

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

MARK 14:27-15:15

Kisses come in a multitude of varieties. Here're a few examples: the forehead kiss, the eskimo kiss, the hand kiss, the cheek kiss, the goodnight kiss, the hello kiss, the cold kiss, the lingering kiss, even the holy kiss...

And there's at least one more type of kiss; for in tonight's passage we find the original Judas kiss...

It's been said, "A kiss is a contraction of the mouth due to an enlargement of the heart." That might be true of most kisses, but not the kiss we'll talk about tonight.

Some kisses can be feigned. Jealousy, anger, hatred can hide behind a kiss. A kiss can mask our hypocrisy.

Such was the kiss Jesus received in the Garden of Gethsemane. In oriental culture a kiss is like a handshake - *it's a token of friendship*. But Judas' kiss turned out to be a kiss of betrayal and death. *With a kiss...* Judas turned Jesus over to His enemies.

It all took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. That's where Jesus took His disciples after they'd celebrated Passover, sang a hymn, and exited the upper room.

But as they walked out into the night, a conversation ensued... "Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" Here He quotes Zechariah 13:7. This will be a crushing night for

the disciples. Jesus will be crucified - and they all will stumble, and forsake Him.

“But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.” Peter’s problem was pride and self-assurance. “Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.”

Peter was proud and *cocky*... and what did Jesus promise a cocky Peter... Before the cock (or rooster) crows twice, Peter will deny Jesus three times.

Notice Peter’s boast, “*Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.*” He’s compares himself with the other disciples. “Even if the others wimp out, I’ll stand strong! I won’t cave in! You can count on me.”

Beware of spiritual pride - putting your confidence in the flesh - of believing in yourself and your abilities.

My faith is not in my ability to stand, but in God’s ability to prop me up. At crunch time - *in essence, when the rooster crows*, we all tend to act chicken.

“But he spoke more vehemently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all said likewise.”

All the disciples were so sure of themselves, Peter particularly was devastated when he heard... **(crow)**

Verse 72 says, “When he thought about it, he wept.”

“Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” “Gethsemane” means “oil press.”

Gethsemane was a olive grove, that had a press that would squeeze the oil out of the olives. And it was near the press that Jesus felt incredible, spiritual pressure.

His soul and spirit were crushed and squeezed.

It’s interesting, in Genesis 3 we're told that sin, and the rule of Satan, began in a Garden called Eden.

In Revelation 22, we discover that when Jesus returns, and puts an end to sin, and Satan's revolt - He will remake the earth into a beautiful garden. The story of mankind both begins and ends in a garden...

And the turning point between the beginning and the end is another garden - a garden called Gethsemane.

It was in this garden that the battle was fought and won that would end up wresting the world from Satan’s clutches, and delivering it over into the hands of God.

Gethsemane was the garden of decision. It’s where Jesus overcame His pain... hurt... betrayal... struggle, and readied Himself for the cross the next day.

In the garden the Father took away Jesus’ cup of pain - the pain of His rejection - and replaced it with a peace. The battle was not just won on the cross - but the night before. Gethsemane was Jesus’ *crunch time*.

“And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.

Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch." He went a little farther, and fell on the ground..." Jesus' legs buckled - His body toppled to His knees. Jesus is carrying a heavy weight. Luke tells us the beads of perspiration that streamed down Jesus' face had the consistency and appearance of large drops of blood.

Jesus was in inexplicable agony... as Matthew said, He was "exceedingly sorrowful and deeply distressed."

And His prayers were not uttered in soft whispers. According to Hebrews 5:7, "(Jesus) offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears..."

The Master of every situation lost control of His own emotions. *Jesus cries, and cries loudly!* His soul is being pressed and squeezed. Paradise was lost when Adam sinned in a garden. Now in this garden Jesus is submitting to God - *obedience is jelling*. Hebrews tells us that in Gethsemane Jesus learned obedience.

In the garden Jesus learned how to *press on* when you feel like *giving up* - how to *obey* when you want to *abort* - how to make *hard choices* with *painful results*.

In verse 35 Jesus "prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

What went on in Gethsemane defies our logic and understanding. It was a deep and holy mystery.

Some folks believe that Jesus was trying to avoid the cross. He was asking God to save the world another way. After He'd asked three times, and it was apparent the cross was inevitable... He ceased from His prayer.

I don't think that's what happened at all. Jesus was born to die. The wise men brought Him myrrh - an embalming fluid. Revelation 13:8 refers to Jesus as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

According to John 17:1, the cross was Jesus' moment of glory. It was the ultimate aim of His mission, not an experience He was trying to escape or avoid.

I don't believe death was in the cup Jesus prayed would pass from Him. I believe that cup held the pain and poison of His rejection. Jesus had just watched one of His most beloved disciples walk out the door to stab Him in the back. He knew all the disciples would stumble and fail Him. He'd even predicted Peter's awful denial. *The rooster was clearing his throat.*

Here were Jesus' choice men - His sidekicks in whom He had invested the treasures of His Kingdom. Yet now in His hour of need they will abandon Him.

Even as He agonizes in the garden - they're oblivious to His travail. Jesus cries out to God. He slugs it out with demons - *while the disciples snooze...*

I believe the devil wanted Jesus to drink the cup He mentions, and succumb to His feelings of rejection. *Stop*

loving, stop giving, abort Your mission. Satan whispers, "Jesus, it's time you took care of yourself."

How do you love friends who act like foes?

How do you die for folks who deny you?

Jesus was willing to hurt all the way to heaven if necessary - but He wanted the Father to remove His pain - take His cup. And I believe the Father did just that. His feelings of rejection were replaced with peace.

In a lesser sense, we all pass through Gethsemane.

We have similar experiences... *we're betrayed by a friend... or we go through a painful divorce... or we're terminated from a job...* If you ask Him, Jesus will remove your cup of hurt, and replace it with His peace.

But God also wants us to **learn** obedience - *to do things God's way even when life doesn't go our way?* **Jesus obeyed even when it hurt.** *What about you?*

"Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." Oh, how we're all painfully and embarrassingly aware of the truth of that statement. How often have we knelt to pray and seek God - only to fall asleep?

Jesus sums up the disciples' dilemma in ten words: ***"The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."***

My spirit has been redeemed. I love God and love others, but doing God's will can be difficult because it requires the

cooperation of my flesh... *a lazy body, contrary habits, corrupt thoughts, a negative outlook.*

The spirit is willing - but there's a part of me that's as weak as water... That's why *at crunch time*, you and I, like Jesus, need to rely on the Father's strength...

Verse 39, "Again (Jesus) went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

Then He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough!" Usually, we say, "three strikes and you're out," but aren't you glad that's not what Jesus said to His disciples?

Jesus will give them a second chance. He is the Lord of grace and mercy. He's the God of another chance!

Jesus concludes, "The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. See, My betrayer is at hand."

"And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders."

Jesus had just risen from His knees. His agony was over. The cup of rejection and hurt that had been so heavy, had now been removed.

There is now peace in Jesus' heart - a resolve in His mind. His nerves are steel. His will is set. Love for humanity, and the Father's glory are His motivations.

On His knees in the garden, Jesus prayed and won the victory that will be played out *before the priests*, and *in Pilate's Judgment Hall*, and *on Calvary's cross*.

But no sooner does Jesus rise from His knees, that an angry mob appears with burning torches and angry voices. It's made up of Temple guards with billy-clubs, and Jewish dignitaries in priestly robes, and in front of the pack is a familiar face... Psalm 41:9 is prophetic. It quotes Jesus in advance, "**Even My own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against Me.**" Judas Iscariot *followed* Jesus for three years, now he *leads* Him to His execution.

"Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; take Him and lead Him away safely." Remember, Chapter 14's first two verses... The Jews were looking for a way to arrest Jesus without starting a riot. *Judas was their answer!*

Judas knew where Jesus would spend the night, and could identify Him. The Jews would arrest Jesus under the cover of darkness... He'd be in Roman custody by daybreak. By mid-morning Jesus would be crucified.

I've often wondered, *why did the Jews hire Judas?*

Surely, there were men in their own ranks who could've picked Jesus out of a crowd. It would've saved them 30 pieces of silver. And why did Judas choose to identify Jesus with *a kiss, of all things?* A kiss in any culture is a symbol of affection or friendship.

I've concluded Judas' kiss was part of Satan's strategy *to keep Jesus off the cross*. A kiss from a friend is a dagger in your back. It's a *heart attack*.

Satan wanted to pry Jesus off the cross by nursing hurt and resentment. Satan was saying "Forget the cross. Why die for the people who'll betray and deny You?" But Satan's attempts were fruitless. Jesus won this battle in the garden. He'd prayed for the Father to take the cup of rejection from Him - and the Father did.

So, "As soon as (Judas) had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear." An impulsive disciple reacted to the arrest.

He drew his sword on one of the guards, and went for his head. He tried to split his skull in half - but the guard ducked, and the sword clipped off his ear.

Luke 22:51 tells us Jesus picked up the lopped off lobe, and reattached it to the man's head. *A miracle of mercy!...* Jesus heals even His arresting officer!

It's interesting the last miracle Jesus worked while on earth has had to be repeated countless times since. He heals a wound inflicted by one of His own followers.

A free-swinging saint with a sharp sword can do much harm. Hebrews refers to the Bible as a two-edged sword. A person motivated by anger, or jealousy, or revenge - can take even

the life-giving Word of God, and use it to cut up another person.

That's why Ephesians 6 calls the Bible as "the sword of the Spirit." Our use of Scripture should be guided not by a show of ignorance, or desire to win an argument, or a need for revenge - but by the Holy Spirit.

Notice specifically, Jesus reattaches a dismembered body part. It's tragic, but true - even well-meaning servants of the Lord can hurt people they want to help.

We can lose patience, and misrepresent Jesus. We lash out rather than love. In church work, folks get hurt inadvertently. They leave the church - get lopped off from the body. At times ears are flying everywhere...

This is why I'm thankful Jesus still reattaches lopped off body parts. I know folks who were wounded by an angry pastor, or a misguided saint - and they become disillusioned with church - but Jesus works miracles.

*He can heal, and reattach people to **His body**.*

Remember, Mark's Gospel was probably Peter's account. Mark was Peter's protégé. The early church believed his Gospel was Peter's memoirs. This might explain why Mark doesn't identify this sword-swinging.

According to John the brother with the blade was Peter. It could be that an embarrassed Peter chose to skip over this detail in the version he provided Mark.

After cleaning up Peter's mess, Jesus addresses the mob... Verse 48, "Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Have you

come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not take Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” I love Jesus’ explanation.

Jesus wasn’t maneuvering behind the scenes. He’d been open, honest, and public about His intentions.

It was the Jews hiding under a rock - *sneaking around*. Their nighttime lynching party was proof.

Verse 50 describes the disciples’ reaction to the Judas’ led mob. **“Then they all forsook Him and fled.”**

The men had been mentored by Jesus for 3½ years said, **“Thank You”** to Him, by disappearing into the darkness. These brave disciples all tucked tail and ran.

And remember their bold claims? When Peter promised Jesus, in verse 31, **“If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”** We’re told, **“they all said likewise.”**

If you’re ever tempted to put confidence in the flesh, and boast in *your* resolve and *your* determination... remember verse 50, **“they all forsook Him and fled.”**

The disciples boasted they’d never deny Jesus, and saw no reason to pray. While, Jesus, the perfect man, cried out to His Father for strength in time of need.

Little wonder the disciples *fold* under pressure, while Jesus *holds* it together. Peter and the other disciples, are the classic example of what happens when you trust in your own strength... Jesus was trusting in God.

I like how one man described his dependence on God, "He had the strength, and I had the weakness, so we teamed up! It was an unbeatable combination."

"Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked." I suppose you could say, *the young man barely escaped...* Only *barely...*

Most commentators suggest that this "*certain young man*" was the author of the Gospel, Mark. Remember, tradition says the Last Supper was held at his house.

When the disciples left, Mark must've thrown a linen sheet around him, and went with them to the garden.

The point Mark is making is that Jesus was left absolutely alone. The weight of our sin, and the burden of the cross, came down on Jesus and Him alone.

Verse 53, "*And they led Jesus away to the high priest...*" The High Priest at the time was Caiaphas.

When we piece together all four Gospel accounts we discover that Jesus was actually tried five times...

First, John 18:13 tells us He was taken initially to Annas - who was the former High Priest.

Second, He's tried by Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

Third, once Jesus was condemned by the Jews, He was taken to the Fortress of Antonio, the military headquarters of the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate.

In the hands of the Romans Jesus became a political hot potato... At first Pilate passes the buck. Upon hearing that Jesus was from Galilea, he shuffles Him off to Herod. Herod tries Jesus for a **fourth** time.

But King Herod refuses to rule, and sends Jesus immediately back to Pilate for His **fifth** trial.

Until I visited Jerusalem I pondered how all this movement could take place in just a few short hours...

From east of the Temple Mount on the Mount of Olives... to the city's western wall and Caiaphas' house... back east to the Fortress of Antonio... a visit to Herod's palace in between – and back to the fortress. It seems all the travel would take a long time!

But one trip to Jerusalem and it falls into place. The entire Old City is less than one square mile. You can walk from one side to the other in less than thirty minutes. In Jesus' day, the city was not much larger.

You can go to Jerusalem, and retrace Jesus' steps in no more than an hour. And in the middle of the night, while the streets are empty, it would take even less.

When the mob arrives at Caiaphas' house the priest was not alone. Verse 53, **“and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes.”** This gathering constituted an assembly of the 70 member, *Sanhedrin* - or the Jewish Supreme Court.

These dignitaries knew about the arrest, and were waiting on the mob, to exercise their mock justice...

It's ironic that in their haste to convict Jesus, their Court broke several of their own rules that night...

First, nighttime judgments were not allowed.

Second, judgments were to be made in the Temple.

Third, a capital conviction and a death sentence could never be handed down on the Day of Passover.

A smart defense attorney could've probably gotten Jesus' conviction overturned on these technicalities.

While this trial unfolds inside Caiaphas' house, Mark tells us what happens outside, **“Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest.”**

The scene now shifts from the *courtroom* to the *courtyard*... And there's Peter... He's followed Jesus, but notice he **“followed Him at a distance”**... **“And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.”**

Understand, it was a cold night. When Mark left his house he grabbed a cloth to cover his body, and keep himself warm. Peter is now warming himself by the fire.

But Peter had grown cold physically *and spiritually*.

When you lose heart and grow discouraged you lose pace... You grow slack... You lag behind... If you're no longer in step with Jesus, a distance develops...

At a distance, it's more difficult to hear what He says. You're too far from Him to pick up on His heartbeat.

Notice Peter's progression... **First**, his heart grows cold. **Second**, Peter follows Jesus, but at a distance. **Third**, Peter is warming himself by the enemy's fire.

When your heart grows cold, and you let a distance get between you and Jesus, you turn back to the fire the enemy stokes. You revert back to sinful thrills that once excited you. It's sad to be gloriously delivered from sin, only to end right back at the enemy's fire.

When Mark Twain was asked the reason for his success, he explained, "**I was born excited.**" And if you're a Christian you also were born excited - you were *born again* on fire for Jesus. Yet if a lack of prayer, and self-confidence have led to a cold heart, which has led to a distant walk, which has led to the enemy's fire... turn back to Jesus and learn obedience.

Verse 55, "**Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.**" Here's the greatest trial in history.

And ironically, *the prosecution had no case...*

"For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree." The Jewish hierarchy paid people to commit perjury and lie about Jesus, but they couldn't get their stories straight. According to Jewish Law no one could be condemned unless the testimony was confirmed by two or three witnesses.

"Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'" But not even then did their testimony

agree.” Remember, the Jews revered Herod’s temple. They worshipped the Temple itself more than they worshipped God. The thought of tearing down the temple would be treason to a Jew.

Of course, when Jesus made this comment in John 2 it wasn’t in regard to the literal Temple - *but of His own body*. He was God’s temple - God’s dwelling place on earth. When Jesus said He would rebuild the Temple in three days He was talking of His resurrection.

Understand, this whole trial was a farce - Jesus was getting railroaded. It’s interesting, the name *"Caiaphas"* means **"Inquisitor."** This High Priest presides over one of the most terrible and horrific inquisitions of all time!

"And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" But He kept silent and answered nothing." Jesus’ lack of response was a fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah 53:7 predicted, **"He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not His mouth."**

"Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am." This was the name God revealed at the burning bush. When Moses asked for His name, God replied, **"I am Who I am."** Now Jesus is identifying Himself as the great **"I am."** He is claiming to be God.

He said, **"And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."**

The right hand of God is ultimate authority. And when Jesus returns a second time He come in this authority. Jesus warns the priest, *"Today, you will judge Me. But when I return, I will judge you!"*

And the Jews knew exactly what Jesus meant. He left no doubt that He was claiming to be God; for in verse 63 we read, *"Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? "You have heard the blasphemy!" "What do you think?" And they all condemned Him to be worthy of death."*

Jesus clearly claimed to be God, which was all the High Priest needed to issue Jesus a death sentence.

Jesus of Nazareth was a man. We saw Him sweat, bleed, sleep - *but He also claimed to be God.* The Jews considered it blasphemy... They didn't realize the Bible predicted Messiah would be both God and man.

"Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!"

And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands." Once the death verdict was issued this stately crew of dignified Jewish gentlemen went ballistic.

They turned crude, brutal, vulgar, and vicious.

The *priests* became *predators*. They began to spit on the Lord Jesus. They threw a coat over His head, and started punching Jesus in the face. It was vicious.

The Jewish Talmud had a weird teaching that Messiah could identify folks by His sense of smell.

Thus, the Jews blindfolded Jesus, and struck Him with their fists; then asked who it was that punched Him. In essence, *"prove to us you're the Messiah."* It's hard to overstate the indignities that Jesus suffered.

In verse 66 the scene outside shifts, *"Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying."*

"And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them." But he denied it again." Matthew 26:72 records Peter's exact words to the girl, *"I do not know the Man!"*

Notice each denial grew in force. It becomes more emphatic. *And sin is that way...* Each time you give in and compromise it's easier to repeat it the next time.

"And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it." Like a true Southerner a Galilean had a distinctive accent.

*"Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!" You've heard the expression, *"To cuss like a sailor."* Well, where do you think the sailors learned to cuss? *...from fishermen.**

Peter had cussed out his tangled nets a thousand times, but never did he think he would one day curse the Lord He

loved... No sooner had the words left his mouth... "And a second time the rooster crowed."

It's amazing, at the time, roosters were banned from Jerusalem. These birds were unclean animals. To hear a rooster crow in Jerusalem was rare and unusual. That's what made the sound a special sign to Peter.

Verse 72, "Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept." The root word from which we get the English word "*wept*" means "bowels or intestines."

The idea was that Peter's guilt had churned at his stomach. He felt a gut-wrenching grief. He probably fell on his face, and doubled-over, and cried convulsively.

Never has anyone fallen so far so fast as Peter.

From promising to die for Jesus' sake, to denying Him before a campfire girl. Peter is the classic example of a man who trusted in His flesh. In his cockiness, he trusted in His own power, rather than acknowledge his weakness. Peter trusted in himself, rather than in God.

It's not weakness that stops God from using us - it's our failure to admit it. Hudson Taylor once said, "God chose me because I was weak enough. He trains somebody to be quiet enough, and little enough, and then uses him." Peter learns a hard lesson, but the good news is he'll be back - Jesus will restore him.

Chapter 15, “Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.” Recall, it was a rule that a capital sentence could only be issued in the light of day, so as soon as the sun peeks over the horizon they cast their votes, and send Jesus to the governor.

Pilate was appointed procurator of Judea in 26 AD, and early in his tenure he made some critical mistakes.

He hated the Jews and delighted in antagonizing them... But when word got to Rome of his hostilities he was reprimanded. The governor’s job was to keep the peace, not infuriate the locals. When the Jews bring Jesus to Pilate, he’s looking for ways to appease them.

“Then Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” This was the question that concerned Rome. Any local king would be a threat to the Roman Empire.

“And (Jesus) answered and said to him, “It is as you say. And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing.” In 19 AD the Romans stripped the Jews of their right to capital punishment.

That’s why Jesus was brought to Pilate. Pilate alone could order an execution. The Jews leveled groundless accusations against Jesus. They wanted to convince Pilate that Jesus was a enemy of Roman interests.

But “Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, “Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!” But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.” Jesus

had answered Pilate, but He refused to dignify His accusers with a response.

His composure under pressure, and refusal to be manipulated by the Jews - had impressed Pilate.

It's obvious from the other three Gospels that Pilate believed Jesus was innocent. Matthew 27:19 tells us Pilate's wife was warned in a dream that He should have nothing to do with condemning Jesus.

This was why Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. He was passing the buck - hoping Herod would acquit Him.

Pilate may've thought angering the priests might cost him his job. Here he's looking for a way to let Jesus go without creating more tension with the priests...

This is what he does in verse 6, "Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested." This was Rome's attempt to honor the feast and create good will with the Jews.

"And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion." Barabbas was a militant member of a Jewish militia. He wreak havoc against Rome. He'd put the common people in harm's way.

"Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy."

Pilate knew he was being manipulated by jealousy. For some reason Jesus had crossed the Jewish hierarchy, and they were using Rome to eliminate a rival. He thought the commoners would never agree.

Verse 11, “But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them.

Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?” So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!”

Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” Pilate’s sense of Roman justice tugged at him. He didn’t want to see an innocent man die. Pilate could’ve been a hero - done a brave deed - but in the end he was more *political* than *principled*.

Tragically, Pilate sacrificed the truth to cater to the Jewish leaders. He cared more about the political consequences of his actions, than their morality. Pilate tried to squirm out of a situation - instead of taking a stand. And *squirming* and *standing* are poles apart.

Verse 14 continues, “But they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!” So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them, and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.”

Matthew 27:24 tells us Pilate, “took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just Person...’ He tried to wash his hands of the whole ugly affair, and disavow any responsibility in Jesus’ death. *But it didn’t work...*

Shortly, after Jesus' crucifixion, Pilate was removed from office, and sent back to Rome. The Church historian, Eusebius, records that his life eventually fell apart. In Rome, Pilate ended up committing suicide.

He kept his job by selling out Jesus - *but in the end he lost not only his job, but his very life.* It reminds me of a verse, "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

It's ironic that every Sunday in churches all over the world believers quote the Apostles' Creed. And in it the line, "suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified."

The creed memorializes the responsibility Pilate tried to escape. The fact is, none of us can sidestep our responsibility in the death of Jesus. It wasn't just Pilate that sent Jesus to the cross, it was my sin and yours...

Again, verse 15, "So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified."

The Roman scourging was nicknamed "the half-way death." Many victims never survived the brutality.

The scourge, or "flagellum," consisted of a dozen or so leather strips attached to a handle. A lead ball was woven into the ends of the cords. Shards of glass or metal were embedded between the lead and handle.

The victim was tied by the wrists, and dangled over a post about a foot off the ground. The scourging consisted of thirty-nine lashes with the flagellum.

The initial blows caused welts on the shoulders and back. By the 7th or 8th blow the glass and metal had opened the skin, and begun to churn up the muscles.

By the end of the ordeal his back had the texture of hamburger - internal organs might even be exposed.

Finally, the victim was cut down, and his body would hit the pavement in a puddle of his own blood.

In history's most important trial there is no shortage of jurors... Every man and woman - boy and child - sits in the jury box to cast a vote in the case of Jesus...

The question Pilate asked the Jews, is the question every human will one day answer, "*What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?*" And Pilate's example proves there is no middle ground. No one can ever wash their hands of Jesus. Everyone either *bows their knee* or *bows their neck*.

What will you do with the Savior?