

Luke 23:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

Analysis

Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them—The word **willing** (θέλων, *thelōn*) indicates genuine desire, though weak resolve. This is Pilate's repeated attempt to free Jesus despite mounting pressure. The phrase **spake again** (προσεφώνησεν, *prosephōnēsen*) suggests he 'called out to' or 'addressed' the crowd, attempting to persuade them toward justice. Pilate's moral conviction that Jesus was innocent battled his political calculation that execution was expedient.

This moment exposes the tragedy of moral cowardice—Pilate knew the right course (*thelōn*, willing to release) but lacked courage to enact it against opposition. His repeated appeals demonstrate both his recognition of Jesus's innocence and his fatal weakness before the crowd. The governor's inner conflict between justice and political survival makes him a cautionary figure: truth known but not acted upon becomes judgment. James 4:17 applies: 'to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.'

Historical Context

Pilate's position was politically precarious. Previous conflicts with Jews (slaughtering Galileans in the temple, Luke 13:1; using temple funds for aqueducts, Josephus) had strained his relationship with the province. A delegation to Emperor Tiberius could end his governorship. His 'willingness' to release Jesus was genuine, but his greater willingness to preserve his power would prove determinative.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does Pilate's 'willingness' without corresponding action teach us about the insufficiency of good intentions?
2. How does Pilate's failure despite knowing the truth challenge us when we face pressure to compromise convictions?

Interlinear Text

πάλιν	οὖν	ὁ	Πιλάτος	προσεφώνησεν	θέλων
again	therefore	G3588	Pilate	spake	willing
G3825	G3767		G4091	G4377	G2309
ἀπολῦσαι	τὸν	Ἰησοῦν			
to release	G3588	Jesus			
G630		G2424			

Additional Cross-References

Mark 15:15 (References Jesus): And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.