

April 2006: Who Was Pilate?

by Aaron Greenway

This month we celebrate Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in which we reflect on how He suffered and the price that was paid when He died on the cross. The selfless way that He gave Himself up teaches us how much He really must have loved sinners, how much He took the lash of the whip, how He handled the jeers and the mocking of the crowd, and how He was able to die hanging on a cross. Christ suffered all of this while Pilate was walking on his stone patio irritated over the decision he had just made. But Pilate was a coward. He put a lot of importance on everyone else's view of him, and especially of those that could make trouble with him and Caesar, the Emperor of the known world back then.

This takes us to our theme: Who was Pilate? This infamous man, who knew that Christ was innocent but could not battle the politics of the leaders of that day, was a man with many problems. Pilate was the governor back then, but one day, before he was to face Christ, his wife went to him to tell him about a dream that she had, warning him to have nothing do with Jesus. But Pilate, because of the political pressure, chose to do the opposite and Christ got the death sentence. This would eventually become his downfall. Ironically, Herod and Pilate, enemies before, became good friends because of what had happened. Finally, Pilate was ousted from power as a truly miserable man.

Some time ago, I sat thinking about witnessing to someone considering my job. Today, you are not able to talk to people about Jesus like you could before. But then I spoke with a fellow worker, the widow of a pastor. She told me to use wisdom and common sense, but when it comes down to it, to always obey a Higher Authority rather than to obey man. This made me think that it really didn't matter what others thought if a family were to come to faith as a result.

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There have been men of the past that have not had the "spiritual guts" to stand up to evil and to make righteous decisions in the face of what is "politically correct". They have given in to the opinions of those in high places. When everything is on the line, many see the cost of being a disciple of Christ and choose not to be because the commitment is too high, or they simply couldn't handle putting at risk their reputation, their money or their authority. This does not always just happen in the world of business, but also in the church. I have witnessed pastors that skip over those who could preach in the pulpit, or teach in a Sunday School, but because they either don't like them or they have their own group of "favorites", they choose to leave them aside. No wonder that many in the church are expendable and are operating in ways outside of their spiritual gifting. But this is the reality of an imperfect world and of some in the church because they allow the politics and favoritism to influence their decisions. If we look for the immediate benefit, then we cannot call ourselves "servants of God", just servants of ourselves. To be a follower of Christ means that there will be sacrifice. This is a higher calling.

When Christ called those who would be His disciples, He had some things to say to them, some criteria so that they would be "true" disciples, not so that they would serve Him with their heart really in another place. In Luke 14, Jesus says, "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

It is never about taking advantage of someone, never about forcing someone, nor about favoritism. When we follow the Lord, we leave our rights behind, and we choose to do what is right and not sacrifice people for the sake of what is even "spiritually" convenient. Pilate wanted to let Christ go, but it was not "convenient" for him, because it was better for Christ to die than for him to be taken out of power. But without knowing it, that is exactly what he did and it became his undoing because he chose to do what was wrong instead, and Jesus' Father took Him out of power Himself.

Christ will never let us down even when it seems like He has, but the worldly treasures don't ever compare to the eternal rewards that Jesus will give to those who truly honor Him. The sacrifice will be worth it when He gives us the Crown of Life. The politics, nor the position, nor the fame cannot promise that! Pilate did not take Jesus' side. He was a spiritual coward.

In all that we do, may it be known that we are operating spiritually above board, always doing what it is right even when it may cost everything.

Something to ponder...

Your brother,

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