

Acts 3:13 (W. Noel Tomkins) 71420

Bible Treasury: Volume N7, Whom ... Ye Denied (3:13)

It would be called effrontery amongst men for one to charge home on others the thing he had been guilty of himself, and to reiterate the charge. But it ceases to be so if we think of the previous word of the Lord Jesus to Peter in full view of his denial of Himself. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32), which along with his Lord's warning doubtless was included when we are told in Matthew 26:75, "Peter remembered the word of Jesus which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly." It is always grace which leads to repentance.

"The word of Jesus." Yes, that must have its weight with a true believer. It had none with the betrayer who "went and hanged himself." The charge which Peter prefers against the Jews after the great Shepherd of the sheep had been brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant (Hebrews 13:20), the infinite value of which was proved thereby, and which Peter knew as cleansing us from all sin, was, we may say, on four counts, viz.:

They denied Jesus as "the Christ." For in Matthew 27 we find Pilate so presents Him. "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ?" (ver. 17). And again, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified" (ver. 22).

They denied Jesus as "King of the Jews." In Mark 15 we read Pilate's queries, "What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him" (vers. 12, 13); and this was emphatic, for he had previously asked them, "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" (ver. 12).

They denied Him as "the Man" —the Man of whom we read in Philippians 2:5-7, "Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." For Pilate says to them (Luke 23), "Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people, and behold, I having examined him before your face have found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him. No, nor yet Herod, for I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him" (vers. 14, 15). But Pilate's pleading was all in vain, for "They were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified" (ver. 23).

They denied Jesus as "the Son of God." For when "Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him, the Jews answered him, We have a law and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:6-7). Had they said, He is the Son of God, but has made Himself of no reputation, and become a man, they would have been right. But no, they took Him and led Him away to Golgotha, "where they crucified him and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (ver. 18). How right, therefore, was Peter in his accusation, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just" (Acts 3:14).

How many glories, however, center in that Name of which the poor lame beggar proved the virtue, and the worth of which Peter knew something; for, while Peter with John at the outset had said, "Look on us," it was only to transfer his attention to another. Peter was conscious enough of his own poverty, and he had no doubt of the riches of his Lord when he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" So to the people greatly wondering at the miracle which had been wrought, he is quick to deny himself, saying the reverse of what he had said to the lame man, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" telling them that the God of unchangeable promise, "the God of their fathers had glorified his Servant Jesus, whom they had delivered up" —the Prince and Author of life, whom they had "killed." "And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all" (ver. 16). How God-glorifying is all this! Let us note the order.

First and foremost, His Name.

Second, faith in its own proper place, the gift of God, not of self.

Third, faith linked with its object, "which is by Him" —that object is always and exclusively Christ.

Fourth, the results for the truster— "strong" and "perfect soundness."

May we, then, as saints or servants, take heed to it for ourselves that with us it may be only and always "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). W. N. T.