

# Faith and Works III

*The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts*

Col. 2:8

## Pilate's Truth

Pilate knew something about Jesus, the Nazarene who stood before him having been betrayed by one of His own disciples, beaten by His captors, and facing Crucifixion by the Romans at the instigation of the leaders of the Jewish religion. Pilate made it his business to know who was planning insurrection, who was stirring up the masses. According to Philo, a Jewish writer of the time, Pilate was "inflexible, he was stubborn, of cruel disposition. He executed troublemakers without a trial." (Luke 13:1)

He would have known about Jesus. His men would have reported that yes, he was drawing large crowds, but oddly, when he taught, tensions between the Jews and Rome went down. People became nicer, tax collectors more honest, people carried loads two miles when asked to go only one, and further, even some of the Roman soldiers reported that members of their households had been healed by a word from Jesus.

But the charge against Jesus was political as well as religious, with Jesus being accused of challenging Rome's authority by claiming to be King of the Jews.

John 18:33-38 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"

Pilot did not mean this in the "post modern" context of our day, rather he was contrasting the truth he lived by with that which had led Jesus to stand before him awaiting sentencing.

Pilot would probably have liked to see more leaders such as this Nazarene. His job would be all the more easier. Jesus obviously taught a religious truth, but it was more about internal unseen things, a spirit that blew like wind.

But Pilot had a different more practical philosophy, and among the long line of cruel procurators who ruled Judea, Pilot stood out as a notoriously vicious ruler, and was only replaced by the Romans after he murdered a group of Samaritans and the Romans realized that Pilots method of dealing with problems with endless executions, endless savage ferocity was only provoking continual rebellions. While he appreciated Jesus as a pacifist, he did not believe that in the long run anything but force and having greater might than ones adversaries was effective.

And here was Jesus, ready to die for His "truth", covered with His own blood, beaten, betrayed. Pilot was not questioning the concept of truth in the modern sense of pessimism about absolutes, he was questioning the utility of the truth Jesus spoke of compared to his realistic truth that might makes right. After all, he must have reasoned, what good did Jesus truth come to in the end? In the end the truth is that might and power makes right. The strong survive and conquer. That is winning in the worlds eyes.

We seek that truth by nature. How shall we eat, how shall we live. but there is another truth, that the first death will not be cheated, that God did not lie, that all die since Adam, and now it is the second death we must fear. No matter how much we stuff into our barns in this life, someone else will get it when we leave, and we are all leaving this tent we inhabit, just not to the same destinations. We are not restoring or saving this outer man, it is perishing, it is the unseen that is eternal, and where will we spend eternity, in gods presence or apart from Him in darkness and continual burning as all fails to hold as all things hold in Him?

What is the truth we are looking for as believers in Christ? Are we to be pitied, as Paul asked in 1 Cor. 15? Should we eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die, best to get all we can before it is over, or seek a way to bring immortality to our fallen natures?

1 Cor. 15:30-32 And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"

1 Peter 4:4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

Sometimes one cannot tell the value of a treasure by looking at the external.

2 Cor. 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

As believers we are responding to and the gospel and have the seal of the Holy Spirit, the inner witness that we are members of Christ, born again into a new family, on a foundation whose builder and maker is God.

But this treasure is in an earthen vessel. It is a field that many would overlook in their haste to find the kind of treasure that moth, rust and thieves can steal and destroy. But to those who find the true treasure that scripture says is in Jesus (Matthew 19:21, Col. 2:3), they gladly sell all that they have to purchase that field (Matt. 13:44).

As Paul stood before king Agrippa, even though he had been in chains for two years, Paul could still say to the royalty who had assembled with the pomp and wealth, that he could wish that they were as he, except for the chains (Acts 26:29).

Paul and Silas did not sing in the Philippian jail because they knew God was going to cause an earthquake to physically set them free in the future, no, they were signing because they were confident that they were already free in Christ, and indeed, they chose to stay and minister the word of Christ to the jailer and his family at their home rather than flee when all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed (Acts 16:25-38).

In the economy of heaven, those forgiven much, love much (Luke 7:47). Those who are first will be last (Mark 10:42-43). Those with true treasure in heaven hold lightly the things of this world. It is a different kingdom (Col. 1:13), and to those who measure success by the outward appearance, by using whatever means necessary to come out ahead of everyone else, those who are satisfied with the things they have stored in their temporal barns, to such as these the word of the cross is foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18).

Surely man's goal by nature is not the cross, but the avoidance of the cross, to live by all means a debtor to the flesh, feeling satisfied by the things of this world and the pride of life. Those with itching ears are seeking godliness as a means of gain in this world only (1 Tim. 6:5).

Is Darwinism correct in its assumptions? Is all of creation a result of the concept of the survival of the fittest? Was Himmler correct, that all of history is summed up in the survival of the fittest?

But to those who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, who dare to let God's light shine into the darkness in which men seek to hide their mortality and unrighteousness before God, to those willing to trust in His love and grace based on the supreme act of God giving His only begotten Son for the sins of the world

that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, to those seeking to thus cloth their nakedness, the gospel is not foolishness, but the power of God unto eternal life.

John 19:17-22 And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was:

**JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’”” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

Today the Rome of Caesar is but history, while the impact of the kingdom of Christ is eternal. What is truth?