

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

Text: John 13:38

John 13:38

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. Chad Myers, a former meteorologist from Oklahoma City, in an interview with CNN.com, once said this about forecasting tornadoes: "There is certainly an art to tornado forecasting. It is both an art and a science, like medicine [it] isn't an exact science. There are many more parameters in weather that we can't forecast."

Later on in that interview, Myers indicated that presently, meteorologist can know approximately 19 minutes before a tornado will strike in a specific place.

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 the Holy Spirit can point someone to the fact that they may be headed for a similar failure in their own Christian life. Perhaps, by learning from the failure in Peter's life,

someone can spare themselves from the bitter tears of regret.

There are three things I want you to notice about Peter that reveal why failure was forecasted for His life. Notice first of all:

1. PETER'S FUTILE ARGUMENT

John 13 is a chapter full with 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,

John 13:34

³⁴ 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:

John 13:35

³⁵ By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

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

³⁶Simon 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.

Peter essentially ignored all the teaching about love, and missed the primary truth Jesus was trying to convey.

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 the Lord 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.

While they may not come out and admit as vocally as Peter did, there are many who simply do not like what the Lord is trying to do in their life.

The reality is that Peter's argument was a futile one. When Jesus said that Peter could not go with Him; that should have been the final word! Though Peter may not have liked it, he should have listened to it and lived with it regardless.

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.

While we connect with Peter's weaknesses, we must learn from them as well. In this text, his self-confidence, and arrogance are foolish. They are traits that had to be amputated from his life through a bitter failure.

The Bible clearly warns us that pride is the predecessor to a fall. Notice with me a couple of things about Peter's pride in this text. Notice first of all:

A. His Misplaced Confidence

The Lord said to Peter: Thou canst not follow me now.

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.

Ten Peter boastfully responds in vs. 37: "I will lay down my life for thy sake."

John 13:37

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

The Lord said you can't and 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.

Be careful about foretelling your own faithfulness. Don't say arrogant things like, "Well, I'll never do what he did," or "I'll never fall into that sin."

The truth is; if it is not for the grace of God, there is no telling the sin you might commit, and the depravity you might reach. Without God, the only potential you have is for sinfulness and self-destruction.

Note what Paul confessed in Romans:

Romans 7:14-18

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. ¹⁶ If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. ¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

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. Notice not only his misplaced confidence, but notice also:

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.

The Lord was committed to the cross. Peter, on the other hand, talked as if he was committed to doing anything to keep Christ from dying. He said in verse 37

John 13:37

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

That sounded noble enough, but it was not the plan of God. Peter was committed, but not to the work that

God was doing. Peter was committed to his own agenda.

What Peter failed to understand was that “Christ must first die for Peter before Peter could die for Christ!”

I wonder; are there those here living with misguided commitments? Are you resisting the work of the Lord in your life, because like Peter, deep down you feel like you know better than He does what needs to happen?

Illustration:

In July of 2005, Eric Rudolph was sentenced to life in prison for setting off a remote controlled bomb at an abortion clinic in Birmingham in 1998. At his sentencing, Rudolph delivered a fiery speech in which he said that abortion must be fought with “deadly force”.

While I too feel that the murder of innocent, unborn babies is a travesty, and a shame upon our nation, I disagree with Rudolph that the way to combat those murders is with more murder. Rudolph is tragically misguided in his fight against abortion.

In this text, 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 and finally:

3. PETER'S FEEBLE ABILITIES

Confidently Peter proclaims in verse 37, "I will lay down my life for thy sake." The Lord had said that He would be delivered up to the Jewish authorities, and that He would be put death, but Peter said, "Not if I have anything to do with it."

Peter felt as if he was able to stand for Christ, regardless of the dangers it would bring. The Lord revealed the truth about Peter's abilities when He said in verse 38,

John 13:38

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.

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. Notice first of all:

A. He Wasn't 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 the Lord, he was not even bold enough to defend the Lord. He slinked along behind the crowd, watching as the Lord 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.

Poor Peter had projected courage, but he was a practical coward. Though he thought he was bold, he wasn't bold enough.

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

However, in Acts 2, Passover gives way to Pentecost and we find the same Peter, filled with a boldness that can only come from the Spirit of God, standing before thousands and preaching a pointed and powerful

sermon, calling all men to repent and come to the Christ in whom He believed.

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. Yes, the believer can say, "I can do all things..." but only if they understand that it is "through Christ" which gives them their strength.

Notice something further about Peter's feeble abilities. Notice not only that he was not bold enough, but notice also further that:

B. He Wasn't Broken Enough

Now by human standards, brokenness is not an ability; it is a disability. But in God's economy, a broken man is a useable man. To use the words of the Apostle Paul, when we are weak, then we are strong.

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.

Illustration:

Matthew Henry made this statement: “It is good for us to shame ourselves out of our presumptuous confidence in ourselves. Shall a bruised reed set up for a pillar, or a sickly child undertake to be a champion? What a fool I am to talk so big.”

Peter reminds us that as long as we are “talking big” about ourselves, we are not broken enough to do anything big for the Lord. God must break us with the hammer of trials in order to show us our inability, and draw us to His sufficiency.

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.

Peter reminds us that our abilities are feeble, and that as long as we depend upon them, we are headed for a certain 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

⁵ Likewise, 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. ⁶ Humble 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.

The Lord predicted Peter's denial, but the reality is that you didn't have to be the Son of God to see the forecast of failure that was coming for the prideful and self-reliant disciple.

Here is the question for you. What is the forecast in your life? Are you headed for failure? Are you submitted to the will of God, dependent upon the Spirit of God, and obedient to the Word of God?

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