

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 319

Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21

Verses: John 18:25-27

Topic: And Immediately A Cock Crowed

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John 18:25-27 MKJV And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Then they said to him, Are you not also *one* of his disciples? He denied and said, I am not. (26) One of the servants of the high priest, being kinsman to him whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did I not see you in the garden with him? (27) Peter then denied again. And immediately a cock crowed.

The predicted failure occurs.

Jesus had prophesied: **John 13:38** *Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for My sake? Truly, truly, I say to you, The cock shall not crow until you have denied Me three times.*

And so it came to pass.

Now was Peter culpable? After all it was a prophesy of Jesus – it had to come true! Satan was sifting him like wheat (Luke 22:31) and Peter was only human. Here God's foreknowledge, our responsibility, and the Devil's tempting and accusing all meet in the unfortunate person of Peter.

And they also meet in the person of Judas, the son of Perdition, who was lost so that the Scripture might be fulfilled (John 17:12).

Peter made a series of disastrous choices, and fulfilled the word of the Lord. Judas made a series of disastrous choices and fulfilled the prophecies in Psalms (41:9, 109:28) and Zechariah (11:12,13).

How can God destine one man to brokenness and the other man to Hell? How can Jesus restore one to apostleship, and lose another to the Devil? Are our lives entirely out of our control? Are they entirely decided in Heaven? Can something as specific as "you will deny me three times before the cock crows" be planned beforehand for us?

On one hand Peter would say that he chose to deny Christ. Nobody pointed a gun at his head or twisted his arm up his back. God did not make Peter sin, though God did allow Satan to test him and to break him. And neither did God make Judas betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver – though God did allow Satan to enter into Judas.

God knows all our days in advance (Psalm 139:16) – but we live them one at a time.

My life has not turned out quite like anything I planned. Yet I keep on planning! I sense God's hand has been with me all along and that He is not surprised at all, about what I am doing today. I sense that He has directed my life and brought me to this place and that I am here for a reason. I also sense that God wants me to think ahead, be wise and plan carefully and act like a wise steward.

Is this totally contradictory? Why am I responsible to plan my ministry and be wise if it is all decided by God in the first place? Why even bother planning to get out of bed – or setting the alarm clock? Surely the time I awake is predestined? Mmm – maybe that is taking things too far!

Both predestination and free will are truths that can be pushed too far.

On one hand we must recognize that God is not accountable for our destiny or how He treats us. We can never put God on trial like Job tried to do. Judas cannot say “that was mighty unfair making me the Son of Perdition just so you could fulfill Your Scriptures.” God will not be judged by you, by me or by Judas.

On the other hand we should thank God for the freedom of choice He does give us. He does allow me to plan certain things within His will – while He predestines others. I do have to set the alarm clock!

A helpful analogy I use is a bar of silver. Each silver atom donates an electron to a floating sea of electrons that move around randomly within the metal bar. The movement of each individual electron is randomly chosen, but the voltage of the bar is precisely determined – zero volts. On the macro scale we have predestination, on the micro scale we have free will.

So it is with my life. I am absolutely sure that God predestines the overall tenor of my life and that He planned that I would be a Christian and a missionary from birth. However there is a lot of small stuff that is up to me.

Yet I also have a sense of total free will. During my conversion experience God appeared as a light and said “If you choose not to believe in Me now, then I will leave you alone forever.” (I was a quite anti-Christian atheistic rationalist / Zen Buddhist at the time) I had a real sense of choosing to believe in God. God is not a God of coercion, but I think He always knew I would believe.

Paul had a sense of being separated to God “from his mother's womb” (Galatians 1:16) as were Samson (Judges 16:17) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15). And each of these bible characters are quite different in the way they reacted to being separated by God. Paul initially resisted his calling and became a persecutor of the church before getting on the right track and fulfilling it, Samson messed his up separation with wild living, and John the Baptist fulfilled his destiny with honor as the ‘greatest born of women’ (Matthew 11:11-13).

It seems that sometimes God give us great latitude to choose, and at other times He manages the tiniest details of our lives so that His plans and purposes might be fulfilled.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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