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Lakeland Hills Leader

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It Won't Wash Off! (March 1976)

Dan S. Shipley

This early Friday morning finds it a perplexed governor that has come to sit on the judgment-seat just outside the Praetorium. Having already examined Jesus, Pilate has found him to be innocent. Now, he must face a hostile and prejudiced mob who wants to hear this innocent man declared guilty. Not only has Pilate found no crime in Jesus, but he also knows that for envy they had delivered him up (Matt. 27:18). And, with all this weighing on his conscience, his wife sends unto him saying, Have thou nothing to do with this righteous man (v.19). Pilate represented a powerful government that prided itself in its good laws and their equitable enforcement. For an honorable and just judge, the verdict should have been easy in this case. But placative Pilate was on the spot. And he responds by ignoring his wife, his conscience and justice to become history's best-known coward.

So when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it (Matt. 27:24). What justice! The innocent man is scourged and delivered to be crucified (v.26) while the man who decrees it declares himself innocent! Pilate wasn't on trial. Yet, he feels compelled to vindicate himself by washing his hands and saying in effect, I AM NOT RESPONSIBLE!-- even when no one cared. Pilate should have known that responsibility is not a disposable commodity. It cannot be transferred; it won't wash off. Yet, many before and since have imitated Pilates wash-pan ethics. Even in Eden we can see signs of this unwillingness to face up to responsibility. Adam says, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat Eve says, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat (Gen. 3:12,12). Like Pilate, each was saying, I AM NOT RESPONSIBLE! Their son Cain was saying the same thing in asking, Am I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9). We see the Pilate problem in Aaron; we see it in King Saul; we even see it in the slothful one-talent man (Matt. 25:24). The Pilates of modern society blame guns, laws, poverty, affluence, heredity, environment--they are never without some kind of a wash pan with which to declare themselves NOT RESPONSIBLE!-- not even in the spiritual realm where men need most to see self-guilt and face responsibility.

No man is without responsibility to God. Free-moral agency says it; stewardship says it (1 Cor. 4:2); knowledge says it (Jas. 4:17); redemption says it (1 Pet. 1:18-19) and certainly, judgment says that all have responsibilities that are inescapable. Like Pilates, they can't be washed off. Neither can they be blamed off; palmed off; regretted off; or ignored off! For the follower of Christ, it is a responsibility of freedom. We are saved to serve — even if only with one talent. How inconsistent then, for Christians to stand where Pilate stood! — excusing ourselves when we ought to be facing-up and steadfastly doing those things we know to be right. As elders, preachers, teachers, parents, and concerned Christians may God help us to see and say: I AM RESPONSIBLE!

- * "Even a small star shines in the darkness!"
- * "Friends multiply joy and divide sorrow!"
- * "Evolution is to science what quackery is to medicine!"
- * "Do you have any idea where you're going? God has shown you in His word!"
- * "Everyone you meet today is on heaven's most wanted list!"