

# John 19:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

## Analysis

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**He was the more afraid** (μᾶλλον ἐφοβήθη/mallon ephobēthē)—Pilate's fear intensifies. Having already felt his wife's warning about 'that righteous man' (Matthew 27:19), now the explicit claim of divine sonship unnerves him. The Greek *mallon* (more, increasingly) suggests mounting terror.

Roman paganism was filled with stories of gods visiting earth in human form. The notion that this bloodied, thorn-crowned prisoner might be divine sent terror through Pilate's superstitious mind. Yet his fear was self-focused—concern for divine retribution, not awe before holiness. He feared punishment, not sin. Fear that doesn't produce repentance leaves one paralyzed between truth and expediency, exactly where Pilate finds himself.

## Historical Context

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Roman literature contains many accounts of the gods appearing in human form (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Acts 14:11-12). Pilate, as a Roman governor in the eastern provinces, would have been steeped in such stories. His wife's dream and now this claim to divine sonship would have triggered genuine fear of offending an unknown deity—yet not enough to overcome political calculation.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. What is the difference between fearing God and fearing God's judgment?
2. How does self-interested fear of divine retribution differ from godly fear that produces repentance?
3. When has political pressure or social consequence paralyzed you between truth and expediency?

## Interlinear Text

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Ὄτε οὖν ἤκουσεν ὁ Πιλᾶτος τοῦτον τὸν λόγον  
When therefore heard Pilate that saying  
G3753 G3767 G191 G3588 G4091 G5126 G3056

μᾶλλον ἐφοβήθη  
the more afraid  
G3123 G5399

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