

## ***THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF FEAR***

**John 18:28-19:16**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Courage has always been rare.
  - i. Most people don't choose the right course of action, they choose the path of least resistance. They choose the path that is safest, easiest, securest, most comfortable, and least risky.
  - ii. In the workplace we don't base our decisions on the desire to please God, but on the fear of getting terminated.
  - iii. Doctors don't base their decisions on what's best for their patients, but on the fear of losing their practice.
  - iv. Politicians no longer fear God, they fear getting voted out office.
  - v. Preachers no longer speak the truth out of fear of losing people. They don't preach to grow people, but to draw a crowd.
  - vi. Corporate CEOs are so terrified of the LGBT Gestapo, the woke police, the social justice warriors, and the environmental wackos, they will are willing to do just about anything to avoid being canceled.
  - vii. School administrators are so afraid of lawsuits, that they sacrifice what's best for the students.
  - viii. Students are not motivated by their love for Christ, but by the fear of rejection and ridicule.
2. Courage is indeed rare in our generation. But it is desperately needed. Our world desperately needs people who are committed to doing what is right, no matter the consequences. Children are looking for role models like that. Voters are looking politicians like that. Shoppers are looking for corporations like that. Christians are looking for pastors like that. Lost people are looking for Christians like that.
3. Our world wants to know, does courage still exist? Is there anyone out there who still stands by his principles no matter what?
4. Our world wants to know, How can I develop courage? How can I overcome fear?
5. This morning we are looking at a story that will help us to better understand and to grow in courage.

### **II. CONTEXT**

1. In John 18, Jesus and the disciples went to the garden of Gethsemane. Judas showed up with small army and had Jesus arrested. Jesus stood before the former high priest Annas, and then he was sent to the current high priest, Caiaphas. There the Jewish leaders interrogated Jesus and charged Him with blasphemy and sentenced him to death.

### **III. TEXT: John 18:28-19:16**

1. 28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They did not enter the headquarters themselves; otherwise they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover.
  - i. After the Jewish leaders sentenced Jesus to death, they led him to stand trial in front of the Roman governor, Pilate, in Jerusalem.
  - ii. This was all happening during the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, one of the major Jewish festivals.
  - iii. To enter the temple and offer a sacrifice, a Jew had to be ceremonially clean. And to eat the Passover meal, they had to be ceremonially clean. But according to scribal law (oral law), you would make yourself unclean if you entered a Gentile's home. And you would not be able to enter the temple or celebrate the festival until you take a ceremonial bath and wait until the next day. So instead of entering Pilate's headquarters, Pilate went out to meet with them.
2. 29 So Pilate came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?"
3. 30 They answered him, "If this man weren't a criminal, we wouldn't have handed him over to you."
4. 31 Pilate told them, "You take him and judge him according to your law."
5. "It's not legal for us to put anyone to death," the Jews declared. 32 They said this so that Jesus's words might be fulfilled indicating what kind of death he was going to die.
  - i. Pilate was not convinced that Jesus had done anything wrong; at least, nothing that concerned him or Rome. So, he suggested that the Jews handle it on their own. The Jews had their own court, and they hold trial and punish people. However, the Jews did not have the legal right to carry out capital punishment. At this time in history, the Romans controlled Israel. And only the Romans could carry out capital punishment. The Romans called it *ius gladii*, the right of the sword. So, after the Jewish leaders condemned Jesus to death, they need to convince the Roman governor to carry it out.
  - ii. Verse 32 says this fulfilled Jesus' words indicating the kind of death He would die. In John 12:32-33, Jesus predicted that He would be lifted up from the earth and killed – this referred to crucifixion. If the Jews would have executed Jesus, they would have stoned him. So, for Christ's prophecy to be fulfilled, the Romans would have to crucify Him.
6. 33 Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"
7. 34 Jesus answered, "Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?"
8. 35 "I'm not a Jew, am I?" Pilate replied. "Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"

9. 36 “My kingdom is not of this world,” said Jesus. “If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”
10. 37 “You are a king then?” Pilate asked.
11. “You say that I’m a king,” Jesus replied. “I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”
12. 38 “What is truth?” said Pilate.
  - i. When the Jews took Jesus to Pilate, they didn’t tell Pilate about their charge of blasphemy. Pilate wasn’t concerned with that. Instead, Luke 23:2 says that they accused Jesus of urging people not to pay taxes to Rome, and claiming to be a king. In other words, they accused Jesus of trying to start an insurrection against Rome. So, Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?”
  - ii. But Jesus made it clear that his kingdom was not of this world. This statement was true in three ways:
    1. The kingdom of God is not a political kingdom that would in any way rival Israel or Rome. His was a spiritual kingdom in which He reigned in the hearts of His people.
    2. Unlike the kingdoms of this world, the kingdom of God does not spread and expand by force. It spreads as people willingly choose to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ. This is one major difference between Christianity and Islam. We support religious liberty, but authentic conversion must be chosen, not compelled.
    3. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world because this “world” in Scripture often refers to the evil world system that is in rebellion against God. The Bible says don’t love the world; and friendship with the world is adultery against God. The world is based on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions. This world is passing away. But Christ’s kingdom is not of this world, it is of God. The kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rm 14:17).
  - iii. Then Jesus explained that His mission was not to build an earthly, political kingdom, or to overthrow Rome, but to testify to the truth. He is the truth (Jn 14:6), and His mission was to convince people to believe in Him as the Savior of the world.
13. After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, “I find no grounds for charging him. 39 You have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So, do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?”
14. 40 They shouted back, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

- i. The Roman governor had a tradition of releasing one prisoner to the people every Passover. But instead of choosing to pardon Jesus, they chose a man called Barabbas. Who was this Barabbas?
  - ii. We know from Mark and Luke that he had taken part in an insurrection and had committed murder.
  - iii. John calls him a revolutionary. The Greek word (*lestes*) means “robber,” not revolutionary. Many translations use the word “robber,” while some say “revolutionary.” Why “revolutionary”? There are two Greek words for thief. *Kleptes* refers to a thief who steals in secret so as to go undetected. This is where we get our word “kleptomaniac,” a person who is addicted to stealing, even if they don’t need to. But the word used here is *lestes*, which refers to a robber who steals openly and violently. We already know that Barabbas had been involved in an insurrection, so perhaps the translators assume that he robbed and killed for political purposes – perhaps targeting Roman officials and Jews who supported them.
  - iv. William Barclay makes an interesting point about the name Barabbas, which is a last name. Bar means “son of.” So, Barabbas can either mean Bar Abba, “son of the father,” (abba means father), or Bar Rabban, son of the Rabbi. If the later is correct, it is possible that Barabbas was the son of a Jewish Rabbi who had become a political zealot.
  - v. Barclay also points out that some Greek manuscripts tell us his first name, Jesus. Jesus was a popular name, since it was the Greek form of Joshua. So, it is possible that the Jewish leaders told Pilate, “We don’t want Jesus son of Joseph; give us Jesus son of the Rabbi.”
15. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 The soldiers also twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and clothed him in a purple robe. 3 And they kept coming up to him and saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” and were slapping his face.
- i. Flogging, a.k.a. scourging, was a gruesome form of punishment. The criminal was stripped and tied to a post with his hands up above his head so that his back was fully exposed. Then he was beaten with a whip, which usually lasted thirty-nine lashes, but often went longer than that, depending on the mood of the soldiers. Several torturers worked together, taking turns when they tired out. The whip was called a cat-of-nine-tails. It had nine braided leather strands with heavy metal balls woven into them, as well as sharp pieces of bone, metal, or bronze. The metal balls would create deep bruises which would eventually burst open as the flogging went on. The sharp pieces would dig into the body and rip off the flesh, causing deep cuts to the bone.
  - ii. **William Barclay** “Few remained conscious throughout the ordeal; some died; and many went raving mad. Jesus stood that.”

- iii. The soldiers mocked Jesus by dressing him as a king with a crown of thorns and a purple robe. Purple represents royalty and was probably a soldier's robe. The crown of thorns was made from the long spikes (up to twelve inches) of a date palm. The thorns would have cut deeply into Christ's head.
  - iv. They teased Him and slapped Him in the face.
- 16. 4 Pilate went outside again and said to them, "Look, I'm bringing him out to you to let you know I find no grounds for charging him." 5 Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"
- 17. 6 When the chief priests and the temple servants saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"
- 18. Pilate responded, "Take him and crucify him yourselves, since I find no grounds for charging him."
- 19. 7 "We have a law," the Jews replied to him, "and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."
  - i. Pilate did not see Jesus as a political threat, so he told the Jews to take care of it themselves. Then they said that Jesus needed to be executed because He had committed a Jewish capital crime, since he made himself the Son of God.
  - ii. They were referring to the crime of blasphemy. Leviticus 24:16 says that the punishment for blasphemy was execution. Blasphemy is speaking evil against God. There are two kinds of blasphemy. First, attributing some evil to God. Second, giving the attributes of God to a creature. By claiming to be the Son of God, Jesus was claiming equality with God, which to the Jews was blasphemy.
- 20. 8 When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever. 9 He went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus did not give him an answer. 10 So Pilate said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?"
- 21. 11 "You would have no authority over me at all," Jesus answered him, "if it hadn't been given you from above. This is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."
  - i. Jesus was not defending Himself or trying to convince Pilate to release Him. So, Pilate wondered why. Pilate reminded Jesus that he had the authority to kill Jesus or to set him free.
  - ii. Then Jesus informed Pilate of the spiritual reality of the sovereignty of God. No man has any power or authority or ability to do anything unless that power is given him by God. In other words, Jesus told Pilate that he could not do anything to Jesus without God's permission.
  - iii. We would do well to remember that no evil can befall us, and no one can do any evil to us, without God's knowledge and consent. And if He allows it, He promises to use it for our good and His glory.

22. 12 From that moment Pilate kept trying to release him. But the Jews shouted, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!”
  - i. Verse 12 is important for our study today. Pilate kept trying to release Jesus.
  - ii. But the Jews threatened to accuse Pilate of being a traitor to Caesar if he released Jesus. This put Pilate in a corner.
23. 13 When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge’s seat in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Aramaic, Gabbatha). 14 It was the preparation day for the Passover, and it was about noon. Then he told the Jews, “Here is your king!”
24. 15 They shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”
25. Pilate said to them, “Should I crucify your king?”
26. “We have no king but Caesar!” the chief priests answered.
27. 16 Then he handed him over to be crucified.

#### IV. PILATE’S PREDICAMENT

1. If you look back at this story, you can see that Pilate tried hard to release Jesus. Three times Pilate told the Jews, “This man is innocent; I find no reason to charge him (18:38; 19:4, 6).” John 19:12 says, “Pilate kept trying to release him.” This is evident in four actions:
  - i. First, he tried to refuse to deal with the case. **John 18:33** “You take him and judge him according to your law.” But the Jews persisted because they wanted Jesus to be executed.
  - ii. Second, he tried to release Jesus by referring to the tradition of releasing a prisoner at the Passover, but the Jews rejected Jesus and called for the release of a violent criminal, Barabbas.
  - iii. Third, he tried to compromise by having Jesus flogged. Did you notice that Jesus was flogged before His conviction? Pilate had him flogged, and then after he was stripped, beaten half to death, and covered in blood, Pilate brought Him out again and told the Jews, “I find no reason to charge him.” He hoped the people be satisfied with the flogging and see that Jesus was no threat. But the Jews shouted, “Crucify him!”
  - iv. Fourth, he made emotional appeal in John 19:15 “Should I crucify your king?” But the people replied, “We have no king but Caesar!”
2. But in the end, Pilate sentenced Jesus to death. Why? He clearly knew that Jesus was innocent. He clearly did not want to execute an innocent man. So why did he cave in to the Jews’ request to execute Jesus. To understand Pilate’s decision, you need to understand his history.
3. 63 BC: Rome conquered Palestine.
4. 37 BC: Rome makes Herod the Great the king of Israel.
5. 4 BC: Herod died and divides his kingdom among his three sons.
  - i. Antipas received Galilee and Peraea.

- ii. Philip received Batanea, Auranitis, and Trachonitis.
  - iii. Archelaus, 18 years old, received Idumaea, Judaea and Samaria.
- 6. 6 BC: Antipas and Philip were capable rulers, but Archelaus was crooked and cruel, so the Romans deposed him and in his place appointed a Roman governor over Judea.
- 7. 26-36 BC: Augustus appointed Pontius Pilate as the fifth governor of Judea.
- 8. Pilate's headquarters were in Caesarea, not Jerusalem. He had 3,000 soldiers under his command, some in Caesarea and some in a fortress in Jerusalem. He had full control of the military and judicial administration of the province. He visited every part of the province at least once and heard cases and complaints. He administered taxation, but did not have the authority to raise taxes. His salary was paid exclusively from the Roman treasury, and his was strictly forbidden to take bribes or gifts. If he was a bad governor, the people of the province had the power to report him to the emperor.
- 9. Pilate was a failure as a governor. William Barclay recounts three examples:
  - i. On his first visit to Jerusalem, Pilate came with a detachment of soldiers, who had their Roman standards. On the standard was the image in metal of the Roman emperor. Since the emperor was worshiped and called a god, this violated the Jewish religious law. It was the image of a false god in the holy city. All previous Roman governors, understanding the unique Jewish religion, removed the image from the standards before entering the city, but Pilate refused to do so. This greatly offended the Jews. As he returned to Caesarea, the Jews followed him, and continued to plea with him for five days never to do that again. Pilate told them to meet him in the amphitheater, where he had them surrounded by armed soldiers. Pilate threatened to kill them then and there if they did not stop making their requests. The Jews refused to budge and told them to strike. Pilate couldn't kill defenseless men, so he caved and agreed to their request. He was beaten. This was not a good start.
  - ii. To build a new water supply (aqueduct) into Jerusalem, Pilate took money from the Temple treasury. The people protested and rioted in the streets. Pilate had his soldiers dress as civilians and mingle with the crowd, and then at his command they attacked the people. Many were clubbed or stabbed to death.
  - iii. When he stayed in Jerusalem, he stayed at Herod's palace, which he decorated with shields that had the image of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Again, the people protested and reported the matter to Tiberius, who ordered Pilate to remove them.
- 10. Along with all of this, just two years before this incident Pilate's patron in Rome, Sejanus (the chief administrator of the Empire under Tiberius Caesar), fell out of favor and was executed.

11. Pilate was already on shaky ground with the emperor. He had already been reported once. And then the Jews threaten to report him over Jesus when they said in verse 12, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!"
12. So, Pilate, out of fear of losing his job, executed an innocent man.
13. Let me spell out for you the danger of fear. Out of fear, Pilate didn't merely convict an innocent man; he didn't merely flog an innocent man; he didn't merely execute an innocent man; he didn't merely ignore his wife's warning to release Jesus because of dream she had about Him; out of fear of losing his job, Pilate had an innocent man crucified – the most brutal form of torture and capital punishment known to man. That's the danger and power of fear. That's the devastating consequences of fear.
14. Pontius Pilate is a reminder of the need for courage. Without courage, fear will drive you to do things you will regret. Think of the horrible acts of evil carried out by Nazi soldiers because they were afraid of the consequences of disobeying orders. Fear will drive you to be everything you don't want to be. We need courage.

#### **V. THE NEED FOR COURAGE**

1. Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the determination to do the right thing in the face of fear. It is doing the right thing and leaving the consequences to God.
2. Being afraid is not the problem. Giving in to fear is the problem. The desire to smack an annoying person in the face is not the problem; giving in to that desire is the problem.
3. Fear is the desire to save yourself from harm. Courage is risking your safety, comfort, and security for a higher cause.
4. Is there a higher cause than your personal safety, comfort, and security? Is there something more important than that? Yes! Jesus Christ. Suffering for Christ is better than comfort. Dying for Christ is better than life. Poverty for Christ is better than riches. Shame for Christ is better than popularity with man.
5. When Jesus saved you, there's a reason He didn't immediately take you away to heaven. There's a reason He left you on this planet filled with sin, suffering, and sorrow. He left you here to live for Him (2 Cor 5:15). To make your life all about Him. To spend and be spent for Him. To suffer and if necessary die for Him.
6. So, let's talk about how to cultivate courage.

#### **VI. HOW TO DEVELOP A COURAGEOUS HEART**

1. You must have moral clarity. What is the right thing to do? You need to be very clear about God's will; about right and wrong. This requires a thorough knowledge of God's word.
2. You must have devotional clarity. Who is in charge? You must be fully-surrendered and yielded to Jesus Christ. You must come to a decision where you tell Jesus, "Your will, Your way, always."



3. You must have spiritual clarity. Who will take care of me? You must have strong faith that God loves you, is watching over you, is guiding and directing your steps, and will work all things together for your good.
4. You must have teleological clarity. Why do I exist? You must understand that your purpose in life, your calling in life, is not to have fun; it is not to be famous; it is not to live as long as possible; it is not to get rich; it is to live for God.
5. You must have compensational clarity. What will yield the greatest reward? You must have faith in God's promise that suffering for Christ will be more rewarding than temporary safety, comfort, or security. You must keep your eyes on eternity – eternal rewards.
6. You must have social clarity. Is anyone else suffering for Jesus? You must realize that you are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Heb 12:1). That men and women all through history have been risking and losing it all for Jesus Christ. That you are not alone. The Bible is filled with examples. Esther and Daniel. Nehemiah. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The prophets. John the Baptist. The apostles.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

1. Let me conclude with a more recent story. During WWII the Nazis invaded and occupied Holland. They rounded up the Jews and sent them to concentration camps. One Christian family decided to do something. Corrie Ten Boom and her family opened up their home to Jews who were on the run. At great risk, they built a special hiding place in her bedroom to conceal the Jews. They also oversaw an underground network of smuggling Jews to safe places. In all, it is estimated that the Ten Boom family saved 800 Jews. Eventually the Nazis caught them and sent Corrie, her sister, and her father to prison. Eventually the Nazis released her, but not before her sister passed away due to the harsh conditions of the prison. Her father contracted tuberculosis in prison and died shortly after he was released. That is courage. It is the willingness to do what is right and leave the consequences to God.
2. From time to time in your Christian life, your devotion will be tested. Your commitment will be tested. Your love for Christ will be tested. Your faith will be tested. You will be faced with a decision to serve Christ, or save yourself. Christ or comfort. Christ or security. Christ or safety. Christ or riches. Christ or career. Christ or popularity. When that test comes, I want to be ready. I want to be courageous. I want to do the right thing and leave the consequences to God. I want that for you to.