

### JESUS DIED WILLINGLY!

- <sup>1</sup> Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. <sup>2</sup> The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe <sup>3</sup> and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.
- <sup>4</sup> Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." <sup>5</sup> When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"
- <sup>6</sup> As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."
- <sup>7</sup> The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."
- <sup>8</sup> When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, <sup>9</sup> and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup> "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"
- <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."
- <sup>12</sup> From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."
- <sup>13</sup> When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). <sup>14</sup> It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.
- <sup>15</sup> But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.
- <sup>16</sup> Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

When confronted with danger, we will react with either "fight" or "flight." Sometimes flight is best. If the house is caught on fire, you better leave to save your life. Sometimes fight is the best option. I know of someone who was unjustly fired from her job many years ago. She decided to go to court, not to sue; she didn't ask for a dime, but to clear her name and prove she was unjustly fired. She won the case easily. Fight or flight, which will it be?

When Jesus was confronted with danger, which course did he take? Remember the time the devil tempted him in the wilderness? He fought, only he fought in an unusual way. Instead of calling down armies of angels to do battle, or to wield his godly power and shoot thunderbolts at the devil, he fought him instead with God's promises in his Word, and the devil retreated. When a disappointed crowd wanted to stone him to death, he prevented them miraculously from seizing him and walked away. In that situation he turned to "flight."

It is Good Friday. Jesus was arrested. His accusers were demanding his death. What did Jesus do? Did he fight, or did he turn to flight? The answer is neither. He didn't fight, nor did he turn to flight. Jesus let them attack him. He let them accuse him falsely. He let them crucify him. That is what we learn on Good Friday. If he fought or fled on Good Friday, he would save himself, but not us. Instead he was willing to be attacked and crucified to save us.

#### *1. He submitted to human authority.*

This is one of the amazing things about Jesus, and something that confuses us. Jesus, as God is above all authority. He is above the laws of nature as he stills storms. He is above all creation as Lord and creator. And he is above every human authority on earth, even great governments. Yet we see Jesus, the Lord of all and subject to none, become subject to all, even human authority.

For example. Jesus let the mob arrest him in Gethsemane. Jesus allowed himself to be dragged before a court that had no just cause to put him on trial. Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin was a joke. Even the paid false witnesses couldn't come up with the same story. When they struck him and spit on him, he did not resist.

Then they dragged him before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Caesar represented the Roman Emperor and was the law in Israel. Pilate understood that well. He said to Jesus, "**Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?**" One man, Pilate, had the ability and authority to let Jesus walk away or die. If Jesus wanted to escape, here was his chance. Pilate was even looking for some excuse to free Jesus.

But Pilate was wrong. He wasn't in charge; God was. Jesus responded, "**You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.**" Pilate was in his position only because God, not Caesar, gave him authority. Remember what it says in Romans 13, how the governing authorities are God's representatives? Of course, they will be held accountable, but still, they have power only because God gave it to them. Pilate really was not in control. Jesus was.

What should Jesus do? He could fight, but he didn't. Remember what he said to Peter in Gethsemane, that he could at any time call down 12 legions of angels. That's over 70,000 angels! And if one angel killed 179,000 men in Sennacherib's army in the Old Testament, don't you think 12 legions could handle a mob and a Roman governor? As God, Jesus could have used his godly power. He could have suddenly let his glory shine before Pilate and say something like this, "You think you have authority over me, your God? Sit down you puny little thing." But he didn't.

Jesus could have also turned to "flight." He could have stayed away from Jerusalem, not arriving on Palm Sunday, or stayed away from Gethsemane and avoided his arrest, but he didn't. Jesus could have lied. When asked if he was the King of Jews, he could have said, "No, not me." And then Pilate would have released him. Jesus could have hired a very expensive lawyer to get him off. But he didn't. He could have spoken up, but instead remained silent.

Jesus didn't fight. He didn't turn to flight. He stood there and took it. He let the lies be spoken. He let the hatred turn against him. He let the soldiers whip him. He let the Sanhedrin spit on him. He let Pilate become wishy-washy and vacillate. He let all of this happen. He submitted to these weak, human people because he wanted to be there.

## *II. He wanted to save us.*

This whole situation frightened Pilate. He wished it never happened. He tried every backdoor way to release Jesus. He reasoned with them. He claimed he didn't want to meddle in religious affairs. He even sent Jesus to Herod hoping to pass the buck. Nothing was working. In desperation he appealed to emotion and their sensibilities. He had Jesus flogged and brought out wearing a crown of thorns. Isaiah's prophecy tells us how awful Jesus looked. He was so shredded by the flogging and beating that he didn't look human. Pilate hoped this pitiful sight would persuade the crowd to give up. He hoped they would have enough blood for the day and go home, but they wanted him crucified all the more. Pilate tried everything except his authority to release Jesus. He tried sarcasm, calling Jesus, the bloody, meek, beaten Jesus a king, but the crowds wanted him dead. He talked to Jesus in private hoping Jesus would beg for his life, but he didn't. Pilate even came out and said he found no basis for any punishment, let alone the death penalty, but the crowds said that Jesus claimed to be God and must die. This last accusation frightened Pilate.

The Romans believed in a whole pantheon of gods. Could this Jesus be some sort of god? If so, it wouldn't fare well with Pilate if he killed a god. Pilate felt stuck. He knew he should release Jesus. But the crowds were not backing down. Then his wife sent a message to him to have nothing to do with Jesus. She had a bad dream, bad enough to scare her. Finally Pilate gave in. He handed him over to be crucified.

Pilate hated this moment. He wished it never happened. Not Jesus. Jesus was not some helpless victim caught up in a terrible situation. He wanted to be there. Jesus didn't whimper or whine or scream injustice. Instead, he displayed utmost confidence and determination. In reality, it wasn't Pilate who crucified Jesus. It wasn't the crowd. No, it was Jesus who let them crucify him. He welcomed crucifixion because of you and me. You wouldn't go to the surgeon and say, "Doctor? Operate on me and remove a kidney, my spleen and anything else you want." "But you are not sick?" he responds. "I know; do it anyways." That would be sadistic and stupid. But if a relative of yours needs a kidney transplant and you are a perfect match and you tell the doctor to operate and remove your kidney, then that is an act of love.

Jesus endured, welcomed, and wanted all of this including the cross and death because he loves us and because this is God's way, the only way, he can save us from the terminal illness of our sins. He does a transplant here. He transplants our sin into himself and dies the death and hell we deserve. He then transplants the perfect life he lived on earth into us so that, in God's eyes, we are just as holy as Jesus himself. He endured all, even death on a cross, to save us.

Jesus predicted this when he compared himself to the good shepherd, **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."** Pilate may have issued the order. The crowds may have demanded it. The soldiers may have hung him on the cross. But Jesus was in total control. He used his authority over them to lay down his life for his sheep, and we will see Sunday, he uses his authority to take up his life again.

Jesus did not fight Pilate and the Sanhedrin. He did not flee, either. He was as quiet as a lamb before the shearers and the slaughter. That is because he did have another fight on his hands, the fight with the devil over us. Jesus crushed his head that day. But now the battle is over, the victory is won. Thanks be to God that we share in that victory through Jesus Christ. Amen.