

Pilate's Choice

- *God has given each person the gift of free choice.*
- *This gift of free choice will either open the door to blessings and joy or to loss and sorrow depending upon the choices we make.*
- *Some misunderstand the concept of free choice and are careless about the choices they make and suffer the consequences.*
- *Some confuse the difference between free choice and free will.*
- *Free will means that we have the freedom to make choices and have the power to carry out those choices and direct the outcome of our lives.*
- *Free choice means that we have the freedom to make choices and we will experience the consequences of our choices. However, we do not necessarily have the power to actually carry out those choices or direct the outcome of our lives.*
- *While some allow their temporary whims and lusts to direct their choice with no thought or regard for the consequences, others feel powerless and bound to their past and believe the lie that they are incapable of making good choices.*
- *The Gospel, the Good News, is that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead, so that we could be delivered from the destructive consequences of our past choices. Each person can make a new choice and put their faith in Christ and begin a new life with Him as their Lord and Saviour.*

The Bible is filled with examples of people who made choices. Some of their choices were good and some were bad.

- *The first choice recorded in the Bible is found in Genesis, Chapter 3, when Adam and Eve chose to disbelieve the words of God. They chose instead to believe the words of the Serpent, disobey God, and rebel against His commandments.*

Genesis 13:10–11 (NKJV)

¹⁰And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.

¹¹Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

- *Lot had a choice of where he would live, but he allowed his own eyes and desires to direct him. He chose to dwell in the area of Sodom and Gomorrah with disastrous consequences for both him and his family.*

James 2:23 (NKJV)

²³And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.

- *Abraham made the choice to believe God and put his full trust in Him. Not only did his choice result in salvation, but he became “the friend of God!”*

Joshua 24:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

- *One of the main messages of the Bible is that each person ever born has been given the gift of choice. God is calling and even imploring each person to choose to repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ and be saved.*
- *Obedience and submission to the will of God is simply an expression and an outcome of choosing to put our faith in Jesus Christ, not only when we first received Him, but as we choose to put our faith in Him each day.*

John 15:22–24 (NKJV)

²²If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

²³He who hates Me hates My Father also.

²⁴If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.

- *Jesus came not only to reveal to mankind their lost state, but to provide the solution. Man has a choice as to how he will respond to God.*
- *There is no neutral ground in the choice that God has set before every human being, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.”*

Job 33:14–16 (NKJV)

¹⁴For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it.

¹⁵In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds,

¹⁶Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction.

- **“For God may speak in one way, or in another ... In a dream, in a vision of the night ... He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction.” - *God reveals Himself to every person no matter where they live or what circumstances they face. If they choose to respond, God will lead them to faith in His Son Jesus Christ.***

Romans 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

- *God speaks through creation itself for “His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made ... so that they are without excuse.”*
- *God gives each person the opportunity to choose “so that they are without excuse.”*

John 3:16–19 (NKJV)

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

¹⁸“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

- *God’s motivation in sending Jesus Christ into the world was to save mankind and not to bring condemnation, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”*
- *However, those who choose to reject Jesus Christ have chosen condemnation, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*
- *What motivates someone to choose to reject Jesus Christ is not a simple misunderstanding, but a choice to want to live in darkness. “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”*
- *Pontius Pilate was a Roman governor who felt he had no choice, but was forced do something that he did not want to do.*

- *One thing we can learn about Pontius Pilate is that although he attained a degree of political power and prestige, his life ended in obscurity.*

Matthew 27:11–18 (NKJV)

¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus said to him, “It is as you say.”

¹²And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.

¹³Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?”

¹⁴But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

¹⁵Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished.

¹⁶And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.

¹⁷Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

¹⁸For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

- *Pilate, as the Roman governor of Judea, found himself in a position of being swept away in a direction he didn't want to go and being forced to make a decision he didn't want to make.*
- *So, instead of making the decision himself, he side-stepped the issue and sought the opinion of the people, “Whom do you want me to release to you?”*
- *Pilate clearly knew that Jesus was innocent and for some reason was not indifferent toward Him.*
- *Pilate's attempt to release Jesus was not motivated by compassion, but by fear. But who or what was he afraid of?*
- *There was something he knew deep down inside about Jesus that he found very unsettling.*
- *Pilate attempted to release Jesus by choosing the most notorious criminal, Barabbas, and setting him and Jesus before the people. Then he asked the people to choose who was to be set free.*

Matthew 27:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.”

- *In the midst of Pilate's inner struggle to see Jesus set free, Pilate's wife came to him with additional troubling news.*

- *Pilate's wife received a dream from the Lord with a warning for her husband.*
- *“Have nothing to do with that just Man” – Her warning to Pilate is clear. “Jesus is not only innocent but He is righteous. Don't be involved in any act of injustice toward Him.”*
- *“for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.” – While Pilate was on the verge of having to condemn Jesus, his wife sent him a fearful message warning him that what he was about to do would end in disaster.*
- *Why would God give Pilate's wife such a powerful dream warning her husband not to condemn Jesus to death?*
- *God does not desire that anyone should act wickedly.*
- *God had already given Pilate an inner witness that Jesus was righteous and that it would be a great evil for Him to be condemned.*
- *Now God sent Pilate's wife as a second witness to him with a very strong warning confirming what he already knew in his heart.*

1 Timothy 2:3–4 (NKJV)

³For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- *God yearns to save all men and He reaches out to all men to be saved. It deeply grieves the heart of God when people reject His salvation.*
- *We see that God gave Pilate's wife the dream first of all to warn Pilate, so that he would not act wickedly.*
- *But God also gave Pilate's wife the dream to warn Pilate, so he would clearly know what he was doing was wicked, so he was without excuse.*
- *God made sure that everyone involved in Christ's betrayal and crucifixion were fully aware that Jesus Christ was a righteous man and what they were doing was wicked.*
- *Pilate, the judicial authority, proclaimed three times before all the crowd and the religious leaders that Jesus was faultless in a vain attempt not to be forced to condemn Jesus to death.*

John 18

³⁸Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no fault in Him at all.”

John 19

⁴Pilate then went out again, and said to them, **“Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.”**

⁵Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, “Behold the Man!”

⁶Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, **“You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.”**

- *It was the sinfulness of man that nailed Jesus to the cross. There was not one person who was responsible for the death of Jesus who was not aware that what they were doing was wrong.*
- *Jesus died for our sins and it was our sins that placed Him on that cross.*
- *The wickedness of mankind is what moved Jesus to die for our sins and it was the wickedness of mankind that betrayed the Son of Man.*

Matthew 27:20–26 (NKJV)

²⁰But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

²¹The governor answered and said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” They said, “Barabbas!”

²²Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said to him, “Let Him be crucified!”

²³Then the governor said, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they cried out all the more, saying, “Let Him be crucified!”

²⁴When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.”

²⁵And all the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and on our children.”

²⁶Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.

- *Everyone who played a part in Christ’s death made a choice to betray Him, but for different reasons.*
- *The religious leaders were motivated because of envy. (Matthew 27:18).*
- *Judas was motivated because of greed. (John 12:6; Matthew 26:15).*
- *The Roman soldiers were motivated by a love of cruelty and enjoyed inflicting pain on the weak and helpless. (Matthew 27:27-31).*
- *Herod was motivated by indifference. (Luke 23:8-11).*

- *The crowd was motivated by an irrational and senseless lust for blood stirred up by the religious leaders. (Matthew 27:22-23).*
- *What compelled Pilate to do what he fully and clearly knew was wrong and what he didn't even want to do?*

Matthew 27:23

²³Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

- "Why, what evil has He done?" – *We can see from this scene that Pilate was not acting like a governor of the Roman Empire, but as a desperate man trying to plead with an angry crowd not to force him to do something he did not want to do.*

²⁴When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."

- *Pilate desperately tried in vain first to release Jesus and then he tried in vain to absolve himself of the responsibility of passing judgment over Him.*
- *While Pilate washing his hands and proclaiming his innocence made good theater, it in no way absolved him from his responsibility and the consequences of his decision remained.*
- *What compelled Pilate to do what he fully and clearly knew was wrong and didn't even want to do?*
- *Pilate's inability to choose to do what he knew was right was not based on the single event that lay before him, but was the result of many choices he had made throughout his life that cascaded down to that very moment when Jesus stood before him.*

John 19:12-13 (NKJV)

¹²From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."

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

- *Pilate's life consisted of choices that were about self-promotion, affluence, and a generally self-centered life. When he heard the final shouts of the crowd, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a*

king speaks against Caesar,” *Pilate was forced to choose between what he knew was right and what was politically expedient.*

- **“We found this fellow (Jesus) perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.” (Luke 23:2). *If this news reached Caesar, Pilate could be held on charges of sedition or treason, not a trivial matter in the Roman Empire.***
- ***Pilate’s fear of man stopped him from hearing and responding to God’s voice. Pilate feared Caesar more than he feared God.***
- ***Pilate’s fear was not rooted in the crowd, but really stemmed from his fear that a bad report would reach the ears of the Emperor and could result in many possible negative consequences. This fear reduced Pilate to a man pleading with a crowd of people who for the most part lacked any social status.***
- ***Pilate no longer acted like a governor, but a man filled with fears and insecurities.***

John 19:15–16 (NKJV)

¹⁵But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”

¹⁶Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.

- ***What was the choice made by the Jewish rulers, the Jewish throng, and Pilate himself that resulted in their collective betrayal of Jesus?***
- **“We have no king but Caesar!” Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified.” – *They all chose to be ruled by the cruelty of a repressive man-made empire and rejected God as their King.***
- ***Although Pilate’s life consisted of selfish and destructive choices that led him to this point it did not mean he could not have made another choice that would set him on the path of life.***

“Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” (Matthew 27:22).

- ***Here is the question of the ages—for every man, woman, and child. What will we do with Jesus?!***
- ***As Pilate asked the question of the people, God was asking Pilate the same question! Pilate asked the right question, but chose the wrong response.***

- *The choice before Pilate was not whether he would release Jesus, but whether he would receive Jesus, and put his faith in Him and receive Him as Lord and Saviour.*
- *As long as Pilate was under the man-made rule of Caesar he was incapable of choosing to release Jesus, because he was ruled by fear and selfishness.*
- *There was only one way that Pilate could have overcome the fear of man and acted righteously.*

Proverbs 29:25 (NKJV)

²⁵The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

- *Pilate's one way to freedom from the fear of man was to put his faith in Jesus, the Son of God; the King of the Jews, the Messiah.*
- *With that one choice, Pilate would have been freed from the fear of man and empowered to serve God.*
- *Pilate thought he had no choice and he felt forced into condemning Jesus, because He misunderstood the choice that lay before Him.*
- *The real choice was not whether he was going to condemn Jesus or release Him. The real choice was whether he would serve Caesar or serve God by accepting Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.*
- *Before a person is born again they may think they have many choices, but truly they only have one choice that is vitally important, "What will we do with Jesus Christ the Son of God."*

John 5:24 NKJV

[24] "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

- *From that one decision the direction of our life is determined and for those who put their faith in Jesus Christ they "have passed from death into life."*
- *We have looked at the choices made by Pilate, the Jewish religious leaders, and even the Jewish throng, but there is one more person who also had to make a choice and that person was Barabbas.*

Mark 15:7 NKJV

[7] And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion.

- *Barabbas in Aramaic means “son of the father.”*
- *Barabbas was chained with his fellow rebels—he was bound to sin and before him stood certain death.*
- *Barabbas was a rebel and a murderer—just as we are also rebels and murders.*
- *The people chose to release Barabbas in order to condemn Jesus Christ.*
- *God the Father chose to condemn His Son Jesus Christ in order to release Barabbas.*
- *The people’s choice reflected their rebellious and hardened hearts against God.*
- *God’s choice reflected His loving and compassionate heart toward mankind.*
- *The same choice with two totally different motivations.*
- *The story of Barabbas does not end with the release of Barabbas, but later with Barabbas’ choice.*
- *The people chose Barabbas, but more importantly, what did Barabbas choose?*
- *What did Barabbas do with this new opportunity for a fresh start?*
- *Did he return to being a rebel leader and murderer?*
- *Did he put his faith in Christ and become a disciple?*
- *Was Barabbas one of the 120 in the Upper Room?*
- *The Bible leaves that question unanswered, because the choice lay with Barabbas, not with the crowd, and not with God.*

Hebrews 6:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,

¹²that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- *Our choices don’t end the moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ they just begin. We will face a lifetime of choices, each of which will have eternal consequences.*

- *Sometimes when someone puts their faith in Christ they do well for a time, but then they get sidetracked and instead of finding freedom they find themselves ensnared in the same bondages they had before.*
- *“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end” – Our choices are cumulative. If we consistently choose to trust Christ and obey Him we will experience the fulfillment of God’s will in our lives.*
- *“through faith and patience inherit the promises” – Faith and patience will always result in a fruitful and joyful life in Christ.*
- *Our choices don’t change us, but when we choose to trust and obey God, He changes us.*
- *If someone thinks they can exercise their will to see their lives transformed they will grow extremely frustrated and end up filling their lives with religion instead of a relationship with Christ.*
- *When we choose to put our faith in Christ and submit to Him, then He does the transforming work in our lives by the power of His Holy Spirit through the release of His grace in our lives.*
- *A Christian does not become backslidden because of one bad choice, but because of a series of poor choices, many of which may appear as minor.*
- *However, God has provided us with a course correction, so we can get back on track. The course correction God has provided is called repentance, which means turning away from sin and disobedience and turning to Christ in faith.*

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- *No matter how many times we have failed, no matter how many bad choices we have made, when we turn to God with an honest heart of repentance He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and to get us back on track.*