

Unwashed Hands

(An review of the trial of Pontius Pilate)

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Introduction: Why do men live the lives they do?

- A. Our lives are a compilation of building blocks, that is building blocks of character!
 - 1. It begins in the home and it continues throughout life. **(Prov 1:7-10, 20-24)**
 - 2. The moral condition of a nation also contributes greatly to this building.
 - 3. Pilate had little to help him build this kind of character.
 - a. If he had he likely would have never reached this position.
 - b. What was Roman society like and in particular what were Roman officials like? **(Rom 1:28-31)**
- B. When a life is not built on principle then it will change with the shifting winds.
 - 1. Jesus described two kinds of people in the Sermon on the Mount. **(Mt 7:24-27)**
 - 2. Paul wanted Christians to build this foundation of inner strength. **(Eph 4:14-15)**
 - 3. Many men think of themselves as strong and principled when in fact they are cowards. We have many cowards within our churches.

I. The background of Pilate

- A. He was involved with a very corrupt government.

“The procurator was the personal servant of the emperor, directly responsible to him, and was primarily concerned with finance.” - ISBE

 - 1. He had to also please unprincipled men! What would please Tiberius?
 - 2. This gave him a rule but one without moral authority. **(Prov 14:32-34)**
 - 3. Because he did not fear God he had no principles. **(Prov 15:33; 18:12)**
- B. He likely had military experience.

“As a rule a procurator must be of equestrian rank and a man of certain military experience.” - ISBE

 - 1. This taught him discipline and respect for authority. **(2 Tim 2:2-3)**
 - 2. How were the Roman Centurions described in the Bible? **(Mt 8:9-10)**
- C. He was a man who tried to intimidate but had no consistency.
 - 1. Jesus used the wrath of Pilate as an example. **(Lk 13:1-3)**
 - 2. According to Josephus, Pilate would yield with a sufficient display.

II. The trial of Pilate

- A. In reality God was putting Pilate on trial.
 - 1. God does allow men to face times of difficulty where their true character is revealed. **(Gen 22:1; Job 23:10-12)**
 - 2. God would be fair with Pilate so that he would clearly see the truth.
- B. Pilate saw the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. **(Mk 14:61-63)**
 - 1. They condemned Jesus to death for blasphemy. Did they mention this to Pilate?
 - 2. They wanted Pilate to rubber stamp their decision. **(Jn 18:28-31)**
 - 3. They made up accusations that would appeal to Pilate. **(Lk 23:1-2)**

4. Like religious leaders today, they wanted to use any means that “work.”
 5. Pilate had no respect for them.
- C. Pilate saw Jesus under severe pressure.
1. The wisdom and strength of our Lord was shown in when he did not speak. **(Mk 15:2-5)**
 2. When he did speak it was not with excitement, hatred or fear. **(1 Pt 2:20-23)**
 3. This strength continued even after a scourging. **(Jn 19:1-2, 7-12)**
- D. Pilate was warned by his wife. **(Mt 27:19)**
1. God choose to warn Pilate through this means as well.
 2. After hearing the claims of His divinity Pilate knew at least of his innocence.
- E. Jesus confronted Pilate with his own hope of rescue ---- the truth!
1. Who is Jesus? **(Jn 18:36-38)**
 2. Pilate’s background taught him the danger of “truth.”
 3. He states the truth but will not stand for it.

III. The “middle ground” of Pilate

- A. Three ways Pilate tried to avoid his decision.
1. **Send Him to Herod. (Lk 23:6-7, 11)**
 - a. Maybe the decision could be made by another!
 - b. Even if Herod had made the decision, Pilate had an obligation to stand.
 2. **Offer the People Barabbas. (Jn 18:38-40)**
 - a. Pilate wanted the crowd to make the right decision for him.
 - b. The decision became even more difficult for him. **(Mt 27:16-20)**
 3. **Arouse sympathy in the people. (Jn 19:1-5)**
- B. The “Solution” of Pilate.
1. He had two goals: to release Jesus but he also wanted to please the Jews.
 2. He decided that the decision was not his to make after all. **(Mt 27:24-26)**
 - a. Some want the struggle is enough, words and emotion without a stand!
 - b. You must not let another make the decision for you.

IV. God’s ruling on the trial of Pilate

- A. Pilate wanted “clean hands.” Did he have them?
1. God recognized that Pilate was pressured. **(Acts 13:28)**
 2. He also recognized that Pilate did not arrest Jesus or cause this situation.
 2. He also knew that Pilate heard a remarkable confession. **(1 Tim 6:13)**
- B. The final verdict of God
1. Guilty! God clearly shows that Pilate’s hands were unwashed. **(Acts 4:27)**
 2. In many ways Pilate was just like the religious leaders he despised by substituting form over substance. **(Mt 23:23-24)**
- C. How will you do at your trial?
1. Many look at consequences first and then try to find another way. **(Gal 6:12)**
 2. What if Pilate had stood for the truth?
 3. On the judgment day you will have no one to hide behind.

Conclusion: Are you looking for middle ground or the truth?

- A. What will you be known for?

- B. A quick test. Can you identify these men? Shammua? Hori? Jephunneh? Igal?
Palti? Gaddiel? Gaddi? Ammiel? Sethur? Nahbi?
- C. God will remember those who stand for Him. (**2 Tim 4:8**)