



**John 18**  
**By Chuck Smith**

Chapter eighteen, the gospel of John.

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where there was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples (18:1).*

This means that this prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John was spoken before they got to the garden of Gethsemane. Somewhere between where they had the last supper, the end of chapter fourteen, they left the house where they had had the supper. So up to chapter fourteen, you have the conversation of Jesus there in the room where they had the passover feast. And then chapter fifteen and sixteen, we're on the way to the garden of Gethsemane, as also was the prayer of Christ. Evidently, they stopped somewhere along the way and Jesus uttered this fabulous prayer that we studied last Sunday night, the seventeenth chapter. At the end of chapter fourteen, it says, Arise, let's go; and so they left the upper room where they had the passover supper and the conversations on the way, the prayer of Jesus. And now they are getting to the mount of Olives. You have to cross the brook of Cedron to get over to the mount of Olives and there was a garden there called Gethsemane. The word means an olive press.

Evidently, some wealthy person had given Jesus the key to the garden. The mount of Olives was covered with private gardens. The wealthy people of Jerusalem had gardens on the mount of Olives. They could not really have gardens within Jerusalem. They had some kind of rule that you couldn't use fertilizer within the city. And so they had their gardens over on the mount of Olives and they were private gardens. Gated gardens. No doubt someone had given to Jesus the key to the garden. He used it often as a place that He would go and spend the night with His disciples and it was a place that was familiar to them. So He crossed the brook "where was the garden, in which He entered and His disciples."

*And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples (18:2).*

It was a place that was well known to all of the disciples. It was a place that they went quite often.

*Judas then, having received a band of men (18:3).*

The word "band" here in the Greek is *speira*, and it is an interesting word because it refers to a unit of Roman soldiers. It could refer to as few as 600. Also it could refer to a unit of 1,200 with 200 cavalry men. And it also referred to a unit up to 1,600. So taking the smaller number, there was quite a number of soldiers that came with the servants of the high priest and all to the garden to arrest Jesus. "Having received the band," *speira*. So they came with the,

*officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came with their lanterns and torches and weapons (18:3).*

They probably figured that Jesus was going to try to hide somewhere and so they had lanterns and torches. There was a full moon because this was passover. And passover took place on the third full moon after our new year. After the Jewish calendar, April was their first month of the year and so the passover always took place on the full moon of the first month. This was passover and they had the full moon so it was quite bright. So they figured no doubt that Jesus would be lurking somewhere, in a cave or hiding. So they had lanterns and torches with them as well as their weapons.

*Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, He went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye (18:4)?*

He didn't try and hide someplace but He went right forth, met them. And just asked them, Who are you looking for? Who are you seeking?

*They answered him, Jesus the Nazarene. Jesus said unto them, Ego Eimi, I am (18:5).*

The word "he" is in italics note, which means that it was added by the translators. Jesus just said, I am. He used that name of the eternal God, Yahweh. The "I am that I am." And when He spoke that name, I am, there was such force, such power that,

*As soon as He had said unto them, I am, they went backwards, and fell to the ground (18:6).*

Here is a manifestation of just that when He would utter the words, I am, so dynamic, so powerful that they fell over backwards.

*And so He asked them again, Whom seek ye? And again they said, Jesus the Nazarene. He answered, I have told you that I am: and if therefore you seek me, let these go their way (18:7,8):*

Notice how that Jesus is more or less taking charge. He's ordering them. They've come to arrest Him and all but yet they recognize that He has authority. So He's ordering them, If you're seeking Me, then let these fellows go. Let them go their way. Again, the protection of Jesus for His disciples. Looking out after them. You can arrest Me, that's part of the plan. But also a part of the plan is that they be set free. So "I told you that I am: therefore if you seek Me, let these go their way."

*That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none (18:9).*

The prophecy was, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (Zechariah 13:7). And Jesus said, All of you are going to be offended this night because of Me. It was the scattering of the disciples. They fled.

*But Simon Peter having a sword drew it (18:10),*

They had, remember, speira of soldiers, quite a few, At the least 200. That's a smaller unit. Then speira, but the smallest unit would be 200. Peter's ready to take them on. You may fault Peter for his denying the Lord under the pressure but hey, Peter's ready to take on the whole band. I mean, he's going to swing. I'll go down swinging.

I like Peter. I really like him. He's my kind of a guy. If we're going to go down, let's go down swinging. At least let's put up an effort. And so he drew his sword,

*and he smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it (18:10,11)?*

John doesn't record for us the prayer of Jesus in the garden. He no doubt felt that it was not necessary because the other gospels had already been written and were widely circulated. And the other gospels all record for us the prayer of Jesus in the garden which He repeated three times when Jesus said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. nevertheless, not My will but Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39). The cup referring to the cross.

If man can be saved by good works, then let's set out the criteria of works that they must do. If man can be saved by being religious, let's set out the form of religion. If man can be saved by any other means, let this cup pass from Me. If it's possible. Nevertheless, not My will but Thy will be done. So now having resolved the issue, He says, "the cup that the Father has given Me to drink, shall I not drink it?" Referring to the cross and His going to the cross. He is committed now to the will of the Father.

As we are told in Philippians, He "emptied Himself, became as a servant, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7,8). Submitting Himself to the will of the Father. "I did not come," He said, "to do my own will but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38), and "to finish His work" (John 4:34). So "the cup which the Father has given me to drink, shall I not drink it?"

*Then the band [that is that speira again] and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him (18:12),*

I think of this, how foolish it was for them to bind Him. It was totally unnecessary and those handcuffs or whatever they put on Him, however they bound Him with the ropes or whatever, that's not what held Him. He could have easily had dispensed of whatever it was that they used to bind Him. As He said, Don't you realize I could call twelve legions of angels to deliver Me? In fact, I have sort of a suspicion that God had to use tremendous restraint on the angels at that point. I'm sure that they wanted to just enter the scene and just really wipe them out. The demeaning, horrible humiliation that their Lord was being subjected to by man. It wasn't the cords that held Jesus, it was His love for you. They didn't need to bind Him, He was bound by cords that were stronger than the ropes that they used. He was bound by His love for you in providing redemption for you.

*It was His love for me that nailed Him to the tree, to die in agony for all my sin. It was for my guilt and blame, the great Redeemer came. Willing to bear the shame of all my sin.*

And it was His love that bound Him. He was committed now to the will of the Father and He was going willingly. He could have disappeared. He did on another occasion when prematurely they were

going to try and force Him to be king. He disappeared from their midst. Another time when they tried to take Him, He just disappeared. He could have disappeared now. But He was committed now to the Father's will to go to the cross and provide redemption for us.

*They led him away to Annas first; for he was the father in law of Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year (18:13).*

Annas was the high priest from the year 6 to the year 15. He was a Sadducee, a materialist and he became an extremely wealthy man. He made his wealth by setting up little booths in what was known as the Gentile court of the temple. In these booths, he would sell certified sacrifices. If you brought say a couple of turtledoves to offer as a sacrifice, the sacrifices had to be without spot or blemish. And so the priest that would examine the turtledoves, they would look carefully, they would go over it inch by inch until they found some kind of a defect in it and then they would refuse it for sacrifice and they'd send you over to the booths of the high priest to buy certified sacrifices. Doves that had already been certified by the rabbis as acceptable.

The only problem was out on the streets you could buy a couple of doves for a quarter. But they were charging eighteen dollars for the two doves that were certified. And so the profit was going to Annas. It was his little merchandising scheme. That was the area that Jesus came into and He drove out those that were selling the sacrifices. Those that were changing the money. He drove them out and so Annas had it in for Jesus. The high priest had it in because Jesus had upset his businesses and so he was determined that he was going to get Him and get rid of Him.

In about the year 15, Annas came into disfavor with the Roman government. And so he was deposed by the Roman government and he had five sons and each of his sons served as high priest for a period of time. But at that time, it was so corrupted they would use bribery and they would purchase the office. Much like in one period of the Catholic church when the office of the Pope was put up for bid and it was sold to the highest bidder. It was that kind of corruption that existed then and they would use bribery and all to gain the office of the high priest because it meant a lot of money because of the merchandising that was attached to it.

And so over a period of time, all five of his sons had served as high priest but each of them came into disfavor. And so Caiaphas had married his daughter and he was now the Roman appointed high priest. However, the Jews did not really recognize Rome's appointments and they still recognized Annas as the high priest. So they brought Jesus first to Annas and John tells us of the trial there, it really wasn't very much before they sent Him over to Caiaphas. So they brought Him bound unto Annas first, he was the father in law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest.

*Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people (18:14).*

That was Caiaphas who was the appointed high priest and he was the one who earlier, as they were saying, What are we going to with this fellow? All of the people are listening to Him and all. He said, Don't you realize, don't you understand anything? It's necessary that one man should die that we might save the nation.

*And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple (18:15):*

Who was that other disciple? We don't know. It was probably John but it has been suggested that maybe it was Nicodemus, who was a secret disciple of Jesus. It said that he was known to the high priest and surely Nicodemus, a wealthy man and a respected teacher, a Pharisee, would be known unto the high priest. Some have suggested that possibly it was Joseph of Arimathea. But most commentators accept that it was John. But how could John know the high priest and how could John have access? Where would the connection be? Because John was from Galilee.

John's father, Zebedee, was a very prosperous fishing magnate. In those days, fish was an important part of the diet. It was impossible, of course, to keep the fish fresh. The main source for fish was the sea of Galilee. It was teeming with fish as it is today. And so they would catch the fish in the Galilee and then they would salt them to preserve them and then they would ship them down to Jerusalem. So it is quite possible that John was a merchandiser working for his dad and that he would bring the fish to Jerusalem. It would appear that John had a home in Jerusalem and perhaps delivered fish to the high priest because only the wealthy could afford them and they were considered very much of a delicacy in those days. The wealthy enjoyed the fish and so it's possible that John had come into acquaintance with the high priest because of the business that he had in the selling of the fish. But at any rate, as I say,

most believe that it was John. So Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple.

John really never did refer to himself much by name. But he referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved and here the other disciple. When he talks about running to the garden and he said that they both ran together but the other disciple outran Peter showing us that he was a faster runner, but he said he stayed outside and Peter went in; but he didn't name himself in the record. Just referred to himself as the other disciple or the disciple whom Jesus loved.

*that disciple [the other one] was known to the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest (18:15).*

He followed right on in because he was known to them.

*But Peter stood at the door outside. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and he brought Peter in to the courtyard (18:16).*

The fact that earlier in the record, he knew the name of the servant, Malchus, the servant of the high priest, the fact that he knew the name of the servant who Peter had whacked his ear off, indicates again a familiarity not only with the high priest but with the household, the servants of the high priest. So he brought Peter in and,

*the damsel that kept the door unto Peter asked, Art thou also one of this man's disciples? And he said, I am not (18:17).*

It would sound like she knew that John was. Are you also one of the disciples? And Peter denied saying, I am not.

*And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret I have said nothing (18:18-20).*

There's no secret conspiracy. Everything I've said I've said openly.

*Why do you ask me? ask them that heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said (18:21).*

According to the law, they had sort of the Fifth Amendment kind of a clause in their law where a prisoner could not be asked a question that would bring about self-incrimination. So it was actually not legal for him to ask Jesus this question because it would require self-incrimination. Jesus is more or less pointing out the fact that that's not a legal question to ask Me. If you want to know the story, ask the witnesses. According to the law, the witnesses are supposed to come and bear witness of what they heard. The prisoner himself could not be forced to testify against himself. So Jesus was calling to him a point of order concerning the law.

*And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, and he said, Do you answer the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you smite me (18:22,23)?*

Here is a totally illegal process taking place and Jesus, who is just and who is righteous and who is concerned in true righteous judgment, is upset with this irregularity according to their own laws. And so He is standing up and challenging them.

*Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest (18:24).*

That was about all that was done there. They then sent Him over to Caiaphas.

*And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being a kinsman or a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, Did not I see you in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew (18:25-27).*

An interesting sidelight here. A possibility and that's all it is. Something to consider. They weren't really allowed to keep roosters in the city limits of Jerusalem. It's much like some of the ordinances that we have in our cities today where you can't keep roosters in your yard because they have a tendency of crowing in the morning and waking up neighbors, and so most cities have ordinances against keeping roosters. Such was the case in Jerusalem. But it is possible that someone had kept a rooster and that it was actually a rooster crowing. But there's another possibility and it's just interesting and I just throw it out and you can do the same.

The Roman had four watches during the night. First one began at nine o'clock, then twelve o'clock,

and then three o'clock and then six o'clock. And at the changing of the watch, they sounded a trumpet. The sound of the trumpet at the three o'clock in the morning change of watch or change of guard was called the cockcrow. And so it could be that it was the sound of the trumpet of the Romans to change the guards at three in the morning that Jesus had said, Before the cock crows, or before that three o'clock in the morning sound of the Roman trumpet, you will have denied Me three times. That is a possibility. Something to, interesting, sort of one of those little Chuck Missler kind of tidbits. Been around Chuck too long.

*Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment (18:28):*

We are told by John nothing of the trial before Caiaphas. The other gospels tell us of the trial before Caiaphas, how that Jesus was brutally treated, how that He was mocked, how that they put a sack over His head and began to hit Him and say, Prophecy, who is it that hit You? And so the other gospels tell us of the trial before Caiaphas. And how finally, Caiaphas said, Are you then the Messiah, the Son of God? Jesus said, You said it. So he tore his clothes and said, What need we of further witnesses? We've heard Himself. And what do you say? They all say He's guilty of death. And so then they took Him over to the Roman court of Pilate in order that they might get the sentence of death. So John leaves out all of that trial before Caiaphas.

The whole purpose was to develop charges against Jesus that could be taken to the Roman government. The charges before the Roman government could not be charges on religious grounds. Rome didn't care. They had to be charges of some kind of insurrection of Jesus against Rome. And so there were false charges, they said that Jesus was advocating a tax revolt. He was teaching that they shouldn't give taxes to Caesar. That's wrong. They tried to trap Jesus on that issue. Remember they said, Is it lawful for us to give taxes to Caesar? And Jesus said, Show me a coin. And He said, Whose image is that? And they said, Caesar's. Well then give Caesar that which is Caesar's, give to God the things that are God's (Mark 12:14-17).

But now they are saying He was advocating not paying taxes and then they were saying that He was an insurrectionist. He was going to rise up against Rome, that He was claiming to be the King of the Jews and was going to lead a revolt of the Jews against the Roman authority. So those were the charges that they decided to bring against Jesus when they brought Him to Pilate. So "they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the hall of judgment,"

*and it was early; and they themselves did not go into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover (18:28).*

This is one of those cases where these guys are doing such a totally corrupt thing. You can't imagine anything more corrupt than this. They are conspiring to see a man put to death who has not done anything wrong. Wicked, vile, evil. And yet, they are careful not to go into the Roman court because this is passover day actually, and you're not to be where there is any leaven and it's possible that there was leaven within the court because the Romans didn't care about the bread not having leaven. And so religiously just keeping the letter of the law, and yet so totally corrupt.

It's interesting how corrupt religious people can sometimes be. How they are so careful in the little religious things. As Jesus said, "You strain at a gnat, but you swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24). And this is so true of religious people. They are so interested in some of the little fine details of the religious traditions and yet they violate so completely real judgment and real honesty and integrity.

*Pilate went out unto them, and said, What accusation do you bring against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee (18:29,30).*

There was no love between Pilate and the religious people. In fact, Pilate had been in trouble with them before. They had complained to Caesar concerning Pilate. When Pilate first became the governor over the area, the capital of the area for the Roman government was in Caesarea. But the governor oftentimes came to Jerusalem because that was sort of the center of the nation. And when he first came to Jerusalem with his soldiers, on the tops of the poles with the flags that they would carry the different legions, they had a little image of Caesar. And so as he came to Jerusalem, the religious leaders were out there and they said, We won't let you come into the city unless you take the image of Caesar off of the banners there. Pilate refused to do it. And so there was quite a confrontation. And finally, Pilate went back to Caesarea and they followed him back arguing all the way. They were about 200 of them and Pilate sort of threatened them. You don't like it, I'll kill you. And they all just held out their necks and

they said, Go ahead, slice them. And he was so moved by that that he couldn't just kill innocent people like that so he gave in and they didn't, they took the little images off when they went to Jerusalem. That was one issue and it was reported to Caesar.

There were a couple of other similar type of issues where Pilate came into disagreement and disfavor with the religious leaders and thus they were constantly reporting him to Caesar. That's why in the next chapter when he is arguing with them to let Jesus go, they said, If you let Him go, you're not Caesar's friend. Ultimately, Pilate was recalled upon the complaints of the religious leaders back to Rome and before he got back there, the Roman Caesar at the time died and so he disappeared from history. We really don't know what happened to Pilate after that. But there was bad blood between Pilate and the religious leaders.

"He went out, and he said, What accusation are you making against this man?" And rather than answering his question, they just said, "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to you."

*And Pilate said unto them, Then you take him, and judge him according to your laws (18:31).*

In other words, washing my hands. I have nothing to do with it. You go ahead and judge Him according to your laws.

*The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death (18:31):*

They are revealing their hand. They are not bringing Jesus to be tried. They are bringing Jesus in order to get a sentence of death. They're not interested in a trial before Pilate. All they're wanting is a sentence of death against Jesus. The power of capital punishment has been taken from the Jews. Just not too long ago from this incident, they had lost the power of capital punishment. So they would, though, you remember Stephen, they stoned Stephen, and the manner of the Jews putting a person to death was by stoning. They could have stoned Jesus but they would have had to answer probably to Rome and so they didn't want stoning. They wanted a cruel, torturous death. They wanted to see Him suffer. They wanted to see Him crucified which is one of the most torturous means of putting a person to death. And they wanted to see Him suffer. So they wanted the sentence to come from Rome because the Roman form of execution was crucifixion. They said "it's not lawful for us to put a man to death,"

*That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke, signifying what death he should die (18:32).*

Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. And this He said, signifying by what death He should die" (John 12:32,33). That is, being lifted up on a cross. They are wanting death by crucifixion.

*Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall (18:33),*

He was outside talking to the Jews. Jesus was inside.

*and he called Jesus, and said unto him, Are You the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, You say this of yourself, or did others tell you of me (18:33,34)?*

Is this a sincere question? Do you really want to know? Is it an honest question? Are you desiring to really know this? Or have others told you? Is this just something that you've heard? Is that what they are saying out there?

*Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You unto me: what have You done (18:35)?*

Pilate is interrogating Jesus, trying to find out just what's going on here. What have You done? Why are they so upset? Why are they so angry? Why are they wanting to see You crucified? What have You done?

*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from here (18:36).*

Jesus is now affirming that He is a King, that He has a kingdom but it isn't of this world. I'm not forming a conspiracy against Rome. I'm not trying to conscript men to rebel against the Roman authority. My kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. It's not of this world. It isn't a material kingdom that I'm going to establish at the present time. I'm going to establish a spiritual kingdom. It will be in the hearts of men, the transformed hearts of men. Lives who will be transformed in My kingdom. It's not of this world.

*Pilate therefore said unto him, Are You then a king? Jesus answered, You said it. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that*

*is of the truth heareth my voice (18:37).*

Yes, I'm a King. This is why I was born. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: the government shall be upon his shoulder: his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it in judgment and in justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isaiah 9:6). Yes, I'm a King. "To this end I was born, for this cause I came into the world." For what cause? To establish a kingdom. To establish the kingdom of God in the hearts and in the lives of those who will submit to His authority.

So that you who have received Jesus Christ as your Lord, you have surrendered your life to Jesus. You said, I want You to take over my life. I want You to be the Lord of my life. You have entered the kingdom. You are a part of the kingdom of God. This spiritual kingdom that Jesus came to establish. My kingdom is not of the world. It's a spiritual kingdom. He rules in the hearts of those who have heard His voice and have responded to His call. It's so good. It's so wonderful to be a part of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

As the scripture says concerning Abraham that he considered himself just a stranger and a pilgrim here. He was "looking for the kingdom, a city which hath foundation, whose maker and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "Our citizenship," Paul said, "is in heaven; from whence we look for our King, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: Who when He comes He's going to change our vile bodies, that they might be fashioned like unto his own glorious image" (Philippians 3:20,21). Yes, I'm a King but My kingdom is not of this world. It's a spiritual kingdom that I'm going to establish in the hearts of people. Not by sword but by love. My kingdom will be established and the power of love will be stronger than the power of the sword and shall overcome the sword.

*Pilate said unto him, What is truth (18:38)?*

Jesus had mentioned, "I came to bear witness of the truth that every one that is of the truth hears my voice." What is truth? This, I think, was said with great cynicism because for years, centuries, the Greek philosophers had searched for truth. They had come up with many concepts of truth. But one by one their concepts were argued out by newer concepts. Until finally the age of philosophy was dying because they had despaired. They figured that truth did not exist. That there was no universal truth. That truth is a relative thing and it is individual and thus, what is true to you is true to you but not necessarily true to someone else. So they got into the existential philosophy where everybody experiences themselves what is true to them and thus, truth is only relative to your background, who you are, where you were raised, the mores of the society in which you live and whatever. That is what establishes truth. There is no such thing as universal truth. And knowing that the philosophers had despaired to discover truth, Pilate said cynically, What is truth?

Jesus had earlier said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Here is Pilate asking the truth, What is truth? Jesus is truth. And over and over again we read through the gospel of John where Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." The word "verily" is truly. He came to bring us the truth of God. What is the truth of God?

The truth of God is that God so loves you in spite of your rebellion. In spite of your foolishness. In spite of your carelessness, God so loves you that He sent His only begotten Son to take your sins and to die in your place, that if you will believe in Him, you might have eternal life. That's truth. God's truth.

Pilate didn't wait for an answer. He figured there was no answer.

*But he went out and he said to the Jews, I find in him no fault at all (18:38).*

The man's innocent. I don't find any fault in Him.

It is interesting how that God was protecting the witness of the innocence of Jesus. When Judas brought back the money, he said, I have betrayed innocent blood (Matthew 27:3,4). His witness, Jesus is innocent. When Pilate was in the process of judging Jesus, his wife sent a message to him and said, Have nothing to do with this just man (Matthew 27:19). The witness that Jesus was just. When the thieves were hanging beside Him on the cross, and the one thief was deriding Him, the other rebuked him and said, Don't you fear God? We're here because we deserve to be here: but this man has done nothing amiss (Luke 23:39-41). Further testimony to the innocence of Jesus. And now the testimony of Pilate. "I find no fault in Him."

If justice is to be served, at that point he should have brought down the gavel and said, Case dismissed. That's justice. But as is so often the case, justice is not served. Nothing new. Goes way back.

*But you have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews (18:39)?*

He is saying it in a snide way, sort of rubbing it in.

*And they cried again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber (18:40).*

Shows you how low they have gotten. Here is Jesus, nothing amiss. Nothing wrong. The Bible said He went about doing good. Healing all manner of sicknesses and all. And yet when given a choice, Jesus or Barabbas, they said, Release unto us Barabbas. We wonder how can people be so hard? How can people be so foolish as to choose Barabbas over Jesus? A man who was known to be a criminal. Known to be a robber. A man who was dangerous to the public. Dangerous to be out on the streets. And yet they had rather take their chances with him than with Jesus. Release unto us Barabbas.

This business of King of the Jews, Pilate does get the last word. When Jesus is hanging on the cross, he has it written above the cross, King of the Jews. He had it put in three languages, Latin and Hebrew and Greek, so that they could all understand it. And that upset the high priest. Remember they came and said to him, Don't put King of the Jews. Put, He said I'm King of the Jews. And Pilate, this thing was going on. It was bad blood here. He just said, What I've written I have written. He was anxious to get his licks in against them. He was being put in a very awkward position. There was a sense of justice in the Roman courts. A sense of justice, at least. He was being pressured to do something that he knew was wrong.

That's always a difficult position to be in when some foolish person in the crowd is trying to push you into that which you know in your heart to be wrong. It always is difficult. They seem to always be there. Those that are leading a person downward. Those who seem to have no interest in the gospel or in Jesus Christ or in their own destiny. They're sort of like the Pharisees that Jesus said, "You will not enter in, but you would hinder those who would enter in" (Matthew 23:13). They're always there. And they are now seeking His death. They are seeking to force Pilate to make a decision that in his heart he knows is wrong. And so he's upset with them. They've always been upset with him. And so it's a lot of pressure and all that's going on in these chapters, in this interchange between the Jews.

It continues on into chapter nineteen. So as we go into chapter nineteen, we see this whole bantering back and forth as Pilate is determined to release Jesus and they are insisting on His death. So we'll follow that on up next week.

Father, we thank You for the kingdom of God and the opportunities that we have of submitting ourselves unto the King. Bowing our knee before our Lord Jesus Christ. Confessing Him as Lord and King of our lives. Surrendering ourselves to follow Him and to live after the kingdom of God. Lord, establish Your reign within our hearts. We're here, Lord, ready to obey and to serve You. We pledge, Lord, our hearts, our lives, our allegiance to You and to Your kingdom. And Lord, we just pray that Your kingdom will soon come. That Your will will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Lord, how we long for that day when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah and He begins His reign forever and ever. Hasten that day, Lord, we wait for it in eager anticipation. And now, Lord, guide us as we submit our lives to You. Show us what You would have us to do. Lead us, Lord, in Your path. In Jesus' name, Amen.