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“I Find No Fault In Him”

Fred Nowell

Fault finding is a pastime that is as old as it is distasteful. Often is the case when people just want to find something wrong with another to the point of dreaming up crimes or allegations to convict. As the youngest of the family, this writer can relate to some degree as to the possible motives one might have to do this. But when it comes to doing another harm or injury, there is no good or acceptable reason or motive.

After our Lord was betrayed by Judas in a garden where He often found peace, tranquility and comfort (Jn. 18:2) and was denied by Peter, Jesus was then brought before Pilate for questioning. Pilate was the Procurator or Governor of Judea for around ten years (26-36 according to Josephus, Ant, XVIII, IV, 2). It was before Pilate that our Lord was brought because of the desire of the Jews to put Him to death. It was not permissible for the Jews to put one to death without the consent of Rome, so Pilate was used to speed things along. It was not because Pilate was loved or respected by the Jews, he was not. “Pilate never became popular with the Jews. He seemed to be insensitive to their religious convictions and stubborn in the pursuit of his policies” (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary).

In spite of their disdain for Pilate, the Jews has a goal in mind and they sought to accomplish it, and accomplish it they did! In John 18:29-31 Pilate asked the Jews “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.” Pilate was being used by the Jews to do evil and though he could have refused their request, he decided to question Jesus, willingly going along with their sinful plan.

After some questioning, Pilate returned to the Jews and said “I find no fault in Him” (Jn. 18:38), proclaiming the innocence of Jesus. Having a custom during that time of the year to offer release to one in custody (at the Passover), Pilate believed that perhaps the crowd would allow the release of Jesus (seeing that He had gained much popularity),

but he was wrong. The people desired for a known thief by the name of Barabbas to be freed instead.

What began as perhaps an entertaining idea for Pilate, turned into a matter of sin that he was sinking deeper and deeper in! The next step was to scourge, mock, beat and humiliate Jesus before the people. Pilate brought Jesus out to them and declared yet a second time, "I find no fault in Him" (Jn. 19:1-4). The crowd grew even more insistent on putting Jesus to death. Their cries filled the air and Pilate told the people "you take Him and you crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him" (Jn. 19:6). Matthew's account says, "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (Mt. 27:24).

Three times Pilate proclaimed that Jesus was innocent yet he allowed Him to be taken and put to death. People often get themselves involved in things that may seem to be "just a little" or "border-line" sinful until the sin grows and grabs a hold, becoming rooted to the point where there will be consequential scars. Not that these sins cannot be forgiven, they can be, all sin can be forgiven (as long as we are alive). But the consequences of some sins have lasting effects both mentally as well as physically.

Pilate later showed leniency and to Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus for their request for the body of Jesus after His death (Jn. 19:38-39). Showing perhaps a small amount of sorrow or sorrow for his part in the death of Jesus.

Thomas Nelson describes Pilate this way in his Illustrated Dictionary:

"Pilate is a good example of the unprincipled achiever who will sacrifice what is right to accomplish his own selfish goals. Although he recognized Jesus' innocence and had the authority to uphold justice and acquit Jesus, he gave in to the demands of the crowd rather than risk a personal setback in his career. This is a real temptation to all people who hold positions of power and authority."