

“HAVE YOU DENIED YOUR LORD?”

John 18:15-18, 25-27

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INTRODUCTION

When we think of the apostle Thomas how often do we attach the term “doubting”?

When we think of Judas, we naturally think of “the Betrayer.”

When we think of Peter we often associate the description “denier.”

Yes, Peter denied the Lord three times while Jesus was being interrogated by the Jewish religious leaders.

- How could Peter be so unfaithful?
- How could Peter be so heartless?

Yes, Peter failed in this circumstance; we might even say that he failed miserably.

But, let us not be so smug in our condemnation of Peter, and in our own assurance of faithfulness to our Lord.

Is it possible that we have ever denied our Lord ourselves—possibly on numerous occasions?

YOU MUST NOT DENY YOUR LORD.

In this passage we see that *Peter Follows the Lord (15-16)*, that *Peter Denies the Lord (17-18; 25-27)*, that *Peter is humbled by the Lord*, and that *Peter Mourns over His Sin*.

Now before we look at the details of Peter’s behavior, let us look briefly at the **four different accounts** of Peter’s denial in the **four gospels**. With this passage compare Mt. 26:71-75; Mk. 14:69-72, and Luke 22:58-62. Here are some facts:

- All four gospels show that Jesus predicted Peter’s denial (Jn. 13:38; Mk. 14:30; Mt. 26:34; Lk. 22:34).
- Two of the gospels (Matt. and Mark) show Him predicting this after leaving the upper room; Luke and John place the prediction in the upper room.
- The time notations in Matt. and Mark cannot be pressed.
- All four gospels show a triple denial by Peter.
- All four gospels mention the crowing of a rooster after the denials. Mark describes a double crowing—one after the first denial, and the other after the third.
- Each gospel describes the circumstances and the wording of the denials differently; it is very clear that Luke and John are independent of each other and of Matthew and Mark. Matthew and Mark are close in resemblance yet still have unique features.
- The gospel writers made no attempt to reconcile differences of details. Each was confident in the accuracy of his report. Note that Peter was behind the report of Mark (Mark was a traveling companion of Peter) and of course John was present at the scene.
- None of the accounts give every detail; all give accurate details based on eye-witness reports.
- If we had all the information, each account could easily be reconciled with the other.

- All four accounts record that the first questioning originated with the female doorkeeper of the high priest's house.
- The second and third denials were preceded by numerous questions from several individuals—not simply by one person each. What we have is a series of three independent questionings and denials.
- Luke shows us that there was a lapse of time between denials one and two, and that there was about **one hour** between denials two and three.

I. PETER FOLLOWS THE LORD (15-16).

- A. Out of curiosity—to see the outcome.
- B. Out of loyalty—which he has repeatedly professed.
- C. Out of Love—compare John 21.
- D. At a distance—lingering back so as not to make his connection with Jesus too obvious.
- E. At the outside door. (16)
- F. In fellowship with the indifferent crowd (18)
 - The household slaves of the high priest were in the courtyard during the interrogation of Jesus.
 - The officers of the temple guard, having done their duty in arresting Jesus, were also in the courtyard outside the rooms, or even below the rooms (Luke).
 - They had built a charcoal fire—a fire that produced a great deal of heat but little light.
 - It was cold that evening—a circumstance not that unusual that time of year in Jerusalem—especially with its high elevation. They stood around the fire in order to warm themselves.
 - Peter was with them—standing there and warming himself.
 - Jesus was in chambers being interrogated!

Another disciple also was following Jesus and the band. What do we know of this disciple?

- Tradition tells us that this was John—this tradition is almost certainly correct.
- John throughout this gospel is hesitant to give his name: cf. 20:2-10; 21:20-22; 13:22-26; etc.
- John was “known to the High-Priest”; in what way we are not told. Some suggest that he was a priest himself—but the evidence in Scripture is insufficient. It is also possible that his father, Zebedee, supplied salt fish from Galilee to the high priest's household.
- This disciple entered into the courtyard of the high priest's mansion.
- He stayed close to the Lord during these proceedings.
- Being a family acquaintance he was not threatened by those who opposed Jesus.
- John, having a concern for Peter, goes to the outside door, speaks with the doorkeeper (female), and brings in Peter.
- One of the reasons John mentions this is that he likely wishes to take away the sting of Peter's denials. He shows that he is partly to blame for what Peter did. He brought Peter into this difficult situation.

- John also shows that there were several involved in the second denial—“they”—and that the third denial was made more difficult for Peter because of the involvement of the relative of Malchus—whose ear Peter had cut off.

II. PETER DENIES THE LORD (17-18; 25-27).

A. Denial One (17)

The first question came from the slave girl who kept the door.

She likely was suspicious when she first saw Peter; especially when accompanied by John, and requested entrance by John—a known disciple of Jesus. But now she had been observing Peter’s awkward behavior in the group—staring at him as he sat around the fire. Then, when the group stood and moved about she gathered boldness and came to question Peter.

1. The question implies a “No” answer. “You are not one of this man’s disciples also, are you?”
2. Peter’s response is quick and to the point: “I am not.”

B. Denial Two (25)

After some time had passed, Peter is still standing and warming himself with the others. The same woman seemed to begin the questioning, followed by another woman, and then by a specific man to whom Luke refers. John simply speaks of “they.” Matthew and Mark tell us that during part of this second denial scene Peter went back to the gate area, only to return to the fire again.

1. Once again, the question implies a “No” answer.
2. Again his denial is straightforward and clear: “I am not.”

C. Denial Three (26-27)

1. The other gospels refer to the fact that Peter’s Galilean accent and mannerisms had given him away as a disciple of Jesus.
2. It is also possible that Peter had looked wistfully at Jesus when He had been brought out of Annas’ chambers in order to be taken to Caiaphas’ chambers; or even that the same had occurred when Jesus was taken from Caiaphas in order to go to His sentencing.
3. John tells us that the primary questioner was a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off. No wonder Peter became nervous! This man asks a question that requires a “Yes” answer: “Did I not see you with Him in the garden.”
4. John simply records that Peter denied this accusation; however, the other gospels tell us that he sought to verify his lies with “cursing and swearing”—that is the taking of multiple oaths.”

Oh what a mess Peter has made for himself; but things are about to get worse for him!

III. PETER IS HUMBLLED BY THE LORD.

A. The Rooster (cock) crowed.

B. The Lord turned and looked at Peter—possibly when brought out into the courtyard, or even when being questioned in the room above Peter.

This detail is recorded for us only in Luke's gospel (22:61)

- This look was undoubtedly one of hurt and disappointment.
- It was also a look that included great love and compassion.
- It is a look that Peter cannot bear.
- Peter remembers Jesus' sovereign prediction of his failure.

IV. PETER MOURNS OVER HIS SIN.

Luke tells us that Peter went out and wept bitterly.

What intense feelings must have been in this weeping! Peter was crushed, devastated. All of his sense of self confidence and bravado were gone—swept away in an instant by his utter and despicable failure.

CONCLUSION

So let us just throw the book at Peter; let us condemn him harshly for his despicable failure. What a miserable excuse for a disciple!

Yes, let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

I would ask us to examine our own hearts and lives and see if we have ever denied our Lord—in our own subtle ways.

Oh that we might go out and weep bitter tears of sorrow and repentance so that the Lord would restore us to useful service for Him.