LESSONS FROM A COWARD

I. Deal with past sins so they don’t come back to haunt us.
   a. Josephus tells some of the background of Pilate’s rule in Judea.
      i. The leaders before him had always kept the Roman soldiers out of the city because their ensigns portrayed Caesar as a god.
      ii. As soon as Pilate was given the position, he marched soldiers into the city with those standards, greatly offending the Jews.
      iii. This made the leaders so mad that they called for a meeting with him in Caesarea Philippi, where he had his quarters.
      iv. He instructed his soldiers to surround the Jewish leaders and kill any of them who got out of line.
      v. When the leaders heard this they bared their throats and dared them to do it.
      vi. Pilate backed off realizing this wouldn’t sit well back in Rome.
      vii. He pulled the soldiers out of Jerusalem, removing the offensive standards.
      viii. Another time, he took funds from the temple treasury and used them to build an aqueduct.
      ix. When there was an uprising, Pilate sent in soldiers, dressed as Jews and they murdered hundreds of Jews on his command.
   b. We read in Luke 13:1-3, that Pilate had killed many Galilean Jews while they worshiped.
   c. Philo, the historian wrote, “He was afraid that if a Jewish embassy were sent to Rome, they might discuss the many maladministrations of his government, his extortions, his unjust decrees, his inhuman punishments”.
   d. What we see is a man paralyzed by his past sins and cannot stand up to defend an innocent man in Jesus.
   e. One writer has stated, “There is nothing that so frustrates good resolutions and paralyzes noble efforts as the dead weight of past sins”.
   f. We must be those who quickly repent when sins are committed.
      i. Jesus taught the necessity of repentance in the very text in which Pilate’s sin against the Galilean Jews is revealed (Luke 13:3).
      ii. Unrepentant sins hurt us in this life, as well as in the next.
   g. How many good deeds have not been done because someone has been afraid that their past will be exposed?
   h. We must obey the gospel, confess our sins to God and resolve to live for Him, no matter the cost.
      i. We might be hurt in the present, but we will definitely gain in eternity.

II. Set godly goals, not earthly ones.
   a. Pilate’s goal in life was to hang on to his position and gain more power.
i. Pilate, history reveals, had risen from being a soldier to power because of whom he married.

ii. Pilate didn’t want to go back to the life of a soldier, or to lose the power he had come to enjoy.

b. In one sense, this day was a great day for Pilate.
   i. He made the Jews happy and kept peace with them.
   ii. He also made up with an old enemy in Herod.
   iii. He was able to hang on to power a few more years.

c. However, we know that, spiritually speaking, it was the worst day of his life.
   i. He condemned the Son of God to death.
   ii. Three times in the book of Acts, his name is tied to the crucifixion of Christ.

d. What led Pilate down the wrong road was his earthly goals.

e. There are a lot of people who profess to be Christians who have set their minds on earthly goals.
   i. They will take a job strictly for the money that is offered.
   ii. They will take a promotion, not concerned with any effect on their ability to attend worship.
   iii. They will allow their children to miss services for athletic events.
   iv. They will allow their children to be involved in events that hurt them spiritually but uplift them socially.
   v. Their goal is success in this world, but not in the next.

f. What shall a man profit?

g. C.S. Lewis wrote, “Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you will get neither”.

h. We must be those who set spiritual goals, not earthly ones.

III. Please God no matter what.

a. Pilate didn’t want to put Jesus to death and he didn’t want to displease the Jews.

b. He couldn’t have his cake and eat it too.

c. He wanted to be neutral and stay out of it, but the Jews wouldn’t let him.

d. His decision came down to, though he didn’t realize it, pleasing God or pleasing man, and he chose to please man, as God knew he would.

e. The New Testament is clear that if we take a stand for God, it will cost us at times in this life.
   i. We are going to alienate ourselves from people by our decision to put God first.
   ii. We don’t do it to be mean or seek to hurt people by doing that (Romans 12:18).
   iii. However, we must do it if it comes to God or man.

f. Paul had many enemies because he refused to not please God (Galatians 1:10).
g. God’s people, through the ages, are marked by their refusal to displease God in order to please man.

h. Winston Churchill, the great English statesman, wrote: “People who are unprepared to do unpopular things and defy clamor are not fit to be ministers in times of stress”.

i. His statement, though political in nature, is also true for Christians.

j. We must be like the apostles and obey God and not man.

k. It must be our habit in private as well as public to please God, so that when the difficult decisions come, we won’t be led astray.

IV. **Don’t compromise our consciences, even to gain in his life.**

a. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent.
   i. He stood up and declared that he found him to be innocent.
   ii. He should have been willing to stand for what he believed no matter what.

b. Pilate compromised his conscience, doing what was wrong to gain the favor of the Jews.

c. However, what he thought was a loophole, became a noose.
   i. The Jews never liked him.
   ii. Jesus lost his life.

d. How many preachers have compromised the truth because they stood to gain something?

e. How many Christians have compromised their moral because they stood to gain something?
   i. It may be that the preacher doesn’t speak out about a sin because a prominent member or family member is involved in it.
   ii. It may that the Christian can get something at work if he doesn’t say anything about his boss’s behavior.

f. For the most part, we know right from wrong.

g. We can’t give in to the world and win in the end.

h. Our conscience must stay pure or we will lose our souls (1 Timothy 1:19).

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