

Mark 14:71

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

Analysis

Peter's third denial: 'he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak' (ἥρξατο ἀναθεματίζειν καὶ ὄμνύναι ὅτι Οὐκ οἶδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον ὃν λέγετε). The verbs 'curse' (anathematizein, ἀναθεματίζειν, invoking curses on himself) and 'swear' (omnynai, ὄμνύναι, taking oaths) show escalating vehemence. Peter called down curses to prove he didn't know Jesus—the ultimate denial. This fulfilled Jesus' prediction (v. 30). The phrase 'this man' (ton anthrōpon touton, τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον) distanced Peter from Jesus—not 'my Lord' but 'this man.' Peter's fall from bold confession ('Thou art the Christ,' Mark 8:29) to cursing denial shows human weakness. Yet Jesus' earlier prayer (Luke 22:32, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not') sustained him. Peter wept bitterly (v. 72), repented, and was restored (John 21:15-19).

Historical Context

Peter's three denials occurred in high priest's courtyard during Jesus' trial. The progression: first denial to servant girl (vv. 66-68), second to others (v. 69-70), third with curses and oaths (v. 71). Luke records Jesus looking at Peter after the denial (Luke 22:61), prompting bitter weeping. Peter's restoration occurred after resurrection when Jesus three times asked 'Lovest thou me?' (John 21:15-17), reversing three denials. Early church knew of Peter's denial—Mark (likely writing Peter's testimony) didn't hide it, showing honest acknowledgment of sin. Peter's failure and restoration became paradigm for Christian experience: genuine believers can fall grievously yet are sustained by Christ's intercession and grace.

Peter later wrote: 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly' (2 Peter 2:9)—likely reflecting on personal experience.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does Peter's progression from confident boasting to cursing denial teach about human weakness and need for divine sustaining grace?
2. How does Peter's restoration after denial demonstrate that genuine saving faith perseveres despite grievous falls?

Interlinear Text

ὁ δὲ ἤρξατο ἀναθεματίζειν καὶ ὀμινύειν ὅτι
G3588 **But** he began to curse and to swear saying I know
G1161 G756 G332 G2532 G3660 G3754

Οὐκ οἴδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον ὅν λέγετε
not G1492 G3588 man this of whom ye speak
G3756 G444 G5126 G3739 G3004

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