

John 10:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Analysis

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself—Jesus insists on the voluntary nature of His death. The emphatic "no man" (οὐδεὶς οὐδεὶς) demolishes any notion that Christ was a helpless victim. Though legally executed by Rome and religiously condemned by Jewish leaders, Jesus remained sovereign over His own death. The phrase "of myself" (ἀπ' ἑμαυτοῦ/ἀπ' emautou) emphasizes autonomous decision—no external force compelled Him.

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again—The word "power" (ἐξουσίαν/exousian) means authority, not merely ability. Jesus possesses both the right and the capacity to surrender His life and to resume it. This twofold authority sets Christ apart from all humanity: we die involuntarily and cannot resurrect ourselves. Jesus does both voluntarily. He is Lord over life and death itself.

The parallel structure "power to lay it down... power to take it again" presents death and resurrection as equally authoritative acts. Resurrection isn't rescue from death's grip but Christ's sovereign reclamation of the life He voluntarily surrendered. This establishes Jesus as utterly unique—His death proves His love; His resurrection proves His deity.

This commandment have I received of my Father—The mission is both voluntary (Christ's willing choice) and appointed (the Father's command). The

Greek ἐντολήν (entolēn, "commandment") indicates authoritative commission. Christ doesn't act independently of the Father but in perfect unity with the Father's redemptive will. The Son's obedience to the Father's command demonstrates Trinitarian cooperation in salvation while maintaining Christ's voluntary participation. He wasn't coerced but willingly embraced the Father's mission.

Historical Context

Roman crucifixion was designed to maximize helplessness and humiliation. Victims were stripped, mocked, tortured, and killed slowly. The entire procedure communicated: you are powerless, defeated, cursed. Yet Jesus reframes His crucifixion as an authoritative act: "I have power to lay down my life." This transforms Rome's instrument of domination into Christ's vehicle of redemption.

The Jewish leaders thought they condemned Jesus (Matthew 26:66); Pilate thought he wielded power over Jesus (John 19:10). Jesus corrects both: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11). Human actors play roles in God's sovereign plan, but Christ remains in control.

Early Christian preaching emphasized this sovereignty. Acts 2:23 declares Jesus was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"—even in death, God's plan prevailed. This truth gave persecuted Christians confidence: their suffering, like Christ's, was under God's sovereign control.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's voluntary death challenge views that portray Him merely as a good man martyred by evil forces?
2. What does Christ's unique authority over death and resurrection teach about His identity—is He merely human, or fully divine?
3. How does understanding the cross as both the Father's command and the Son's willing obedience reveal Trinitarian unity in redemption?

Interlinear Text

οὐδεὶς αἱρεῖ αὐτήν· ἀπ' ἐμοῦ ἀλλ' ἐγὼ θεῖναι αὐτήν·
No man taketh it from me but I down it
G3762 G142 G846 G575 G1700 G235 G1473 G5087 G846

ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ ἔξουσίαν ἔχω θεῖναι αὐτήν· καὶ ἔξουσίαν
from myself power I have down it and power
G575 G1683 G1849 G2192 G5087 G846 G2532 G1849

ἔχω πάλιν ἔλαβον αὐτήν· ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν
I have again have I received it G3778 G3588 commandment
G2192 G3825 G2983 G846 G1785

ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου
have I received of Father my
G2983 G3844 G3588 G3962 G3450

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 2:9 (Parallel theme): But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

John 10:17 (Parallel theme): Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

John 14:31 (Word): But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Titus 2:14 (Parallel theme): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

John 6:38 (Parallel theme): For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

John 10:11 (Parallel theme): I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Acts 2:24 (Parallel theme): Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Acts 3:15 (Parallel theme): And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

John 15:10 (Word): If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Acts 2:32 (Parallel theme): This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.