

Sunday 031724

NFIHBC SP

John 18:28-40

The Surrender & Obedience of Jesus: Testifying to Truth

Good morning and welcome, and welcome to all those online as well.

Today's passage is John 18:28-40 (SLIDE 1. Title & passage) READ

If you need a bible raise hand...

While you're getting to the passage...:

2. (SLIDE 2. Sermon Notes) Also all PPT slides are available in the sermon notes.

Pray: (Long Pause – Israel - Children)

What might "*testifying to truth*" demand from you? (SLIDE 3. Truth question) (repeat)
Jesus, who is the truth, said these words in 18:37b (Hilite "*testify to truth*") "*I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth*".

Our passage today follows Jesus and the disciples sharing the Passover meal in the upper room, and then Jesus preparing and equipping the disciples for their life as disciples after he returns to the Father. Jesus wants his disciples to not just survive, but to thrive. We then saw Jesus and the disciples head to the Garden of Gethsemane where in Ch 18 Judas, with Satan in him, accompanied by Roman troops and temple guards, intercept Jesus and arrest him. So far in chapter 18 we have seen several important events happen to Jesus as a lead up to the crucifixion, all events that Jesus *allowed* to happen.

Jesus *allowed* Judas and the cohort of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to approach him and arrest him in the "garden", but only after he established *the truth* that he would go by his *choice* not by force. If you recall when Judas and the troops came to arrest Jesus, he responded to them by telling them *the truth* about himself, that he was the "I AM" (18:5 hilite "I AM he") And his pronouncement of those words that revealed the *truth* about his identity as YHWH resulted in all the troops, including Judas, falling backward. This demonstrated Jesus power over them, simply with his voice. Jesus spoke, and that happened. So Judas and the troop arresting Jesus only happened because Jesus "*allowed himself*" to be arrested. Jesus then *allowed himself* to be tied up, and *allowed himself* to be led to Annas (On'us) house, the father in law of the high priest Caiaphas.

In Anna's house, Jesus then *allowed* the high priest to interrogate him. Jesus responded to his questions with *truth*, and as a result he was viciously slapped across the face by one of the temple guards. Jesus *allowed himself* to be viciously slapped across the face. Jesus then *allowed himself* to be bound and sent to Caiaphas, where Peter's 2nd and 3rd denial happen, where Jesus is beat up more and where the Jewish leaders demand Jesus death. That is where our passage picks up today.

John's account of the trial in Caiaphas' house gives us some details but does not give us a lot of details. The last detail we hear about Caiaphas house is in 18:28 that "*Jesus' trial before*

Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning". That is curious to me because in other gospels we learn that it is at the trial before Caiaphas that Jesus is sentenced to death by the Sanhedrin **Mark 14:64 (Hilite "What is your verdict?...Guilty! He deserves to die!")** READ One would think that John's gospel would include that information, but it doesn't. And on careful reading of John's gospel in comparison to the other three gospel accounts, there is *much* that is not included.

So before we look at the rest of our passage today and the subsequent events Jesus *allows* to happen, I want to address the Gospel of John's obvious omissions of information regarding Jesus' life, arrest, trial and crucifixion that are again in the other gospel accounts, but not in John's.

Now I'm going to get academic here for a couple minutes, bear with me. If you need a power nap, now is a good time for that. PAUSE 1. John's gospel is *90% new* information in comparison to the information in the other gospels. 90%! 2. John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has a message or messages that he wants to communicate to the reader. 3. We know the *overarching purpose* or message of John's writing from **John 20:31**. READ That is what he wants to *persuade* the reader of. And so John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has included *specific information* about Jesus and his life and ministry that supports the *purpose* of the book. And just like John included information in the gospel that supports the purpose of the book, likewise each story or account he included contains information that supports the message the inspired author is communicating in each story. If John included it in his gospel, it's there for a reason.

There are those who have attempted to create one congruent gospel out of the four gospels. If we do that we run the risk of missing what *message* the inspired author is wanting to communicate from each unique gospel and each unique gospel perspective. Yes looking at the various gospel accounts does provide a broader picture and fill in information, and that is helpful, but it also increases the likelihood of *missing* what the unique messages of each gospel accounts are. So when you read the gospels consider *adding* this approach to your reading. Rather than focusing on what is *missing* from the gospel of John, focus on what is *included*. And from what is included, try to determine from there how the information that is included supports the purpose and message from the author, and *or* how the information that is included helps *reveal* the messages the author is intending to communicate.

For example, the information that John included concerning the arrest of Jesus in the garden serves to emphasize that Jesus *surrendered his supreme power, chose to surrender his power*, to the much, much, much weaker enemy. The information that supported this was, the number of troops sent -*"a cohort"* **v3**, that the cohort came from *both* the Romans and Jewish leaders, and they were working together, a match made *in hell* btw v3. John's gospel included the names and/or power titles of the leaders that were sent, *"Malchus, the high priest's servant"* **v10**, *"a Roman commanding officer"*, and that they came with *"lamps and torches and weapons"*. All of these words, and information and names were included to emphasize and create imagery of the *comparison of power* between Jesus and Judas who had Satan in him, and the contingent of troops *given* to Judas. The information that John included served to

emphasize and paint the picture that Jesus *laid down his supreme power* by choice to the much, much, much weaker enemy, and that Jesus did that out of obedience to the will of the Father, out of love for the Father. Make sense?

God the Father gave us four gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, each with a slightly different purpose, and somewhat different messages, all inspired by God, all intentional. So using this line of thinking, go discover the messages God wants you to know in each gospel. As we have stated before, the Bible was written for discovery, which is *super cool!* PAUSE I encourage you to read a section of the gospels daily.. I call this my “daily dose of Jesus”.

Now, following that approach to the gospels, **I** So let’s read again, what Jesus says about *testifying to truth*. **18:37b (Hilite “testify to truth”)** READ “*I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth*”. That’s Jesus being pretty clear on his purpose right? I believe the information John included in our passage has a message for the readers, for you and I about “*testifying to truth*”. PAUSE What might “*testifying to truth*” demand from you?

The Greek word translated in the NLT as “*testify*” is the Greek word “*martyreo*” – **(SLIDE 4 Testify)** (mar-too-reh'-o) It’s where we get our word “*martyr*” from and it means: “to be a witness or to bear witness; to affirm that one has *seen or heard or experienced* something.”

Our English derivative “*martyr*” – meaning “one who *dies* for truth”, provides a perspective of *seriousness* of *testifying to truth* in an evil world that is under the rule of Satan.

So in the context of Jesus’ stated purpose, and the seriousness of the word testify, let’s see what we can learn about “*testifying to truth*” from our passage today.

In **18:28** we learn the “*trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning*”. The use of the word “*early*” here typically means “*daybreak*” in Greek, and daybreak is when the Roman officials would begin receiving Jewish inquiries. That’s super early for starting your business day unless you are milking cows. Growing up in Brazil in the 80’s the work day there was 6 -11 and 1-6p – two hours off for lunch and a nap in the heat of the day. (*Which is brilliant!*)

So around daybreak the trial at Caiaphas was over, and sleep deprived and beat up Jesus then *allowed himself* to be “*taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor*”. This was the “*Praetorium*.” This “*Praetorium*” was simply the headquarters of the roman military governor. Where ever the military governor was residing was the Praetorium. If the military governor was in a military field tent near a battle, that was the Praetorium . If the governor was in Herod’s palace on the western wall, that was the Praetorium. If the governor was in Caesarea in another of Herod’s palace *that* was the Praetorium. Most historians believe that the praetorium for Jesus trial during Passover was in or attached to Antonio Fortress, which is currently the location of Our Lady of Zion church. **(SLIDE 5, 6, 7, 8) Antonio Fortress, Praetorium, Duane Praetorium, Via Dolorosa)** I stood on very spot on the original stone floor

where the Praetorium was, where Jesus was sentenced. It was super humbling and emotional. PAUSE This is also where the Via Dolorosa starts.

In the end of **v28** John points out the spiritual *hypocrisy* of the religious leaders. READ. Essentially the religious leaders were willing to convene an illegal trial, willing to use false witnesses in an illegal trial, and willing to condemn an innocent man to die, BUT were *unwilling* to go into the home of a gentile, or any pagan precincts, because it would *ceremonially defile them* and prohibit them from participating in the evening Passover celebrations. Trapp calls this “putrid hypocrisy” – where you “strain a gnat and swallow a camel”. PAUSE.

Let’s add a little more history and background about Pilate. So Pilate is the military roman governor of the Judaea province. **(SLIDE 9 Roman Judaea Province)** Apparently he normally resided in Caesarea, the capitol of the Roman province, but *may have* come to Jerusalem because of Passover and the 100s of thousands of pilgrims that journeyed there. In high numbers the factious Jews were a riot risk, and thus Pilate’s presence, and his troops were there to keep order. Pilate was married to the granddaughter of Caesar Augustus. Imagine that pressure. He was *not liked* by the Jews. “Philo”, an ancient Jewish writer, describe Pilate as “corrupt, insolent, who seized property by force, insulted people publicly at will, was cruel, and had a history of murdering the “untried and un-condemned”. Philo said Pilate’s brutal actions towards people were “uncalled for”, and “grievously inhumane.”

So in **v29** this Pilate steps out of the praetorium into the colonnade, like an out porch, to greet the religious group that were accusing Jesus and wanted him sentenced to death. On occasions like this Pilate’s “bema seat” – or ceremonial seat of judgement” would have been moved to the colonnade where the judicial hearings could proceed without the Jews becoming ceremonially unclean. Then Pilate asks them, READ “*What are your charges against this man*”? PAUSE. His question seems to catch the religious leaders off guard because they respond in **v30** with a bit of “spice and sass”. READ.

Two interesting things here: This would not have been the first time Pilate heard about the man the religious leaders wanted to arrest and kill. The night before Pilate gave the religious leaders a “cohort” of roman soldiers to go arrest Jesus, think military operation. That’s a pretty big deal and allocation of a lot of resources, man power, that Pilate would have to justify. The religious leaders would have had to give evidence of the need for such a military operation. So Pilate already has some level of understanding of who this man is and what the accusation and charges the religious leaders were bringing, and it would have been pretty obvious that they wanted a death sentence. So for Pilate to come out *asking a question* about the charges as if he doesn’t know, or is now showing some restraint, may have been a surprise and probably an insult to them.

The 2nd interesting thing is that in **v30** the religious leaders use the label “*criminal*” for Jesus which in Greek is the word “*evildoer*”. The Jewish religious leaders, who *think they represent God* and *understand God’s perfect law*, saw Jesus as an “*evildoer*” who was worthy of death because of “evil deeds”. When in actuality God the Father, who the religious leaders thought

they served and knew, saw Jesus as qualified to be the Passover lamb, meaning without blemish, – i.e. the *sinless perfect* “lamb of God” - no evil present in him. Did that status of “without blemish”, “without sin” or “without evil” make Jesus worthy of death? – yes, but worthy of a “sacrificial death for sin of all mankind, because of his “sinless perfection”. That’s a *huge* contrast bw how religious leaders judged Jesus and how God the Father judged Jesus. The name for God “El” in Hebrew **(SLIDE 10 “El)** also means “judge” as in the “supreme judge”. Whose judgement of Jesus was correct?

Back to Pilate’s question. Pilate had every right to ask the question he did because he could only sentence someone to die if there was a legal justification to sentence them to die – that’s just due process in the Roman legal system called “cognitio”. Was Pilate known for following due process? No! But did he have a right to ask questions? Yes. And he may also have asked the religious leaders the question simply because he was known to be “obstinate”. I kind of get a picture of Pilate and the religious leaders “verbally sparring” here – Pilate holds the power and they don’t like it - sort of like he’s the biggest bully on the playground. But in that picture in your head, where is Jesus in that picture? I imagine Jesus standing quietly between two soldiers, head hung in exhaustion, face and body bruised and swollen from the beating he took at Annas and Caiaphas house, hands tied behind him - just waiting while these “little boys” “joust” with words. Silent. PAUSE

So because the religious leaders didn’t bring any real charges to Pilate he tells them to go back to their own court system and judge Jesus, **(v31)** to which they reply, “*Only the Romans are allowed to execute someone*”. Now we know the religious leaders have wanted Jesus dead for a while, and we know that they have been actively “plotting” Jesus’ death since **11:53** when many people began to follow Jesus in response to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. READ. So for the religious leaders to use the word “execute” here in v31 is no surprise.

John the author adds his commentary here to the narrative in **v32**. READ Jesus had alluded to “*how*” this execution would happen in **12:32-33** READ While these words may be *vague imagery* to us, in first century ears this was a reference to being “*lifted up*” in crucifixion. To add to the “Messianic expectation”, Jesus is using the *same language* in 12:32 as Isaiah used **Isa 52:13** confirming the fulfillment of prophecy and messianic imagery. READ.

V33 READ. Now maintain a true perspective here on the power dynamics. Jesus *allowed* himself to be taken into the praetorium, which technically made him ceremonially unclean. He then *allows himself* to be questioned by Pilate who is the military governor of a tiny roman province, who *thinks* he has a lot of power. Then Pilate mocks this bruised, beat up, tied up, uneducated common laborer turned self-appointed rabbi with the question “*Are you the King of the Jews*”? Which was probably asked incredulously, “*Are YOU the one they told me is the King of the Jews*”? Maybe Pilate was thinking, how could this person in front of me possibly be the King of the Jews?

Now John’s gospel doesn’t include “Jesus being the King of the Jews” as the charge brought by the religious leaders to Pilate, but it is ultimately THEe “legal justification” for a death sentence

that Pilate uses to crucify Jesus, and appease the Jewish religious mob. **19:19 READ** To be the “King of the Jews” is legally “treason” against Caesar and Rome and treason is punishable by death.

So when Pilate asks Jesus, “*Are you the King of the Jews?*”? Jesus pulls his classic move of responding to a question with a question. **V34 READ** Jesus already knows the answer, he is just wanting Pilate to *own his truth*. PAUSE Now this is a trial, so in a court of law, when Jesus responded to Pilate, the examiner and judge, with a question, Jesus instantly went from being “examined” to being the “examiner”, which appears to result in a momentary swing of power - even tho Jesus is the tied up, beat up, “*criminal*” - “*evildoer*”.

Some have said that Jesus question was to determine if Pilate was looking at Jesus from a Roman perspective or from a Jewish perspective. PAUSE That could fit, but I wonder if Jesus discerns that Pilate is weak and makes court decisions just to appease others? Whatever is behind Jesus’ question, the effect is that Pilate may have been caught off guard by Jesus question, and now is on the *defense*, which is why he responds the way he does in **v35**. READ.

It seems that by Pilate’s response he is saying he doesn’t *care* about Jews or Jewish religion or politics. Rather all that matters to him is having a legal reason for sentencing Jesus to death. Why? Because that is what the loud, contentious mob of religious leaders want on the morning before the largest holiday event of the year, Passover. Which helps us to understand Pilate’s question to Jesus “*what have you done?*” meaning, “*What have you done to deserve death?*”.

Jesus answered in **v36** READ. Jesus’ reply “*My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom*” would have been sufficient to inform Pilate that Jesus’ kingdom was not a physical threat to him or Rome. Jesus reinforces this by saying otherwise “*my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders*”. I almost wonder if Jesus isn’t being a tad sarcastic here about his followers. He had *11 followers* in the garden when arrested, and they all *scattered* – Judas had 600 troops. And also, there is no indication that Pilate had been given any report of an approaching arming, or even of a labor class militia uprising.

Note here: all of this language Jesus uses serves to emphasize the *contrast between* kingdoms and understanding of the kingdoms.

Augustine observed from this verse that *earthly kingdoms* are based upon force, pride, the love of human praise, the desire for domination, and self-interest. We see this displayed by Pilate and the Roman Empire.

The *heavenly kingdom* which Jesus speaks of is exemplified by Jesus and the cross, and is based on love, sacrifice, humility, and righteousness before God. The Kingdom of Jesus is about an eternal relationship between man and God the Father that results in Jesus’ followers exemplifying sacrificial love. It requires Jesus followers to live by the power of the Holy Spirit not by the power of military conquest or domination or financial conquest and domination.

The Kingdom Jesus speaks of here to Pilate is evidenced by living according to Truth that can only come from the Word of God that is inspired by God, and from Jesus who is “the Word”.

And that is why Jesus so emphatically says *a second time* in the end of **v36** “..my Kingdom is not of this world”.

Pilate seems to completely miss this contrast by Jesus regarding the differences in Kingdoms. I encourage you to meditate on the differences between these kingdoms yourself and your role in them.

And so Pilate opportunistically asks the question in **v37** READ “So you are a king?”
 ... *Jesus responded..* Jesus response is again a contrast.. Yes he is a king but not of this world, not a king that the “world under the rule of Satan” expects. Rather Jesus paints himself as a King “coming into this world that the Deceiver controls, bearing the *banner of Truth* – capital T. And Jesus says “all who love the truth recognized what I say as truth” Implied there is “and come to me”-.. meaning all who love the truth leave the banner of deception, leave that king and kingdom, and rally at the banner of truth that Jesus, who is the Truth, is carrying.

Let’s read the rest of this section and then come back to “testifying to truth”.

19:38-40 READ (with commentary:).

V38 “*truth*” With this question - Pilate reduces Jesus to just another empty philosopher.. in the long line of many empty philosophers in Greek and roman world. Obviously Pilate has disdain for them.

“*not guilty*” is a legal statement of innocence.

V40 “*Barabbas*”. – according to John he was a “revolutionary” or “bandit”. The historian Josephus implies that he was a “zealot insurgent”. The name “Barabbas” means “Son of the father”. Interesting in **John 8:44** Jesus calls the religious leaders “sons of their father the devil” who love to do the evil things he does.... “*murderer*”. Which is what Barabbas was according **Mk 15:7** a “murderer”. “So Barabbas, the son of the father”, the devil, is released at the time of the Passover lamb sacrifice, while the true “son of the Father”, Jesus, the Lamb of God, is sacrificed.

“*Testifying*” is a regular theme in the gospel of John. Any form of the Greek word translated as “testify” occurs 31 times.

(SLIDE 11 “Testifying to Truth”) These PPT slides are available in the sermon notes.

John the Baptist “*testifies or bears witness*” (to truth about Jesus) in John 1:7, 8, 15, 32, 34; 5:31-32,34.

The Samaritan woman *testifies to the truth* about Jesus in John 4:39

Jesus' teachings and miracles *testify to the truth* about Jesus in John 5:36

The Father *testifies to the truth* about Jesus in John 5:37

The Scriptures *testify to the truth* about Jesus in John 5:39

Jesus *testifies to the truth* about himself in John 8:18

The people that saw Lazarus walk out of the grave *testify to the truth* about Jesus in John 12:11

The Advocate (Holy Spirit) *testifies to the truth* about Jesus in John 15:26

The disciples *testify to the truth* about Jesus in John 15:27

John the author *testifies to the truth* about Jesus in **John 19:35 NASB, 21:24**

All of these who “testify or bear witness” support John’s purpose of the gospel and stand today as a witness in front of every reader, in front of us. Why? So that you **John 20:31** “*may believe that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.*”

So then when you do believe the *truth* about Jesus based on *these testimonies and witnesses*, when you are follower, a disciple of Jesus, what are you then to do thru your life and your words? _____ *Testify to the truth* about Jesus.

This testifying to the truth is what Jesus was preparing and equipping the disciples for by giving them: **(SLIDE 12 World Circle with Blue Ring add “Testifying to Truth”)** (READ blue circle)

Now you understand the Gospel of John, and now you know your purpose, to “testify to the truth” about Jesus.

What might “testifying to the truth” demand from you and I that we learn from the example of Jesus? **(SLIDE 13 What Does Truth Demand)**

1. Testifying to truth will demand that I choose truth, that I choose between the Father of Lies and the Father of Truth, and recognize their two kingdoms.
2. Testifying to truth will demand my surrender and obedience to truth.
3. Testifying to truth will demand that I “Love truth” as Jesus said in v37. If I’m not “loving the truth” what am I loving and why?
4. Testifying to truth will demand that I speak truth even when it hurts me.
5. Testifying to truth will demand that I hold truth, and pray for discernment of when to speak.
6. Testifying to truth will demand that I live the truth in every area of my life
7. Testifying to truth will demand that I value truth *above my own life*.

Supplemental Notes

1. On Jesus “allowing”: What Jesus did “*not allow*” in the garden was for any of the remaining 11 disciples to be harmed by the enemy troops, thus the 11 left Jesus in the garden alone with Judas and the troops and fled.

2. v28 What day was Passover?

You may have noted that Passover meal was celebrated by Jesus and the disciples the night before v28 happens, after which Jesus was arrested in the garden. But here in v28, our next day, it indicates that Passover was only to begin after sundown. So was Jesus celebrating the Passover a day early? The Passover lambs were to be slaughtered at the time of afternoon sacrifice, 3p, just hours before Passover begins, on the day that had just dawned in Jerusalem in our narrative.

As you can imagine there are several theories to explain this discrepancy. Top contenders are: Different religious groups used different calendars that were a day off, the pharisaic rabbinical calendar has Passover on Nissan 15, the day Jesus was crucified, not the day before.

Another top contender is that rabbis were permitted to celebrate Passover anytime during the Passover week if they were *teaching* their disciples about conducting the Passover meal. And the third contender is that because Passover lambs were required to be slain the afternoon before Passover, Jesus and disciples celebrated the Passover meal *without a lamb*, thus they could have the meal a day early. Some have added that Jesus was going to be *the slaughtered Passover lamb* the next afternoon.

You decide.

3. v29 On Pilate’s hesitancy to sentence Jesus to death: There are some that theorize Pilate couldn’t afford to use manpower during Passover week. Pilate’s hesitancy could not have been about a shortage of manpower because the night before Pilate sent a “cohort” (600 troops) to arrest Jesus, a crucifixion only takes 4 soldiers.

4. v33 On the title “King of the Jews”. The phrase “King of the Jews” was used by the wise men from the east when they followed the star to Jerusalem and asked in **Mt 2:2** “*Where is the newborn “King of the Jews”?*” The unusual visit from the East by wise men 30 years prior during the reign of King Herod, and their story of following a star, and who they asked for, probably would not have been forgotten by the Jews or the Romans.

5. v37 On Jesus’ purpose of testifying to truth. Jesus says he came into this world to “testify to truth”. Does everything Jesus said or did in the gospel fall under that statement? I encourage you to meditate on that.

The fact that the word “testify” in Greek occurs 31 times in John’s gospel supports the purpose of John’s writing that we know from John 20:31.

6. V39 On the “custom” of the governor releasing a prisoner of the Jewish leaders’ choosing. There is no evidence in any roman document that this custom existed outside of Judaea.

7. On Gospels with differing content:

John's account of the trial in Caiaphas' house gives us some details but does not give us a lot of details. That is curious to me because in other gospels we learn that it is at the trial before Caiaphas that Jesus is sentenced to death by the Sanhedrin **Mark 14:64 (Hilite "What is your verdict?...Guilty! He deserves to die!")** READ One would think that John's gospel would include that information, but it doesn't. And on careful reading of John's gospel in comparison to the other three gospel accounts, there is *much* that is not included.

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