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May memory verse Romans 6:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Commentary on Mark chapter 15 verses 1-26, by Chuck Smith 5.1.22

Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane in the evening or late night, and immediately brought before Caiaphas the high priest and some of the rulers where they held an illegal night tribunal. And they tried to develop charges that they could bring against Jesus before the Roman court because they were determined that Jesus must be put to death. But they did not have the power of condemning a prisoner to death. That was Rome's power. So, their trial against Jesus was basically a religious trial. And they had many witnesses that came; none of them could agree together. And finally, the high priest said directly to Jesus, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us, are you the Son of God?" And Jesus answered in the affirmative and said, "Henceforth you're not going to see Me until you see Me in the right hand of power." And the high priest tore his clothes and he said, "What need we of any further witnesses?" In other words, "We don't need a witness. This guy has witnessed against Himself. What do you think of this?" And they all said, "It's blasphemy!" "What shall we do to Him?" "Let Him be put to death." Well, there's no way the Roman court is going to put a man to death for blasphemy against the Jewish religion. So they had to develop other charges when they brought Jesus before Pilate because their religious charges would not hold any credence in a Roman court. Now,

And straightway in the morning [this first trial was at night,] the chief priests [they gathered together the whole council, verse one of chapter 15, and they] held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked him ([Mar 15:1-2](#)),

Now, no doubt the charges that they brought against Jesus were charges of insurrection against Rome, claiming that He was a king. And they did throw in the charge, though it was a false charge that He said they should not pay taxes to Caesar. So basically, the only charges that they could bring in the Rome court against Jesus would be insurrection against Rome. And these would be capital offenses for which He could be put to death.

"Then Pilate asked Him,"

Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it [You said it]. And the chief priests accused him of many things; but he answered nothing [but he did not make any defense for himself]. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing [Don't You answer anything to these charges]? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled. Now at that feast [that is the Feast of the Passover,] he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired [it was a custom of the Roman government to honor the feast by turning free a prisoner unto the people, a prisoner of their choice]. And there there was one [certain prisoner] named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them [as he was accustomed to do, on this particular day of the year, release a prisoner]. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I [do you want me to] release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified ([Mar 15:2-15](#)).

So we find the account of Jesus before Pilate. For many years there were certain Bible critics that found what they felt to be a discrepancy in the scriptural record because of the reference to Pilate. And within the Roman records that have been discovered up to that point, there was no record of any man named Pilate ever being a governor over Judea. And so those Bible critics who are so willing and ready to find some discrepancy in the Bible began to assert with all of their scholastic pomp that the Bible was not a credible record at all because it listed people who never did exist, people whose names were absent from any other record or any other source. And because there was no other source naming Pilate as a Roman governor, then surely the Bible account has to be wrong and you cannot rely or trust in the Bible. And these men gained great notoriety by their proclamations and the papers were only too happy to publish them and their findings. However, when excavations were being done in Caesarea, they happened to cross an interesting stone that had the record of Pilate inscribed upon it, "The Governor of Judea," and telling a little bit about his office as governor. And so all of the scholars and all of their discrediting of the Bible was, of course, discredited itself and the Bible stood once more as an anvil, as the hammers that were beaten against it were worn out and tossed aside. And now it is thoroughly recognized and there has been much more discoveries by the archaeologists that have proved that Pilate did indeed live and govern over Judea. In fact, we know quite a bit about Pilate's history now. But it's interesting how that people are so ready to find fault with the Word of God, or so ready to discredit it. And how much publicity they can get on any statement discrediting the Bible. Yet when they found this stone of Pilate, very little was mentioned about it in the press. You know, the guys just sort of bow their heads and put their tail between their legs and slink away and hope that people will forget their asseverations that Pilate was not a real person.

Jesus is accused of being the King of the Jews. He's more than that. He's the King of Glory. But Jesus did not defend Himself. Now in Isaiah it said, "And as the sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." It is possible that this crowd that had gathered before Pilate had not gathered on the account of Jesus. It is quite possible that the crowd that had gathered was drawn together in order to have this man Barabbas released. It could be that was the purpose of the crowd being there. Now we find the charge against Barabbas was insurrection. That would not be a bad or evil thing as far as the Jew was concerned. In fact, this was a common problem that Rome had with Judea, the many insurrections. For there were many zealots who hated that Roman occupation of their land. And they were constantly having uprisings against the Roman occupiers. And there was, of course, this man Barabbas. It could be that to the people he was a national hero because he dared to stand up against Rome. So that, it is quite possible that the crowd that was there was not actually there to witness the trial of Jesus, but were there for the purpose of getting the release of Barabbas, to put the pressure on that Barabbas might be released, as sort of a popular hero.

Pilate asked them a question that is a question that is very relevant to each one of us, "What will you then that I shall do unto Him whom you call the King of the Jews? What shall I do with this man?" That's something that every one of you have to determine in your own hearts. What are you going to do with Jesus who is called the King of the Jews? You see, you've got to do something with Him. He is a radical, and as a radical you cannot be neutral towards Him. You've got to have some kind of an opinion. You've got to do something with Him. And you see, you've got to either believe Him or not believe Him. You've got to receive Him or reject Him. Now, not to believe in Him is to not believe in Him. In other words, you can't be neutral; you've got to take a stand one way or the other. You either believe or you don't believe. You can't be neutral. Not to receive Him is to reject Him. Not to confess Him is to deny Him. And each of you must determine what you are going to do with this man Jesus who is called the King of the Jews. For you either confess or deny, you receive or you reject, you believe or you don't believe.

Pilate was the judge. He is asking the people to give him direction for his decision, a very unusual move on the part of the judge. But yet, in this case, it's a significant move because really, it's the people's choice. It's a personal choice. And each man must make the decision for himself; you can't leave it up to Pilate to make the decision for you. You make the decision for yourself and you are responsible then for that decision that you make.

In a sense, each of you stand as the judge of Jesus Christ. Was He really the Son of God, or was He a charlatan and a fake? Did He really die for the sins of the world? Was He really risen from the dead? Or is it all a farce, a hoax? And each of you must stand as judge of the facts of history to determine whether or not these are accurate or inaccurately reported to you. So you must finally decide and determine what you are going to do with this man Jesus, who is called the Christ, the King of the Jews. But the ironic twist of the whole thing...your being the person who must judge for yourself concerning Jesus Christ, the ironic twist is that your decision concerning Him has

absolutely nothing to do with His destiny. Though you have to judge, you are not determining His destiny; but in reality, you are determining your destiny. To believe in Him, to receive Him, to confess Him is to receive eternal life. To not believe in Him is to receive eternal damnation. And thus, you as the judge are determining your own destiny when you make your determination concerning Jesus Christ. It's a very heavy thing. I am the judge, but yet it is my fate that is being determined by the judgment that I make. What Jesus is, He is. You can't change it. What He is He has always been and will always be. Your decision concerning Him will not affect Him at all. But it will determine where you spend eternity.

"Pilate, willing to content the people..." This is justice of convenience, which is not true justice. To give in to the will of the people, though you know it is wrong, to yield to the pressure of the crowd, though you know it is wrong, it's always a hard position to be in. In your heart you know what is true. In your heart you know what is right. In your heart you know what you ought to do. But there is this pressure against you, the pressure to make the wrong decision, to do the wrong thing. And how sad it is when a person yields to that pressure, rather than to stand up for that which he knows to be right and true. Pilate, in order to placate the people, freed Barabbas but delivered Jesus to be crucified.

"And he scourged Him..." Now, we have it only in one word: "scourged Him." Yet that scourging was one of the cruelest forms of punishment administered by Rome. In fact, it was such a horrible punishment that there was a law that no Roman prisoner being a Roman citizen could be scourged without first of all having a formal trial.

The purpose of scourging was to discover information. You've heard of the old third degree, which of course the supreme courts have outlawed now. You know, when they turn the hot lights on and they don't feed you and they keep asking you questions, and they wear you down mentally until finally you're ready to sign your confession and all. And where they take the pliers and pull out your fingernails and they pinch your ears and they slap your face...and you know, all of the old third degree thing to get a person to confess. Well, this was the "tenth degree" kind of an exercise of the Roman government, where they would tie the prisoner over a post so that his back was stretched out and exposed. And then they would use this leather whip with sharpened bits of lead and glass tied in it; and it would literally tear the prisoners back to shreds, as they would lay this lash over their back thirty-nine times.

They always had a scribe standing by who was recording the confessions that the prisoner would cry out. And the idea was, as the stripe was laid upon you, you would cry out a crime that you had committed. You confessed to some crime. And that way they would make the next lash a little easier and a little easier. And it was to help the Roman government solve a lot of the unsolved crimes prior to putting the man to death. It was to clear up the police blotter of a lot of the unsolved crimes in the community. And it was very effective. It was so painful that there are records of many men who went insane through the beating, and rarely would a man survive it. Usually, he would die from the

loss of blood and just the horrible painfulness of this experience. And many prisoners died during the scourging, many went insane.

"As a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." As they were scourging Him, He had nothing to confess. And of course, the idea was if there was no confession, then he lays the whip on a little harder and a little harder until you're forced to confess your sins, your crimes. Having nothing to confess, Jesus took the full brunt of that scourging. But it wasn't over; it was just the beginning.

And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called the Praetorium; and they called together the whole band [of soldiers] ([Mar 15:16](#)).

Now you're going to have some barracks fun. These Roman soldiers are going to take this man who has been condemned to die, the man who made claim to be the King of the Jews. And they're going to make fun of Him and have just have a vulgar type of a time as they mock and make fun of the prisoners.

And they clothed him with purple [the kingly color], and platted [they wove] a crown of thorns, and put it about his head ([Mar 15:17](#)),

The King of the Jews, His only crown a crown of thorns. How significant! Where did thorns come from anyhow? Going back to the book of Genesis when Adam rebelled against God and God began to pronounce the curse upon man and upon woman, and God said, "Cursed be the ground; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth." Those thorns were the result of God's curse against sin. Here was Jesus ready to bear the curse of sin. How appropriate that they should crown Him with a crown of thorns.

And they smote him on the head with a reed [with a club] ([Mar 15:19](#)),

They were just hitting Him on the head. Now, earlier He had been buffeted in the court of Caiaphas. They put a sack over his head and began to beat Him in the face with their fists, plummet Him and then to slap Him and say, "Prophecy! Who is it that hit You?" Now He is scourged, and now He is being hit over the head with a reed.

and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees [mock] worshipped him ([Mar 15:19](#)).

You can almost see them; you can almost hear their laughter. They're not to be blamed too much; theirs isn't really hatred, theirs is just a big laugh, a lot of fun.

And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him ([Mar 15:20](#)).

Having had their fun, now they get down to business.

And they compel one [a man whose name was] Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross ([Mar 15:21](#)).

Now, all a Roman soldier had to do is lay his spear on your shoulder, flat side on your shoulder, and tell you what to do, and you had to do it. If you were walking along the path and you came to a Roman soldier who was carrying his gear down the road, he could lay his spear on your soldier and say, "Carry this for me one mile." And the paths were all marked out with milestones by Rome and you can see these milestones even today. And legally, you were obligated to carry that load for that soldier one mile. He could force you to do it; that was the law of Rome. However, the law of Rome would only compel you to do one mile. You could carry it through one mile, then you could dump it and go. But he had the power to compel you to carry it one mile. Now, that is what Jesus was talking about when He said, "If they compel you to go one mile, go two." So, they laid the sword on Simon's shoulder flat side down and they said, "Carry this man's cross!"

Simon had no doubt come to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. As the adult male Jews came from all over the world for this particular feast and he just happened to be there and just happened to be the man that the Roman soldier laid his spear on, so that he was forced to carry the cross of Christ. But there is interesting indication that though it is possible he never knew Jesus up to this point, that Simon actually became converted and became a very important part of the early church.

There's a reference in [Acts 13:1](#) to Simeon, who was called the Niger, indicating that he was from Africa, who was among the group of the ordaining elders that sent Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. Rufus and Alexander, being his son's name, there are references in the Bible to Rufus. And it is quite possible that Mark tells us he is the father of Rufus and Alexander in order identify Simon who was well-known in the early church and became a very vital part of the early church. There are those bits of evidences and there are others in the New Testament that indicate that particular possibility, and it is interesting to speculate.

And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull ([Mar 15:22](#)).

Now, it is assumed that it was called the Place of the Skull today because across from the wall of Jerusalem between the Damascus gate and Herod's gate, there is a barren side of a cliff which was created from an ancient stone quarry, where, as the result of the stones being quarried from there and landslides and so forth, there is definitely the appearance of a skull as you look at the cliff. And it could be that the Golgotha got its name from the appearance of the face of that jagged cliff. It is also possible that it got its name, The Place of the Skull, from the fact that this was perhaps the place where the Romans crucified most of the prisoners. And when they were crucified, they were usually left there on the crosses until they died. And sometimes it took as many as six days for a person to die. He would die by exposure, malnutrition and starvation. And

they'd leave them hanging until they died. And then they would oftentimes continue to leave them hanging, or they would just cut them down and the dogs and the birds would come and feed on the bodies. And so it could be that there were just a lot of skulls of men who had been crucified at that place around that had been left after the dogs and the birds had done their job on them. And it is possible that that's where it received the name The Place of the Skull. My personal opinion, and it is the first, as you go over there today, you can surely see that appearance of a skull on the face of the mountain or on the face of that hillside there. It's the top of Mount Moriah actually. And there's a very definite impression or face of the skull upon it. And I believe that that is the actual site of the crucifixion of Jesus.

And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not [would not receive it] ([Mar 15:23](#)).

There were a certain group, a society of ladies in Jerusalem, a society of mercy, who would make up this concoction of wine with myrrh that had the effect of an anesthesia and would stupefy the prisoners so that they would not experience so badly the suffering and the pain of crucifixion. And so they would come out when prisoners were ready to be crucified, and they would give them this stupefying drink, so that the person would sort of be out of their head and not experience as badly the terrible pain and suffering of crucifixion. And they offered it to Jesus. But to me it is significant that He refused it, in order that He might taste of death for every man and know what it was.

Many of His followers in time to come were to be crucified also for their belief in Jesus Christ. When Peter was condemned to die by crucifixion, Peter requested that he have the privilege of being crucified upside down, as he was not worthy to be crucified as his Lord. Jesus, no doubt knowing that many of His followers would be stoned to death, would be crucified, would be beaten to death, would be burned to death, refused that stupefying drink in order that He might know and be able to comfort those who later on would go through the same pain and torture for His sake.

And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments ([Mar 15:24](#)),

Now, He would have had sandals, He would have had an inner robe, He would have had the sash that they tied their robe with, His turban. And then, that beautiful outer robe that was made by loving hands, a coat that was sewn or an outer robe that was woven without any seams. And so, they parted His garments. One fellow took the sandals and another the sash, another the inner robe, another the turban. But they cast lots for His robe, for they said, "There's no sense of tearing this thing up; it won't do anybody any good." So they threw dice to see who would get that outer coat.

And it was the third hour, [that is nine o'clock in the morning,] and they crucified him ([Mar 15:25](#)).

The day began at six o'clock in the morning, the night watch began at six o'clock in the evening, and the day watch began at six o'clock in the morning. So at nine o'clock, the third hour, they crucified Him.

And the superscription of his accusation ([Mar 15:26](#))

Now, when a prisoner was condemned to death, they made him, as a rule, carry his own cross to the place of execution. And they would have four Roman soldiers that would be marching with the prisoner in the middle. And one Roman soldier would go in the front with a sign that bore the charges against the prisoner. And they would never walk the shortest route to the place of execution, but would take the longest route through the city, making a lot of clamor and a lot of noise so that the people would have fears struck in their heart against rebelling against Rome or whatever. So the fellow in front would carry the wood with the accusation written, the reason why the prisoner was being crucified. And so they took Jesus through the streets, and finally, when they came to the place of the cross and nailed Him upon the cross and raised it up, they took the charges, "The King of the Jews," and they nailed it on His cross, the accusations that were made against Him. And so,

And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.