

John 18:28-19:16

Sunday 2/19/2023

We have been studying a book by Peter, and we looked at him over a three-week period to cover all the material. What a great study he is for all of us to learn what God is really doing in our lives and what He wants to do. I broke him down, basically for the simplicity of understanding it all, into four areas of our study. I talked first of all about his spiritual growth. We talked then about why God continued to use him in spite of the things that he got into. We talked about his loving loyalty to Christ, and then we talked about last week how God made a way back.

Character studies in the Bible are paramount, as far as I am concerned, to really understanding who we are, but also the people that we work with and the people that we deal with. Today, as we move on, we read in John 18, and we are going to read quite a passage today, all the way up to John 19:15. Today, I want to bring you another character study, and we are just going to follow them through as they go through our time together in the Word of God. I want to just bring them up to the fact that today we are going to look at Pontius Pilate. He is the next character that we have.

Now, one of the things that I want you to do as you grow in the Lord is I want you, obviously, as you get involved in ministry—and we know that ministry is people—I want you to learn how to deal with people. There are a lot of good places in the Bible that show you why people do the things that they do. People will fall into patterns, and you are going to find that no matter what their vocation is, what their income is, what they do in life, what their hobbies are, whatever the case, you are basically going to deal with two fundamental people groups. You are going to have to deal with people who are saved people on all different levels of spirituality, and then you are going to have to come and deal with people who have never trusted Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. These are people that are lost, without hope, without Christ.

I. Four Pictures Of An Unserved Man

You are going to find that this is going to be another pattern that you are going to find people, and the Bible is filled with these, but fundamentally, you have four major pictures in the Bible of an unsaved man or an unsaved woman. Now, there are plenty of stories and pictures that I would characterize as sub-studies, but in my mind, in dealing with people over the years, I have seen people fall into just four fundamental patterns, and then all the other stuff just kind of filters into this.

The first one in your Bible would be back in Exodus 1-8, and this would be Pharaoh. Pharaoh is a perfect picture of an unsaved man when he is faced with God's people and what God wants him to do. Pharaoh is a classic case of when you start to deal with people about their soul. Maybe you are here today, and you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. It does not necessarily make you a bad person; that is not why you have not done it. Many people have never heard the truth. Many people have never just been in a situation where anybody even explained it to them. So I get that.

You know what Pharaoh said? He said, "I'll let the people go tomorrow." That is what unsaved people say when you confront them about their salvation and their soul. They will say, "Nah, I'll do it tomorrow."

The next guy in the Bible we are going to find in Acts 24, and this will be Felix. When Paul was before Felix, Felix is confronted by Paul in Acts 24, and when he is confronted with it, he says, "I'll call you back when it's a more convenient time." I have had to hear that all the time.

King Agrippa, he is in Acts 26, and when Paul deals with him, and Paul really nails him on what he knows to be the truth, he says, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

You are going to find that when you learn these four guys, and you learn who they are and what they are doing and everything that is happening, the fourth one is my favorite, and this is the character study I want to talk to you about this morning: Pontius Pilate. Pontius Pilate is one of the greatest studies in the Bible about an unsaved man and the way he tries to get around the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Trial Of Jesus Before Pilate

I want to begin reading for you in John 18:28. We are going to come all the way down to the end of that chapter, and then we are going to read the first sixteen verses in chapter 19, just to get a feel for our message today.

John 18:28-40

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

John 19:1-16

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and to release thee?

Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

Now, Father, help us today to look at this man's life and to see how this fits into every one of our lives before we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior. I pray here that there is a young man or a young woman or a mom or a dad or somebody here today that they have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. That is what this church is all about. Oh, we have a lot of fun, we do a lot of things, we have a lot of good time together, like the Super Bowl party last week and the skating activity today and all the things that we do. But all of that is just a means to an end, and that is to bring people the truth about their own spiritual condition and Christ's death on the cross and their salvation. Help us today, Father, to be able to see this man's life and whatever state we are in spiritually, if we are unsaved, that we may be able to see ourselves in it. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.

III. Pilate's Indecision And The Nature Of Truth

In 1 Timothy 6:12-13, he tells us there:

1 Timothy 6:12-13

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

Now, you know what that tells me? That tells me that Pontius Pilate is a picture of an unsaved man. And that tells me that you and I as believers need to be a good witness for the unsaved people that Pontius Pilate represents. As I look at this story, I cannot help but see this is where an unsaved man is. This is where an unsaved woman is. I get this, I understand this. My goal today is maybe to help you get to see this.

He said over there in John 18:38, and I told you to mark that, when he says, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." And Pilate said in John 18:38, "What is truth?" Now, that is an amazing statement to me. That is a picture fundamentally of an unsaved man. Pilate says, "What is truth?" when he has the truth standing in front of him. This morning, if you have that same question in your heart, "What is truth?" the truth is all around you today, found in the Word of God.

Now, Pontius Pilate is a man who pictures an unsaved man or woman who has a real problem understanding what truth really is. I want you to turn to two passages of Scripture in the Bible. I want to first show you the problem that he really has. This is the problem many unsaved people have. You find people like Pharaoh, you find people like Agrippa, you find people like Festus, you find people that have every excuse in the world, and then you find people like Pilate.

Look at Acts 3:13. You want to get that in one hand, and then get Acts 4:26-27 in the other hand. I want to bring you a message today about a man who had the truth right in front of him, and I want to show you why he could not accept that truth. In Acts 3, Simon Peter is preaching here, and he says that the Jews denied Jesus Christ in the presence of Pontius Pilate when he was determined to let Him go. Then you go over to Acts 4:26-27, and it says of a truth, the rulers of this world, Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, the people of Israel, were against the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, look at that. One place says that he was for Jesus, determined to let Him go. The other place says that he was against Him and wanted to turn Him over to the Jews. There it is. I guess Pontius Pilate will go down in history as the man who just could not make up his mind one way or the other about the truth that was before him. He is a picture of somebody who is unsaved and wishy-washy. He is a picture of somebody who is unsaved and always wants to play in the middle of the road. He is a picture of somebody who is on a mental fence, cannot make up his mind one place or the other, tries to straddle the middle. As the man says, when you walk down the middle of the road, you are going to get hit from both sides.

When I look at his life, I guess of all the men in the Bible, Pontius Pilate got into the worst situation that a man could get into. He is standing there asking questions about truth when the very truth of the universe is standing right before him. Just like an unsaved man here today or woman, or in any church anywhere, hearing the Gospel and the Word of God being preached, and that person is an unsaved person, truth is right before you today.

The tragic thing about this is that Pontius Pilate is not like all the other people in the Bible that are terrible people. As far as the record is concerned, and I get it, there are things we do not know, but as far as the record shows us, he was a good man. I mean, you would take a guy like Judas, who was a thief and held the bag; when he went to hell, you would expect it. You would take a guy like old Ahab back there in 1 Kings 16; you would expect a guy like that to die and bust hell wide open. You get over in Mark 6, and you have Herod. Well, you would expect a man like Herod to wind up in the lake of fire.

It is always a tragedy to me when a man goes to hell, no matter what his state is, but it is really as tragic as when a decent, good man goes to hell. What I am saying is it is a tragedy when a man loses his soul anytime, but a man who outwardly is moral, who tries to do the best he can, a man who is good, a man who is clean living, he is loving, he takes care of his family, when he loses his soul, or she loses her soul, over one little decision, it is rough. To my way of thinking, as I look at this story, Pilate is one of the most tragic characters in the Word of God by what he symbolizes for us today. Of all the characters listed in the Bible with all of their sins and all of their faults, there is only one fault listed for this man, and it fixed him. You know what it was?

Indecision. Pilate was one of those kind of guys who tried to work it out, tried to play both ends against the middle, and he wound up losing his soul.

Character studies by the absolute standard of the Word of God that defines human nature and human behavior are invaluable. I want to show you today how Pilate tried four ways to get around the decision that he had to make about Jesus Christ. They are the same four ways that an unsaved man or an unsaved woman will try to do it today. When I look at his life and I see these things the way I have seen these things so many times in people's lives when you are trying to tell them the truth, you know what his problem was? Fundamentally, the problems that he had are the same problem that you have if you are here and unsaved this morning. You know what it was? He had Jesus on his hands. If you are here this morning and you are lost and you do not know for sure if you die right now you will go to heaven, that is the issue that you have in your life. You have Jesus on your hands. What are you going to do with Him?

IV. Pilate's Attempts To Avoid Decision

➤ Carelessness

The first thing, one of the ways that Pilate tried to brush off the Lord Jesus Christ, was by carelessness. It says over there, they said, "Crucify him." John 18:28. Pilate said, "Why? What evil hath he done?" They said, "By our law he ought to die." You know what Pilate said? He said, "Oh, okay, then you take him. You take him and you judge him and you kill him." You see? He just tried to carelessly blow it off. "Oh, well, if by your law he ought to die, then you take him. You go ahead and do it, and I am out of it, man."

You know what the Jews said? I love this. The Jews said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." John 18:31. Pontius Pilate had Him on his hands again. Did you ever see a man try to do that, or a woman try to do that? Sure you have. I start out there and tried to talk to them, and they will say to me, "Well, you know what, brother, you got your religion, and I got mine. I just do not want to become a fanatic. I believe there is a God. I believe in God. I believe you can worship God out in the woods. I believe you can worship God on a golf course. I believe you can worship God anywhere. There is a time and a place for religion, but it is just not now."

I had a man tell me one time, "You know what? There are all kinds of different roads to heaven. This is your road. I have my own road." I have seen him say, "Ever hear a man say, 'You know, I got my religion, and it is my business, and it is none of your business'?" I have seen guys put off Christ that way all of my life. Folks, you realize the most terrible sins in this world are not the sins of commission; it is the sin of omission. That is right. The greatest sin in this world are not the things that you do. The greatest sin in this world are the things that we do not do. That is where it gets us. That is what hurts the work of God. That is what hurts the work of the Holy Spirit of God. That is what hurts somebody's life. That is what hurts a church. That is what hurts God's people. It is what God's people do not do. When you give Christ a brush-off and you just take that careless approach, you just wind up lost.

I remember a while back when AJ and Sarah wanted to get married. Now, this is one of these little private stories that I never told anybody, but it is a cute story, and it makes my point. AJ

came to me one day, and he says, "I really love Sarah, and I want to marry Sarah." I said, "Well, that is good." He says, "I am going to ask her to marry me this weekend." I said, "Well, that is really good. I am happy for you." So the story goes that he took her out to a very romantic place, had a nice dinner, took her out to a very romantic place overlooking the city, pushed the top down on the car so he could see the moon. That is really good because he did not have a convertible. He looks into her eyes, and he says to her, "Sarah, will you marry me?" She looked at him, and she says, "You know, AJ, I really like you." He said, "Oh, that is good. Let us get married." She says, "You know, AJ, I think you are one of the greatest young men I have ever met." He said, "Great, let us get married." She says, "You are really fun to be with." He says, "I get it, let us get married." And she says, "But you know, I just do not really want to hurt your feelings." He said, "Do not then, let us get married." And she says, "I just cannot say yes or I just cannot say no at this particular time."

Now, you know what she did? She just turned him down flat. Later, after many, many hours of counseling, she saw the value in AJ, and she accepted. Here they are today, happily married, on the way of starting a family. But my point is this: when it comes to Jesus Christ, you cannot take that careless attitude. You either accept Him or you do not. The Bible says, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." I am telling you right now, you do not say, "Well, yes or no." You do not say, "Well, you know, I really love God. I really believe in God. Oh, I go to church. Oh, I believe." No, no, no. It is more than that. You either accept Him and invite Him in, or you do not. It is just that simple. She just flat turned him down, and that is the way it is with God. Sitting here today, you have either accepted Him or you have rejected Him. Accepting Him is not just like she did with him, "Well, I really like God. I like church. I have fun. I have a Bible." No, no, it is you inviting Him into your life to be married to Him someday.

But carelessness will not get rid of Christ. Pilate said, "You take him and you judge him." And you know what those Jews said? They said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." John 18:31. And they put him right back to Pilate, and Pilate had Him on his hands again. If I am talking to an unsaved person, listen, you can put me off. You can call me rude. You can tune me out. You can turn me off. But there is one person that you will never tune out of your life: it is the Lord Jesus Christ. You know why? Because truth is standing before you today. I am telling you, you will not put Him off. You might put me off. You might blow me off and just say, "I do not know what he is talking about." You will not put Him off.

Let me tell you something, sister, you get a bad report from the doctor, and you are laying on an operating table before they put that mask on you to put you out, you will hear the rest of the message. You bet you will. Some of you young guys out there that do not want anything to do with God right now, and you live your life the way you want, you get out there about two or three o'clock in the morning and get into a car wreck, and you get pinned under the car about four o'clock when they are trying, you will hear what God has got to say, clearly, because there are some people you do not put off. There is one man that I do not care, you will never get around. Pilate tried carelessness. He said, "I will get rid of him. I will just give him back to the Jew," but he did not. He had Him on his hands again, and he wound up losing his soul.

➤ Cowardice

You know the next thing he tried? He tried cowardice. He tried being a coward. Oh, how I have seen them try that. I have seen them pass the buck. I have had them say to me, "Well, preacher, I am just not ready to live it yet." And I think a person has to live it. I think there are some things in my life I have got to fix first before I could ever go to Jesus. I have seen them shake. I have seen them tremble. I have seen them shake and tremble and then talk about not having the right feeling. Why, if God knows the secrets of the hearts of men today and women today, eighty-five percent of people probably go to hell because they are scared.

You know what keeps people from getting saved? They are afraid. Some of you are afraid your buddies, if you got saved and you got back to work tomorrow, your buddies will laugh at you if you mess up. Some of you are afraid if you have to carry your Bible now, and people will look at you. Some people, you are afraid because you cannot face the boys at work or the women at work in the office. You are afraid of what happens, you know, when they invite you out to happy hour, and you go, but you cannot drink anymore. The biggest reason why people do not get saved is they are scared stiff.

Almost, I do not know, thirty-five years ago maybe, I preached a revival down in a little river town called Bridgeport, Ohio. I preached a five-night meeting down there, starting on a Sunday night and going through the whole week. Every night, a man in the military, he was a staff sergeant, came to hear me preach. He wore his uniform. That guy came every night. I preached hot and heavy, boy, when I was back in those days when I was in a revival, you got both barrels, man, every night. He came back every night. I looked at that guy, and he was with a combat unit. I think he was with the 9th Infantry, if I remember right. He had a presidential unit citation. His left side of his chest looked like an Army Navy store. He got a CIB combat badge. This guy had been some places and done some things.

It was the last night of my sermon, and I had been praying for this guy all week long. When I gave the invitation, that old boy stepped out and came down and trusted Christ as his own personal Savior. I pulled him aside and I dealt with him because I had just gotten out of the Army too, and I could relate to wherever he was at. I put my arm around him, and his tears were running down his face. I said, "Sarge," I says, "Why did it take you so long? I mean, you were here every night. I watched you in the invitation. What took you the fifth last night you come down?" He looks at me, and he says, "Preacher, I have taken machine gun nests by myself. I have been places where I did not know if I was going to survive or not." He says, "There are times that I have been so scared in combat that I did not know what to do." But he says, "I have got to tell you, the very thought of coming down this aisle in front of all these women and all these kids and kneeling down here, just scared the fire out of me." He went, "Whoa, scared, afraid." That is what happens. That is what happens.

Pilate had a decision to make, and he could not make it. You know what he did? He does what all cowards do. He tried to get somebody else to make it for him. That is what he did. Let somebody else make the decision. Let them bear the heat. He says, "Where is he from?" They said, "He is from Herod's jurisdiction." "Oh, send him to Herod." See, let him make the decision. Let him

bear the heat. He is finding himself, not only does he have Jesus in front of him, the truth, that he has got to make a decision what to do with Him. He is caught now, if you saw what we read, in a political scenario. He is caught now where they are saying, "If you do not kill this guy, you are no friend of Caesar." Now it is getting political. The Bible says, "Now he is even more afraid." You bet he is.

It is like some of you this morning. It is like people listening to my sound of my voice. It is like every time I preach revivals, and I have done hundreds of them over the years, every time you would preach, you would see people who just were scared stiff to make a decision for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you know what happens. Pilate said, "Where is he from?" They said, "He is from Herod's jurisdiction." "Send him to Herod." You know how it goes. It is recorded in Luke 23 for you. They brought Him into the judgment hall there before Herod, and the soldiers mocked Him and beat Him and made fun of Him and laughed at Him. Then they brought Him into Herod. Herod says, "Well, how are you doing today?" No answer. Herod says, "There are some folks that say you are John the Baptist risen from the dead." No answer. He says, "Well, you know," he says, "I hear you are quite a miracle worker." Blank, man, no answer. He says, "You are not very civil, are you? Do not you know I am trying to talk to you?" Nothing. He said, "Do not you know that I am a king?" Not one word. He said, "Do not you know if you do not talk to me, I have the power to cut your head off like I did John the Baptist?" Nothing.

You ever notice that there are some people in the Bible Jesus never bothers to speak to? Oh, Herod is one of them. He had nothing to say. Herod asked his questions blank. The Bible says that He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, like a sheep before his shearers. He was dumb, and He opened not His mouth. Let me tell you something. Herod had seared his conscience when he beheaded John the Baptist. He had nothing to do with God or what it did not do about it. Jesus never spoke to him. You know what he did? He shipped Him right back to Pontius Pilate, and Pilate had Him on his hands again. You are not going to get rid of Christ. Truth is standing before you today. Pilate got into a real mess. He knew what he had to do, but he just could not do it.

I have seen men like that. I have seen the tough guy act. I mentioned this Thursday night. I am glad we won the Super Bowl and all that, and that is good. I did not really care one way or the other, but I did not watch much of it. I watched the one last year when they had this parade, and they come down Grand or wherever it is and wind up down there at the old train station. I watched that thing last year, and I looked at this thing, and these guys, these are the guys that are supposed to be the role models. They are great football players. They are great athletes, and your kids need good role models. There is no question about that. But to watch those guys stand up there with a beer in their hand, shaking a champagne and spraying it all over the crowd, half of them are drunk by the time they get down to Union Station. Those kids down there watching that happen, saying to themselves, "That is what I want to be."

Let me tell you something, guys and girls, going with the crowd does not make you a man. Doing what the world does does not make you a man. It does not take any courage to do that. I walked as they stopped the bus, and they all got off, and they are high-fiving, and they are signing things, and they all got a beer in their hand. In the game, when they needed a thing or something great happened, they pointed to God, and now they have a beer in their hand because

they won it; they do not need God anymore. You know what I would like? You know what would have taken real courage in that thing? You will never see this. But you know what would have been real courage? If one of those players was truly saved, born again, loved the Lord, believed the Bible, and he is on that bus where everybody else is drinking, and when they all get off, he gets off with a handful of tracts. Instead of going up and displaying what a drunk they are, he starts passing. A guy like that, he could ride his own tract. He just won the Super Bowl. I would have had tracts made up and said, "We won the Super Bowl, but let me show you how I won the game of life." Then I would have put the whole plan of salvation and showed that we may be celebrating a victory here today at the Super Bowl, but I want you to celebrate the victory of Jesus Christ coming into your life and taking your sins away. Takes courage to do that. Do you think the sportscasters would have zeroed in on that? No, they zeroed in on the beer.

I am telling you young kids, you think that you have to go along with the crowd in the world, and that is the "in" thing to do. It does not take any courage to go with the world. I saw this movie one time, cannot remember the name of it. But this guy got put into an insane asylum. He was not nuts. I do not remember how he got there, but anyway, oh, they were punishing him for something. It was in a prison thing, and he was put in a sane asylum, and they were down in the basement. There were some loonies down there, believe me. It must have been two, three hundred, maybe four hundred. He is trying to, he has to live down there, he has to sleep down there, he has to eat with them. He is the only sane person down there. You could imagine what that would be like. Around the outside of the perimeter downstairs, you had four hundred people, zombies, nutcases, all walking in around a big circle, hours, days, all hours of the night, all around that big perimeter, they just walked in a circle, everybody walking, nobody talking, nobody looking. They just walked around in a circle, hours. This guy could not take it anymore. He had to get out. You know how he kept his sanity? Everybody was walking the same direction, and he started walking in the opposite direction. The crazy people could not get a hold of that because crazy people always want to go the same direction. Let me say that again. Crazy people always want to go the same direction. Let me say it one more time because I do not think you are getting it. Crazy people of this world always want to walk in one same direction. It takes a child of God who will go against the stream. This guy got out of that and kept his sanity because everybody was walking this way. He decided he was going to, and they tried to stop him. Oh, you should have seen it. They did not like the fact that he was going against the stream where they were going. He just kept pushing them away and kept walking around. He was not going to submit to the crazies of this world by doing what everybody else was doing.

Pilate is just going along with everybody. He is just trying to get the thing all worked out. He is just trying to get the thing where he can just do whatever he wants to do. I am telling you, it does not take a real man. The Bible says in Ezekiel 22 that God is looking for a man. He is looking for a man that will stand in the gap and make up the hedge. He is looking for somebody who will go the opposite direction that the world is going. Pilate was not that guy. Most people when they are unsaved, they are afraid. They are afraid that their life is going to be so different now, that their friends are not going to be their friends anymore, that they cannot do the old things. Hey, I have got news for you. God has got a new life for you that will be better than any old life you ever had on any best day of your life.

➤ Cleverness

You know the next thing he tried? He tried cleverness. I mean, this fits, man. Unsaved man, woman, this is us before we got saved. He has got Jesus on his hands, truth standing right in front of him. He tried carelessness, just to put Him on the Jews. That did not work. Then he tried to play the coward and get Herod to do it. That did not work. Now he is sitting there saying, "I have got this. I can figure this out. You know, I have been in tight spots before. I will work it out. I will tell you. I will work all this out." I will tell you something, not that one you will not. Let me tell you something. You will not work that one out. Listen, when a decision is holy and just and right in God's sight, and you have got to make it, you have got to make it. You cannot duck it. You cannot get away from it.

Do you know all down through history? Oh, this is so true. Once you see this and you broaden the perspective a little bit, you see that all down through history, man has tried to get around Jesus Christ by cleverness. Every religious system, just stop and think about it. Every religious system put together by the world. The Bible says in Proverbs 19:21, "There are many devices in a man's heart." Boy, there sure is. Every religious system in this world was put together so you did not have to make the decision that Pilate had to make, and that was he had Jesus on his hands.

You know what Catholicism is? It is a system where they believe the virgin birth. They believe the Trinity. They believe the second coming. They believe the bodily resurrection. They believe in all the fundamentals of the faith. Sure they do. But you know what? When that Catholic goes to church on Saturday night or Sunday morning, and he sits down there on his knees, and that priest comes down and takes that round wafer and puts it in his mouth, and he swallows that. You know what that wafer is? It is an alibi to get out of accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. That is all it is. That is all it is. Every religious system in this world was put together so you did not have to make the decision that Pilate is faced with, that you are faced with today.

You know what Muhammadism is? It is having Allah as your God, the Ten Commandments, the Quran. It is the teachings of Muhammad and his traditions and all the things that they go through and all the things that they have without ever receiving Jesus Christ. You know what Buddhism is? It is a system of getting rid of your karma and you meditate and going to a transcendental state, and you are one with the wheel of life and the Bodhisattva without ever receiving Jesus Christ. You know what Brahmism is? It is a system to get rid of your karma and again, transcendental state and one with the Atman of the Brahman universe, without ever trusting Christ as your own personal Savior. You know what Judaism is? It is the Ten Commandments, the Talmud, and the Torah. It is the revelation to the fathers. It is all the things in the Old Testament without ever trusting Jesus Christ. You know what Confucianism is? It is the teaching of the ancestors and the reverence of the spirits of the ancestors and living a moderate life, without ever trusting Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. You know what Protestantism is? It is the Golden Rule, Ten Commandments. It is Psalms 23. It is the Sermon on the Mount. It is the social gospel, without ever having to trust Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior.

Listen, the greatest religious systems in this world that have ever been invented are for the express purpose of getting you around the decision that Pontius Pilate had to make, and you cannot get around it. You just cannot. I remember preaching in public schools years ago what I used to do. The Gospel and the stars, and I used to do things in schools, and they would have me in. Cannot do it anymore. I used to do it in high schools, and I used to do it in colleges. I would get the, if looks could kill, I would get the most devastating looks from the professor or from the teacher that you could ever see in your life. You know why? Because they have spent twenty, thirty, forty thousand dollars to get out from under the decision that Pilate had to make. That is why. There have been many a man that goes to college to get a BA or an MA or a PhD to prove the Bible wrong, to get out of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior.

I remember I talked to a kid one time, and he was a nice kid. He was an intelligent kid, much smarter than I was. I tried to talk to him about the Lord, and all those things, and salvation. He said to me, he says, "You know what?" He says, "Honestly, if there was any other power in the universe," I was talking about God and the devil. He did not believe in either one. He says, "If there was any other power, God and the devil, in the universe, the whole structure breaks down." He says this, he says, "The physical laws could not exist." He says, "You could not, for instance, you could not count on the tensile strength of steel." I looked at that kid, and I said, "Kid, do you think the devil gives a flip about the tensile strength of steel? He wants to damn your soul for all of eternity. He wants you to burn like a torch. And you are worried about another power in the universe, not counting on the tensile strength of steel." Oh, they are so clever, man. They get their brain on it, educated mind. Old Bob Jones Senior used to say, "Education without salvation is damnation." Pete Ruckman used to say, "The bigger the belfry, the more room for the bats." I am telling you, man, cleverness will not do it.

Oh, they are so clever. I love it. I just do. I mean, "How did Jonah live for three days in the whale?" "The Bible says they crossed the Red Sea, and God split the Red Sea. It was not a Red Sea; it was a sea of reeds with only three inches of water." Oh, they are so clever. "How do all the animals get in Noah's Ark?" A guy said to me one time, he said, "How do all the animals, I have got a question for you." I am trying to witness to him now. They always try this clever approach. He says, "Well, I have got a question for you, preacher." He says, "How do all those animals get in Noah's Ark?" I said, "How big was the Ark?" He did not know. I said, "How many animals were there?" You think he just took all the animals that were on planet Earth and read the Bible? He did not know that. A guy asked me one time, "Well, you answer this question, and then I will maybe believe in God. Can God create a rock bigger than He is that He cannot pick up?" I said, "I do not know, but I do know this: you are going to throw your soul in a lake of fire, and you are going to burn like a torch screaming for all of eternity. How is that work for you?" Cleverness. They are so clever. One guy said, "Well, where did Cain get his wife?" I said, "Online dating, same way you got yours." "Man just wrote the Bible." "Jesus was a good teacher." "I just cannot believe that Noah's flood was a universal flood. I think it was a local flood." "What about the babies in Sodom and Gomorrah?" One guy I was witnessing to one time, and he stopped me, and he said, "Let me ask you something, preacher. Where do the heathen go?" Real forceful, like he was saying something. I looked at him, and I said, "Oak Park Mall.

Zona Rosa, Kmart, Walmart. That is where the heathen go." You see, cleverness will not do it. Oh, they are so, so clever.

Pilate tried that. He said, "You know what I will do?" You find this in Luke 23 and John 18. "I know what I will do. I have got it figured out. Man, I do not need anything else. I have got it all worked out. I will get Barabbas." He said, "If I get Barabbas, you know, that good-for-nothing thief, I will whip him. I will get a little blood. These are good people. They just are all out of sorts. They are all stirred up. I will get Barabbas, I will whip him, and then I will let Jesus go." So he goes and gets Barabbas. Puts him over here and puts Jesus over here. You have got to see this. Then he says to the people, "Which one of these guys do you want?" Let me show you how human nature is when it comes to Jesus and truth. That crowd sitting down there, and they are looking at Barabbas. They say, "Look at that old Barabbas. Yeah, he is a rascal. He killed some guys. He is a thief, broke into my friend's house. Oh yeah, he is a rascal. Yeah, I will tell you what, there is a lot going. He is there, and he is a rotten guy. And I know that, but you know what? Something about him you just have got to like." One of those guys, no matter what he has done, he has just got a personality. He says, "You know what? He reminds him of me."

Then there was Jesus on the other side. "Now look at that guy. You know what? Never did like that guy. Loud. Thinks he is right, and everybody else is wrong. Always talking about this kingdom stuff. Always talking about holy stuff. You know, I do not know what it is about him, but I just do not like, of course, we never caught him in anything, you know? But a lot of accusations out there that he is this, that he is that. And I do not know, he is just one of those kind of guys, and he is just a guy that I just do not know. And I do not know what, tell him!" That is how it worked. Pilate said, "What evil hath he done?" You know, he says that three times in the chapter that I read to you today. He says, "I find no fault in him" in John 19:4, in John 19:6, and in John 19:22. Three times, he says, "I find no fault in this guy." And he says, "Shall I crucify your king?" And they say, "We have no king but Caesar." And he has Him on his hands again.

I am telling you something, folks. Cleverness will not get you around the decision you have got to make of Jesus Christ in your life. I do not care who you are. If you are here this morning, I want to give you a fair warning, friend. You cannot get rid of Jesus Christ in the decision you have got to make. You may have the smartest, keenest. You may have an IQ of 560. You may have the smartest, keenest, razor-sharp, the most stimulating mind the world has ever seen. But you cannot get around Jesus Christ. The old Southern Gospel song they used to sing years ago is that He is so high, you cannot get over Him. He is so low, you cannot get under Him. So wide, you cannot get around Him. You have got to come in at the door. That door is found in John 10. You are not smart enough. The greatest, wisest men that ever lived tried it. They all got so educated and got so clever. They all thought they were smarter than God. The list is endless. You think Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato back in the Greek Empire, they are held up today as the wisest men that ever lived. I mean, they are the biggest clowns on the face of the planet.

Somebody says, "Well, they set the whole world to the Lord of the Greek Empire." Yeah, and they are burning in hell this morning. Somebody said, "How about Voltaire?" Voltaire is one of those guys that came out of Europe in the think tank during the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s. Voltaire said, "God created man in his own image." Then man returned the favor, thinking the idea that

God is not real, that man created God in his own mind because he needed a crutch. I think of Beethoven, that great composer that everybody likes to listen to. His music is good, but I tell you what, he had an attitude toward God all of his life. He hated God, did not believe in God, and he died. It was a thunderstorm night, and he shook his fist at God and screamed that the comedy is over before he went into hell.

How about Sigmund Freud, the father of modern-day psychology? There is a book in there, I am surprised it is still there. I put it out two or three weeks ago. It is called *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Maybe it is because of the cover; you thought it was a fashion magazine book or something. I do not know. Remember the story of the emperor and his new clothes? That story, it is a little kid, you know, that he was so stuck on himself and wanted everybody, that somebody came in and made an invisible set of clothes. So he put this invisible set of clothes on; the guy is as naked as a jaybird. But he is walking around, and the guy is saying, "That is the most marvelous creation of clothes that I have ever seen." All the people came in, and they were afraid to tell the king that he was naked. So they all got on the bandwagon, and they said, "Wow, those clothes are really nice." Obviously, you had a little problem. One guy said it is a beautiful shade of blue, and the other guy said it is a beautiful shade of red. You had a problem with that. But he just believed it. You know what that book is about? It shows you that the new clothing for human nature is the psychology of these guys right here over against the Bible. People now think that they are clothed with truth through modern-day psychology, when in reality they are naked before God, and their sin is going to wind up in the lake of fire. Great little book, great little book. I am surprised it is still there this morning, but it is a great, great little book.

He had guys like Winston Churchill. Winston Churchill, somebody asked him one time if he believed in God and all that they had went through in World War II, and that old fat, cigar-smoking drunk said, "Do you believe that God is really, really interested in man's history?" That clown had just written three volumes on English history. He could not find God in it anywhere. Oh, they are so clever. How about Einstein? Einstein is probably the closest one. Billy Graham asked Einstein one time if he was a believer. Einstein said, "I could not believe in a God that is not a mathematical formula." You know, that is probably the truest statement of any of them. He just could not get the keys to put it together. God is a mathematical formula. The whole Bible is built on a number system. He could not get that. He could not get it. How about Thomas Paine? How about Charles Darwin? "We all came from an amoeba someplace." How about Spinoza? How about Nietzsche? Nietzsche, he got around it. You know what Nietzsche said? He said he had come up with the astounding statement that God had died and God is dead. Really? All the cleverness that they come up with, all the things that they do. And there are old boys, every one of them, when they hit the end of life and crashed into the tombstone and stumbled into the casket, they split hell wide open. Then they met Him face to face.

Let me tell you something. Philippians 2:10-11 says that every knee is going to bow and every tongue is going to confess to Jesus Christ as Lord. I want you to understand something. It does not say that maybe you will. It says you will. You either accept Him and bow your knee now under a loving Savior that died for you on the cross, or you will bow your knee and confess Him as your Lord when you are ready to be dumped into the lake of fire. It is not a matter of whether

you will or whether you will not, just when you are going through. Cleverness will not do it. Cleverness will not do it.

> Compromise

You know the last thing that Pilate tried? It is the last thing that all men try. He tried compromise. That is the last thing all men try when all else fails. They try compromise. When we could not win the Vietnam War, and it got out of control, we went halfway in compromise. When a family busts up, and there is nothing you can do, and they will not do what is right, all you can do sometimes is compromise. When a husband and a wife have problems, all you can do is compromise. When a country with another country has problems, like it did all down through history, you have got to come up to a compromise. But I will tell you one place where compromise will never work. That is when it comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. Brother, it is all or nothing. You receive Him, nothing short of that. I mean, you can repent, you can be baptized, you can confess, you can join a church, you can take communion, but if you never received Him as your own personal Savior, you are not going anywhere.

That is what Pilate tried. He tried compromise. He had Christ brought in, Roman soldiers beat Him, slapped Him, pulled His beard out, whipped Him, mocked Him, brought Him back to Pilate, who took Him to the crowd, and he says, "Behold the man." They said, "Kill him, kill him, kill him." He says again, "Why? What evil hath he done?" He thought for sure if he just went halfway. He thought for sure if he publicly beat Him to a pulp and then brought Him out to the people, if he could just go halfway, that they would accept that. He says, "Why?" And they say back, "Because he made himself the Son of God." Well, that changed things. We read it in John 19:7-8. Pilate was now really afraid, the Bible says. He could not handle that one. Now he had been told not only three times did he say, "I find no fault in him," but in Matthew 27:19, his wife said, "You better let this guy go." He just did not have the courage, caught in the middle, just like most of God's people.

So he brings Him in there after He is beaten, whipped, and he says, "Where are you from?" "Where are you from?" He is now thinking He is sure from outer space. He was right too; he just did not take it far enough. Pilate said, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have the power to crucify thee, and the power to release thee?" Jesus said in John 19:11, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." That is the last word Pilate hears fall from the lips of God's Son. The last word he hears is a three-letter word that is the most terrible word in all of the world. It is the word sin.

The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The Bible says in Romans 6:23 that "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 3 talks about that there is none righteous, no, not one. Pilate was faced with a decision. Truth was standing right in front of him, just like it is for you today. He had a decision to make, and he tried to blow it off. Carelessness did not work. He tried to blow it off by playing the coward and get somebody else to make the decision; it did not work.

He tried to get clever with it and try to come up with some novel idea to get around Jesus on his hand, and he could not do it. Finally, he tried compromise.

V. The Inescapable Decision

I do not care if you are here this morning, and you are an unsaved man or you are an unsaved woman, you have got a decision you have got to make, and you can try all of these things, and you will never get around the decision you have got to make of trusting Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. I do not care what church you join, how good a life you live, all of the reasons you want to throw up in the air will not work.

Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall, Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all, Hark to what meanest is sudden call. What will you do with Jesus? What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be. Someday your heart will be asking, What will He do with me?

Will you evade Him as Pilate tried, Or will you choose Him, whatever died? Vainly you struggle from Him to hide. What will you do with Jesus? What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be. Someday your heart will be asking, What will He do with me?

Folks, someday it is all going to end. It is all going to be over. All the games, all the excuses, everything that you have pulled up in your life to try to get you around that decision is going to come home. I said it before, you will either trust Him in this life, bow your knee and confess Him as your Savior and Lord, or in that day you will stand before Him as your Judge. You will bow that knee, and you will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, not your Lord anymore, but the Lord, and you will be cast into the lake of fire.

Pilate did that two thousand years ago. There is no record anywhere that he ever changed that position, ever got the courage to make the right choice. If that is true, when he stayed with what he is for two thousand years, he has had to live that decision in hell. That is only the beginning because he is going to be dumped into the lake of fire, Revelation 20. He is going to spend an eternity, all because he did not have the courage to make the decision that he needed to make. All because when he was faced with something that every one of us have been faced with, some of you now today, truth is standing right before you in the Word of God.

In the silent midnight watches, Hark! thy bosom's door, Someone knocking, knocking, knocking, Evermore. Say not, 'Tis thy pulse beating, For it is thy heart of sin, And thy Savior knocking, crying, "Soul, arise, and let Me in."

Death comes on with reckless footsteps, The palace home or hut. Think you death will tarry, knocking, Where your door is shut? Jesus standing, waiting, knocking, But your sinful heart stands fast. Grieved away, your Savior leaveth. Now death comes in at last.

Then you will be standing, begging Christ to let you in, Beating at the gate of heaven Covered with your sin. God forbid, you guilty sinner, Heaven's not your lot. Jesus waited long to know thee, But now He knows thee not.

Every head bowed, every eye closed. Now you are standing before truth today. Out of the four men that are the key, unsaved men in the Bible in type, I gave you the best one, because that is where we are at in John, but the best one that I think illustrates where most people are at today. Pilate had Jesus on his hands, and if you are unsaved here this morning, you have Jesus on your hands. He tried four ways to get rid of Him, and there are the same four ways. I have found men and women all my ministry, all my life trying to do it. I did it too before I got saved.

Now let me ask you, you are among friends here today. I love you very much. First off, it is no accident that God brought you here today. It is no accident that you happen to hear this message. Maybe you are listening to it on YouTube or whatever the case, but let me just say this to you. Let me ask you this. I am not going to ask you if you are saved, if you have ever trusted Christ as your own personal Savior. Those are nebulous terms today that in the church age that we live in have lost their real meaning. So let me ask you this, which puts it right to where it needs to be. Man to man and man to woman. If you would die right now, this very second, you would keel over in this service and step out into eternity. Are you one hundred percent sure that you would go to heaven to spend an eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ? That is the only question that really matters in life. Where you go to school, where you work, all that is secondary. The number one question that you as a man or a woman have to answer if you were to die this very second, are you one hundred percent sure that you would go to heaven? It cuts through the church, it cuts through your baptism, it cuts through all of the things that Pilate tried to put in front of the truth so he would not have to accept it. We have taken those away now. I am asking you man to man, someone who was where you are at right now, many, many years ago, and had to make the same decision as everybody that is saved in this room had to make. It is my job because I love you so much, and God loves you even more than I do, to help you try to get that decision made today.

Now here is what I want to do. Every head is bowed and every eye closed, no one looking around. If you are in a situation this morning, if you are a man or you are a woman, I do not care what it is. And you are not sure that if you die right this moment, that you would go to be with the Lord in heaven for all of eternity. While we have our heads bowed, I will not embarrass you, I will not say anything, I will just recognize it. If you find yourself in that scenario today, would you just put up your hands and say, "Bob, pray for me. I am not not sure if I died right now that I would go to heaven to be with Him for all of eternity." Anybody? God bless you, buddy. Anybody else? Let me put it down. God bless you, son. God bless you. Anybody else? Just put it up so I can see it and then put it down. Anybody? Anybody at all? Else. Two brave young men raised their hands. Anybody else? I am not sure, Bob. This is it, this is the time. This is where the rubber meets the road. Now this is where we really find where we are at. Anybody else? Well, we are going to wait a moment. I have preached the truth to you the best way I could. I have tried to get inside of your heart, get inside of your head, and hopefully will affect your soul, but it is your choice. Two hands were raised. Anybody else? Before I pray. Anybody else? I am not sure.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You so much. Thank You, Father, for all that You do. Thank You, Father, for all that You have been in my life and my family, and I just pray, Father, for these folks here today that they all came the same way. We all did, we all came. We all had to come to Christ, just like Pilate needed to come to Christ. Help us,

Father, to realize today. I pray for these two young men that raised their hands. I pray, Father, that if there is any doubt in their hearts and their minds, that they clear it up today, that they do not spend another moment, another hour, another day, not one hundred percent sure of their salvation. I just pray, Father, that You take this time now, that You will give these young men the courage to be able to answer that question today. We will thank You and praise You and give You all the honor and glory. In Jesus' name, we pray. Every head bowed and every eye closed.

Okay, here is the deal. Courage. Our heads are bowed, and if you are a young man or maybe a young lady that did not raise your hand, what I am going to ask you to do is I am going to ask you to make that decision today. I do not care if you are in the front or the back, the left or the right. Here is what I want you to do. If you are a young man, I will have one of my young men. If you are a young lady and you stand up, I will have one of my young ladies. But right now, if you raised your hand and you want to settle a question wherever you are at, you just stand up. We will come and get you. We will take you into the privacy of one of our rooms. We will open up the Word of God and show you how you can know for sure. Come on, who will be first? Stand up right where you are at. Do what is better to do business with God today. Who will be first? Do not leave this place without knowing for sure. It is not worth it. It is not worth the chance. You heard the message. Obviously, it touched your heart. You are not sure where you are at today right now. Who will be first? Let us make it sure. Nobody is looking. I will have one of my guys come and get you, take you back into one of the offices, and open up the Scriptures, and you can leave here knowing for sure. Anybody? Two guys raised their hand. Maybe you did not have enough courage to raise your hand at that time. God bless you, son. God bless you. Zach, over to this side. Anybody else? Come on. I know it is tough. Your legs feel like they are weighing ten thousand pounds at this point. That is okay. That is okay. Anybody else? Come on, while we wait. One more time across. Over here to the right. So, we are going to go to the left. We are going to go to the right. We are going to go to the right. And we are going to go to the right. Over here to my left. And you, Amy, you stood up. You go on back with a guy back there, and he will take care of you. In the middle. Anybody? Over to my left. Over to my right.

All right, let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You for the young man that wants to make sure that we are taking, open up the Word of God and give him what he needs. We love You. We thank You, Father, for all that You do for us. We pray now, Father, Your hand upon it, and it shall take this message, whether it goes out over to YouTube or into the hearts of the people here, and help them understand that they have Jesus on their hands, and they will never get rid of Him because Pilate could not. We will thank You and praise You for the truth. Pilate asked the question, "What is truth?" The only truth in this world is the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for that. We ask You now Your blessings in all we do today, in Jesus' name, for a sake we ask You. Amen. All right, buddy, go ahead and get with Zach back there. I will see you guys all down there in just a little bit. Get out of here, and I will see you down there for lunch, and then we will get hooked up and go from there. God bless you, you are dismissed.