

JOHN

I. Introduction

A. **John 18:19-24, 28-40** . . . The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. [20] Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. [21] Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." [22] When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" [23] Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" [24] So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. [28] Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. [29] Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" [30] They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." [31] So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," [32] to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die. [33] Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" [34] Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" [35] Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" [36] Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." [37] Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." [38] Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him. [39] But 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?" [40] So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

B. Prayer

II. Lessons from **John 18:19-24, 28-40**

A. **John 18:19-21** . . . The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. [20] Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. [21] Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said."

1. Once again, Jesus does not directly answer the question asked, but instead responds in a way that points to a truth that is larger and more important than the question was seeking.
2. And though John never states that this is one of Jesus' common communication methods, it is included enough times in his gospel to make it impossible to miss.
 - a. But why? Why does John want us to see Jesus giving answers that instead of directly answering the question leads to a larger, more important truth related to the question?
 - b. I don't know for sure, but I can think of at least two good reasons why John included this method which Jesus used.
 - c. **First**, getting people to think more honestly, or more comprehensively, or more introspectively, or in a more reasoned and sensible way **is vital** to them coming to a state or condition of mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Why? Because the more truth you can see in a situation and understand about a situation, the more wisely you can respond to it and deal with it – both internally and externally.
 - d. **Second**, helping people see a bigger picture and the more important truths **than they are currently seeing** in a specific situation enables them to see more of God, His ways, His character, His word, and themselves so that they can better align their thinking with God's word, maintain a better attitude, and make better choices – if they will.
3. In this situation, Jesus is pointing out that there are numerous witnesses who could give testimony to what He taught so that those accusing Him could judge Him fairly – or in other words, judge Him according to their laws – which we can read in:

- a. **Deuteronomy 17:6**, “On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.”
 - b. **Deuteronomy 19:15**, “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”
 - c. In other words, according to Jewish law, defending Himself would be of no benefit unless two or more witnesses could confirm His testimony. Therefore, Jesus’ response was calculated to promote honest thinking about the justice God required when dealing with those accused of a crime.
4. However, beyond promoting honest thinking about the OT Law and justice, Jesus was doing something else when He responded to the questions with something other than what was being asked.
 - a. You see, just as Jesus sought to protect His disciples in the Garden when the soldiers came to arrest Him, so here, before the high priest of Israel, Jesus continues to protect His disciples by not talking about them even when questioned about them.
 - b. Now I am pointing this out because once again, Jesus was concerned for the well-being of those around Him more than being concerned about His own well-being – which is an example to us of godly humility, love, and care that we can and ought to have for others in spite of what we are facing at the moment.
- B. But notice, there sometimes is a painful price to pay for loving and protecting others as much or more than we love and protect ourselves. And so we read in **vs 22-23**, that when Jesus said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Him, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" [23] Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"
1. The reality is, doing what is godly, loving, and caring doesn’t guarantee being praised or well-treated.
 - a. In fact, the more your godliness, love, and care for others exposes the hypocrisy, selfishness, injustice, or cruelty of the oppressors, the more likely you will be ill-treated in some way as a result.
 - b. But there is a second reality here. Whenever you do what is godly and loving, you contribute to the presence and influence of righteousness in the world **and** to the reasons unbelievers have for giving glory to God – and that is to the good of everyone.

2. You see, Jesus was not just protecting His disciples and promoting justice for Himself, He was speaking and behaving in a way that promoted justice for anyone who would stand accused before the high priest. Therefore, just as Jesus was responding to evil in a way that promoted the good of all, so can and so should we – even if we pay a price to do so.
 3. There is one more point I want to make about Jesus’ response to the man who hit Him. Jesus challenged the man’s actions by asking him to defend his actions or admit that he had acted unjustly.
 - a. And what I want you to see here is that Jesus did this with a question that was asked in a humble, respectful, and non-threatening way that gave the man the opportunity to tell his side of the story.
 - b. Too often, accusations and condemnation are made in angry, disrespectful, threatening, and even arrogant ways that show no interest in hearing the other person’s side of the story.
 - c. However, as Christians, we are to remain within the boundaries of godliness regardless of what the one we are talking to has done, or is continuing to do. This is why Paul exhorts us to speak the truth in love, rather than in an angry or abusive way (**Ephesians 4:15**). And this is why James says to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not achieve or accomplish the righteousness of God (**James 1:19-20**).
 4. Therefore, as Christians, we are to be humble and respectful when dealing with those who have done wrong, and with those **we assume** have done wrong – whether to us or anyone else. And we ought to give them an opportunity to tell their side of the story.
- C. **John 18:24, 28** . . . So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. [28] Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.
1. Notice, the Jewish religious leaders and the Jews accompanying them were willing to break the moral law by seeking to murder Jesus, while being unwilling to break the ceremonial law by entering the Praetorium and becoming ceremonially defiled.
 - a. And again, in their arrest and trial of Jesus, they showed little concern for legal ethics and justice. Yet in seeking to gain Rome’s approval for wanting to kill Jesus, they showed great concern for their ceremonial purity.

- b. They were willing to murder the Lamb of God, but were unwilling to be ceremonially unclean when eating the Passover lamb.
 2. This is the apex of hypocrisy. It is the classic example of being devoutly religious and willingly sinful.
 - a. It is for this reason that God, speaking through Isaiah said, “Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; for the LORD speaks, ‘Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have revolted against Me. An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger, but Israel does not know [Me], My people do not understand (**Isaiah 1:2-3**). What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me? I have had enough of [your] burnt offerings ... and the fat of fed cattle (**vs 11**) ... Bring your worthless offerings no longer ... I cannot endure [your] iniquity [combined with your] solemn assemblies (**vs 13**) ... Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, and reprove the ruthless (**vs 16-17**).
 - b. Paul made the same point in relation to partaking of Communion. In **I Corinthians 11:27-31**, we read, “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. [28] But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge [himself] rightly. [30] For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. [31] But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.”
3. Hypocritical Christians not only give the world reasons to reject God, discredit Christianity, and scorn the Church, they bring God’s judgment on themselves – just as Israel did in Isaiah’s day, the Jews did in Jesus’ day, and Christians do today when we take communion in an unworthy manner.
4. The important point here is that hypocrisy may get us what we want in the moment, but it also brings what we don’t want – God’s judgment, costly and painful discipline, and possibly an untimely death. The was true for the Jews of Isaiah’s day, the Jews of Jesus’ day, the Christians in Corinth, and Christians today.
5. And so I encourage you, run from hypocrisy and pursue whole-life, whole-hearted godliness, single-mindedness, and Christ-likeness. This is the path to God’s loving-kindness and grace.

- D. **John 18:29-30** . . . Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" [30] They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you."
1. How prone we are to say things in just the right way, or to say just enough, or to exclude what needs to be excluded to get our way.
 2. It is a mark of trusting God to tell the whole truth and leave the results up to God and those who have authority over you.
- E. **John 18:31-32** . . . [31] So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," [32] to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.
1. Listen long enough and most people will reveal their true motives. It is clear from these verses that the religious leaders had already condemned Jesus to death and only wanted Pilot's approval so they could carry out their pre-determined sentence.
 2. Skipping down to **vs 37** –
- F. **John 18:37-38** . . . Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." [38] Pilate said to Him, "**What is truth?**" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him."
1. What is truth? That is a question worth pondering. According to Webster's 1913 Unabridged English Dictionary, truth is that which is true or certain concerning any matter or subject. It is the real state of things, the facts, reality.
 2. The problem with truth is that in this life, it is unlikely we will ever know the full truth about all that there is to know – be it the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, the human body and mind, the Holy Scriptures, and God himself.
 3. But there is one thing I am sure of, and that is this: to whatever degree you are not honest with yourself, to that degree you cannot know the truth about God, the truth contained in God's Word, the truth about yourself, and the truth about how to live a godly life.
 4. You see, to the degree to which you live in denial, or live in denial that you are in denial, or make excuses for your behavior, or blame others for the way you are instead of taking responsibility for it, or

make a half-hearted effort to change so that you change so little it is as if you haven't changed, or continually hope to change instead of doing what is necessary to actually change, **to that degree** you block the truth of God's word, and the truth about God himself, and the truth about yourself, and the truth about how to live a godly life from penetrating your mind and heart – so that **to that degree** you are unable to be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

5. Let me say it one more time – to whatever degree you are dishonest with yourself about yourself, to that degree you cannot know God and the truth of God, because you will reject such knowledge, ignore it, explain it away, or harden your heart against it in order to continue your dishonesty with yourself about yourself.

III. Conclusion

- A. **John 18:39-40** . . . But 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?" [40] So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.
- B. Instead of doing what was right and just, it appears Pilot took a calculated risk in offering to free Jesus or the robber Barabbas. After all, the rational choice was Jesus, because He was no threat to the people's well-being whereas Barabbas was. And yet, the people chose Barabbas.
- C. From Pilot we learn that risking what is right in order to please or appease people who want to do what is wrong usually results in wrong being done.
- D. And from the people we learn that giving power to our fears or fleshly and worldly desires, instead of to our intellect and the truth we know, often results in foolish thinking and selfish choices, which results in doing what we know is wrong.