

# The Denying Disciple

by Horatius Bonar

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*The sermon highlights the significance of Peter's denial and the importance of the Holy Spirit in keeping us from falling, with Jesus' love and intervention being the key to our restoration.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:70, Luke 22:54

**Topics:** "Denial", "Human Weakness"

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## Description

Horatius Bonar reflects on Peter's denial of Christ, emphasizing the profound weakness of even the most devoted disciples when faced with fear and temptation. He highlights that Peter, who had previously proclaimed his loyalty and witnessed Christ's glory, succumbed to fear and denied his Master three times, despite being warned. This denial occurred in the presence of Jesus, showcasing the depth of human frailty and the desperate wickedness of the heart. Bonar urges believers to recognize their own vulnerabilities and the necessity of divine support to remain steadfast in faith. Ultimately, he illustrates that even in Peter's darkest moment, Christ's love and compassion prevailed, leading to Peter's repentance.

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## Transcript

"He denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest."--Matthew 24:70.

It takes almightiness to lift up a soul from death; and it needs no less to hold up the soul that has been raised. Hence the need of a divine quickener; hence the preciousness of the blessed Spirit. He only can keep us from falling. Were He to let go, in a moment we fall. In Peter's case we see all this. It was an Almighty voice that called to him, "Follow me ;" and it was an Almighty hand that drew him out of his boat, and from his nets. It was an Almighty arm that sustained him. And now for a moment that arm lets him go, to prove him and shew him his weakness. In a moment he falls. His fall is one of the saddest and most awful that the Bible records. He denied his Lord. He denied him when he ought most to have confessed Him. He denied Him with oaths and curses.

Let us throw the statement of the evangelist into the following questions:--(1.) Who? (2.) Whom? (3.) What? (4.) When? (5.) Where? (6.) How?

I. Who? Judas? No. Nicodemus! No. Thomas, the doubter? No. Philip, the questioner? No. Peter? Yes; Peter. Simon, son of Jonas. Peter, the rock! Peter, the confessor of the Christ of God. Peter, the fervent proclaimer of his fidelity and love. Peter, who took the sword against Malchus. Peter, who had been with the Master on the transfiguration-hill, and in the garden of his agony. Yes; Peter denies. Poor human

heart! Lord, what is man! What is even a converted man? What is a disciple? Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

II. Whom? It is his own Master whom he is thus treating; Jesus, whom he had followed; whom he had confessed; and whom he seemed so truly to love. Jesus of Nazareth! Jesus the Christ, the Son of God; the Son of the blessed! It is not a fellow disciple whom he thus treats; it is his blessed Master! O incredible mystery of human evil! O desperate wickedness of the heart of man!

III. What? He denies Him. It is not forsaking Him merely. They had all done that. But it is denying Him. In this he stands alone. No one but Peter had said, I know not the man;--he who had so lately said, We know that thou art the Christ! What ingratitude, what falsehood, what inconsistency, what cowardice, are here! But should we have done anything else had we been there?

IV. When? Immediately after the supper and the garden scene; after those wondrous words recorded by John as spoken in the upper room; after listening to the awful cries of Gethsemane! So soon after these! Does it not seem impossible! Yet with all these in remembrance, he denies his Lord.

V. Where? In the High Priest's hall; within sight and hearing of his Lord he does it. In circumstances in which we should have expected him nobly to confess Him. In the hour of danger. Surrounded with enemies. Forsaken by friends. Yes, in the very presence of his Master he denies Him. Untouched with pity for his desolation, and sorrow, and torture, he denies Him.

VI. How? He did it three times. He did it after being warned by the Lord. He did it through fear of a woman. He did it in the most decided way. He did it with oaths and curses. Oh, what a denial! "Woman, I know Him not!" Then, "Man, I know Him not." Then, "Man, I know not what thou sayest." And then the oaths and curses burst forth. O dreadful and incredible wickedness! The old fisherman of Galilee had, it would seem, been a swearer before his conversion. This swearing fisherman had been called by the Lord and become his follower. Three years' intercourse with Christ had done much for him. But the old man was not dead. The temptation was presented, and the old habit returned, the old blasphemies broke out. The old oaths came forth again; aye, and they came forth to clench his denial of his Master. "May I be cursed for ever if I know the man," he says. Simon, son of Jonas, is it thou? Is that thy voice? Ah, if your Master heard, what would He say? He heard! Yes, He heard the threefold denial, and the curses with which it was enforced. Yet no anger came from either lip or eye! The curse only drew out the love. Yes, at the sound of the last denial, invoking damnation on himself if he knew the man, the Lord turned and looked. He looked in love, and the love conquered. Peter went out and wept. It was his last denial and his last oath. Satan had sifted him; but the Lord steps in.

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