

John 13:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? (ἀποκρίνεται Ἰησοῦς· Τὴν ψυχὴν σου ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ θήσεις, apokrinetai Iēsous· Tēn psychēn sou hyper emou thēseis)—Jesus questions Peter's confident self-assessment (13:37). The verb θήσεις (thēseis, 'will you lay down') echoes Jesus's own statement about laying down His life (John 10:11, 15). **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice** (ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, οὐ μὴ ἀλέκτωρ φωνήσῃ ἕως οὔ ἀρνήσῃ με τρίς, amēn amēn legō soi, ou mē alektōr phōnēsē heōs hou arnēsē me tris)—The double ἀμὴν (amēn, 'verily') emphasizes certainty. Peter will deny (ἀρνήσῃ, arnēsē, 'deny, disown') Jesus τρίς (tris, 'three times') before dawn.

This prophecy reveals Jesus's omniscience and Peter's overconfidence. Peter genuinely intended loyalty but didn't know his own weakness. Jesus's prediction isn't cruel but preparatory—knowing Peter will fail yet be restored teaches that discipleship depends on Christ's keeping power, not human strength. Peter's restoration (John 21:15-19) would prove grace triumphs over failure.

Historical Context

This occurred in the Upper Room during the Last Supper, hours before Peter's actual denials (John 18:15-27). Peter's self-confidence was characteristic—he repeatedly spoke impulsively (Matthew 14:28; 16:22; 17:4). Yet Jesus chose him to

lead the church, demonstrating God uses broken, restored sinners, not perfect saints.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Peter's overconfidence warn against trusting our own strength rather than depending on Christ's sustaining grace?
2. What does Jesus's foreknowledge of Peter's failure yet continued investment in him teach about God's patient discipleship?
3. How should Christians respond when we fail Christ—with despair like Judas or repentance like Peter?

Interlinear Text

ἀπεκρίθη	αὐτῷ	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	τὴν	ψυχὴν	σου	ὑπὲρ	ἐμοῦ
answered	him		Jesus		life	thy	for	my sake
G611	G846	G3588	G2424	G3588	G5590	G4675	G5228	G1700
θήσεις	ἀμὴν	ἀμὴν	λέγω	σοι	οὐ	μὴ	ἀλέκτωρ	
Wilt thou lay down	Verily	Verily	I say	unto thee			The cock	
G5087	G281	G281	G3004	G4671	G3756	G3361	G220	
φωνήσει	ἕως	οὗ	ἀπαρνήσῃ	με	τρίς			
crow	till		thou hast denied	me	thrice			
G5455	G2193	G3739	G533	G3165	G5151			

Additional Cross-References

Luke 22:34 (Parallel theme): And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

Matthew 26:34 (References Jesus): Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Mark 14:30 (References Jesus): And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

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