *Luke 2:11 - "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."*



Devotional: Jesus: Our Promised Savior

From the very beginning, the story of Jesus introduces hope and salvation. Matthew's Gospel starts with the fulfillment of God's promise—a Savior who rescues people from sin. Jesus' name means "God saves," and His coming changed everything. In the Gospels, we see God stepping into human history to enact grace in the most tangible way: through the birth of Jesus Christ.

This promise sets the stage for understanding why Jesus would eventually face condemnation in our place. His mission was to save, to rescue, and to restore a broken relationship between God and humanity. Yet this salvation would come at a cost—Jesus would have to bear the penalty for sin Himself.

Reflect on the hope you have because God kept His promise. The Savior who came to earth willingly took on your sins. His arrival signals a new way to live, free from the condemnation we deserve.



Reflect and Apply

1. How does knowing Jesus was born to save people affect your understanding of His mission?

2. In what ways do you personally experience the hope that comes from Jesus' arrival?

3. What does the promise of salvation mean for your daily life?



Day 1:  The Gospel Promise: Good News Begins

Journaling Prompts

1. Write about a time you experienced God's saving grace.

2. Describe what it means to you that Jesus came to save you from sin.

3. Note any doubts or questions you have about salvation and bring them to God in prayer.



Day 1:  The Gospel Promise: Good News Begins

Prayer for Today

Lord Jesus, thank You for coming into this world to save me from my sins. Help me to remember the great promise of Your birth and the hope it brings. May I trust in Your saving power and live each day with gratitude for Your grace. Give me a heart open to receive Your love fully and to share it with others. *Amen.* 🙏❤️🌟





Day 2: Jesus' Innocence Amid Rejection



Day 2:  Jesus' Innocence Amid Rejection

Your Verse

Matthew 27:23-24 - "But they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!...' When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, he took water and washed his hands"

Supporting Scriptures

- *Isaiah 53:7 - "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter."*
- *John 18:38 - "What is truth?" said Pilate. With this he went out to the Jews again and said... 'I find no basis for a charge against him.'*



Day 2:  Jesus' Innocence Amid Rejection

Devotional: Innocent Yet Condemned

Jesus was completely innocent—He had done nothing wrong. Yet the crowds demanded His death, shouting for Barabbas to be released instead. Pilate, the Roman governor, recognized Jesus' innocence but ultimately yielded to the crowd's pressure.

This moment reveals much about human nature. We often reject truth and demand what we want, even when it's not right. Jesus' silent submission contrasts sharply with the noisy uproar of the crowd. His willingness to bear unjust condemnation reflects the heart of God's plan to save us through substitution.

As we look at Jesus in this vulnerable moment, we see a Savior who stands in our place—condemned so that we wouldn't have to be. How powerful to realize that this innocent man took on the punishment for our guilt and sin.



Day 2:  Jesus' Innocence Amid Rejection

Reflect and Apply

1. What excuses or pressures do you experience that might lead you to reject God's truth?

2. How does Jesus' willingness to be condemned for you deepen your appreciation of His sacrifice?

3. In what ways can you respond to injustice as Jesus did—with grace and silence?



Day 2:  Jesus' Innocence Amid Rejection

Journaling Prompts

1. Write about a situation where you felt misunderstood or unfairly treated.




2. Reflect on Jesus' silence and what it teaches about suffering.

3. Jot down ways you can show grace to others in difficult circumstances.



Day 2:  Jesus' Innocence Amid Rejection

Prayer for Today

Father, I thank You that Jesus was innocent yet willingly took on condemnation for my sins. Help me to understand the depth of His sacrifice and to trust Your justice even when I don't understand the circumstances. Teach me to respond with grace like Jesus and to rest in Your plan. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*   





Day 3: Barabbas Freed: A Picture of Substitution



Your Verse

Matthew 27:16-17 – "At that time they had a notorious prisoner... they asked Pilate to release Barabbas."

Supporting Scriptures

- *2 Corinthians 5:21 – "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*
- *Galatians 3:13 – "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us."*



Devotional: Barabbas and Jesus: Our Substitution Story

Barabbas was guilty, a convicted criminal deserving death, yet he was freed while Jesus took his place on the cross. This powerful exchange is the heart of substitution—a concept central to the Gospel.

Jesus did not deserve condemnation, but He accepted it so that Barabbas, and by extension all sinners, could be released. Scripture explains this deeper spiritual truth: the sinless one became sin for us so that we could be made righteous before God. This transfer is the foundation of grace—the unmerited favor God offers us through Christ.

Barabbas' release reminds us that, without Jesus' sacrifice, we would remain imprisoned by sin's penalty. Jesus stepped into our place, offering freedom and life. How does this shape your view of God's love and justice?



Reflect and Apply

1. What does the story of Barabbas' freedom teach you about God's grace?

2. How do you respond to being 'set free' by Jesus' substitution on your behalf?

3. In what ways does understanding substitution affect your relationship with God?




Journaling Prompts

1. Write a prayer of thanks for Jesus' sacrifice in your place.

2. Describe what freedom from sin means to you personally.

3. Reflect on times when you have needed grace and how God provided it.



Day 3:  Barabbas Freed: A Picture of Substitution

Prayer for Today

Lord Jesus, thank You for standing in my place and taking the punishment I deserved. Your substitution set me free from sin and death. Help me live in the freedom You purchased and share that grace with others. Fill me with gratitude and humble reverence for Your love. *Amen.*   





Day 4: ⚖️ Pilate's Dilemma: Justice Versus Mercy



Day 4: ⚖️ Pilate's Dilemma: Justice Versus Mercy

Your Verse

Matthew 27:24 - "When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd."

Supporting Scriptures

- *Psalm 51:4 - "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight."*
- *Romans 3:26 - "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith."*



Devotional: Choosing Mercy Over Justice

Pontius Pilate attempted to avoid responsibility by washing his hands, but the choice between justice and mercy remained. Pilate recognized Jesus was innocent, yet he allowed the crowd to decide His fate. This act symbolizes humanity's struggle between what is right and what is convenient.

For us, God's justice demands punishment for sin, but His mercy provides a way through Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus, the perfect atonement, satisfied justice so mercy could flow freely to us when we accept Him by faith.

Reflect on God's perfect balance of justice and mercy, and how Jesus' substitutionary death bridges that gap. How do you respond when faced with hard choices between right and easy?



Day 4: ⚖️ Pilate's Dilemma: Justice Versus Mercy

Reflect and Apply

1. How does Pilate's action mirror any hesitation or denial you experience regarding God's truth?

2. How do you understand God's justice and mercy working together through Jesus?

3. What is a current situation where you need to choose mercy over judgment?



Day 4: ⚖️ Pilate's Dilemma: Justice Versus Mercy

Journaling Prompts

1. Write about a time you avoided a hard decision and its outcome.

2. Reflect on how Jesus' sacrifice satisfies God's justice for you.

3. List ways you can extend mercy to others this week.



Day 4: ⚖️ Pilate's Dilemma: Justice Versus Mercy

Prayer for Today

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to fulfill Your perfect justice and show mercy to me. Help me to trust Your decisions and extend mercy to others even when it's difficult. Give me courage to stand for truth and grace simultaneously. I surrender my own hands washed of responsibility, embracing Yours. *Amen.* ⚖️ 🙏 ❤️





Day 5: The Crowd's Choice: Grace Rejected by Many



Day 5: ❤️ The Crowd's Choice: Grace Rejected by Many

Your Verse

Matthew 27:20-22 - "But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed."

Supporting Scriptures

- *John 1:10-11 - "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."*
- *Hebrews 10:29 - "How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot?"*



Day 5: ❤️ The Crowd's Choice: Grace Rejected by Many

Devotional: The Cost of Rejecting Grace

The crowd chose Barabbas over Jesus, the path of rebellion over redemption. Despite Jesus' innocence and love, many rejected Him. This rejection was not merely historical; it speaks to the ongoing human tendency to reject God's gift of grace and pursue selfish desires instead.

Grace is offered freely, yet it must be received. The crowd's choice to condemn Jesus highlights the tragic cost of rejecting God's mercy and substitutionary love. It challenges us to evaluate whether we are embracing Jesus fully or resisting His lordship.

Consider your own heart: are there areas where you resist grace? What prevents you from choosing Jesus wholeheartedly?



Day 5: ❤️ The Crowd's Choice: Grace Rejected by Many

Reflect and Apply

1. What reasons might people have for rejecting Jesus today?

2. Have you ever struggled to accept God's grace? Why?

3. How can you open your heart more fully to Jesus' love and lordship?



Day 5: ❤️ The Crowd's Choice: Grace Rejected by Many

Journaling Prompts

1. Write about moments you resisted God's work in your life.

2. Describe how receiving grace changed or challenged you.

3. Pray for those who currently reject Jesus, asking God to soften their hearts.



Day 5: ❤️ The Crowd's Choice: Grace Rejected by Many

Prayer for Today

Jesus, I confess times I have resisted Your grace and rejected Your lordship. Please forgive me and draw me closer to You. Help me to choose You each day and live as one who fully receives Your gift of salvation. May my heart be open and obedient. *Amen.* ❤️ 🙏 🌿





Day 6: The Power of Christ's Resurrection



Your Verse

Matthew 28:5-6 - "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."

Supporting Scriptures

- *Romans 6:9 - "Because Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him."*
- *1 Corinthians 15:20 - "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*



Day 6: 🌅 The Power of Christ's Resurrection

Devotional: Resurrection: Victory Over Death

The story does not end with Jesus' condemnation and death—His resurrection is the ultimate victory. When Jesus rose from the dead, He conquered sin and death once and for all, proving that His substitutionary death was accepted by God and sufficient to save all who trust Him.

The resurrection brings hope beyond this life and assures believers of new life in Christ. It is a triumphant declaration that God's grace and power are greater than any trial or sin.

As we meditate on the resurrection, we celebrate that Jesus offers us a living hope and invites us to share in His victory.



Reflect and Apply

1. How does Jesus' resurrection impact your view of life and death?

2. What hope do you hold onto because of the resurrection?

3. In what ways can the power of the resurrection change your everyday struggles?



Day 6: 🌅 The Power of Christ's Resurrection

Journaling Prompts

1. Write about how the resurrection gives you hope.

2. Reflect on areas of your life where you need Christ's power to overcome.

3. Make a list of ways to live in the light of the resurrection.



Day 6: 🌅 The Power of Christ's Resurrection

Prayer for Today

Risen Savior, thank You for conquering death and giving me hope. Empower me to live boldly as a new creation and to share Your resurrection power with others. Fill me with joy and confidence because of Your victory. *Amen.* 🌅 🏛️





Day 7: ✨ Living in Grace: Our Ongoing Response



Your Verse

Ephesians 2:8-9 - "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith... it is the gift of God—not by works."

Supporting Scriptures

- *Colossians 3:12 - "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility..."*
- *2 Peter 3:18 - "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*



Devotional: Embracing Grace Daily

The story of Barabbas' freedom and Jesus' sacrifice is only the beginning of our journey. We are called to live in grace every day, responding to God's gift with faith, humility, and love.

Grace is not a one-time event but a way of life—continually relying on God's mercy. It changes how we see ourselves and others. Instead of striving for approval through works, we accept God's unearned favor and extend that grace outward.

Today, meditate on how you can grow in grace and live as one freed by Christ's sacrifice. Let His love shape your actions and attitudes, making your life a reflection of the Gospel.



Reflect and Apply

1. How can you live more fully in God's grace this week?

2. What attitudes or behaviors need to change to reflect God's love?

3. How can you share the message of grace with someone in your life?



Journaling Prompts

1. List ways you have experienced God's grace recently.

2. Write down practical steps to grow spiritually this week.

3. Pray for opportunities to demonstrate grace to others.



Day 7: ✨ Living in Grace: Our Ongoing Response

Prayer for Today

Holy Spirit, help me to live daily in the grace Jesus purchased for me. Teach me to walk humbly, love freely, and share generously. Let my life be a testimony of Your amazing mercy and kindness. Thank You for this gift of grace that renews me each day. *Amen.* ✨ 🙏 ❤️





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