



lêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP




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the gospel of
JOHN

ΕΝ ΑΡΧΗ ΗΝ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ
 ΘΕΟΝ ΚΑΙ Ο ΤΗΝ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΟΣ ΗΝ ΕΝ ΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ
 ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕΣΤΟ ΚΑΧΩΤΙΣ

We have seen Jesus arrested, questioned in a secret and illegal preliminary interrogation by the High Priest

Annas. We have seen Jesus transferred to a more formal trial of select Jewish officials headed by the High Priest Caiaphas. We've seen Jesus delivered to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate where He has been examined repeatedly, then shockingly degraded, and horrifically tortured.



Pilate has gone out of his way to release Jesus using several different tactics to accomplish that end all to no avail. Even after having Jesus beaten nearly to death and presenting Him disgraced and disfigured to His fellow Jews, Pilate could not elicit from them even the slightest mercy.

In fact, Pilate's repeated bids to get Jesus released had not only failed to engender any sympathy, they had actually served to further incite the Jewish mob.

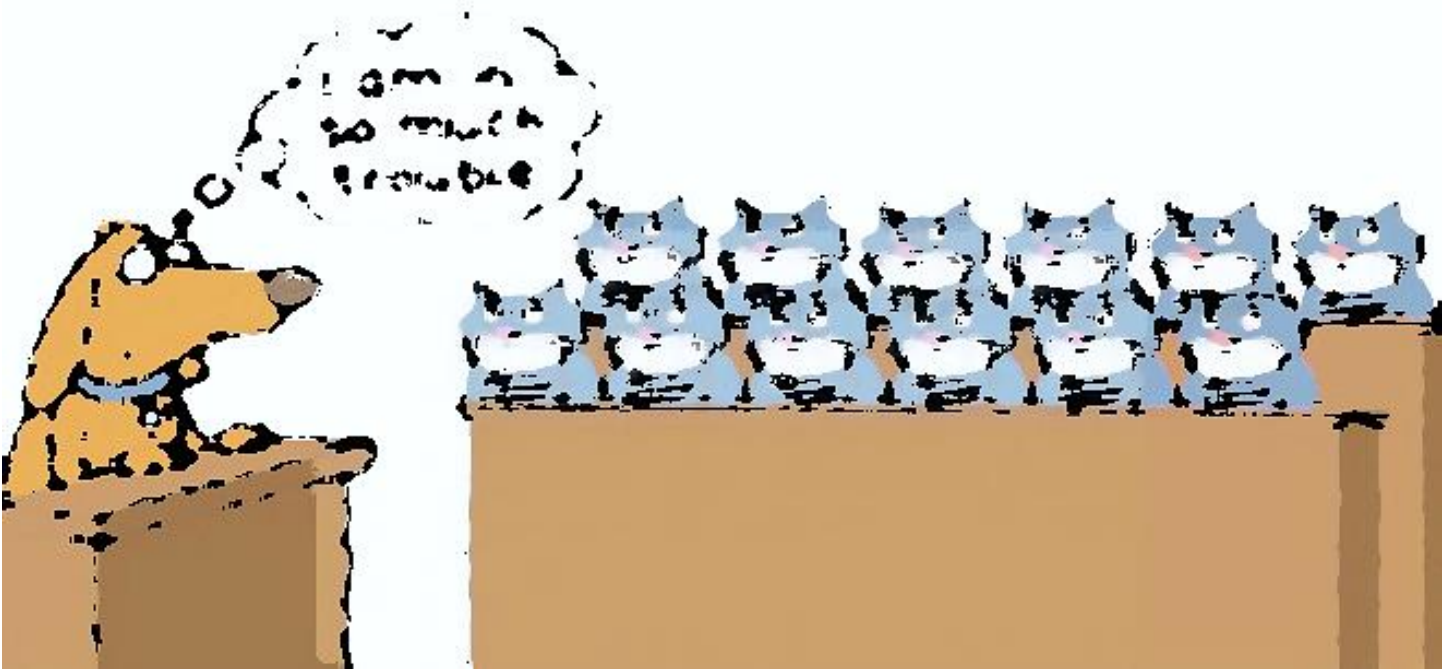


By this point they were out of control, hysterically frenzied to a fever pitch, seething with savage fury and sadistic homicidal intent. The mob was now passionately raging and nothing less than Jesus' execution would satiate their bloodlust.

Pilate presented a crushed, bleeding, humiliated, and now, frail Jesus to the murderous crowd saying to them "Behold the Man" ... John 19:6, So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they shouted, saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him

yourselves and crucify Him; for I find no grounds for charges in His case!”

Imagine Pilate’s frustration. Visualize the ferocious intensity of the mob. Here in the NASB the horde is described as the “chief priests and the officers.”



Most translations have something similar because of the immediate context found here in isolation. Taking John’s account all by itself, we would assume that the other Jews with the “chief priests,” are the officials, or officers, or Temple police that arrested Jesus in the Garden and have been involved ever since. In the larger context of the four Gospels, we know that other

Jewish people continued to arrive outside of the Praetorium swelling the original size of the crowd.

That knowledge helps us properly understand the term translated here as “officers” to be the more general concept of underlings. In a specific context the word can mean a particular type of underling, like a Temple policeman, or a soldier. Here, given the situation, while the “officers” were still present, the mob has grown. What John hints at here and what is confirmed elsewhere is that the Jewish elites and their minions had induced a large number of other Jewish people to join them and support their cause. These new arrivals were people who were also under the control of the “chief priests.” They have stacked the deck.



All those Jews shouted in unison over and over again “Crucify!” It was σταύρωσον (stav-řō-sŏn) that they shouted. It is the Greek command to crucify. They didn’t shout in Hebrew or Aramaic because no such word existed in those languages back then and Pilate would not have understood a Semitic euphemism. They certainly didn’t shout “crucifige” (křü-kē-fē-gā) in Latin because the Jews did not use Rome’s language.

Greek was at the height of its 600-year reign as the common language that tied the world together from England to India and from Ukraine to Ethiopia. It was the common language that everyone knew well enough to communicate in. It was the language used between

Jesus and Pilate. It was the language used between Pilate and the mob and it was the language in which the Jewish throng shouted their demand, σταύρωσον!



Again, imagine Pilate's frustration. Now, the crowd of rabid Jews were creating a public spectacle ordering Pontius Pilate the representative of the emperor Tiberius to do their bidding. It was outrageous and Pilate was clearly offended and a little more afraid. The last thing he wanted was a riot.

Pilate yelled back at the crowd, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him; for I find no grounds for charges in His case!"

For the third time the Roman governor publicly declared that there was no basis whatsoever for a judgment against Jesus.

Yet, the unruly crowd was undeterred and so Pilate told them since he could not see the guilt of Jesus that they apparently saw, they should take Him away and crucify Him themselves.



John 19:7&8, 7The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die, because He made Himself out to be the Son of God!” 8Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.

Here, the Jews finally come clean with their actual charge against Jesus. This has been a complicated continuous battle of wills replete with nuanced political maneuverings and while the Jews will eventually win the day and get what they want, Pilate scored a number of good shots as well. This is one of them.

He painted the Jews into a corner, and they had to pivot and confess that their justification was that Jesus had made Himself out to be the Son of God. It was the charge of blasphemy, and it was a crime that did indeed carry the death penalty in Jewish Law. Leviticus 24:16, 16Anyone who blasphemes the Name of the Lord must be stoned to death by the whole community of Israel. Whether native-born Israelite or foreigner among you anyone who blasphemes the Name of the Lord must be put to death.

One quick note here about translations. The NASB has the word “ought.” The Law judges that a blasphemer “ought” to die. It’s a Greek manner of speaking that is replicated here in English. What it means is that the Law declares that all blasphemers must be killed. There’s no ambiguity at all. It’s not optional, there’s no discretion or flexibility, it is a divine mandate. It is “ought” in the older sense of the word as what one is obligated to perform.

This was the most serious charge that the Jews ever leveled against Jesus from their point of view, and it was one that they had made repeatedly throughout His ministry. Even here, people try to dismiss the idea that Jesus Himself claimed to be God made man, but that's precisely how the Jewish elite understood Him and according to God's Law, any human being who made such a claim, had to be executed. Further, in a concession to Jewish sensibilities, Rome mostly supported the Jewish right to condemn Jewish and some in some cases, even Gentile blasphemers.

1) The Jews were correct in their understanding of the Law as it pertained to blasphemy. 2) They were also correct in recognizing that Jesus had repeatedly made Himself out to be divine, to be uniquely God's eternal Son, to be the Word of God made flesh, to be God among us. 3) They were correct that any human being, doing what Jesus did, was to be summarily executed. 4) Finally, they were correct that Rome should support such a sentence.



What they were wrong about was the manner of execution. It was strictly spelled out to be stoning by the assembly. A thing that they could have done later on to Jesus. Something they actually did do later on to Stephen. Of course, had they merely detained Jesus until well after the Passover and then had Him stoned to death it would have failed to fulfill multiple prophecies concerning the Messiah. Interesting how God orchestrates His Will through the jealousy, anger, and seething hatred, of Satan's children.

The other thing that they were wrong about was the thing that is probably the most obvious to us now. It

cannot be blasphemy if it's true. Jesus was innocent of this charge as well.



Oh, He repeatedly claimed what was unmitigated blasphemy for any human to claim, but while He was fully human, He was also at the same time fully God. So, it wasn't blasphemy since Jesus' claims about Himself were true.

Verse 8 tells us that after the Jews admitted their real charge against Jesus, Pilate became more afraid. That means that he had already been afraid. We can easily recognize how uncomfortable he was with this whole affair – it spooked him for a lot of reasons.

Pilate had spoken with Jesus and knew that Jesus was no fool, he was not delusional, not suicidal, and not frightened. Quite the contrary, Jesus was intelligent, savvy, and well-comported. He didn't act like any man in His situation should act.

Jesus clearly grasped the gravity of His predicament and yet was entirely unfazed by the ramifications of it. He was calm, confident, and self-controlled. Now, Pilate may have initially taken that as Jesus being defiant, or perhaps fatalistic, or possibly being stoic, in the face of the inevitable. But Pilate, had, by this time, been convinced that none of that was behind the character and bearing of Jesus. Pilate realized that it was like Jesus knew something that no one else knew.

Jesus was certainly not like anyone else whom Pilate had dealt with before and it scared him. Pilate also knew that Jesus was innocent, but try as he might, He couldn't seem to release Him. A person Whose only crime seemed to be that He was popular enough, for the Jewish elites, to perceive Him as a threat to their power, prestige, and wealth. But even after having Him savaged and having sent Him off to King Herod Antipas, and having offered them the murderer Barabbas, and all his other maneuverings to get Jesus released from his responsibility he couldn't manage it.

Coupled with his 1) personal interaction and experience with Jesus, and his 2) inability to rid himself of the case, and the 3) threat of a riot in the city, 4) Pilate's wife had warned him "See that you have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him" (Matthew 27:19).

Then Pilate, hearing that this sane, innocent, and according to his wife, "righteous Man," claimed to be the unique Son of Almighty God, Pilate was struck with deep fear. What in the world had they gotten him into here? What an insane mess and how could he extricate himself from it?



For the third time Pilate left the mob and went back into the Praetorium to deal with Jesus. John 19:9–11, 9and he entered the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. 10So Pilate said to Him, “Are you not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” 11Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over Me at all, if it had not been given to you from above; for this reason the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin.”

Panicky Pilate incredulously asked Jesus Πόθεν εἶ σύ (pō-thēn ā sü), literally “Whence, are You?” But the

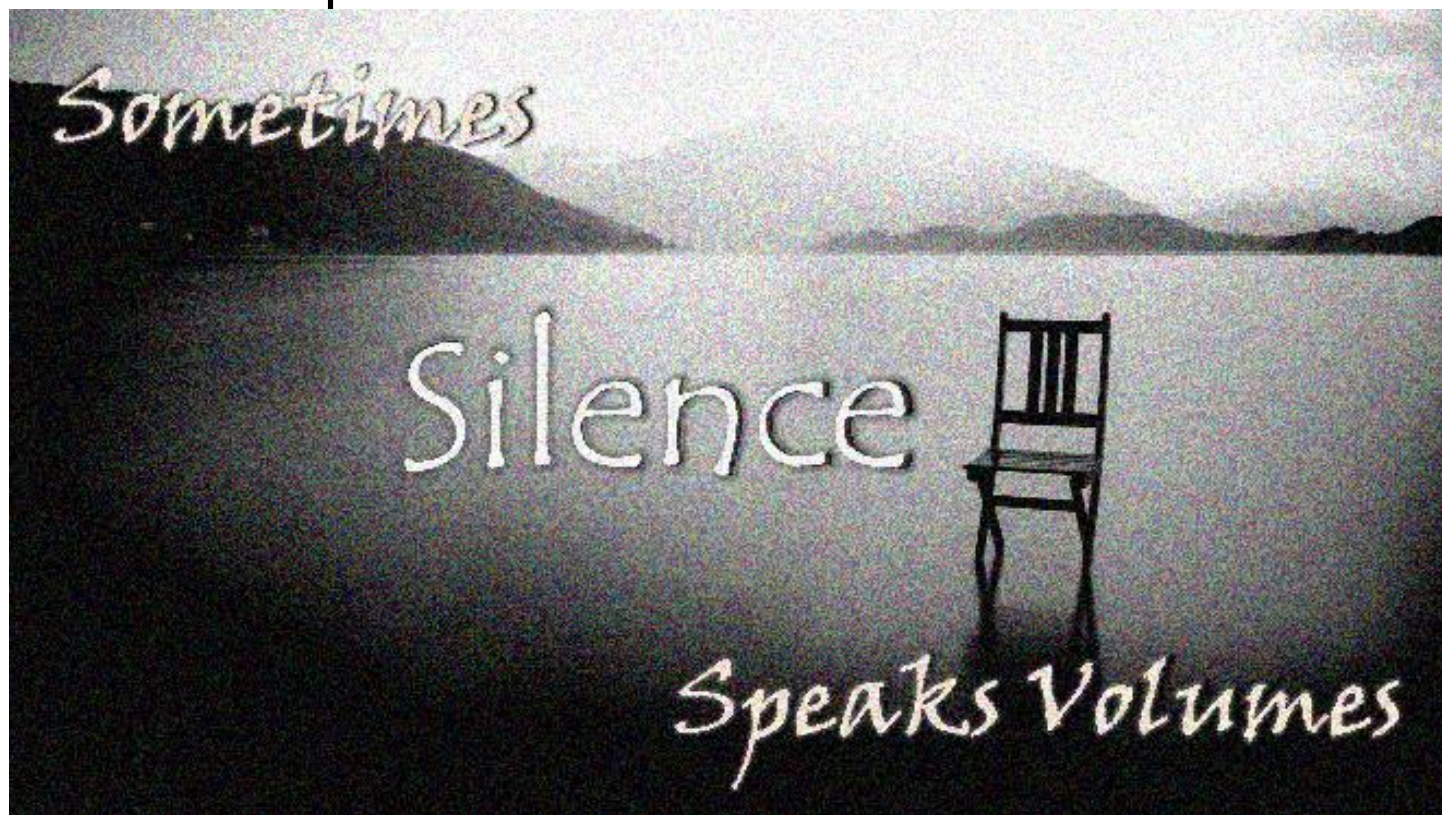
emphatic stress is actually on the pronoun “You.” In English, it would be like saying, “You! From whence?” The question is framed in such a way that it means, “Who are You?” Pilate was now very seriously concerned that Jesus wasn’t just a man.

One scholar wrote, “It is possible that a polytheistic Roman was more open to claims of divine sonship than a monotheist.” People back then were far more superstitious than they are now, and the Roman religion was chalk full of gods, demigods, magical creatures, and mystical beings that all occasionally masqueraded as humans and interacted with people on earth. Even today, many people think that angels, or ghosts, or demons, masquerade as human. Pontius Pilate was seriously concerned – the Bible confirms that he was already afraid and that after hearing that Jesus claimed to be divine, he was more afraid, very afraid. “Who are You?” “You. What planet or dimension are You from?”

Jesus said nothing. Imagine the scene. The Roman nobleman appointed as the supreme governor of a Roman province by the emperor himself, was uncomfortable and frightened. He was genuinely wondering if Jesus was a god of some kind and was

earnestly asking Him for a straight answer about that possibility and Jesus ignored him.

Like Pilate's question about the Who, what, and where of Jesus, the nuance of Pilate's response in verse 10, is quite clear in Greek and loses something in translation. Again, it's difficult to put it in English. The closest you could come would be something like, "Me. You refuse to talk to me!?!?" Pilate was incredulous at this, and the stunning disbelief of his question is hard to convey in English, without breaking our grammar rules, or adding a whole lot of extra words to keep the nuance, but then you would lose the terseness of this three-word question. Translation is difficult.



Why did Jesus decide that it was time to be silent? Pilate has finally asked Him directly about His source or origin. Couldn't Jesus have told the governor the Truth and be set free? Maybe, and that would have been a problem for God's Will. Ultimately, Jesus didn't answer because the Father didn't want Him to answer.

At a lesser level Jesus didn't answer because He had already answered, and Pilate refused to understand and therefore refused to believe. Pilate had already accepted that Jesus claimed that He was the Ruler of a Kingdom not sourced from this world. If not originating from a physical, natural power, what power remained? Obviously, a metaphysical, supernatural power.

If you were a superstitious Roman 2,000 years ago and you fully believed that the man standing in front of you was the King of such a Kingdom, would you have him beaten nearly to death? Of course not! Pilate didn't believe, because belief in Jesus requires faith, not superstition. Jesus knew that there was no point. Pilate's unwillingness to truly seek what he was already opposed to did not dignify a response from Jesus.

Had Jesus explained Himself further, Pilate would have simply misunderstood, would have simply asked more

questions. Pilate wasn't ready to understand and so couldn't believe.

That brings us to an interesting principle. Jesus not only had the very Words of Life; He is the Word of Life. We who are in Him are the only ones on planet earth who carry His Word of Life into this physical reality now. Most of the time, modern western Christians don't speak enough. Sometimes we share too much. There is no sense in "Casting pearls before swine." Some people are simply not worthy of the Truth, at least not yet, at least not with their current attitude. Jesus was rebuking Pilate with His refusal to answer his inadequate question.

We westerners tend to think that we can talk a person into Heaven. We are inclined to believe that if we can give someone enough information, enough evidence, enough convincing arguments that they will suddenly say, "Eureka! Oh, I get it now! Thank you so much for continuing to bombard me with facts and figures and eloquence – I believe!" Sometimes there is nothing better than the rebuke of silence.

Apologetics is the branch of theology that gives rational arguments in defense of the Truth claims of the Bible.

It's a fine branch and is sometimes useful to remove obstacles to faith, but it will never save a single soul.

No matter how much a person knows about the Bible, Theology, Christianity, and Jesus, they will never talk anyone into Heaven. Similarly, no matter how much a person knows about the Bible, Theology, Christianity, and Jesus, they will never be a Christian, until they know Jesus.



The Gospel is Jesus. The only way that a person can meet Jesus is through an active introduction to Him by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God makes the introduction through Christians who allow Him to minister through them. Since it is the Holy Spirit making

the introduction through the Christian, it is obvious that it cannot possibly have anything to do with that Christian conduit for the Spirit. The Breath of God will use anyone who yields to His use.

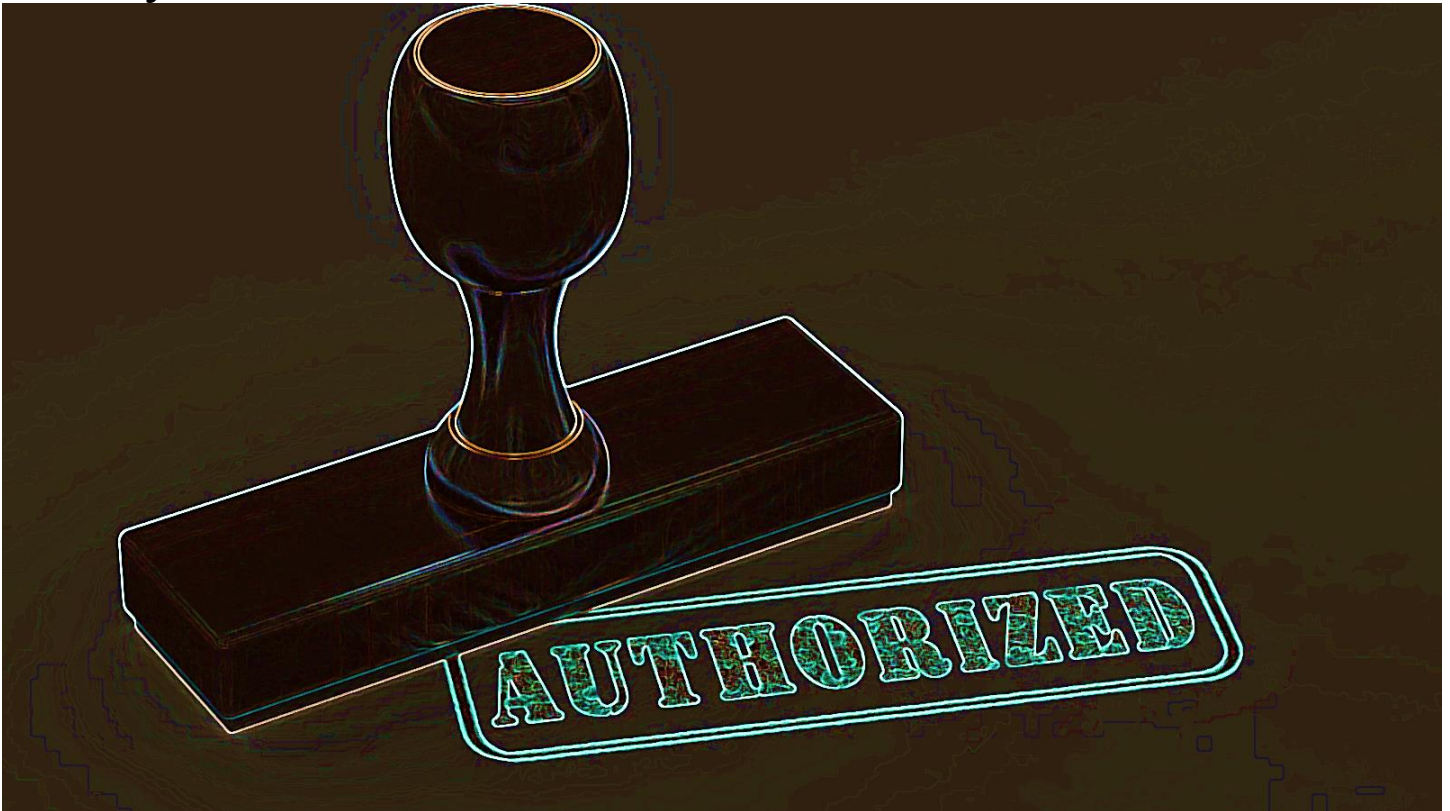
In this yielding, the Holy Spirit will do what He does, and the response of the other person is between Him and them. The Christian is merely the messenger, and as such, it is none of their business how the respondent responds. Deliver the message – that's it.

For the messenger there are two basic results. One good, the other not so good. God will use you regardless of your personal walk with Jesus. If your walk is strong – you are working at abiding in the True Vine and you are growing, learning, maturing – if you are being honest about your failures and working on correcting them, you will be a vessel of honor. In other words, if you are seriously trying to follow Christ the Holy Spirit will minister to others through you and you will be blessed in the process. On the other hand, if you are being a sloppy Christian – one who skips prayer, skips giving – skips church – skips studying – skips being intentional about being a better Christian each day, God will still use you, but as an ignoble vessel.



In the church there are crystal goblets for fine wine, there are silver platters for serving the meal and there are trash cans and chamber pots. All of the vessels in the church serve a purpose. The Bible tells us that it is up to us as individual Christians as to whether we will be a crystal goblet or a chamber pot. II Timothy 2:21NLT, “If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special vessel for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.” Choose whether you will take your Christian walk seriously enough to be a vessel that holds something wonderfully delicious or one that holds something far less appetizing.

After incredulously asking Jesus about His silence, Pilate went on to explain his surprise by continuing in his tone of astonishment with “Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?”

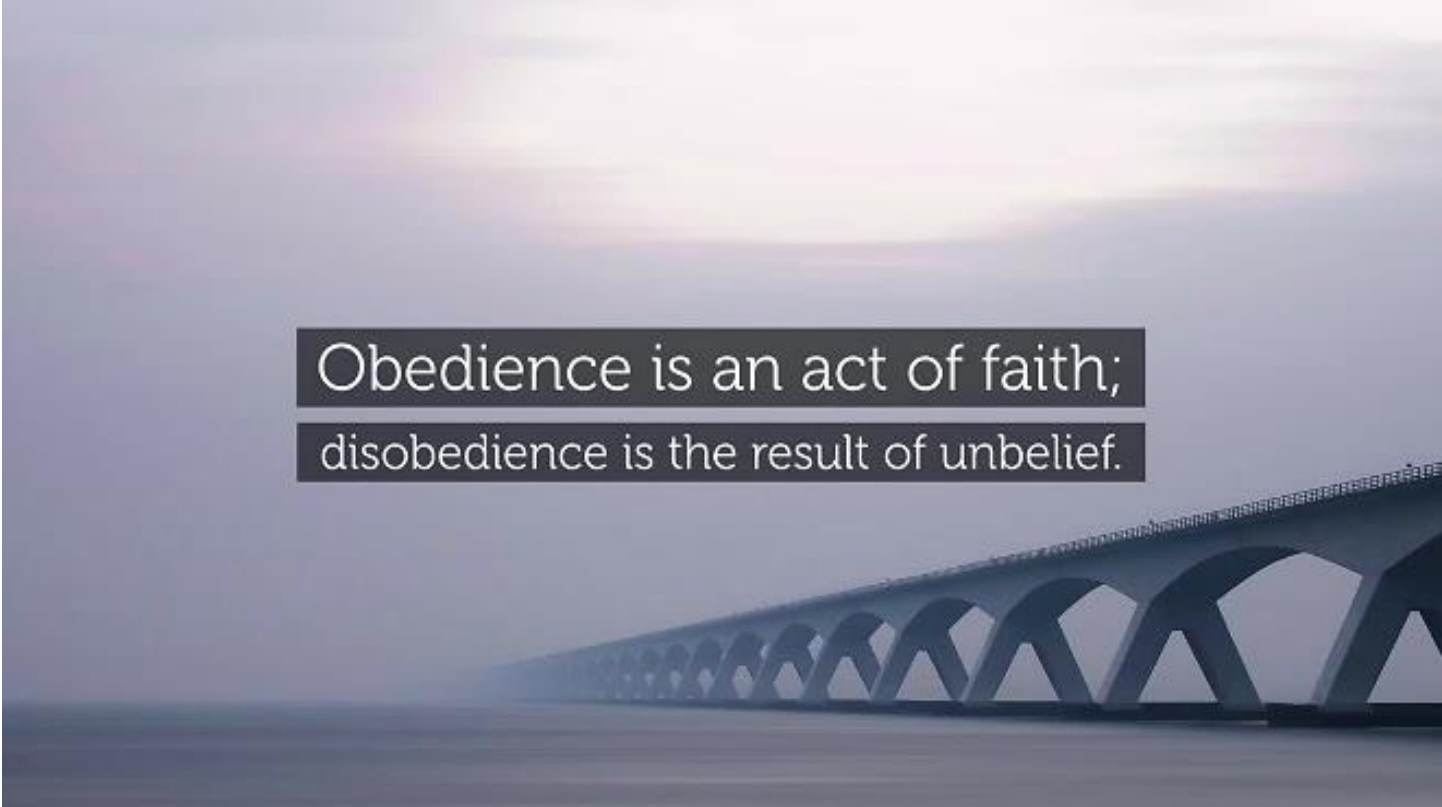


It's purely an attempt to get Jesus to talk. The word “authority” was used twice, adding to the stress on this point. Pilate had all the power... From a human point of view. By saying this Pilate just proved why Jesus rebuked him with His silence. Does a Roman governor have authority over any god, let alone over the One and Only Unique Son of the One and Only True God?

Jesus answered Pilate's statement about authority by making an absolute declaration, "You... have no authority," except what is "given to you from above." This functions as a principle grounded in Biblical revelation from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. Almighty God; the very title itself refers the One with all the might. God is omnipotent, which means all powerful. He has all the power and authority that exists in our physical universe and beyond. Therefore, any power or authority that any other being has is derived from God. God loans His power to whomever suits Him and how you know that that is true is because He can take His power back at Will. The mere relaxation of His grip and the universe and all that it contains ceases to exist.

From Satan to the flea on a dog's back, all power and authority is allowed by God. That Truth has ramifications. You can spend a great deal of time considering what that means regarding evil in the world and why God would allow so much power and authority to be wielded by Satan, by Pilate, by the High Priests, by Vladimir Putin, etc., etc., ad nauseum. The focus for our present passage is sort of the other side of that – those who have power and authority owe it all to God as He is the Source of all power and authority.

To anyone observing the interaction that morning between Jesus and Pilate it would have been obvious that Pilate had all the power and Jesus had none. Yet, it was in reality, exactly the opposite. Jesus simply chose to allow Pilate to keep his derived authority in order to accomplish God's divine purposes.



Obedience is an act of faith;
disobedience is the result of unbelief.

Jesus chose obedience to the Father's Will. Notice the far greater degree of surrender and self-sacrifice involved when someone refuses to change what they easily could change. It's one thing to obey when you don't have any real choice and quite another to obey when you have all the choices.

Jesus wasn't caught, or stuck. He wasn't weak or defeated. He was actively allowing the Jews and the Gentiles, and the Satanic forces arrayed against Him to retain the power that they derived from Him. He was choosing to go along for you and for me and for all of our siblings in Christ around the globe and throughout time.

In light of that, will you allow others their power, if doing so accomplishes God's purposes? Would you, for example, share the Gospel with someone who then openly reviles you for doing so, and still keep your Christian self-control by not retaliating against them or defending yourself?

Jesus went on to say that "the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin." First, please note, that Jesus was not in any way exonerating or absolving Pilate of his responsibility in the matter. "The greater sin" by definition means that Pilate's sin remained, but that the sin of betrayal was worse than the sin of allowing fear to sway judgment over another.



Let's talk about that for a moment. First of all, the sin of betrayal has long been considered the greatest sin of all sins that are potentially forgivable. Over 700 years ago Dante Alighieri described the 9th Circle of Hell as home to Cain, and Judas, and Satan himself. Like Captain Jack Sparrow said referencing the Italian Poem, "The deepest circle of hell is reserved for betrayers and mutineers."

Even so, it is potentially forgivable and so the greatest sin of all is the one unforgiveable sin, which is to "blaspheme of the Holy Spirit." That is the sin of unbelief – of disbelieving what the Holy Spirit proclaims about God's plan of Salvation. It is the sin of rejecting

the Message of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus as the One and Only means of forgiveness. It is the “unforgiveable sin” because it is the rejection of Salvation. It is choosing to remain unsaved.

Outside of that, the most heinous sin, as I said, is betrayal. It is the sneak attack like that seen recently in Israel. It is the spouse cheating on the one whom they promised absolute fidelity to in the sight of God. It is the Christian who throws a grenade into the church on their way out to help justify and rationalize their divorce from the brothers and sisters of that church who have only tried to love and bless them.

Betrayal is vile. It is being a disloyal, unfaithful, duplicitous, double-dealing, two-faced, friendly to your face, stab you in the back, liar.

Liar – that’s what I said. A betrayer is always a liar and a liar of the first order because they deceive someone into believing something false, to facilitate taking advantage of their trust for personal gain. It is to build false faith and then to betray it, thereby destroying that person’s ability to trust, to have faith, to believe going forward.

Jesus said that to harm another person's ability to believe was to place a stumbling block in their path and that anyone doing that would be better off if a millstone had been tied around their neck and they had been cast into the sea (Luke 17:2). The Book of Revelation declares "all those who lie, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. That is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). Psalm 5:6 proclaims about God, "You destroy those who speak lies; The Lord loathes the person of bloodshed and deceit."

Who is the one with the "Greater sin," of betrayal in John 19:11? The most obvious answer would be Judas the close friend and Apostle of Jesus who literally "betrayed Him with a kiss" (Luke 22:48). Grammatically, it would be the Jews outside, led by the High Priests. This gains even more traction when in the Book of Acts, both Peter, and later Stephen, state that the Jews "betrayed and murdered Jesus" (Acts 2:23, 7:52).

It is singular and would indicate the Jewish opposition as a whole. We could extrapolate it out to encompass the entire opposition then and always. That would include both Peter and John in the sense that they each betrayed Jesus. Peter with his voice and John with his silence. Then we add all the other Apostles who simply ran and didn't even have enough nerve to

follow Jesus even at a distance. Now, we could add to the mix ourselves, couldn't we? Have you ever by thought, word, or deed, left Jesus out to dry?

“Greater sin” is μείζονα ἁμαρτίαν (mādz-ōn-a hä-mär-tē-än) μείζονα is the comparative adjective of μέγας (mě-gäs) from which we get our word “mega,” as in huge. As a comparative adjective it means “huger,” “more bigger,” than that. ἁμαρτίαν is the noun ἁμαρτία (hä-mär-tē-ä), which we translate as sin.



Sin at its most basic fundamental level is resisting God's Will. The Kingdom of Heaven exists where God's Will is entirely embraced – where there is no resistance to His Will at all. There is no sin in Heaven, not

because no one sins anymore, but because Heaven is where sin cannot exist. Where there is sin, there is no Heaven. Where there is Heaven there cannot, by definition, be any sin.

Sin as resistance to God's Will could be unintentional either because of ignorance or inability. Intentional sin is active disobedience. It's knowing what God wants and choosing to do what you want instead. That disobedience can be by commission – doing something against God's Will, or by omission – failing to do something that God wants you to do. All of these sins, whether unintentional or willful, whether active or passive, are sins.

Some sins are far worse than others. There is definitely a ranking of sins by degree of severity. Betrayal of innocent blood is lightyears worse than sneaking the last donut. The reason that Christians say that all sin is sin and act as though there's no difference in degree is because the slightest unintentional sin imaginable carries the exact same penalty as the worst of all sins. Eternal Death is the sentence for the least offense and since there isn't any punishment worse than that it ends up being the same sentence for the Judas' of the world and for even Satan himself.

Additionally, the only thing that can erase the slightest sin is the full sacrificial death of the Word of God made man, which is the exact same remedy to cover the vilest of sins.

That Truth creates a bit of a misnomer among people. There is an idea that since the penalty and the remedy is the same, that God does not distinguish between the little sins and the big ones. That's false! Of course, God distinguishes between what is of little consequence and what is of massive consequence.

It is absolutely untrue to say that all sins are equal – they're not. Blatantly and willfully violate God's Will and in the process do great harm to yourself and those around you. Repudiate Christ and His church by your selfish desires and there will be serious consequences. Some will be physical, and some will be spiritual.



God will not be mocked, Galatians 6:7–8 teaches us, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap.” My friends, it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living God as we see in Hebrews 10:29–31, 29How much more severe punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” 31It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. In both places God is talking to the church.

We disobey because lack faith. A lack of faith results in fear. We fear because we are self-interested. I see life through my eyes, and I determine how I believe things should be. I'm fearful that they won't go that way and so I manipulate in order to accomplish my will instead of trusting in God's Will.

A person is in a listless marriage and instead of allowing God to love their spouse through them and trusting that God has a plan, the person is afraid that they will continue to suffer and so they try to control the marriage by manipulating their spouse. By taking from their spouse. By betraying the trust of their spouse. As an example.

It is a selfish self-interest that creates constant fear that things are not going how I think that they should go and so I take action to change the direction by forcing my will at the expense of violating God's Will. That's sin.

Fear results from a personal assessment of the potential future's negative impact on one's self-interest. Personal assessment, potential future, negative impact, self-interest. It is always a lack of faith that things will work out and the fear of that is the cause of sin, but...



GOD
IS
LOVE

I John 4:18–21, tells us that 18There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear... and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19We love, because He first loved us. 20If someone says, “I love God,” and yet he hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother and sister whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.”