

**John 19: 1-22; “The Power to Crucify Jesus”, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on March 25th, 2018,
In the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The power to sin seems so very great, so very prominent in this text that I have just read in your hearing, that you may be tempted to think that the power of wicked men to do their wicked deeds, is stronger than the power of God. Even many Christians fall into this kind of thinking when they are confronted with the strength and power of what sinful men seem to “get away with”. It does not seem righteous in God to permit sinful men to do what they do get away with, when they commit violent acts, and take the righteous away. How can God stand by and permit this, we think? How can He not intervene? Why could He have not prevented this in the first place? These are questions which come to our minds. It did appear that evil triumphed that day when Jesus was delivered into the hands of wicked men and was falsely accused, unjustly tried, and so cruelly treated and put to death.

But I want you to understand this afternoon, that all of these events were perfectly orchestrated by God the Father, not in terms of the sinfulness of them, for God is not the author of sin; but perfectly orchestrated in what our Lord Jesus would have to undergo and suffer on our behalf and in our place. Actually, wicked men do not ultimately get away with anything. No man’s decisions or actions are outside the bounds of the scrutiny of God the Father. No man’s will is stronger than God’s purpose. And although we see here that wicked men had the power to sin against Jesus and to inflict upon Him terrible sufferings, He had the power to be able to speak and act as the most noble of Kings, because He knew that power belongs to God.

So the question that I am asking this afternoon is this: “How are the power of sinful men and the power of God to be understood, when we look at the events leading up to the crucifixion?” In this message, I want you to present to you that there are certain conclusions which we can draw from this text concerning the power of men and the power of God.

The 1st Conclusion is this: Pilate had the power to order the soldiers to scourge, and mock and strike Jesus, but Jesus had the power to endure this.

(verses 1-4)

“So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.” “And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe.” “Then they said, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” “And they struck Him with their hands.” “Pilate then went out again, and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.’” We need to understand that God has given to all men the ability to exercise their will in order to do things that they want to do, in accordance with the human nature that He has given them. And, when we see men acting as Pilate did on that day, we may be perplexed, but this much we know, He did exactly what He wanted to do even though it appeared that he wanted Jesus to go free. He kept on saying, I find no fault in this man, I find no fault in Him at all. But yet He unjustly scourged Jesus and actually permitted Jesus to be mocked and cruelly treated.

When we see these men sinning against Jesus, they are sinning because they have decided to sin; they think and purpose the sin, and they know that they have the power to sin and to treat Jesus in this cruel way. God is entirely separate from their sinful acts and motives and purposes; He is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity. And yet His is

entirely the power to ordain what will happen to Jesus, and exactly to what degree He will suffer. But He also committed to Jesus the power to be able to endure all of these sufferings, all the way to the cross and death. Jesus says in John 10: 17, 18, “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.” “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” This command I have received from My Father.” These sufferings of Jesus were very real because Jesus had a true human nature besides His divine nature. He would feel the pain just as deeply as any of us would, and I believe even more so, because of His sinlessness and His deity.

This we do not sufficiently consider. We think that Jesus would endure easily because He was God made manifest in the flesh. I am saying that Jesus felt more deeply the evil perpetrated against Him because of His sinlessness and His divinity. His power to endure was related directly to His righteous and holy character. This insured that when He felt the Father forsaking Him on the cross, that still He had the power to endure and to triumph in His sufferings. His thought was that the Father was pleased with Him in these sufferings even when the Father had to look away from Him, and look at Him as though He was all the transgressors in the world, rolled up in to one, and punish Him accordingly for our sakes.

Now 2nd – Pilate had the power to crucify Jesus or release Him, but Jesus knew that it was all in the hands of His Father.

(Verses 5-11)

“Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.” “And Pilate said to them, ‘Behold the Man!’” “Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him!’” “Pilate said to them, ‘You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.’” “The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.’” “Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, ‘Where are You from?’” “But Jesus gave him no answer.” “Then Pilate said to Him, ‘Are You not speaking to me?’” “Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?” “Jesus answered, ‘You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.’” “Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

I do not think that Pilate liked the idea of having to scourge Jesus, but I think that he reasoned that if he could show Jesus to them as one who was broken of His physical strength, that he would be able to convince the chief priests to release Him. He says to them, “Behold I am bringing Him out to you,” and in verse 5 he says, “Behold the man.” He is saying to them in effect: Look, He says that He is a King, but, behold! It is only a man. He is a shattered King. But the chief priests and the officers cried out to crucify Him. So Pilate is now willing to let them have their way. They would have Him crucified, but he wants to be exonerated (he wanted to be free from the guilt or blame) of having committed any crime himself.

The power at work in Pilate was not the power to do what was right, it was the power to please these leaders and to make concessions to their sin. His was the power to compromise in terms of administering justice. This was a sinful weakness in Pilate’s character. The power to stay the course and suffer and die without complaint or any explanation which might ease His sufferings, this was the power of our King. The Jews say to Pilate, “We have a law and according to our law He ought to die, because He made

Himself the Son of God.” It then says, “When Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid.” He goes to Jesus and asks Him, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gives him no answer. Jesus did not need to give him answer, because He had already told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, that His kingdom was not from there. But Pilate thinks that Jesus is not speaking to him, perhaps because of an unwillingness to recognize his power in that situation. “Are you not speaking to me?” “Do You not know that I have power to crucify You and power to release You?” Jesus knows that that issue was settled hours before in the garden; yea the issue was settled before the foundation of the world. It was determined there, and agreed upon by the Persons of the Divine Trinity, that Jesus would suffer and die in this very way. In Revelation 13: 8 it says concerning the Antichrist – “All who dwell on the earth will worship Him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Well, the Lord Jesus knew all this, and so he lets Pilate in on the secret. “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.” “Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” He was saying that Pilate only had whatever power that he had, as a grant from God; and that his power over him to crucify Jesus was given to him, there at that time, to accomplish whatever the Father had decided should take place. Acts 4: 27 says, “For truly against You holy Servant Jesus, who You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.” We need desperately to see and to remember, as Christians, this blessed truth. Power really does belong to God. Psalm 62, verse 11 says – “God has spoken once, twice I have heard this; that power belongs to God.” “Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; for You render to each one according to his work.”

We also need to see this if you are not a Christian. The power to change people, to take away a stony heart and grant the gift of salvation is all with God. The power to reward people according to their work, whether good or evil, is with God. And God will do it. He will weigh it all perfectly and make judgments which are righteous.

3rd – Pilate had the power to write that Jesus was the King of the Jews, but He had no power to resist the demands of the chief priests that Jesus be crucified. (Verses 12- 22)

“From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, “If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend.” “Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.” “When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.” “Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour.” “And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’” “But they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!’” “Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’” “The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’” “Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified.” “Then they took Jesus and led Him away.” “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.'"

Now, you can see that Pilate was seeking from this point on, to release Jesus, after he heard Jesus speak about his, that is Pilate's, lack of power. He had the power to say to them in verse 14, "Behold your King!" And he had the power to ask the Jews, "Shall I crucify your King?" But he had no power to resist their demands for his crucifixion. What it all came down to, was the statement of the Jews to him in verse 12, "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend." "Whoever makes himself a king, speaks against Caesar." This was where Pilate's moral weakness is seen in its truest light. He could not bear the thought that his power, his position, his reputation, his life could be jeopardized by his releasing Jesus.

These Jews were implying that he was no friend to Caesar if he did let Jesus go, and in fact, he would be encouraging rebellion against the Roman government by releasing the one who they had said made Himself out to be a King. Pilate knew that Jesus was not a rebel and that He was not encouraging rebellion. But he feared the implications of all that these Jews were saying, getting back to Tiberius Caesar. So, it says, he delivered Jesus to them to be crucified. Pilate's parting shot at the Jews in this matter is found in the fact that he wrote a title and put it up on a plaque on the cross. And the writing was, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews". And this action of his, God, with His infinite power to order all things, did permit to stand; even though the Jews made objection to it.

They wanted him to write, "He said, I am the King of the Jews." But Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." And the truth would stand. And so Jesus was crucified, the King of the Jews. Ask yourself, now – Is Jesus my King? For Jesus died not for the Jews only, to be their King, but also for us Gentiles; all who will receive what He has done for us to ourselves. Believe in Him. He now sits at the right hand of God and rules over all. But in salvation you humbly ask Him to come and rule over you. And when you do, you will find Him to be the best of Kings; the King of Kings. This say all of His subjects.