



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 144 - In Complete Control (John 18-19)

Each Gospel writer looks at Jesus' sufferings from a slightly different angle. John shows us Jesus in complete control—from His arrest, to His trial, to His suffering, to His death.

In the Garden

As the temple guard and soldiers make their way toward the garden, Jesus doesn't cower in the corner. He goes forward to meet them. His simple answer, "I am He," drives them backward to the ground. In complete control Jesus stops Peter from violently defending Him, sends His disciples away to safety, and turns Himself over to them.

- Why is it important for us to see Jesus in control in these events, rather than a helpless victim of circumstances beyond His control?
- What comfort can we draw from this when we find ourselves in difficult situations beyond our control?

Roman Governor or Errand Boy?

As the Roman military governor, Pontius Pilate is supposed to be in control. But with the Jewish leaders refusing to enter his palace to avoid being defiled, Pilate appears more like an errand boy, running back and forth between Jesus and them.

- Obviously, Pilate is not in control of this trial. How do we know the Jewish leaders weren't in charge either?
- God sometimes lets His children suffer at the hands of evil people. What reassurance can we get when we see Jesus suffering the same thing?

Are You King?

No matter what other charges the Jews raised against Jesus, Pilate was only really concerned with one. He asks Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

- If Jesus would have claimed to be an earthly king, why would that have been a concern for Pilate?
- When Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world," why did Pilate decide He was not a dangerous rival to the Roman Emperor Tiberius?

It is ironic that the one charge that officially stuck against Jesus was being King of the Jews. It was the crime inscribed on the plaque that hung on His cross.

- Why would the Jews and Roman soldiers find it difficult to believe a man who ended up crucified could really be a king?
- If a king's job was to protect his subjects at all costs, including laying down his life, if necessary, why is it appropriate to think of Jesus as our great King and the cross as His throne, as we watch Him suffering and dying there?

In Control to the End

We might think Jesus lost control when He was nailed to the cross, but we'd be wrong. With all the cruelty, taunting and mockery of His dear Son, there is one voice that rings in God the Father's ears: "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.' ..." (Luke 23:34a). Then He selflessly commits His mother to the care of His beloved disciple John. Even when He cries out, "I thirst," He is only doing it so His voice will be strong, so He can loudly proclaim the victory He has just won over sin, the devil and death: "It is finished." The eerie and unnatural darkness as well as the earthquake proved that God was in complete control on Good Friday—not the Jews or the Romans or Satan himself. And the way Jesus died showed He was in complete control.

Most victims of crucifixion died of congestive heart failure, their lungs filling with fluid until they could no longer breathe. But Jesus shouted out in a loud voice several times before giving up His spirit. As Jesus said back in chapter 10, no one took His life from Him. Instead, He laid it down of His own accord.

- How can recalling that Christ Jesus was in complete control during those dark hours of His suffering and death, make us confident during the dark hours of our lives?
- How could sharing the story of Jesus' suffering and death help a friend who is feeling overwhelmed with problems?