

Day 27 Friday
John 13:36-38 NKJV
Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

36 Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.”

37 Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.”

38 Jesus answered him, “Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

Lord, Where Are You Going?

Peter (and the other disciples) did not yet understand Jesus. Peter perhaps thought that Jesus was going on a long journey without them. Peter wanted more of an explanation. Hear how Jesus explains in John 14:2-3

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

His path includes preparing a place for those who trust in Him by faith. The disciples, and all who are born again (John 3:3; 3:14-17), will find Christ and be with Him in eternity (John 14:6). The men He has taught for three years cannot do what He is about to do, but they can be reunited with Him eventually.

Where I Am Going You Cannot Follow Me Now, But You Shall Follow Me Afterward

Jesus is about to be arrested and executed (John 19:30), then resurrected (John 20:17) and ascended into heaven (Acts 1:6–9). Those are steps in which His disciples cannot follow, at least not yet. Peter didn't understand, but Jesus did. Jesus understood that Peter could not follow Him unto death now, but afterward he would.

Another layer of meaning comes when we look at the fates of the men hearing these words. Most of them will suffer martyrdom: killed for their faith in Christ. In that sense, they will "follow afterward" in the path Jesus is about to walk. This includes Peter, who tradition indicates was crucified upside-down, by his own request, as he felt unworthy to die in the same way as Jesus. Peter's eventual fate is even more amazing consider the prediction Jesus is about to give.

Lord, Why Can I Not Follow You Now?

Peter knew he was the disciple of Jesus, and the disciple's duty was to follow the rabbi. Peter felt so committed to his discipleship to Jesus that not only would he follow Him, but also lay down my life for Your sake.

“I Will Lay Down My Life For Your Sake”

Peter meant well, but this scripture contains yet another example of his bravado and emotions getting the best of him. Jesus corrected Peter's first incident with stern reassurance (John 13:8–10). Here, however, Peter makes a remark which he probably regretted for the rest of his life. Scripture gives no reason to think Peter's words are a bluff. He fully believes what he is saying. This is not an attempt to look good, or a fear-covering lie. To Peter's credit, he will launch himself into battle when Jesus is first arrested later this evening (John 18:10).

But when faced with true danger, Peter will give in to fear. As Jesus is about to predict, that means even denying he knows Jesus, let alone being willing die with Him (John 13:38).

Consider this. Judas has already left (John 13:30). The disciples, at this point, do not know that Judas is the betrayer—all they know is that one of the inner circle is a liar (John 13:21).

When Jesus gives His prophecy in the next verse, it's all but certain that some of them thought Peter would be the culprit.

“Will You Lay Down Your Life For My Sake?”

Peter has a habit of speaking without understanding. Earlier in the evening, he resisted Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet (John 13:6–10). In the prior verse, he declared he was willing and able to go anywhere with Jesus, even to death (John 13:37). That was in response to Jesus saying that where He was going others would not be able to follow (John 13:36).

On top of this, Jesus has predicted that one of the inner circle is a traitor (John 13:21). No one yet realizes this is Judas, who has already left to alert the authorities (John 13:26–30). What Peter says is both a boast, and a declaration that he is certainly not the betrayer.

That makes Jesus' response here both confusing and devastating to Peter, as well as the other disciples. Jesus uses the infamous "truly, truly," phrasing here. This repeats the word amēn.

“I Don’t Know the Man!”

The truth is that despite Peter's bravado, he is hours away from entirely denying that he has anything to do with Jesus (John 18:27). That moment will shatter Peter's self-confidence.

Matthew 26:71–75

71 And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

72 But again he denied with an oath, “I do not know the Man!”

73 And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, “Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.”

74 Then he began to curse and swear, saying, “I do not know the Man!” Immediately a rooster crowed.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” So he went out and wept bitterly.