

Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 18:15-18, 25-27

"And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in. Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?' He said 'I am not.' Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself... Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore, they said to him, 'You are not also one of His disciples are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.' One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off said, 'Did I not see you in the garden with Him?' Peter then denied again, and immediately a rooster crowed."

John has woven his accounts of Jesus' trial and Peter's denial together. It may just be that John is putting the events together in their best chronological order. However, John rarely puts things without a purpose and it could be that he does this to emphasize the strength of Christ in His interrogation verses the weakness of Peter in his. Or to remind people that it is Peter's failure that Christ is dying for.

One of the things we often miss in Peter's story here is to note his strength and courage. Peter did follow Jesus. All the others had fled, but Peter followed Him. This demonstrates courage and love for Jesus. Peter was also not deterred because he had to wait "at the door outside..."

Often when we think of Peter's denial we only think of the negative outcome, the three denials, the shameful end of the episode. But what about the other disciples? Where were they? They had all fled the scene and were probably hiding out back in Bethany. William Barclay writes "True, he failed; but he

failed in a situation which none of the other disciples even dared to face. He failed, not because he was a coward, but because he was brave."¹

The question is, should Peter have been where he was? Should Peter have followed Christ into the courtyard of the High Priest? I mean, yes we can consider this courage and there is reason to note that. But Peter was also impulsive. No, Peter should not have followed Jesus. Christ had released Peter and the other disciples from this ordeal – “Let these go their way...” (18:8). He had asked, as a condition of His arrest, that they be allowed to leave safely. Peter would have been better to have run and prayed than to have stayed and denied.

"Now that disciple was known to the High Priest..." Some believe this second disciple is John because he often describes himself in his gospel anonymously. But others believe John could not have been known to the High Priest. It is difficult to know with certainty.

As soon as Peter was in the courtyard he was assailed by the first question. The servant girl at the gate asks him an innocent question. She says "You are not also one of this Man's disciples...?" What is significant here is that she uses the word "also" in her question. She recognized that the "other" disciple, whether he was John or someone else, was clearly a disciple of Christ. We get a hint of this servant girl's attitude toward Jesus from her question. She seems to indicate that she did not think Jesus was anything special - calling Him simply "this Man." Perhaps the question itself was even demeaning, though we do not know the tone that it was spoken in - maybe Peter's quick denial indicates that it was demeaning.

So is there any danger in answering this question in the affirmative? No. First, the other disciple appears to be known to be one of Jesus' disciples and he is not in any danger. Second, Jesus had said that "Of those whom You gave Me, I have lost none..." (17:12).

TableTalk

Courage and impulsiveness can look alike. Sometimes they can be mingled together. True courage is doing what God asks of us when the situation is dangerous, not doing dangerous things when He has freed us from the danger.

¹The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John, vol. 2, William Barclay, pg. 230