

10 Pilate.

(John 18:28-19:6)

I've seen them all in my time. Bad men, mad men, sad men. Yes they've all come, whinging, moaning, howling, crying, begging. The sad and irritating flotsam of humanity, all deserving their sentence just to rid the world of their pathetic figures. Many a time I have been happy to sign their death warrants, a job well done, a noble service to humanity, and as they leave they are gone, never recalled, never remembered, out of sight and out of mind.

But ... but this man, this man dragged here at that unearthly hour. Yes he was as bruised and swollen, beaten and tortured and ragged as the rest. But ... but there was no whinging, no groaning or moaning, no pleading and no bribes? I knew why they had brought him of course, they wanted only one thing. I sometimes wish I had just signed the paper and asked no questions. If I had of course this wouldn't have happened. I could have rested easily, another job well done, another pathetic dreg without whom the world would be a better place. But I didn't, I asked: "What charge this time?" And then and then I had to question him.

Normally I wouldn't look at a prisoner beyond a passing glance, but there was something about this man, something that compelled a person to look. And that's when it happened, as I looked at him, he looked at me. This ragged, tortured, bloodstained man looked straight at me. Me the governor, me the ambassador of Caesar, me who bears the royal authority of the Imperial Roman Empire! He looked straight at me. And his look was a look like no other look I have ever seen. I've met many other important people in my time. I've seen their back watching, status grabbing looks, sly and demeaning to all within their gaze. Yes I know the frightened look of the transitory authority of officials and even Emperors. But this man had a look like no other. Not the wild look of a condemned man, but the look of one who possessed a status and authority far beyond anything I could ever imagine, beyond my wildest dreams.

I had to look at him, I had no choice, and then I heard my words. Not that I remember speaking them, but they were my words I know: "Are you the King of the Jews?"

"It is as you say."

I stared at him again, hardly able to believe what I had heard, and he stood there with his eyes fixed on me. I struggled to claw back what I was beginning to think.

"No! he's mad! This is madness!"

But, If at that moment he had made his way to the throne of government and sat down, would I have stopped him? If he had commanded me to take off the

Imperial ring and hand it to him, would I have hesitated? If he had motioned to me to bow before him, would I have delayed for even a second?

I had no choice of course. The dogs were baying, like wild bulls out to kill, only one thing would satisfy this crowd.

I watched as he was led away, willing, hoping with every fibre of my body that he might turn and look. But at the same time terrified that if he did if he did?

And now that look is all I see. Waking, sleeping, day or night, tipping the scales of my sanity. Turning me in-side-out and laying me bear with the unthinkable unspeakable realisation, this man was

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