

Matthew 27:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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 (ἀθῶός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου)—Pilate's handwashing invoked Jewish ritual (Deuteronomy 21:6-7), a symbolic declaration of non-culpability. Yet the act condemned him—he proclaimed Christ's justice (dikaios) while condemning Him to death.

You cannot wash away responsibility for moral choices. Pilate knew Christ was innocent (v. 18, 19, 23), yet chose political survival over justice. His words 'see ye to it' (ὁμεῖς ὁψεσθε) attempted to transfer guilt, but God holds all accountable—both Jewish leaders and Roman authority crucified Christ.

Historical Context

As prefect, Pilate alone held *ius gladii* (right of the sword). No handwashing could transfer his legal authority or moral responsibility. Fear of riot and Caesar's displeasure drove his decision. Governors who lost control faced recall and disgrace.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. In what ways do you try to 'wash your hands' of moral responsibility for decisions you know are wrong?
2. How does Pilate's claiming innocence while condemning Christ illustrate the self-deception of knowing truth but choosing expediency?

Interlinear Text

ἰδὼν	δὲ	ὁ	Πιλάτος	ὅτι	οὐδὲν	ὠφελεῖ	ἀλλὰ
saw	When		Pilate	that	nothing	he could prevail	but
G1492	G1161	G3588	G4091	G3754	G3762	G5623	G235
μᾶλλον	θόρυβος	γίνεται	λαβὼν	ὕδωρ	ἀπενίψατο	τὰς	
that rather	a tumult	was made	he took	water	and washed		G3588
G3123	G2351	G1096	G2983	G5204	G633		
χεῖρας	ἀπέναντι	τοῦ	ὄχλου	λέγων,	Ἄθῳός	εἰμι	ἀπὸ
his hands	before		the multitude	saying	innocent	I am	of
G5495	G561	G3588	G3793	G3004	G121	G1510	G575
τοῦ	αἵματος	τοῦ	δικαίου	τούτου·	ὕμεῖς	ὄψεσθε	
G3588	the blood	G3588	just person	of this	ye	see	
	G129		G1342	G5127	G5210	G3700	

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 27:4 (Blood): Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

Psalms 26:6 (Parallel theme): I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

Matthew 26:5 (Parallel theme): But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Righteousness): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1 Peter 3:18 (Righteousness): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

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