

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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