

Sinless Yet Condemned

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 18:39-19:16
Preached on: Sunday, August 9, 2015

We return once again to John's Gospel where we are making our way through verse by verse chapter 18, the last 2 verses and going into verse 16 of chapter 19. We have before us a very moving passage of Scripture, the historical account of the injustice and unimaginable torture that was inflicted upon our blessed Savior and I confess that I find myself deeply disturbed with this text. It will be difficult for me to preach it to you this morning. It will be difficult for you to hear it. But friends, here we have an illustration of man's seething hatred for God. His mysterious disdain for all that is pure and holy. His utter contempt for that which is beautiful, that which is righteous. And what happens here and in the crucifixion to follow brings deep conviction to my soul because here the Spirit of God brings me face to face with the horrors of my own sin and the penalty that I deserve. In fact, as I went through the passage, I found myself being able to see my own arrogant, angry face in the violent crowd. I could see my upraised fist and hear my screaming voice saying, "Crucify him! I will not have this man reign over me!" Then I can see my precious Savior and I can see him beaten to a point where he really doesn't look human anymore, being led away as a lamb to the slaughter as my substitute. Here, dear friends, we have a picture of who we really are and what we really deserve and what Christ has done for us. So as we look at this text, I would like to divide it into 3 very simple categories that I hope will be meaningful to you and help you understand it. We're going to look at Pilate's great dilemma. We're also going to see man's great hatred. And finally, Jesus' great love.

So let me take you back 2,000 years. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has allowed himself to be easily arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. He has been betrayed by Judas. He has been shackled in chains on his wrists and on his feet. They have taken him to the high priest of Israel, Caiaphas, where he has been interrogated. He has been mocked and ridiculed and severely beaten and now they have taken him to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. A large crowd has gathered around them. They are outside of the Praetorium where the governor would rule because they knew it would be unclean to go inside. And after his initial interrogation of Jesus, in verse 38 we read that Pilate went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him." At this point, Luke's Gospel indicates that Pilate, having learned that Jesus was a Galilean and knowing that Roman law allowed an accused person to be tried in the province where they lived, decided that he would rid himself of this difficult case and pass the buck, so to speak, onto Herod Antipas who was the tetrarch of Galilee so that Herod could then adjudicate the case and it just so happened to be that Herod was in Jerusalem at this time for the Passover. Luke tells us that Herod questioned Jesus at some length but Jesus gave him no reply whatever. Meanwhile, the chief priests and the scribes were standing there vehemently accusing

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him. Then Herod together with his soldiers, having treated Jesus with contempt and having mocked him, put a gorgeous robe around him and sent him back to Pilate.

This brings us to John's account here at the end of chapter 18 in verse 39. So first, I would like for you to focus with me on 1. Pilate's great dilemma. As we read this entire account, we discover that Pilate declared Jesus' innocence 7 times. He was no threat to Rome, Pilate could see that. He had not violated any laws. Luke tells us that Pilate was willing to release Jesus. And in Acts 3, he says that Pilate was determined to let him go so the question before us is: why didn't he do so? Well, there are really 2 reasons, the first is that the Jews by this point were absolutely apoplectic. They were enraged. They utterly detested Jesus. And Pilate could see that he had a mob on his hands that was rapidly growing out of control. In fact, Matthew tells us that a riot was starting and so he had to do something to protect himself from losing favor with the people, to prevent mob violence, and also therefore protect him from the rulers of Rome. After all, the most important thing in life is being popular and being comfortable even if it means violating your conscience. Even if it means killing an innocent person and sadly, we can all be tempted in this way.

But the second reason why Pilate didn't let him go is because in the eternal counsels of deity, God foreordained Christ to be sentenced by Pilate. The Lord Jesus was to die for both Jews and Gentiles so it is fitting for both of them to be a part of this injustice but we must also understand theologically that it was God himself who put his Son on the cross to be the propitiation for our sins, to be the substitute for all whom the Father had given him. Paul says that, "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." In fact, Peter will later affirm at Pentecost that Jesus was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. It's interesting, by the way, that a few months later after Jesus rose from the dead after Pentecost, a number of these same people obviously came to Christ and they prayed, according to Acts 4:27, "Truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." So not only was God sovereignly orchestrating all of this for these purposes but it is also appropriate for us to understand that it was our sins the put them on the cross. And what's even more amazing is to know that Jesus voluntarily, willingly suffered and died as our substitute. He said in John 10:18, "No one has taken My life away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

Now, it's fair to ask the question: how could Pilate be held responsible for doing that which God foreordained for him to do? Well, here we are confronted, once again, as we

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are many times in holy writ with the inscrutable mystery of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, something that is incompatible in our minds but perfectly compatible in the mind of God. But we must also bear in mind that the Lord Jesus clearly gave Pilate the truth. He told him earlier that, "everyone who is of the truth hears my voice," but Pilate scoffed and said, "What is truth?" God even revealed the truth about Jesus to Pilate's wife in a dream and she warned him about this but he ignored it. So it's important for us to understand that although nothing can thwart the eternal decrees of God, Pilate like all men, was without excuse because God had warned him. He had spoken to his conscience as he speaks to all men as he reveals himself to all men through creation and through conscience but Pilate suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. Therefore Pilate is justly accountable for his callous rejection. I might add that the same is true for each one of you. Every person knows that there is a God, even the most hardened atheist. Everyone knows therefore that they are somehow accountable to God. Every person knows that they are a sinner and that there is some distance between their Creator, that therefore they must be reconciled to him. And for every man and woman who is so convicted and by God's grace therefore longs for his mercy, he will give it to them. He will reveal himself to them and save them. So the question before all of you is simply this: do you see your sin? If you do not, you will not see the Savior. But if you do, you will acknowledge him as your only hope of salvation and ask him to save you and he will.

So Pilate finds himself on the horns of a dilemma here. He doesn't know really what to do. He knows that he must appease the Jews in some way but he needs to free Jesus. He needs to protect himself so in verse 39, he presents his scheme. He says, "You have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" This phrase "the King of the Jews" perhaps was a statement of mockery because he knew the Jews detested that terminology. Or maybe he was appealing to the sympathies of the crowd because he also knew that just a few days earlier they tried to crown him as their Messiah and King.

But Pilate's proposal only fueled the fires of their rage. They would have nothing to do with it and so in verse 40 we read that, "They cried out again, saying, 'Not this Man, but Barabbas.'" And John tells us that "Barabbas was a robber." Better translated "a terrorist." Matthew tells us that he was a notorious prisoner. Mark and Luke tell us that he was a murderer, an insurrectionist. How ironic. Here we have the exchange of a man who is clearly guilty for a man who is clearly innocent and what a picture of each one of us as Peter later expressed in 1 Peter 4:18, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust." It's fascinating, isn't it, when man is given a choice, he will always prefer wickedness over holiness. He will always prefer sin over righteousness. He prefers darkness over light because his deeds are evil. Man's will is always in bondage to his depraved nature until God does a marvelous work of grace.

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So here we see not only Pilate's great dilemma but secondly, man's great hatred. We read in verse 1 of chapter 19, "Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him." This is amazing. There were 3 kinds of Roman scourging or flogging. There was, first of all, fustigatio, which was a severe beating for lesser crimes. Usually it was accompanied by a warning. Then secondly there was the flagellotio, which was more brutal. It was administered to more hardened criminals who had committed more serious crimes. Then there was the worst of all, verberatio, the most severe form of torture, and this torture was reserved for those who were about to be crucified. It was designed to be the most brutal of all so that it would hasten death upon the cross.

Now, it is quite possible at this point, I believe, in verse 1 of chapter 19, that Jesus received the first form, the less severe beating for lesser crimes because the sentence of death had not been passed as yet and here Pilate wants to appease the Jews. He wants to teach Jesus a lesson but he doesn't want to kill him at this point. But later, according to Matthew's account, it would appear that Jesus was scourged the second time with the most severe form, the verberatio flogging because Matthew indicates that Jesus was scourged after Barabbas was released and the sentence of crucifixion was ready to be carried out. I would also argue that it's hard to believe that Pilate would have administered a torture designed to hasten death when he has stated 7 times that Jesus is innocent and while he is still in the midst of scheming to appease the Jews so that Jesus could be released. So I would argue that this first flogging, though severe, was the first of 2 floggings, the second being the cruelest of the 3 forms from which a man would never recover and one that would hasten death upon the cross.

My friends, next to crucifixion, this kind of scourging is the most severe form of torture that man has ever devised. In fact, it was so severe that Romans were excluded from it. This was a Satanic savagery that was designed to weaken and dehumanize a person. What they would do is they would strip the victim completely naked and they would tie them to a post with their hands up or they would stretch them out and then several soldiers, not just one but several, would beat the victim until they were either too exhausted to continue or the commanding officer would have them stop. Their instrument of torture was a whip made of leather thongs that were fitted with small pieces of bone on the end or metal, lead. And the lashes would gradually remove the skin and rip away at the muscles and the arteries and the nerves and even tear away at cartilage and bone. It wasn't just on the back, it would wrap around the whole part of the body. Eyewitness accounts tell us that these beatings were often so brutal that they would literally break bones and expose them and even expose entrails. Often the victims would die and never even make it to the cross.

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I want you to bear in mind that Jesus has already been beaten when he was before Caiaphas and then he has been led over to Pilate where he has been beaten again as we will see and flogged in probably the less severe form and he's got the worst flogging yet to come. Then he has to endure the cross. This explains why later on Jesus was unable to carry his cross. As I thought about it, Jesus' body was not subject to the curse. It was a sinless body. It was far stronger and healthier than anything we could imagine and yet such abuse took such a terrible toll. It wasn't just the abuse of his body, it was the abuse of his soul that his own kinsmen rejected him, that his own disciples had fled from him.

So with this in mind, we come to verse 1, "Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him." But that wasn't enough, verse 2, "The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him." The crown of thorns was probably the thorns of a date palm. I've seen them in Israel. They can be as long as 12 inches. They undoubtedly were twisted together to imitate the crowns of Oriental god kings that had the appearance of radiating glory coming off their head. Verse 3 says that "They began to come up to Him and say, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and to give Him slaps in the face." Matthew tells us that they also put a reed in his hand that would imitate the scepter of a sovereign king and they would kneel before him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Matthew says that they also spat upon him and then they would take the reed from his hand and they would beat him on the head, driving the thorns into his skull.

Well, after this unimaginable cruelty, verse 4, "Pilate came out again and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.'" In other words, "I have just tortured an innocent man in hopes that somehow you would allow me to let him go." The insanity of sin.

Verse 5, "Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Behold, the Man!'" Not behold your king, your Messiah, but behold this man. By this time, Jesus would have been so bruised and so bloodied that he wouldn't even look human. He would probably be unable to see at this point, the blood, the swelling eyes. If he could see, it would be just barely. Isaiah predicted that the people would be astonished to look upon him, Isaiah 52:13. He went on to say that his appearance would be so marred that it would be beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the children of mankind. So even by this time, Jesus didn't look human.

My friends, what a dramatic reversal will occur someday, the day of judgment, when the Lord Jesus Christ will not stand falsely accused but he will sit on a throne in judgment. Think about it: on that day, he will not wear a painful crown that mimics the glory, the fading glory of earthly kings, but John tells us in the book of Revelation that upon his head will be many diadems. His glory will never fade away. His eyes will no longer be

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soaked with blood and swollen, John says they will be like a flame of fire. And like a laser, his penetrating omniscience will judge the wicked. He will not be a lamb that opens not his mouth but he will be the Lion of Judah that thunders judgment. He will no longer wear a man's robe of mockery but John says that he will wear a robe dipped in blood. And on his robe and on his thigh, he has a name written, "King of kings, Lord of lords." Imagine what those people will say when they see that.

The day is coming, dear friends, when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return in all of his glory and as we look at the constellation of prophetic signs we can see that that time could be very, very soon, and I want to say with all love you must simply get out of this little insulated bubble of Calvary Bible Church in middle Tennessee because Satan is alive and well and he is doing everything he can to destroy us, to destroy the world, to thwart the purposes of God, but we know that when he comes, John tells us in Revelation that from his mouth will come a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

So Pilate brings Jesus out hoping that he will somehow appease the Jews and they see this pathetic looking creature and you would think that they would be so absolutely overwhelmed with the sight that they would be satisfied to let him go but not so, wicked men. Verse 6, "When the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, 'Crucify, crucify!' Pilate said to them, 'Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.'" What a ridiculous irrational statement. What a non sequitur. "I find no guilt in him so you go and crucify him." Again, here is the insanity of sin. And the question before us is this: why did they hate him so? Was it because he healed the sick? Because he gave sight to the blind? Was it because he gave hearing to the deaf? Because he fed the hungry? Was it because he raised the dead? And showed compassion to the outcast? Why when he stood before them in such a horrifying state would they like savage beasts that had just tasted blood cry out for more? Why would they demand that he be crucified when just a few days earlier they wanted to crown him as their king? My friends, the answer is quite simple: it's because this is Jesus Emmanuel. This is God with us and man by nature hates the living God. Moreover, this is Satan's hour and he is doing everything he can to thwart God's plan of redemption and so he moves upon the hearts of sinful men as he continues to do today.

We're told in Scripture that man hates God. He is at enmity with God. He is alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds. We're told that man's heart is deceitful, more deceitful than all else, and desperately wicked. Solomon tells us that the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. But then to make matters worse, Jesus has come along and exposed their sin and he has called

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them to repentant faith in him. He has unmasked their hypocrisy. You see, the Gospel is the ultimate insult and offense to self-righteousness, to self-righteous pride. The Gospel is to pride what light is to darkness. It exposes the evil that is hidden in the secret caverns of men's hearts and imaginations.

Jesus would not give them what they wanted. His theology did not agree with theirs. You see, sinful man wants a God that they can manipulate. Sinful man wants a God that will wink at their sin and serve them. Sinful man wants a prosperity genie in a bottle that they can somehow rub so that he will do their bidding. The Jews wanted a king that would rid them from Rome and inaugurate the earthly kingdom and give them their hearts' desire. They did not want a king that would expose their sin and warn them of judgment and then call them to humble repentance in him. You know, nothing has changed today. The same heart, the same attitudes. The world still hates Christ and all who belong to him. But dear friends, please hear me: man's great hatred of Jesus in this picture is really a picture of all of us. Never underestimate the innate perversity and rebellion of the unregenerate man and never underestimate its remnant in your own life.

Well, we've seen Pilate's great dilemma. We've seen man's great hatred and yet we see Jesus' great love for sinners. This is so amazing to me, to think that Jesus is willingly subjecting himself to this Satanic savagery because of sinners like you and me. It's just incomprehensible. Now, I want you to remember that Jesus knew all whom the Father had given him in eternity past. He made this so clear in John 17. He knows whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life. All of these names had been engraved upon his heart and with that in mind, it's fair to ask the question: I wonder if that was on Jesus' mind?

Now, I will admit our conception of God's omniscience, his infinite wisdom, is so exceedingly limited that what I'm about to say will seem beyond income principle. In fact, maybe to give an analogy, it would be like asking an amoeba to explain Einstein's theory of relativity or to use Paul's analogy, for a clay pot to be able to ask why the Potter made him that way. What was on Jesus' mind and heart during all of this? The answer is quite simple: all whom the Father had given him. Friends, let this never escape you: if you belong to Christ, at that very moment, in the midst of that absolute horror, the Lord Jesus Christ was thinking about you. He was thinking about me. He knew your name. He knew the number of hairs on your head. He knew what you looked like even before you were born, all during your life, and what you're going to look like when you die, what you're going to look like in glory. He knew the color of your skin. The color of your eyes. He knew the sound of your voice. He knew everything at that moment that characterizes all that you are because you are his personal creation. You are part of those whom the Father had given him in eternity past. Moreover, he knew all of our sin. He bore our sins

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in his body as our substitute. He knew precisely for whom he would die. This is a real substitution that is taking place. This is a personal atonement, not some potential atonement. And knowing that he took my place and endured what I deserve as my substitute is so profoundly humbling to me. I'm at a loss for words. It reminds me of the lyrics of that hymn that we sing from time to time, "What wondrous love is this? Oh my soul, oh my soul, what wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, to bear the dreadful curse for my soul."

Well, of course, the Jews couldn't see any of this although 700 years earlier, the prophet Isaiah had predicted this very scene and the scene to follow. If you go to Isaiah 53, you will find that the prophet describes Israel's future confession when the Messiah returns again as their conquering King. He says in verse 1, "Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him." In other words, they reflect upon the fact that no one could see that he was the Lord of glory. No one recognized him as the Christ that he was.

They go on to say that "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And they confess that like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." We all know how painful it is to see a friend and they turn their face and walk the other way. This is what Jesus experienced in such a profound way.

But then they go on in their confession and Isaiah tells us, verse 4, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted." In other words, they were convinced that he deserved this punishment, that he had blasphemed the living God and that God was on their side in killing him. Oh, the deception of Satan and the wickedness and the foolishness of the human heart.

In verse 5, Isaiah says, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth." Oh, child of God, I hope you can see Jesus' great love for sinners.

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Let's return to the sickening scene in verse 6, "When the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, 'Crucify, crucify!'" Obviously they had no pity on him, no conviction of their own sin so they couldn't see who the Savior really was. And Pilate now is frustrated. His plan isn't working and so he responds with indignation and says to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." Once again, this is amazing, despite the overwhelming evidence of his innocence, they still reject him even as some of you still want nothing to do with him.

"Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." You can detect the bitter sarcasm in his statement. "You wanted me to judge him. You brought him to me. I judged him. I find no fault in him. You don't want justice, you want revenge so you take him and him crucify him. I'll wash my hands of all of this."

Well, the Jews know that they by law can't do this so they've got to come up with an argument here, a counter argument. They know that the Romans granted those they conquered autonomy to judge in civil matters as long as their rulings didn't in any way clash with Roman laws and interests. So they come up with this scheme in verse 7, "The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and by that law,'" in other words, the law in our own province that we have adjudicated, "He ought to die because He made Himself out to be," catch this, "the Son of God." You see, folks, this is at the very core of their hatred. This is the very purpose of John's Gospel. They hated his claim to be the Son of God and nothing today has changed. You stand up today in this world and you tell the world that Jesus was and is the Son of God and that he is their only hope of salvation and they will mock you, if not kill you.

Verse 8, "Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid," the statement that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. You see, not only was Pilate afraid of the uprising that would perhaps cost him his position, maybe even cost him his life if the Emperor got wind of it, but he was all the more afraid when he hears that this may be the Son of God. The Romans were very superstitious to begin with, however, I would also argue that just being in the presence of Jesus would evoke fear. No man ever spoke like he did. Nobody ever acted like he did. I'm sure from his very first encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, Pilate's spirit was deeply troubled and his heart was warring against everything that Jesus said, everything that he claimed to be. He's thinking, "If all of this is true, then I'm in big trouble. My life is going in the wrong direction. All that I believe is wrong." And so, indeed, he was even more afraid.

So what does he do? Verse 9, "He entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, 'Where are You from?' But Jesus gave him no answer." In other words, he's saying, "Are you from this planet or beyond? Are you a god? Tell me, I have to know." But Jesus gave

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him no answer. You see, Jesus had already given him the truth and Pilate had rejected it over and over and over again so Jesus will no longer cast pearls before swine. My friends, there is a great warning here: when a man persists in rejecting the truth of the Gospel, a time will come when God will be silent. A time will come when God will give that person over to the consequences of their stubborn rejection. The door of divine mercy will only remain open for so long. You see, Pilate had forfeited his right for further revelation. He had turned a deaf ear to his conscience. He had rejected the truth and now the Truth will reject him.

So Pilate says to him in frustration, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" You see here Pilate plays the power card. His status, his authority has been mortified. He's being humiliated here. He's not used to this kind of disrespect. He's used to prisoners groveling before him, begging him for mercy. "Don't you realize I have power over your life?" Such is the attitude of sinful man, isn't it? You see, we want Jesus to bow before us, we don't want to bow before him. We want Jesus to be impressed with us because, after all, we are so impressed with ourselves so we want others to join in on our self-adulation. And how ironic, Pilate touts his power and authority yet he is a slave to popular opinion and to his own sin.

In verse 11, "Jesus answered, 'You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.'" Here Jesus, once again, refers to the sovereignty of God in all that is happening and although Pilate is responsible for his sin, God is orchestrating all of these events to accomplish his eternal purposes to glorify himself through a redeemed humanity and through his judgment upon the wicked and he says, "for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin," a reference to Caiaphas and to his own kinsmen.

So Pilate remains convinced that Jesus had nothing worthy of death by crucifixion so he says in verse 12, "As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, 'If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.' Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha," which means pavement stones. I found it interesting that this Hebrew term occurs just once in the Old Testament and it occurs in the context of wicked King Ahaz rearranging the temple furnishings to accommodate his deepening apostasy and his involvement in Assyrian cultic rites. So Pilate is terrified here at the thought of the Emperor getting wind of the fact that he somehow released a man who had a following, in fact, several days earlier there was well over a million Jews wanting to

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make him king, and certainly he claimed to be a king. So like many today, perhaps like you, Pilate feared man more than he feared God.

Verse 14, "Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, 'Behold, your King!'" Pilate is now exhausted. He is defeated and afraid. He's like a worm that is puffed up with the sense of his own self-importance and yet he is a slave to his own sinful pride and to the praise of man. "They cry out," in verse 15, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.'" How ridiculous. "So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified."

Matthew says that Pilate said earlier, "What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" I was thinking about that. Here we learn that his choice was the wrong choice. My friends, no one can remain undecided about Jesus. We all have to make a choice. We can't just wash our hands from it all. Either he is who he claimed to be or he is the biggest fool, the biggest madman that ever lived and the question is: what do you say about Jesus? Who do you say that he is? Your answer will determine your eternal state. If you have trusted him as Savior and Lord and your life of submission to him reveals that, then you need to know this: you are a target of the enemy and you are an object of the world's hatred and this is mounting.

I want to close with this thought: here, dear friends, we see the unimaginable violence of Satan at Jesus' first coming. Can you imagine what it's going to be like before his second coming? This is a very important topic that I'm going to address next Sunday. I'm going to step away from this text. We are on the front lines of spiritual warfare here at Calvary Bible Church and we need to be prepared and vigilant and united in purpose as believers. As Paul says, "We need to be striving together for the Gospel." But I want to leave you with this word of encouragement: our Lord reigns. Isn't that wonderful to know? Boy, we've just got to have some good news here, don't we? Our Lord reigns. The victory has been won. He has vanquished Satan and sin and death. We're just waiting for final judgment to come and we believe that it could be very, very soon. And I found myself after meditating upon this passage just rehearsing in my mind Paul's great words there in Colossians 3 where he reminds us that, "Since you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of this earth for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God and when Christ who is our life is revealed," what's going to happen? What's going to happen? You all know it, "we will also be revealed with him in glory." So this is the great hope that is ours because of what Christ has done on our behalf.

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Sinless Yet Condemned

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 18:39-19:16
Preached on: Sunday, August 9, 2015

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. I pray that we will all leave here today celebrating the unsearchable riches of Christ and the hope that is ours in him. And Lord, I pray that by the power of your Spirit, you will bring great conviction to those who have never placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have never asked him to save them. I pray that today they will be so consumed with their guilt and shame that they will come running to the cross and be cleansed, be forgiven, and be justified by the blood of Christ. For it is in his name that I pray. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.