

Expediency Or Honour?

*“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying,
Have thou nothing to do with that just man:
for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.”*

Matthew 27:19 KJV

The Roman governor for the Jewish people—during our Lord’s adult life (26 CE - 36 CE)—was Pontius Pilate. He hated his subjects as much as they hated him. He did several memorable things to provoke their powerless anger.

Pilate liked nothing better than to enrage his subjects. He was recalled to Rome on more than one occasion to answer for his actions against the Jews. It took some significant effort and several personal petitions in Rome, but the Jews finally had Pilate ousted from governing them.

During the night Pilate had his sleep disturbed by the Jews asking for Roman police to escort them and help them apprehend a dangerous criminal. Wanting to keep things peaceful, he complied, dispatched the soldiers and went back to bed—likely telling his wife what the problem was.

Later that same night he was again awakened by the Jews asking for him to impose the death penalty on this Galilean, Jesus of Nazareth. Once more

he rose and went out to deal with the matter.

His wife fell back to sleep after this second disruption and had a frightening dream where she came to understand that her husband was dealing with an innocent and very righteous Man.

Waking up, she sent a message to her husband, who was occupied with the Jewish leaders, warning him of her dream and her great concern for her husband’s safety if he did the Man any harm.

Pilate would pronounce Jesus “not guilty” of any crime five times during Jesus’ two appearances before him. Yet for the sake of “political expediency” or lack of “honour” he caved into the pressure from the Jews to execute the Man he believed innocent.

We call Pilate an unprincipled man, or a man without honour for his part in the execution of our Lord. When he had an opportunity to stand for principle he sold his soul for peace with the people he ruled.

His superstitious culture—that believed in omens and dreams—may have played on his emotions, but at last expediency ruled the day and Pilate was morally shipwrecked.

At times Christians can give in unwisely to pressures from without when their conscience tells them the right way to act. Not wishing to go against their non-Christian friends calls to sin, they give in and lose the temptation battle.

If you have been caught in some situation that calls for you to compromise your principles for the prize of popularity, stand firm for truth. Honour your commitment to follow the Lord regardless of cost.

What you gain will be worth much more than fleeting popularity with the godless crowd. Stand firm for the Lord and you will never regret it, collapse and you will suffer dreadful loss (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

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