

Just A Wash Basin

Matthew 27:22-24, "Pilate saith unto them [the multitude] *What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it.*"

Under Roman Law the only person with the authority and responsibility of sentencing anyone to death was the Roman Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. The priests of the Jewish Synagogue wanted to put Jesus to death, so Pilate was the man they must deal with. The problem was that there had not been any crime committed. Even a man with a conscience, like Pilate, had trouble with such a brazen abuse of justice. So, what does Pilate do? He calls for a basin of water in which to wash his hands in front of all the screaming multitudes, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood, see you to it!"

Ever since that day, Pilate has been an example of the way many love to avoid their responsibility. It's saying, "I don't want to get involved."

Pilate's "Wash Basin" has two lessons for us today:

1. The Wash Basin shows it impossible to wash away for God-given duties, no matter how hard we try.
2. The Wash Basin shows how wonderful it is that God's love can wash away our cowardly efforts in shunning responsibilities.

Today, of course, we would not call for a "Basin of Water" and wash our hands in order to avoid responsibilities, however, there are other ways we shun our duty

We can avoid the tasks God has for us to perform by simply shrugging our shoulders, with an attitude, "I couldn't care less." We may even excuse doing what we want to do by saying something spiritual, like, "I'll pray about it."

An article on "Crime Prevention" tells us that burglaries could be cut in half "if neighbors were concerned about their neighbors." It continues to say, "Even shoplifting could be drastically reduced, if customers would call a clerk's attention to obvious thefts." We've all seen on various television news reports of acts of violence, rapes, even murders, that were carried on while witnesses were present - but who did not want to get involved, so they did nothing about it!

An African story is told about a man who fell ill midway between two villages. The Elders of each of the villages attempted to measure the distance to each village to see which community was closer and, therefore, would have the responsibility of caring for the sick man. The story goes, that the man died before a decision could be made.

Do we ask, "What is my responsibility? Am I my brother keeper?"

Probably, the most serious “*Hand Washing*” we do is when, like Pontius Pilate, we try to avoid our responsibility for either confessing or crucifying Jesus Christ.

How do we do that?

One way we do this is – when we want to be considered religious – belonging to a church – but, in no way do we want to do anything to change the pattern of our life.

We need to ask our self, “*What difference does our faith really make in our life?*” *Is my lifestyle built around recreation, home improvements, or making money?* So often believers develop a “*do-it-yourself*” way of life, meaning that they pretty much doing what they feel like – instead of seeking what God would have them do. If serving Jesus gets in the way, there’s no question about what has to give.

This is the reason Pilate called for a “*Basin of Water*” to wash his hands, he didn’t want to rock the boat! Note that Pilate was fearful to a certain degree. He knew Jesus was some kind of “*god.*” Even his wife had a dream about this whole thing and warned him.

Fear keeps those who are half-hearted about living for God from giving up altogether. They cling to some kind of religion. Their religion serves them like an insurance policy, they are afraid to drop it, but hate to make the payments.

The popularity of the religious television programs is, often, so the believer can enjoy religious services, but no commitment necessary. They feel as if it keeps their soul insured for eternity, but viewing religious programming. They don’t have to be involved. But, there is no easy way to wash your hands of the responsibility of the tasks Jesus gives to us.

The name “*Pontius Pilate*” is spoken by great congregations, lisped by little children, even whispered by the dying. It has been repeated ten thousand, ten thousand times as Christians the world over have recited those words from the Apostles creed: “*He suffered under Pontius Pilate...*” And, so, it has always been with those who have looked for an easy compromise between complete commitment and unbelief.

Jesus made it plain when He said, “*He that is not with Me, is against Me.*” Many have discovered that, like Pilate, they have crucified Jesus, and He judges them from the cross. Hebrews 6:6 warns believers of “*falling away (from their tasks) to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.*”

As Pilate sought to wash his hands of his responsibility, out, beyond the open window, there is an angry mob giving Pilate his answer to the “*Wash Basin.*” They cry, “*His blood be on us and on our children.*” These reckless words should be a reminder to us all. Pilate alone did not crucify Jesus. He blood is on us and on our children, and on every human being who has ever lived!

Why?

Romans 3:22-23 states it plain enough for all to comprehend, “*The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” We are all guilty

There's a message to be learned in the mobs reckless willingness to accept the guilt for the blood of Jesus. Little did this bloodthirsty multitude know that the blood for which they screamed would soon be shed to "*wash away the sin of the world* (John 1:29). 1 John 1:7 tells us that Christ's blood will "*cleanse us from all sin.*"

Pilate's wash basin can mean to us more than just ordinary water from a palace pitcher. It can be emblematic of what Scripture calls, "*the washing of regeneration.*" (Titus 3:5). God can wash away all our cowardly efforts to shirk our responsibility and give us new opportunities to be involved the way God wants us to.

There is a very interesting event that took place in the last days' of our Lord's earthly existence. John 13:4-11 relates the incident, "*Jesus rises from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He pours water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter says unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, `What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.' Peter says unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me. Simon Peter says unto him, `Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' Jesus says to him, **He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.** For he knew who should betray him."*

Here was a different basin in a different place, under different circumstances. Jesus was showing His followers that they should serve one another. There's also another lesson to be learned. Jesus reveals that once we have been washed in His blood by the born-again experience, we do not need that washing again. But, in our walk with the Lord, our spiritual feet will sometimes get dirty and will need cleansing. We need to check our work with the Lord every once in awhile and see if, perhaps, we need our spiritual feet wash again.

There was a story in the Nashville, Tennessee Newspaper of a lady name Lila Craig who "*had not missed attending church for 1,040 Sundays.*" The editor commented, "*It makes one wonder what's the matter with Mrs. Craig. Doesn't it ever rain or snow in her town on Sunday? Doesn't she ever go anywhere on Saturday night so she's too tired to get up on Sunday morning? Doesn't she ever attend family picnics or reunions on the weekend? Doesn't she ever have headaches, a cold, nervous spells, or read the Sunday paper? Hasn't she ever become angry at the minister or had her feelings hurt by a member of the church or felt justified staying home to hear a good sermon on television or radio? What's the matter with Mrs. Craig?"*

What's the matter?

Mrs. Craig had learned and believed in accepting her God given responsibility that the "*buck stopped here.*" And, she wasn't about to pass it on to anyone else. For her, the Wash Basin meant "*Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee!*"