

WILT THOU LAY DOWN THY LIFE FOR MY SAKE JOHN 13:36-38

Text: John 13:38

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³⁸ Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

Introduction:

The United States has the highest occurrence of tornadoes of any other nation in the world. In an average year, over 1,000 tornadoes will occur across the continental U.S.

Along with the damage they cause, tornadoes are dangerous because they can be somewhat unpredictable.

At the close of John chapter 13, the Lord Jesus makes a very somber forecast for the life of Simon Peter. In verse 37, Peter had boldly and brashly proclaimed that he would lay down his life for Jesus.

In verse 38, Jesus repeated that claim, this time in the form of a question. Then he pronounced a forecast of

failure in Peter's life. He said, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

Within a few hours of that forecast, Peter's boldness would be replaced by brokenness. The Bible says that Peter "wept bitterly" because he had cursed and denied that even knew the Lord Jesus.

From this passage at the close of John 13, we learn that this type of failure is not without its predictors. There are certain traits and signs that we can see in Peter that point to the failure for which he was headed.

By studying Peter's words in this text, perhaps we can learn that we could be headed for a similar failure in our own Christian life.

By learning from the failure in Peter's life, someone can spare themselves from the bitter tears of regret.

Notice:

1. PETER'S FUTILE ARGUMENT

John 13 is a chapter full of instruction. It records the final evening that the Lord shared with his disciples prior to His arrest and crucifixion, and it is full of parting words and directions from the Savior.

Trying to prepare His disciples for His coming death, the Lord says to them in verse 33:

John 13:33

³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

Not content with the information he was given, Peter asks in verse 36:

John 13:36

³⁶ Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

As usual, Peter's mouth is not easily closed, and in verse 37 he protests and asks,

John 13:37

³⁷ Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

There are times when, like Peter, we are resistant and even rebellious against the work of the Lord in our lives. The problem is that our stubbornness often leads to our sinfulness. Notice what was going on with Peter and his futile argument. Notice first of all:

A. The Message He Disregarded

In verse 33, Jesus told His disciples that He was going to be leaving them. He then moved from that announcement to the instructions He wanted to leave with them before His death.

In verse 34, Jesus said to them, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

In verse 35, He goes on to tell them that their love for one another is what would reveal to the world that they were in fact His disciples.

In the context of this conversation, this is the main point the Lord was trying to convey to His disciples. Yet, Peter completely misses this point, and goes back to the statement the Lord had made about leaving.

In verse 36, we read:

John 13:36

³⁶ Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

There are some people who resist the work of Christ in their life because they have missed the larger point of what He is trying to do in them.

For instance, there are people who will not tithe because they don't like to part with their money, but

they have missed the fact that the Bible teaches that it is not really their money in the first place.

There are those who won't attend church faithfully because they don't feel like they have to. All the while, they have missed the message that attending church is not something we have to do; it is something we should want to do.

Peter argues with the Lord because he had disregarded the primary message that Jesus was trying to convey. Notice something else that is going on in this futile argument. Notice not only the message he disregarded, but notice also further:

B. The Message He Disliked

The real reason why Peter argued with the Lord in this text is that he did not like what he had heard. The Lord told the disciples that He was going to be leaving, and that they would not be able to accompany Him.

In verse 37, Peter protested,

John 13:37

³⁷ Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

Even though the Lord had said it, it didn't sit well with Peter, and he disliked the message Christ had given him.

Many people are resistant and stubborn about the Lord's work in their lives simply because what He has said to them, and what He has asked of them is not easy or enjoyable.

Notice a second truth that points to the forecast of failure in Peter's life. Notice not only *Peter's futile argument*, but notice also secondly:

2. PETER'S FOOLISH ARROGANCE

Peter was the Apostle with the foot-shaped mouth.”

He was, eager, aggressive, bold, and outspoken – with a habit of revving his mouth while his brain was in neutral.

I would say that most of us relate more easily to Peter, than to any of the other apostles.

His flaws and his failures are imperfections we see in our own lives.

Notice a couple of things about Peter's pride:

A. His Misplaced Confidence

Jesus said to Peter, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me yet.” Peter boastfully responded in verse 37,

“Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.”

Jesus said, “You can’t,” but Peter said, “I will.” Peter believed that his devotion and faith were strong enough that if it came to it, not even death would part him from his Master.

It turned out, however, that the interrogation of a little girl was enough to send the once arrogant disciple into a foul-mouthed, full-fledged denial of His Lord.

Peter was confident in himself, and self-confidence, according to the Word of God, is always misplaced confidence. Notice something else about Peter’s foolish arrogance.

B. His Misguided Commitment

The Lord had been telling His disciples about His coming death. He was preparing them for the crises through which they were about to go.

Peter’s intentions were sincere, but they were contrary to the will of God. He was foolishly arrogant to think that his plan was somehow better than God’s. He warns us against stubbornly and arrogantly resisting God’s will in our lives.

There is a third predictor of Peter's failure that we find in this text. Notice not only *Peter's futile argument*, and *Peter's foolish arrogance*, but notice also thirdly:

3. PETER'S FEEBLE ABILITIES

Peter felt as if he was able to stand for Christ, regardless of the dangers it would bring. Jesus revealed the truth about Peter's abilities when He said in verse 38, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

Though Peter promised a big stand for Christ, the reality is that he was not ready to be the man he claimed to be. His failure was due to the feebleness of his abilities.

Notice a couple of things about Peter's feeble abilities:

A. He Was Not Bold Enough

Peter sounds so valiant and courageous when he says, "I will lay down my life for thy sake."

The only problem is that not only was Peter not bold enough to die for Jesus, he was not even bold enough to defend Jesus. He slinked along behind the crowd, watching as Jesus was unjustly taken and tried.

When the little girl by the fire said, “You are one of his followers, aren’t you,” Peter’s courage wasn’t even sufficient to claim Jesus, much less rescue Him.

The reality is that Peter had the wrong kind of boldness. His boldness on Passover night was a courage bolstered by his own arrogance.

Before his failure, Peter wasn’t bold enough. His confidence before his failure was a self-confidence, and it was never enough to stand in a spiritual battle.

Peter’s insufficient boldness warns us about having the wrong kind of courage.

Notice something further about Peter’s feeble abilities.

B. He Was Not Broken Enough

As long as Peter thought he was able to do something for Christ, he would never be able to do anything for Christ. Peter had not come to the point of brokenness, where he realized that he was totally dependent upon the Lord.

God uses broken things. Job eased his bodily pain with broken pieces of pottery. Mary broke her alabaster box, and used its contents to minister to Christ. Paul and his companions escaped from the sea on the broken pieces of a ship.

Peter was eventually used by God in a mighty way, but only after his self-confident, over-bearing will had been broken by the shame and regret of his sinful failure.

Close:

The same Peter whose pride and arrogance led him to such a devastating fall, would one day write these words:

1 Peter 5:5-6

⁵Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. ⁶Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Those are the words of a man speaking from experience. Peter learned the hard way that if we do not submit ourselves completely to God, we are setting ourselves up for failure.

May the story of Peter's failure cause us all to examine ourselves, and to beg God to keep us from falling!