BARABBAS

THIS SHOULD BE MY CROSS, YOU KNOW. I SHOULD BE HANGING HERE -- SURROUNDED BY THE CURIOUS CROWDS WHO HAVE GATHERED HERE -- THE PRIESTS, THE SCRIBES & PHARISEES -- THE SORROWING WOMEN -- THE THE CALLOUSED SOLDIERS & ONLOOKERS WHO SEEM TO ENJOY WATCHING DEATH BY CRUCIFIXION! ---- I SHOULD BE HERE!

RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, I'M NOT SURE I WANT TO BE HERE -- WHERE SOMEONE MIGHT RECOGNIZE ME & THROW ME BACK INTO PRISON. YES, I KNOW THAT THAT CAN'T HAPPEN ----- I'M FREE! I'M FREE! THE CROSS IS HIS, NOT MINE -- I'M FREE! HE TOOK MY PLACE THERE ON THE CROSS! THEY CALL HIM "JESUS -- King of the jews'

AND THEY CALL ME -- YES, THEY CALLED ME -- I CAN STILL HEAR THE SOUND OF THEIR CRIES -- SO LOUDLY, SO ENTHUSIASTICALLY: --- "BARABBAS -- GIVE US BARABBAS!" -- THAT-S WHY I'M HERE! I SHOULD BE RUNNING TO TH HILLS -- HIDING -- RUNNING FOR MY LIFE

MY LIFE! THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT -- MY LIFE! THE CROSS - THE CRUCIFIXION - HIS DEATH ----IT'S ALL ABOUT MY LIFE -- TODAY I WAS TO DIE -- THIS CROSS WAS FOR ME -- THESE NAILS WERE MINE-- BUT AT THE LAST MINUTE I WAS RELEASED!

LET ME TELL YOU HOW I GOT INTO PRISON! IT'S REALLY NO SURPRISE THAT I ENDED UP THERE.....I WAS A BRASH KID -- LOUD-MOUTHED -- BULLY -- LEADER OF THE GANG. I TELL YOU I WAS FULL OF MISCHIEF. IN MY TEENS AND EARLY ADULTHOOD I BECAME A MEMBER OF THE ZEALOTS -- RABBLE-ROUSERS -- INSTIGATORS OF WHAT WE THOUGHT WERE HOLY WARS -- TALKING, PRAYING, WAITING TO OVERTHROW THE ROMANS. WE LOOKED AT OURSELVES AS A BAND OF PATRIOTS -- BRAVE, UNAFRAID. WE WANTED TO SHOW THE REST OF ISRAEL HOW FEARLESS WE WERE -- RAIDING - STRIKING UNEXPECTEDLY -- KILLING!

I LED THE ATTACKS -- DARING, BRASH, CALLOUSED I WAS. WE HIT & RAN -- PLUNDERED & STOLE. WE DID IT ALL IN THE NAME OF OUT GOD-"FATHER" WE CALLED HIM.....THEN SOMEONE BETRAYED US. THE ROMANS WERE WAITING FOR US. THEY WERE LOOKING FOR ME - BARABBAS APPARENTLY, MY NAME STRUCK TERROR IN THEIR HEARTS. I DREW MY SWORD -- I STUCK -- I KILLED -----THEN EVERYTHING WENT BLANK. WHEN I AWOKE, I WAS IN PRISON.

LESS THAN A WEEK HAD GONE BY -- THEY WASTED NO TIME -- THEY WANTED TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF ME -- CRUCIFIXION -- MANY OF MY OWN PEOPLE AGREED -- THEY SAW ME AS AS AN OUTLAW & MURDERER! BUT I TELL YOU, "I WAS NOT GOING TO CRAWL OR PLEAD FOR MERCY.... I WOULD BE A BRAVE PATRIOT TO THE VERY END!"

I HEARD THE STEPS -- ARMED GUARDS -- THIS WAS IT! THEY PULLED ME FROM MY CELL! FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT I CAN REMEMBER -- FEAR WELLED UP INSIDE OF ME -- CRUCIFIXION --- I'D SEEN IT BEFORE ----IT'S A TERRIBLE WAY TO DIE!

TO MY GREAT SURPRISE THEY DRAGGED ME UP THE STAIRS ----TO THE GOVERNOR'S BALCONY. I COULD HEAR THEM YELLING -- LOUD, CRAZY VOICES ----- THEN I SAW HIM -- I HAD HEARD ABOUT HIM -- ROVING PROPHET -- PEACEMAKER -- SAID HE WAS GOING TO "BRING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD!" -- "WITH WHAT?" I WONDERED -- WITH WORDS?" -- "HA! HA!" I SMILED.....

PONTIUS PILATE MOVED OVER & STOOD BESIDE ME: "WHICH ONE WILL YOU HAVE?" HE CRIED, "BARABBAS OR JESUS, WHO IS CALLED "KING OF THE JEWS?'" .....I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EARS ---PILATE WAS ASKING THEM TO CHOOSE BETWEEN US ----- THE IRONY OF THE SITUATION DID NOT ESCAPE ME --- WE BOTH CALLED OURSELVES "S O N S O F T H E F A T H E R" THAT'S WHAT JESUS CLAIMED TO BE -- "SON OF THE FATHER --- AND THAT'S MY NAME TOO -- B A R A B B A S -- WHICH MEANS "SON OF THE FATHER....."WHICH 'SON OF THE FATHER' WILL YOU RELEASE?" PILATE CRIED OUT -- WHAT AN IRONY! WHAT A CHOICE! THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND WHOM THEY WOULD CHOOSE -- I WAS A GONNER-----

"BARABBAS!" BARABBAS" THEY CRIED OUT ---"GIVE US BARABBAS!" AND TO MY DISBELIEF, THEY SET ME FREE-- MY HANDS -- MY FEET -- UNMANACLED -- UNCHAINED --- FREE --- I AM FREE!!!!!

I RAN -- DOWN THE STEPS I RAN ---- AND THEN I HEARD ANOTHER ROARING CRY -- BLOOD-CURDLING CRY: "CRUCIFY HIM," THEY ROARED, "CRUCIFY HIM!" .....I WAS FREE, BUT THIS OTHER "SON OF THE FATHER" --- DOCILE, SILENT ---- HE WAS GOING TO DIE -- IN MY PLACE -- FOR ME.....PLEASE, PLEASE LET THOSE WORDS SINK IN --- CARRY THEM TO YOUR OWN GRAVE: "F O R M E !"

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO SAY THAT? THIS SHOULD BE M Y C R O S S, YOU KNOW -- MY CROSS! I SHOULD BE HANGING THERE DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO HAVE SOMEBODY TAKE YOUR PLACE? -- SOMEBODY INNOCENT? -- WHEN YOU ARE GUILTY???.....DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CALLED "A C H I L D O F T H E F A T H E R ....DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS TO BE F R E E -- FREE!!!