

The Final Choice

John 19:8-15

We are honored to be with you again today. It is a privilege to study God's word with you; thanks for joining us. We are Heralds of Hope, and this program is one way we can fulfill Jesus' last command. Jesus told us in Matt 28 to "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." Through this program, we want to teach everyone about Jesus and the things we have learned from Him. We pray for Jesus' Kingdom to be strengthened through the things we share on our program, and we encourage you as you walk with Him and follow Him.

Our study today continues in John 19, where Jesus is being questioned by Pilate. The title is *The Final Choice*. It is a closer look at Pilate's choice and what may have led him to make the decision he made. Before we get into today's teaching, however, let's think about the power of our choices and how our choices set a direction in our lives.

Romans 1 shows us the progression of choices for two people. The first is for someone who is following Him and walking by faith. The other is for someone who has rejected God and is walking away from Him.

First, let's think about the choice to follow God and live for Him. This is summarized in v17, and it is a short summary describing how we can grow closer to God. It says, "God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith." I understand this to be teaching that when you choose God's way and walk with Him, it leads to more faith. Think about the times in your life when you needed God, He shows up, and your faith grows.

As you are faced with many choices and continually go toward God, your faith will continue to grow. "God's righteousness is being revealed from faith to faith," or as I like to think of it, "from faith to more faith." This is God's heart, and this is what He wants for each of us. In every choice, large or small, acknowledge Him and move toward Him.

The rest of the Romans 1 describes what happens when we reject God and walk away from Him. It is a much longer description, but as we look at it, I hope the warning can be taken seriously. Notice it starts by saying these are people who know God. We are not talking about those who don't know; these people knew God.

The downward spiral starts when people know God, but don't glorify Him or thank Him. This is the first bad choice. Remember, it's God's wish for the person to turn toward Him and choose right. However, God is a gentleman and doesn't force Himself where He is not welcome.

So, people know God but don't worship or thank him. This leads right into the next bad choice. They begin to worship created things instead of the creator. The first choice led them away from God, a little. Then they are faced with another choice; again, they reject God and get further from Him. Notice the progression, each choice takes them farther away from God, and it happens little by little.

Time after time, they walk away from God and make the choice to reject Him. Understand this is not a single choice; it is reoccurring. Every day they should glorify God, but they don't. They see a beautiful sunrise, but they don't give God the glory He deserves. And these choices slowly lead them away from God, and they are becoming hardened to Him.

As this progression away from God continues, He lets them go. And they take their rejection of Him another step. They reject His ways and do whatever they please. And you know what? God lets them go. He allows them to live out their sinful desires. It is not pretty. Look at verses 29-31; it gives a summary of what life is like when you continually walk away from God and reject Him, and to add to their wickedness, they even approve of others who are doing as they are.

So here in Romans 1 are two very opposite paths; one leads to more faith, the other to wickedness. Each path is determined by my many small choices. This is why every day is important; each day, our choices lead us to God or away from Him. God is merciful, and in His amazing sovereignty, He continues to give us the freedom of choice. Our prayer is that you will choose Him and move in God's direction. Don't be like Pilate, who was not brave enough to stand for Christ. And don't be like the mob who demanded that Christ be Crucified. Instead, make the right choice and move closer to God.

Now let's give our attention to Pastor J Mark as he teaches us more about The Final Choice.

All of us face choices every day. Some choices are very serious. Some may be rather trivial. But each decision requires the will to carry it out. The serious choices can mean the difference between life and death. The most far-reaching choice I submit to you is the choice we make for or against Jesus Christ because that has to do with the destiny of this life.

At the time when our decision is focused upon Jesus Christ, we are subject to influences affecting our reasoning. There are several ways power can be used to influence that choice. In John 19:8-15, we get the setting for **THE FINAL CHOICE**.

8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid.

9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

When faced with the final choice, we should be aware of the **USES** of power in arriving at our decision.

The first use of power is: **The Power of Silence.**

Pilate was seized with fear when he heard that the Jews said Jesus made Himself the Son of God. Pilate realized then that he was dealing with more than an ordinary person. You can be quite sure that Pilate was not a believer in the God of the Jews. By no means! He was an idol worshipper. But, nonetheless, he was seized with fear and put the question to Jesus like this, "From where are you?"

There seemed to be a mystery about Jesus. Pilate realized that he was dealing with someone more than his equal. But I want you to notice how Jesus used the power of silence. He knew how to use it. He just kept quiet; He said nothing; He did not answer Pilate at all. Few people know how to use the power of silence, but Jesus knew how, so He was forcing Pilate to make a decision.

The second use of power is: **The Power of Rulers.**

When Jesus refused to speak, Pilate attempted to bring the power of Rome down on His head. He said, "Do you not know that I have power to crucify you and power to release you? My word can mean your life, or my word can mean your death." He was at the mercy of the ruler. That is the kind of power Pilate had as a Roman ruler. That was Roman power, the power of rulers. With a whim and a word, they could pronounce life or death.

But Jesus answered him something like this, “You have no power at all. There is a divine power that you do not recognize.” Now here is exactly what He answered, “You would have no power at all against me except it were given you from above.” Roman power, Jesus informed Pilate, is subject to divine power. The power of the state is not absolute. Jesus made that very clear to Pilate.

There was that political power that the accusers of Jesus began to employ, the power of rulers. Rome allowed no rival. Therefore, the appeal was made to Pilate that unless He would crucify Jesus, he would get himself into trouble with the emperor, Caesar.

Now Jesus had set Pilate straight. But the accusers of Jesus threatened him with political power. He had to make a choice. Pilate had to make a choice. Many rulers like Pilate do not realize their power is not absolute.

The third use of power is: **The Power of The Public.**

So, Pilate sat upon his judgment seat in the place called the Pavement. It was simply a mockery. He put on his Roman robes and sat, most likely looking very stern, upon the seat of judgment. He then announced the accusation, “Behold your king.” But the power of the public moved in. It was a mob movement. They passed sentence without law. They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him.” And thus, the innocent One was sentenced to death by the power of the public.

Mobs are seldom rational. They can be led. And that’s what we have here. Jesus became subject to the power of the public.

The final choice was between Caesar and Jesus. For Pilate, it meant his political future. And here, he failed to understand wherein true power lies. He was influenced by the power of the public.

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Now, I urge you to tune in next week as Pastor J. Mark continues our study from John's Gospel. You won't want to miss it. And until then, keep looking to Jesus; He'll give you hope for today!